



# MISSIONARIES IN ACTION

## DOMINICAN MISSION FOUNDATION

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## *Keeping the Faith*

*Fall came at the same time last year. Are we repeating it all, you ask?  
No. Just as the new year is never the same as the last,  
One fall is never the same as another, but it is still fall. What is new?  
If it changes to something altogether different, it is another thing.  
But if it is bringing closer to fruition what it was always meant to be,  
If it remains in harmony with what it was from the beginning,  
It is the same thing, renewed.*

*A baby renews the family, but it's not a new family.  
The fresh paint renews the house, but it is not a new house.  
We call it tradition—What is in the mind of God, what is good for us,  
What was always meant to be, what keeps us all in union with what Is.  
Tradition is what does not change since there'd be nothing to replace it.*

*The Family of Jesus, the Church, constantly renews itself as it grows older.  
Here, it is obvious that the old forms of faith, the familiar symbols and signs,  
Are on death watch, but they can be renewed, revitalized,  
With creativity and freedom, and still remain in harmony with tradition.*

*The desperation is mounting to hold on to the faithful.  
The children, youth, young adults, like a school of fish,  
Swim in murky waters, many isolated in families shut in on themselves,  
Or submerged in their phones, disconnected from the past.  
Lured by the tempting bait of easy doctrine,  
They do not venture into the clearer, ever-renewing waters  
Of participation in the feasts of the Lord.  
When they decide to pull away from the crowd, they will discover  
What has been hidden inside: The finishing touches that Jesus put on them  
in the beginning.  
They will be making of themselves what they were always meant to be.  
They will be the same, renewed.*

*We await the God-Man Jesus. He comes as a baby, ever new.  
Why not? What better image of eternal life?  
We grasp him in our arms, we kiss his cheeks. He is Hope Alive.  
Pray from the heart to be renewed.*

*~Fr. Timothy Conlan, O.P.*



Dear Mission Friends:

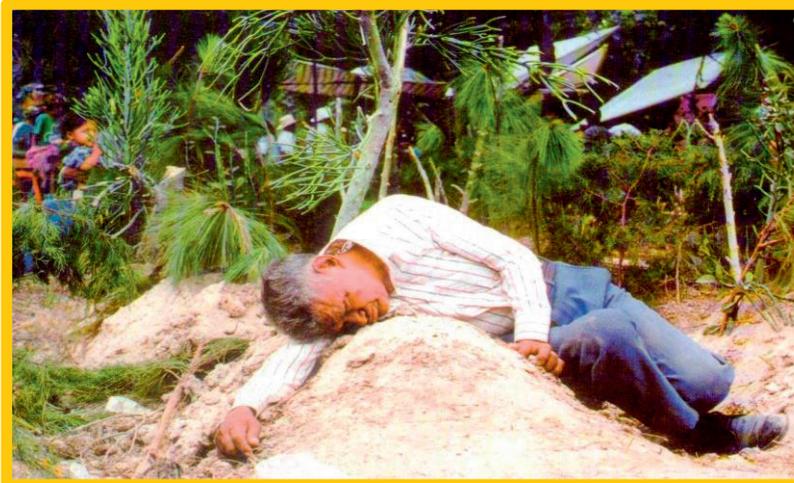
A few years ago I was on a long bus ride to Rabinal when I recognized a passenger who had been one of my scholarship students in nursing six years earlier. It was just before the feasts of All Saints and All Souls and Anna, like throngs of others every year, was coming to Rabinal to commemorate family members murdered during the massacres in the 1980s, when state forces carried out acts of genocide against the indigenous Mayan population. **Almost every family in Rabinal has a story from that time, and I asked about hers.**

One of eight children, Anna grew up in poverty and fear, especially after her father died. He worked on the roads for the state, but one day in 1982, at the height of the government massacres, soldiers picked up her father's road crew and threw them in their truck.

**Lord, send forth your spirit ... and renew the face of the earth (Psalm 104:30).**

Anna happened to see her father in the back of the truck when it passed through town and she ran after it, not knowing that it was on its way to the military camp outside town and that it would be the last time she'd see him. The next day her mother gathered up the younger children and set off to plead with the military to free her husband, but a family friend stopped her on the road and warned her that neither she nor her children would come back alive. So she returned home and raised her eight children alone. Five years ago some of Anna's father's remains were exhumed with others from the old military camp to be buried properly in the local cemetery. It is estimated that there are over 5,000 victims scattered among more than 60 clandestine graveyards with no markings.

*I was proud of Anna's efforts to join her family and help keep alive Rabinal's collective memory of the massacres. And I was delighted to learn that since graduating with her nursing degree she has been working in the local state-run health center.*



*Left, a man still grieving the loss of his wife, murdered during the 1980s massacres.*

*Below, relatives of victims gathering for the annual November commemoration at the cemetery.*

The thrust of our program, *Jovenes Arriba*, has always been to help families get an education for their children, including learning about the faith. Recently it dawned on me that I have worked more on general moral values than specific religious values, so in order to find out where my scholarship students might need more guidance, I sent out a series of questionnaires. I asked about their religious affiliation, what sacraments they've received, their knowledge of Christianity and of the Church, their comprehension of my homilies, and the amount of time they devote to social media.

I'm finding that our young people here are no different than elsewhere, that they are being ruled by social media, becoming convinced that they need to make lots of money in order to buy the goods that they see advertised and being consumed by U.S. youth.

Here in Rabinal, we've always had a very rich spiritual and moral tradition based in the Gospels and Church teaching, one in which young people saw the value of serving others and building a true community where all work for the good of the rest. But with the onslaught of the internet, such tradition is fast disappearing. We are working hard on producing a book for young people on twelve parables of Jesus, an ambitious project not only because it will incorporate games, word puzzles, comprehension questions, stories, and a teacher's manual, but also because it will be translated into three languages. Our hope is that it will offer its readers some good theology for reflection and some tools for getting outside of themselves.

Society everywhere seems to be drifting into secularism, or even worse, relativism or agnosticism.





*Their first time at McDonald's a few years ago-- now with social media, our young people are inundated with materialistic values.*

People are putting aside the practice of their faith. Week days are filled with things we have to do and when it's time for Mass we're watching the game and don't want to get off the couch; or we're surfing the net and stop just long enough to make a trip to the refrigerator to get a soft drink. We have no time for devotion—we're tired and deserve a break. We rationalize.

This is precisely why today's world needs the Gospel and its values more than ever. It is why Jesus, who came as a poor man, formed the Church and keeps inviting us to stay connected with him in its community. We all need to turn off the commercials and the devices and learn to value each other. We must adjust our goals for happiness, learning how to live on less. We must promote honest, simple community life, living in accord with the environment and using natural resources more efficiently.

These are timeless Gospel values, not new ones, but maybe they need to be renewed through—Dare I say?—digital ways of communicating. It won't hurt—it might help!—to enlist the assistance of technology, as long as we hold the reins and don't allow it to control us.

Another major reason so many of us are drifting away from practicing our faith is that we are disillusioned—so overloaded with bad news and slanted news that we've become cynical, feeling helpless to affect any change for the better. As I look on from a distance to the events that have been unfolding in the USA, I hear people spinning the same stories from opposite angles causing much division. The truth is scarce.

In Guatemala's government, the truth is almost non-existent and corruption is rampant. No one would believe all that is sucked off the public treasury. Congress refuses to change campaign finance laws and continues to squander money on their own salaries. Maybe worst of all is the duplicity of the judges and the process by which they are chosen. The only thing that is not corrupt here is the country's Commission Against Impunity (CICIG), established and run by the United Nations to seek and prosecute corrupt officials and to maintain the rule of law. But in spite of, or more likely because of, the fact that there are now 257 former government officials in jail, the commission is in danger of being rendered impotent. CICIG's special prosecutor has been aggressively investigating the

multiple transgressions of the country's current president, Jimmy Morales, and his family, and so after the investigator left Guatemala on a break, Morales banned him from re-entering, alleging that he was a threat to public security and order. Morales has also announced that he will not renew CICIG's mandate when it ends in September 2019. And most of the white collar criminals will walk free after they wear down the legal system with appeals and legal maneuvers.



*We strive to enable as many youth as we can to escape the cycle of poverty and make positive contributions to their family and their community.*

Guatemala has a long history of authoritarian rule, particularly as manifested in Rabinal during the massacres. A 1996 peace agreement was drawn up, but it belies the corruption, violence, organized crime, and drug trafficking that continue. **And so any investment in our program is truly long term because with an education the youths get better jobs, enabling them to contribute positively to society and play concrete roles in helping to dispel the corrupt military dictatorship that has done such harm to Guatemala throughout its history.** In fact, we require all our students to read and report on a book we give them on the Spanish conquest which includes the history of our town and the violence that devastated it. Our young people now were born well after those events, so they have a need to absorb it and reflect. **It is their living history which they must never forget or it may someday repeat itself.**

While our program is small—no corporate connections, no large institutional donations, no huge fundraising events—I pay my staff a living wage. It comes to \$5,500 a year for each of the three workers. (I pay my personal expenses with my work in the parish and gifts from family.) And with office expenses and of course the scholarships, we are always scrambling to keep up. Still, we manage to cover a college education, including room and board, to each of our qualified youth for \$2,000 a year, which would not even pay for a student's lunch money in the USA.

We funded twenty students who became nurses thirteen years ago and, like Anna, have been earning salaries and providing services ever since. We have probably another 50 who are employed in various other careers, plus hundreds of students in computer classes or high school, opportunities that they would never have had. **God has inspired many to help—indeed, your donations have provided all those youth with the means to study. They are very grateful, as am I, especially in this month of Thanksgiving when we count our blessings.**

Muchas gracias, Fr. Tim

### ***St. Martin de Porres Triduum*** November 1, 2, and 3

#### **First Day:**

*St. Martin, you always had sympathy for the poor and those who were suffering. I need your help and now ask for it with great confidence in your goodness and power. Please remember me, as you adore God. Amen.*

**(Your petitions, followed by Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)**

**Closing Prayer:** *Dear St. Martin, I turn to you in my sorrow and anxiety to seek your friendly protection. Please intercede for me with our merciful Father in heaven so that I may be truly sorry for all my sins and be freed from the evils that shackle me. Ask that I might have something of your spirit of love and self-sacrifice, and so be at all times reconciled to God's holy will. Oh heavenly Father, in the name of your Son and of His blessed Mother, and by the merits of your faithful servant Martin, help me in my trouble and do not forsake me. Amen.*

**Second Day:** *St. Martin, we praise God for the manifestation of His love. The favors you received from God encourage us now to seek your intercession and help. We ask you most humbly to befriend and assist us from your place in heaven; but most of all, we beg you to commend us to our beloved Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**(Your petitions, followed by Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)**

**Third Day:** *Brother Martin, when you were here on earth, you spent your life loving God and your neighbor. This we know from the testimony of your own Dominican brethren. Now that you live in the presence of God in paradise, intercede for those who stand so much in need of the healing help of God and beg the Divine Physician to give us health of the soul and body. Amen.*

**(Your petitions, followed by Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)**

Certainly our director, Fr. Martin de Porres Walsh, O.P., has a special devotion to St. Martin de Porres, but it was one of our former directors, the beloved Fr. Joseph Asturias, O.P., who actually named him the patron saint of our missions. On November 1, 2, and 3, in honor of his feast day, a Triduum of Masses will be offered at St. Dominic's Church in San Francisco, invoking his intercession for the intentions marked on your slip.

We invite you to join us in prayer each day by reciting the Triduum below.

November is also the month to pray for the souls of those who have gone before us.

If you have sent in the names of your departed loved ones, they are on the altar at St. Dominic's and are being remembered at Masses all month.