

REPORT FROM THE MISSION TRIP TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.....by Fr. Joachim Lally, CSP

I ask you to join me in giving thanks to our loving God for our ten day mission in the central mountain region of the Dominican Republic from which I just returned on Friday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Thanks to the generous support of many friends around the USA we were able to repair six homes....all very small "shacks" as we would call them here. We put new roofs on most of them and put new lumber for walls while tearing down the rotten lumber. For one home we put up a cement block wall around the old wooden structure and then tore down the wooden structure from within. The average monthly income of the owners of these homes was around \$90 USA.

There were 54 of us on the mission.....only six of us from the USA. The others were mostly young adult Dominican Republic volunteers....many of whom had been on various missions with us over the twenty years we have been giving these missions in the D.R. This was our 35<sup>th</sup> mission. We had three teams of volunteers: one for construction, one for installing water filters in 30 homes and in one school (parasites and dysentery are frequent problems due to unclean water), and one for visiting homes where we joined the families in prayer. One day while visiting a family we found a couple who had been married sixty-six years. He was over ninety and she was in her eighties. They asked me for confession and the anointing of the sick which I did. Two days later, on the evening before I left, I received word that the wife died suddenly of a heart attack. I celebrated the funeral Mass for her in a family member's home. Generally there is no embalming and burial is within twenty-four hours. Everyone from miles around came to pay their respects. The family was so grateful. The nearest priest lives an hour and a half away in the town of Jarabacoa. We had no phone signal in this area and so couldn't call him without driving for some distance.

We didn't have television and didn't hear of any outside news except that Michael Jackson had died and that some country had some kind of coup. We found out that it was Honduras on the day we left.

Since we were up in the mountains we had weather in the 60's and 70's during the day....and during the night I slept under two quilts. The beautiful mountains and rushing river nearby were truly blessings.

I had directed over 30 missions in the hottest parts of the country until I discovered that there were many poor families also in the mountains where it is much cooler. Since often there is no electricity and little water....and hence no fans and water for showers in these hot areas....I decided in the summers to choose to have our missions where it is not so unbelievably hot. I guess I'm getting "soft" in my old age.

May God bless in a special way all of you who have supported us with your prayers and sacrifices. I plan to go on my next mission with students from Grand Valley State University during their Spring break in March of '10. Just know that God cannot be outdone in generosity. Again....please join me in giving thanks to our loving and gentle God for this wonderful mission.

