

Llevando el Evangelio a través del Pan y la Tortilla

Bringing the Gospel by Bread & Tortilla

Chiapas Project Bulletin # 54 November 4, 2022

On November 20th 2020, groceries were first distributed by the Church of San Benito de Nursia to 45 families facing food insecurity in their barrio after the flooding of Hurricane Eta. Already reeling from unemployment caused by the COVID 19 pandemic and amid the rains, San Benito asked their companion churches in Chicago to help them help their neighbors. Thus, was born the San Benito Food Pantry: perhaps the humblest church in the poorest diocese of Mexico saw their neighbors hungry and, with support from the Chiapas Project churches in Chicago, gave them food. **Today, we celebrate the completion of two years of the San Benito Food Pantry.** November 18th will begin year three.



Right-to-left is Petrona, mother of the next three women; the young woman with the baby is a single mother, the next two girls are her sisters, the fifth sitting on the bench and the two who are standing also receive groceries. They are among the new attendees at San Benito during the past two months.

As part of our periodic review process, we have collected data on the past two years, shared here. The project began with 45 families; five dropped out and were replaced by another five. At the beginning we were responding to two families in the church that were wiped out by the floods. Today, thirty of the families receiving biweekly food are attending services at San Benito. Father Florencio named the project in its fifth month: “Bringing the Gospel by Bread and Tortilla” (Llevando el Evangelio a través del Pan y la Tortilla). Many churches have experienced a decreased attendance because of the pandemic. The San Benito

congregation has doubled in size. A choir has been added to services. This year’s class of confirmands was the largest on record. This year’s scholarship recipients have increased by one-third. They saw their neighbors hungry, and they gave them food.

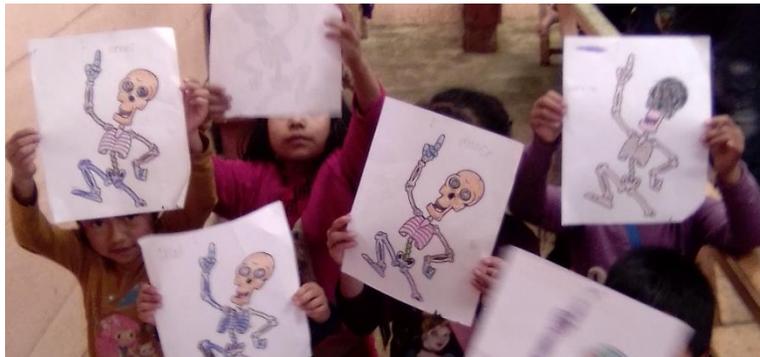
Alternate weeks ten volunteers from the church collect bulk supplies and bring them to the church where supplies are broken into family packets for distribution. Families come to collect groceries at the church on Friday afternoons and Sundays; about five deliveries are made to neighbors unable to come to the church. For the past two years, 52 biweekly bulletins have documented each food delivery and have been circulated to the Chiapas Project churches for inclusion in their weekly enews (as well as to parishioners in San Cristobal).

A typical supply of groceries includes 3 kilos each of rice, beans and sugar, a liter of oil, and 6 bags of pasta soup (200 gm, each); this can feed a family of four for five days. Each year the Food

Pantry has fed about 4,300 individuals, more than 17,500 meals. Periodic reviews of the effectiveness of financial support (and bulk food costs in San Cristobal) have boosted the initial level we send from \$500/month two years ago to the current \$689/month. With 8.7% inflation pushing up the price of staples in Mexico this year, we are likely to need to augment the monthly sum in the near term.

Day of the Dead celebrated in Yochib

In addition to the Food Pantry at San Benito the Chiapas Project supports the weekly visit of a healthcare worker / Christian education instructor to the Church of San Mateo Apostol in the village of Yochib, 60 miles from San Cristobal, in the Mayan Highlands. On Saturday, October 29th Carlos reported the topic for the children's class was suggested by Father Florencio on "the creation." "We talked about the



beauty of the planet Earth and how God protects nature; we drew wings and imagined ourselves as angels whose job it was to protect animals and plants. At the end, we prayed for the future of humanity. Next, we turned to our



Mexican custom of the Day of the Dead and decorated skull drawings with colors. We concluded our morning with our usual cleaning and disinfecting the church. We did not provide lunch today since the children wanted a piñata after an

upcoming class, so we economized a bit." The children's pictures decorate the sanctuary.

Food Pantry # 52 was held Friday November 4th Friday November 4th was the fifty-second food delivery by the Church of San Benito, a project involving four churches in Chicago working together on "The Chiapas Project": Church of the Atonement, Holy Comforter, Church of Our Saviour, and St. Chrysostom's.





This bulletin terminates the bi-weekly circulation of news from Chiapas. Beginning in December a monthly newsletter will recap the month's activities at San Benito and San Mateo. It will be available in two forms, one inclusive of names of children parishioners in Chiapas that cannot be provided on the internet and that will be sent by email, and one for church enews links that will be internet-friendly.