



627 S 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
Escanaba, MI 49829  
906-280-8923

[Bishoptj8941@gmail.com](mailto:Bishoptj8941@gmail.com)

Lay Apostolate of the Diocese of Marquette, MI

## **Plan for La Granja Community Center La Paz, Honduras**

### **Summary:**

This plan is for the establishment of a Community Center in the La Granja barrio of La Paz, Honduras, providing life skill development, religious instruction, regular medical care and employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for the residents of the barrio.

This project would extend and enhance the existing efforts of the Michigan-based Sirvientes de Cristo mission group and the Honduran Casa de Belen organization to improve the material and spiritual well-being of this at-risk population.

### **Background:**

La Paz is a town of approximately 25,000 people in South Central Honduras. **La Granja** is the largest barrio of La Paz. It is an extremely poor neighborhood, and its people suffer from the ills associated with poverty in a Latin American country, including unemployment, delinquency, drug use and related violence, limited educational opportunities and economic discrimination. In addition, the breakdown of the family that is both a cause and a consequence of these circumstances results in many cases in a lack of spiritual direction for the children of the area.

With economic opportunities limited and living conditions as they are, many residents are unemployed, have children at a young age, or succumb to the many temptations existing in the barrio. Many others - including young unaccompanied children - attempt to leave their country and immigrate illegally to the United States, not only submitting themselves to the danger and uncertainty associated with this trip, but adding to the troubles on the Mexican/U.S. border as well.

**Casa de Belen** is an institution situated in the La Granja barrio, offering the following to the people of La Granja and Honduras:

- A parish community serving the barrio's spiritual needs
- Free, bilingual grade school (sister school of Holy Name Grade School in Escanaba, Michigan)
- Housing and care for elderly poor
- Room and board for seminarians
- Room, board and tuition for needy male adolescent students
- Housing for visiting mission groups

**Sirvientes de Cristo** (Spanish for "Servants of Christ") is a Lay Apostolate of the Diocese of Marquette, based in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Its mission is defined as follows:

"To build a spiritual bridge to the poorest of the poor in Latin America. Through prayer, we seek to glorify God - who is Love - and to make manifest that love by application of the Works of Mercy, especially through feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, sheltering the homeless and educating those in need of instruction (Mt 25:31-46), for the love of Christ urges us on (2 Cor 5:14

The main activity of the group in pursuit of this mission is a yearly two-week mission trip to the town of La Paz in southern Honduras. Among the events the group conducts during this trip are:

- A three day Bible Fiesta for the children of the barrio
- A faith-formation event for barrio teens
- A medical/dental brigade for all barrio residents
- Classes in the development of practical skills (e.g., sewing, wood-working, crochet, English) aimed at improving the material well-being of the barrio population

See Appendix A for more information on the Sirvientes de Cristo group.

## **The Opportunity:**

The efforts of the team have been met with success and enthusiasm by the residents of La Granja. For example, the Bible fiesta, limited to those between five and ten years of age, is attended by 300 to 350 children, and the team has in the last few years added “Fuego y Luz” (“Fire and Light” in Spanish), a faith formation event for those adolescents who have “graduated” from the Bible Fiesta, in an effort to build on the momentum created by the Bible Fiesta. In addition, from 500 and 700 people attend the medical/dental clinic each year, and the skills classes are always full, with many people having to be turned away.

Out of necessity, these events are currently held in the existing facilities of the Casa de Belen complex, including school classrooms. This causes disruption of the school schedule, restraints on the number of people who can attend and difficulties in the logistics associated with these events. In addition, these limitations have made it impossible to continue with other plans of the team, such as those for more frequent skills training, for a soup kitchen and for regular medical clinics.

The lack of a resident manager throughout the year has also constrained the team’s efforts.

## **Proposed Solution:**

The proposal is for the construction and operation of a Community Center in the heart of La Granja barrio that would combine the learning of practical life skills and employment opportunities with religious instruction for the at-risk residents of the barrio, as well as provide a secure place for other activities of the team, such as religious instruction, medical clinics, food distribution, and other community activities.

The scope of this solution includes:

- Construction of a building to house the Community Center
- Managing and staffing of the facility
- Ongoing operations of the facility

## **Construction of a Building to House the Community Center**

A dedicated building will be constructed designed to facilitate the planned Community Center activities and to address the specific security requirements posed by its location in La Granja barrio. This building will have the following characteristics:

- Three large general-purpose rooms to be used as classrooms during skills classes, as group project rooms during Bible Fiestas, and as consultation rooms during medical clinics
- Office for staff, meetings, etc.
- Large room dedicated to religious instruction
- Commercial kitchen
- Dining area
- Restrooms and laundry area

The building will be constructed adjacent to the existing Casa de Belen facility to enable the sharing of equipment, services, and personnel. It has been designed to facilitate future expansion.

See Appendix B for floor plan and drawings of this building.

## **Managing and staffing of the facility**

The facility will be managed and maintained by one employee drawn from the residents of the barrio, working from between 18 and 32 hours per week. The responsibilities of this person will include:

- Control of access to the facility
- Maintenance of the facility and its equipment
- Regular reporting of activities to facility management, including information on events held, participation numbers, security concerns, etc.

In addition, personnel will be employed on a per-event basis for such tasks as supervising workshops and conducting training.

## **Ongoing operations of the facility**

The facility will house all the current and future activities of the team, including:

Yearly or bi-annually:

- Bible Fiesta
- Medical/Dental Clinic

Monthly:

- Medical Clinic

Weekly:

- Religious instruction
- Woodworking classes
- Woodworking workshops
- Sewing/crochet workshops
- Sewing/crochet classes

(In this document, a “class” is a session directed by a skilled, compensated teacher involving active instruction on aspects of the skill; a “workshop” is an opening of the facility for work by the participants on their own projects, with a compensated helper present to assist and answer questions.)

See Appendix C for details on some of the above events.

## **Sirvientes de Cristo’s History in La Granja**

Due to its eleven year history of work in La Granja, Sirvientes de Cristo is uniquely positioned to assist its residents in the enhancement of both their spiritual and material well-being. The commitment of the group to La Granja as evidenced by their ongoing programs have resulted in a high level of understanding, trust, and friendship between the members of the group and the people of the barrio.

It is the perception of the team that all three partners in this enterprise – the barrio residents, Sirvientes de Cristo, and Casa de Belen – are prepared to take the next significant step in our evolution.

## Timeline:

The following is the timeline of major milestones of this effort:

<u>High-Level Timeline</u>	<u>Projected Date</u>
Begin Construction	August, 2017
Construction Complete	May, 2018
Initiation / First Classes	June, 2018
First Medical/Dental Clinic	June, 2018
Start Regular Classes & Workshops	July, 2018
Begin Faith Formation Classes	July, 2018
Begin Regular Medical Clinics	November, 2018
First Bible Fiesta	June, 2019

## Budget

The following is the high level budget for the proposed facility, based on estimates supplied by Casa de Belen and other sources:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Estimate</u>
All iron rods, nails and wire	\$3,333
Blocks 5-inch	3,405
Blocks 4-inch	2,405
Stones for foundation	833
Coarse sand	833
Fine sand	833
Select filler material	3,429
Labor	14,286
700 cement bags	6,667
Roof and tiles	30,000
Furniture, equipment, and appliances	11,665
Finishing (doors, windows, trim, paint, etc.)	10,500
Total:	<b>\$88,189</b>

## **Funding:**

The funds for this project will be solicited from the following:

- Catholic parishes
- Catholic altruistic organizations
- Catholic philanthropists
- Secular charitable/service organizations

Any funds received in excess of what is required for the construction of the Community Center will be used for the payment of ongoing operating expenses of the center.

Details of the manner in which these funds are expended will be included in the reporting page of the Sirvientes de Cristo website.

## **Making a Donation:**

All donations will go through St Joseph & St Patrick parish in Escanaba, Michigan. Checks should be written to “St Joseph & St Patrick”, with the word “**Honduras**” in the memo field. Donations can be mailed to the following address:

St Joseph & St Patrick  
709 1st Ave South  
Escanaba, MI 49829

## **Questions:**

Questions will be answered as quickly as possible and may be submitted via email to:

[bishoptj2262@gmail.com](mailto:bishoptj2262@gmail.com)

## **Where to Find the Latest Version of this Proposal:**

The latest version of this proposal can be found at:

[www.sirvientesdecristo.com](http://www.sirvientesdecristo.com)