



WHAT DOES MISSION WORK LOOK LIKE?

Father John Ostrowski is Pastor at Saint Peter the Apostle Church in Teotepeque, El Salvador. His mission work began in El Salvador six years ago after having served as an assistant pastor at Saint Christopher Parish in Rocky River, Ohio. He also served at St. Mary's Church in Painesville, Ohio.

Father Juan, as he is called in Teotepeque, serves the people in twenty-five communities in the surrounding area. He has developed a deep seeded love for all of the

families his ministry touches. Many of these people have, for the most part, either been born into poverty or voluntarily accepted poverty as they fled to escape the violence of El Salvador's Revolutionary war of the 1980's.

Father John accepted the calling for this mission work in 2011 and provides a Catholic Faith Based Ministry to the poorest of the poor in this area. Let us now take you along with Father John on a typical day in his life on the top

A Day in the Life Of Father John Ostrowski In Teotepeque, El Salvador

WALK WITH FATHER JOHN FOR A DAY

of the El Salvadoran Mountains.

Father's day begins early in the morning at the Rectory in Teotepeque, usually around 6:30 a.m. with prayer time and breakfast. Dalia, his cook and housekeeper, prepares three meals a day for him, six days a week. If Father is on the road for the day, a lunch is prepared and sent with him.

Today, Father's first responsibility is a meeting with the Works of Charity Ministry. This

is where representatives from 23 of the surrounding communities gather for their monthly meeting to discuss what is going on in each area. Representatives are called on one by one to discuss the latest news and their pertinent concerns.

Today's hottest topic appears to be "lamina". Lamina is used for roofing, siding or wherever protection from the elements is needed. Since lamina is unaffordable to most families, the Mayor of this large area has the means to assist these citizens based on their need. The lamina has a life expectancy of ten to twelve years. Rust forms over time and holes ensue, exposing families to rain and heavy winds.

The distribution of this much needed lamina by the Mayor has become a source of politics. Those who can be influential in

the Mayor's reelection receive the lamina first, whether they need it or not. Those with the most need and no political influence rarely receive any help.

Father John finally has to step in and remind the Ministry leaders that he is but one man, with limited resources. He asks the representatives to remember his primary mission is to assist them in developing their faith and their relationship with God. He explains to them that through prayer *all* things are possible, not just receiving "lamina". While this topic is put to rest, fact remains that many of the representative's families are getting cold and wet during this rainy season.

The format Father uses and the representation that is present, demonstrate the pride and the appreciation the representatives have for

having been given a voice. The voice that had been silenced with death and violence during the revolution can finally be heard!

As soon as the meeting concludes, we hop into the truck for short ride back to the rectory. Father rushes through a quick lunch and then begins his daily Mass schedule. With 25 communities, it is common for him to offer up to three Masses a day. Since each community does not have the opportunity for a weekly Mass, each one usually lasts between 1 ½ and 2 hours. Many times food is served at the conclusion to add to the celebration.

Father will also offer the sacrament of Reconciliation either before or after the Mass. The people are honored that he has come and want to maximize the time they have with him.

The first Mass of this day is scheduled for 2:00pm. All went as planned, but after a half an hour ride back to Teotepeque, Father is greeted by several of his employees who are busy working out the final details of a new clinic that is being built behind the church. He stops to discuss the plans and to look at the progress which has already been made. Like all building projects, few go perfectly as planned. This one is no exception so Father must provide his insights to keep the project on time.

This day's schedule is further challenged as there has been a death in one of his communities. It is a priority of Father's to preside over the funeral. Since the bodies are not able to be embalmed due to money and availability, the burials must be done promptly. These funerals bring people out from

the entire community, processing with the family and the deceased through the village streets to the gravesite.

Father must now hurry to the funeral Mass, since it is located in a community one hour away.

After the funeral, we head back to Teotepeque for the final Mass of the day at 7:00pm.

When we arrive, the church is packed with people, beautiful flowers and celestial music. Mass concludes a little after 9:00 p.m. and we retire to the rectory for some much needed dinner.

Watching Father go through this incredibly demanding schedule, in ninety degree temperature and high humidity is a testimony to his commitment to his vocation. Everywhere he travels, it appears as though each task is the only thing that matters

to him. No one is ever rushed, he is never too hurried to stop and say hello, and yet Father remains calm and enthusiastic through it all. Like a duck swimming across a pond, on the surface it seems calm and collected however beneath the water you see frantic feet pushing the water aside to get where he needs to go. Father John can keep this pace with rare poise and singular success.

The day is finally over! I would like to tell you that this was an unusual day; it was not, it was typical. Father John will once again get up early tomorrow and start yet another day, full of challenges for the people he has come to love and to serve. He would like to thank the parishes in the Diocese of Cleveland; without whose financial support and prayers, his ministry would not be possible. Gracias!