



Family Missions Company

# SERVE

Winter  
2012

## Events

Mission Formation  
Our Lady of the  
Bayous  
Every Wed. @ 6:30pm

Faith Camp  
July 16-20

Evangelization 101  
Retreat

Genie on EWTN  
"The Choices We Face"  
Spring 2013

Phone-A-Thon  
December 27-31

Missions Conference  
2013  
October 18-20

## Mission Trips

General Cepeda, MX  
January 2-10

Philippines  
March 2-10

General Cepeda, MX  
March 29 - April 7

General Cepeda, MX  
June 22 - 29

3rd Annual SSME  
Philippines  
June 1 - 25

India (Kolkata/Pune)  
July 1 - 20



## Top 5 Reasons Not to be a Missionary

By: Sarah Granger

### Your Past:

If you have sinned, fallen short, made mistakes, or otherwise screwed up your life in any way, God cannot possibly be calling you to serve Him! Look at Church history: St. Paul, persecutor of Christians; St. Augustine, hedonist; St. Francis of Assisi, rebellious youth – the list goes on and on. These Saints made serious mistakes, and as a result, God simply could not use them to witness the Gospel. Their lives made little or no impact on the world because they had messed up before they decided to give it all to Jesus.

I personally considered my past a possible "out" of serving as a missionary. When God called me into missions, I had gone through a divorce and felt like my past would create a stumbling block for the people I ministered to. The priest at my mission post simply said, "God called you here, Sarah, and I don't see anyone else standing in line to serve these people. If you don't, who will?" As I shared my brokenness with others it became evident I was not the only person with a messy past trying to serve the Lord, to follow Jesus. Witnessing to God's faithfulness in spite of my mistakes somehow worked out, but don't take my word for it. See if God can work with whatever you have holding you back. Who knows? You might end up like poor St. Ignatius of Loyola, who, because of his gambling and carousing as a youth, was only able to catechize and convert thousands and founded a passionate missionary order.

### Your Future:

Being a missionary prevents you from planning for the future. You have no money. You have no retirement plan. You can't save up for your children's college funds. You are basically admitting that this world has nothing for you and banking it all on the World to come. This is crazy. Pretty much everyone in the world agrees it's a bad idea.

When I was a child, I heard people telling my parents (who were missionaries) over and over again that they were shortchanging us by not planning for their children's futures. They ignored all this well intentioned advice and continued living in poverty, serving the poor, and giving any extra money away to people who were starving or sick, instead of wisely saving for our college education. My brothers and sisters and I suffered from their lack of planning for our future. We all went to college on full scholarships (except for Simon-Peter who is mentally handicapped), and graduated with honors. My parents refused to plan for our future and just gave everything to God, who for some absurd reason decided to make sure their children's futures were provided for.

### Your Children:

If you have children, you can rest easy knowing that there is no way **YOU** are called to be a missionary. Being a missionary can be dangerous – developing nations are places of poverty and disease.

Furthermore, your children probably don't want to leave everything and be missionaries. Seriously, would God call you to subject your kids to hardship? What did He do with His only Son? And if your children aren't sure about being missionaries, how could you in good conscience bring them into missions? What are you going to do next – force them to eat vegetables, do homework, take baths? Kids know what is best for them, and you should always listen to them! If they grow up serving the poor in mission, they will never become normal American teenagers.

Sadly, I have seen this play out in my own life. My oldest daughter, Alyse, doesn't like to hang out at the mall like a normal teenager. Instead of shopping, she enjoys bringing her clothes on mission trips and leaving them for the poor. Instead of planning a fun spring break trip to the beach with her senior class, even though we are now living in the States, she is spending her time and energy fundraising to bring her class to Mexico on a mission trip. My middle daughter, instead of saving up money for the new camera she really wants, decided instead to give to the Heifer Project and buy some struggling family she doesn't even know across the world a goat. A goat!? Because they grew up serving Jesus, surrounded by poverty and hardship, they don't understand that they should just focus on themselves and what they want. They really are weird. This is what I get for forcing them to be missionaries.

### **Your Desire for a Spouse and Children:**

Okay, so you don't have a spouse or children – yet. A surprisingly good reason **NOT** to become a missionary. In case you didn't realize this, missionaries have very limited social lives. They are so focused on preaching the Gospel and serving the poor that they don't have time to hang out in fun social situations and look for spouses. Oftentimes, they rarely interact with eligible members of the opposite sex for months at a time. If you are single, you obviously should not throw away your young, single years serving God when you could be searching for the **ONE**.

A few years ago I lived in Spain with four other lovely single women. All of us hoped to be married and have children someday. Instead of doing the sensible thing and staying in the United States, where awesome Catholic single men who want to be missionaries abound, we trusted our futures to God and went to serve Him on the other side of the world. God is so sneaky, though! He sent our husbands to meet us on mission trips. Four of us are now married to amazing missionary guys, we have four beautiful babies, and one of us is still happily serving the Lord as a single girl. What if we had stayed where it made more sense to be instead of throwing our lives away serving Jesus? It's almost like if you give your plans to God, He really cares about them and gives you the desires of your heart.

### **Your Plans:**

It's pretty safe to say that being a missionary will not mix well with any plans that you already have for your life. It's hard to get that next promotion on the mission field. You almost definitely won't end up with the vacation house you always dreamed of. Don't be a missionary, because God doesn't care about your plans. He has his own plans for you, and if you surrender to Him, you will be stuck with His plan. Jeremiah 29:11 confirms this: **“Behold the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for woe, plans to give you a future full of hope.”**

History bears this out. Look at all the saints who went out to preach the Gospel and had their plans destroyed. St. Peter probably had plans to be a successful fisherman, instead, he ended up the first Pope. Mary probably had plans to have a quiet, happy life in Nazareth, instead, she is the Queen of Heaven and Earth. My Dad, a successful lawyer, wanted to be District Attorney, instead, hundreds of families in unheard of places like Malaybalay, Philippines, and General Cepeda, Mexico, credit his preaching with bringing them into relationship with Jesus. I planned to quietly raise my family in Abbeville after my divorce, and instead we have travelled to Mexico, Belize, Spain, Portugal, and England together preaching the Gospel, serving the poor, and loving every minute of God's crazy plan for us. I don't even remember why I wanted my plan anymore, that's how much God destroyed it. Don't be a missionary, or He may do the same to you.

## **Let's Pray Right Now** By: Genie Summers

So many times in our lives as Catholic Christians, we encounter friends, relatives, acquaintances, and even strangers that tell us about their problems. Let's face it, a Christian is an ambassador of Christ, I learned that in Catholic School in the early 50's. So as we stand there, hopefully, listening to their brokenness, we are listening as Jesus would listen, with compassion and mercy. Often we have words of encouragement, words of holy advice, and gestures of love. As we part from one another, they almost always say, “Please pray for me.”

Probably at the top of my list of valuable responses that the Lord Jesus has given me, there are these four little words, “Let's pray right now.” Even when I don't have the money they need for their crisis, or the solution to their problem, I always know Who does. Jesus said, “Where two or more of you are gathered in my name, I am there in the midst of you.”

So, if Jesus is here when we pray, why not gather in that very moment and bring their needs to Him. In all of our mission posts, in our mission homes, in our stateside homes, in Wal-Mart, in the lobby of the movie theatre, at a restaurant, on a plane, or a train, in the park, at the country club, after Mass on the church steps, **ANYWHERE**, Jesus is there with us as we pray. Without fail, Jesus consoles. A huge portion of the time, He heals instantly; often He dramatically begins the healing process, He changes hearts, He changes circumstances, people “find” money in unexpected places. That's why He came – to serve us.

I have seen countless miracles: cancer healed, marriages saved, money appearing shortly after our prayer, hearts changed, lives empowered. At FMC, our missionaries carry on this important lesson. Try it! You'll like it.



**Be sure to catch Genie on EWTN speaking on “The Choices We Face” - set to air Spring 2013!**

## Loving the Poor

By: Lindsey Romero

Before I became a missionary, I had never been exposed to poverty. I knew it existed, but the starvation, destitution, and squalor I read about and saw on TV just didn't seem real to me. Poverty was something very foreign to my reality.

In Matthew 26:6-13, a woman anoints Jesus with a jar of expensive perfume and the disciples protest, saying that the money should have been spent on the poor. In response, Jesus says to his followers, "You always have the poor with you." Hmm. Not in my experience. I didn't know anyone who was truly poor, much less associate with them always. What was Jesus talking about? Was He predicting that poverty would never be eradicated? Did he mean that caring for the



material needs of the poor could take a back seat to other priorities when it comes to spending our time, talent, and treasure?

It wasn't until I moved to the Philippines with my family and the poor were always with us that I began to understand what Jesus meant by these words. Of course He didn't mean we shouldn't care for the poor or try to end the plight of poverty. He meant that His followers would always be found among the poor! I began to realize that being with, befriending, helping and **LOVING** the poor were basic essentials to being a Christian! Jesus was poor, his friends were poor, and most of the people He ate with, preached to, and healed were also poor. We are called to be imitators of Christ, but we cannot be like Him if we remain separated from the poor.

This is an uncomfortable, difficult, and heartbreaking challenge. In my first year of missions I've gone through a roller coaster of emotions and cried countless tears as the abstract and distant concept of poverty I'd always lived with became real. The poor now had names and faces and stories. I grew to know them and call them friends, and that made my heart break even more when I saw them suffering from lack of food, water, education, employment, adequate shelter, or a thousand other injustices. I poured my heart, my time, and my energy into helping them however I could, but so often part of me wished I could just forget everything and go back to my old life where poverty did not exist.

But Jesus didn't shy away from the poor. He didn't hesitate to share in their sufferings, to do something to alleviate their strife, or to love them...face to face. As Christians, how can we justify doing anything less ourselves? "You always have the poor with you." Where are the poor in our daily lives? Do we live like poverty exists? Are we loving those whom Jesus loved, even though it's hard? Have we given ourselves the chance to do so by taking the opportunity to put a face to our abstract conception of poverty (like go on a short-term mission trip)? We must not be afraid to do the uncomfortable, the difficult, or the heartbreaking for the sake of others as our Lord did for us!

**"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich."** 2 Corinthians 8:9

## It's Good to be Home Again By: Rita Reardon

About 10 years ago, I got divorced and shortly after I fell away from the Catholic Church. After attending another church for the past two and a half years, I decided an hour was too far to drive every Sunday and looked for another church of that domination that was closer; but I never found a church that felt like home.

This past November, I went on the Mexico mission trip to support my daughter, Teresa, who is a full time Catholic missionary. I wanted her to know she has chosen the best job in world and that she has the best boss, God. In preparation for the mission trip, I watched a video that FMC suggested for newcomers. The one thing I remember from the video was that this was a working mission not a vacation; the video reminded me that I was there to serve the Lord and support Teresa. Living into the mission and exercising my missionary heart, motivated me to rise at the 7:15 am morning bell. During the trip, Teresa suggested I read Ms. Genie's book "Go! You are Sent". The book showed me how Ms. Genie had persevered during her marriage; and no matter what little things happened in her life, she always trusted in God and had faith. Ms. Genie's book sparked many good memories. When I was younger, I was like Ms. Genie; I always trusted God. The book was a catalyst to a chain reaction in my heart to trust God during the mission trip and let go of my expectations. Just let God do His work. Prayers, ministry in the ranchos, and the words of the Christian songs kindled this new fire in my heart and soul.



Our days were always packed full of ministry; every morning we went out to visit the homebound. During the home visits we shared scripture, prayed and sang songs of praise with the sick and elderly. In the evenings, we went to the ranchos, which are



small communities of people one to two hours away from the home base. We would go door to door inviting families to come and hear the word of God. I was moved by the faith of the people of the ranchos. They were so hungry to hear God's word and they appreciated everything we did for them. As the mission teams drove to the ranchos, we asked the Blessed Mother to intercede for our ministry and make space in the hearts of all those attending the Mass or prayer meetings. As we prayed the rosary, I was tickled I knew all the prayers. When we were at the ranchos, Father John Carville said the Mass in Spanish. Even though I don't speak Spanish, I knew exactly what was happening during the Mass; we were all part of the one body of Christ.

One night during our prayer meeting I heard American music playing outside the window, I was immediately drawn to the beat of the music, and I realized I could lose this prayerful experience just by the sound of one American song. I started wondering what I was going to do and how I would hold onto the newfound zeal for my Catholic faith this trip had given back to me. I remembered from my Catholic upbringing that we are strengthened

by the Eucharist and that Mary brings all God's children to her Son. I have always felt close to the Blessed Mother because I called on her often while raising my four children. I knew I could not take home the wonderful people I met on the mission trip, but I knew God and Mary would help me find a Catholic community like the one I was experiencing. At this point on my journey back to my Catholic roots, I felt I needed to go back to Mass, but first I knew I had to make a good confession. When we were in the chapel at a rancho named Our Lady of Fatima, I was inspired to go to confession. I knew by going to confession I would receive graces I desperately needed and desired. I was blessed to have Father Carville on this mission trip and to receive the sacraments and be welcomed back into the Catholic Church. Since returning from the mission trip, I have remained faithful. I have been going to confession, attending Mass and praying the rosary. I am glad to be back home in the Universal Church, to be a Catholic.



## All I Need to Know About Generosity I Learned From the Poor



By: Sidney Savoie

**"This is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we must love one another" -1 John 3:11**

When I reflect back on my year in General Cepeda, I'm awestruck at how much I've grown and how much God has taught me. The first thing I'm reminded of is how I never regretted my decision to become a full-time, foreign, Catholic lay missionary. Even when times were trying I always loved the life God gave me. Never once did I wake up with that feeling of dread that comes when we're working in a job we hate or majoring in a subject that bores us.

Another thing I learned from working with the poor, is that we have to be careful about our being judgmental towards the poor, masquerading as prudence. Many times in missions you have to discern the needs of those who come to you. Are they telling the truth? Do they really need this? What will they do with it? Is it going to help them or harm them? These are some of the valid questions that we can ask when trying to figure out how to best serve the poor. But we also have to be willing to trust in God and the people we serve. We have to trust that the resources we donate will be put to good use. If we have that trust, then even when our donations to those in need are misused, at the very least we have still grown in our trust of God. However, if we rake people over the proverbial coals every time they come to us for help, we show our distrust of God and His sovereignty. Our prudence turns into being judgmental. And the poor are humiliated and no longer want to ask for help.

I've also witnessed the utter generosity displayed by those in need. It's counter-intuitive. Those with less should give less. Those with more should give more. Poor people don't have anything to spare, right? Rich people have tons to give, right? But the fact of the matter is that the more we have the more we tend to hoard and preserve. We lose sight of God's generosity and live under the illusion of self-sufficiency.

The more material wealth we possess, the more we need to pray to God for the grace to share with others. The poor, though they have little, are often the most generous. Because they don't have a lot, they don't have a tremendous need to hold onto it. And because they have as little as they do, they have no choice but to rely on and trust in God to provide. From this trust springs forth a generosity unrivaled by any other, simply because they know the giver of all good things will constantly supply them with their necessities. They are able to share with others, never having to fear that they will run out.

Thank you Lord Jesus for teaching us about true generosity. Help us always to be able to bring others closer to you by our willingness to share.

To follow Sidney's mission, check out his blog: <http://cajunmissionary.wordpress.com/>

# ✠ God's Ways are Above our Ways

By: Mark Eckstine

Serving our Lord Jesus is always an amazing challenge, no matter where we are or what we are doing! Two years ago we could not have written the story about our life in missions. G. K. Chesterton wrote, "Truth is stranger than fiction because we create fiction to suit our fancy." Of the two year commitment we made to FMC we spent our first year in St. Lucia as foreign missionaries; our second year ended up like a pilgrimage with stateside mission work. We had imagined ourselves spending these first two years at the ends of the earth spreading the truth of who Jesus Christ is, not on pilgrimage to all the places we have lived in our 18 years of marriage, plus visits to family and friends in Wisconsin, Ohio, North Carolina, Georgia, Montana, Oregon, Kansas, and Missouri. We also participated in 3 mission trips, including FMC's first two stateside mission trips to Joplin, Missouri (where Lora and I had met). The rest of the year was spent in Louisiana, working, waiting, praying, and participating in the Community that is growing at Big Woods Mission. We kept praying and wondering what the Lord had next for us....Our two year mark came and we were still stateside. We had a family retreat with the Alvarez family and committed ourselves to being at the birth of their 7th child. Soon this meant that we were headed to the Philippines, but not before a trip to work and earn money in Montana!



As we told others that we were actually preparing to return to the mission field, there was a difference in people's responses compared to our first announcement of becoming missionaries with such a large family (10 children). People seemed more confident in us and proud of us, unlike our first announcement when people were genuinely happy for us but concerned about how it would all work out (so were we). We still have those thoughts of "how will it all work out?" The choice to follow Jesus in this way is not an easy choice, especially after being back stateside for over a year. It became easier to see ourselves just living a "normal life". After all a family with 10 children is a witness in our day and age. Yet we continue to follow the call and see that truly the Lord's words about a plentiful harvest and few laborers is very true.

Our arrival in the Philippines has been full of mixed emotions: from great joy at returning to the harvest field that is so plentiful, to the thought of leaving family and friends, especially during this holiday season. Relief at the fact that we made it in time for Lora to be here for the arrival of the Alvarez family's newest edition, which was an amazing event! We are also looking forward to experiencing the Holy Days of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus, in an entirely different culture. The Filipinos seem to love Christmas, with decorations up long before they are in the States.

So as we get adjusted to living here, our emotions do swing between understanding why we would come here, not living a "normal" life somewhere else, and how the Lord would use us? We reflect on how Jesus left His throne, glory, and Heaven to descend and come down and live among us, not as some King, ruler, or even a popular figure, but as a carpenter from a "no-where" town, not seeking money or power or fame, but laying it all aside to save the lost and broken.

In Philippians 2:5-8: **"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross."**

As we are meeting new people and getting involved in their lives and they are getting involved in our life, the Lord gives us glimpses of why we have come. Lora, Abigail, and I were very involved in the birth of a baby of one of our new friend's sister. She is un-wed and almost aborted the baby, but because of the involvement of the other missionaries before we arrived she decided to keep the baby. This was a great blessing! Our new friends, Kring and Ramon had been living together, in a relationship for 8 years, but because of the missionaries here, they decided to get married. They now testify to God's faithfulness in spite of having been on the brink of calling it quits. They testify to the Lord sending missionaries, supplying their needs and holding them together. They are now committed to their Marriage, their family, to serving Jesus Christ, serving their neighbors, to growth in the love of God and holiness. Truly the Lord does heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds! There is so much more to tell about this lovely couple, but the point is that the Lord does seek out and save the lost.

After hearing about their lives and all the Lord has done for them, we were reading from Luke 15, where the Pharisees and Scribes are murmuring about our Lord Jesus because He is receiving tax collectors and sinners; and He tells several parables about the lost, including the Prodigal son. After hearing about all that the Lord has done for Kring and Ramon, we had a new understanding and appreciation for the lost and truly how great it is when a single one returns! They were lost, and from any outside view, hopeless; from the inside they felt hopeless. But the Lord has come to heal and save the Lost!



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 Ezekiel Kiehl-due in March  
 Gemma Kiehl  
 Issac Kiehl  
 Johnathon Kiehl*

*Pray for them!*

## **Giving Everything for the Sake of the Gospel** By: Teresa Kiehl

Intake has ended. We have completed the first step, but the rest of the journey is still before us. During our Intake opening retreat, Joseph Summers gave a talk challenging us to give our lives totally and completely to God to use us as He wills. He then asked us how we want to enter heaven. Do we desire to show up, rubbing shoulders with all the greatest saints, and when they start talking about how they lived and died for Christ and gave everything for Him, feel that we need to hide our faces, too ashamed because all we can say is, "I was nice to those around me, and I gave \$5 to the homeless guy down the street a few times," or do we want to be able to proclaim with them in all honesty that we lived our lives wholly and completely for God alone, holding nothing back?!!! I can't tell you how many times I have thought about that scenario. I am ashamed to admit that before I came to Intake I was completely happy with how "holy" I was. I was searching and willing to follow God, but only if it was something that fit into the plans I had made for my life, as long as I stayed comfortable, and as long as I didn't have to change much. But can that really be enough?



During Intake we were blessed to spend our lunches studying the Book of Acts and the Encyclical, "Mission of the Redeemer." I had read all about the apostles before, but I never thought about what their stories really meant in relation to their own lives. These men gave up **EVERYTHING** for the sake of the Gospel. They didn't just give it away, they threw it completely aside and forgot that it was ever important. Paul says in Philippians 1:21, **"For me, my life is Christ and death is gain."** Three months ago I would have said that's a bit extreme; but today I can honestly say that I want those words to be true for me too!

Every single apostle who chose to live for Jesus, with the exception of St. John, was martyred. They were all aware that because of their beliefs, there was an ever increasing possibility that they would be killed, but they still went out and preached. St. Paul, who had been such a devout Jew that he persecuted and imprisoned Christians and was willing to stand by and watch St. Stephen as he was martyred, was so overwhelmed by the power, majesty and love of our God and the truth of Jesus when he was knocked from his horse and blinded, that later he gladly allowed himself to be captured, imprisoned, beaten, stoned within inches of life, shipwrecked and eventually martyred. Imminent death was not a good enough reason for him to keep quiet. His message was that important. He had encountered something so beautiful, so immense, so great, so glorious that he could not keep this knowledge to himself, even if it cost him his life. Death was worth it! Death was worth it to all the first apostles. Their knowledge and willingness to share the Gospel changed the world!

Unfortunately, the zeal that once existed has waned, and now people are content to keep their beliefs to themselves. They are happy to believe that others, whether they know this great truth or not, have all that they need. The fact of the matter is that that is just **NOT TRUE!** Everyone deserves this great truth! It is worth living and dying for! Jesus' sacrifice was to open the gates for all those who would believe, **"But how can they believe in Him if they have not heard, and how can they hear if there is no one to preach?"** (Rom 10:14) Two-thirds of the world does not know about Jesus. They have a right to this glorious knowledge that we have, and we are blessed to be called out of our country to share it, and we can't wait! May God touch the hearts of those who have not heard as we begin to spread this Good News!



## **Intake, the Greatest Blessing I Ever Had**

By: **Matthew Holland**

My name is Matthew Holland, I am eighteen years old, and I am from Lafayette, Louisiana. As a child, I was an FMC missionary with my family of 9, from 2005-2008. It was the craziest thing ever in my little short life!

I graduated high-school, and entered a local community college (South Louisiana Community College). Then I quit college to return to be a full time missionary with Family Missions Company.

Intake has been a crazy ride, from preparing talks, to inviting people to come to a Bible study, to serving at Saint Joseph's diner in Lafayette, to going to Mexico for three weeks, to climbing mountains in

Mexico, to talking with random strangers about how crazy our **GOD** is for their heart!

Intake has taught me many things, most of all how to be patient. Being the youngest of all of the intakers has been tough in many ways. Still maturing, and growing up, but throughout these three months I have made lasting friends! Intake, I am more than sure, is the best decision I have ever made, better than any college I could ever attend or job I could ever get. Jesus is the Divine Master, and best boss ever!

Mark 8:34-36 - Then He called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: **"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"**



## **Being Good Stewards** By: **Chip Cantrell, CPA**

Each month we read of the wonderful evangelistic activities of the many missionaries of Family Missions Company all over the world. We hear of the amazing things happening in Central and South America, Asia, Europe, and even here at home. But, as we read these stories we have to understand that there is an amazing support structure underpinning each of these missionaries that is critical in making it all happen. This support comes from the administrative staff and all the many supporters giving their time, talents, and treasure.

The importance of these supporters can never be overstated. Their volunteered time and financial support are the fuel driving all the missionary activities. The FMC Board and Directors have always understood this importance and have taken their stewardship responsibility very seriously.

During the last fiscal year for the organization, approximately **92%** of all dollars spent by FMC were used in direct support of the various program activities. Only **6%** of the expenditures of the organization were for administrative costs. The organization has taken care to carefully utilize all of its limited resources to function so tightly. Whenever anyone donates to FMC they can feel secure that the vast majority of all donations are going directly into service to spread the Gospel of Christ to the world. It is very uncommon for any non-profit organization to be even close to this successful in directing such a large percentage of resources to its program services.

In today's economy, non-profits are struggling in competition with each other for donations. **It is very comforting to know that dollars sent to FMC are honored and used in the service of God.**

## **Sailing on with Lots of Wind in Our Sails** By: **Frank Summers**

Well, you may ask, how are things going at FMC since Frank and Genie stepped down from leadership and Joseph and Brooke have taken over? And what are Frank and Genie doing these days?

Honestly, FMC is doing much better with Joseph and Brooke at the helm. We now have over 100 full-fledged missionaries spread about, including the 12 presently completing their Intake training. Come January, we will have long term missionaries in Mexico (at 2 locations), the Philippines (at 2 locations), India, and Ecuador. This coming year we have scheduled about a dozen short term mission trips, with groups signing up from around the USA. Our missions to Mexico have always been safe despite Mexico's past problems with drug and mafia related violence; now with improvements in Mexico's safety situation, we have more groups choosing to go to Mexico again. (Our Catholic brothers and sisters there need our presence and moral support.)

I have noticed that things are running more smoothly, there are finances available, and everyone is enjoying the community aspect of our lives in FMC. Genie has just published her second book, *Our Family's Book of Acts - Love and Serve the Lord*. FMC is planning a lay missionary conference to be held in Lafayette in October, with the hope of having Ralph Martin and other acclaimed speakers - pray with us for the success of the conference and Genie's book.

Really great things are happening in the Church right now, we are at an important spiritual juncture: the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council; the 20th anniversary of the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church; we just celebrated the Year of St. Paul and now are celebrating the Year of Faith; a Synod of world bishops has been convened and has published propositions on the subject of the New Evangelization; those propositions have been sent to the Pope and he will publish an Apostolic Exhortation on the subject of Evangelization, which we must hope will propel our Church into a new era where all Catholics will see themselves as evangelists and missionaries. Yes, this is a GREAT time for all of us in FMC. **PRAISE THE LORD!** Genie and I are presently considering and praying about short missions to Greece, Cuba, Egypt, Madagascar, and Panama. Will you please pray with us for clear direction, and advise us if you have contacts in those countries.

# **Neighborhood Gwapo**

By: Susanna de Almeida



How overwhelming the task of a missionary seems on the surface. Can you imagine trying to convince everyone you meet that you are right and they are wrong? That's what most people think missionaries do. Some people think it is unjust, close-minded and intolerant. If I were them, I would just think it impossible. How on earth can you convince anyone to believe all the truths of Christianity, if they have no particular desire or inclination to believe them?

This is the good news for all missionaries: We don't have to! We don't have to prove it at all. Because our Truth is not an impersonal belief system. It is **THE** Truth. It is a **PERSON**, who wants to prove Himself to us. It is Jesus Christ. Like the early Christians we pray, "**Lord, grant to thy servants to speak your word with all boldness, while YOU stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.**" (Acts 4: 29) The burden of proof is on Him, not on us. Praise the Lord for that! We tell people "If you seek God's kingdom first, He will give you everything else you need." And the next thing you know... He does!

This is the story of a young man named Ramon. Ramon is 20 years old. He lived with his girlfriend Kring Kring, and their one year old son. They were expecting their second baby when they met a bunch of FMC missionaries who invited them to join a Bible study. Ramon had never read a Bible before. He had lived a wild youth, part of a dance troupe, drinking too much, involved with gangs and far from God. But with that Bible study and the ones that followed every week, things began to change. In the course of the next six months, Ramon and Kring Kring decided to put God first in their life. They experienced the overwhelming grace of God as they received the sacraments of Reconciliation and Matrimony.

Ramon and his family, like many in the Philippines, led a hand to mouth existence. With two young children, trying to complete a degree in Office Administration; and with an unreliable job killing and roasting pigs for fiestas, finances were even tighter than usual. One day they had no rice, no diapers and no milk for the babies. "I don't know what we're going to do," a worried Kring Kring said to Ramon.

But Ramon was a new man. "Is your faith so small?" he asked her, quoting his favorite verse from Luke 8:25. Then He turned to God: "God, You **PROMISED** You would provide for us. You are the Provider! I challenge you to provide us with rice for my family!" Seems like his faith was larger than the size of a mustard seed.

The same day Ramon received a call from a friend: "Ramon, do you want to participate in the Barangay Gwapo competition?" (A barangay is the smallest unit of local government in the Philippines, similar to a neighborhood. *Gwapo* means someone who is attractive or good-looking.) Apparently someone had dropped out suddenly from the competition, and they needed someone to fill in. Ramon was astounded at the unexpected answer to prayer. "I don't have any time to prepare. I don't have any clothes to wear." But he decided to do it. He borrowed clothes from Sammy, the only male missionary on our team. His talent was dancing, but he had no music to dance to. He came to Sarah, and she went through the music on her computer. The only music she could find that he could dance to was a song called 'God is Enough' by Christian rap artist Lecrae. (Sounds staged, huh? God is the Master Playwright, after all.)

He got up on stage, said a prayer and gave it his best. Kring Kring said, "Before when Ramon used to dance, it was like he had a devil in him. Now when I saw him dance, he was totally different. He was smiling!" In the question round, Ramon told the judges that what set him apart from the other contestants was that he was a religious man and that he feared God.

And yes... He **WON!** The judges commented on how humble he was, and said that helped them to make their decision. His prize was 3400 pesos (\$80), enough to buy plenty of rice, milk and diapers, and even share with his relatives. God was the One who proved to Ramon that His Word is true; that He really is a Father who cares about our daily needs; and that He longs for us to trust Him, and come to Him with childlike faith. Ramon and Kring Kring have become active and hard-working local mission partners with FMC missionaries. They still struggle to provide for their family, as well as members of their extended family that need their help. Let us know if you feel led to help support them during this difficult time in their lives.



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## Floors for the Poor By: Sammy Romero

Back in October, we kicked off a new ministry at our Malaybalay, Philippines mission, called “Floors for the Poor.” The project provides cement floors for those who only have dirt floors in Isla Bonita, the small squatters community where we’ve worked for the past ten months. In just two months, cement floors have been completed in 40 homes, and this is only the beginning! Donors and families who receive floors have been linked with other families across the globe in prayer and generosity - in a connection that only God could have orchestrated. I am truly honored to be a part of such an amazing project!

A cement floor makes an incredible difference in the life of a poor family. Families with dirt floors are constantly struggling to keep their homes clean. When it rains their dirt floors turn to mud; and in the Philippines, it rains a lot. The children who play in the dirt are constantly sick and suffer from parasites, not to mention they are always dirty. But surprisingly, some of the most amazing and powerful changes we have seen in the lives of the people of Isla Bonita have

been apart from their physical condition. We have had the privilege of seeing these people encounter God in a real way and experience life changes because of that encounter.

My friend Benji’s family’s home was the third house to receive a new floor. Since that day, he has helped with almost every floor with out ever asking for pay. He regularly attends our Bible study and the men’s prayer group we started in the community. He is emerging as a leader in Isla Bonita and an amazing example to both younger and older men of what it means to love and serve God. Benji and I have built a strong friendship working on floors together. One day as we were working, he confided to me that he, his wife, and their six children had not eaten the day before and that he didn’t think they would have food that day either. He had not had work in a while because work is so scarce in that area. Rather than sit around and wait for work, he decided to do this backbreaking work on a completely empty stomach to help his neighbors. He told me that some of the other families were experiencing the same thing. So that day we bought 110 lbs. of rice and over 20 lbs. of beans. Benji helped us to deliver the food through the rain and mud to over a dozen families that needed it most. We would never have known about these needs if it were not for the relationship Benji and I formed working together on “Floors for the Poor.” I am proud to have worked alongside a man like him. I have learned so much from Benji not just about cement floors (he is a very skilled mason), but about what it means to live out the Gospel.



Please keep Benji, Isla Bonita, and “Floors for the Poor” in your prayers as God continues to transform lives physically and spiritually through your generous support of this ministry! Thank you!

Concrete floors are a huge blessing for families because they protect children from disease and improve the health and overall quality of life for everyone in the home. A study by the Center for Effective Global Action reports that, as a result of a program providing concrete floors in Mexico , “Children experienced almost 13% fewer episodes of diarrhea and benefited from a 20% reduction in anemia. Toddlers’ language and communication skills jumped 30%, while youth scored 9% higher on vocabulary tests.” Amazing results for such a simple improvement!



**\$70** is all it takes to give this life-changing gift to a family in the Philippines. This amount provides for the materials to complete the floor as well as a fair wage for out-of-work skilled masons in the community.

As a donor, you will receive pictures and information on the family you sponsor, and your name will be given to the family so that they can pray for you!

To donate, visit the donation page at [www.fmcmisions.com/donate](http://www.fmcmisions.com/donate) and put **Floors for the Poor** in the memo!

# 'Meeting Jesus' at Art Day

By: Rebekah Lillis

What is universally guaranteed to capture students' imagination? New art supplies, of course! So when my elementary alma mater shipped a large box of materials to the Philippines, my mission partner Susanna and I were ecstatic. \*Among the supplies were twenty-two boxes of crayons (including a 92-piece box and a 64-piece box!), eighteen sets of colored pencils, ten watercolor sets, and a big package of markers. But the best were the 192 sheets of beautiful scrapbook paper. This was something I'd poured over in art stores and dreamed of using. Now I got to do something better: share it with kids who didn't know paper like this even existed!



We organized an Art Day to share these wonderful gifts with our students. I have always had an artistic passion and strongly believe that everyone has the God-given gift of creativity. I love encouraging people to use this gift! On a Saturday we invited any students who like art to come, learn some techniques, and work on a project. In the morning about 25 first and second year students came, and in the afternoon we had around 15 third and fourth year students. A few teachers joined us, too. Susanna and I were only too happy to prepare for the Art Day by making some sample paintings.

The theme for the day was 'Meeting Jesus.' We've been teaching our students that being Catholic means more than simply following the religion of their parents. It's more than going through the motions of rosaries and novenas. It's a personal encounter with the living God! My hope was to bring out this exciting, intimate relationship through our Art Day. I asked the students to reflect on where they meet Jesus, how they meet Him, what they feel, and how they are transformed. Before diving into papers, colors and imagination, I talked a little about how we can glorify God through art. Because God made us in His image and likeness, we have the gift of creativity. When we use this gift, we mirror God the Creator and give Him thanks. Beautiful art can help lead people to the Beautiful One.

It made my heart swell with joy to see our students' creativity blossom through crayons, markers, and scraps of colorful paper. The classroom hummed with the happy sound of kids absorbed in their work. These young people love making art just as much as I do, but don't usually have the opportunity or materials. What a privilege to provide them with both!

At the end of the session we held a little art show. Each student got to present his or her project and explain it. I could see their personalities reflected in their work: some were meticulously crafted, while others exploded with enthusiastic vigor. As they shared their pictures, I glimpsed their relationships with the Lord—talking to Jesus about struggles, watching the sea and feeling close to Him, meeting Him while serving at Mass. Two of my favorites were Ceilon and Aldren. She drew a starry Christmas night sky and a bamboo hut, "simple, but with a loving family", and he made a collage of clouds, raindrops, and puddles because he "meets Jesus in the rain."

Before they went home the kids got to select a few supplies to take with them. Each person chose what they wanted to keep: a box of crayons, sheets of scrapbook paper, paints, or pencils. One boy deliberated for a few minutes and then finally made his choice: one black colored pencil. When I told him that he got to keep the whole box, his face lit up with surprise and thanks. Some of the students used their new crayons and pencils to make Susanna and me sweet thank-you cards. The simple, heartfelt messages affirmed that God's truth had fallen on good soil and was already bearing fruit:

**"Thank you for being our Values and Religion teachers. I learned many things from you like about the seven sacraments and how to be a saint."**

**"I have learned how to be a good Christian and to be a good daughter to God. It's a big honor because you teach us to know more about Jesus."**

**"I love you because you teach me how to do good things, you teach me how to love people, you teach me how to pray the right way."**

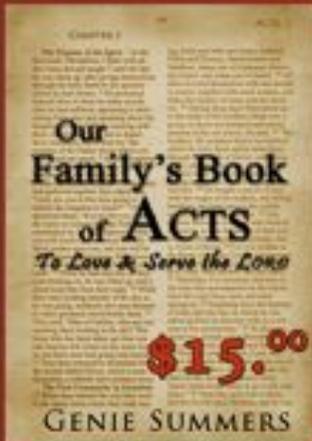
**"You encourage us to be an instrument of God. You help us to understand more about God. You make us laugh and happy every time and every day."**

**"Because of you, I realized how Papa God really loves us."**

\*The art supplies were collected by the students of St. Malachy Elementary School in Geneseo, Illinois. All the materials that weren't able to be shipped to the Philippines were donated to the local Food Pantry. This is a great way to teach kids about the joy of generosity and to bless members of your community!



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