

*Missioners of Christ*

# EXTENDED-TERM MISSIONS PRE-DISCERNMENT DOCUMENT

Greeting fellow follower of Christ! We first want to thank you and exclaim, “Praise the Lord!” that you are open to serving God in such an incredible and selfless way. We have put together this document, based on our history of serving in the missions, to help those discerning service with the Missioners of Christ in Honduras. Our hopes are that, in being transparent about the rigors, difficulties, and expectations in serving with us, the individual who is called to a ministry *other than* the Missioners can recognize that early in the process.

We first want to share that we truly believe God gives a specific calling to each of His children to serve Him and Him alone. We see our responsibility being to assist and support any inquirer in discerning whether this specific ministry in Honduras is what they are called to. For this reason, we consider this a mutual discernment process. We prayerfully go through this process with you, and based on our past experience as well as our prayerful sense of where God is leading, we make our best prudential judgment in inviting those we feel are called. It is important to remember two things in this matter; first, we recognize that we will be imperfect in this discernment – it is very possible that we will both invite people who are not called, as well as fail to invite those who are. We just have to trust God that, if we do our best in good faith, He will bless the decision. Second, our decision *not* to invite an individual to serve with us in an extended-term capacity often has to do with our recognition of our *own* limitations. As is often the case, we recognize that we are only equipped to handle a certain amount of missionaries with only a certain level of personal challenges. Otherwise, our excessive focus on internal community problems will greatly hinder us in carrying out our mission in Honduras.

All this being said, we ask that if you do decide to enter into the discernment process with us, that you see it as just that; asking God if this is the specific ministry He is calling you to at this specific time in your life. In that, receiving a “not here/not now” response in the discernment will be an acknowledgement that another door is being opened for you in God’s path for your life. For this reason as well, *we strongly encourage all applicants to be actively applying to other faithful Catholic apostolates in addition to the Missioners.* Keeping your options open gives the Holy Spirit more room to work!

## Commitment

We are currently accepting applications for **Summer 2010**. Extended-Term Missioners commit to a minimum of two years of service – as Bishop Camilleri of Comayagua, Honduras shared, “One year given is for oneself. Two years is for Honduras.” If you are looking for something shorter term, please consider our summer/winter mid-term missions, or one of our short-term missions throughout the year.

## Catholic Identity

We are unabashedly Catholic Christian, fully submitting to the Teachings Authority of the Church, to the Holy Father, and to the local bishop and pastors wherever we serve. It has been our experience that, if an individual wants to serve with us, yet has strong issues with respect to Teachings of the Church (artificial contraception, sexual morality, women’s ordination, etc.) they too have found participation in this particular ministry to be exceptionally difficult, and potentially becoming a source of division within the Community. We in no means promote blind acceptance – yet if the stage of a person’s faith journey has them still struggling against Teachings of the Catholic Church, this particular mission would not be a good fit for them.

## Form of Ministry

Our mission is centered in evangelization and discipleship. We engage in very few work projects, and generally the only thing we attempt to build is the Kingdom of God. While there are many different roles in the Missioners in Honduras, *all* participate in our evangelization and discipleship in one way or another. This includes home visits (sometimes door to door), teaching, running ministry programs, public speaking, and the like. You will no doubt be drawn far out of your comfort zone, and you have to be open to this form of “being stretched”. As well, if you are used to being the “lead” in public ministry and such, you have to also be willing to take “less-public” support roles, when that is asked of you.

## Authority Structure

As we function as a Catholic Christian Community, obedience and submission for the common good of the Missioners Community and the greater Church is absolute necessity. We live a structured community life, similar to a religious order, which complements our rhythm of service and ministry. There is an authority structure in place within the Missioners that allows us to function in concert with the Diocese, other local Catholic religious orders, and the people we serve. The Missioners of Christ functions under and with the permission of the local Bishop, with canonical status in the Diocese of Comayagua. In deciding to serve with us, you are agreeing to work under our authority structure.

## Mental and Physical challenges

The life in the mission is both physically and mentally rigorous. A volunteer’s physical/medical conditions tend to exacerbate themselves in Honduras, so a condition of any significance will very possibly preclude you from serving in this particular mission. All who serve extended or long term with the Missioners are required to complete a physical exam and be cleared by a doctor for serving in a third world country. As well, we have found that our own limitations, as well as the harsh lifestyle, community life, and exposure to difficult life realities, tend to exacerbate mental health issues. Even those who do not have identified emotional challenges find the mission experience very trying; every weakness, insecurity, and past hurt tend to emerge during their service. While it is true this can be a first step in spiritual and emotional healing, when you already have significant mitigating mental health struggles, a foreign mission is not the best place to work these issues out.

## Prayer at the Center

We pray incessantly! Every day has about 3½ hours of prayer (including Mass). For many initially, this can be quite challenging... but after serving with us for several months, most agree it is barely enough. While some may think, “that is too much time praying, we need to do more *active serving!*” this misses the central point of our mission; this is not *our* work, it is God’s work, and our ability to do something good for the people of Honduras is directly correlated to our ability to seek God’s will, to hear His voice, and to allow Him to use us as His instruments to build His Kingdom. As John Paul II had put it, we seek to be “contemplatives in action.”

In closing, there is much more to tell you and share about the mission, but we feel this initial information will be helpful to many who would sense that God is calling them to something different than this particular ministry. If you do still sense, after reading this and prayerfully reflecting on it, God may be prompting you in this direction, please complete the brief **Preliminary Missions Inquiry Form** to begin the discernment process with us!

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