

"Go out to all the world and tell the Good News." Psalm 117

Last week, we shared about the three homes built by the Guatemala Outreach Ministry and From Houses to Homes, and the families for whom these homes were built. Today, we share a video recapping the journey for our three teams and also testimonials on how the experience impacted some of our ministers, including our Pastor, Fr. Vidal.



*"On Aug. 8, 2025, together with 17 parishioners and friends of our parish, we traveled to Antigua, a small city surrounded by volcanoes in southern Guatemala. This is an annual outreach program that our parish has been doing for many years. Even though it was my first time joining the group, I already had an idea what this mission is all about. **"It is not just about building physical houses but also about transforming lives, giving families stability, hope, and a foundation to build a better future."***

*One thing was very clear to me the day we traveled to Guatemala: We are called to love Jesus in a concrete way. When we hear Jesus say, **"Whatever you did to the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me"** (Mt 25:40), He is reminding us of a deep truth: Our love for Him cannot be separated from our love for the poor. To serve those in need is not simply a good deed or an act of generosity; it is an encounter with Christ Himself.*

Building homes for families in extreme poverty is more than putting up walls and a

roof. It is restoring their dignity, giving children a place to dream, and offering security to hearts that have long known uncertainty. In the act of mixing the gravel and cement and putting it in buckets, laying a brick, or painting a wall, we are touching the very flesh of Christ, hidden in the lives of our brothers and sisters. When we provide for someone who has nothing, we are saying with our hands and hearts: **“Lord, I see You. I see You in my brother, I see You in my sister, I see You in those little children, I see You in the least among us.”** In the faces of those who receive this gift, we see the face of Christ, Christ who was born in a manger because there was no room at the inn, who wandered without a place to lay His head, Christ who identifies Himself with the little ones, the forgotten, the poor.



The five days of manual labor under the heat of the sun brought joy to my heart, as well as to the rest of the group, through what we were able to accomplish. During the last day of work, I will never forget the moment when the three little boys, Santiago, Edie, and Santos, came up to me one by one, hugged me tightly, and whispered the words, **“Gracias por la casa - thank you for the house.”** Those simple words, spoken with so much sincerity, touched my heart in a way I can hardly describe. Tears almost flowed from my eyes because at that moment, I realized how deeply our work had touched their lives. Every home built for the poor is a dwelling place for Christ. Every act of mercy is a brick in the Kingdom of God.



And here is something important: Those words of gratitude, those hugs, were not only for

me, not for the volunteers who worked under the hot sun, they were also for every parishioner who shared their blessings, who gave generously so that this dream could become a reality. You may not have held a hammer, mixed sand and cement, or lifted bricks, but your gift made the building possible. Through your generosity, you, too, were standing there with us, receiving that “thank you for the house.” Together, we didn’t just change a family’s life; we let them change ours, too. So let us never get tired of building, not just houses, but communities of compassion, justice, and love. For in serving the poor, we are building not only their home, but also our eternal home in the heart of God.” Fr. Vidal

“Our time in Guatemala was truly transformative. Experiencing the warmth, faith, and resilience of the family we served touched us deeply. Together, we were humbled by the beauty of the mission and the way it drew us closer to each other, the community, and God. And for me, returning to a place where I served 10 years ago as a teen, only to come back as a man with my fiancée, made the work all the more special.



Building a home for a family who had never had one was both challenging and incredibly rewarding. From laying blocks to painting walls, each task felt purposeful, creating a foundation for hope, security, and new beginnings. Seeing the family’s reactions as the house came together reminded us of the lasting difference this work makes.



The highlight was presenting the keys and witnessing the family’s joy firsthand. It symbolized far more than ownership—it represented dignity, love, and community. Sharing that moment together made the experience unforgettable. We leave with hearts full of gratitude, a renewed sense of purpose, and memories that will stay with us forever.” Andrew Kispert & Danielle Arnone

"Jesus, who is the ultimate example of giving, emphasizes in Acts 20:35 that there is a greater blessing in giving than in receiving. If you are fortunate enough to participate with From Houses to Homes in Guatemala alongside the Notre Dame of Mount Carmel Church community, you will experience and live out this Bible quote to its fullest! This mission was truly one of the most worthwhile missions I have participated in. On the very first day, I remember feeling physically, mentally, and emotionally drained—the work was challenging, the environment unfamiliar and uncomfortable, and I wasn't sure what I had gotten myself into. But as the days went on, something inspiring happened. I began to embrace the task at hand. It wasn't just about mixing gravel, carrying cinder blocks, patching holes with cement, or doing concrete brigades—it was about creating a safe, lasting home for a family who welcomed us into their lives with love and gratitude. It truly became more than helping to build a home.



Little by little (actually by day 2), I grew an incredible affection for the family we were building for. I learned to accept and appreciate their culture, their warmth, and their way of life. One of the greatest joys throughout the week came from simply being around the children. Their smiles and toothless grins were contagious. It took very little to make them happy. Something as simple as a lollipop, a small car, a coloring book, or a tattoo lit up their faces with the biggest smiles. The children followed us and greeted us each day in hopes of a little trinket to hold on to. Precious moments like that reminded me how powerful love and generosity can be.

Each day brought some challenges, but also moments of connection with the workers, my peers, other parishioners, the children, and the family. Seeing the new structure form beside the old...was a constant reminder of our purpose. My desire to do more for them only deepened as I went to bed each night reflecting on the day's work and what I could



further do to help the next day.

By the end of the week, I realized that what we built together was so much more than a house—it was hope, dignity, and the promise of a brighter future for each member of the family. On the last day, the words rang in my ears, “Gracias por mi casa”, as I was given a hug around my legs multiple times from one of the sons. Chills covered my body and soul within. A sign for sure that God’s work was fulfilled in that moment.

The experience left me changed forever, teaching me that when we give of ourselves, we not only touch the lives of others, but find our own lives enriched in ways that cannot be measured. Thank you, Notre Dame of Mount Carmel, for providing me with such a heartfelt experience in my life.” Gina Parisi