

FMA FOCUS

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Franciscan Mission Associates
Mt. Vernon, NY 10551

Missions in Guatemala - Honduras - El Salvador, Central America



Virtue: Hope

Happy are those who can say with the psalmist, "For you are my hope, O Lord; my trust, O God from my youth (Ps. 71:5). Many put their trust in money, power or in other earthly temptations. But these are transitory, for this world only, and often not much of a comfort. All of them disappoint in the end. True hope like true happiness is not fleeting, it does not wax and wane with the company you keep or the coins in your pocket. Hope in God alone is the only "sure and firm anchor." It requires patient endurance and practice. When we are lost, we know to reach out to God and he will surround us with the love we need to sustain us and to attain glorious hope.

■

What We Believe



The Liturgy of the Mass is the Church's greatest treasure, the chief duty of priests, and a copious source of nourishment for the spiritual-life. In obedience to the command of Christ, "Do this in memory of me." The church daily celebrates the Eucharist in which Christ's victory and triumph over death are again made present." At this sacred banquet where we are fed on the very body and blood of Christ, the soul is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory given to us. There are so many points during the daily or weekly Mass where we are enriched. Take for instance the recitation of the Nicene Creed. The Nicene Creed was produced by the Council of Nicea I (325). The Council

was developed to object to Arianism and to teach that Jesus Christ is “consubstantial” or “one in Being” with the Father. Many scholars agree that the basis for the Nicene Creed was the Apostles’ Creed and the profession of faith administered at Baptism.

Later, at the Council of Constantinople (381), the Church again affirmed its condemnation of Arianism and also condemned the Pneumatomachi (i.e., “the killers of the Spirit”) who not only denied the divinity of Jesus but also the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Creed was expanded to clearly define the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The words are well worn for some, but each time they are articulated they should have renewed meaning. Through this recitation we acknowledge the Trinity by saying throughout the prayer that we believe in “one God the Father almighty” and later, “One Lord Jesus Christ” and lastly, “the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life.” The beauty and strength of this prayer is its ability to illustrate clearly and succinctly what we believe. And in its concluding stanza, the faithful get to recite together our belief in what we are all doing on this earth, preparing for life everlasting.

“I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.” Although it is said so often we take it for granted, make sure at the next Mass you listen to words and declare your beliefs with passion. Say it and believe it every time.

How devoutly, actively and knowledgeably should we take part in the Eucharist where we are fed on God’s word as well as on our Savior Himself.



Remember...

Both in life and in death, we belong to the Lord. (Romans 14:8)

You can continue to carry on the work of the Missions and the people they serve by remembering them in your estate plans. These legacies of love can be made in many different ways to fit your individual circumstances.

Consider making a bequest of whatever you wish to: Franciscan Mission Associates, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598. Or, if you wish additional information about making a will, please feel free to contact:

**Franciscan Mission Associates
P.O. Box 598, Dept. 4192
Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**



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Please address all correspondence to Father Robert, O.F.M., at P.O. Box 598, Mount Vernon, NY 10551. Please send changes of address six weeks in advance; if possible include your mailing label, and give both old and new address.

A True and Faithful Vacation

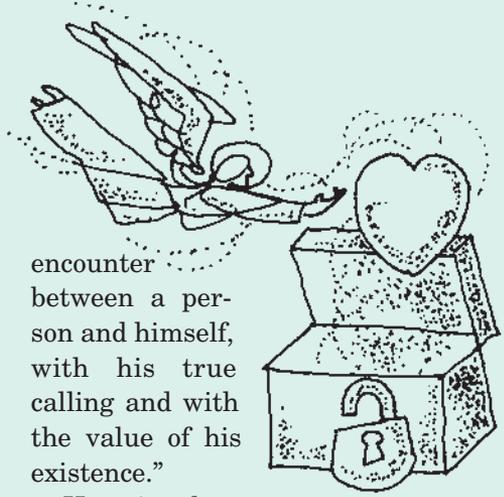
While we are urged with commercials to feed our body and visit far off places in the summer, there is another type of vacation. St. Pope Paul VI urged all Catholics who were able to do so, to take a vacation for a different reason. Vacations have an immense importance, “often decisive,” he said, “for our intellectual and moral development.” These days often the vacation is needed from electronics. All day long we scroll, search, or click. These activities seem to be keeping our minds active but are they? Even some wonderful spiritual websites can’t take the place of an in-person visit to a shrine, or even a local chapel for adoration. For some, such as the ill and shut-in, it is a blessing to be able to turn on the television or the computer and be in the company of the faithful. But if you can, make that outing to a house of worship. Remember it might be in the journey that you see the Lord’s true miracles, the vistas, the streams, the wildlife. So often with our life today, 24-hour connections, we miss the beauty of a rainstorm, we berate it’s inconvenient timing, but miss the beautiful rainbow it creates.

“Vacations are not merely a beautiful pause which interrupts the monotony of work with physical and external enjoyment,” St. Pope Paul VI added, “but they are also, and perhaps even more, an

encounter between a person and himself, with his true calling and with the value of his existence.”

Here is where we get stuck so often. If we take a vacation from our stress, our temptations, our nonstop life, we must turn it over to someone. That someone is God. If this summer, when the weather turns and we are still running around, stop and listen. Listen to the Lord, listen as he says, “do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.” (Lk. 12:22-25) Imagine if we listened, if we truly understood that God is with us, to take care of the big and little things in our lives. He is our guide and also our shoulder.

This year let us use our vacation to follow that advice and make healthy introspection, reading and spiritual reflection a part of a happy vacation. ■



ST. ANTHONY'S SERENITY

Serenity amid the changes and turbulence of life is a mental outlook often associated with older people who have successfully survived the traumas and troubles we all face. In a saint as youthful as St. Anthony of Padua, who died at the early age of 36, his equanimity was all the more remarkable. He met the changes in his life with a supernatural tranquility of spirit we all should cultivate and imitate. His life was anything but routine. His first ambition, to become a missionary, was not what his father wanted but Anthony pursued it anyway. A wayward ship brought Anthony into the company of St. Francis in Italy. That chance meeting had a profound impact on young Anthony. He admired the humility and peacefulness of St. Francis and Anthony was dispatched to work menial jobs in a hermitage. Years went on and Anthony learned to love the scripture and deeply feel the Lord working in his simple life. His simple life suited him. But that was not what God had planned for him. As the story is told, Anthony was plucked from obscurity to preach at an ordination and the rest is history. He answered the call and traveled to France and all around Italy to proclaim the word of

the Lord. His brilliant oratory and eloquence enchanted crowds for years up to his death. It was that gentle, peaceful and beautiful ability that propelled an almost immediate call for his sainthood after his early death at the age of 36. Legends grew up around his memory including a story in which a friar saw a shining light under the door of Anthony's room, peeked through the keyhole and saw the infant Jesus standing on a book with his arms around Anthony's neck. As a student, as a religious cleric, in sickness, when his missionary hopes were dashed, then as a humble kitchen friar and later as a renowned preacher and theologian, wherever duty and obedience called him, St. Anthony was a model of a person at peace with God, his neighbor and himself. His humility – knowing who and what he was is the key to his serenity. ■



VOCATIONS

Please pray for the young people at home and in the missions who are ready and eager to dedicate their lives to God and the spiritual welfare of His people.

Often all they really need is the special courage to hear God's call and to answer Him. Please join us in daily prayer, especially during the seasons of Advent and Christmas, for God's grace in providing devoted brothers, sisters, priests, and religious for Christ's work in today's world.

For further information please write Fr. Robert, O.F.M. at
Franciscan Mission Associates, P.O. Box 598, Dept. 4194, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598

The Presence of God

Realizing God's presence is not a matter of being very emotionally aware. Neither do we need highly-sensitive spiritual antenna or a vivid imagination to sense the reality of God's omnipresence, and the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. Rather it is more often a question of intelligence and will more than a feeling.

By faith we know God is everywhere, that the Lord of Creation enjoys His Creatures and "delights to be with the children of men." The Scripture assures us that the Kingdom of God is within us, and that "in Him we lie and move and have our being" our very existence. One of the more familiar bible passages that illustrates God's omnipresence in our lives is in Isaiah. "When you pass through waters, I will be with you; through rivers, you shall not be swept away. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned, nor will flames consume you." (Is. 43:2) The entire chapter depicts a Lord who "calls us by name." Do we remember that? Do we look for God in those times or do we curse God during difficulty? Unlike Anthony and so many other

saints, we don't often see that burdens are sometimes blessings in disguise. So, how do we open our eyes to our Lord? We stop walking through life looking at "things." Instead, we make ourselves aware that everything comes from God – that dolphin off the pier, the beautiful poem in that favorite book, and even the uncut grass of our neighbor. All of this and more is given to us by God. If we dedicate our lives to the Lord, and listen and follow His Will, what a glorious and enriched mortal life we will have. And with this gratitude and joy we will spread His Word to those who need it most.

God is always close to each of us, particularly in times of trial and temptation. Though we so seldom realize His presence, we acknowledge it whenever we are recollected, and we can turn to Him humbly and prayerfully for comfort. ■



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Love's Challenge

We can learn something of the love of God by reflecting on the ways people in love communicate with each other. In their ardor, sometimes they appear silly, if touching, to those of us whom years and experience have jaded. They delight in each other's company. Their love is displayed not so much in words as in deeds of thoughtfulness and affection. They are glad when together, sad when separated, and grieved when unwillingly one may cause the other any pain. Humans in love never grow weary of exchanging their intimate thought, sharing experiences, and expressing their love both in words and in their silences. The difficulty with loving God in this way is His spiritual nature, His apparent invisibility which only deep faith can penetrate. In Matthew's Gospel, our Lord is clear how we should love and whom. The first and greatest love should be reserved for God Himself, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all

your heart, with your soul and with all your mind" (Mt. 22:37). This commandment we know and we follow. We go to Mass, we pray to Him, we evangelize in our own ways. But there are other ways to show our love for God. By showing, in His place, our love for our neighbors, as is seen in the second commandment "Love your neighbor as yourself." Loving others requires two important characteristics – selflessness and sacrifice. Both mirror what, in fact, God has done to show His love for us. Some simple ways are to be kind to people we might not agree with, show affection for family members we might be estranged from, and work toward reconciliation with anyone we have personally harmed. How does this impact our love for God you say? Since God loves us all, with our faults and imperfections, if we show our love for others with their faults and imperfections, we are striving to please God.

Let us see in them Christ, our Lord and God's visible presence, however completely it may be disguised, "as often as you did it to the least of my brethren you did it to me." It is a powerful thought. ■

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Father Robert includes a special remembrance for all Franciscan Mission Associates on their birthday if he knows when it is. To be remembered at his Mass on your birthday please send him the filled in form below at any time.

My name is _____

My Birthday is: Month and Day _____

My address is _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Fr. Robert, O.F.M., Dept. 4195,
Franciscan Mission Associates, PO Box 598, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598

Director's Letter

Fr. Robert, O.F.M.

FRANCISCAN FRIARS/P.O. BOX 598/MOUNT VERNON, N.Y. 10551-0598

TEL. AREA CODE: 914 664-5604



Dear Friends of the Franciscans,

The beautiful month of June is the backdrop for many weddings. As a bride and groom are preparing, they must choose scripture for the ceremony. Often they choose a passage from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, the litany of what love is and what your life is like without it. That reading has saturated the human landscape to a point its words are not, at times, heard. But, if they are used at a wedding you attend this summer I urge you to listen closely and live out the message. Often, we think of love in relation to how much we can get? How are we loved? But this passage reminds us that love, and especially the love God has for us, is so much more.

Love is patient, love is kind.

It is not jealous, it is not pompous,

it is not inflated, it is not rude,

it does not seek its own interests,

it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury,

it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth.

It bears all things, believes all things,

hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails.

God's love never fails us, He is always there, He always loves and forgives. Let us spend June, and the summer, listening to God and living His mandate to love one another as He has loved us.

God bless you all,

Fr. Robert, ofm

Fr. Robert, O.F.M.

BECOME LIKE LITTLE CHILDREN

Fr. Jack, O.F.M.

Words of Wisdom from One of Our Missionary Friars

When we look upon the face of a child, how can we not think of the innocence of humanity? They remind us of God's entrée among us when we contemplate the Incarnation. The Son of God takes on our human frailty as a babe lying in a manger (***a trough from which animals are fed***). In order to become our spiritual nourishment, Jesus, the Bread of Life, is born in Bethlehem: the little town whose name means "House of Bread."

As adults, that child that identifies us is buried deep within our being and at times covered over by the daily responsibilities and challenges, however great or small they may be, and this preoccupies our minds, our bodies and our souls. We become hardened internally and spiritually. Where is that "spring of life giving water?" we may ask. Has our internal well dried up? Are we starving for that "Bread of Life" that produces living water?

Think for a moment on the dependency of our little ones. Because of our loving care for them, they totally confide in us once we have eliminated any presence of fear which, as strangers, we might provoke. Becoming comfortable with them gives us a sense of rejuvenation also. How much more pleasing it is for us





tion. The children love to play, and to be fed and hugged. When will we learn to let God hug and feed and dance with us? Become like little children and you will know **HIS** presence.

So many of the young people and families we see in our missionary work possess the joy of God, even though their pockets and stomachs are empty. God's love is given freely, through your generosity and the dedication of our Friars, the Word of the Lord sustains our families and gives them hope. For that we are so blessed and grateful. ■

THE BREAD OF ANGELS

Fr. Michael, O.F.M.

Our dream to build a self-sustaining bakery has taken many years and so many prayers. But recently we broke ground on our full service bakery and our dream is more and more becoming a reality.

In the early part of 2013, our students began to receive lessons from San Martin, a well-known bakery franchise, and Naturalceites, a local business. By 2014, Intecap, a prestigious vocational school, provided the students with some training with the purpose of helping them acquire knowledge and practical techniques that would help them after graduation.

We then formalized classes with the 11th grade girls, teaching them to bake bread and extended the program to

therefore when we become intimate with our God, through the innocence and gentleness of a little child! Remember, that little child can be you.

“Become like little children,” says Jesus to his disciples, **to us!** Only then will we be able to deal with the pressures and challenges in life. As children need our love and care, so too, do we need the grace and mercy of a Loving Father, the Lord God. Let us not be afraid of the encounter we can experience with the Lord through the Sacraments and Teachings of Holy Mother Church as she nurtures us with the Bread of Life and the merciful touch of God through reconcilia-



include 12th graders with a class in making pastry. In 2015, Naturalceites joined the formal trainings and began to offer our 10th and 11th grade girls bread specialties and pastries.

In 2016, Molinos Modernos joined and began teaching the 10th grade girls the basics of baking. By the end of 2016, we began to see the fruit and true potential of the program – not only providing marketable skills for the girls, but as a means of creating a self-sustainable project for Valley. At this time we were already baking all our own bread for the children and offering it after Mass as well. With the generous support and enthusiasm of Rodolfo Cabrera and Jose Moreno of the El Pulté, we were offered an amazing opportunity.



Rodolfo designed a bakery for Valley and Jose and the El Pulté committed to building it for us. The ground-breaking ceremony of the construction for the bakery took place in late 2018. We are thrilled our girls will be given the opportunity to learn valuable skills which will help them gain their own financial independence. ■



Words Worth Noting



Genuine love is demanding, but its beauty lies precisely in the demands it makes.
Pope Francis

One man with courage is a majority.
Andrew Jackson

You must do the thing you think you cannot do.
Eleanor Roosevelt

It's hard to detect good luck, it looks so much like something you earned.
Frank A. Clark

Wisdom is knowing what to do next, virtue is doing it.
David Starr Jordan

Loneliness is better than bad company.
Anonymous

If God can work through me, He can work through anyone.
St. Francis of Assisi

It takes a lot of courage to show someone else your dreams.
Erma Bombeck

Each person must live their life as a model for others.
Rosa Parks

Our Readers gladly write...



Dear Father Robert,

I want to thank the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Blessed Mother, Infant Jesus of Prague, St. Anthony, St. Jude, St. Joseph, St. Anne, St. Francis and St. Theresa for answering prayers to bring my 99-year-old mother through two kidney procedures to remove a kidney stone and two separate hip surgeries. She still has a long road ahead to recovery but we are hoping and praying that God and all the saints will bring her the rest of the way. I'm enclosing a donation for the missions and would hope that my thanks will be published in the Focus magazine if that is possible.

D.P.

Flushing, NY

Dear Father,

Recently I sent in a donation and asked for prayers for myself and I was rather distraught at the time and you all took notice. I appreciate more than I can say for your response to me and your most encouraging words, for this I am very thankful and I am keeping up my prayers, knowing dear Mary will help me in the long run. Thank you for your prayers and I pray for you also.

God bless you,

A.P.

North Chesterfield, VA

Dear Father,

Please publish this thanks to St. Anthony, St. Jude, St. Therese, St. Anne and the Blessed Mother. I feel so grateful for the prayerful intercession to Our Lord on my behalf by the Saints and Our Lady. I am having financial difficulties right now and one of my prayers was answered. I am continuing my novenas to them. I hope all your readers know that God is great and He does hear us and answer. Please accept this small donation.

Thank you,

Y.C.

Staten Island, NY

Dear Father,

Thank you for your thoughtfulness in sending me a birthday card as well as celebrating a special Mass for me on my special day. You have my gratitude.

Sincerely,

L.R.

Toronto, ON, Canada

FACING UP TO DISAPPOINTMENT

We have all heard of the famous “Murphy’s Law” that says if anything can go wrong it will. In our experience we all have ample proof of Murphy’s Law. Fortunate we are if our disappointments in life have been few; for others not so blessed – there may be many downturns to face. For example, the man of our dreams marries someone else, or perhaps the child we hoped would take over his father’s business prefers to be a poet, a teacher or an actor. The promotion we worked so hard to get is given to the vice president’s cousin. The list could go on and on. Oscar Wilde once said there are two great disappointments in life, the first is to *not* get our heart’s desire, and the other is *to* get it. Though it may seldom seem so, God uses our worst trials to help us, our best blessings often come to us very well disguised at first. Think for a moment about St. Joseph. A carpenter, or tradesman, probably thought his life was run-of-the-mill. Not so. He was chosen to be the man in Jesus’ life. He took on Mary, who also likely



had other plans for her life. And the Holy Family was blessed for eternity and its composition allowed everything to change.

Or what about Paul, originally known as Saul. He had his life figured out. He was a Roman citizen and a Pharisee who even presided over persecutions of early Christians and was, by some accounts, a witness to the martyrdom of St. Stephen. But, as is the case, God had other plans – on the road to Damascus, Saul saw the light and the future in a way he had not before. And what a blessing his life turned out to be as well.

Unless we are very holy people we are not apt to see our life in perspective, from God’s loving point of view. There is nothing our loving Father in heaven will not give us, as long as it will not be to our detriment in the long run. It is not easy to look at our own life as God does. We are too close to be detached from ourselves. This is what prayer helps us to do. Look for the blessings in disappointments, God is there. ■

DONATING ONLINE IS SIMPLE

Each day families in the poorest and most dangerous nations see hope and light because of your donations. And now you can offer your financial support online. The link below will direct you to our website. You can read about our work and see how a small sacrifice from you can make life-changing differences for so many.

http://www.franciscanmissionassoc.org/enrollments_supporter.cfm

PROMOTE CIVILITY

The world is losing its civility, in discourse and deed. Not so long ago Pope Francis addressed the U.S. Congress encouraging all to choose civility and be beacons of change. He said, “Each son or daughter of a given country has a mission, a personal and social responsibility. You are called to defend and preserve the dignity of your fellow citizens in the tireless and demanding pursuit of the common good.” He further highlighted that, “Building a future of freedom requires love of the common good and cooperation in a spirit of subsidiarity and solidarity.” He cautioned against polarization and encouraged efforts toward restoring hope and addressing injustices, which in turn, builds true peace and promotes the well-being of individuals. Choosing civility

is so important in today’s polarized world where sometimes facts are obscured by the social media noise, or are too quickly radicalized. But civility is not a new concept; it was, in fact, close to the heart of our dear St. Francis of Assisi. He lived 800 years ago and that time was also filled with turbulence and warring groups. Imagine St. Francis in today’s world, greeting all as he did hundreds of years ago with a “peace be with you,” at each meeting. He chose civility in relation to his human, animal and all earthly counterparts. His prayer, so well known, shows how he believes in peace and civility.

*Lord make me an instrument of
your peace*

*Where there is hatred let me sow
love*

Where there is injury, pardon

Where there is doubt, faith

Where there is despair, hope

Where there is darkness, light

And where there is sadness, joy

This beautiful compassion should be our guiding light as we make our way through this uncivil world. ■



Visit us on the web
franciscanmissionassoc.org

CELEBRATING JOHN THE BAPTIST AND HUMILITY

In June the church celebrates the Nativity of John the Baptist – the one who Baptizes our Lord. Luke’s Gospel begins the story.



“The angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right of the altar of incense. Zechariah was troubled by what he saw, and fear came upon him.

But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a

son, and you shall name him John.

And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He will drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will be filled with the holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb, and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.

He will go before them in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers toward children and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to prepare a people fit for the Lord.” (Lk 1:11-17)

The Angel of the Lord who declared these words to Zechariah was Gabriel, the same angel who later in Luke declared the news to Mary of her great responsibility.

The beautiful story of these two cousins is one of hope and humility and reverence. John challenges us as Christians to the fundamental attitude of Christianity—total dependence on the Father, in Christ. Except for the Mother of God, no one had a higher function in the unfolding of salvation. Yet the least in the kingdom, Jesus said, is greater than he, for the pure gift that the Father gives. The attractiveness as well as the austerity of John, his fierce courage in denouncing evil—all stem from his fundamental and total placing of his life within the will of God. ■

ST. ANTHONY’S BREAD

Offerings in honor of St. Anthony, either in petition for a favor sought, or in thanksgiving for a favor received, are used to assist the poor. Thus, they have received the name, St. Anthony’s Bread. Such offerings are also used to help educate priests and religious.

Fr. Robert will gladly send you a leaflet explaining the origin and purpose of this devout practice, now centuries old. Please write:

St. Anthony’s Bread, Franciscan Mission Associates
PO Box 598, Dept 4193, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598

Special Novena Schedule Summer 2019

All year round Franciscan Mission Associates conducts a regular schedule of spiritual and devotional exercises in which all benefactors are invited to take part. During the summer months the Special Novena schedule is:

May 7-15 and May 16-24.....	Feast of St. Dymphna (May 15)
June 2-10 and June 11-19	Novena of the Holy Spirit
June 5-13 and June 13-21	Feast of St. Anthony (June 13)
June 20-28	Feast of the Sacred Heart
June 22-30	St. Anthony for a safe summer
July 18-26.....	Feast of St. Anne
August 2-10 and August 11-19	St. Anthony (in Padua)
August 7-15	Assumption of Our Lady
Sept. 2-10 and Sept. 11-19	St. Jude Novena

Holy Mass is offered each day for all Franciscan Mission Associates benefactors and for the special intentions they request. Kindly forward your petitions for the Novenas scheduled to:

**Father Robert, O.F.M., Franciscan Mission Associates
PO Box 598, Dept. 4191, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**



Pax et Bonum!

Since 1855, the Franciscan friars of Immaculate Conception Province have striven to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ, following the example of our Seraphic Father, St. Francis. We minister to God's people throughout the eastern seaboard of the United States; in Toronto, Canada; and in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador in Central America.