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A medical clinic in Mexico

Every Sunday at the crack of dawn, scores of indigenous Mazahuas and Otomíes gather at the old hacienda of San José de Toshi to receive medical treatment, participate in a training workshop, pick up a food ration or attend a Christian doctrine class.

08/24/2003

Toshi's history

Toshi is located around 120 kilometers from Mexico City. In 1959 a medical clinic was set up on the premises to provide health care to the local Mazahuas and Otomíes communities. At first, the doctors and nurses who came every Sunday from Mexico City to offer their services had difficulty making contact with the locals. The area communities were not sure whether to trust the new arrivals. There was also a language barrier: only some of the natives spoke Spanish, the language of the doctors and their assistants.

Little by little, however, people began approaching “the grandmother’s house” (the literal translation of the Mazahua word “Toshi”). They satisfied themselves that these people were really trying to help them by medical consultations, vaccines, medicines, radiological studies and operations

which were previously available only in the city.

As confidence grew, so too did the number of patients. Many had symptoms of malnutrition, so the doctors obtained donations of basic foods such as powdered milk, beans, flour and even animal crackers for the children. They also began to give classes on hygiene, nutrition, first aid, dressmaking, weaving, and literacy.

More services

Together with material aid, the organizers wanted to provide the Toshi locals with means for improving their Christian life. As St. Josemaría Escrivá said, “Christian charity cannot be limited to giving things or money to the needy. It seeks, above all, to respect and understand each person for what he is, in his intrinsic dignity as a man and child of God.” (*Christ is passing*

by, n. 72). With this in mind, the Toshi clinic's sponsors organized classes of catechism and Christian formation from the outset of the program.

The owner of the Toshi hacienda was supportive of the charitable work being done there, so she made her property available to the faithful of Opus Dei to turn Toshi into a center for social aid and Christian formation. With her efforts, among others things, sufficient economic aid was obtained for Toshi to offer new services, including a store offering products at reduced rates, such as clothes, tools, blankets, and toys.

In 1997, some young businessmen established the Mazahua Foundation, in order to provide the locals with the tools that would give them access to better jobs and thus a higher standard of living. Around the same time, Toshi was able to set up new

premises. The new building, called the "Eucaliptos Social Center," has classrooms and examining rooms, as well as rooms for student volunteers.

New developments

In recent years the number of people coming to Toshi has been growing significantly. Each Sunday at an early hour, people can be seen arriving to pick up a monthly food allotment, available upon presentation of a card which shows the results of a means test. At present the food ration includes rice, sugar, oil, crackers, sardines, soap and matches. Others come for medical treatment, which has been expanded considerably since 2000 with the addition of staff specializing in odontology, pediatrics, endocrinology, ophthalmology, dermatology, gynecology, optometry and family medicine.

A number of nursing students from the Pan-American University have

been fulfilling their social service requirement by participating in Toshi's health care programs, and by giving health education classes in the local schools. In addition, they are able to give classes of Christian formation to local teenagers.

Additionally, a new Medical Unit is now under construction, where medical graduates will be able to carry out residency programs.

For more information or to make a contribution, Toshi can be contacted at:

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