



2008 LENTEN H₂O PROJECT

NATIONAL FRANCISCAN YOUTH YOUNG/ADULT COUNCIL
www.franciscanyouthusa.com
franciscanyouthusa@hotmail.com

I would like to share with you about my experience on the Honduras water project. First of all, I did not plan to participate in the Water Project, but it was God's will for me to be part of this mission trip.



I was excited about the trip, but I must say the hardest part was saying goodbye to my family and friends. As the trip got closer, I became more anxious and worried about adapting to a new country. Once arriving in Honduras, I became calm because it reminded me of my home, El Salvador. Seeing beautiful landscapes and being surrounded by loving people swept all my anxiety and worries away.



The people from the village of Las Guamas were nice, united and hard-working. My first feeling about the village of Las Guamas was sadness. I felt this way because many of homes were made of cardboard and the majority of children could not attend

school, because they had to help support their families. The village was so poor; they did not have safe, clean water and electricity.

Being part of the Water Project reaffirmed how fortunate and blessed I am to live in a prosperous country. My participation in the water project allowed me to preach with action and not with words.

On behalf of the Las Guamas people and the Franciscan Young/Young Adult National Council, I want to thank everyone who supported the FYYA with the H₂O Project, especially the Franciscan Sisters from Iowa.

Manuel Hernandez, SFO – Age 26
National FYYA Council
+++

Words on paper cannot even come close to describing my experience in Honduras. But, as I sit here gazing at the photographs we took, I think back on the life changing experience that I had and I will try my best to bring some of that to you.

I was chosen to join a team of 29 members to head to Honduras to work for a week to bring clean water to those in the village of Las Guamas. I had no idea what to expect and at times I was scared about ever having said "yes" to going. I knew about the poverty and the violence, but not so much about where we would be working and what exactly digging trenches would be like. After the first day, sore muscles, and learning to clean my clothes by hand, using a wash-board, I had a much better picture. It was not just dirt that we dug in, but mud and clay and sometimes we would be digging around coffee plants and bending over for hours.



Regardless of the hours of hard work, my favorite moments were being with the people of the village, especially the kids. All of the teenagers would come to help with the work; and they worked much harder than we did. I even gave my gloves to a young boy because he kept taking my shovel from me. Either he really wanted to help or I was just that bad at shoveling.

The women would cook lunch and we would all eat together. They were so hospitable that, at times, some of them would not eat until they knew that we were all fed. The only thing that I wished I could do was speak Spanish. But each day, I would remind myself that much communication is in the face, a smile can speak so many words. Like St. Francis is quoted as saying, "Preach the Gospel always, use words if necessary." The kids love you no matter what; all they need is attention.



On Sunday, my favorite day out of the whole mission trip, we were invited by the village to watch a soccer game. We agreed and brought prizes for games that we would arrange for each age group. I got to be with the babies and they were so amazed at such a simple thing like bubbles. The most meaningful part was seeing all of the parents around with smiles and laughing with us and their kids. I wished the day would never end; however, it brought us even closer to the people and reminded us why it was so important for us to be down there.

On our very last day, Mass was celebrated. They only see a priest maybe about once a year, so this was very special for them. It was great to look around and see a nice age mix. I even held a little baby, who fell asleep on my shoulder, during the celebration. Afterwards, we took out a piñata and had a little party and played, until it was time to leave.

As we left in our pickup trucks and waved, I had tears coming down my face. One girl told Manuel and me that she didn't want us to go because we were her best friends. It was so hard to leave, but we had accomplished so much.

For me, I learned so much about the poverty, violence, and how hard it is for them each day. Most importantly I learned that it's not what you have but *who* you have. They have so little, but their families and friends mean so much to them. Jesus tells us that "It is in giving that we receive," and I received so much.

We learned before we left that we had finished about 70% of the main work. They could not stop thanking us, because, if it were not for us and the donations, they would not have realized their dream of having clean running water. I want to thank all who were able to give to the Franciscan Youth USA H2O Project, and thus to the Sister Water Mission, and all those who prayed for us. Please thank God for all our blessings, for clean running water.

Lori Taormina, SFO – Age 25
Queen of Peace Regional FYYA Chair
+++

Sister Water Mission Team in Honduras:

The Sisters of St. Francis, Dubuque, Iowa, for the second year, sent a 29-member Mission Team representing eight different states to Honduras from November 18 – 26, 2008. The team was housed in the village of Esquias. It is three hours north of Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, Central America. The team worked side by side with the Hondurans in the village of Las Guamas, about 40 minutes from Esquias. They dug trenches, laid and connected water pipes, installed pumps and educated the people in water purification techniques.



In Honduras, \$5,000 will purchase pipes, pumps, tanks, transport, and other materials needed to create an additional portion of a rural water system. When safe water became accessible to one Honduran village, daily diarrhea decreased by 47% within 30 days!

Sister Water team worked with the people of Las Guamas and the water project - there are about 70 homes and over 400 people that will be served by this project.

See more photos at: www.franciscanyouthusa.com