

# PORTAL DE BELEN 2020 REVIEW

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# WORDS FROM PADRE

To Our Dear Friends of the Foundation,

In the midst of this global pandemic, because of your past and present generosity, we have been able to continue our mission of serving those most in need in the Dominican Republic.

The Dominican Republic has been particularly hit hard by COVID-19 and cases jumped from 18,000 in June to more than 130,000 today with no end in sight.

Your support has given our brothers and sisters hope and has allowed us to continue our work. We have begun construction on our new church in Don Juan in addition to assisting those hit hardest by the pandemic providing them food and medicine. We have continued building latrines and supporting our schools and classes have resumed virtually.

The first words heard from the angels as they appeared to the shepherds were "Do not be afraid. I tell you news of great joy for all peoples."

This child belongs to all, not to any privileged persons but for all. In him this unjust world will encounter the salvation of God. Today, we still will find him not among the powerful, but among the poor, weak, and those in need.

As you may know, due to the present financial situation in the Diocese of Rochester, NY, parishes who were once our main source of support can no longer directly help us. Your contributions are what has allowed us to continue helping those in need.

With a heart full of gratitude, I thank you for continuing to make this work possible. May God's blessings be many for you in the year ahead. Please consider making a donation to keep the mission moving forward. With the pandemic, the needs are greater than ever.

Blessings and prayers,



Padre Ron





# COPING WITH COVID-19

Starting mid-March, the Dominican Republic shut down due to the pandemic through May. Many lost their jobs as the normalcy of daily life was put on hold.

There is currently a strictly enforced nationwide curfew in place that prevents people from being outside of their homes past 9 PM on weekdays and 7 PM on weekends. The government is asking people to stay home except for work and to get food, to not congregate, especially at night, to wear a mask, and remain socially distant. This has proved to be difficult as the culture is very social.

Medical care is limited with some hospitals at or near capacity and there is a limited availability of ICU beds. Thankfully though, masks have been inexpensive and relatively easy to obtain.

Churches have been limiting attendance to 30% to try and minimize the spread and allow social distancing.

# PROJECT UPDATES

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**SAN JUAN DE BAPTISTA  
CHURCH REBUILD**



**PROJECT HATO NUEVO**



**DON JUAN SCHOOL AND  
PROJECT RACHEL**



**LATRINES PROJECT**

# SAN JUAN DE BAPTISTA CHURCH REBUILD

Your support has given our brothers and sisters hope and allowed construction to begin on our new church in Don Juan, San Juan de Baptista.

Through your generosity, we met our goal of raising \$100,000 which has been matched by the Foundation.

The new church will seat 300 and serve as a gathering point for the community.

We are fortunate to have Father Lorenzo Vargas overseeing the new construction. Meanwhile, we are holding mass in the city community center.



# PROJECT HATO NUEVO

The pandemic has been especially hard on the poor who have been the first to lose their jobs and benefits. The Foundation has been helping those with no resources or government aid in Don Juan and Hato Nuevo.

Our project, Hato Nuevo, is being run by Sister Lidia Alcantara. Through the project, we help hundreds of penniless families providing 600 people with food items and medicines on a bi-weekly basis.

We are also helping undocumented Haitians obtain their legal documents from the government which includes registering children born at home, giving them a chance for a better life.



# DON JUAN SCHOOL

Our school, Santa Maria Josefa Rossello, in Don Juan opened virtually on November 2nd utilizing workbooks, Zoom, and WhatsApp to conduct classes.

The teachers have been working closely with parents to ensure that the children have the resources to join the virtual classrooms.

Don Juan currently has 450 students - preschool through 8th grade - enrolled. The Foundation provides financial support for school supplies, the school bus and driver, teacher salaries not covered by the state, and building repairs.

This past spring, we replaced 2 roofs on the school building costing \$12,000.



# PROJECT RACHEL

Our school Project Rachel, also opened virtually on November 2nd.

Project Rachel is our school for children with special needs, Autism, Down Syndrome, and those who have suffered brain traumas. We have 48 students enrolled at the school and a ratio of 8 children per teacher. The Foundation pays for the teacher's salaries, school materials, internet, building rent, and school lunches.

Since the shutdown of the pandemic, we have continued to support our teachers' salaries along with critical projects.



# THE LATRINES PROJECT



The latrines project supports the building of latrines in areas where people have no other means. The project is run by Eddie Leyba who works diligently to identify families who are in need. The family is required to dig a hole for the latrine. Eddie will then purchase the materials and hires a family of Haitians (Bolivar and his son) to build the latrine.

Each latrine costs \$200. To date, we have built 1,020 latrines. We are working through the smallest and most remote communities one at a time. There are still a lot of communities and families in need and we hope to continue and grow the work of building latrines in 2021.

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**Thank you for your support and generosity!**



**[www.portaldebelenfoundation.org](http://www.portaldebelenfoundation.org)**

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Portal de Belen Foundation is tax exempt as described in  
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