



# San Lucas Health Foundation

## Medical Care for the Destitute

— Cochabamba, Bolivia —



“Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”

1 JOHN 3:18



## We are a Catholic ministry

that mobilizes the global Catholic Church to transform the poor and their communities materially and spiritually for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Rather than create new institutions to distribute aid, we support existing ministries and churches already serving the poor. In addition to being the most cost-effective way of helping the poor, empowering these ministries allows us to support the Church's spiritual mission and its important position of leadership in poor communities.

We consider every gift we receive as a precious resource from God. We direct every donation to its intended project, provide honest and accurate reports to our donors, and keep overhead costs to an industry low. We handle funds with utmost integrity and hold our ministry partners in the field to the same high standards by asking them to document costs and the impact of their outreach.

We invite you to join with us as we seek to transform the lives of the poor materially and spiritually — ways that please the Father and glorify him in Heaven and on earth.



## Project Synopsis

### Description

This project will empower a Catholic ministry providing health and dental care to the homeless and impoverished families with no access to medical care.

### Purpose

To offer expert medical care — and God’s loving touch — to destitute people who have nowhere to turn.

### Our Partner

The San Lucas Health Foundation is an outreach of the Franciscans, who also care for the poor.

### Location

Cochabamba, Bolivia, and the poverty-stricken mountain communities outside the city.

### Cost

**\$36,000** to help support modest salaries for four dentists, and other medical support staff who are called to improve the health of Bolivia’s poorest families.



*The medical team at San Lucas is prepared for emergencies like this severe leg wound.*

### Highlights

- Homeless street dwellers in Bolivia, especially children and the physically or mentally handicapped, lack access to medical care and are vulnerable to diseases and injuries.
- Many poor, indigenous families in remote mountain villages have virtually no access to medical care and are vulnerable to malnutrition, dental disease, typhoid fever, diarrhea and other preventable conditions.
- The San Lucas Health Foundation follows the command of Jesus to “love your neighbor as yourself” by welcoming and treating all who enter.
- Treatments include prenatal and neonatal care, birthing assistance, immunizations, dental work and emergency response to severe cuts and disease, as well as preventive health education and leadership development through rural outreach.
- Cross Catholic Outreach is committed to providing modest salaries for the hardworking staff who’ve dedicated their lives to improving the health of Bolivia’s poorest families.



## The Need

The pleas of the destitute in Bolivia may not have stirred the hearts of many, but they have been heard by the Lord and the Catholic faithful.

Armed only with prayer and a conviction to follow Jesus' commandment to love our neighbor, compassionate Franciscans created the San Lucas Health Foundation to serve as a loving response to extreme poverty in one of Bolivia's poorest communities. We likewise feel called to pursue this mission of mercy to the poor — *and we hope and pray you do too!*

Of the many cries for help, those we feel most compelled to answer are coming from the physically and mentally disabled. Tragically, many of these struggling men, women and children are homeless and wander the streets in the slums of Cochabamba. Each day, they scavenge to find food. Every night, they must search out a safe place to sleep. Even orphaned children and single mothers can be found among this group, and they can become incredibly vulnerable.

Cries for help arise from the outskirts of the city, too. There, entire families live in small shanty homes without water and electricity. This extreme poverty also extends into the mountain regions where Bolivia's indigenous people live. The rural Quechua and Aymara communities are a case in point. They contain the country's poorest citizens — mostly subsistence farmers who survive on whatever meager crops they can produce.

All these groups are in desperate need of better medical care, and children are particularly vulnerable. They risk falling prey to malnutrition, typhoid fever, diarrhea and other illnesses — not only because they are poor, but also because their families lack training in basic hygiene and prevention. As a result, even mild and treatable illnesses can escalate into life-threatening conditions.

On the following page, you will see why this need must be addressed, and you'll learn how recent successes are inspiring us to support the expansion of this outreach. For example, you will see how Miguel and Evita, two people whose lives were once characterized by hardships and medical trials, are being transformed by the healing presence of God through the San Lucas Health Foundation. As you read these stories, we hope you prayerfully consider supporting the Franciscans and caring health professionals in bringing God's love to those in need.



*Rudy, a young homeless man, entered the clinic for treatment after being brutally beaten on the street. Rudy has been so touched by the compassion and acceptance he found at the clinic that he joyfully tells others on the street about the clinic's medical care.*

**“He answered, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”**

LUKE 10:27



## A People in Need

### God Reaches Out to the Homeless

Fortunately, the people of God can become powerful instruments of God's mercy when they submit to his will. That was the case when Miguel faced his crisis. Struck by a car and badly injured, the 52-year-old homeless man came to the San Lucas Health Foundation because he had nowhere else to turn for help.



*Miguel.*

Acting as agents of our loving God, Dr. Judy Vargas and her colleagues repaired his fractured knee — and restored his dignity.

A victim of physical and sexual abuse many years ago, Miguel has lived a simple life on the streets trying to survive day by day. Devastated by the emotional pain he experienced decades ago, he never expected compassion or love — until he visited the clinic. In addition to medical care, he found acceptance and community.

“I feel like Dr. Judy is a part of my family. I know I'm important to her,” he said.

Encouraged by Dr. Judy, Miguel began to find his dignity. He now regularly visits the Franciscan Social Center next to the clinic for a wholesome lunch and spends time in the courtyard with other homeless men whom he now considers friends.

Today, Miguel is able to walk with dignity because of the caring Catholics of the San Lucas Health Foundation who found the courage to live out the commandment of Jesus and love their neighbor.

### God Embraces Destitute Families

Sadly, many of the destitute families living in the slum communities skirting the town of Cochabamba feel unwanted and unsupported. The Machaca family experienced this hopelessness when their daughter Evita was born with a mental disability.

Since birth, her family had given her plenty of love, but they lacked the money needed to care for her fully. For example, when Evita developed severe tooth decay, the family could find no solutions. They visited medical facility after medical facility seeking help, but were denied care every time. They simply couldn't afford the services Evita required.

Only when they encountered a Christ-centered clinic — the San Lucas Health Foundation — did they finally experience true compassion and a possibility of care. The Franciscan ministry welcomed Evita with open arms and was able to treat the suffering girl, ending her pain and restoring the family's faith.

***This has only been possible because of the financial support of caring Catholics like you.***

In Evita's case, the medical care was a process, and each step was handled with loving attention. One by one, Evita's teeth were repaired and, today, her bright smile stands as a testimony to the incredible power of Catholic compassion. What a special gift to the world!

“She now has a face full of happiness,” said Dr. Maria Teresa Losada, clinic director.



*Evita smiles bravely as her teeth are being repaired.*



## Ministry Description



*Dr. Judy examines a patient at the clinic.*

The Lord continues to call people of compassion to serve the homeless and destitute of Bolivia.

He began by inspiring Brother Ignacio Harding of the Franciscans, who was deeply troubled by the suffering he saw on the streets of Cochabamba. This spirit-filled missionary was joined by Dr. Maria Teresa, who came to the Franciscans with a call she felt from God. She felt inspired to deliver loving, compassionate medical care to her neighbors in need.

Soon, the San Lucas Health Foundation was created, and the Lord drew other qualified professionals to create a

comprehensive medical and dental outreach. Today, the ministry team includes Dr. Maria Teresa (executive director), Dr. Judy, one other doctor, four dentists, and administrative members. The clinic is open six days a week to provide treatment for emergencies as well as testing for illness and disease. There are also other medical staff who travel to remote areas to provide care.

Now, Cross Catholic Outreach wants to mobilize other Catholics to add their support — effectively fulfilling Jesus' commandment to love your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:27). Your contribution to this important appeal will help fund the modest salaries of the dentists, doctors and administrative team of the San Lucas Health Foundation.

We hope and pray you will join us! Your support will play a crucial role, financially boosting the outreaches of this Catholic ministry so its staff can continue blessing the poor of Bolivia.

### Reaching Out in Love

Outreach is an important component of the San Lucas Health Foundation. On one visit to the slums on the edge of the city, team members conducted follow-up visits with families struggling with major health problems. Their ongoing care includes assisting a 3-year-old girl with Down syndrome who is not growing because she is not digesting food well and a 6-year-old girl who can't walk and needs accommodations at school.

The outreach also goes far beyond the city. With a mobile clinic, a medical team travels for days at a time to sparsely populated, remote mountain villages to provide medical care and health education for indigenous people.





## Help Now!

To the San Lucas Health Foundation team, the parable of the Good Samaritan is much more than an ancient Bible story. It is a relevant blueprint — a guide helping us follow Christ’s ways in this age and all others to come.

The parable begins with a simple question put to Jesus in Luke 10:29 — “Who is my neighbor?” To demonstrate loving your neighbor, Jesus tells the story of a Samaritan who happens upon a badly beaten man. The Samaritan goes to great lengths to care for the stranger and ensure he is restored to health. Jesus then ends his parable with a simple command — “Go and do likewise.”

Dr. Maria Teresa, Dr. Judy and others on the ministry team have certainly lived out the command to “go and do likewise.” The slums and poverty-stricken countryside of Bolivia are filled with people badly beaten down by life, people who would be easy to ignore and walk past. But instead, the Franciscans have loved them and created a ministry that gently nourishes them back to health.

And now these Christ-centered missionaries have turned to us for help. Please join us! Together, we can ensure this ministry’s outreaches continue, and we can follow Jesus’ command to love our neighbor — especially those in great need.

**“Go and do likewise.”**

LUKE 10:37

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### Our Promise to You!

Donations from this campaign will be used to cover any expenditures for this project incurred through June 31, 2021, the close of our ministry’s fiscal year. In the event that more funds are raised than needed to fully fund the project, the excess funds, if any, will be used to meet the most urgent needs of the ministry.

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