

19th Sunday or Ordinary Time

Sunday, August 9,

Fr. Jack Donald, S.J.

First, I want to thank all of you for the help you've given me over the many years, the Jesuits in Central America and specifically in Honduras.

It's been a long while now and the Jesuits in this year have reached a seven-year mark of being present in Honduras. So, this was a blessing, not only the 70 years of the Jesuits in the high school in Honduras, but also in the radio station, and in the various parishes we've had over the years.

So, I thank Father Jerry Robinson, who began the twinning arrangement, and then Father Michael, continued after Father Jerry, and now Father Tom, and the Jesuit community, and all of you, who are so nice to bring me back here again once again to talk about Honduras. The Jesuits, as you know, have been in Honduras ever since, they were called from Belize. From the country of Belize, where they came from, the Jesuits of the Missouri Province, and they began with the education and the traditional Jesuit schools, and we continue in that same line of work. But not only that, we've opened up parishes along the whole north coast of Honduras, which is an extension altogether, Maybe, about 300 kilometers, 200 miles, in extension.

So, we've had many, many parishes, but over the years, as vocations grow from the native population, and as the Jesuits from Missouri and from California are reduced through death, of course. Now, we have the Central American Jesuits, and, of course, the diocesan priests who are assuming some of these, well, most of the villages and most of the parishes now. So, it's been a blessing to see how God works during this time.

But still, there's times when, like St. Peter, was sinking in the presence of the Lord in the lake, when you just wonder if you're going to be able to continue or not, because of the problems in the country. That's what God lifts you up, and he's the one that really makes the miracles happen in our presence.

So, I want to thank you for a, specifically, for the help you've given last year. We not only have the well, which gives water to our entire center, our pastoral center, where we live, but also, it's evidence that we don't have to bathe out of buckets of water, but we have good water. And this year, we drilled two more wells 250 feet down, where there's good water, and these are in the strategic point of the parish where we have centers.

Our parish has approximately 30 different churches. 30 churches in the urban area, and in the mountainous area. So, we still have a lot of work to do and as I mentioned before, the last Jesuit from the United States, and now, all the Jesuits, the more from Central America. did no longer are there any Jesuits from the United States.

So, we're down to the last one Mohicans. And also, I'll give you an example of one of the Happenings that is very interesting.

In my previous parish, when I arrived for mass one day, in an isolated village. One of the young boys, about six years old, was bitten by a venomous snake. It's called a barba amarilla. Or in French it's Al Fer DeLand. This snake is the worst of all of the snakes in Honduras. And usually, everybody that gets bitten by the snake dies.

But there's a remedy that's just kind of unusual for us. The father would have to take him into the house in the darkness of the house without any sunlight coming in. And wait for the curandero. He's a medicine man. He is summoned from one of the villages which are nearby. And after 24 hours, he came to the house to dispense the medicines that he had, the natural herbs.

And everybody that has seen the baby, the boy, after he was bitten by the snake, has to take the remedy which he has given by the Curandero. And sure enough, after a day and a half, the boy got better, no aftereffects. So, the faith of the people, the faith that we have, the same Catholic faith, is present in their lives at a different level of understanding.

But that's one of the examples of the people who have no access to medicines in a village, they have to use the natural medicines, the natural healing methods, and the natural curanderos who come and dispense that medicine. So, we have now only 3 different parishes and I am in one of the parishes. It's an urban area now that has 30 villages, 30 communities, 30 churches where we have to staff. And of the 2 of us that are in the parish, we have to have mass once a month, at least, in each of our churches. So, when it's going into the mountains, or going into the various outlying parts of our parish, we have this obligation, and the people are unfailing in their hospitality, as you can imagine.

And of these people, we have approximately 80 men who function as deacons. 80 men, we call delegados de la Palabra. And they're the ones that minister to the people that give the preparation for the sacraments. And when we arrive at specific times, then we baptize and we marry the people in their area.

So, this just one parish and also, we have maybe 100, or 120 women, and some men, who are ministers of the communion. One of the greatest blessings of this time is the program

we have of RCIA, which are for new converts and for people that want to learn the faith. So many people that have not received the sacraments, for one reason or another, for one whole year, they come for two hours every Sunday until they complete the course, and they become very active members, as here in our parish, too, in Sacramento, they become active members of the church, whereas before, they were not.

So, I'm going to ask for a few things that we need at present. First of all, we have to remember the children. These children, there are 230 that we serve, to keep them in grammar school.

We have a program for them. They have tennis shoes and backpacks, and whatever they need to continue in grammar school, and also to help their mother, who is usually a one parent for the child. And these children are also given food on occasions when we have meetings and whatnot. So, we try to get involved with the poorest of the poor of the children of our parish. Also, we have high school kids who are studying, mostly in high school, some at the vocational school. And we have, on an average, maybe \$50 a month for tuition for these schools, both Catholic and state.

And during the year, we'd spent maybe \$450, \$500 on one child for one year. So, we need help in this area with the children that are divorced and also the high school students. Also, we have an orchard that I mentioned last year.

We inquired a half an acre, which is a part of next to our residence. Half an acre, but we've planted a lot of fruit trees, going into the ecological aspect of Pope Francis and his desire to have nature, the green earth, as part of our patrimony, and part of our survival. So, we have this down. We have planted all the fruit trees in that area. So, we're going to try to get a wall around that, because I've never gotten to that yet. Because when the hurricanes come, as I mentioned before, it goes through that area on the property. We have to control those areas and build a retaining wall so that it goes back into the river. So, we have these projects, and I think, those of you that have gone to Honduras, you've probably gone by the way of their cruise ships, but that doesn't reach our area. But it's interesting to see the hospitality of the people, to see the welcoming gestures and the invitations that we receive for a dinner or whatever.

But anyway, I thank you for all of the work that you've done, and I ask that you continue to help us out as our sister parish. And I hope to see you down there one of these days. So, thank you very much.