



## EXTENDED-TERM MISSIONS

### *Pre-Discernment Document*

*Greetings, fellow pilgrim!* We would like to begin with a hearty ‘THANK YOU!’ for your openness to serving God in such an incredible and sacrificial manner. In being transparent about the rigors, difficulties, and expectations in serving with us, we hope this document will help you discern whether or not you are called to serve with us in Honduras.

### A “MUTUAL DISCERNMENT” PROCESS

God gives a **specific calling** to each of His children to serve Him. It is our responsibility to assist and support any inquirer in discerning whether this specific ministry in Honduras is what they are called to, therefore, we consider this a *mutual discernment process*. We will prayerfully walk this journey with you and strive to make our best judgment in inviting those whom we sense are called. We would like to emphasize two points on this matter: (1) We recognize that we will be imperfect in this discernment—it is very possible that we will invite people who are not called, as well as fail to invite those who are. Still, we trust God that, if we do our best in good faith, He will bless both the decision and outcome. (2) The decision not to invite an individual to serve with us often has to do with our recognition of our own limitations. We recognize that we are only equipped to handle a certain number of missionaries with only a certain degree of personal challenges—as an excessive focus on internal Community problems will greatly hinder us in carrying out our mission in Honduras. Finally, we ask that if you do decide to enter into the discernment process with us, that you see it as just that: **a process of asking God** if this is the specific ministry He is calling you to at this specific time in your life. As such, receiving a “not here/not now” response from this discernment, is still a “win-win” and an acknowledgement that another door is being opened for you in God’s path for your life (whether it is currently evident or not). We desire you to be **where God desires you to be!**

### CATHOLIC IDENTITY

We are unabashedly Catholic Christian, fully submitting to the Teaching Authority of the Catholic Church, to the Holy Father, and to the local bishop and pastors wherever we serve. It has been our experience that, if an individual wants to serve with us, yet maintains strong beliefs contrary to certain Teachings of the Church (artificial contraception, sexual morality, women’s ordination, etc.) they have found participation in this particular ministry to be exceptionally difficult, potentially becoming a source of division within the Community. We in no means promote blind acceptance—yet if the stage of a person’s faith journey has them still struggling against the Teaching Authority of the Catholic Church, this particular mission would not be a good fit for them.

### FORM OF MINISTRY

We encourage you (especially if you have served with us in Honduras before) to jettison any expectations you might have and make yourself totally open and malleable to whatever service God may be asking of you. As you will see in our **Missions Orientation** Packet, our mission is centered in evangelization and discipleship. While there are many different roles in the Missioners in Honduras, all participate in our evangelization and discipleship in one way or another, including home visits, teaching, running ministry programs, public speaking and the like. You will no doubt be drawn out of your comfort zone, and you need to be open to this form of ‘being stretched’. As some say, “being flexible and adaptable are not enough; you have to be fluid.” If you are used to being the ‘lead’ in public ministry you would also need to have the humility to accept ‘less public’ support roles, if that is asked of you.

### AUTHORITY STRUCTURE

As we function as a Catholic Christian Community, obedience and submission for the common good of the Missioners Community and the greater Church is an absolute necessity. We live a structured community life, similar to a religious order, which complements our rhythm of service and ministry. There is an authority structure in place within the Missioners that allows us to function in concert with the Diocese, other local Catholic religious orders, and the people we serve. The Missioners of Christ functions under and with the permission of the local Bishop, where we have established canonical status in the Diocese of Comayagua. In deciding to serve with us, you are agreeing to work under our authority structure.



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### MENTAL AND PHYSICAL CHALLENGES

The life in the mission is both physically and mentally rigorous. A missionary-in-training's physical/medical challenges tend to exacerbate themselves in Honduras, so a condition of any significance will very possibly preclude you from serving in this particular mission. Applicants are required to complete a physical exam and be cleared by a doctor for serving in a third world country. As well, we have found that our own limitations, in addition to the harsh living situation, community life, and exposure to difficult life realities, tend to aggravate mental health issues. Even those who do not have identified emotional challenges find the mission experience very trying: every weakness, insecurity, and past hurt tend to emerge during their time of service. While it is true this can be a first step in spiritual and emotional healing, when you already have significant mitigating mental health struggles, a foreign mission is not the best place to work these issues out.

### PRAYER AT THE MISSION HOUSE

We pray incessantly! Every day has about 3½ hours of prayer (including Mass). For many initially, this can be quite challenging... but after serving with us for several months, most agree it is barely enough! Some may think, "that is too much time praying, we need to do more active serving!" however, this misses the central point of our mission: this is not our work, it is God's work. Our ability to do something good for the people of Honduras is directly correlated to our ability to seek God's will, to hear His voice, and to allow Him to use us as His instruments to build His Kingdom. As St. John Paul II put it, we seek to be "contemplatives in action."

### COMMUNITY

Our first understanding in Honduras is that we are called together as Community; imperfect and broken men and women who are seeking the face of God in Christ, in His Bride, and in the poorest of the poor in Honduras. Yet, 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—and yes, our egos. Again, the Community is very imperfect and in coming to Honduras, you must be prepared for God (with some assistance from your other community members) 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. Our Community experience is one of mutual prayer, mutual service, mutual sacrifice, and at times, mutual suffering. 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. If we mutually discern your service with us for the summer, you will be entering into the intercultural Missioners Community with members from Honduras, the US, and other countries... and cultures will collide.

In particular, understanding the Honduran culture is the key to connecting with those we serve. It would be an understatement to say that there are cultural differences between the US culture and Honduras. There are things that we do not understand, but we go along with, to try and show respect and not cause any trouble, draw unnecessary attention to ourselves, or scandalize anyone (e.g., not wearing shorts in public, accepting the Eucharist at the Holy Mass is on the tongue). As 'foreigners', 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.

*Vocation in Community.* We believe God has created you for a specific calling and purpose! It is in fully living out and within that calling and purpose that we discover and utilize the gifts He has bestowed upon us, bring Him the utmost glory, and contribute in the greatest way to the building of His Kingdom. Many who have served with us in Honduras have in the process received clarity as to their permanent vocation. Yet it is important to realize that while serving at the mission, our primary focus is on our first vocation to holiness... and living that expression within our current state in life—that of *singlehood*. Your orientation and focus need to be outside of yourself, laying down your immediate ideas, wants, and fears—



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even as it relates to the revelation of your vocation—during your period of service with us. Many times, vocational discernment very easily regresses into something more akin to vocational obsession. This process can quickly poison your spirit as well as your relationships with others in the Community, and it ultimately erodes your inner freedom. You must trust that if you are about God’s business, He will take care of yours in His timing. For these reasons and more, during your service we require you *to fast from any form of romantic relationships*—entering into them, pursuing them, or planning to pursue them. For many, this is a hard teaching! Yet time and again this parameter has proven to be absolutely necessary, and actually promotes greater inner freedom within yourself and the Community, as all can strive to relate to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, as opposed to “potential prospects.” God’s Will *will* be done in your life—so long as you continue to seek His face and serve His people—so you need not approach your vocation with fear and anxiety. Instead, trust that God will honor your sacrifice in this fast and be thankful that He is permitting you to have this small period of your life set aside to fully focus on Him.

### LENGTH OF SERVICE

We are currently accepting applications! We are flexible, however the Extended-Term Missioners typically commit to a minimum of two years of service – as a former Honduran Bishop shared, “One year given is for oneself. Two years is for Honduras.” The initial commitment is an in-country discernment period of 4 to 5 months (Aug – Dec). If you are looking for something shorter-term, please consider our two-month summer mission or short-term missions throughout the year.

### LOOKING AHEAD

#### **Phase 1: Pre-Mission Formation:** *Yr 1, May – August*

After being invited to serve, the mission begins seven weeks before setting foot in Honduras. You must be committed to setting aside a minimum of a half hour each day during this phase to work through our online formation program. This formation allows the volunteer not only to arrive in Honduras “on the same page” as those already at the mission, but it also allows the volunteer to already begin to be transformed by what the Holy Spirit is desiring to do within him or her.

#### **Phase 2: Orientation, Immersion, & Discernment:** *Yr 1, August – Mid December*

After arriving to Honduras, you will have an initial in-country orientation, language immersion (4 – 8 weeks), formation & a final discernment decision made in mid-November, followed by ongoing formation and community building through mid-December. All XT volunteers, whether they are discerned to stay on longer or not, return to the U.S. in mid-December, with those continuing on returning in January. The best way to discern is by being immersed in the mission.

#### **Phase 3: Formation & Ministry:** *Yr. 1, Mid-January – August*

*Formation:* Our ongoing formation at the John Paul II Formation Center includes study of Church Teaching related to missionary work, solidarity with the poor, and our part in Christ’s mission on Earth. Our primary formation is received by the daily encounters and service to Christ in the Hondurans and within our prayer and communal life. *Ministry:* For your first year, you serve with our ongoing ministries (see Missions Orientation Packet for more details).

#### **Phase 4: Evangelization & Discipleship:** *Yr. 2, September – Mid-August*

The second year of missionary activity in the Missioners program has its main emphasis in evangelization and discipleship (for instance, the Missioner typically has a stronger control of the language and is beginning to build deeper relationships at this point). Ongoing formation and spiritual direction will continue during the second year, however the Missioner emphasis is now on spreading Christ’s Gospel message, and teaching others to do the same. For each individual missionary, this phase will be adapted to the needs of the Diocese/parish communities, and the gifting of the missionary.

### LET US BEGIN

After reading this, prayerfully reflecting on it, and discussing with your Spiritual Director/Mentor, you still sense that God may be prompting you to serve with us: **let’s begin the process!** Please register online at: <https://missions.missioners.org/>.

*“Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.” – St. Teresa of Calcutta*