

Twinning relationship proposal letter
September 25, 2007
St Francis Xavier College Church

Dear Father Jorge,

Warm greetings from all of us at St Francis Xavier Church! It is a pleasure to get back to you about our twinning relationship! It is exciting to learn that Ricardo Falla will be visiting us soon in order to initiate our relationship. Before he arrives, perhaps it would be good to review with you a little about where we are and how we envision this relationship.

Here, at St Francis Xavier we (the steering committee) have met once a month since last June and we have explored different approaches to our relationship. In our last meeting, we listened to Erin Klein's report on her trip to Santa María de Chiquimula, we talked about fair trade, and we discussed our desire to know and understand better Guatemalan realities and culture (since we know so little). There were other items on the agenda that we did not cover, such as further discussion of your document "Popol Ja". We always start and end our meetings with a prayer for both of our communities.

We are aware that numbers of twinning relationships between Catholic parishes in the United States and in Latino America (and some in Africa) have substantially grown during the last ten years. Much has been learnt over these years about how to establish good relationships and we hope to explore and learn from them. Our group was founded on the belief that there is a great need in our world to create bridges between peoples by establishing a personal mutual relationship that is beneficial to both.

With this letter we would like to communicate some of our vision and hopes and request your own thoughts and reflections regarding them.

Some principles:

1. Fundamentally, we believe that twinning is about building a relationship; its goal is to develop a friendship and to become one family. The motivation behind our relationship comes from the gospel of Jesus and our common faith. We are all God's children, we are a global church. It is an excellent opportunity to share—to share friendship, our common faith (and the distinct ways in which we celebrate our faith), **our cultures**, our daily experiences and most especially our lives. We both bring gifts and struggles to the table of the Lord.

Furthermore, this will help us to understand each other, beyond political problems and stereotypes that we see in television, movies, and the media. We are all part of the same family.

2. As much as possible, we hope to form a mutual relationship. We believe that in this relationship, it would be important that each community has participation and

voice from the beginning. Then we would share ideas to answer these questions: What type of relationship do we want to develop? How do we want to do that?

3. Also we will hope to have similar structures--for example, a common mission statement concerning our twinning relationship. Ideally, it could be necessary to share ideas about how to form a common mission statement, something that can be done through email and/or phone. With time we would meet on a visit in order to strengthen and finalize this mission statement which would become the foundation for all our future actions around twinning (of course this could be changed in the future by mutual agreement).
4. Another example of a structure could be mutual committees. **For example, we have a committee here specifically for the twinning relationship, is that something that could work in La Natividad? We know that at times there may be obstacles, but if it is feasible for both of us, it would be great.**

The goals of this committee might be:

- a. To maintain communication between the parishes
- b. To establish a common mission statement
- c. To plan and coordinate the actions between our parishes
- d. To invite all of our parishioners to participate in this twinning relationship

The rationale for having a specific committee for the twinning relationship is:

- a. This is a relationship between entire parish families, not just its leaders. Laity would have a responsibility for this relationship
 - b. It is not fair to have all the responsibility fall to the leaders, since they have so many other things demanding their attention
 - c. In the situation a priest leaves the parish, if there is a committee responsible, his leaving will not affect the relationship so much. The twinning will continue.
5. In order to establish good and strong relationships, **we would welcome mutual visits between our two parishes. The goals of these visits and the fundraising necessary would need to be determined by both communities in a mutual manner.**

If you agree with the ideas in this letter, perhaps we could invite some parishioners from La Natividad (perhaps including some lay leaders from your parish?) to form this twinning committee. This committee would then reflect upon all these ideas, especially the type of relationship we all want to develop and how we want to do this. If possible, we could exchange more ideas through email, telephone or letters that we could use for our own formation. We would love to get more information on La Natividad (your economy, environment, customs, etc) and on Mayan spirituality. We have already

received a couple of your bulletins, which we found extremely interesting and informative.

Finally, Father Falla has been in communication with us and we are looking forward to his visit to St. Francis Xavier parish November 28-December 2. This will be instrumental in learning more about you and your vision for our twinning relationship with La Natividad. (therefore, we will forward this letter to him too).

If you agree and are interested, we would also like to visit you (a small group of perhaps four or five people) for maybe a week at the most (if you think this is a good idea). The group would include our pastor, Father Len Kraus, myself (the Director of Social Ministry) and a few others from our twinning steering committee.

We would see the goals of these visits as the following:

1. First and foremost, to get to know one another
2. To share our faith with you—how we understand it, celebrate it, manifest it
3. To share some of our own cultural, economic and political realities
4. To let the committees meet in order to reflect on questions such as: What type of relationship do we want to develop? How do we want to do that? Also to discuss and ratify, if we are ready, a common mission statement.
5. If there is time we could come up with some ideas for projects.

These are only our suggestions. We are looking very forward to your ideas and suggestions also.

Thank you for your kind attention to this long letter. We hope that this will have meaning and value as we grow our twinning relationship.

With gratitude and God's blessings,

Fr. Len, Vicki and Members of St. Francis Xavier Twinning Steering Committee