

Community of Saint Paul
Missionary Appeal 2020
Helping the Elderly and Children in Dominican Republic

Good Morning everyone, my name is Fr. Jose Nieto. I am a priest of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and member of the Community of Saint Paul. I would like to start giving thanks to the pastor, the parish community and the mission office of this diocese for giving me the opportunity to speak to you about the missionary work of my community.

The Community of Saint Paul (CSP) is a Public Association of the Faithful in the Catholic Church, made up of priests and lay men and women from various countries. Our headquarters is in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee (Wisconsin), and we are present in Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Ethiopia. The CSP carries out programs in health, nutrition, education, agriculture and attention for children in need as well as pastoral work. Crucial to our missionary work is the appeals we make every year. Through them, we not only seek to sustain our missions but to spread the news about the work our Church is doing in remote places.

For several years, the CSP has been given the opportunity to participate in the Sunday Missionary Cooperation program in some dioceses of the United States. Through the generosity of many people from the different parishes, we have been blessed and allowed to continue our mission in the places where local churches cannot provide for the needs of the most vulnerable. This year 2020 has brought not only the usual challenges to finding the financial support to run our missions, but also the added challenges of helping the vulnerable during and after the current pandemic. Since the beginning of the public declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic we have been bombarded with so much news about the magnitude and negative impact of the new virus. Whether we agree or not with the measurements taken by local governments, one thing we know to be true: the current situation has affected us all. And even more so those who already were afflicted by the preventable stigma of poverty. After much consideration and prayer, we have asked for your support to care for the children and elderly we serve in the Dominican Republic.

The Community of Saint Paul in the Dominican Republic is based in the parish La Sagrada Familia of Sabana Yegua (Azua province). For more than 17 years, the parish has been cared for by priests of the CSP and other members, carrying out the pastoral and social work for the people present there. Currently we are serving a population of 30,000 people amongst 22 communities. Besides the sacramental work, we also have social programs. There are educational initiatives such as a scholarship program; a health center that offers medical consultation, laboratory, pharmacy, odontology and gynecology services. The CSP also runs a network of ten small home-based pharmacies in the most remote areas of the parish. There is a center for physical therapy and rehabilitation. There are also programs destined to improve the sanitary conditions of the population, through the construction of latrines. But as mentioned before we would like to ask for your financial support for two projects specifically. One is our children's centers and the other is a program for the elderly.

We have three early-childhood centers that offer daily preschool education and a nutritional supplement to 160 children from two to five years old. The children are monitored by a nutritionist who is a member of the CSP, and the staff of this program includes seven educators and five cooks, and a doctor that conducts regular wellness checks on the children. In 2019 various structural improvements were made to the centers, and an emphasis was placed on encouraging parental accountability in the care, hygiene and nutrition for their little ones. Most of the staff is paid through the constant help of benefactors but for the food and school material we depend on the generosity of local business which now are also affected by the pandemic. **On average, every month the centers spend \$1,600 for two meals offered at the centers and for the school supplies for 160 children. That would be \$19,200 a year.**

There is also a special program called the San José Group, through which 100 elderly people are helped by having access to monthly food pantries, basic medical attention and special meals on holidays. The elderly is being taken care of periodically by a group of parishioners at La Sagrada Familia. They oftentimes live alone, and need health assistance, house care, food, prayers and company. The goal of San José Group is to give them food, medication and any kind of assistance but at the same time we want to give a comprehensive care, interacting with their families, learning about their situations and tailoring the best response for each of one of them, aiming at preserving

their dignity, promoting their responsibility, and that of their families, and to create the necessary conditions to ensure as much as possible their physical wellbeing and emotional stability. The amount and the extent of the needs of each person varies greatly in each situation. **On average, each person would need 10 dollars a month. That means \$1,000 a month for all the seniors registered and \$12,000 to keep the project going for one year.** The assistance depending on each specific case, could include, food, medicines, transport, regular hospital visits, house care and clothing.

Since the beginning of the COVID19 crisis, every two weeks food supplies have been provided for the 100 elderly in the San José Group. This is twice as often as usual, with twice the amount of food, meaning we are currently offering four times the usual amount of aid. In addition, food is also provided to the families of the 160 children that attended our three nutritional centers for early childhood. The quarantine restrictions in Sabana Yegua have made difficult for many families to continue their jobs and thus receive their daily income with which they sustain their families. Many people work as informal day laborers, meaning they were already living day to day before the crisis. While the people of the Dominican Republic in La Sagrada Familia parish face similar challenges to us living in the United States, the day to day reality before the crisis caused by the pandemic was already precarious. Now more than ever they need support. There is a beauty in that as a Church, as we face similar changes and challenges like never before, we are able to foment hope, for our brother and sisters in La Sagrada Familia, and indeed for the world as a whole.

If you want to help the people in Sabana Yegua through our projects, remember that with **only \$120 you can provide for a whole year or with \$60 for one semester food and school supplies for a child or an elderly.**

We thank you in advance for your financial support and we kindly ask you to keep us in prayer as we do the same for you. Thank you!