



# The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch

## The Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

*Works of The Order in Action!*

### **Project Mexico**

Project Mexico has three main goals: First, to operate St Innocent Orphanage - a home for abandoned teenage boys in Tijuana Mexico. Second, to build homes for poor families in Tijuana, who live in squalid dirt floor shacks. Third, to provide an opportunity for people of all ages, but specifically young people, to come and participate in the work itself and be blessed in the process. As is most commonly known, Project Mexico operates St. Innocent Orphanage – a home for abandoned teenage boys. It is a venerable but extremely difficult task to take care of the most vulnerable population of orphans in Tijuana. Sometimes however, the homebuilding program of Project Mexico is under highlighted. The Order of St. Ignatius can be assured that not only has their ever reliable support gone to provide for the most needy and abandoned orphan boys of Tijuana, but have also been instrumental in supporting the poor families in Tijuana in their times of need. The end results of all of our hard work sometimes goes unnoticed for years, but rest assured we are helping to save lives on a daily basis, especially in the rainy season.

Every winter heavy rains are predicted for the San Diego / Tijuana region and within a few days of the forecast, it is not uncommon to hear of children dying in the aftermath of the rain storms in Tijuana. Relentless downpours and powerful winds pound the area, toppling trees, shutting down schools, and canceling airline flights. Successive storms can bring severely inclement weather — including hail, torrential rain, driving winds, and lightning – making roads impassable and causing widespread power outages. When the media reports mudslides in California that wash away solidly-engineered homes built to strict building codes with the best construction practices possible, imagine what is happening on the hillsides of Tijuana, Mexico where hundreds of thousands of people live in Third World poverty with only dirt-floor shacks for shelter. There, rain means the misery of being cold and wet with nowhere to go to get warm and dry, and people – especially the young and elderly – *die from rain*. But the families who've received a solid, concrete-floor home from Project Mexico no longer have to fear the rain – because of *you* and your support through the Order of St. Ignatius! As one home recipient described it, “Last winter the rains came and knocked down my whole house. Now I won't have to worry about that and I also know that the baby won't die of cold because he'll be warm and dry.” Since its inception in 1988, Project Mexico has hosted over 10,000 volunteers who have worked on projects at St. Innocent Orphanage and built nearly 250 homes for needy families. If you're wondering whether their efforts and the efforts of The Order have made a difference, please read the following excerpt from local newspapers about the grim reality of what happens when it rains:

	
<p>The typical Mexican community where Project Mexico builds homes for the poor – as you can see the roads are all dirt and the houses are very basic.</p>	<p>A Project Mexico crew of volunteers completing a wall section of the new home!</p>

*As a wall of water crashed through their impoverished neighborhood, a woman helplessly watched her husband being swept away to his death. “I saw his truck go tumbling in the water and he disappeared,” Quintero said, pain and horror still etched on her face. “I couldn’t believe what happened. I called out his name, but he didn’t answer.” A neighbor had awakened them to warn of rising water racing down the normally dry gully that bisects their neighborhood. Andrea’s husband was one of thirteen people killed by the floods.... It was the latest chapter in a perennial saga involving the city’s poor neighborhoods: violent and sudden death by water. There is a grim saying along the U.S.-Mexico border: When the big rains hit, people in San Diego get wet and people in Tijuana drown. Many of the poorer neighborhoods are little more than shantytowns built on the sides of canyons where the hills lack vegetation. With heavy rain, torrents of mud strike swiftly and ferociously. Grief-stricken residents tell numbingly similar tales of watching as loved ones were carried off. “Everything happened so quickly,” Quintero said. “My husband started the truck and was moving it to higher ground but it stalled. Then I heard the water. It sounded like a giant train roaring through.” Residents said a torrent about 100 feet wide and four feet deep swept down the canyon.”*

Thanks to the efforts of The Order, we can provide these poor families with homes where they will be kept safe and dry and protect them from the elements in the midst of such distress. May God bless you for all you have done for Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage throughout the years, as we and the poor we provide for, have counted on having The Order join us in our struggle to help the poorest of the poor. May you be blessed knowing that you are truly making a difference in the lives of many and act as the Hands of Christ to the poor and orphaned south of the border.

For more information on this ministry: [www.projectmexico.org](http://www.projectmexico.org); for more information on The Order of St. Ignatius: [www.orderofstignatius.org](http://www.orderofstignatius.org)

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