

## The Price of Partnership

Many people in our diocese, and beyond, are well aware of St. Cloud's Global Solidarity Partnerships with Homa Bay, Kenya and Maracay, Venezuela. These relationships have been life-giving and faith-enhancing for the people of both our diocese and those of our partners, and we're always proud to spread awareness of the beauty and graces of these partnerships. What many people are not aware of is that these relationships come with a cost.

Over the past two years alone, the Mission Office has sent out over \$140,000.00 in partnership funds between Homa Bay and Maracay. These expenses range from the cost of bringing delegations here, scholarships and orientation expenses for delegations traveling there, support of our foreign missionaries, special pastoral and development needs in our partner dioceses, partnership promotion, bank fees, communication expenses and many other miscellaneous general costs that add up in the continuation of these key relationships.

The Mission Office relies solely on donations to be able to cover these expenses and share funds with our brothers and sisters in Latin America and Africa. Unfortunately, the donated income over the past two years has been less than partnership expenses, by 20%. Partnership accounts are dwindling, and have only been keeping up with expenses thus far thanks to estates and larger donations made in the past, many of which are running out. Without these donations, the exciting happenings and life-changing projects in our partnerships cannot occur.



Micki Morrissey of Glenwood and Trina Aguilar of Maracay during the 2009 delegation to our diocese.

As Mission Office and partnership committees look at upcoming partnership activities, we need your help. For example, our diocese has committed to sending \$25,000 a year for three more years to support the Child Survival Project in Homa Bay. This project helps provide for school fees and educational expenses for young people who have been orphaned due to AIDS; these young adults

are caring for younger siblings, and need vocational training in order to be able to work in a healthy trade to support their families. Donations as small as \$5 towards this project can help cover student year-end exam fees; \$10 could purchase a mosquito net or blanket for a student in boarding; \$20 helps with required uniforms; \$70 could provide a bag of corn for student meals; or something as generous as \$400 could pay a semester's tuition. But without such donations, we cannot offer the support we have promised our partners.

Another upcoming commitment is the welcome of a delegation of nine of our brothers and sisters from Maracay. They will be joining us this coming August. Between rising airfare prices, and the general costs of a visiting delegation, we anticipate an expense of nearly \$10,000 for the group. A donation as simple as \$5 could help give a welcome basket to one of our delegates; \$50 could provide a room for a night at one of our great retreat houses in the diocese; or something as generous as \$700 could fly a delegate one way. But without help, welcoming our friends will be very difficult.

In addition to special expenses there are also on-going costs associated with supporting our partnerships: over 13% of all outgoing partnership funds are for "general" expenses. These general funds often get depleted due to special projects and activities such as above that draw from these general, undesignated funds when the special funds aren't enough; often without more undesignated donations coming in to replenish them.

As Christ models for us, we are called to solidarity and relationship with our brothers and sisters. Our diocese truly values and stands behind our commitment to be in mission through these special partnerships. Our histories are intertwined, and our salvation is wrapped up in one another's. Yet to continue participating in the saving grace that we believe our partnerships are to all, we need your help! Please consider sharing your gifts and helping bring God's Reign to earth through these transformative partnerships.

There is no charge for MISSION CONNECTIONS, but tax deductible donations for our educational work are gratefully accepted. Donations for any of the missionaries or mission connections mentioned here may be made in care of the Mission Office.

\*\*Please direct comments, suggestions and articles to Kateri Mancini, at kmmission@cloudnet.com. \*\*The mailing list is managed by Mary Lou Janski, at mlmission@cloudnet.com.

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Stephanie, a St. Ben's graduate, with friends at the Girls Empowerment Center in Kenya.

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## Care for Widows and Orphans

The following is a letter home written by Brother Lawrence Kenning, MM. Bro. Larry is originally from St. Mary Help of Christians Parish in St. Augusta, and has been a Maracay missionary in Bolivia for 40 years.

This past July was my birthday, and a small group discovered this, so they amongst themselves organized a birthday party on the lawn of the park next door to me. A cake, refreshments, the whole bit. It turned out very nice. Doña Carmen Gusman, the organizer, I have known for some 15 years already, she is a widow twice over. Her seven children are mostly adults now with children. Doña Josefina is a widow of five adult children, one died over a year ago of leukemia. Doña Carmen Rosa, widow of four adult and teenage children; her husband was killed in a robbery (for a paycheck and bicycle) about ten years ago. Doña Maxi, widow with adult children and caring for two grandchildren. Doña Carmen Rosa, widow with two high school age daughters who are almost always sick; she lost her husband in a bus mishap. Doña Ruth Galindo is rather young; her husband lost his life in a taxi robbery. She is only weeks away from giving birth to his baby.

In the afternoon this same day, Doña Elizabeth was waiting to see me. Elizabeth was carrying a baby in a blanket over her shoulder (the local way of transporting a child, leaving ones hands free to work). She told me that the baby belonged to her sister who was sick with AIDS and not able to care for her baby. The principle reason for the visit was over her own son, 14 year old

Mauricio, who had leukemia and had been in treatment for months already. My suggestion to her was to pray, putting the cause of her only son in the care of our Lord Jesus, as the cost of his rehabilitation would get more and more costly than available monies. Together we prayed right there at the edge of our driveway. I gave her some money, saying that she should use it on food and family maintenance. Truthful advice in such situations is very taxing to give. Forgive me Lord, I did my best.

When I looked up, Doña Felicidad, an elderly lady, was also waiting to visit with me. I had met her for the first time about two months ago. She had told me then that she was caring for seven orphans whose father recently died. With limited resources I realized that in the garden there were still green beans and the harvest of guayaba fruit, so I sent some with her. In no way did it justify the need that she had. I asked her about the children's mother, and in tears she responded that the mother was her daughter, who was alcoholic and lost, expected dead.

With in view, I saw Doña Miriam; I called Miriam over to tell her story to Felicidad. Miriam too is about 60 years of age. A woman of good will. Only about 1 1/2 years ago her daughter too died of alcoholism. Miriam now has the daughter's small children to rear, one of whom is still in preschool. Good going Grandma Miriam!

Talking to each other both women were able to realize that they were not alone in their life's trials. None are alone. Thank you Lord Jesus, Praise God!

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## Mission Meetings

- 1:30pm March 19: Cold Spring deanery at St. Peter & Paul, Richmond
- 9am March 27: Foley/Princeton deanery at St. Mary's, Mora
- 8:30am April 17: Melrose/Sauk Centre deanery at St. Joseph, Grey Eagle
- 8am April 18: St. Cloud deanery at Sacred Heart Parish, Sauk Rapids
- 9am April 19: Alexandria/Morris deanery at St. Ann's, Brandon
- 9am April 25: Fergus Falls/Wadena deanery at Christ the King, Browerville
- 9am April 26: Little Falls deanery at St. James, Randall



The following is the homily given by Deacon Vern Schmitz, of Holy Spirit Parish in St. Cloud, for the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time this past November.

Christ is challenging us to think with his parable of the Master and the three servants. And as in most of his parables, our thinking can go in many ways. Because of the way the story is told, it is common for us to think that the moral of the story is that the first two servants are the good guys; they are the ones that have used all of their talent—their intellect and their effort; with this interpretation, we see the first two servants using the many God given gifts—and maybe some they developed through their own hard work.

But we could also look at Jesus' parable as a story of the rich getting richer—through exploitation and greed. Why? In first-century Mediterranean culture, people believed that all goods already exist and are already distributed. There is no more where this came from, and the only way to get more is to defraud another. Anyone who suddenly acquired something "more" was judged a thief.

So does this make the master a clever entrepreneur or an arrogant, greedy person who exploits others? And what about the first two servants—they assisted in the exploitation of others just like their master. They fell in line, probably thinking it's better to join than fighting the establishment. And with apparent zeal, they did everything possible to exploit and double their master's investment.

But what about the third servant? Rabbin of Jesus' day said the third servant took the most honorable course of action. Maybe he was acting out of fear when he buried the talent. Or maybe he was acting with real courage—not wishing to exploit one more peasant for the sake of his boss, even though he knew that he would have to suffer the consequences. Maybe he was not just a passive subordinate, but someone taking a proactive stand in an

unfair society. By refusing to allow his master to dominate him, he engages in a courageous effort.

And what about you and I? Do we have the courage to stand up to wrong-doing? Do we stand up to those exploiting others? Or would we be too filled with fear of upsetting the reputation of the powerful? The third servant took a stand for the common folk. Maybe the "Occupy Wall Street" protesters for example are doing the same—standing up to the masters harvesting what they did not plant; maybe they are like the third servant and have a love for God and their brothers and sisters throughout this world. They are seeing the disparity of this world—seeing the widening of the economic gap in the US.

## Courage of the Servant

Maybe we too need to be a part of the movement to awaken America—to reclaim the Christian ideal of working for the common good, to shake the foundations of those that feel secure in their right to extravagance when others are barely making it. We must remember that we too sometimes fall victim to the powerful's invitation to share in greed. So, if you were the grad student in that Penn State locker room, would you have stopped the crime with all of your strength? As students in our schools, how often are we stopping the bully? As business people, how courageous are we to protect those less fortunate? What are we willing to take a stand against in our society?

Jesus repeatedly tells us to "fear not." But, we too often lack the courage of the third servant. We are afraid of taking some of these risks. We play it safe. But this is not the route that Jesus took; his life was one of many risky choices. So let us pray that we too are able to take the risks that our sisters and brothers deserve and the Lord expects of us. Let us be the courageous servant.



The St. Cloud Mission Office can help your life as a good and faithful servant extend beyond your own lifetime. Consider leaving a legacy that makes a difference by including the St. Cloud Mission Office in your will.

## Sharing My Gifts

In answering Christ's call to build peace and solidarity in our world, I wish to share my gifts with our Diocesan Global Solidarity Partnerships.

- Please accept my gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support the Maracay, Venezuela Partnership general fund.
- Please accept my gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support the Homa Bay, Kenya Partnership general fund.
- Please accept my gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support the Child Survival Project in Homa Bay, Kenya.
- Please accept my gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support the coming delegation from Maracay, Venezuela.
- Please accept my gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to be used where it is needed most.
- I am interested in volunteering with the partnerships; please contact me

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Comments/specifics about my interest: \_\_\_\_\_

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## No Greater Gift

*Kayla Kastanek, a University of Minnesota-Duluth medical student originally from St. Anne's Parish in Kimball, wrote the following message of gratitude after her 2010 experience to Nicaragua.*

We were just four college students headed out for an adventure. We wanted to walk in the shoes of the people of Nicaragua. We wanted to share in their struggles, their joys, and their love. We prayed months ahead of time for God to cleanse us of our selfishness and insecurities. He answered our prayer the very first night. While out for dinner our hotel neighbors came into our rooms and stole all our money. With no money to travel we were forced to change our plans. Instead of traveling to see other villages, we would spend the entire two weeks with our host families in the little village of Mulukuku. Instead of having our translators stay with us and pick us up, we would take public transportation and meet them at the half-way point. We were stripped of every little security we had and found our feet in Nicaraguan shoes for the rest of the trip.

The morning after the robbery, Fr. Chico said Mass for us. After Mass he stepped away for a few minutes and returned with \$400, enough to get us up the mountain and back with even a little wiggle room. We later found out that Fr. Chico had given us his own personal savings. It was money that he used for his daily living expenses and personal enjoyment. One U.S. dollar is equivalent to 22 Nicaraguan Cordobas. The average per capita income in Nicaragua is \$430, making Nicaragua the poorest country in Central America. "Greater love has no one than this, that they lay down their life for a friend" (John 15:13). Father Chico had given us all he had, asking nothing in return.

As is often the case with faith, we thought we were being asked a favor, when in fact we were being given one. I often thought during the early part of the trip, "God we are doing you a favor by being your servants; we are living on the bare minimum, sleeping with the bugs, working to repair an entire church and serving others." Yep, we were looking like some pretty faithful servants...for a while anyways. It was the fourth day when we caught a glimpse of what our Master was up to. During the day we worked at a school run by Franciscan Sisters. While painting there we had made a friend named Isaiah who helped us more than we could imagine. During lunch one day we asked why Isaiah and his father were staying with the Sisters. We were told they had traveled three days by horse, and had been waiting already three weeks to see a doctor. Isaiah's dad was crippled by rheumatoid arthritis and they were hoping to get some relief for him. Our days spent with the Sisters and Isaiah and his father showed us we were not the real servants of God; they were. They were patient with our inability to do things correctly, they forgave us for every mistake and situation, they were never quick to anger at our faulty thought process, and they were always serving us to the fullest regardless of the sacrifices they had to make to do so. Us servants of God? No. We were being served by God himself, hidden in each of these people.

Where do we usually find the great love we give and receive? Most often from our friends and families, typically not from complete strangers. In Nicaragua we walked into the houses of complete strangers. From the first nights they gave us the best of everything regardless of what little they had. We said we didn't need breakfast, but they woke up before sunrise each morning to cook for us. We said we wanted to eat what you eat, but they ran to the market everyday to get us fresh food. We said we wanted to learn how to do our laundry by hand, but they rewashd our clothes a dozen times. We were strangers but they didn't treat us as such. As the days passed we shared many laughs, and even tears as we grew closer and closer to these people. Despite the language barrier we prayed together, sang together and did our best to tell each other of the differences between our lives. In the end we were thanking the people who took our money. Had it not been for them, we would not have been blessed with the extra days to love and be loved by strangers who soon became family.



*Erik Doeden and Daniel Nash with friends in Mulukuku village*

Mission trip stories are my favorite. I don't think I have come across a mission story I have not enjoyed reading, or had conversation with a fellow missionary that has left me feeling empty. But there is a trend I have noticed with most mission stories. In the midst of all the greatness they talk about they fail to mention the people who made it possible. The mission never starts and ends with the people who go. It is the encouragement, support, and prayers of our family and friends who have really done the hard work. I can't tell you how many times we have talked about going back and visiting our friends and families in Nicaragua. The experience is one that deeply changed our lives and the lives of the people we met. So if you have ever supported a missioner, thank you! You may have thought at the time you were just helping a few college kids embark on a little adventure, but it was so much more than that. You helped find the love of Christ and there is no greater gift that can be given.



*Linda Arnold and Kayla Kastanek (far right) with their hosts, the Santiagos family*

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## Spotlight on Mission

*There are countless mission activities happening all the time in the St. Cloud Diocese, ranging from parish mission groups, to fair trade sales, to groups incorporating mission education and service. All these activities are important to the work of celebrating our global Church. In this issue we highlight the Franciscan Community Volunteers.*

The Franciscan Community Volunteers (FCV's), a ministry sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, are a group of young adults, 21-29 who are looking for an authentic way to live a life of faith and service. The program's mission is "To invite young adults into a process of companionship with the poor in the Spirit of Saints Francis and Clare."

During these young adults' ten-month experience, they do service work, putting in 40 hours a week at an organization that fits their passion and gifts, such as Lutheran Social Services, Place of Hope, Hands Across the World, the Mission Office, Catholic Charities, and more. Volunteers are both supported and stretched at their placement sites. FCV'er, Alicia Landale, explains, "I am thankful to be at the Children's Home, though it is not easy. I know that God is glorified here, and opportunities arise each time I look a child in the eyes and listen, care about and relate to them, as Christ undoubtedly would." In solidarity with the poor and marginalized they work with volunteers are encouraged to live simply, such as taking the bus or biking to work, and they live off a meager stipend. They are also encouraged to volunteer as they are able with additional organizations in the community.

In addition to their strong commitment to service, the FCV's also strive to live out the pillars of community and spirituality. They live together, along with Franciscan Sisters, at

the Franciscan Welcoming House in St. Cloud. They enjoy meal and prayer together, as well as a community nights in which they listen to a speaker, watch a documentary, or otherwise engage in enrichment, reflection and discussion in regards to justice and the Gospel message. As FCV'er Will Braun described it, "To me, the relationships formed in this community are a symbol of the relationship between God and humanity." Another volunteer, Cattie Tobin, reflects on what she learned about Franciscan spirituality during her time with FCV: "I've realized there is maybe another dimension to Francis's words; the idea that we are called to embody the gospel. To not necessarily do more but to be more to others. In a sense, to strive to be that 'living prayer' that Francis was in our own relationships with God." The personal development and professional enrichment the volunteers experience is immense, and the mark they leave on the St. Cloud community and the lives they touch is deeply lasting.



*FCV's with Franciscan Sisters, staff and friends from Homa Bay, Kenya*

Thank you to the FCV Program, Franciscan Sisters, and the volunteers themselves, for their dedication to experiencing faith, simplicity, service, and solidarity with the poor and underserved.

If you or someone you know are interested in knowing more about the FCV Program, or becoming a volunteer, service site, or supporter, please call Sister Clara Stang, OSF or Anna Zaros at 320-229-0307 or visit [www.fcvonline.org](http://www.fcvonline.org).

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# Mission Connections

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*LORD, make us to walk in your way,  
where there is love and wisdom,  
there is neither fear nor ignorance;  
where there is patience and humility,  
there is neither anger nor annoyance;  
where there is poverty and joy,  
there is neither greed nor ambition;  
where there is peace and true prayer,  
there is neither care nor restlessness;  
where there is the fear of God  
to guard the heart,  
there no enemy can enter;  
where there is mercy and prudence,  
there is neither excess nor harshness.*

*This we know through the example  
of him who laid down his life for us,  
Your Son, Jesus Christ our LORD.*

*Amen.*

*~Prayer in the Spirit of St. Francis~*

### Special Points of Interest:

- Partnership Updates
- Mission in Nicaragua
- Gospel Reflection
- Spotlight on Mission
- And MORE!

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