

January 2021

Dear friends of the people of Honduras,

Warmest greetings, and hopes you are healthy and well.

Two months after a [pair of hurricanes decimated Honduras](#) left 80% of people without basic resources and destroyed or affected up to 80% of the country's agricultural production, utter despair, and near starvation is griping the population.

- ❖ The [UN estimates that 1.4 million](#) Hondurans remain particularly vulnerable due to the compounding threats of food insecurity and disease, growing numbers of Covid-19 and dengue fever cases, on top of the destroyed homes, collapsed latrines, contaminated wells, and people living in unfit shelters.
- ❖ The corrupt, repressive Honduran government has abandoned the poor majority and is accused of absconding with international aid meant to address the pandemic as well as the hurricanes.
- ❖ The Honduran public healthcare system in the north of the country, already weakened from the 2014 corruption scandal, in which the president's political party siphoned off \$300 million, [collapsed](#) this week.

Given this context of mass desperation, it is unsurprising that last week, up to 9000 migrants left Honduras by foot encountering cruel repression in Guatemala, which pushed them back across their border. As our friends at [Radio Progreso](#) tell us, the people leaving the country are "a desperate expression of a population that can no longer bear its situation of anguish and uncertainty, and that in these times has reached its extremes of hunger and unemployment with the pandemic, the passage of hurricanes Eta and Iota, plus the uncontrolled corruption of the core that is controlled by the State."

In spite of this growing misery, hope springs forth in a new project offered by our Honduran friends. They have offered a concrete model to address food insecurity and bring life and light to the communities, but this project urgently needs our immediate help.

The SHARE Foundation has joined our Honduran sisters and brothers in launching the "**Vamos a la Milpa***" campaign. This is a bi-national campaign of solidarity in support of a development initiative to strengthen communities organizing for local food production. With our help, Vamos a la Milpa can recover indigenous traditions by planting community vegetable gardens and fruit trees in rural and urban settings to nourish their bodies, spirits, the community, and Mother Earth.

- ❖ Vamos a la Milpa is solidarity. The Milpa seeks to strengthen community values and foster unity. The land, the water, the forest, and the people are bound together in hope.
- ❖ Vamos a la Milpa is powerful. It promotes equity, sovereignty and harmony with the environment.
- ❖ Vamos a la Milpa is life, rooted in creation, nourishing bodies and spirits with food and love.

From the *Paso a Paso* vegetable gardens in the urban area of San Pedro Sula to small plots of land in the mountains of Esperanza where Berta Caceres' *COPINH** works, to the Bajo Aguan where the San Isidro parish works on the banks of the Guapinol river – communities are hoping for resources to plant their Milpa.

Hermana Rosa Maria and Padre Melo of Honduras have asked for help in building up this life-giving project.

We, in turn, invite you to share this invitation and find ways to be in solidarity.

Help us generate resources to purchase native seeds, tools, and the organizational resources to plant the Milpa in many communities, and where needed, to help purchase land for collective production! \$1,200 will support a group of 12 farmers.

Local food production is revolutionary and reinforces food sovereignty, where people have control of what and how they produce and how it is shared. Through our material support, our abiding love and prayer, we can make such a difference and be a source of hope in these perilous times.

Thank you for your offering of any size and your prayers,

In Solidarity with the Milpa,

Jean Stokan, Mary Anne Perrone, Sister Ann Pratt, OP Amy Argenal, Rev Deb Avery, Sister Ann Scholz, SSND and Jose Artiga.

P.S. Some people have already stepped forward to pledge their stimulus checks to this urgent plea.

Letter from Fr. Melo and Hermana Rosa Maria from Honduras:

January 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

In these first weeks of this year full of uncertainty and desperation for our people, we write with the conviction that to feed our hopes and strengthen our faith –we hold tight to your solidarity.

First and foremost, we want to thank you for your presence and concern as we face unimaginable hardship and struggle as a result of two hurricanes, plus the impact of the pandemic, so many here have lost everything. Your expressions of solidarity have given us an added measure of strength and are transformative, especially as we launch a new campaign, *Vamos a la Milpa*— which is stirring hope in our people.

In Honduras, the Milpa consists of corn, beans, squash, fruit trees, and more. Traditionally, indigenous communities came together to plant, cultivate, harvest, and share the fruits of their collective labor. Our dream is to recover this tradition in response to the crisis.

"**Vamos a la Milpa**" seeks to address the hunger that is affecting tens of thousands of families. Our bodies are hungry for food just as our spirits are hungry for justice.

Vamos a la Milpa is an answer to the urgency of planting to feed ourselves, and is a call to recover the wealth and strength of the community. It is a proposal that unites Mother Earth with the Community, in the spirit of the Salvadoran martyr, Rutilio Grande SJ, who said, "*Nos salvamos en racimo, nos salvamos en comunidad*, we are saved in a cluster, we are saved in community."

As part of our extended family, dear sisters and brothers, we ask you to join us in making this dream come true. We ask you to unite with us as we link with international solidarity around our Mother Earth and turn the Honduran destruction into the creative sowing of our territory as *La Casa Comun*, the Common House dedicated to the Common Good.

Thank you for walking side by side with our people.

With our embrace and prayer:

Sr. Rosa Maria Trochez, SSND

Fr. Ismael Moreno, SJ (Padre Melo)