

The Disciples of the Good Shepherd



VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

AUGUST 2007

IXIM: SPIRIT OF SOLIDARITY

A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE DIOCESES OF OMAHA NE AND HUEHUETENANGO GUATEMALA

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- There are currently 22 Disciples
- A young woman interested in becoming a disciple must go to 2 or 3 discernment weekends, talk with Sr Nora and Sr Cristina and be 17 years old
- In their new building, the Disciples will have a store to sell their handmade weavings and artisan crafts.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Letter from Nora, School Report 2

Pictures and names, Who Can be a Madrina 3

IXIM Info, Mam lesson 4

The Disciples' Building Progress



Bishop Bobadilla, Sr. Cristina, Fr. Marco & Sergio Sosa laying the 1st stone for the new building

Filled to capacity and wanting better space for the program, the Disciples demolished their old building. For the last two years, the Disciples have been living at a former convent which is now owned by the diocese. They have been excitedly watching and participating in the construction along with the IXIM Omaha groups. As of July, the last touches, including

Looking down into the new building



roofs, ceilings, railings and a few more floors were being completed and everything looks to be on schedule for their November blessing and celebration. The celebration will include a marimba concert and great food.

A Day in the Life of a Disciple



After staying up late studying, chatting and doing all the little things that living with 22 people demands, the Disciples rise in time to meet in the chapel each morning for 5 am prayer. Daily scriptures are read out loud, reflected upon individually and then there is a period of discussion and sharing. One of the mornings when our Omaha group was able to join the Disciples, they were reflecting on the gospel passage when Jesus calmed the sea. They asked each other what stood in their way of trusting Christ and reflected upon the kind of faith we are called to have. They closed with prayer and petitions.

Petrona, Maria Gonzales and Stephanie Spiegel, an Omaha Iximero guest, went running after this while others made breakfast. Those in junior high left for school by 7 am. Depending on their schedules, the other Disciples go to their jobs in the morning or in the afternoon. Ramona, one of the three university students was preparing for her math test during the July 2007 visit. Alejandra works at the Cathedral bookstore during the week since she and Ramona have their university classes on Saturday. In the afternoon, 12 of the young women go to high school.

The first weekend of each month, the Disciples travel back to their home communities to reconnect and relax. In doing this, they are examples to the young women of their communities of higher education, empowerment and self-esteem.

Petrona runs races when she can, up to 20 kilometers.



Maria de Pablo plays the keyboard and performs at various festivals. Catarina loves to do traditional Mayan weaving in the colors from her home, Ixtahuacan. In their spare time, the women love to sing, dance, embroider, crochet and learn English. Sr. Nora and Sr. Cristina embrace the women as sisters—accompanying them through their formation and their personal journeys. It is evident how much the Disciples support and energize each other during their long and difficult hours of studying and formation.



A letter from Sr. Nora



Sr. Nora is the director of the Disciples of the Good Shepherd program

“Thank you for believing in this project...for making this space of sisterhood possible.”

It gives me much happiness to send my greetings to you, my love and gratitude for all of the kindness you have shown to our community. I hope with all my heart that God fills you with wisdom in the work that you do every day.

Thank you for believing in this project for promoting women. Thank you for making this space of sisterhood possible. We feel very blessed and very favored and loved by Jesus, our Good Shepherd, that by making all of you known to us he has done something grand, beautiful and marvelous. I consider it a great privilege that God has permitted each of us to come together in sisterhood, to feel like one single family. The lines that divide us have disappeared, and in Jesus Christ we are one single family. Our Lord Jesus desires this, that we become one. Personally, I praise and

glorify God that he has permitted us to know and love each other.

You are always in our prayers and we ask that your faith would be strong and that your great hearts would always let us feel like beloved sisters and friends to you.

Thank you for showing us the love that you have for our community, for the support for our construction project, for the support of the community – support that has been well used for the health and studies of each of the young women. A thousand thanks to you for helping to make the process of formation possible for us.

Our community was the first place that the diocese opened to propel the promotion of women, and even though they are opening others, I firmly believe that we will always be the pioneers of this effort to promote women.

I will share that I led the

first congress of women that included participation of women from all of the different towns of Huehuetenango. Four of our Disciples participated in this congress, 3 were participants and Sister Cristina was part of the group that organized this congress.

It was a proposal of this congress that to continue the work of the participants the organizing team be established as a permanent group.

Thank you for the time that you have generously donated, thank you for your strong support of our community, but above all thank you for teaching us with the testimony of your life what great power a woman has when she loves herself.

We pray that Jesus grant you much peace, love, happiness, hope, and good health to continue shining as a light from the presence of our good God.

A big hug and our sincere love,
Nora

Who can be a sponsor?



Paula Lenz and Stephanie Spiegel with the Disciples during the 2007 IXIM trip. Four women from the group spent two nights singing, dancing, and getting to know these amazing women. Top Row: Juana, Maria Pilar, Magloris, Fabiana, Maria Pablo Bottom row: Florinda, Guadalupe, Maria Sebastian

Families, friends and groups such as women’s guilds have volunteered to be sponsors, or “madrinas”, which means “godmother” in English. Madrinas are partners of support to these young women as they go through their formation process, offering not just financial support, but emotional and spiritual support as well. To date, 12 of the 22 Disciples have sponsors, so we are actively recruiting, and in great need of more. Sponsors sign up for a 1-year commitment, and we hope that they continue year to year. If you know someone who would be interested or a group that would like to see a presentation, please e-mail ALavin21@aol.com. To accompany these women through this journey and to know their hopes and struggles is truly a blessing.

Community Photos



Left: Petrona and Jandy, the director of the Pastoral/Social team of the Huehue diocese



Picture at Right

Top row (L to R): Florinda, Sr. Nora, Marta, Maria Pablo de Jesus, Catarina, Maria Gonzales, Petrona

Middle Row (L to R) Juana Ignacio, Rosita, Patricia

Front Row (L to R) Guadalupe, Concepcion, Magloris, Lucia and Alejandra.

Disciples not pictured Fabiana, Juana Mateo, Ramona, Maria Pilar, Carmen, and Sr Cristina

Realities of Huehuetenango

Upon arriving to the diocese, each mission group is given an overview of the facts & figures of the diocese. Huehuetenango is the 5th largest of 24 states in Guatemala. It is located in the northwest corner of Guatemala, in the Cuchumatanes Mountains. Huehuetenango is multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic. There are 9 Mayan ethnic groups making up 70% of the population in the state: Mam, Qanjob'al, Chuj, Quiche, Popti, Awuacateco, Chalchiteco, Tetiteco, and Acateco as well as Ladino, or mixed communities which are 30%. Seventy-

nine percent of the state of Huehuetenango lives in poverty and 37% live in extreme poverty, the majority of these living in rural, indigenous communities. Women are 51.41% of the population, and most suffer discrimination for being women, for being indigenous and for being poor. More than 3 women die each month because of violence. In contrast to these challenges, it is easy to see how the Disciple's project is so spe-

cial. It is part of a larger diocesan mission and effort to promote gender equity. The diocese is working to promote the analysis of gender realities, promote the respect of human dignity and promote equal participation in decision making. The gender equity team is one of several pastoral/social teams including human rights, cultural equity, ecological, poverty reduction, migration, health, education and social communica-

Through the sponsorship program we are empowering women by supporting them in their pursuit of higher education, community values and self-esteem. These women are changing social structures as living examples of leadership, inspiring other women to follow their dreams.



Step by step in school

This January five Disciples started "basico," which is equivalent to junior high. Three are studying at the university and the rest are in a preparatory program equivalent to high school in the United States. There are many challenges for these women, especially in their academics. In Huehuetenango, the illiteracy rate for men is 30% and 40% for women. In many Mayan villages an indigenous language is spoken

in the home and children must go to school through 2nd or 3rd grade to learn Spanish. The student's only exposure to Spanish comes in school, but is necessary to participate in life outside the village. In the beginning of the program, a few of the Disciples were still learning Spanish as a second language. Marta for example only spoke Aguateco (now called Chalchiteko) when she joined the Disciples.



Ixim

Spirit of Solidarity

A ministry of solidarity between the Catholic dioceses of Omaha, Nebraska and Huehuetenango, Guatemala.

Ixim: pronounced "ee-sheem", is the Mayan word for corn, a staple of Guatemala and a livelihood of Nebraska. This represents the common goal of forming relationships between the people of the Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska, and the Diocese of Huehuetenango, Guatemala

Please contact us:

In the Omaha Archdiocese check out our website: <http://www.ixim.org>

Disciples of the Good Shepherd information contact Ann Lavin E-mail: ALavin21@aol.com

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5a Calle 9-51 Zona 1
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Mission:

Ixim Spirit of Solidarity is a transnational ministry that fosters mutually enriching Christian relationships between the people of Nebraska and Guatemala through sharing of our humanity, faith and resources.

One of several Ixim projects, the Disciples of the Good Shepherd sponsorship supports consecrated lay women who are living, studying and working together in their formation to become pastoral ministers in their communities. Most of these communities are rural Mayan villages, in need of ministers who speak their language and know their culture. We in Omaha are seeking *madrinas* or "godmothers" to pray for and sponsor these women during their journey for structural change through the education & empowerment of women. The cost for tuition, room & board each year is \$1,000. Contact Ann Lavin if you are interested in learning more!

How is your Mayan?

According to Wikipedia, there are over 6 million indigenous Mayan people living in Mexico, Belize and Guatemala. Twenty-one distinct languages are recognized in Guatemala, and Mexico recognizes 8 more. In the diocese of Huehuetenango, there are many Mayan communities, each speaking their own language. All but one of the Disciples are from Mayan communities and speak one of these 21 languages. Spanish is taught in school. During a visit to a parochial school, Ixtahuacan, the progression from bilingual education to Spanish-only education is seen. While Spanish is the language of business and higher education, the Disciples maintain their Mayan culture which includes their language. This knowledge of culture

and language will help them be better teachers and pastoral ministers when they graduate and return to their communities. Catarina and Alejandra are 2 Mam speaking Disciples who took the time to write a few quick phrases:

- **Tzán táya** (Cómo estas= How are you?)
- **Qína** (Adios= Goodbye)
- **Ti tbiya** (Cómo te llamas= What is your name?)
- **Len** (Buenos días=Good morning)
- **Ban tul lena** (Bienvenida=Welcome)
- **Tqil qib** (Nos vemos= See you soon)
- **B'ix til tib'a** (Se cuida= Take care)
- **Qman tukila** (Dios con usted= God be with you)

Mam Numbers 1-10

Juun	pronounced "hon"
kab'	"cob"
oox	"osh"
jwe'	"way"
qaq	"ka"
wnuq	"wook"
wajxaq	"washa"
b'elaq	"bay-lock"
belejuj	"bay lay who"
laaj	"lock"

From Maya codices, the numbers written in Mayan hieroglyphic script

0	1	2	3	4
	•	••	•••	••••
5	6	7	8	9
	•	••	•••	••••
10	11	12	13	14
	•	••	•••	••••
15	16	17	18	19
	•	••	•••	••••
20	21	22	23	24
	•	••	•••	••••
25	26	27	28	29
	•	••	•••	••••