



## Finger Lakes Connection Is Long Lasting

It is hard to believe that our involvement in the Nicaragua Mission Project started in Seneca Falls over 20 years ago. Reverend David Gramkee was our pastor and regularly invited Ann Marie to speak to us. Each passing day has seen increased growth and support from not only Seneca Falls but from the entire surrounding area.

We have a loyal group of parishioners from St. Francis-St. Clare Parish, our new name, which is the consolidated commu-

nity of St. Patrick's in Seneca Falls and St. Mary's in Waterloo.

Our loyal and dedicated volunteers help pack boxes with donated goods from May to the end of August. On container loading day, Ann Marie Zon and a core group of veteran loaders meet us in Seneca Falls where they are joined by the Mynderse Academy soccer, and sometimes, the football, team. On August 29th, we were able to load more than 1000 boxes on a 40 ft. high cube container destined for the area of

Teustepe, Nicaragua.

Our supporters from the area have also been a tremendous help in sending rototillers and aid for pumps and wells. These have been ongoing projects and are invaluable to the Nicaraguan people.

To assist in our efforts, the Waterloo Container Company has donated hundreds of boxes over the years and Subway has donated food for our workers. We are so grateful to all who help us make our dedication to Nicaragua continue and flourish.

**Parishioners of St. Francis-St. Clare Parish**

## Trip Results in Better Understanding of the Poor

**By Reverend Roy Kiggins**

St. Francis and St. Clare Roman Catholic Community  
Waterloo, NY

Parishioners Mary Ann Bender, Mary Grace, Kelly Rouscher and myself, spent two weeks last month in Nicaragua. We represented parishioners for their years of support for Ann Marie Zon's 30+ years of ministry there. The group went at their own expense.

From seeing the area for ourselves and being guided to sites by Ann Marie as well as visiting with Nicaraguans, we witnessed the beneficial and extensive impact of our church community's donations and packing.

We returned with ideas of how to make our end of the support pipeline even more relevant to Nicaraguan needs.

Members of the group described what most impressed them in a series of church bulletins with their observations on Page 2.

Ann Marie Zon's home and operation center sits atop a low rise along the shore of Lake Nicaragua. Most mornings, Mary Grace and I met at 6:30 a.m. for a walk along the lake's edge.

One morning, rains that had pounded through much of the night ended shortly before our walk. Starting out we spotted a small group some distance ahead. Children, teens and adults were not in the water bathing nor clustered around one of the flat topped boulders set in the water for doing laundry. They were darting about on the beach bending regularly to pick up something. The night rain had



*A Good Morning's Catch Means a Fine Dinner Meal*

created shallow, multi-channeled ribbons of run off. The group was hand-grabbing small fish from the channels. The fish ended in a five gallon plastic bucket already three quarters full of wriggling fish. A child's school backpack served as a lid to keep the fish from flipping out. The catch would feed them. Perhaps some would be sold.

Watching the industrious Nicaraguans on the beach and later two  
**TRIP - Page 2**

- Your comments and suggestions are welcome. Send to Nicaragua Mission Project, 10100 Transit Road, East Amherst, NY 14051.
- If you know someone who would like to receive a copy of "LA VIA," email [info@projectnica.com](mailto:info@projectnica.com) and a copy of "LA VIA" will be sent or emailed to them.

**TRIP - FROM PAGE 1**

men throwing fishing nets out in the lake convinced us that they know how to fish and need only a plentiful supply of fish.

The fish are a symbol of the items which we pack each year and send off to Nicaragua. The plastic bucket and backpack may well have come from one of these. Nicaraguans are skilled at finding practical, innovative uses for things we might overlook or discard.

Before coming to Ann Marie’s home, we spent a couple of days at a mountain dairy farm she supports.

One afternoon, Father Alfonso, a Nicaraguan diocesan priest who for years has worked closely with Ann Marie, led us on a walk through the pastures. A cow herder saw us. It took only a few deft strokes of his machete to make us sturdy walking sticks. In a sense,

he provided “fish” for us that we used often and would have liked to keep as souvenirs.

Look at the items from clothing, tools and rototillers, to towels, bedding, hand powered well water pumps we offer to the Nicaraguan Mission Project as “fish.” The people use them creatively and gradually improve their living conditions.

One afternoon we watched workers constructing a cow barn. They were roofing it by flattening out metal housings from outmoded fluorescent fixtures shipped to them.

We realized that the “fish” exchange goes both ways. It helps us all, like a walking stick, travel the challenging road of mutual respect and generous caring that Jesus assures us “leads to Me.”

**Reflections on Nicaragua**

*The following excerpts are reflections of the group which visited Nicaragua with Father Tom.*

**KELLY RAUSCHER:**

Not knowing exactly what to expect during my trip, I did my best to just keep an open mind and to observe. Utilities which we consider basic are not plentiful. Even in an area where these services are available, a steady unlimited supply is not always available.

The walls of most houses are constructed of vertical boards or cement blocks loosely joined. Meals are cooked on a wooden fire in the kitchen and it’s not uncommon for a four room house accommodating 8 to 12 family members.

Faith is practiced frequently and joyously with the churches filled on Sunday and mid-week devotions.

**MARY ANN BENDER:**

I remember a homeless woman with few teeth hugging me as she entered the Sisters’ kitchen for a nutritious meal.

I remember the genuine smiles on the faces of the little children as we handed them pencils and holy cards.

I remember the people at the Teustepe distribution center waiting in line for bags and boxes and feeling that somehow our donations had made a difference in their lives.

**MARY GRACE:**

I observed school desks from a parochial school in a mountain settlement that were badly chipped and broken.

I observed the elderly at a homeless soup kitchen eating a dish of rice and vegetables most without a utensil and drinking juice from a plastic sandwich bag.

I observed a boy about 3 living in a very remote shack. His eyes got as wide as saucers when I handed him a small stuffed animal.

We returned with many ideas of how to make our end of the support pipeline even more relevant to Nicaraguan needs.

**Images of the Nicaragua Trip**



**Your Email Address Will Cut Costs, Add to Project Funds**

Every newsletter sent by email saves more than a dollar in printing and mailing costs, particularly valuable when it comes to “La Via.”

We thank the many readers who answered our invitation to send us their email addresses.

We invite you to join them in doing so.

**Email addresses are kept confidential** for the exclusive use for the newsletter.

Please help by sending your email address to [info@projectnica.com](mailto:info@projectnica.com)

In the subject line, mention “Nicaragua email.”

The savings translate into more funds for the poor in Nicaragua and an opportunity for you to forward the newsletter to others.

# A Word of Admiration and Thanks from Father Alfonso

“Ardently I have decided to eat this meal with you,” Jesus said to his Apostles before the Last Supper.

When the meal was done, He said, “Do this in memory of me.” At the Last Supper, Jesus humbly washed the Apostles’ feet.

He shared the meal with them. He shared bread and wine with them. He gave them His body and His blood.

He shared a long time with them and He said, “I give you a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.”



*Father Alfonso Alvarado Lugo*

What Jesus did and said at the Last Supper was the celebration of what He did and said during his mortal life: SHARE.

That is exactly what I saw and heard towards the end of September 2015 at 10100 Transit Road, East Amherst: 60 persons sharing.

First they shared TIME, TALENT, TREASURE loading a container 40 feet long with many different articles for the brothers and sisters in Nicaragua. Afterwards they happily shared in a communal lunch.

That is surprising. That is a miracle. Above all when one realizes that for each person that I saw loading the container, there are many more who make possible this noble gesture of love and solidarity.

There are many persons who we don’t see at that moment, but they are behind the scenes, humbly serving, as Jesus did — moved by love. They are sharing TIME, TALENT, TREASURE.

Sometimes we think that the (pagan) mentality and egotistical attitudes have infiltrated our society and our church. But that is not totally true.

Who in their right mind shares their time (which is money)? Who shares time for nothing? Who in their right mind wants to share information which is the fountain of power?

And here we are — you and I swimming against the current: sharing.

When Jesus tells us “Do this in memory of me,” He is not referring to a sentimental memory full of nostalgia, which is portrayed in the TV “soaps.”

He is referring to an active memory which is motivated by love which in turn motivates us to share TIME, TALENT and TREASURE.

We do all this in memory of Jesus who is alive and resurrected among us.

In brotherly love  
 Father Alfonso Alvarado Lugo  
 Nicaragua

## A Healing of a Heart

While in Nicaragua during the Week of Sorrows, we attended a healing mass. As the priest was moving through the shrine to anoint and bless the participants, we were turned to face the center aisle. Standing across from me was a young mother holding a child no more than 2 ½ years old. I do not know whether the mother was ill, the daughter, or both.

As the pair waited, the mother was overcome with tears and sorrows. Seeing her mother’s distress, the little one gently wiped

away the tears falling down her parent’s cheek. This act of kindness made the mother weep with renewed intensity. The little girl, with pure love, then kissed each cheek filled with her mother’s tears.

What a profound lesson to observe. How much greater must be God’s love for us as He tenderly embraces our sorrows and tears. The act of healing may not always be of body, but there can always be a healing of the soul.

Judy Zon

### Trash to Treasure

#### Some Suggestions for Donations

- **Clothing: For men, women, children**
- **Baby clothes, “onesies”**
- **Toys, stuffed animals, picture books**
- **Linens, towels, bedding, dishes**
- **Paper, construction paper, crayons**
- **Canned goods, rice, beans, macaroni**
- **Religious supplies, candles, rosaries**
- **Hand tools, saws, hammers, pliers.**

**Journey of Hope Foundation** is a not-for-profit foundation enacted under the Section 402 of the not-for-profit corporation law.

**Its mission** is to solicit and procure funding through donations, loans and grants for the promotion and support of indigent people, especially in Central America.

**The Foundation** at this time is looking toward helping the needy of **Nicaragua**. With the recent completion of the buildings at the Sinai Center, funding has returned to helping fund the 42 18-wheel containers that Ann Marie Zon sends each year. The more people learn of the hopes for the future of Nicaraguan poor, the more that future can be made brighter.

If you would like to help support the Foundation and its mission, go online to [www.journeyofhopefoundation.org](http://www.journeyofhopefoundation.org) or send your donation with the form to the right, to: Journey of Hope Foundation, 200 River Road, North Tonawanda, NY 14120 or call 716-874-4074.



YES! I want to do my part to continue the work of the Nicaragua Mission Project. Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift.

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## Mercy's Door Awaits Us

During this year of mercy declared by Pope Francis, we are invited to enter the Lord's Door of Mercy.

How appropriate that we do so in this season of Lent. The top priority of Pope Francis is his concern for the poor. The poor are you and me as well as those we see lacking food or money or homes. The Lord's top priority in the eight beatitudes that begin his Sermon on the Mount is to be poor in spirit.

That includes us for we can not embrace the teachings of Jesus without knowing that we ARE needy.

It is difficult to see ourselves as poor - we have so much. We have so much to give away without hurting. The piles of clothes and furniture and food and dishes that pile up in Ann Marie's trailers each week of summer testify that we have far more than we need.

None of us is hurting for the lack of something material. But the Lord calls us to look within ourselves.

Are we lacking a recognition of God's gifts to us? Are we lacking the spirit that says to give not just what we consider 'Junk' or 'unnneeded'? Are we willing to give more - of ourselves through helping others out of a good spirit or offering just a little more than usual or looking for ways in which others could use help ?

Are we willing (and of course able) to meet Christ in others, especially the needy in our communities - the sick, the aged, the overworked, the lonely. A kind word, an offer to help, a smile as we help to enter through a door, a simple act of courtesy ... things like these need no money They only need our smile and helping hand, realizing that "poor" means "in need of help". We can all do this every day no matter where we are.

What a wonderful Lent that would be.. What a wonderful lesson of God's mercy for ourselves and those we meet.



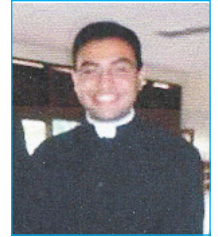
Msgr. Richard Wetter

## Back Home Again

Young Carlos Mairena has finished his theological studies in Spain and has returned as parish and family in Popoyoapa.

Before he returned home, he was ordained a deacon in Spain, the last step before priesthood.

We spoke about him in 2014 when he was doing great work in his parish first as an altar server and then as youth director. The bishop has given him many duties as a deacon. He works at the major seminary and serves in Rivas on Sundays at St. Peter's Church. He looks forward to priestly ordination in about a year.



### A Well Lived Life

**Our dear friend and loyal supporter of the Nicaragua Mission Project died on Dec. 19, 2015, 12 days before her 103rd birthday.**

**Milanie Pawlik was smart, witty and determined to keep her mind active, even though her body was gradually waning. Her gifts to the poor of Nicaragua were many and continuous.**

**A most memorable trait of Milanie was her faith. She loved and cherished her religion especially her devotion to the Trinity.**

**She prayed to God the Father to help her care for her body. He was her Creator and she prayed to Him for health and stamina.**

**She prayed to Jesus the Son who taught her what love and sacrifice can do to enrich her soul.**

**She prayed to the Holy Spirit, often forgotten by us, as the Keeper of her mind and thoughts. She relied on the Spirit to be by her side and keep her strong for more than a hundred years.**

**May her example of prayer to the Holy Trinity be ours. And may she rest in peace.**



This newsletter is produced through the generous support of the Journey of Hope Foundation

[www.journeyofhopefoundation.org](http://www.journeyofhopefoundation.org)

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