

FROM THE PASTOR'S PRINTER

Relatives Will Be Visiting

These words may excite or scare you, depending on the relatives! Don't worry, the relatives who are coming to visit are good visitors from our sister parishes in El Salvador. For those who may be new to our parish, we have a twinning relationship with two parishes in El Salvador. It began with Santa Cruz (Holy Cross) parish in the city of Soyapongo, a large city bordering San Salvador, the capital of the country. Because of rapid growth, another parish was established from Santa Cruz (sort of like parochial cloning) under the patronage of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe). Because of the good rapport between the people that was already established, St. John's entered into a relationship with NSdG. Although it is numerically impossible, we are twins with not one, but two parishes. (As St. Paul wrote, "With God, all things are possible.")

But what does it mean to be a twin parish? Many people think of a twinning relationship as one in which a wealthier parish commits itself to assisting one with lesser resources, and the former visits the latter to help with projects or to make sure the money is used wisely. This is only one aspect of the relationship. The purpose of twinning parishes is to establish a relationship between two communities in which each learns about the other, supports each other in prayer, and gives witness to the power of Christ from different life experiences (i.e., In our case, life in these different countries with very contrasting realities.) Through these dynamics, we build bonds of Christian love through everyday living (as far as possible, given the distance between our communities).

Now a person might look at this and think it is a nice thing to do, but it is not really essential to life in the Catholic Church. I have my parish and they have theirs; if they need help we will send them what we can. However, we find in the epistles of

St. Paul and the writings of the Church Fathers (2nd to 5th centuries), that relationships between churches of different places was seen to be necessary for the very life of the Church, not just sociologically, but in order to be truly universal – that is "Catholic". It was not only necessary that all communities agreed on doctrine, but that they lived in love and peace with one another. Just as individuals are expected to love one another, so to are communities of faith. Reaching beyond geographic neighbors is a sign of a community recognizing the universality of the Church; coming to know and have relationships with another community helps both communities to grow in insight that leads to deeper faith. It is not a case of our parish simply helping SC & NSdG with tuition and other projects, we also have been enriched by them in spiritual ways that exceed what we give. In visiting them, we have learned how small Christian communities within the parish who gather to pray, study, and support one another are a leaven that raises up the whole parish. We learned how people who are powerless in the eyes of world, through faith, are empowered by God to live with dignity. These experiences have helped our parish to be enriched in faith, hope, and love.

I invite and encourage each of you to come to at least one event from this Wednesday to next Monday. You don't speak Spanish? Neither do I. We will have translators, and you won't be spending the whole time trying speak with each other. Being together with our "twins" and with each other in the parish is a great way to welcome them into your life, and let them welcome you into theirs.

Hope to see you there.

¡Dios te bendiga! – Padre Jeff
(Compliments of Babelfish Translator)