

## Missionary Cooperation Plan David Goehner

Greetings folks. I am hoping to take just a few minutes of your time to share some thoughts about the Missionary Cooperation Plan of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Thank you, Fr. Joe, for allowing me to speak with the congregation. Thank all of you, for allowing me to be here to share about the plan.

Historically, the Missionary Cooperation Plan used to be called the Mission Appeal. That name was changed a few years ago, but the purpose, and our parish response, hasn't. St. Sebastian parish has dedicated any funds that you may decide to contribute to the Plan to support the work of the SHARE Foundation, which is the organization that helped to develop our sistering relationship with the people in Teosinte, El Salvador. Funds that you may offer are used by SHARE in the following ways:

- Regional women's empowerment programs, which includes education services, health services, and the development of microloans that enable women, particularly impoverished women and families, to become more financially stable;
- Regional youth leadership and education programs. The goal of these programs is to support opportunities for young people to attend both high school and college, as well as provide leadership training to support good decision-making as the young people contend with the intense and severe impact of gangs, and the push/pull to try to make it to the U.S. in the hopes of having better financial options despite being undocumented residents;
- Regional advocacy projects, most notably efforts to stop the mining industry that is quickly contaminating already depleted water supplies. As an example of the water situation, our sisters and brothers in Teosinte typically face the need to ration water from January through May each year. That limited water supply is further threatened by extensive run-off from the mining industry that is expanding through the eastern and northern parts of El Salvador.

Your contribution is directly used by SHARE for these programs, as well as the ongoing delegation facilitation SHARE offers to our parish.

Our most recent delegation to Teosinte was in August, and we received this cross/plaque from the Directiva and Pastoral Committee as a symbol of shared faith and fellowship with St. Sebastian Parish. This cross will be on display in the Adult Faith Formation room.

I'm not all that good about asking folks to consider making a monetary donation...it's not my proverbial cup of tea...or Salvadoran coffee perhaps. What I would instead like to consider doing, if you will give me just a few more minutes, is to offer a perspective that may be a guide to your thought and prayer process as you contemplate making a donation to the Missionary Cooperation Plan.

When I was a kid, I attended a parochial school, and we were always having to do memory work. That amounted to getting a different Bible verse each week, which we had to memorize and then stand in front of class on Fridays and recite our passage. I was always fascinated by the concept of a Bible "passage". We knew it as our Bible verse. The term "passage" is rather remarkable in my estimation...it's an entry...a path to something...I think it's kind of cool to think of reading a verse from the Bible and it being a path to something...to something of God.

I remember one of the memory verses I had as a kid...John 14:14: "whatever you ask in my name, I will do it". I remember thinking about that verse back then and thinking "I've got it made...time to start asking God for some things". So most of my prayers were the same process..."God, I'm asking for a new

bike...God, I am requesting new tennis shoes...God, I am asking you to make sure my brother Steven leaves me alone...God, please don't let my Dad find out I put that huge scratch in his car". When using the name "God" didn't work, I thought I needed to be more creative, so I whipped through the Bible to find all the different ways to use His name...Jesus, Spirit, I AM, Jaweh...  
You already know the outcome...I didn't get pretty much everything I was asking for.

Yet that Bible passage remained. I came across that verse a few weeks ago and it got me thinking about what it means "whatever you ask in my name, I will do it". And I focused a bit more on the concept of "name". What is a name. I'm David...and I'm a husband, a father, a Catholic, a privacy officer, a recent delegate to Teosinte. Which one is the real me...each one is, yet all are together.

When I apply that same idea of "name" to God, things really get complicated...God is so many many things to so many people. For me to pray in God's name, I need a better understanding of all that God is...who God is.

I'll cut to the proverbial chase. I have personally met God each time I've been in El Salvador. Oh, I know I've met God in other places...it just was phenomenally apparent in Teosinte. So, if you will be so kind, I want to share some of God's name in Teosinte:

- Rubia, a mother and common law wife who lost her hope of going to school to be a dentist and instead crafted a proposal to start a partially government funded preschool and parenting program for young mothers and pregnant mothers in Teosinte;
- Jose Benjamin, a 10-year-old boy who has committed to attending school and college to become a veterinarian. Unlike other kids who go do college and learn a trade or skill that is of little use the remote village of Teosinte, Jose Benjamin knows that he can be a veterinarian in any location, but most specifically in Teosinte, where he can remain and care for his mother...Rubia...just like she remained home to care for her own parents;
- Marta...a natural leader with incredible energy and drive to organize people...living the complicated world of having much wealth as a result of having 4 of her 6 children living in the U.S., but knowing she will likely never see them in person again;
- Arnulfo...who came to our parish two previous times. Arnulfo is physically just the hollow of a man due to diabetes. Arnulfo was a young husband and father who got separated from his wife and a daughter during the Sumpul River Massacre in 1980. Arnulfo was able to gain safety by swimming across the river, under heavy gunfire from the military, all the while carrying his youngest daughter on his back. He eventually reunited with his wife and other daughter three weeks later in the Mesa Grande refugee camp;
- Rafael, who married Arnulfo's youngest daughter, who learned his youngest daughter Ana Francesca was diagnosed with cancer four years ago. After about a year of being cancer free, Francesca was again diagnosed with cancer, and underwent chemotherapy. We offered prayers of the faithful for Francesca earlier this year. Francesca passed away a few weeks before our August delegation arrived in Teosinte;
- Jhonatan...a 14-year-old only child of Carmen...Rubia's sister. Jhonatan was diagnosed with bone cancer back in April. In June of this year, his left leg was amputated. Jhonatan has vowed he will not return to Teosinte...for two reasons: he cannot play soccer with his friends and is concerned he will be isolated; and Jhonatan's home in Teosinte is a quarter mile hike up a rocky mountain...he won't be able to make that climb anymore;
- Elmer...a 20-year-old man who loves growing things. He's designed a greenhouse concept that will increase his ability to grow a wider variety of vegetables...organically. Elmer loves to

draw...he has drawn a map of all the residences in Teosinte...I can share that with any of you if you are interested;

- Cecilia...a 10-year-old girl who loves to dance and adores her father and her younger brother and sister. Cecilia told me she sometimes gets sad knowing her mother left her and her family but that when that happens she reminds herself that there are people like her dad in her life who are God's proof in "the good";
- Miguel...the town alcoholic...who's father laments he didn't spend enough time with him when he was a little boy because they were constantly fleeing military assaults during the war, and then living in the Mesa Grande refugee camp. Miguel is incredibly perceptive...always found on the fringe of any important meeting, or Mass...listening in...and later making profound comments about the different ways truth is told by people;

When I think about praying in God's name, I now continue to wonder how to ask for things in God's name...in God's name as comprised of many many people...people like you, but especially for me...in Rubia and Jose Benjamin's and Marta's and Arnulfo's and everyone else I've met in Teosinte...

Seems to me that my best prayer is to just say those names...and the names of everyone else I know.

May you be moved to consider the Missionary Cooperation Plan. Mostly, may you be moved to find your own way to pray in God's name.