

Amigos de Jesus Orphanage and the hand of Providence



Amigos de Jesus is Spanish for Friends of Jesus. Crossroads had been looking for this group for two years. Well not exactly! We had been trying to locate the founder of this “unnamed” group, whom we were told is a priest and had some type of project going on in the western part of Honduras, somewhere in the general area of where our clinic was located. To make matters worse, we weren’t sure of his name and all we knew was that he resided somewhere in the greater Philadelphia area, believing that some time ago we had read, in a now lost newspaper article, he resided in the Malvern area. No one with whom we were in contact was able to provide any information about him – until very recently when a series of circumstantial events (Providence?) brought us together. It seems that the “good padre” too had been searching for us, as he heard about a medical clinic supported by a group out of Pennsylvania, was somewhere in his “Honduran neighborhood.” It was through his hiring of a new US Director for his organization, who was somewhat aware of Crossroads’ mission, that brought us together for the

first time. This was how we came to meet Father Dennis O’ Donnell – the long sought after pastor, who founded the *Amigos de Jesus* Orphanage for boys 9 years ago in a Honduran community about 35 minutes away from our clinic. And yes, Father Dennis’ organization is located in Malvern, PA – about 8 miles away from our location in West Chester!

You might characterize our initial meeting as “love at first sight” – bound by a common mission of service to others and a shared love for the people of Honduras. Father Dennis had 65 boys, some had lived in a garbage dump and others had been problem youths, taken off the streets in Honduras by the police and fortunate enough to land at his facility, where they were given love, respect, food and an education. Unfortunately no reliable medical attention is available in the immediate area. This role will now be fulfilled by our Manos Amigas Clinic and its team of healthcare practitioners.

During our August visit to Honduras, while the team of doctors from Geisinger Hospital was attending to patients at our clinic, three of the doctors, having finished with their patients early were eager to head out to the Orphanage site



near La Fletcha. Since our clinic has no ground transportation, a bus was chartered to transport this contingent of doctors and nurses along with medical scales, trunks of medications and assorted supplies that might be needed during the physical examinations. Although this was the rainy season and afternoon showers can spring up quickly, we learned from a quick phone call to the orphanage, that the best way to reach them at this time of year was over the river road. So, we set off on a new journey to provide the clinic's first outreach services to a remote area.

After riding for about 25 minutes we turned off onto a muddy dirt road, passing through a couple of villages of fenced in homes and colorful tropical flowers. Having experienced a couple of wrong turns, we came to the river road, only to be engulfed by a herd of long-horned cattle moving onto another field location down the same road. As we started our ascent up a deeply rutted road, we could hear the sounds of a straining engine and spinning wheels only to find that we were side slipping into a ditch. In a matter of nano-seconds we were stuck! Our team quickly exited the bus and turned its attention to looking for rocks, sticks, branches and whatever we could carry to fill and "rebuild" the sunken portion of the roadbed, thinking that we might be able to rock this bus just enough for the rear wheels to get enough traction. Didn't make it!!



The orphanage was getting worried that we had not yet arrived, so they sent out a search party. It was our good fortune that they did! With their help and a short rope, their pickup was able to ease us out of the ditch and back up onto the roadway. We followed them the rest of the way to their school as they stopped periodically, picking up neighboring children, who quickly piled into the bed of the truck, since they too were enrolled in the afternoon session of the area's only school at the orphanage.

After sharing a meal with the students, the medical team got down to the business at hand - giving physical exams to boys who had never seen a doctor.



As a result of the afternoon's



work, 65 boys were examined, treated as necessary and a health record file created for each in the event they needed to come to the Manos Amigas clinic. You may want to follow up on this story in subsequent months, because the next team visit will entail administering a set of vaccines.

Feeling happy about having accomplished a long afternoon's work load, we headed back to our clinic. Would you believe it, if I told you that we got stuck again in the same place, but on the other side of the road this time? Well we did! And if it were not for the boys in the black Toyota truck on their way into town to pick up supplies, we might still be there!