

## El Hogar is a Response

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think, or feel, "this is our response. This place is our response to the evil in the world." And when I say "our response" I mean our response with God. We do this work, even if it's just a week out of the year, with God. We don't know whose fault it is that the people of earth, and the earth itself, are full of destructive behavior, but this response has enough meaning to keep many of us from despair and even to give us hope.

And what is this response? To me, the heart of it is that at El Hogar the children receive what they need to grow up well: not only an abundance of unconditional affection, hugs galore, but also an ordered life, maintained by people who understand the need for kindness and discipline and flexibility in teaching. At El Hogar there is a chance the children will understand that they have valuable work to do in their lives and that they are loved for who they are. To me this is near the heart of the Christian message: you are loved for yourself, and God loves you, and knows what you yourself need, as a growing child.

The energy at El Hogar is terrific—I'm sure it's generated by the constant motion of the children, who have lots of time to run freely around all the play areas. Sometimes you see a child gazing into the distance and you wonder what he is thinking. Another time you will notice a girl who is happy one moment, and then deeply sad, and then running off giggling. You may notice one watching and waiting as some of the parents arrive on Friday afternoon. And the children are encouraged to hug visitors, so you are often in the arms of some small lively creature, embracing them in return, kissing their hair.

I think it's true that children are closer to God because they have just entered this world of ours. So that would also make El Hogar, with its loving kindness and nurturing, a place that is closer to God. And for that, I am very thankful.

- Jane Sherwin

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# El Hogar

SPRING / SUMMER 2011



## A Message from Matt Engleby

The Rev. Matthew Engleby joined El Hogar in April as Executive Director in Honduras. He has spent the past two months getting to know the children, staff, and families of El Hogar Projects.

I have been in Honduras for two months now but I am reluctant to qualify my experiences here, as initial impressions are often exaggerated or untethered. Yet, I will acknowledge the truth that many of you know far better than I, that El

Hogar is a source of miracles and that God is very much alive and engaged through the hands of those who serve here.

Mother's Day was one of those "disconnects" that I had not anticipated when I made my journey here. I wasn't prepared for the considerable attention devoted to the celebration here. Most schools let out early on the Friday before Mother's Day and the traffic was backed up for blocks.

However, I was more unprepared to process the emotional impact that such a celebration could have in an environment where one's relationship to both fathers and mothers has unique connotations. At El Hogar, the Institute, and at the Farm School, the children and young adults often have very different relationships with their parents than most of us can even imagine. In a community where children long for stability and love, how then does one address the awkwardness so often experienced in that relationship? One of the transformative elements of life at El Hogar is the unwavering power of truth and love. The directors of El Hogar engage the children in an honest manner but always wrapped in love and offered as a gift. Yes, for many, the celebration of mothers can churn emotions that these children can't even digest; but they are also aware of an alternative to the poverty, neglect, or abuse that they may have experienced. That is what we celebrate with the children at El Hogar on Mother's Day - a celebration of the life unfolding before them. We sing songs, dance, act out comedy skits, offer prayers and small gifts - always with the secure knowledge that God is walking with us.

In hope, always,  
Matt

### El Hogar's Mission

The mission of El Hogar Projects is to provide a loving home and education in a Christian environment for abandoned, orphaned and hopelessly poor children, enabling them to fulfill their ultimate potential as productive and caring citizens of Honduras.

# Reflections

## A Graduate's thoughts

**A reflection from a recent graduate after his ten years at El Hogar.**

In November 2010, the 5th reunion of El Hogar graduates was held. The following is part of an interview with Angel Jonathan Servellon, who graduated in 2006.

**Interviewer:** I know you have many memories of your time here in El Hogar, but if I asked you if you had a single memory of great importance, what would it be?

**Angel:** I always remember the first day when I came here. It wasn't a happy day; it really wasn't. Actually, I felt very sad. From the moment they came to bring me here, I started crying. I missed my family. I remember that when they brought me here, they assigned me to clean. They give out assignments, and they appointed me to finish the cleaning. I remember that this was the area, right here [gestures to the area where he sits]. And while I was doing it, I was just crying. It was pretty hard for me in the first months that I was here. But little by little, I was adapting. We were forming a family, we have friends here. And education is pretty important to me. I don't know if in my house, or with my family, I would have the education that I now have. I wouldn't have been made to study, if not for El Hogar Projects. I would not be at the academic level that I am at now. So really, I am very grateful to El Hogar for my education. They've been like a family. We are a family. They've offered us food, education, clothes, and all the things we need. I felt better here.

**Interviewer:** If you had the opportunity to talk to the children who are, say, six years old, is there a lesson or anything that you would tell them?

**Angel:** Yes. I would tell them that this is a great opportunity. I would say that God gave us this. We were chosen by Him to have this opportunity. It's a great blessing. How many people outside of [El Hogar] would want to have this opportunity that we had? And being here, many times I thought about leaving. But I was also afraid, so I didn't go through with it. So, I stayed here, studying. And my goal was to be somebody, to better myself, and to keep my family going. And so, yes, I would tell the children to continue forward. Study. This is a great opportunity that you don't get very many times in life. They should take it, always.



## Mother's Day at the Technical Institute

**A reflection from a volunteer from Colorado, teaching English with her husband at the Technical Institute.**

Today was the Mother's Day celebration at ITSM. What a great day. Many of the boys had mothers, aunts, grandmothers, cousins and even fathers and grandfathers here to celebrate. Some mothers and grandmothers arrived yesterday afternoon. They slept on small mattresses in the classrooms last night. Others rode the bus four or five hours (some rode for eight or nine hours) to get here by 8:30 this morning. There were some boys who did not have anyone here with them. Before we went into the church for our first meeting with parents, I ran into Cesar. He looked very sad. In my best Spanish and his best English, I was able to figure out that he was expecting his mother, but she didn't make it. I told him that I would be his mother today if he needed someone. When we went into the church Cesar saw me and hollered out my name. He made the boys sitting next to him move so that I could sit next to him. Later in the morning he made sure to find me and stand next to me during the program. He also made sure he showed his report card to me. I was touched. Needless to say, Cesar now has a special place in my heart. – Valerie Moon



## El Hogar is a Response

**An excerpt from a homily given by a work team volunteer from Massachusetts, upon her return.**

El Hogar, the home of love and hope, is centered on four acres protected by a huge metal gate and wire fencing in the middle of Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. It's filled with tropical plants, and with children in motion. I was struck especially by the colors. Many of the outdoor walls are the color of blue swimming pools. On one wall is a painting of Jesus and children, another has coral reef creatures, and a third is covered with Dr. Seuss characters including the Cat in the Hat. In the morning the children wear blue pants and shirts while they go to class.

As you have heard many times, the poverty of Honduras is something you only understand if you go to see it. It is more like the poverty of the world than what we see here in the greater Boston area. And, as always in the world, it's the children who get the worst of it: begging for food, no school, malnutrition, disordered families and danger. And this when, to grow up well, they should be living very differently.

I have trouble stomaching the evil and the distortions and the cruelty of the world. Either I'm to feel despair, or to become enraged, or to pretend it's not really happening. Flying into Tegucigalpa, seeing the thousands of shacks stuck up and down the mountainsides, denial becomes impossible. And, after a few days at El Hogar, I began to

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