



VOICES of COMPASSION



WINTER 2006

NEWSLETTER OF THE MARYKNOLL LAY MISSIONERS

■ ENVIRONMENT

Stripped: *The Economic and Geologic Landscape of Mexico*

While standing at the precipice of the Sierra Madre, the mountain range that embraces the Mexican state of Oaxaca, one is intoxicated by the cutting air of the high-altitude, humbled by one's own smallness, and distressed by the gaping barren strips of land where God had once planted a forest.

Although Mexico is the fourth most bio-diverse country in the world, poverty, injustice and environmental degradation are destroying its natural resources. The introduction of chemical fertilizers and insecticides, coupled with over-cultivation, has reduced the harvests of the campesinos by reducing the fertility of the soil. The threat of invasive genetically modified crops is a danger to the food sovereignty of Mexico.

(More...page 4)

Free Trade Comes at a Price: *Why Mexicans Immigrate*

When NAFTA, the (North American Free Trade Agreement) was signed on January 1, 1994, Canada, Mexico, and the United States were hopeful that its lifting of tariffs and regulations would be nothing

but beneficial to the three countries. But they may not have considered all the effects the agreement would have.

Since its proposal, NAFTA has received equal amounts of praise and criticism. Backed by a number of transnational corporations for its ability to lower tariffs, thereby raising profit margins, NAFTA is

(More...page 2)

MKLM Responds to Mexico's Cry for Help

MKLM began sending its missionaries to Mexico in 1985, and it currently has nine missionaries serving in Oaxaca, Mexico. MKLM missionaries apply their skills and knowledge to respond to the basic needs of the poor. We raise the quality of life, and restore hope, by making sustainable improvements in healthcare, the environment, education, civil and human rights, and economic development.

This Winter 2006 edition of *Voices of Compassion* focuses on Oaxaca and the MKLM missionaries working there. If you wish to learn more about our organization, or the missionaries we send and support in mission, please call us at **1.800.867.2980**, visit us at

www.mkml.org, or write us:

Maryknoll Lay Missioners

P.O. Box 307

Maryknoll, NY 10545-0307



Why Mexicans Immigrate

(Cont'd. from Cover)

often the source of discontent for Canadian and U.S. labor unions that fear job losses to marginal labor costs in Mexico. But below the surface of partisan debate and economic theory lies the very tangible by-product of the agreement that has disenfranchised thousands of Mexico's farm communities.

Since NAFTA was enacted in 1994, the agriculture subsidies allotted to U.S. farmers have forced Mexican agricultural prices down, subsequently forcing many small farm owners of Mexico, or campesinos, out of business. In order to survive, many rural residents, and notably, rural farmers, have felt compelled to travel to the US in search of food and work. The decade following the enactment of NAFTA directly correlates to a staggering

increase of illegal immigration to the U.S. from Mexico.



According to the U.S. Census Bureau and the Department of Labor March 2004 Current Population Survey, the number of Mexican legal and illegal immigrants in the United States has increased from approximately 760,000 in 1970 to more than 11 million in 2004. The Mexican population living in the United States has grown by greater than one half million people each year since 1994.

Although in 2000 President Bush had entertained discussions with Mexican President Vincente Fox regarding free flow of people across the U.S.-Mexico border as a second phase of NAFTA, secu-

rity issues took priority after the 9/11 attacks. With Congressional talk of a wall riding the 2,000 mile U.S.-Mexico border, the plight of the campesinos looks glum.

At The Oaxacan Migrant Center and House of Hospitality, migrants traveling north are provided lodging, a meal, and information on the risks of their trek.

A Flower Grows in Oaxaca

The staggering rate of unemployment and the economic ebb of rural Oaxaca has left measurable effects in its wake. One effect is the northern migration of thousands of laborers to the United States hoping to find work and a way to support their families. A second measurable effect is a dramatic increase in violence against women. Flor y Canto (Flower and Song), and Centro de Orientacion del Migrante de Oaxaca (The Oaxacan Migrant Center and House of Hospitality) seek to address these by-products of the depressed economy.

Flower and Song, The Center for Indigenous Rights, was established in 1994 as a human rights organization in Oaxaca. It has been recognized for its out-

standing work not only in Oaxaca, but has also won human rights awards on the national level. This year, the center, which serves more than 400 women, focused its energies on a special program to address the fundamental need to raise awareness regarding women's rights, especially as contained in the Mexican Constitution. Women are particularly vulnerable due to illiteracy, malnutrition, gender-related discrimination, and lack of access to judicial processes. A significant factor in the exploitation of these women and the violation of their rights is lack of knowledge about those rights.

This project is critical given the increased repression and human rights violations in Oaxaca in the past year. It also responds to a frightening increase in violence against women in Oaxaca, partly due to high rates of unemployment and a depressed economy.

Before joining MKLM, Randy Hinthorn spent 35 years in the insurance industry, developing many skills in marketing, budget-



Oaxacan women celebrate the diverse indigenous cultures of the land.

ing, planning and management. Hinthorn applies his skills to his ministry with Flor y Canto, where he writes grants and researches other funding possibilities.

Susan Hinthorn, MKLM missionary (and Randy's wife), also works to address the human rights of transient, disenfranchised Oaxacans through her work with The Oaxacan Migrant Center and House of Hospitality, or COMI. Susan, having joined forces with an Oaxacan priest at

(More...page 9)

*Welcoming
the immigrant
in the spirit of
solidarity is not
an act of charity
but rather an
act of justice.*

— Pope John Paul II

The Economic and Geologic Landscape of Mexico

(Cont'd. from Cover)

Deforestation has caused soil erosion and water supply problems. Agricultural problems in crop selection have caused hunger and malnutrition among isolated pueblos resulting in widespread health problems.

MKLM missionary Phil Dahl-Bredine (pictured on the cover with an Oaxacan farmer) currently serves in ministry with Centro de Desarrollo Integral Campesino (CEDICAM), a project that addresses extreme poverty and resultant out-migration in rural communities of the Mixteca Alta in Oaxaca. CEDICAM, founded in 1982 by Oaxacans working with Guatemalan promoters, is directed by local Oaxacan farmers, or campesinos. The campesinos have analyzed the root causes of their poverty and are rebuilding confidence in the culture, the land and the village life of the area.

Approximately 5,000 people in nine villages of the Mixteca Alta, one of the poorest and most environmentally devastated regions in Oaxaca, are helped by CEDICAM's efforts. By working side-by-side with the local farmers of CEDICAM, Dahl-Bredine is able to help campesinos recapture knowledge of local agricultural traditions and soil conservation, test methods to preserve and improve native seed varieties, and learn new methods of pest management, organic fertilization, and reforestation to restore a severely eroded landscape.

Most recently, Dahl-Bredine has been working with the local community to regenerate the forests



Top: The Sierra Madre suffers the effects of deforestation. **Left:** A seedling of hope blooms from the efforts of CEDICAM.

Bottom: Rudimentary tools are brought to the mountainsides where CEDICAM participants hope to restore the forest.

.....



that once blanketed the mountainsides. In the past five years, CEDICAM participants have planted more than one million native trees, and have begun a series of rain catchment programs. These

collect rain water that families can use for their everyday needs; it is also used to recharge the aquifers that feed the mountain springs on which Mixteca communities depend.

In the United States, use of heavy equipment aids reforestation efforts by providing calibrated, level, and evenly dug and spaced trenches for the seedlings that will occupy those trenches. But in Oaxaca, local farmers must climb the mountainsides with the most rudimentary of tools. CEDICAM discourages heavy equipment donations, knowing that the farmers will not be able to afford even the



Rain catchments and drip irrigation systems are built with inexpensive and indigenous materials.

fuel to operate the equipment. Instead, CEDICAM is beginning a process called “the campesino school” to spread the basic yet useful knowledge and methods they have found to dozens of new communities each year. They work to teach solidarity and self-reliance for years to come. The techniques taught today will be passed on from town-to-town for generations, giving the promise of hope for tomorrow. CEDICAM hopes that municipalities will be inspired by the success of the pilot programs and begin to use municipal funds to expand and maintain their use.

Dahl-Bredine has served as an important link in helping CEDICAM share its experience and knowledge throughout Latin America and around the world. In 2005 he helped coordinate a tour of their leaders to speak with U.S. farmers. As a result, a first bi-national congress of U.S. and Mexican small farmers was held in September 2006 to build a common vision and formulate action plans among farmers—particularly among those with small to medium farms, which are vulnerable to current trade and economic policies that favor large producers.

Another MKLM missionary, Pat Denevan, works with The Ecology Project as his primary ministry. The Ecology Project is a center for learning and mutual exchange of knowledge of ways to “live in

harmony with nature.” This project, like CEDICAM, seeks to address the ecological devastation of the area. It combines modern technology and the wisdom of indigenous cultures of Mexico to promote efficient uses of natural resources and organic, sustainable agriculture. Examples of ecological techniques are: construction with natural materials, composting, reforestation, solar power, bio-intensive gardens, collection and retention of rain

water through retention ditches, drip irrigation systems, ecological toilets, wood-saving stoves, and the saving of native Mexican corn seeds. The project also demonstrates techniques for constructing buildings from inexpensive local materials, such as compacted dirt, adobe, straw bales, clay roof tiles, along with techniques that were actually used by indigenous ancestors, but have been lost by younger generations.

By teaching methods of self-sustenance and growth, both CEDICAM and The Ecology Project hope to stem the tide of migrants leaving rural Mexico for the U.S. in the face of trade agreements that are devastating the countryside and their hope for survival in their homeland. ♥

MKLM currently supports nine missionaries in our Mexico region.

To learn more about MKLM, and the work of the missionaries MKLM supports, please call us at **1.800.867.2980**, or visit **www.MKLM.com**.

MKLM Lends a “Helping Hand” in Mexico

*A*s is common in poor, marginalized communities, access to healthcare, and access to knowledge regarding food, water, health, and nutrition information is scarce in the state of Oaxaca. But three MKLM missionaries are working with and within the communities to provide not only immediately needed healthcare, but health, nutrition, and preventative education.

PROSA is the Center of Indigenous Health Promotion and Healing Practices. MKLM missionary Mary Mallahan Hicken joins four indigenous women, one indigenous man, and two Medical Mission Sisters on PROSA’s team to promote holistic health and the recuperation of traditional indigenous herbal medicines throughout 20 economically poor indigenous communities, while training local community health promoters. They train local women, building on their

ancient wisdom and experience, to respond to their family and community health needs and illnesses. Workshops focus on confronting diseases caused by lack of potable water, poor sanitation, lack of adequate housing, poor working conditions, and lack of sufficient nutrition. As a 25-year MKLM veteran, Mallahan Hicken adds value to the PROSA team with her organizational and leadership skills, her knowledge of herbal medicines, her knowledge of mental health care, and her deep spirituality and faith—deepened further by her work in the United States, Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

MKLM missionary Kenney Gould works as a health promoter for La Clinica del Pueblo — The Clinic for the People, located in San Martin, on the fringe of Oaxaca City. Because the facility is the only of its kind in Oaxaca to offer quality care at very economical prices, the clinic serves not



MKLM missionary Mary Mallahan Hicken provides information on health and nutrition with PROSA. Here, she displays a document about medicinal plants.

only the poor of its geographic region, but also many patients that travel from the countryside to Oaxaca. Once in Oaxaca, patients are often put on long waiting lists at government facilities or denied care at private clinics and hospitals due to economic limitation. So, each year, Clinica del Puebla has been



MKLM missionary Kenney Gould provides outreach, screening, and education through The Clinic for the People.

a tremendous resource for thousands in need.

Gould's role is to provide outreach, to screen, and to educate families in poor communities. He is also involved in eye care, hypertension and dental screenings, and the creation of dynamic activities that both teach and inspire better health practices. His wealth of experience as a health promoter with migrant farm workers in N.Y. is invaluable in his work. MKLM is proud to sponsor him while he is in mission.

MKLM also sponsors missionary Kathy Dahl-Bredine while she teaches basic health skills to more than 720 children from 24 rural Oaxacan communities in her ministry, Niño a Niño (Child to Child). Before becoming a missionary, and while still living in Silver City, NM, Dahl-Bredine founded a Montessori school and served as a teacher and director. She also implemented the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program of spiritual education. Now, working in ministry with Niño a Niño, an organization formed by local Oaxacan groups and

Maryknoll Lay Missioners in 1989, Dahl-Bredine serves to improve the lives of the most marginalized of Oaxaca's poor — the children. The program's unique approach has won U.N. recognition and consists of empowering children and teenagers to recognize, analyze, prioritize and act on their most pressing health and safety issues themselves, and then teach what they've learned to their family, friends, and neighbors, furthering the effects and the reach of the program exponentially. The method uses creative techniques, such as theater, song, games, puppets, art, and crafts.

Dahl-Bredine has helped incorporate into the program three eco-technology lessons that teach the construction of wood-saving adobe stoves, composting latrines, and solar ovens. These easily learned environmental techniques have tremendous impact on reducing

the amount of wood needed for cooking, and provide organic fertilizer for family and community gardens. By this year's end, 71 additional latrines, 44 additional stoves, and 102 additional solar ovens will have been constructed. ♥



Child to Child, the U.N. recognized program that Kathy Dahl-Bredine works in, teaches children about health and safety issues.

Steve and Mary Mallahan Hicken Celebrate 25 Years as MKLM Missioners!



When Mary Mallahan Hicken and Steve Hicken joined MKLM in 1981, who could have hoped that their devotion would take them on a 25-year mission to celebrate their faith with the neediest world-wide?

During their 25 years as MKLM missioners, the Mallahan Hickens' ministries have included the MKLM mission awareness trips program Friends Across Borders, EDUCA, an alternative education program for the poor of rural Oaxaca, and PROSA, The Center of Indigenous Health Promotion and Healing Practices. But their journey began in Spokane, WA when Mary and Steve left St. Patrick's Parish, with their first son, Christopher, just 3 months old at the time, and headed for MKLM in Ossining, NY. From there, Nuevo Horizonte in Caracas, Venezuela became "home" for the next six years and Mary, Steve, and Chris were joined by second and third sons, Joseph and Jonathan. Their fourth son, Joshua, was born in the United States while the Hickens served in leadership roles in the organization.

The Mallahan Hickens joined the 1981 Class Reunion at MKLM's NY Headquarters the weekend of October 6. Congratulations to them on their 25 years of commitment to the organization and to their faith!

■ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Repairing the Weak Links

As greater Mexico seems to benefit from political and international free trade agreements, rural farmers and small business owners continue their struggle to crawl out from under the crushing economic by-products of the pacts. Organizations have banded together to address the issues of a new economy biased against the rural communities and "mom-and-pop" shops of Oaxaca.

Eleven years ago, Maryknoll Lay Missioners, along with local civil and human rights activist organizations, formed Alternative Education Services, or EDUCA. EDUCA helps to strengthen the work of Oaxacan organizations that are devoted to serving the poor, and improve citizen participation, human rights, and economic development. The three main foci of the program are citizen training, particularly with the rural and indigenous poor; community economics, which supports 18 stores, coops and community banks; and essential training and leadership formation for elected community leaders, especially in indigenous zones.

Measurably, more than 700 participants are directly helped by the program. But indirectly, the entire state of Oaxaca benefits from the service. MKLM missionary Steve Hicken serves in ministry as the Assistant to the Directors of EDUCA where he provides critical organizational skills, specifically in strategic planning and fundraising. Hicken also provides an essential link to the international community with his computer and website skills. ♥

Join Us at Your Local Parish! Do you love listening to stories and learning new things about life in far off lands? Then come join MKLM at one of our many Church Dates. In 2006, MKLM missioners spoke at more than 100 parishes throughout the US, sharing their stories of mission life, mission work, and the people they serve. We encourage you to join us in 2007. Please visit the calendar at www.mkmlm.org to find out when an MKLM missionary will be speaking at a church in your area! Check back every so often as dates are added throughout the year.

■ EDUCATION

A Lesson for Ever-Lasting Life

When Deirdre Cornell-Gould decided to become an MKLM missionary, she knew that her M.A. from the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, her upbringing in a Catholic Worker family, her years of experience as a catechist and religious educator, and her work with migrant farm laborers in New York's Hudson Valley would come in handy!

Cornell-Gould's ministry is with Oaxaca's San Martin Parish Faith Formation, where she serves more than 125 parishioners, providing meaningful sacramental preparation that is rooted in the Christian values of service and solidarity, and training and support for parish members to carry out theological reflection.

As people escape the poverty of rural Oaxaca, they often come to San Martin in search of, but rarely finding, a better quality of life. By taking an active leadership and training role in the local parish of San Martin, on the outskirts of Oaxaca City, this MKLM missionary



is able to assist in and respond to the growing pastoral and material

needs of the parish community by providing desperately needed spiritual education, including catechism, Bible study, and teaching a First Communion class for young adults. Her selflessness, her theological background, and her organizational skills have deeply impacted San Martin Parish.

Family life is a highly regarded value in Mexican and Oaxacan culture. It is the center of many aspects of society. Cornell-Gould's willingness and eagerness to join in Oaxaca's struggle with her five children opens doors of deep sharing and faith building.

A Flower Grows in Oaxaca

(Cont'd. from page 3)

the inception of the project, co-founded COMI in response to a joint initiative of U.S. and Mexican bishops which called for urgent attention to migrants.

The purpose of the center is to provide migrants a safe environment to rest, and to provide vital information regarding the

risks of their journey and their rights as human beings. In 2005, more than 96 men, women and children came to COMI where they were offered three nights of lodging and meals, a phone call to family or friends to obtain money to continue their journey, and straightforward information regarding their rights, obligations, and the dangers they face. In addition, COMI raises awareness

regarding the plight of the migrant, and the families they leave behind, through educational workshops offered on the diocesan and community levels.

Hinthorn is inspired by, and reminds us of, the words of the late Pope John Paul II: "Welcoming the immigrant in the spirit of solidarity is not an act of charity but rather an act of justice." ♥

Parent - Kid Connection

Parents and Grandparents! Here's a family fun activity that can help you bring to your children the stories of Mexico.

Please be sure that your children are age-appropriate to handle the materials.



Make Your Own Mexican Maracas!

What are maracas?

Maracas are musical instruments that sound like a rattle. Maracas can be heard in many forms of Latin American, pop, and classical music. Maracas are sometimes called rhumba shakers. Sometimes people like to play with two maracas to make the music more interesting.





What are maracas made from?

A maraca is usually made from a gourd. A gourd is a type of vine. Cucumbers, melons, squash, and pumpkins have the same type of vine. Maracas can also be made from other kinds of hard containers that are easy to hold, like a coconut shell. The inside of the vine or shell is filled with seeds or dried beans. When you shake the beans inside the can, it makes a musical sound!

Can you think of other containers that can be used to make a maraca? Would you like to make some maracas? Be sure to ask a grown-up for their help.



Here's what you will need:

-  2 clean soda cans. Make sure they are empty and dry.
-  Material that makes noise for filling the cans. Try using beans, rice, or pebbles.
-  Decorations for the can. Try stickers, colored markers, or acrylic paint.
-  Wide adhesive tape.



Instructions:

1. First, decorate the can however you like. If you decide to paint the can, make sure it is dry before you continue.
2. Now you can fill the can with the beans or rice. Different materials will make different sounds. So, maybe you will want to fill each maraca with something different.
3. Place several pieces of tape over the hole in the top of the can. Make sure the tape is tight and make sure none of the beans or rice can get out.
4. Almost done! Hold your maraca like a soda can and shake it up and down and back and forth. See if you can make a song!

What Is Your Mission?

Whoever is kind to the poor
lends to the Lord;
and will be repaid in full.

Proverbs 19:17

Maryknoll Lay Missioners

Inspired by our Catholic faith, MKLM missionaries work in 17 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, applying our skills and knowledge to respond to the basic needs of the poor. We bring our wide range of professional and educational talents and skills to raise the quality of life, and restore hope, by making sustainable improvements in healthcare, the environment, education, civil and human rights, and economic development.

*Will you share your talents and skills
to ease the suffering of the poor while
living the mission of Jesus?*

Is MKLM right for you?

If you are a Catholic man or woman, single or married, with or without children, and discerning overseas volunteer mission work, let us help you take the next steps in your decision making. Our Admissions staff is eager to speak with you, and offer advice, guidance, and options for your consideration. We encourage you to visit www.mkmlm.org. See examples of the work we do. Learn more about us, how we serve, and who we serve. Learn more about our application process and training program. If you think we may be a mutual fit, fill out the preliminary application online. Or, please...

Visit: www.mkmlm.org

Call: 1-800-818-5276 Ext. 114

Email: kwright@mkmlm.org

Write: Kathy Wright
Maryknoll Lay Missioners
PO Box 307
Maryknoll, NY 10545-0307





PO Box 307

Maryknoll, NY 10545-0307



INSIDE
Read the stories
of these MKLM
missioners in
Oaxaca!

****Please remember, although we are one of the three entities composing Maryknoll Missioners, we, the Lay Missioners, are separately funded from the Fathers & Brothers, and from the Sisters. We welcome your call for further information at (800) 867-2980.**

PRST STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Newtown, CT
Permit No. 100