



# La Sagrada Familia



*News from our family in the Dominican Republic .*

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## OUR FIRST ISSUE

Yes, we *are* family with La Sagrada Familia. And you are an important member of this family.

Welcome to our first issue. With this newsletter, we hope to strengthen the relationship of the parishes and parishioners of our Archdiocese to those of La Sagrada Familia. Our goal is solidarity among our two families: to walk together as one family.

We plan on publishing three newsletters a year. Each newsletter will provide information about our sister parish. Each newsletter will provide information about us, here in Wisconsin, and how we are interacting with our sister parish. These articles must come from you.

Have you or your parish interacted with La Sagrada Familia? Have you made rosaries or collected school or sewing supplies for the parish? Let us know and we'll print it.

Has your parish done a fundraiser? Share the news with us and we will share it with the family.

Do you have an article, a story, or a "parting reflection" to share? Send it to us.

Do you have a question about your sister parish you want answered? Ask and we'll try to answer it.

Do you have suggestions for items to print? Suggest! We want to hear from you.

The success of this newsletter rests on you. We need to hear from you. E-mail your items to Tom Roeder, Newsletter Facilitator, at [troeder@wi.rr.com](mailto:troeder@wi.rr.com).

Now, relax and take a few minutes to read our first issue. Get updated on La Sagrada Familia, read the reflections of recent pilgrims, and learn how you can help *Keep the Wheel Turning*.

We hope you find this issue both informative and motivating. We need active family members. If you have a few seconds, give Tom some feedback.

Thank you and God bless you for being a member of the family.

*Christian hearts must always be open to the world, and the sufferings of their brothers and sisters. Even those who are far way cannot fail to involve them deeply. — Pope John Paul II*

## LENTEN 2009 PILGRIMAGE

Sister Rosemary lead eight pilgrims, ranging in age from 10 to 78, for the annual Lenten pilgrimage to La Sagrada Familia.

Padre Oriol guided the group. They started by spending two days in Santo Domingo learning the history of the island. Traveling to the parish, the pilgrims stopped at a Coffee Co-op high on a mountain. Here they bought freshly ground coffee at \$4 a pound.

This was followed by four days in the parish staying with local host families. This was quite an experience. During those four days, they toured the parish villages to see how people live and work. This included a visit to the local prison. They attended Mass at the main parish church four times and twice in the villages. The final two days were at Playa Esmeralda reflecting on their journey.



The group brought suitcases filled with school supplies, rosaries, and sewing supplies to the parish. One pilgrim, Dr Julie, brought 25 stethoscopes and blood pressure cuffs and instructed a representative from each village on how to use them.

Reflections from some of this year's participants can be found later in the newsletter.

Information on Lenten Pilgrimages can be found on the La Sagrada Familia pages of the Archdiocese website. It is a very rewarding experience.

Directions to the web pages of La Sagrada Familia are in the Q & A section of this issue.

## KEEP THE WHEEL TURNING

On May 6, over 75 friends of La Sagrada Familia gathered at the St. Joseph Center for cake, coffee, camaraderie, and to hear the latest about our family in the Dominican Republic.

Sister Fran welcomed everyone and led them in singing Happy Birthday for Padre Martí. She introduced the World Missions Ministries staff and then reviewed a bit of history of our sister parish relationship.

Padres Martí and Oriol provided the group with the latest news from the parish. A review of their talk is on the next two pages.

Finally, Sister Rosemary asked two very important questions to the gathering:

- ◆How can the number of *Friends of La Sagrada Familia* be increased?
- ◆How can fundraising efforts for the parish personnel expenses (not for projects) be expanded?

Those gathered agreed that we need to spread the word about our sister parish in our church bulletins and in church meetings. We need to interact one-on-one to inform and to motivate others to action.

Some of the friends gathered volunteered to work on fundraising projects such as a walk-a-thon, a youth event, or fundraising through the internet. If you would like to work on one of these projects, contact the World Missions Ministries office.

If you have a fundraising idea that you will work on and coordinate, contact the World Missions Ministries office. Funds are truly needed to support our two wonderful priests as they do Christ's work at La Sagrada Familia.



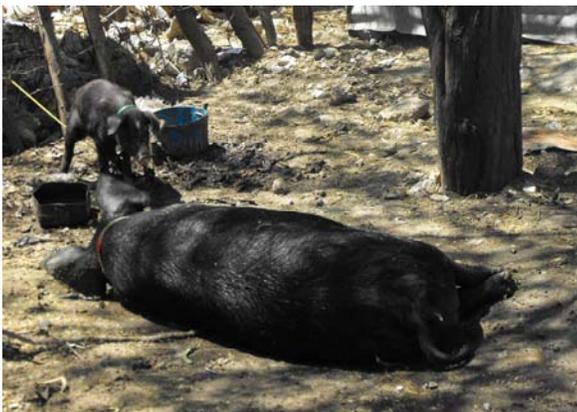
## UPDATE ON LA SAGRADA FAMILIA

Padres Martí and Oriol updated attendees on La Sagrada Familia at the *Keep The Wheel Turning* gathering. Many topics were touched briefly. We will delve deeper into some of these topics in future newsletters. In this issue we will just bullet point the topics reviewed.

- ◆ **Parish Size.** Seven villages on the east side of the parish have been moved to an adjacent parish. The parish is now 30,000 people living in 22 villages.
- ◆ **Pastoral Work.** Mass is said every day at the main church in Sabana Yegua. Villages have Mass either once a month (the smaller ones) or twice a month. On other Sundays a service is led by a lay minister. The parish has started to baptize Haitians which is working well.
- ◆ **Nutritional Centers.** The largest center is in Sabana Yegua, Centro de Nutrición Infantil San Agustín, where breakfast and lunch is served daily to 130 children, ages newborn to 6 years old. Between the meals there are pre-school activities. A doctor sees the children twice a week and a physical therapist is working with about 30 handicap children. Two teenage girls started a smaller center in Los Ladrillos. It now serves two meals daily with pre-school activities to about 30 children, ages newborn to 6 years old.
- ◆ **Health.** The Health Center is operating in Sabana Yegua with a doctor, lab technician, and pharmacy. A first-aid station is present in some villages and, in others, there is a medicine cabinet in a parishioner's home.
- ◆ **Job Training.** Programs exist for cosmetology, sewing, and computer literacy.
- ◆ **Legal Aid.** Many children in the villages were not registered at birth and, by law, cannot attend school past 6th grade. An attorney is now employed by the parish who assists families in getting their children registered. This is a difficult process as one must deal with a very bureaucratic government. It is even more difficult if the child's mother is not registered and the grandmother is no longer present.
- ◆ **Agriculture.** The parish is encouraging family gardens to supplement the food supply. Plants are provided as well as assistance in irrigation and growing. The parish has a vineyard and is promoting diversity in farming.
- ◆ **Animal Husbandry.** The pig program provides a female piglet to a family free of charge. The family must return three females to the parish from the first litter. These are given to other families. The grown sow and future litters belong to the family. Also, there are the rabbit and hen house programs.



Bishop Sklba stops at the gathering to show support for Padre Martí and Padre Oriol.



The female piglets provided by the parish grow to be large sows.



The pharmacy at the Health Center

## UPDATE ON LA SAGRADA FAMILIA CONTINUES

- ◆ **Chapel Building.** A chapel was built in Ganadero in 2007 and in Barrera and Los Jovillos in 2008. They are also used as Community Centers and shelters from Hurricanes.
- ◆ **Education.** The parish has scholarships for students who attend high school and the university. There are 120 people in adult literacy programs. A school for basic learning has been set up for Haitian immigrants which operates 2 hours/day and has about 40 adults attending.
- ◆ **Sanitation.** There is a latrine building program at a cost of about \$300 per latrine.
- ◆ **Bakery Co-operative.** Four men are operating a bakery co-op within the parish compound. Fresh bread and delicious cookies are baked daily and sold to hungry customers. Bread is provided to the Nutritional Center in Sabana Yegua. A portion of the proceeds earned by the co-op is returned to the parish for use in social programs.
- ◆ **Housing.** The parish has no ongoing housing program. On occasion it will finance the building of a home. As a consciousness raising project, the parish altar servers raised funds to finance the construction of a home for an elderly man. Parishioners from St Mary's Parish in Kenosha have come to build a home and plan on coming again.
- ◆ **Kilometer 15.** In November, 2007, Tropical Storm Noel caused flooding and destruction in portions of the parish. One village, Kilometer 15, was wiped out — 37 homes destroyed. Second collections were taken in many Archdiocese churches to provide funds for rebuilding the homes. The village was moved to higher ground and 37 new concrete block homes were built. The village has recently been provided with water and many of the homeowners have planted gardens. It is a "New Paradise".

Those attending the gathering certainly learned that this is one busy parish. Anyone who has visited the parish can attest that Padres Oriol and Martí are constantly on the go. There is always something to do.

The parishioners of La Sagrada Familia are ever grateful to these priests and to the many folks within our Archdiocese that provide support, in prayer and in dollars, so that these priests can continue their work.

Throughout the years, the priests that have served at La Sagrada Familia have made significant contributions to both the spiritual and physical lives of the parishioners. Gracias a Dios!



Altar inside the chapel in Barrera



Parish Bakery Co-operative



New homes built in Kilometer 15

## 2009 PILGRIMAGE PARTICIPANT'S REFLECTIONS

**Therese:** Fr. Oriol and Fr Martí are outstanding priests serving the parishioners in all facets of their lives. In addition to saying mass and offering the sacraments, they are also the prime economic movers in the area that La Sagrada Familia serves.

How many children have a warm and nutritious noon meal at the several Nutritional Centers? Hundreds. How many are cared for in their health needs at several Clinics? Many, many. How about the rabbits, hens, pigs, grape vines, tomatoes, an assortment of vegetables, home gardens, a sewing center, a computer room, and all the many economic tasks that the Padres are involved in?

They truly carry out the corporal works of mercy and we were witnesses to this holy work.



Children eating lunch at the parish Nutritional Center in Sabana Yegua



Padre Oriol with a parishioner who has given him a large melon.

**Elaine:** My impressions begin and end with gratitude to the parishioners who so graciously accepted us. They shared their homes and their lives, their joy and honest pride in their accomplishments.

Whether walking down the dusty road flanked by dozens of children, worshipping in the parish church or the tiny rustic chapels, or visiting the nutrition sites, schools, and clinics, we were always greeted with smiles. On leaving those places we carried some of their warmth with us.

I feel proud that our archdiocese has been able to support the pastoral leadership that has made the parish such a vibrant, dynamic community.



Padre Oriol celebrates an outdoor Mass.

**Shirley:** I felt such a connection to the Dominican people. They are so friendly and take such pride in their homes and children. They are so willing to share what little they have!

A mutual love and respect was evident between the people and priests, who not only guided their spiritual journey, but are very involved with helping the people get what they need to improve their quality of life. Seeing the nutrition sites, agricultural developments, health clinics, etc., showed me the use of mission dollars in the most productive way possible.

I am truly blessed to have been able to experience this journey!

## 2009 PILGRIMAGE PARTICIPANT'S REFLECTIONS

**Nancy:** During my pilgrimage to La Sagrada Familia Parish, I was overwhelmed by many emotions, ranging from sadness to joy. The poverty, malnourished children (and adults), inadequate housing, inhumane prison conditions, and lack of medical care are a sampling of what contributed to my sadness.

The government's lack of services to aid its people to surmount their problems made the "light at the end of the tunnel" appear bleak.

However, the Church stands as a beacon of hope, a true living example of the Gospel mandate to love thy neighbor.

La Sagrada Familia not only provides the sacramental and religious functions of a church but also the social services needed to offer hope and compassion to everyone. Food, medicine, health care, schooling, scholarships, clothing, toiletries, legal advice, and social activities are a few examples. The intense personal interest of the parish priests for each individual living in the area, regardless of their religious affiliation, is reflected in the eyes of the people who know they are loved and regarded with respect and dignity. Liturgies are a celebration of life and God's love.

I have come away from my experience with a totally new concept of what "Church" should be and a tremendous appreciation for the work of our Archdiocese.



**Celine:** What touched me about my pilgrimage to La Sagrada Familia was the welcoming nature of Fr. Oriol and Mike Wolf, the beautiful people of this parish, the multitudes of little children, and those welcoming us into their homes.



We don't have a photo of the prison.  
Here are homes in a parish village.  
Is substandard housing a type of prison?

The prison affected me the most. The inhumane way they treat their prisoners was noticeable. We were told they receive little clothing or food from the state. Their families must provide for them. So if you have no family - then what?

The buildings are in need of repair. As we sat in the classroom conversing with some of the inmates, I looked up at the ceiling. A huge chunk of cement was missing. I thought, "I hope this ceiling does not fall on us."

The opportunity to learn a trade for when you are freed is only available if another prisoner is willing to teach his fellow prisoners what he knows. Some have skills to teach but many of these people have little teachable trades to share.

We take so many things for granted in the US that are just simply not provided or are not possible to have in other countries.

## Q & A

**Q:** How do I find the internet web pages on La Sagrada Familia?

**A:** Go to the Archdiocese web site at:  
<http://www.archmil.org/>.

Scroll down until you see our sister parish button and click it.



**Q:** Would sharing this newsletter and the link to the La Sagrada Familia web pages be a good way to increase the number of *Friends of La Sagrada Familia*?

**A:** Yes, along with your personal message.

**Q:** I have a question about our sister parish. How do I get it answered?

**A:** You can e-mail your question to [troeder@wi.rr.com](mailto:troeder@wi.rr.com) or mail it to the World Mission Ministries office. We will try to answer it in the next issue.

## Prayer of La Sagrada Familia

God of all people  
who blesses us wherever we are  
with the wealth of the land you created;  
with the water that nourishes our fields.  
You bless us, especially  
with generous brothers and sisters  
in whom we see your face.

We give you thanks for these many years  
of mutual care and support  
between these two sister churches:  
Sagrada Familia parish and the  
Archdiocese of Milwaukee.  
We have grown in this embrace  
that we gave each other so many years ago.

Bless this relationship  
and help us always serve without condition  
those who need it most,  
*Amen!*

## “Parting Reflection”

I was fortunate to participate in the recent pilgrimage to La Sagrada Familia. This was my third visit but it was the first time my eyes opened to the many challenges faced daily by our sister parishioners. One challenge is housing. Let me share what I learned about housing at our sister parish.

For four days I lived with a parishioner family. They had a middle class type of home: a three bedroom ranch of adobe construction with about 700 square feet of living space. Instead of interior doors, there were curtains. The rooms were very small. Mine had a bed, three shelves, and a chair. No closet. No dresser. Yet, I was comfortable.

The home had a bathroom but no running water. There was a large barrel of water outside the bathroom. You ‘flushed’ by pouring a bucket of water in the toilet from a height of about five feet. Then, you mopped up the water that missed the bowl. You washed yourself by standing in the shower stall and taking water from a 5 gallon pail. You kept your mouth shut as the water was not safe to drink. The home had electricity. However, it only was working on one of the four nights. That is all the government provides. Candles and kerosene lamps were the norm.

This home was a middle class home. Others were of wood construction and smaller, perhaps two or three rooms, with no bathroom. Some homes had latrines and others did not. Some villages had no electricity at all.

Every home we visited was neat and tidy. Every homeowner had pride in their home and it showed. We heard no complaints. Housing is just one of the many challenges faced by the parishioners every day.

This visit affected me. I want to do something to help. Each morning I pray for the success of the priests and for the well-being of our sister parishioners. I share my experiences with my friends at church hoping they will want to get involved. I am working with the Human Concerns committee at my parish to secure some funding. I pray that the Holy Spirit opens more eyes and more hearts (and some wallets, too).

I thank God that our Archdiocese has reached out to the people of La Sagrada Familia. I am grateful to be a Friend of La Sagrada Familia and so very proud of the priests, current and past, who have left the “luxury of Milwaukee” to carry on Christ’s work. — - *Tom Roeder, St John Kanty Parish, Milwaukee.*