

## **2019 St. Bartholomew Guatemala Mission**

July 16, 2019 twelve St. Bart's missionaries headed to Guatemala for what turned out to be a life changing experience. We landed in Cuilapa, Guatemala with our servant hearts full of love and anticipation to minister to all we met. The missionaries were Yeraldine Penalzoa, Emma Gomez, Susy Nako, Patti Traupman, Ada Martin, Jackie Majalap-Wilson Susan Thompson, Phillip Thompson, Joan Kriegh, Rosa Ellenburg, Ana Castillo, Padre Ricardo Arriola, Sister Fortune Ezeugo, and Mary Abrams.

The joy and excitement of all of the people of Guatemala was evident everywhere we visited. They opened their homes and their hearts to us. The need and poverty was all around us as we visited but the love of our Lord Jesus Christ in all of them was everywhere.

It was our honor and pleasure to be in their company and they soon showed us their great faith and humility that make them such a great testament of how great our God is.

We worked to help level the floor of the new church in 'LA 46' in Cuilapa alongside the local builders and the people from the community who came out to help us on the weekend. We visited families in the area to offer support through prayer, anointing and confession by Father, as well as playing with the children and just visiting to hear their stories.

Father Ricardo was able to celebrate the 1<sup>st</sup> Mass at 'LA 46' 2 days after we were there to help them. It was a true testament to their faith that they were able to finish the floor and the roof so we could attend Mass together.

Our welcome in most of the village churches, such as Los Chilitos and San Juan la Laguna, was second to none. Especially when we visited Aldeo Agua Zarca where they greeted us with singing, fireworks and huge banners thanking us for joining them. It filled our hearts with love and admiration for the time and expense it took to do this for us.

We visited a home for orphaned, abandoned, abused and at-risk girls called The Hogar de la Nina Santa Rosa de Lima. When we arrived we were met by smiling faces and hugs all around by the children and the Nuns that run the home. This is where the money collected during Mass at St. Bartholomew, as a 2<sup>nd</sup> collection, was donated. The Sisters rescue these girls from abuse and/or neglect and show them the love of Christ while offering them a quality education so they can support themselves in the future. The girls make rosaries, ornaments, bracelets and other crafts to sell in order to learn a trade.

Another one of our visits was to a shelter for abused women and their children called Emanuel Dios con Nosotros. There were 3 ladies in residence that we were able to visit with us. They have a bakery on the premise to teach the ladies a skill to use when they leave the shelter. These women were very generous in sharing their stories with us of the courage and strength it took them to flee from the violence of their abusers.

Our last visit was to the parish of Blessed Stanley Rother, originally from Oklahoma, who was martyred in his rectory in the church of Santiago Apostol in Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala in July 28, 1981. Blessed Stanley Rother was a true witness of the faith, not by his words but by his life. He went to Guatemala to spread peace and joy, by loving everyone, even his enemies who ultimately killed him, out of love for Jesus and he gave his life for his people and his faith. Father Ricardo celebrated Mass in the room where he was martyred along with a shrine of blood stains on the ground to the right of the altar. To say that it was very emotional for all attending, especially Father Ricardo, is an understatement.

We were witnesses to the great faith of the Guatemalan people as well as the beauty of the country. They touched our lives through their hugs and smiles. We came loaded with rosaries, toys and gifts but they had so much more to offer us than we had to offer them. They offered us all they had which was their greatest gift to give, namely their love for Jesus.

The Lord is calling all of us to be missionaries. We hope that you will join us on mission next year.