



UNITED IN MISSION

MARCH 2010

VOLUME 8



A MESSAGE FROM JUDITH SCHAUM, SSND, DIRECTOR OF MISSION EFFECTIVENESS

Dear Colleagues,

Recently I finished reading the book *Brother Andrew – God’s Smuggler* by Andrew van der Bijl. It is the true story of a man

(Andrew) who transported Bibles into countries that were behind the Iron Curtain and the incredible ways that God provided for him and insured his safety during every venture. It certainly is an inspiring story, as we marvel at his complete trust in God’s providence.

SSND missionaries often faced incredible challenges as they endeavored to bring God’s word, through education, to people in other countries. This newsletter continues the theme of internationality by focusing on SSND in Guatemala, Honduras and Puerto Rico. Join with me in praising God’s providential care for all SSND missionaries and for all you do in our sponsored organizations.

We are now in the holy season of Lent, preparing for the great feast of Easter. As we live the three themes of Lent – prayer, fasting and almsgiving – I pray that the Spirit will open your minds and hearts to God’s special graces for you at this time. Then the risen Christ will indeed fill you with great hope and joy. Sincerely,

Judith Schaum, SSND

Judith Schaum, SSND
Director of Mission Effectiveness
410-377-7774 x1107
jschaum@amssnd.org

HONDURAS

Surrounded by Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua in Central America, Honduras is a country of almost 8,000,000 people. At the present time, there are eight School Sisters serving the people in El Progreso and Monte Verde located



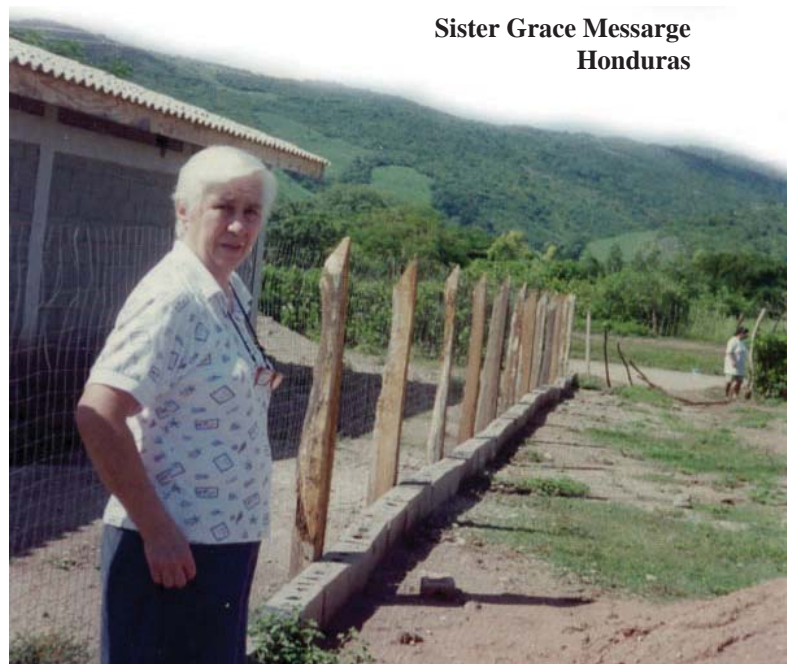
in one of the 18 municipalities in Honduras. This is a story about some of these Sisters.

A little more than fifty years ago, in the city of El Progreso, the School Sisters founded a school,

Instituto Notre Dame. The school educates children in grades 7 through 12. The curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of the children, and includes: an academic tract, a business tract, a bi-lingual secretarial tract, and a computer tract. Sister Grace Messarge, who taught English in the Instituto for six

(Continued on page 2)

**Sister Grace Messarge
Honduras**





S. Mary Kennedy in rural Honduras

years, notes the intense loyalty the children have not only for their country but also for Mother Theresa Gerhardinger and the charism and spirit of the School Sisters. Theresa's spirit is indeed alive and flourishing there.

While some children have the blessed opportunity

to attend the Instituto, there are other children in El Progreso who are suffering from abuse, hunger and homelessness. Sr. Teresita became aware of their plight and established a home for them, a safe haven where their needs are met and they have the opportunity to attend local public schools. Sr. Teresita is dearly loved by both the children and the people of

El Progreso and just a few years ago was able to raise enough funds to build a new and bigger home.

SERVING RURAL HONDURAS

Desiring to serve in a rural area with very little religious presence, Sister Mary and Sister Reina del Carmen chose to serve the Lenca people, the very poorest of the poor in Monte Verde. The area in which the Lenca are located is a very mountainous, rugged region with clay soil and no paved roads. The Sisters minister to 30 rural communities, consisting of about 8,000 people. As background information, only one community has electricity; only three have health clinics.

Sisters Mary and Reina are involved in a variety of projects. They work side by side with the Lenca as they struggle for their rights, especially in preserving the forests. They lead the communities in weekly celebrations of the Word and preparation of the children to receive the sacraments. The Sisters are truly laying down their lives and sharing themselves for the life of the Lenca people.

GUATEMALA

The seed of SSND presence in Guatemala was planted by the words of Pope John XXIII when he invited religious congregations to send 10% of their personnel over ten years to serve in Third World countries. The first School Sisters left Minnesota in 1962 and opened the school in Nahuala. Over the next 48 years, more Sisters arrived from five other North American provinces and taught the children who lived in extreme material poverty and had no other way to receive formal education. They found the Guatemalans to be faith-filled people with a strong sense of community spirit and rich in traditions.

As new needs arose in the dioceses in which the Sisters served, they responded generously and enthusiastically. In San Marcos, the bishop asked the sisters to take responsibility for one of the parishes. Because there are so few priests, Sisters administered the sacraments of Baptism, Matrimony and the Anointing of



Jean, with Guatemalan women interested in religious life

the Sick. In Mixco, the bishop asked the sisters to work with catechists, sacramental preparation, and with women and youth.

Despite civil wars, other examples abound of SSND in Guatemala; Sister Regina worked at the Ministry of Family Therapy and Mental Health.

(Continued on page 3)



Sr. Janet Druffel is the administrator of the Diocesan Radio in Santa Cruz del Quiche

Sister Janet accepted the position of Manager of Radio Quiche which was a cultural radio station and was transformed into an instrument for evangelization. Sister Jean has worked in a diocesan seminary and in the year 2000 Sister Linda began to coordinate a major seminary.

At the present time, there are six School Sisters working in Guatemala. In addition to Sisters Janet,

PUERTO RICO

The first SSND mission outside North America and Europe was Puerto Rico. In September 1, 1915, eleven sisters from the provinces of Baltimore, Mankato and Milwaukee arrived in San Juan and were



warmly welcomed by the Redemptorist Fathers and the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart. Only one sister spoke Spanish. Upon arriving at their almost finished house in Puerta

de Tierra, a large crowd greeted and celebrated them. On September 27 St. Agustin School opened, the first SSND school in Puerto Rico. By the 1970's there was a total of seven schools staffed by School Sisters. Sister Frances Marie Usher, who taught in two of the

Jean and Linda mentioned above, there are three others. Sr. Mary is Director of the Charismatic Spirituality Center in Nahuala, Sr. Carol works for the Guatemala Conference of Religious, and Sr. Marisol (a native Guatemalan) is a pastoral agent. The commitment of these Sisters is truly awe-inspiring as they continue to share the SSND charism in Central America.

schools for sixteen years, commented that the parents and students were eager for a good education and so very grateful to the Sisters' commitment to them.

There are still 17 sisters on the island. Eight of them still administer or teach in schools. Sister Rosemarie Gonzales opened a facility for homeless and addicted persons. At the Center they receive the tools they need for successful recovery. In Caguas Sister Mercedes Rosado ministers as a social worker, especially with immigrants. The long history of SSND presence has borne fruit in the hearts of the native people of Puerto Rico whose love for the sisters is boundless.