



# Missionary Fraternity of Mary Newsletter Fall 2017



Small Mission Church

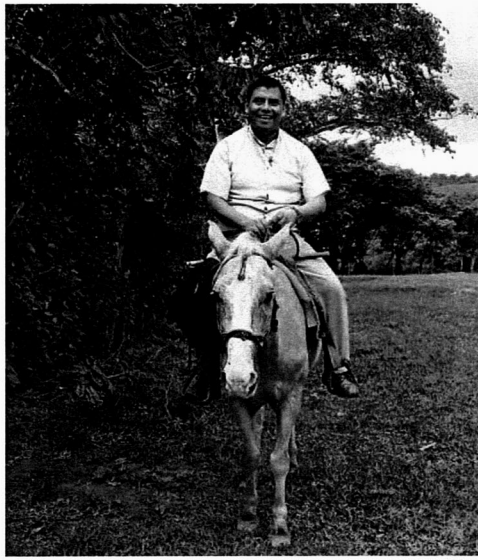
**“They asked, and we  
accepted with pleasure.”**

F. Silvano Velasquez

On June 9, 2017, the Missionary Fraternity of Mary opened its newest mission at the Nuestra Señora de Candelaria Parish in Chitre, Panama. The area presents many challenges, and Panamanian bishops – who could not recruit diocesan priests to do the job – requested that the Fraternity assume responsibility for the parish. “They asked, and we accepted with pleasure,” explained Fr. Silvano Velasquez, M.F.M., the Prefect of Finance for the Fraternity.

### **The Difficult Journey**

The Diocese of Chitre is located in Los Santos, in the south of Panama, on the Pacific Ocean. Chitre is 223 miles from Panama City, and due to the inhospitable terrain and the poor condition of the highways, the journey takes about five hours. This impoverished area is rural and under-developed, and the inhabitants eke out a living with subsistence farming or raising livestock. The main crop is rice, but currently the farmers are having problems selling their rice.



Fr. Domingo Tiney going to visit a village in the country area

## A Five Hour Journey

### **A New Mission**

Fr. Henry Oliva Madrid and Fr. Domingo Tiney Culam head up the new mission at Nuestra Señora de Candelaria. They begin each day with Mass and prayer, before going out into the community to visit the sick and infirm, meet with parish groups or tend to clerical matters. On weekends, they celebrate Masses, baptisms and other sacraments. However, attendance at Mass in the parish is very low, and the missionaries aim to motivate their parishioners to participate more. Given that they just arrived in the region, they first plan to come to better know the cultural context in which they find themselves, in order to find the right means for evangelizing. They also hope to reach the hearts of the fallen-away Catholics, to bring them back into the practice of their faith.

Working with impoverished communities, the Fraternity emphasizes the relevance of and importance of the values found in Scripture: love, justice, equality, and respect. These missionaries promote respect for the inalienable rights of each human being, such as life, decent housing, food, work, and a just wage.



Fr.Cesareo & Fr. Antonio Xica in Via Crucis



Small Mission Parish

Love, Justice, Equality, and Respect

### **Spreading the Word**

The Missionary Fraternity has had a presence on the opposite coast of Panama since 1993, with two missions in the Colon Province on the Caribbean Sea: Sagrada Familia Parish and Maria Auxiliadora Parish. These parishes are forty - five miles north of Panama City and about six hours from the new mission in the south. A new missionary Priest Antonio Perez Xicay was recently brought in to Colon to work with the youth of both parishes there, especially to implement the *Exodos Juveniles*, the youth retreat program. He lives in community with Fr. Cesareo Barrera and Fr. Leonel Cruz, the pastors of the two parishes in Colon.

Despite their proximity, the two parishes in Colon are in reality quite different. Sagrada Familia Parish has levels of participation and the majority of its parishioners are farmers from the countryside. Maria Auxiliadora, on the other hand, is more urban and faces the social problems that go along with that: gangs, drug-addiction and drug - trafficking.

However, a higher percentage of the community participates in the parish at Maria Auxiliadora, even though Protestant evangelization has been increasing. Some Protestant groups here have openly come out against the Catholic Church, especially criticizing such practices as attending Mass, saying the Rosary, the sacrament of Confession, and the images of saints. The anti-Catholic sentiment presents a challenge for the Fraternity here, especially since it divides families and the community. The Fraternity hopes to create solidarity among the communities it serves, and especially to keep the youth engaged in the life of the Church and away from danger and distractions.



Fr. Henry Oliva with parishioner



Fr. Antonio Xica, new priest of the Fraternity

All contributions are tax deductible and are used exclusively for the work of the Fraternity in Guatemala and its missions worldwide. For more information or to mail contributions, please send to:  
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