

A LENTEN JOURNEY OF ACCOMPANIMENT WALKING WITH TEOSINTE

St. Sebastian's 2009 Lenten Outreach Project

This guide is available on the parish website at <http://www.saintsebastianonline.net/> .

****Viewing it online allows you easier access to the recommended websites.**



These reference materials are intended to help parishioners, families and the students of St. Sebastian School deepen our connection with our sister parish in Teosinte, El Salvador as part of our Lenten experience. It is our hope that as we journey through Lent in solidarity with Teosinte we will; **1)** learn more about and grow in our appreciation of our Teosinte family, **2)** gain a better understanding of the model of accompaniment and the concept of solidarity and share those ideas in meaningful ways with the children in our lives, and **3)** experience spiritual growth and closeness to God as we try to answer the call to peace, justice and global solidarity. The reference materials include:

Part I - Background on Teosinte

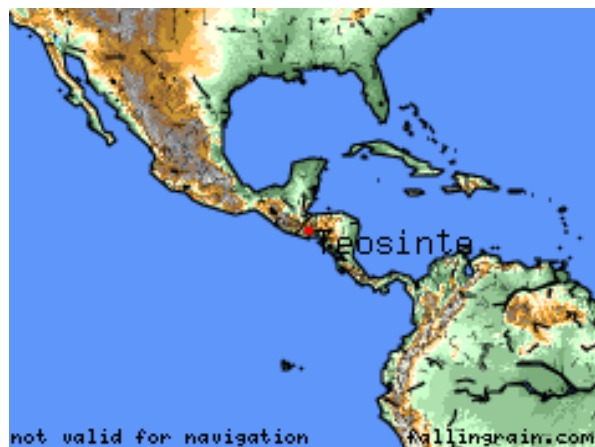
Part II - Reflections on Accompaniment & Solidarity

Part III - Charity and Solidarity – Use your “Carry Out the Mission” containers **and** practice solidarity!
Includes suggested Lenten activities for adults, kids and families

(Many helpful resources are available on the internet. Instead of printing and copying that information the links to appropriate websites are noted. You can further explore the topic or activity on the internet if you wish. If you can not access the internet and want a copy of an on-line document, contact Joan Plumley, director of Faith Formation, at 453-7150.)

PART I – Background on Teosinte, El Salvador

The word Teosinte means ‘sacred corn’ in the language of the Lenca: the indigenous people who initially settled the mountain hillside of our sister parish approximately 300 years ago. Stone wall formations remain in the village as evidence of the Lenca’s early presence there. Also remaining in the village is the importance of corn - a staple in the diet and culture of its residents today. The current community of Teosinte was founded on August 19th, 1988 by a group of Salvadoran families who had been living in the Mesa Grande refugee camp in Honduras. The families had originally lived in another part of El Salvador and fled to Honduras during their country’s civil war. They were not mountain farmers until they came to Teosinte. Now they plant corn on hillsides so steep it boggles the mind and rows of corn stalks line the hilly, rocky paths to their door-steps. That they have mastered mountain farming is but one example of their strength and resilience.



St. Sebastian's became a sister parish to Teosinte in 1992. The City of Arlington, MA is a sister city to Teosinte. Below are excerpts from their website www.arlingtonteosinte.org which provide some historical background for the Teosinte community:

"El Salvador was engulfed in civil war from 1980 until 1992. The effects on this tiny country... were devastating. Seventy-five thousand people died and 1.5 million (more than 1 out of every 5) were displaced. The roots of the civil war lie in El Salvador's long history of rule by a small circle of elites and the poverty and disenfranchisement of most of its people.

During the civil war, entire villages were driven out of their homes. Fearing for their lives, civilians fled their land to escape the brutal fighting. For many years they were forced to live in overcrowded refugee camps, the largest of which was the Mesa Grande camp in Honduras. Groups of villagers began to organize in order to better advocate for their rights. The Association of Communities for the Development of Chalatenango (CCR) was founded to help people return to the province of Chalatenango, where Teosinte is located.

On February 14, 1992, the Salvadoran Peace Accords were signed... However, true peace and security have not come to El Salvador. Salvadorans continue to struggle.....El Salvador remains a divided country... half living below the poverty line, and an extreme concentration of wealth, media ownership and political power in a small percentage of the population. Due to the lack of job opportunities, more than a quarter of the Salvadoran population has emigrated to the United States, many without documentation. Money sent back to El Salvador by Salvadoran workers...constitutes 17% of El Salvador's gross net product – the single largest source of revenue. (It is said that El Salvador's chief export is people. (This is a matter of deep concern to the residents of Teosinte who say they are losing their youth to the U.S.)

Today Teosinte is a village of approximately 280 people located in the mountainous region of northern El Salvador, in the province of Chalatenango. Like those who live in other repopulated villages, the people of Teosinte are mostly subsistence farmers. Teosinte is remote, with little infrastructure and few employment opportunities. However, its remoteness also protects it from the urban violence found in the capital San Salvador."

It is appropriate that the above passage end on a positive note because what St. Sebastian parishioners have found in our 17 years of sistering is that the residents of Teosinte are people of great faith, hope and love in spite of a difficult past and the current economic and socio-political conditions that bring constant concern to their daily lives. Though they have little in the way of material wealth they offer us much in their examples of both care and concern for each other as well as hope and perseverance in the face of poverty and oppression. Hopefully you will witness this in person soon as we are inviting friends from Teosinte to visit us this fall. In the meantime, we continue our long distance friendship based on a common faith and during this season of Lent we consider the example of our Teosinte family and try to learn from them. We also consider their concerns and how our intentions can attempt to address them. **Their concerns include: Environmental Issues - especially clean water concerns, Limited Access to Education, Human and Civil Rights Abuses, Fair Trade Issues, Food and Water Security, Immigration concerns, Limited Health Care Access.**

For further reading on the background of Teosinte and El Salvador we suggest these web-sites:

History: <http://www.pbs.org/itvs/enemiesofwar/elsalvador.html>

Concerns in El Salvador/Teosinte today: <http://www.share-elsalvador.org/> and <http://www.cispes.org/>

Current Water and Civil Rights issues: <http://www.projectcensored.org/top-stories/articles/11-el-salvadors-water-privatization-and-the-global-war-on-terror/>

St. Seb's website on Teosinte with past issues of Solidaridad: <http://www.teosinte.org/friends.php>

The four part series of articles inspired by an Arlington, MA resident's visit to Teosinte in Aug '08:

http://www.arlingtonteosinte.org/images/Democracy_dramatic_and_humble.pdf

http://www.arlingtonteosinte.org/images/A_Spiritual_Relationship.pdf

<http://www.arlingtonteosinte.org/images/WorkingTowardADifferentLife.pdf>

<http://www.arlingtonteosinte.org/images/TheyMustCarryOn.pdf>

PART II - Reflections on Accompaniment and Solidarity



The principals of solidarity and the model of accompaniment are what have guided our sister parish relationship the past 17 years. These concepts ask us to form relationships with the poor and disadvantaged that *go beyond charitable giving*.

Our experience with the people of Teosinte has been this: They greatly appreciate the financial assistance we've provided towards the rebuilding of their church which was bombed out during their civil war. They are especially grateful for our assistance with scholarship funds to help their youth attend high school and college. They see those contributions as investments in their community, their future and the future of their country. Still, more important to them, they say, is our friendship, our prayers, and the knowledge that we believe in them, value them and support them in solidarity. This Lent we hope to deepen our understanding of the concepts that underlie our Teosinte relationship.

A good place to start is with excerpts from an article on accompaniment written by a Dominican priest, Fr. Jim Barnett who spent years working with the poor of El Salvador. The full article is *well worth* the read. We strongly suggest you access it on-line at <http://www.domcentral.org/preach/accomp.htm>. In part, this is what he says:

“A group of new missionaries from the States had an orientation to the country and finally met with the Archbishop (Romero) for his blessing...He told them: "We're very grateful for your coming here--you've had many opportunities for education and the people will appreciate you. In the U.S. you have great churches and schools and pastoral programs and wonderful parish plants. But what the people really need is that you simply WALK WITH THEM in their lives, that you ACCOMPANY them on their own faith journey, that you are THERE WITH THEM as they struggle to work out their own historical destiny. If you do that--if you simply accompany the people, I tell you, you will discover a wonderful faith, and YOUR faith and YOUR lives will be transformed.”

“Accompaniment can be the most intimate, transforming process imaginable--the reality of friendship--love is an ultimate expression of accompaniment--to BE WITH a person, to get inside of their skin, their life, their experiences, to know the world through their eyes, to stand with them and be at their side in their pain and struggles, to walk with them...**That is love--and accompaniment is the way to it.**”

“Archbishop Romero took accompaniment to a deeper level. Care for the poor had been consistent with his life as a priest all along. But when he became archbishop of San Salvador, he took sides, he chose the side of the poor, he directly faced the forces aligned against them, he entered their conflictive, messy social struggle--and this was a very different matter. He became "political"...political accompaniment is sometimes called *solidarity*. ...And I should also mention that John Paul II's social encyclicals often refer to the concept of solidarity. In "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis", for example, he writes: "The Church feels called to take her stand beside the poor...This commitment to solidarity demands a readiness to accept the sacrifices necessary for the good of the whole community...**Solidarity (he continues) is not a feeling of vague compassion, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the concrete goal**"--and this "concrete goal" in the writings of the Latin American bishops at Medellin is no less than the *transformation of social structures...systemic social change.*”

It is important to realize that all parties involved in accompaniment gain from the experience. In his article Fr. Barnett shares many examples of the “mutuality” of accompaniment. Below we share one:

“A final story about a sister of Loretto from the U.S., Ann Manganero, who was also a medical doctor working in a clinic behind the lines during the civil war in El Salvador. One day a baby was born about two months premature. The mother died in birth. The baby was tiny--about four pounds--and clearly would not survive. But Sister Ann kept her constantly in her arms, talking to her, singing to her, carrying her as she dealt with other patients, as she herself slept or cleaned the floor. They were literally inseparable. After a couple of days the baby died. One of the workers

at the clinic said, "What a shame... the poor baby didn't have anything." Sister Ann cried back, **"Didn't have anything? That baby was powerful. That baby had the power to *draw out of me* so much compassion that I thought I would burst, to *draw out of me* pure, divine love--in spite of my busyness, in spite of the other patients, in spite of the war, that baby brought out God's own Spirit, God's love, God's life, from me."** That, my friends, is what can happen with accompaniment. Amen."

Other Reflections on Solidarity, Social Justice and Charity:

"Charity consoles but does not question... Unlike solidarity, which is horizontal and takes place between equals, charity is top down, humiliating those who receive it and never challenging the implicit power relations. In the best of cases, there will be justice someday, high in heaven. Here on earth, charity doesn't worry injustice; it just tries to hide it." – Eduardo Galeano

"Solidarity is action on behalf of the one human family, calling us to help overcome the divisions in our world. Solidarity binds the rich to the poor. It makes the free zealous for the cause of the oppressed. It drives the comfortable and secure to take risks for the victims of tyranny and war. It calls those who are strong to care for those who are weak and vulnerable across the spectrum of human life. It opens homes and hearts to those in flight from terror and to migrants whose daily toil supports affluent lifestyles. Peacemaking, as Pope John Paul II has told us, is the work of solidarity." *Called to Global Solidarity*, USCCB

"Solidarity is not charity but mutual aid in pursuit of shared objectives." – Samora Machel

"If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound with mine, then let us work together." - Lila Watson, aboriginal activist

Once there was a town beyond the bend of a large river. Some children were playing near the river when they saw three bodies float by. They got help and the townsfolk pulled the bodies out. One was dead so they buried it. One was alive but ill, so they put him in the hospital. The third was a healthy child they placed with a family who cared for it. From that day on, every day bodies came floating down the river and, every day, the town tended to them like the first ones. This went on for years. The town grew to expect the bodies and developed elaborate systems for pulling them out and tending to them. Some townsfolk were quite generous tending to the bodies and some even gave up their jobs to do it full time. The town felt a certain pride in its generosity but, sadly, no one ever bothered to go up river and beyond the bend that hid from their sight what was there and why, daily, bodies floated down the river. (Adapted from *The Holy Longing* by Fr. Ronald Rolheiser)

Referring to the above story Fr. Rolheiser writes in *The Holy Longing*: "Private charity responds to the homeless, wounded and dead bodies but it does not of itself try to get at the reasons why they are there. Social justice tries to go up the river and change the reasons that create homeless, wounded and dead bodies... Hence justice differs from private charity: Charity is about giving a hungry person some bread, while justice is about trying to change the system so that nobody has excess bread while some have none; charity is about treating your neighbors with respect, while justice is about trying to get at the deeper roots of racism; charity is about helping specific victims of war, while justice is about trying to change the things in the world that ultimately lead to war."

For further reading on accompaniment and solidarity:

Fr. Jim Barnett's full article on accompaniment: <http://www.domcentral.org/preach/accomp.htm>

US Conference of Catholic Bishops "Called to Global Solidarity":

<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/globalsolidarity.shtml>

Part III - Practicing Charity and Solidarity - Use your
"Carry Out the Mission" containers *and* practice solidarity!

This lent you can use the “Carry Out the Mission” containers you’ve been provided to collect money if you decide to donate money to Teosinte during lent. The funds will go toward their scholarship program.

We want to suggest, however, that you go a step beyond charitable giving to learn more about Teosinte and attempt to better understand the concerns that affect their life in El Salvador. We invite you to incorporate simple acts of solidarity (suggestions start below) in your Lenten journey and hope that in this process your bond with Teosinte is strengthened. Below we suggest a way to use the carry out containers as you practice solidarity.

CHARITY – USING YOUR “CARRY OUT THE MISSION” CONTAINERS

(If you received a plain carry out box you can make the project of decorating it a family activity. Because corn and a clean environment are so important to Teosinte we suggest decorating it with images of corn, mountains, and clean rivers. You and your kids can also try your hand at the brightly colored images of traditional Salvadoran artwork you’ve seen on the wooden crafts we sell. Samples of this artwork can be viewed on-line at http://www.ellahouse.com/shopping/products.php?sort_by=Wood&subcategory=Crosses)

Because corn is such a vital component not only in the diet but also the culture of Teosinte we suggest that you place a scoopful of corn kernels (popcorn) in your container as a symbolic gesture of your solidarity with Teosinte when you pray, sacrifice or act in solidarity with them. The teacher’s will be doing this with the school children. If you incorporate a component of charitable giving as part of your Lenten journey, you can convert your kernels to coins (ex. a penny, dime, quarter, etc. per kernel of corn or teaspoon of kernels) and then bring your container to the Gathering Space on or before Palm Sunday. They will be presented at the offertory. Use your collected kernels for a popcorn party at home and/or school. The growth (in volume) of the popped corn is a reflection of your growth in knowledge of and solidarity with the people of Teosinte.

SOLIDARITY – WALK WITH TEOSINTE THIS LENTEN SEASON

In solidarity with the people of Teosinte, El Salvador, during this Lenten season, we will:

Assist an elderly person in our family or community - In Teosinte their elders are held in high regard. When on a delegation to Teosinte parishioners are escorted to each elders home where they share their life stories. The community of Teosinte helps them with crops and other needs.

Help a young person with school work, tutoring – A high school education should be a basic right but in Teosinte it is a privilege that requires substantial economic sacrifice by each student’s family. They place great value on education saying, “Los jovenes son nuestro futuro.” The children are our future.

Stand up for someone who is being bullied - For many years the Salvadoran people were bullied by a repressive government. Powerless against guns and bombs many fled to refugee camps. War ended only when the international community took a stand to help end the violence.



Conserve resources in my home or workplace – As we begin Lent, Teosinte begins their dry season. This means that they will have

running water in their homes for less than an hour each day. Some days there will be no running water. This will be the case until mid-June when the rainy season starts.

Contribute food to a local pantry or work with Bread for the World striving to end hunger –

For the most part Teosinte is a made up of subsistence farmers. They consume what they harvest and survive outside of the growing season primarily on their corn and bean crops that are most easily preserved. In recent years, global market forces and the use of corn in bio-fuels have caused the price of corn and other staples to rise in El Salvador. The UN estimates that the caloric intake of Salvadorans has decreased by 60% since 2006! This year the Teosinte town council created a new committee on Food Security.

Contribute blankets or clothing to a homeless shelter or volunteer with an agency that works to create affordable housing – Teosinte became home for the homeless. When the refugees first arrived in Teosinte they worked together to restore existing structures damaged by war and build homes for each other. They were homeless due to a civil war. The homeless in our community fight their own personal wars.

Walk the Way of the Cross (Stations of the Cross) with Teosinte – On Friday, March 27th at 7pm we will pray the Stations of the Cross with reflections on Peace and Justice at St. Sebastian church. That same evening the faith community in Teosinte will do the same.

Purchase more fair trade products - We pay a fair price to the women of the sewing shop in Teosinte for the quality products they create. Everyone deserves fair pay for their work or product and Fair Trade purveyors ensure that happens. Visit <http://milwfairtrade.org/> for a list of local businesses with Fair Trade products. The Four Corners of the World at 54th & Vliet carries items from the Teosinte sewing co-op.

Write a letter of advocacy (issues include food security, water, immigration) – At the risk of being arrested Salvadorans rally against a government that wants to privatize the water system and mining companies that they believe will pollute the rivers. A large portion of US foreign aid is supposed to be used to alleviate poverty and is to be contingent on human rights standards. Your representatives care about your concerns and you can complain and protest without fear of violent reprisal. If you visit the SHARE or CISPES websites (see bottom of page two) you will find opportunities to engage in advocacy on behalf of Teosinte.

Donate to or volunteer with our local Catholic Charities office – Our local Catholic Charities office has programs serving immigrants and refugees in our community.

Pray for the needs of Teosinte- We recently received these prayer requests directly from Teosinte: 1-For the health of the elderly of Teosinte, 2 -For the youth of our community that each day they become better people for the good of their families and the community. 3 - That each home in Teosinte has better living conditions in 2009. 4 - For our future Salvadoran government that it carry forth a plan of liberty and equal opportunity for all Salvadoran households. 5 -That the new administration of the United States governs with liberty and equality for the well being of our emigrants; especially those from Teosinte. 6- For food security and the economic crisis of all Latin-American people that our living conditions improve.

Select a Teosinte family and pray for and/or write to them – See the list of families in the Teosinte corner of the Gathering Space at church.

OTHER SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS AND FAMILIES:

1 - Read the story *Swimmy*, by Leo Lionni. Discuss how all the fish worked together for the good of all. Explain the need for families, parishes & schools to work together and with people from other places like Teosinte so that all people may have a better life. (Adapted from the USCCB website.) If you want a *Swimmy* related classroom or family activity you will find a sample at: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/3489>

2 -Create handouts with a picture of a backpack or get an empty backpack for each person participating. Ask everyone to imagine that they arrive home from school/work to learn that their entire family is leaving in one hour and might never return. They may take only what they can carry in their backpacks. On the handout, have students make a list of the items they would bring. (Or if you are at home, take time to pack your back backs.) What was packed and why? What was left behind? What and who will be missed the most? **Explain that during the war many residents of Teosinte had to abandon the homes, friends and towns where they grew up and live for years as refugees until they were allowed to create a new community in Teosinte.** (Adapted from the USCCB website.)

3 - Dr. Suess' book, *The Sneetches*, is a recommended reading source for teaching basic values needed to accomplish solidarity; acceptance of those who are different from us and the celebration of diversity.

4 - The Body of the Church Activity for Classroom or Family (Adapted from Diocese of Madison, Ghana Curriculum Project, <http://www.straphael.org/MadisonStandards/GSPDM.htm>)

A. Read 1Corinthians 12:13-17, 19-22 with the children. Discuss the passage with them. Ask them; is it better to do be a thigh or an eye? Is it a contest? Why or why not?

B. On chalkboard/paper, write the headings "El Salvador" and "U.S." Brainstorm what comes to mind when they hear these phrases. Once you have a number of items below each heading, discuss with the students if they see any patterns—any similarities/differences between the two lists. Do things on one list seem better or worse than the other list? Do we need El Salvador and does it need us? In what ways?

C. Read the following passage from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Leader's Guide to Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*: "We are called to global solidarity. We are one human family regardless of national, racial, ethnic, gender, economic or ideological boundaries. Global solidarity expresses concerns for world peace and international development." Ask that they discuss what this statement means to them.

D. Explain that they'll do an activity that looks at each of their own gifts. Divide the class into small groups. (Adapt process if doing this at home.) Give each group a large piece of paper and markers. One person in the group lies down on the paper and the rest trace the outline of his/her body. Have each student write their name next to the body part with which they most associate themselves and their gifts. Have each student share why they chose a particular part of the body. After the groups have discussed their choices, have the class discuss the activity. Did groups find that people chose the same body parts or was there a variety? Emphasize that each person has gifts, but that all are needed. Draw a connection to how throughout the world, as part of the human family, we all have gifts and all are equally needed and valuable, recognizing this is the basis for solidarity.

5 – Make a meal in Solidarity w/ Teosinte: Below are links to recipes for a traditional Salvadoran meal:

Pupusas (like a stuffed corn tortilla): <http://www.whats4eats.com/breads/pupusas-recipe>

Curtido (a slaw served w/ pupusas): <http://www.whats4eats.com/salads/curtido-recipe>

Casamiento (black bean& rice): <http://www.whats4eats.com/grains/gallo-pinto-recipe>

Plátanos Fritos (fried plantains): <http://www.whats4eats.com/vegetables/platanos-fritos-recipe>

6 – Use fair trade ideals to teach solidarity: The Catholic Relief Service website on Fair Trade offers educational resources and lesson plans on solidarity and other themes of Catholic Social Teaching: <http://www.crsfairtrade.org/resources/download.cfm#education>