

# Chiapas Connection

Autumn 2015

## Pediatric Dentist Fills Long Awaited Need In Palenque

More than a dozen years ago, Dr. Mario Violante of Youngstown, NY, was the first dentist to respond to our call to join our medical mission to Palenque and its surrounding villages. He and his wife, Lois, gathered their supplies, improvised a dental chair and worked by sunlight and headlamp to treat hundreds of patients.

It had been eight years since the Violantes were last able to join the team and the need had grown. Imagine our delight when pediatric dentist, Tony Vinciguerra, and his wife, Michelle, heard of our need and asked to join the March team!

Tony and Michelle are seasoned volunteers, having travelled the world to join other medical personnel wherever there is a need. Loaded with nearly a dozen suitcases, they arrived in Palenque with all their medical and dental equipment, including a portable dental unit, sterilizers, and medicines. Two suitcases of supplies were detained at customs. However, Sr. Consuelo and Tony returned to the airport and, after much deliberation, were able to obtain the equipment. This was a learning curve and now the team understands the paperwork to be completed prior to arrival.

Due to the setback at customs, the dental team was not able to begin their work until Tuesday. They worked out of a newly remodeled area of the Dispensary (Lak ña Clara) that provided the perfect set up of space, sink with running water and a dental chair that has not been used since it was first donated several years ago.

Sr. Consuelo assisted them and Tony and Michelle's son, Anthony, joined them to serve as an interpreter. Andrew Kowalski, the son of one of our medical doctors who is interested in a dental career, was able to assist. After a slow start, they saw 51 patients, some of whom had more than one visit, and some appointments required up to more than two hours of dental work.

Tony summed up his experience as follows, *"Thank you so much for one of the best mission trips we have ever been on! Your amazing attention to detail and deep concern for each and every person in our group was beyond anything we have experienced before."*

Sr. Maria Elena Martinez shared that many smiling children came to Sunday Services, showing off their teeth! Their proud Moms are glowing and families are asking when the dental team will return. True to their commitment to serve those in need, the Vinciguerras followed their mission in Chiapas with another in Haiti. They will be returning to Palenque in March 2016.



# They only asked us to remember the poor — the very thing I also was eager to do

Galatians 2:10



St. Vincent de Paul Youth Ministry in Niagara Falls, NY, collected boxes of donations for the Chiapas Mission.

Laurie Marshanke, an associate of the Sisters of St. Francis, is the youth minister at the parish and told the students about the need of their brothers and sisters in Chiapas. Moved by what they heard, the students acted with enthusiasm! Their collection was sent with November's team.

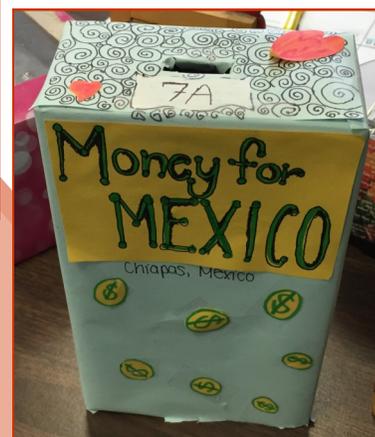
A HemoCue HB 201 machine, donated by Dr. John O'Handley, allows the team to test for anemia. This proved to be very valuable during the spring mission.

Dr. Peter Kowalski and nurse, Sandy Costanza, collected 120 tubes of triple antibiotic ointment prior to joining the March 2015 medical mission.

They did a presentation to the service club at Saints Peter and Paul Elementary School in Williamsville, NY where Sandy's son attends. The students were excited about raising money for the mission and impressed Sandy with their creativity for collection. Several decorated containers were scattered around the school, and they collected \$162.50.

Peter also collected 500 tongue depressors and 10 bottles of 100 acetaminophen (500mg), along with a bag of toiletries.

There is always a need and the Sisters welcome donations of infant and children multi-vitamins (not gummy vitamins), prenatal vitamins, antibiotic ointment, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, toothbrushes and small tubes of toothpaste.



## Joy in Palenque

On the Feast of the Stigmata, Sister Ilse Lopez Gomez made her first profession in Palenque. There was a wonderful joy among all on the occasion.

Let us pray in thanksgiving for One Heart, the Christ, for our Sisters in Palenque!



Sister Ilse is pictured with her family on her profession day.

At right, the altar is decorated to welcome her into her Franciscan community.



Sr. Carol Snyder spent five weeks in Palenque over the summer to help the sisters with their English language studies. This was her seventh visit to Chiapas over the years and she shared, "In 1991, Sr. Consuelo came with Srs. Antonia Anthony and Marilyn Archer to explore places for our first mission in Mexico. They agreed that Chiapas seemed to be the best place to begin. Next year we will celebrate twenty-five years of our presence in Mexico! I am totally convinced that God definitely provided by having Sr. Connie be the "madrecita." She has provided for a wonderful Franciscan foundation for the sisters, who are deeply rooted in Franciscan spirituality. Her example is the most powerful witness!! The community is highly respected by all the people, and together, they have built a beautiful house and created a dispensary and pharmacy on the grounds as well.

Our motto, God will provide, has certainly been proven true here in Chiapas. Let us continue to keep the sisters and their ministries in our prayers!"

## **Mission Statement**

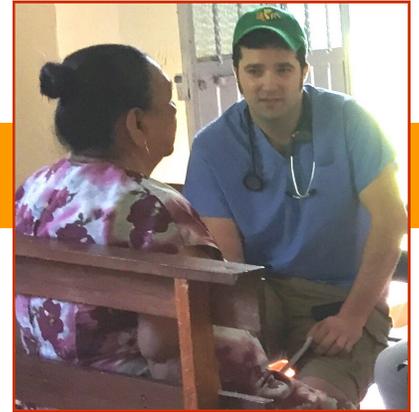
*Responding to Jesus' call to serve the materially poor, the medical missions of the Sisters of St. Francis minister to the indigenous poor in and around Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico. The collective spirit of mission members is characterized by compassion, respect for the God-given dignity of each person, and quality health care.*

### **Thank you, our friends and donors, for making this possible!**

We are especially grateful for our team members who not only give generously of their time, but collect and donate equipment and supplies needed at the mission.

In addition, we thank Mount St. Mary Hospital in Lewiston, NY and Pine Pharmacy in Niagara Falls, NY and all of our benefactors for their support. We also extend our gratitude to Sterident for helping us obtain sterilizers for the dental mission and Dr. Gary Wieczkowski, Jr., who donated age-appropriate toothbrushes and toothpaste.

**Volunteers are needed for our Medical Missions — especially dentists.**  
If you can lend your medical expertise, please consider this important ministry.



It's easy to donate online and to get the latest news of the ministry by visiting [www.stellaosf.org](http://www.stellaosf.org)

### **Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity Chiapas Medical Mission**

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