

Spreading the GOSPEL in Mexico

by Heather Schultz, Renewal Ministries' Editor



This photo was taken during a recent mission to Mexico with students from Fr. Gabriel Richard High School.

Extended family: That is how Renewal Ministries' country coordinators and frequent mission team members describe the people they have come to know—and love—in the dumps of Mexico City. Renewal Ministries' mission work there occurs more frequently than it does in any other specific place. Country Coordinator Butch Murphy travels there at least four times each year along with a medical team—another unique aspect of our service in Mexico.

Renewal Ministries' annual mission trips to Mexico take place in January with i.d.9:16 young adults; in April with seniors from Father Gabriel Richard High School (FGR) in Ann Arbor, Michigan; and in July and either October or November with other groups or individuals who want to serve there. Some years, our country coordinators also make additional trips to Mexico with groups that do all of their own fundraising.

Tim Green, who has served in Mexico regularly since he first traveled there in 2013 with his daughter's FGR class, described his time there as "an incredible blessing." Tim served in Mexico a second time in 2015, when his second daughter went with FGR. After that, Country Coordinator Butch Murphy asked Tim if he would consider serving more frequently, since he added so much to the team. Tim has traveled to Mexico City with Renewal Ministries six times since then.

Tim's unique upbringing makes him particularly well suited to serving in Mexico City. He spent twelve years of his childhood there, and another year in Venezuela, while his father worked as a journalist, and then a bureau chief, for the Associated Press. In fact, Tim even speaks Spanish with a Mexico City accent. Among other things, this enables him to translate homilies; serve as a translator in the medical tent; and pray with people for healing, for freedom from oppression, and that they will experience God's love.

Regarding his service with the young people from FGR and i.d.9:16, Tim said,

“It's a real pleasure to watch the kids encounter the Lord's love in a deeper way, through mission activity and our prayer times together. Mother Teresa said you will encounter Christ in the poor, and that is so true. If I'm attentive to the Lord in ministry, I really encounter Him there.”

Residents line up to receive supplies during a recent Mexico mission trip. Tim Green with a member of his "extended family."



Tim described two times in which he very much encountered the Lord through the poor in Mexico:

▶ Once, while at a home for elderly men, he was ministering to a man who couldn't use his arms and couldn't speak. "I was giving him a banana, and he sort of smelled, and I don't like being around people like that on a natural, human level," said Tim. "Suddenly he cried, 'Agua! Agua!' (Water! Water!) He was thirsty—and it was like I heard the Lord say, 'I thirst!' from the cross."

▶ Another time, Tim was putting shoes on an elderly woman who couldn't reach her feet. He gave her a kiss on the cheek, which is a sign of great respect. In doing so, he realized she smelled very badly—and the Lord said to him, "That's Me you just smelled."

Tim explained, "I have a fairly small heart with not a lot of generosity and love—and the Lord keeps expanding it every time we go down there, which is very, very good."

The Mexicans who live in the dump "have an incredible generosity of spirit," said Tim. He explained that the mission team often will give people two sandwiches, because "they will find someone and give one away. If you give them one sandwich, they will give half of it away."

"Every group we take is amazed by the total giving the Mexicans have for each other," he added. "They try to look out for those in need who don't have enough. For instance, there is a man who is ninety-two with deteriorated eyesight. He is treated with respect and dignity. He is taken through the food line, and people make sure he has what he needs."

They extend that generosity and love to the young people who attend missions. "Our kids (the FGR students, all of whom have taken at least three years of Spanish) stumble through their conversations, and the residents smile and nod and talk back," said Tim. "They share the love they have for each other."



➦ A student visits with Mother Inez at the orphanage.

He added:

"The work Butch and Debbie Herbeck do—the love they show the people—is what carries the day. It's delightful to watch. You go there and you experience the love of your extended family and that love gets shared with our kids (who go on the missions)."

While members of Renewal Ministries' mission teams benefit from serving in Mexico, the residents in the dump also appreciate the presence, service, and love of the people on mission. For instance, "they are incredibly grateful for our priests bringing the sacraments for them," said Tim. "I don't think that happens very often—that a priest is there who they can talk to and who can bless them. They are so grateful."

Another way the residents have shown gratitude for their "extended family" is that they recently put a lot of effort into updating the medical tent area, giving it two wooden walls, a tin roof, and a cement floor. As one member of the i.d.9:16 medical mission team, Hallie Raney, said, "The leader of the community told us that the people wanted to build a beautiful place for us to come to in order to demonstrate their gratitude and love."

There are limits to what can be done in the medical tent, but the team is able to "clean wounds and give medicines to people who need them on a regular basis for diabetes, etc. In some cases, we are their sole source for that medicine," said Tim. People also can be treated for things they typically encounter, like getting jabbed in the hand or foot by a needle while going through the dump, foot problems, or parasites. Tim added, "The doctors serve selflessly in the tent. It gets hot, but they serve for hours on end."

Tim himself was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor eighteen years ago. He has done radiation twice, and after exhausting all other options, recently underwent chemotherapy. He said "it is by God's grace" that he is able to continue serving in Mexico. Even his brother, an atheist and a doctor, admits it is a "miracle" that Tim has still been well enough to go.

"I thought my first trip might be my last," Tim explained. "Every time I go, I wonder if it will be my last trip. It helps me to live for the moment and to be more present to the people I am there with."

“This mission is so transformational,” he concluded. *“It impacts the people who go on it so deeply. It's worth anyone considering going on it. If they want to encounter the Lord and His people, it definitely happens on this trip.”*

Please Pray...

✚ For those who are facing concerns related to aging—either their own, or that of someone they love—that the Lord will grant them peace, wisdom, and confidence in His unfailing love.

✚ For the Lord's Church to hear His voice and listen to the call to repent, draw near His heart, and bring His light to the world.

✚ For the prayer intentions of all our supporters and their family members, especially as they face the challenges of illness and economic uncertainty.