

*Missioners of Christ*

# MID-TERM

Foreign Adult Mission



## INDIVIDUAL ORIENTATION PACKET

SUMMER

**V6.0**

[updated April 2019]

## MOVING FORWARD... IN THE SPIRIT!

Thank you for your interest in participating on a foreign mission through the Missioners of Christ! The Missioners have been facilitating foreign and domestic missions for youth and young adults since 1996, and in 2002 established a permanent presence in Honduras, now adjacent to the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal in the Diocese of Comayagua.

The fact that you are reading this packet means that you have moved past the initial inquiry stage and are now seriously considering applying to be considered for a ten week summer term of service with us in Honduras. We have put together this packet to both introduce you the Missioners as well as the particular mission in Honduras. While we are involved in a number of ministries, foreign and domestic,



we consider the missions the highest expression of the Missioner vision and mission. We are grateful to God that He has inspired you to look into the possibility of serving with us.

First and foremost, it is important to remember that this is a *mutual discernment* process that both you and the Missioners are entering into. Our goal is not necessarily to pick and choose the “best” applicants, but to seek God’s will for both you and the Missioners; ascertaining if there is a “convergence of callings”. We want to acknowledge up

front that we are imperfect in discerning His Will at times, but we strive to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and His promptings. Our overall goal here is to do our best to make sure this is exactly where God is calling you to serve at this particular juncture in your Faith journey.

We ask you to take this time to become familiar with the mission in Honduras, our philosophy of service, and our *modo de proceder* (our way of proceeding and operating). Most who have participated on other missions have found both *what* the Missioners do and *how* we do it quite different than their previous experiences. So that we all are on the same page regarding expectations (allowing you to make an informed decision on whether or not this is what God is calling you to) we urge you to prayerfully consider all that is written here.

All training, guidelines, and even sacrifices expected of those who participate on this mission are implemented with one desired goal in mind; moving this time in service from a “great mission experience” to a true encounter with Jesus Christ. Truly, it is always important to remind ourselves that this mission is not about us; it is about Christ and His people in need, and we go on these missions, quite simply, because our Lord and Savior commanded us to “Go make disciples of all nations.”

# A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE MISSIONERS OF CHRIST

The Missioners began as a small prayer group (only 4 people!) in an “upper room” at the Library of Regent University in Virginia Beach, VA. The group shared only one desire; engaging an authentic Catholic Faith that was orthodox in teachings and dynamic in expression. From that desire grew a vision for discipleship which placed mission as the central vehicle for drawing youth and young adults closer to Christ and His Bride, the Church.

Below we share with you our Mission Statement, as well as our common understanding of the Missioners’ identity and purpose. Our sharing here is not for the purpose of boasting or presenting ourselves as better than we are; truly, it has only been through the grace of God that any fruit has come forth from the ministries He has entrusted to us. In spite of our many personal and even corporate shortcomings, we have consistently received confirmation that the Lord wishes us to push forward in serving His people through this vehicle. By understanding better who the Missioners are and what we are about, we hope you will be able to better discern if this is the Community God is calling you to serve with.

## Mission Statement

Missioners of Christ is a Catholic Christian Community centered in prayer and united by covenant that evangelizes, disciples and sends forth youth and young adults on domestic and foreign missions to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ.

## Identity

Missioners of Christ is a Catholic Christian community united by common prayer and common ministry. Our “four pillars” shape the essence of our formation and spirituality; we are Eucharistic; understanding the Eucharist to be “the source and summit of Christian life” (CCC 1324), Charismatic; believing in and calling upon the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are “at the service of charity which builds up the Church” (CCC 2003), Marian; holding a special devotion to Our Lady, which is “intrinsic to Christian worship” (CCC 971), recognizing Mary as a “preeminent and... wholly unique member of the Church” (CCC 967), and Magisterial; being submitted to the teaching authority of the Catholic Church, whose “authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ” (CCC 85).

Our Covenant defines our commitments to each other and collectively to God, in how we live out our daily experience as a Missioner. This Covenant serves as a general rule of life, which allows us to be in solidarity with the greater Missioner community, whether we are in proximity to other members or not. The Covenant also reinforces and emphasizes aspects of the Catholic Christian life which are already expectations of the Church for its faithful, such as frequenting the Sacraments, stewardship, prayer and fasting, and charity to one’s neighbor.

## Purpose

The Missioners of Christ has been called together to fulfill the Great Commission, “making disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). We are a discipleship community. Our primary focus is on youth and young adults, with our main means of discipleship being missionary service.

As God has blessed us abundantly with many gifts, and it is recognized that, “much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.” (Luke 12:48b), our primary locus of ministry and service is outside of our community. Realizing that more than two-thirds of the world does not even know Christ in slightest capacity, and that many of the faithful that call themselves Christian are so poorly discipled that they are like the seed that “fell on rocky ground where it had little soil” that ended up being “scorched and withered for lack of roots” (Mark 4:5,6) – as soon as difficulties arise, their faith perishes, and then they are like “salt which loses its taste” (Luke 14:34).



Community is the fruit of our common prayer and common ministry. While fruit can be enjoyed in and of itself, its ultimate purpose is to fall to the ground, die, and reproduce itself in abundance. In such, internal ministry is essential to the Missioners, such as prayer groups, retreats, social opportunities, formation, and intercessory prayer covering -- yet these aspects of Missioners are engaged in for the purpose of strengthening its members so that they may go forth in serving those much more in need than ourselves, and are always in subservience to our vision and mission to disciple the nations, “for the love of Christ urges us on” (CCC 851).

## AUTHORITY, SUBMISSION, AND OTHER FUN CATHOLIC CONCEPTS

If seeing these words made you jump for a moment, we can relate! In many ways, these words have lost their “positive” meaning in modern times. Still, we thought it would be good to share some of these concepts which are deeply rooted in our Catholic Faith right up front. These are quite counter-cultural to our society’s often individualistic, ego-centered values, yet are absolutely necessary (and time-tested) dispositions for those who desire to serve on God’s terms, and not our own.

The Missioners facilitates missions in a manner which is consistent with living in a Religious Community; there are specific times set aside for prayer, meals, work, and sleep. This highly-structured schedule can be very difficult for our American sentiments to follow; we do not tend to like to be told what to do and when to do it, as it conflicts with our (often misguided) concept of “freedom”! Yet this unity is both necessary for our formation of Community, and more importantly, for the service of those whom God has placed before us. We in no way promote *uniformity*; our all-creative God blesses each individual and team with a diversity of gifts! The *unity* is where those gifts work together in *symphony*.

The Missioners of Christ subordinate ourselves to full authority of the Bishop and Pastors we serve under. Additionally, it is important to remember that, by agreeing to participate on a mission facilitated by the Missioners of Christ, you are agreeing to function under the Missioners’ authority structure. This is paramount for all participants understand this before the mission. Serving the greater good often

requires individuals to make personal sacrifices – crucifying our own egos, and truly dying to self. The expectations that go along with that structure are outlined in **Mid-Term Missionary Expectations Form**.

## THE MISSION IN HONDURAS

### Mission Statement for Honduras

The Missioners of Christ Community and Apostolate in Honduras exists “to proclaim the faith and to plant His reign” (CCC 935). We are a missionary community under the authority of the local bishop and clergy, called to “disciple the nations” through both works of mercy and evangelization. Through our prayer and work we hope to help in raising up a new generation of bold Eucharistic Catholic Christian youth well equipped and ready to give themselves in abandon to Christ and His Church’s mission of salvation.

### Cultures Collide

Understanding the culture is the key to connecting with the people. It would be an understatement to say that there are cultural differences between our western society and Honduras. While we might describe the United States as being in a “culture war” (between more traditional family/societal values and a value system where indulgence of the appetites reigns supreme), Honduras’ seems to play out the unwitting victim’s role in this war. You see a strange blend of strong family and communal ties right up against rampant sexual immorality, immodesty, and greed. Planned Parenthood and other organizations with similar harmful value systems have made significant inroads in Honduras, and our (western civilization) has often only confirmed and encouraged immorality with our poor example. The Honduran people, like we, need Christ! And His Bride, the Church, has much to offer... though the unfortunate reality is that there is only one priest to every 28,000 Catholics.

With this as a background, still there are many societal aspects that we try to uphold in the Honduran Culture. The kids are generally sheltered from the consumerist society of the US. They have fun with trash and don’t need expensive video game systems. Few grow up in front of TVs. Everyone is friendly in the streets and a greeting of “Buenos días” or “adios” as you pass someone is the norm. The people are extremely generous, willing to give you everything they have as a “thank you” or to help you out. Faith in God is probably near 100% and they aren’t ashamed to put it on their bus, on in their business, or proudly displayed in their home. We have a lot we can learn from them.

Yet there are sad cultural realities as well, and these are things that we try to challenge. Couples do not usually bother to get married, much less, in the Church. Premarital sex is hardly even taboo, and is almost a normal thing. Fathers rarely take responsibility for their children and abandon the family whenever they please. Abuse is the norm and sexual abuse is not uncommon. 14 year old mothers are struggling to support their children. Crimes go unreported as estimates say that only 3% of reported crimes are ever investigated. Room for improvement is an understatement.

There are also things that we do not understand, but we go along with, so that we do not cause any trouble, draw unnecessary attention to ourselves, or scandalize anyone. Shorts, for example, are generally unseen in public for anyone over 14 unless you are playing soccer. Accepting the Eucharist at the Holy Mass is almost always done with the tongue and sometimes, they will not even allow you to accept in your hand.

We try to show that we respect the people here. Our actions and efforts are magnified and a simple action can make a huge impression (positive and negative). We come with stereotypes and obstacles (not least of which is language) but with care, we can share and learn in peace.

## The Community

Our first understanding in Honduras is that we are called together as a Community; imperfect and broken men and women who are seeking the face of God in Christ, in His Bride, and in His flock, the poorest of the poor in Honduras. We also seek Christ in each other... this can be very hard at times! While the idea of living in close community with many dynamically orthodox young Catholic men and women may sound like the joy of a lifetime (and it is!) the reality comes into play of our own weaknesses, fears, and hurts—and yes, our egos, and it can be quite difficult at times.

Our Community experience is one of mutual prayer, mutual service, mutual sacrifice, and at times, mutual suffering (are you picking up on the “mutual” theme?). We both disciple and are being disciplined. Our day to day life is much like a religious order. The need to die to self – to our own wants, preferences, and even needs – can be a continual moment to moment decision. Community is both good, and – make



no mistake about it – very hard. If we mutually discern your service with us for the summer, you will be entering into the Missioners Community, with both “Gringo” (non-Hondurans usually from the U.S., Great Britain, Canada, Ireland, or Australia) and Honduran members who have made longer-term commitments to the mission and vision. The Community is very imperfect—ot only in our own fallen human natures, but in our structures and processes as well. What’s more, in coming to Honduras, you must be prepared for God (with some assistance from His irritable and irritating flock) to bring to the

surface all your hidden fears, hurts, and anxieties. It can be a painful purging, but His desire is to bring about healing, humility, and holiness—all for our sanctification, so that we might be better images of Him in a world so desperately in need.

## The Apostolate

As mentioned earlier, we are a discipleship community. Discipleship takes place through evangelization, catechesis, and drawing the individuals towards the Sacraments. But it is in the walking side-by-side with these people, day in and day out entering into their lives, which allows them to open the doors of their hearts, and let Christ in. We have a primary focus on youth and young adults, but each ministry is meant to impact much more than those who participate directly.

We have groups for all ages of youth that meet once a week to receive formation. We work at times with local religious orders as well as parishes leading retreats and providing catechesis, we organize and lead missions in the mountains and villages, and minister to people at medical brigades. We also assist in the formation of a group of leaders who make up our Youth Evangelization Team. Additional works of

evangelization are done with parish priests, orphanages, homes for the sick, religious orders and the community surrounding our houses/ center.

Here are some brief descriptions of some of the ministries and initiatives the Missioners engage in:

*Compañeros del Corazón de Cristo (Companions of the Heart of Christ)*

This program is for boys between the ages of 9-13. It seeks to instruct them in the principles of manhood and leadership under the basic formation of prayer, fraternity and example. The participants are being prepared to participate in the parish youth groups, build a prayer life, and the become leaders in their community and parish.

*Misioneros de la Paz de Cristo (Missioners of the Peace of Christ)*

The purpose of this program is to assist the community, especially the poor, with our gift of manual labor and to help form young men between the ages of 13-17 in the Faith to be responsible Catholic Christians.

*Hermanos de Archangel (Brotherhood of St. Michael the Archangel)*

This is a group of young men between the ages of 17 and 24 from different parishes. It meets seeking to form a community of brothers grounded in prayer, faith and trust with accountability and help for each participant to live a life more committed to Christian teaching and to participate actively in their parishes in a sacramental lifestyle. It is requirement that each youth participant be a part of a parish youth group and are ready to live a faithful Christ-centered life.

*Niñas del Rey (Daughters of the King)*

This group of young girls between the ages of 7 and 13 seeks to form its participants in the knowledge of the Catholic faith with the priorities being to root the girls in a consistent prayer life, a sacramental lifestyle, and service to God and the community. It seeks to help girls understand their dignity in the eyes of God through lessons and activities to help them grow in holiness, purity and respect. We hope to help the girls begin to discover their vocations and God's call on their lives.

*Rosas de María (Roses of Mary)*

This group of young women between the ages of 11 and 14 seeks to help the girls establish a routine life of prayer and active participation in the sacraments in their parish. The group seeks to prepare the girls for the transition into parish youth groups in their parishes and to become leaders in the New Evangelization and help in their vocations discernment.

*Hijas del Rey (Daughters of the King)*

This group of young women between the ages of 15 and 24 seeks to form the girls in the clear commitment to Christ and His Church, with the principles of modesty, purity, service and prayer. It seeks to help form the girls in daily prayer and to grow in their commitment to the Faith. It also gives the girls the invitation to discern their vocational call and a chance to visit religious orders and participate in spiritual retreats.

*Equipo Juvenil de Evangelización (Youth Evangelization Team)*

This team is another joint effort between the Missioners of Christ and The Franciscan Friars of the Renewal and exists to form young leaders between the ages of 16 and 25 from the parishes and the communities in the Diocese of Comayagua. The participants receive integral formation in leadership,

apologetics, spirituality, and evangelization. It also gives the youth a change to discover, develop, and use their gifts and talents in both special works of evangelization and especially in their parish communities. It seeks to form the youth as young disciples and leaders in their communities. This team also participates in special events and programs of evangelization with the Missioners and the Franciscan Friars with priority given to their active leadership in the events of their parishes.

### *Misiones Parroquiales y en aldeas (Parish and Mountain Missions)*

Four times a year the Missioners of Christ organize parish and mountain missions in response to the need and invitation of parish priests and *Delegates of the Word* (lay local leaders chosen by the parish priests). These missions consist of door to door evangelism, apologetics and catechesis, depending on the needs of each parish or community. During the week of mission there are also daily programs for the children, youth, and adults of the community, with a closing program that could involve a Eucharistic procession and vigil, a Mass or a Celebration of the Word depending on the availability of a priest. The Missioners also lead shorter missions, evangelization events or vigils usually at least once a month at the invitation of local priest on weekends.

### *Pan de Vida Retreats*

The Missioners collaborate directly with the Friars to lead 4-5 Youth 2000-style retreats in various parts of the country. The purpose of the 3 day retreat is to invite youth 15+ to experience and receive the love of God through a personal encounter with the Eucharistic Jesus. The retreat has 40 hours of Eucharistic exposition, daily Mass, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and special talks about the Catholic Faith to include: The Eucharist, the Person of Jesus, morality and chastity, the mercy of God, Mary, our Mother, and the responsibility and commission to the evangelize the nations.



### *Medical Brigades*

Built by Light of the World Charities and the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, Centro Medico San Benito Jose sponsors four medical brigades yearly with surgical teams from the United States. The Missioners of Christ train and organize the team of volunteers for this week of service and evangelization. The brigades, directed by the Friars, offer surgeries free of charge for the poorest of the poor of Honduras. The Medical Center also offers general health services six days a week, year-round.

### *Short-Term Missions*

The Missioners of Christ receive short-term mission groups from the USA five to seven times a year. These missions focus on the evangelization of parish sectors, seeking to satisfy some of the needs of the parish priests. In the past parish missions have been done in the following parishes: María Reina de los Apóstoles, Santos Mártires, etc. These missions not only serve to evangelize Hondurans but also encourage the conversion of North Americans that encounter the living Christ in the poor that they serve.

### *Family Services/Distribution of Food*

The Friars direct this program with the cooperation of the Missioners of Christ. Through this program, 75 families of the poorest families in the neighborhood are provided with food and spiritual support. The Missioners of Christ are responsible for the evangelization of children and youth during the monthly food handout and they provide support to the families during the rest of the month through home visits, prayer, educational support and catechesis.

### *Educational Support*

The Missioners of Christ sponsor three levels of the “Educatodos” program each year (1st-6th grade, 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade and will be adding 9th grade). In addition, in cooperation with the Friars, the Missioners of Christ provide all needed school supplies twice a year to the boys and girls that participate in the discipleship programs that the Missioners of Christ offer each week. We also have several University students that we are helping through school and several high school young people that we help with tuition and formation. The Missioners also offer tutoring each Tuesday night for two hours.

Mid-Term volunteers often fill gaps during transitional times for the Missioners Community. In the summer, we have extended-term (2 or more years of commitment) members both arriving/being oriented, as well as others completing their service. Additionally, there are numerous short-term missions throughout the summer. During this time, it is important that we do not let any of our ongoing discipleship ministry lapse (while experienced volunteers are either orienting new members or assisting with the short-term missions) so it is very possible that you, as a Mid-Termer, will be assisting with an ongoing ministry to the local community. As well, depending on your particular giftings and the Community’s need, you may also assist with the short-term missions taking place during your time in Honduras. In any case, we encourage you (especially those who have been to the mission before) to jettison any expectations you might have, and make yourself totally open and malleable to whatever service God may be asking of you and the Community during your time with us. We have now also added two weeks of language training school to the process at the beginning of the term of service, as we have found that it greatly enhances the missionary’s ability to serve.

## **A Note on Solidarity and Simplicity**

We work in situations of poverty on the mission; both tangible/financial and spiritual. Some of the situations we come across can be quite depressing, and often are difficult for those on our team to relate to. The Hondurans do not have the same access as we to resources, such as child protective services, psychiatric and substance abuse treatment, medical assistance, and even at times the legal system is ineffective in protecting the most vulnerable citizens. It can create within us (with our American “activist” orientation) a great frustration. Christ consistently challenged his disciples to enter into the world of the poor, the oppressed, and the outcast. Still, for us it can be much easier to come in as the “privileged rescuer” instead of the “fellow Christian on the journey.” When a person returns from a mission and responds,



“I better appreciate what I have now,” they have missed the point. The question that greater reflects solidarity with God’s people would be, “Do I really need all this *stuff* that I have?”

In small ways, we attempt to be in solidarity with those we are serving, which means, we forgo some of our standard American comforts, consolations, and distractions. We do not bring walkmans, I-Pods, cell phones, and such to the mission. We go easy on the dressing “in-style” and the excessive time getting ready in front of the mirror in the morning (umm... but we still encourage good hygiene!). We do not stop for the “Starbuck’s double-decaf-caramel-mocha break” (but Honduras *is* known for being up there with Colombia for its coffee, which you will have available in great abundance... just without the “froth”) or “reward ourselves” with ice cream for our hard work. Our reward is in Heaven, and we need to help each other to retreat from the many *things* in our day to day lives.

Admittedly, these “sacrifices” which allow us to free ourselves to enter into the mission and these people’s lives in a more communal way, are limited. But still, they can be difficult, and are often unpopular. However, most would agree after serving day to day at the mission, they are absolutely necessary. We ask you, if you choose to participate on this mission, to assist us with promoting the spirit of solidarity and simplicity; we have not constructed an extensive list of “no’s” – it is more a mindset, or a mission sub-culture of simplicity and spiritual poverty, that we ask you to help us cultivate in our Community.

## DISCERNMENT AND PREPARATION

### Discernment

Is there a tugging at your heart while you read this? Or perhaps there is a sense that, “the way this is set up is not my thing...” We truly believe that serving on this mission is a specific calling – and not all are called to this specific form of sharing the Gospel at this particular time in their lives (though *all* are called to spread the Gospel!) Discernment can be a difficult thing, and sometimes what God is asking of us might be different than what, at least on the surface, we think we want. Please again keep in mind, this is a mutual discernment process, the primary goal of which is discerning God’s Will for both you and the Missioners at this juncture of our respective Faith walks.

It is absolutely essential that you understand and agree to all that is provided in this packet, and those requirements outlined in the **Mid-Term Missionary Expectations Form**. If you want to come, but do not feel you can wholeheartedly participate in all aspects that we have listed, we know from experience that you will find the mission to be one big frustration, and not a life-giving experience of God’s love and power. Please feel free to speak with the Stateside MT Missions Coordinator with any make-or-break questions and/or concerns you have.

### Taking the Next Steps

We have really striven to enhance and improve our preparation process over the years and have recently completed a major overhaul of the preparation and training process. Yes, it has become more intensive, but we believe that this will help place all who come down on the same page, and better prepare everyone for the awesome work which God has before us.

### *Application*

If, after reviewing all the materials, praying, and speaking with individuals you trust (such as your pastor and/or your spiritual director), you feel prepared to take the next step in the discernment process, please complete the **Individual Application**. There will be more information as well as paperwork coming your way, including background checks, liability release forms, and such, but this will get you started.

### *References*

Once your application is received and reviewed by the Stateside MT Missions Coordinator and the Local Servant in Honduras, assuming all is in order, the next step will be to obtain references from those who know you in various settings, generally including a pastor/spiritual director, employer, and personal friend. As well, we will be obtaining your permission to run several background checks on you, for the safety of the Community and those we serve.

### *Phone Interviews*

Once references are received, 2 phone interviews are scheduled, generally with the Local Servant in Honduras, and a former MT Missioner.

Once this pre-mission discernment phase is completed, and if we mutually discern a convergence of callings, we provide a conditional “invitation” pending criminal and child protective service background checks. We then move forward to the next phase which involves preparation and formation, and we will send you the **Individual Preparation Packet**, which will tell you more about things like what to bring, how to raise money, etc. It is our goal to help you feel fully informed and prepared each step of the way (to the degree that this is possible!)

## WHAT NOW?

There is so much more to tell you, but we figure eleven pages are enough for now! More info on the Missioners is available to you at [www.missioners.org](http://www.missioners.org), or you can send an email to [MTMissions@missioners.org](mailto:MTMissions@missioners.org). If you are feeling called, we would love to serve alongside you, and encourage you to move forward with the application process!

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