



By the grace of God Juan Francisco Sanchez arrived at the orphanage when he was one day old. Below is an excerpt from a paper he recently wrote while attending Dominican University in River Forest, IL.

**AGC wants to thank you for your love and support, it's making a difference. May God be Praised.**

Pope John Paul II's Encyclical was written in commemoration of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rerum Novarum, which means "of revolutionary change" or rights and duties of capital and labor. This was an open letter that was delivered to Catholic bishops of all nations to address the conditions of the different working classes. The general approach of the development of this Encyclical was an analysis of economic, social, theological, and historical experiences and then the church's position toward work as it related to each of these concepts. In today's society the real concept of human work has been mis-defined. This Encyclical deeply explored the exact concept of man's work. This text emphasized the elements of spirituality of work, which means that we humans share our labor activities with God's actions. This letter also focused on social issues, the church's position on them and how they relate to the worker. This Encyclical gave me different insights about my place in life and also improved my understanding of the positions of the Catholic Church. In addition, it explored peoples' inequality and how the new inventions had shaped our ways of living now.

When we look at the biblical dimension of work, the Bible states that man was created in the image of God and man is called to labor so he can be more like God. Work mimics the action of God and the act of working gives dignity to humans. Pope John Paul II said that work is necessary for earthly progress and development of the Kingdom. He means that man must earn his daily bread and contribute to the continuous progress of science and technology through his or her work. From the beginning, man was called to work; this is the only characteristic that distinguishes man from the rest of the other creatures. The Bible says that man was born to work as the bird to fly. What would we say of a bird lying on the ground that was unable to fly? We would say that this is a sick bird or that something is wrong with it. So we would say the same thing about a man that does not work because he doesn't want to work. We would say that there is something abnormal in his mind or that something is wrong. Work makes us live with dignity because what you eat is not the fruit of the labor of others or for outright theft, but a noble and generous effort.

From my personal experience, I can say that work is part of our spirituality. Through my work, I tend to be closer to others and to be a more grateful person. I am a student who was raised in a country where there are not as many opportunities to work for a sustainable living as here in America. So by having a job and studying at the same time it gives me the courage to do my best in everything I do. My job gives me a sense of spiritual satisfaction especially when I am doing something for others. I believe that we humans need to work for our society because we are called to make this world a better place to live.



Winter 2015

Comayagua, Honduras

We send you a warm greeting, desiring that God abundantly bless you.

It is with great joy that we write you, to thank you for always being with us, and for sponsoring our boys, girls and young people. Thank you very much.

A great thank you to the Band of Brothers that recently visited our Homes. Our boys and girls were very happy with your visit, thank you for sharing your time with them. We thank the Band of Brothers for that Elegant Dinner which you provided to this year's graduates. The Board of **All God's Children** also visited and had meeting with the Board of Honduras. These meetings were very valuable for both Boards. We are delighted Randy and Mercedes Wittig have joined us to help us with all of our projects. As they are bilingual and understand Latin culture we are sure that they will develop a great work team, keeping in mind the welfare and benefits to our children which are our priority.

The majority of girls, boys and youth that study in the different educational institutions, have finished their school year in a satisfactory way with good grades.

**Honor roll:** Estefanía Mejía, Angie Paola Medina, Johana Antonia Amaya, María Martha, José Fernando López

**Graduates: Grade School:** Ana Arely Barrientos, Geydi Areli Vásquez(Hogar Niñas), Melany Darlene Montoya(Buen Pastor), Josué Jafeth García(granja).

**Middle School:** Isis Rosibel Medina, Massy Magaly Manuel Alvarez, and Digna Jaqueline Rivera

**High School:** Carlos David Doblado, Roberto Sosa Benítez (Granja), and Candy Magaly Ramos (Hogar Niñas). Candy Magaly Ramos and Carlos Doblado are in Tegucigalpa this week for orientation to start in the University.

As we are always thinking and desiring that our young people are prepared for the future: Allan Adrián Paredes, Jorge Alberto Rodríguez, are finishing their studies as Barbers, Isis Karolina Centeno, Juana María Mejía, Mildrid Johana Ramos and Perla Shayleen Rivas are finishing their studies in Beauty and Cosmetics, all of whom have been studying in the National Institute for Professional Formation, INFOP. They will be graduating on December 18.

On Saturday, December 19<sup>th</sup> the following girls will have their confirmation: Johana Antonia Amaya, Isis Rosibel Medina, Elba Yaneth Dican and Ainer Guiela Traap.

Our boys and girls are doing well, enjoying their vacations. They are now enjoying decorating and making a manager scene at the Hogar and are very excited about the colored lights they are going to put up. They also are participating in the activities of the church and are very enthusiastic about participating in the youth groups. Now they have time for recreation and are practicing a lot of sports.

We thank you once more for your cooperation and your generosity with the children and young people of our Home. Thank you very much, we desire with all our hearts a Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year, and that each of you may receive abundant blessings in your homes.

God bless you,

Carmen & the children

***"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me." Mark 9:37***

## BAND OF BROTHERS

BY TIM DOUMA

*"I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, WHATEVER YOU DID FOR ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE BROTHERS OF MINE, YOU DID FOR ME."  
MATTHEW 25:40*

I made my first trip to Comayagua and *All God's Children* during Advent this year. Advent is a time of waiting.

I've aged out of that demographic marketers love, so there's no list of things I'm waiting and hoping to find under the Christmas tree. In fact, I'm trying to get rid of stuff. And I'm not a Star Wars fan, so I'm not waiting with bated breath for the release of the latest installment. But there is one thing I'm waiting for. Everybody's waiting for something, and whether or not we recognize it or can name it, underneath our waiting and our longing is our heart's desire to be connected to God. To see him, feel him, touch him, get to know him and be known by him. To be surprised by his presence with us and overjoyed to understand that this is what we've been waiting for.

What prevents us from receiving that for which we wait? A wise-guy pundit once told me that a rut is nothing but a grave with the ends kicked out. Routine. Regular schedules. Prescribed ways of doing things and schedules that cycle back again as regularly as the rising of the sun. Not much room for surprise there. We know what's expected, what's coming next, and we move from one thing to another, almost on automatic. There's not much room then, not only in the schedule, but more importantly, in our psyches for breakthroughs.

So, wanting and waiting for a miracle, I asked my friend about a trip to Honduras.

Now I have to say it was a request made with some ambivalence. I've been in ministry long enough to

be skeptical of the do gooders who are basically doing good for their own good; mini-messiahs who invest a week and think they're saving the world. Having worked in cross-cultural ministry, I'm only too attuned to the propensity for patronizing. And I've read way too many "Why Mission Trips are BAD" essays. I know too from my own experiences, both as a prof and as a pastor who incorporated neighborhood tours as an essential part in coming to know and love the city, that it's way too easy to cross the line between learner and voyeur. My car has been stoned when one of my students was filming some kids leaving school.

But I had heard of AGC, that they were making a difference. So I thought I'd take the chance.

So I took that step. Out of the rut. You know, the kind where people drive in safe, expected ways. Where roads are paved or at least graded. Where you don't pass through two locked gates to enter the orphanage. Where you're not accompanied by police because kidnapping is an industry that pays well. And, oh yeah, I don't speak Spanish.

Are these the kind of surprises we're waiting for when we're waiting for surprises?

No, but they pave the way for when you survive that crazy drive, pass through the gates into safety, and even though you don't know Spanish, you're greeted with the kind of love and joy that you gave up on. And more than that, your fellow travelers are welcomed by name, and they respond naming the one greeting them, and do it in Spanish.

Hugs all around, and even for me, the newbie. Are these kids so starved for affection? It wasn't that. It was that when this bus pulled up it was filled with people whom they knew, from long extended experience, and knew they could trust. I expected to find faces like the ones they show you on those late night TV pitches that ask for only \$29 per month. But these were happy kids who laughed and smiled and knew how to play soccer better than the gringos who challenged them.

Short term, quick fix feel good visits? When these kids are sponsored many of those who do the sponsoring come down to visit. Some up to 6 times per year. If there's a graduation, they want to be there.

So I used what Spanglish I had, plus some sign language and then the help of some of the kids who knew English and I heard about their lives. Young women who came as infants, now getting ready to attend university. This out of an institution that started with a faith-full woman who took in two young ladies and didn't know how she would care for them. But now the compound has dorms, kitchen, gathering spaces, special areas for education, a playground including soccer field and basketball court. From there it expanded and has



Pastors Tim Douma & Ray Carter at Hogar

affiliation with a school for disabled, a farm for boys who learn farming and woodworking, a home for at risk and abused young mothers. And oh yeah, those townhouses in Tegucigalpa where they live while attending university.

You see, when I'm in my rut I don't expect to see miracles. And if you don't live by and expect miracles, you don't see them. I expect plans and hard work and investment that will pay off, incrementally. But outside of the rut, when you don't know what to expect, you're continually surprised by stories you think of as once in a lifetime occurrences, and you've heard so many you'll need to live to be 1000 to keep the ratios in balance.

And the best surprise of all is this: You find what you've been waiting for. It shouldn't surprise us that it's not in all the competing rants on Facebook, nor in the promises and provocations made in presidential primaries. Not in the stuff that inhabits the rut. It should be no surprise to us at all because it's the connection to God we're waiting for. God with skin on. Touching us. In the flesh. He told us in Mt 25 where to find him, and if you still haven't found what you're looking for, learn more about *All God's Children*. You'll be surprised by joy. Tim Douma



Guys that are not Pastors at the Hogar