

News Sister Diocese Update Dominican Republic

“There are many, many success

stories in our mission schools.

I am one of them!”

By Scarlyn Maria



Hello, my name is Scarlyn Maria De Los Santos Nova. I am eleven years old and I live in a very small town high up in the mountains of the Cordillera Central in Los Frios, Dominican Republic. My older brother Randy, my younger sister Yamilka and I live with our parents in a small, humble wooden house.

I would like to take a few moments to share with you a little about my school days at the mission school: Nuestra Señora de Las Lomas. About eight years ago, the Diocese of Orlando decided to lend a helping hand to the children on my mountains. They decided to start a Pre School in several of the villages nearby. The school, at that time was not recognized by the state as an official school but my parents like many others decided to enroll me in the school. I was four years old then. The education was so good that in two months of being in school I had learned to read. It was easy to learn to read in my school. In the public school it is very hard.

“I hope you’ll continue to contribute. Every time you give, my friends and I are provided opportunities to grow. There are many, many success stories... I am one of them.”

At that time the school was in an old broken down house and I had to walk to school. One day on my walk to school, I came face to face with a herd of cows in the street. I had to get to school but I was afraid. I decided to jump in the ditch and wait till the animals passed. Even dirty this was not an

excuse not to go to school. I just wanted to learn so I went.

At the end of that first year, I was reading so well that I was promoted to First grade. A year later, I was again skipped up another grade. My mother was now my teacher and I thought I would sail through but all to the contrary. I had to work so very hard but finally I was at the top of my class again.

The walk to school was now much longer and all the students in my grade were very smart. We all liked to study hard.

When I was in the sixth grade, it was in October and we were all in class when Sister Bernadette arrived with

the wonderful news that our school was finally approved by the State. We were all elated but no one as much as Sister Bernadette. It was truly a moment of celebration. The students of our little school in the mountains could remain in this school until the 8th grade and then take the national graduating exams. We all screamed with delight.

Just a month ago, I completed the national exams and along with all the others in my class, graduated with high honors from 8th grade..

I am sad that I will be leaving my little mountain school but the wonderful memories that I have of my school will always be an inspiration for me.

In a few short weeks I will be entering High School. Once again the Mission has stepped in to provide the best for us. My classmates and I will be joining the Mission Residence Program and attending Loyola Polytechnic High School. I am excited about this because I dream of becoming a doctor. I know that these opportunities will open doors for me that would not be possible without the support of the Diocese of Orlando.

I thank God and the Mission Office for providing me with this new, exciting opportunity. Already, I see myself reaching out to assist the sick of my community in a few short years to come. God bless everyone who reads my story and all the many persons who have supported the Education Program of the Mission. I hope you’ll continue to contribute. Every time you give, my friends and I are provided opportunities to grow. There are many, many success stories. I am one of them.



Sister Bernadette Mackay,
Director of the Mission Office

Without YOU We Cannot Transform Lives. Partner With Us!

Transforming Lives One Person at a Time

Mission Office: 2011 Highlights

Teacher University Graduations!

This December three of our teachers will receive Bachelors Degrees in Education! Congratulations:

**Rosanny
Nidia
Yosi**

March 2012 Graduates:

**Altragracia
Julissa**

All Star Students!

Our Sister Diocese Students captured 2nd Place in 2nd Annual Catholic Athletic Competition. Our kids were thrilled bring their Trophy Up the Mountain. (see picture in article)

- ✧ 9 Mission Trips to the Dominican Republic have already taken place.
- ✧ 108 Lay Missioners have already served in our Sister Diocese this year.
- ✧ **Valencia College** partnered with us to provide students with a hands on Summer Science Camp.
- ✧ **Our Savior, Cocoa Beach, Youth & Adult Leaders plus adults from Blessed Trinity in Orlando, Epiphany, Port Orange and St. Theresa in Titusville** led Vacation Bible School in La Cucarita & La Cueva
- ✧ **Medical Missioners** provided School Physicals for children in our 5 Catholic Schools. **This was a first for us!**
- ✧ **4 Medical & Dental Missions will occur before the end of the year.**
- ✧ **Upcoming Electrical Construction Mission.**

LA CUCARITA, Dominican Republic -

Our Mission Office Needs YOU!

Father Fred Ruse, Pastoral Minister to our Sister Diocese in the Dominican Republic, is visiting Orlando for one of two annual visits back to the diocese. This three week visit is an opportunity to meet groups around the Diocese and explain our mission that is located in one of the most impoverished areas of the Dominican Republic.

"Sister Bernie, and I give a face to what it means to be a Sister Diocese," said Fr. Fred. He tells the stories of people who live out their faith in various ways. For example, he tells of Cynthia Aithcheson from Blessed Trinity, Orlando who handmade dresses for the girls in the Dominican Republic to wear for their First Holy Communion.

He says being a Sister Diocese is not one way giving –but a process of giving and receiving. "People who go on the missions are changed and they bring that change back to their schools, homes and churches. Our Diocese is changed forever."

People who go on mission trips often think about what aid or assistance they can provide. "But they receive a lot more than they give," said Fr. Fred "They receive a new sense of living simply, a greater awareness of our limited natural resources and they receive a new sense of what is really important in life," he added.

Sister Bernie, Director of the Mission, encourages



everyone to experience firsthand what it is like to be a missionary. Keila Rios recently returned from an English Summer Camp Mission where she served as a Lay Missioner.

"As an educator, I'm looking at the dedication of these kids. Ramoncito, leaves his house at 6 a.m. every day on a 2 hour walk to school. He's the only middle school student from La Cueva to attend St. Max. He's going into 8th grade. At 14 what's the driving ambition?"

"I also met Jonathon on the road going up the mountain. (Tears begin to flow as she speaks.) His father tried to burn down their house. He now lives in an 800 square foot home built by his family's sweat equity and Lay Missioners. His grandma, two uncles, his mom and three siblings share that small space. His focus is learning. That's incredible! I miss him. I go with the best intentions. The kids don't understand what

they do for my soul, and my spirituality. I definitely get more from these Mission trips than I put in. Such great kids!"

Her mom, Cristina Caban, Executive Assistant to Bishop Noonan, served as a translator on an eight-day OB/GYN surgical mission trip two years ago. Caban credits Keila for inspiring her to go to San Juan de la Maguana.

"She loved doing the missions—she was 16 when she did her first one," said Caban, who added that she is considering another mission trip this year.

For information on upcoming mission trips, call the Mission Office at 407-246-4890.

This article was written by Teresa Peterson, Diocesan Communications Director and Justo Gonzalez, II, Associate Director of Missions.



Dedicated student Ramoncito Delgado shows off the 2nd Place trophy won in 2nd Annual Catholic Athletic Competition.

**YOUR Offerings
Transform Lives!**