

Instruments of Christ's Love



I'm chasing chickens!" Fr. Martin shouted in explanation when I asked him why his voice kept cutting out. It was his daily phone call to our office since moving to his new assignment in Mexicali. Somehow I wasn't surprised, by either his multi-tasking—he writes his best homilies while running on the treadmill—or by the chicken-chasing, but I couldn't help laughing out loud as I pictured him darting about, trying to round up some skittish chickens, destined, I later learned, for a hungry family's dinner table. The irony was not lost on me either: Fr. Martin runs around all day like a chicken himself, though his head is planted firmly in place.



Our devoted mission team.

From left, front row: Fr. Joseph Barranger, O.P., Sr. Maria de los Angeles Gomez Ramirez, O.P., Sr. Marcela Vianey Rios Chavarria, O.P.,

Fr. Martin de Porres Walsh, O.P.

Back row: Fr. David Bello, O.P., Sr. Flora Carillo Gamboa, O.P.,

Fr. Bartholomew de la Torre, O.P.

Missing: Sr. Araceli Lopez Machado, O.P.

Having the energy of a child, he never stops and thrives on keeping busy, accomplishing a myriad of tasks every day of the week. He did finally give in to my offer to write this month's newsletter for him so he could concentrate on tying up loose ends here and getting settled there.

But no, he won't be giving up his posts as director of both the Shrine of St. Jude and our Mission Foundation (including preaching all over the western states on its behalf.) He is simply adding a hat, that of helping to minister to the poor and needy of our mission parish in Mexicali, where, in some



Cardboard houses still inhabited by the poorest in Mexicali.

parts, electricity is still a distant reality, and a barrel of water for drinking and washing is dropped off in front of each house every few days.

Frs. Martin and Joseph Barranger, O.P., of the Eastern Dominican Province, have been welcomed by Frs. David Bello, O.P. and Bartholomew de la Torre, O.P., as well as by the Dominican Sisters of Christian Doctrine, Srs. Marcela Vianey Rios Chavarria, O.P., Flora Carillo Gamboa, O.P., Araceli Lopez Machado, O.P., and Maria de los Angeles Gomez Ramirez, O.P. Together they make up our current mission team in Mexicali, where our friars and sisters have been preaching the Word of God and building community in the poorest areas of the diocese for many years.

With your generosity and the help and enthusiasm of the parishioners, we were able to

construct, in addition to our parish church, Santa Maria de Guadalupe, three chapels: San Martin de Porres and San Juan Macias in Flores Magon; Encarnacion de Maria in Valle de Alamo; and San Juan Diego in Via Zapata.

Now with our recently-constructed Dominican parish house, we have been able to expand our team with more full-time, visiting, and seminarian missionaries.

And our newest addition was built in memory of one of Mexicali's most beloved missionaries, Fr. Thomas Kraft, O.P., who, as you recall, lost his quiet fight with cancer this past January 22.

In 2004, after several years in Mexicali and bound for his new assignment in Seattle, Fr. Tom wrote in his final report on the Mexicali mission:

“Someday soon, we hope to build a catechetical center—presently, the children receive religious education outside, sitting on benches beneath trees.” And so, again thanks to you, our mission friends, we are thrilled to announce the completion of the Fr. Thomas Kraft, O.P. Catechetical Center, in Valle de Alamo, one of Mexicali's poorest communities. The center was blessed and dedicated by Bishop Isidro Guerrero Macias on August 16, 2009.

Also in his 2004 report, Father Tom wrote, *“Thanks to your generosity, we have developed faith communities. Children, youth, young adults, married couples, and older adults have found hope and comfort in the faith community in the midst of their poverty. They have found love and peace in Jesus in the Eucharist in the midst of street violence. They have found the love and acceptance of community in the midst of family division and dysfunction. They have found Christian morals and direction in the midst of relative ethics.”*

And that momentum has continued to grow. Ministry among youth groups, choirs, and liturgy groups is flourishing. Home visits and *despensas*, monthly food subsidies, are provided for the elderly, sick, poor, and abandoned of the parishes.

Fr. Tom's Commemorative Plaque

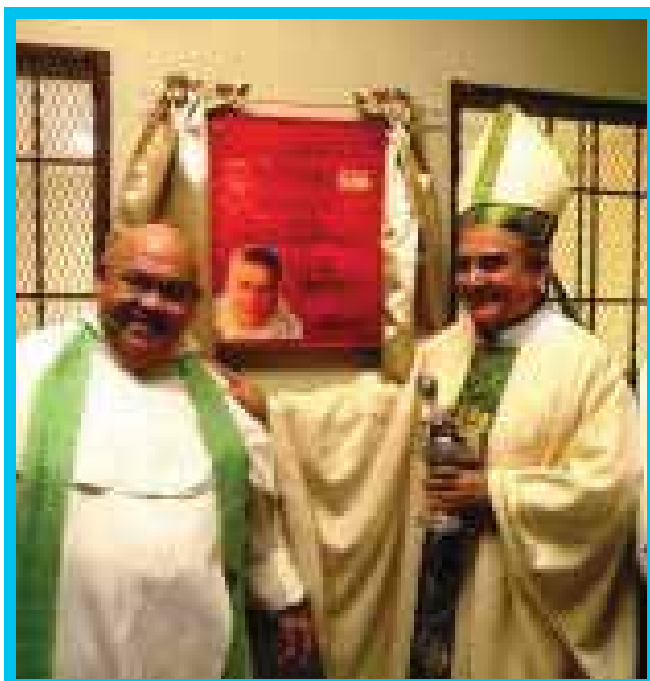
And the numerous children now attend the Sisters' catechism classes sheltered by the simple beauty and peace of *El Centro Pastoral de Padre Tomas Kraft, O.P.*

Each of the friars and sisters here bears daily witness to another of Fr. Tom's cherished beliefs: *"Christ is my life; our Lord Jesus lives in me and certainly served the people of Mexicali through me."*

A few years ago, Fr. David, current pastor of the mission parish, wrote, *"I have so many*



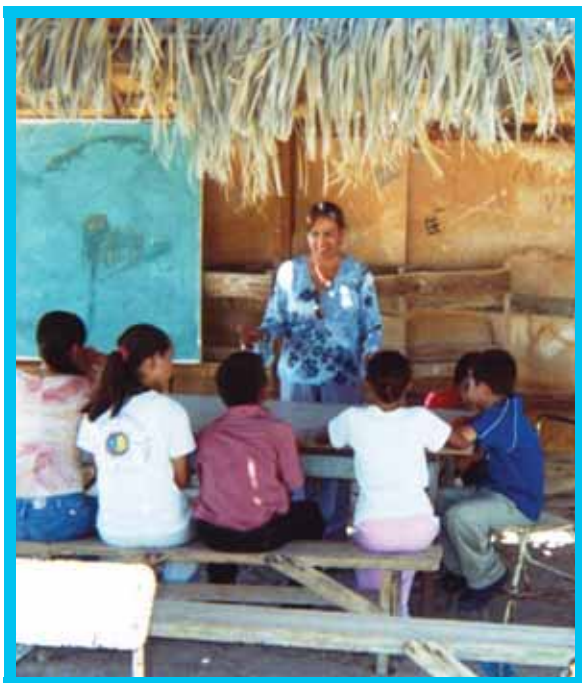
on whom I can depend for my material needs. But what of the poor, who can only depend on us? And I who can get in the car, and 'escape' across the border to friends for rest and relaxation...but what about the poor who must stay here in Mexicali, working tirelessly every moment of daylight in temperatures that can reach 129 °F? No, I want to be here. I need to be here. I only ask that the Lord will give me a grateful heart when I experience the helplessness and invisibility of the poor."



Fr. Bello and Bishop Macias at the dedication.



Bishop Macias blessing the new catechetical center.



Before the new catechetical center...



Sr. Marcela and Sr. Maria teaching catechism in the new center.

Indeed, with his recent move, Fr. Martin, who was assigned to Mexicali from 1979-1987, and again from 2003-2007, is back home again. While he is a mighty inspiration whenever he preaches *about*, and seeks aid for, the needy of our mission areas, he is in his glory (so to speak) when he is living, preaching, praying--and even chasing chickens--*among* the poor.

Peace in the New Year,
Lesley Warnshuis



Sr. Marcela and Sr. Araceli in a rare quiet moment.

We would like to thank the tremendous number of our donors who heard our plea in the November newsletter and were able to send in aid for the Martinian Brothers working in the Tala Leper Colony in the Philippines. Your sacrifice in these difficult, uncertain times is especially appreciated—by us as well as the Brothers (who can now keep up their strength by eating more regularly) and the afflicted whom they serve. Please know that your donations have been sent directly to them.

Thank you and God bless you.