

Why?

“Why are you doing this?” The question took me aback, not because it was unfair or difficult but because of its timing and source. I was thinking, praying and checking on the funding needed for our son Philip and me to return to El Hogar as part of our second mission team. It would be fine, but it required time and attention which were in short supply. We’ve done this before. I was way beyond the “why”.



Jorge, Felipe, Donis and Mauri (who likes to practice his serious stare)

The source of the question was my wife Meg, and it hit me like an alarm. My focus, intent and goals regarding mission were quite clear in my mind and among our mission team. But if they hadn’t been clearly communicated to Meg, what about the parish in general? “Mission” means doing what Christ commands us to do, *“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40)* But why go so far away when there is so much to do – more than we can manage – right here? Why would the Lord lay a burning desire on my heart for foreign mission and then push me to involve the parish?

I expected several very tangible blessings to emerge from answering Christ’s call to this particular area of ministry. They have come, but the reality is so much more than I anticipated.



Katherine, Marisela, Maribel, Sisi and Celenia

Blessing – I expected the Lord to use us to bless the children and staff of El Hogar and to bless us through them. That has clearly happened and it would not have happened without the in-person connection. The US is a distant dreamland to them. When we come in the name of Christ we are his ambassadors. When we sit with a child to do a craft, hear them read or cheer their soccer goals **they see and feel the love of Christ**. We feel it too. I hope and pray we successfully bring it home with us.

Inspiration – The question gets asked repeatedly, “Wouldn’t it be better to just send them the money?” While El Hogar existed for 30 years without St. Mary’s help, it has always relied on the Lord to send people like us to build relationships, tell their stories and share the Gospel. Over time, support wanes among some of their supporting churches and others grow closer. We have become a small part of something very beautiful that Our Lord is doing there and they have become part of



Virginia Collins helps the boys make bracelets.

what he is doing here. Various members of St. Mary's are now sponsoring 6 children. Before we went, we sponsored zero.



Paul Hanson and Horace Beckwith moving fill dirt for the cafeteria expansion.

Another common question is, “Why not help the children here?” A significant goal of distance mission work is to awaken us to the local work Christ is calling us to do. We actually do quite a lot for children and families in our area. I hope and expect that to grow, in part because of our growing focus on mission at every level. If you feel strongly about local mission, explore what the Lord wants to do through you.

Growth – The most important benefit of serving Christ is that we, the people we serve and those around us grow closer to him. That should be true for every ministry from the Altar Guild to the Youth Group. Our mission teams have certainly experienced that – and in a particular way. Long distance mission extracts us from our cultural bubble of comforts and complacency. For a week, it’s just our team and El Hogar meeting in Christ. That experience makes it easier to see him everywhere else, especially at home. We also see that the Body of Christ is so much grander than we knew before. Sometimes we have to step back from a picture to see it clearly.

Surprise! – A further blessing from our trips is the opportunity to establish a ‘sister parish’ relationship with Santa Maria de los Angeles, the pro-cathedral in Tegucigalpa. Several of our team met with their vestry and some other interested members to forge an additional tie across the body of Christ. They shared some ideas which I hope will help us build our children’s ministry. We shared some ideas about Cursillo and Alpha.



Christin Hill and Colleen Rothrock listen to Maribel read.

Someday I will be called before Our Lord to give an account of what I did with the gifts and responsibilities he gave me. While I am not at all comfortable with my progress thus far, I’m thankful that for our time with the children and staff of El Hogar and sharing them with you. It all pleases Him.

AMEN

Fr. Tim+