Transforming Lives in Guatemala

Bless Families With Homes, Education, Nutrition and Spiritual Hope

The gift of a safe home is a life-changing blessing for a child such as Fátima Fernández. Restore safety, health and the hope of a bright future by meeting the needs of families like hers.

CrossCatholic.org/house
An Urgent Need for Peace and Safety

Cristina Yanes pleads with God to keep her children safe.

In rural Guatemala — where Cristina struggles against all odds to raise her son and daughter — that humble prayer for safety occupies her mind at every waking moment. Like many of their neighbors, Cristina and her children live in a flimsy structure with stick walls, a thatched roof and a dirt floor. It’s a precarious situation, and Cristina is justified in fearing for her family’s security. The home does not even have a solid front door to deter intruders, and their house has been burglarized before.

“I am afraid of someone coming and doing something to me and my children,” Cristina lamented.

This hardworking mother of two has other worries as well. Every bout of bad weather brings a new set of challenges. During rainstorms, for example, water seeps through the roof and walls, turning the floor into a mud puddle. When the wind blows, the children often fall ill. And during the dry season, bugs and snakes slither inside. Cristina longs to defend her family against the threats that plague them, but her meager wages are barely able to put food on the table, much less provide a safer home.

Your intervention is needed to transform the lives of families such as Cristina’s. Crushing poverty is preventing them from building safer homes, sending their children to school and even securing their daily bread — but your compassion and generosity can bring the miracle they desperately need.

Please stand with us to meet families’ most urgent needs for housing, education and nutrition, and provide them with a lasting reminder of God’s protective love!
Executive Summary

Description

This project will empower two Catholic dioceses to strengthen poor families materially and spiritually through transformational programs.

Purpose

Many families in rural Guatemala live in unsafe and undignified conditions, often building flimsy shelters from scraps of wood, plastic tarps and sheet metal. These families also lack access to vital resources, including nutritious food, a quality education and career opportunities. Working together as the Church, we can address their most urgent needs and transform their lives forever.

Locations

The Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima and the Diocese of Suchitepéquez-Retalhuleu in southern Guatemala.

Our Partners

We are working with Caritas Santa Rosa de Lima and Caritas Suchitepéquez-Retalhuleu to implement integral human development programs that provide holistic support for the poor.

Campaign Goal

$2,123,879 is needed to build safe homes, provide academic scholarships, feed the hungry and strengthen suffering families with God’s love. See a complete financial summary on page 14.

Campaign Highlights

- **HOUSING** Build safe homes for 159 families. Each concrete, three-room home will include a sanitary latrine, and a water storage tank or wash basin.

- **SPIRITUAL OUTREACH** Strengthen the Church in Guatemala by supporting seminarians and equipping lay leaders to share Christ’s mercy within their communities.

- **EDUCATION** Provide 70 partial scholarships for students in need, and support a Catholic secondary school that is working to provide 100 students with hope and a future.

- **AGRICULTURE** Help equip 249 families with resources and training to improve their crop yields and strengthen their food security.

- **FOOD** Send 816,480 protein-rich meals to feed hungry families and fight malnutrition.

In all, this outreach will bless more than 10,000 people!

**Stand with us to transform lives with safe shelter, education, nutrition and more.**

Maria Alejandra González is held by her father, Adán, inside their home. Together, we can meet the material and spiritual needs of families like theirs.
A mother in the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima cooks a meal. The houses you provide in that diocese will include clean-burning stoves to protect families' lung health. You will also guarantee them nutritious meals and more!
SECTION I

THE NEED

Gladis González lives in the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima with her parents and two sisters. Their home is made from hole-ridden metal sheets and rotten wood, and Gladis often gets sick in the wet and drafty conditions.
Poverty in Guatemala

Nearly 60% of Guatemala’s population lives in poverty, with one in four people earning less than $3.20 a day (CIA World Factbook, World Bank Group). More than half of the nation’s people dwell in rural areas, which often lack access to basic infrastructure such as quality schools, sanitation, electricity and safe housing. Without education and opportunities for advancement, children follow in the footsteps of their impoverished parents and remain trapped in poverty for generations.

Most rural families survive by subsistence farming — growing just enough food to feed themselves — or by finding seasonal jobs as day laborers on local plantations. People like Cristina (featured on the inside cover) perform backbreaking chores in the coffee and sugarcane fields to earn their daily bread. They toil in the hot sun and earn only a few dollars for a full day’s work.

Almost one-third of Guatemala’s workforce depends on agriculture for their income, and many parents must use some of the food they grow to feed their children as well. Because these crops are critical for survival, they live in a constant state of worry over the whims of weather. Families pray for rain to water their crops — but they also know that too strong a storm will send their feeble stick-and-tarp houses crashing to the ground. When these challenges come, it is nearly impossible for poor households to get ahead and improve their circumstances. No matter what they do, insufficient food, substandard housing, the costs of education and lost economic opportunities can easily prevent them from progressing beyond poverty.

Population and Poverty Facts

- Population: 17.7 million
- Population lacking modern sanitation: 4.1 million
- Children chronically malnourished: 42%
- Literacy rate: 80.8% (99% in U.S.)
- Infant mortality per 1,000 live births: 26.2 (5.2 in U.S.)
- GDP per capita: $8,400 ($60,200 in U.S.)

Sources:
CIA World Factbook, Global Hunger Index, World Bank Group
How Unsafe Housing Perpetuates Poverty

Safe shelter is a basic human need — and when housing isn't available, families can easily fall victim to a domino effect of hope-crushing hardships. In rural Guatemala, the poorest households can only afford to build small, insecure, mud-floor shelters that cannot even keep out the rain. These dwellings offer little protection and perpetuate the cycle of poverty by:

• **Creating health problems.** Nearly half of Guatemala’s children under age 5 are chronically malnourished, and unsanitary living conditions put their already vulnerable lives at risk. Additionally, one-third of Guatemala’s rural population does not have a sanitary latrine or toilet, contaminating the environment and promoting the spread of disease.

• **Inhibiting education.** Even if children have access to a local school, inadequate living conditions may prevent them from completing their education. Many boys and girls are unable to sleep through the night as rainwater drenches their beds and damages their few school supplies. Without a safe place to rest and study, some students fall behind in class and eventually drop out of school altogether.

• **Preventing progress.** Barely able to put food on the table, many poor families must sink their already limited resources into repairing their patchwork walls and keeping their flimsy homes standing. The constant battle to exist is hope-crushing and anxiety-inducing, and it keeps families from moving beyond poverty. By standing with Cross Catholic Outreach to build safe homes in Guatemala, you can give families the foundation they need to protect their children and build a brighter future filled with peace.

*The Moctezuma-Dupont family hangs their possessions from the rafters to protect them from water damage and pests.*
The González Family’s Miracle

Otilio and Vicenta González live with their children and grandchildren — eight people crowded into one small house. Their little shelter has a dirt floor, walls made mostly of wooden planks, and some concrete blocks around the base. They do their best to keep it nice, but it provides very little protection on wet, cold or windy days.

“We don’t feel safe, because we are afraid. The house is not well covered,” Vicenta said. “The children suffer.”

The family has had many sad and scary moments inside the house. Once a rattlesnake even slithered inside. Most recently, one of the grandchildren became so sick that the family was afraid he would not recover.

“In the end, like a miracle, [my grandson] was cured … but it was serious. It was very worrying,” Otilio told us. “When I have a more dignified house, the children won’t get sick anymore. May God give us health and take care of us.”

In order to grow healthy and strong, children need safe shelter and sufficient food. They also need opportunities to develop their minds through education and ways to strengthen their faith in Jesus, their ultimate source of true peace. Families like the Gonzálezes are praying their children and grandchildren will have the chance to grow into the young men and women God has created them to be — but they see no clear path to that better life without some kind of intervention.

As the Church, we can help make their dreams of a safer, more prosperous life a reality. Working together, we can break the bonds of poverty that have held these families captive for far too long!

A Prayer From
Father Raúl Monterroso,
Director of Caritas Santa Rosa de Lima

“Lord Jesus, we want to thank you for your goodness to us. We ask you to be present in our families and in our community. May you always bless our brotherhood with Cross Catholic Outreach. We also ask you to bless your donors. Bless always their homes, their families and their work which brings peace, and grant them also their daily bread. We pray you will always reward their generosity with eternal blessings. Renew our promise to follow you more and to serve you better each day. We ask this from you, who live and reign forever. Amen.”
Candelario (center), Marta (far left) and their children have been helping with the construction of their new home in the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima. With the peace, health and stability that a safe home provides, families can focus on the future and create lasting change in their communities.
Meet Our Ministry Partners
Building a Foundation of Faith

Caritas Santa Rosa de Lima
Established in 1996, the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima is a suffragan diocese of the Archdiocese of Guatemala. With 21 parishes and nearly 400,000 people, the diocese is committed to sharing Christ's love in both word and deed to strengthen the poor. About 72% of its population identifies as Catholic.

Cross Catholic Outreach has partnered with Caritas Santa Rosa de Lima since 2014. To date, we have helped support the diocese in its material and spiritual outreach through programs for faith formation, food, education, agriculture and housing, impacting thousands of families.

Caritas Suchitepéquez-Retalhuleu
The Diocese of Suchitepéquez-Retalhuleu was also founded in 1996. It is a suffragan diocese of Los Altos Quetzaltenango-Totonicapán and has 23 parishes. About 65% of its 897,190 residents identify as Catholic.

Cross Catholic Outreach began partnering with the Diocese of Suchitepéquez-Retalhuleu in 2018. So far, we have provided operational support to help the diocese increase its capacity for integral human development programs. We have also helped provide food relief, agricultural training, academic scholarships and a solar-powered community water system to strengthen local families. This will be our first housing project in the diocese!

What Is Integral Human Development?
Cross Catholic Outreach is committed to transforming lives materially and spiritually for the glory of Jesus Christ. To accomplish this, we work with partners like Caritas to assess the needs of individual communities and develop tailored programs that promote integral human development. Rooted in Catholic social teaching, this Christ-centered approach seeks to help families flourish physically, intellectually, economically and spiritually — improving their quality of life while leading their souls to heaven. On the next several pages, explore how we can work with Caritas to implement meaningful initiatives that will provide housing, education, nutrition, spiritual outreach and more!

In 2021, Pope Francis appointed His Excellency José Cayetano Parra Novo (third from left) as the bishop of the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima. Already, the bishop has taken an active role in the compassionate work of Caritas. Here, he inaugurates the diocese’s first private Catholic school, the construction of which was funded by Cross Catholic Outreach donors like you.

His Excellency Pablo Vizcaíno Prado (third from left) has been the bishop of the Diocese of Suchitepéquez-Retalhuleu since its inception. Here, he stands with his local Caritas ministry. We are working closely with them to strengthen the poor.
Goal: Build safe homes for 100 families in the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima and 59 families in the Diocese of Suchitepéquez-Retalhuleu.

Housing often provides the critical foundation families need to improve their overall situation and build a better life — and through Cross Catholic Outreach, it only takes about $8,434* to build a new home for a family in Guatemala! Each concrete home will feature three modest rooms, a water storage tank, an outdoor latrine and an environmentally safe stove to safeguard families’ health and security.

These simple but profound provisions represent a life-changing blessing to families who have lived their entire lives in extreme poverty. Children will become healthier and have more energy to focus on their studies, and parents will be empowered to work at a fuller capacity and make strides to overcome generational poverty. Most importantly, the gift of a safe home restores hope and revives a family’s faith in God and his love.

* Returning donors may notice that the cost per home has increased since 2021. Inflation has raised the price of labor and building supplies — but this is still an incredible value for such a life-changing gift.
The Process of Building a Home

Under the leadership of their respective bishops, local Caritas organizations in each diocese will carry out a specific set of procedures to ensure the project's success. Project timelines can vary due to weather, road conditions and COVID-19 travel restrictions, but on average, it takes six to nine months to complete all the homes from start to finish.

1. Conduct a census and visit selected communities to identify the families in greatest need of safe housing.
2. Hold informational meetings to explain the housing project, secure community participation, and answer any questions that the benefiting families might have.
3. Review land ownership documents. Families must present their property titles before building can begin.
4. Work with a trusted professional construction company to build strong, safe homes for families in need. Able-bodied beneficiaries will invest in this process by providing unskilled labor, such as clearing the land, digging pits for their latrines, and carrying construction materials to the work site.
5. Host training sessions on topics such as leadership, teamwork, service and love of neighbor to promote continued growth and empowerment while furthering Catholic evangelization.

With the stability of a sturdy home, families will be free to focus on education, income generation, spiritual formation and spending time together. Shelter 159 families — a total of 1,113 people — to restore their peace and help them build a brighter future.

Each Home Will Include:
- A 338 sq. ft. floor plan with three rooms.
- Concrete walls and flooring and a galvanized steel roof.
- A secure metal door and shuttered windows.
- A water storage tank.
- A sanitary latrine to promote hygiene and dignity.
SPIRITUAL OUTREACH

Goal: Strengthen the Church in Guatemala by supporting seminarians and equipping thousands of lay leaders to share Christ in their communities.

During the more than 20 years our ministry has served the poor, Cross Catholic Outreach has seen this truth affirmed time and again: Development programs must address both material and spiritual needs if they are going to create true, lasting change. Our Community Transformation programs are designed with that approach in mind and seek to strengthen the poor physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Just as a body needs food, water and shelter, the human soul needs hope and the life-transforming love of Christ!

We seek out partners like Caritas Santa Rosa de Lima because they believe this important truth too. Together, we are committed to meeting the urgent material needs of the poor, while also spreading the Gospel and fanning the flames of faith in individuals, families and communities.

This year, the diocese hopes to train 2,000 catechists and 6,670 other lay leaders. It also hopes to facilitate enriching spiritual retreats for local parishes and to support the education of 16 seminarians. By supporting these efforts, you will strengthen the Church in Guatemala and encourage committed Catholics to share the hope of Christ in their communities!

Help us strengthen families both materially and spiritually! Empower Catholic priests and lay leaders to follow the Holy Spirit's leading and win souls for Jesus.

Evelyn Sanchez teaches the children in her community's Missionary Childhood and Adolescence group and helps prepare young hearts to receive the sacraments. Evelyn desires that she and her neighbors "continue to grow in [their] love for the Lord so that [they] can continue to serve him."

Transforming Lives Through the People’s Holy Mission

The Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima evangelizes souls through the People's Holy Mission — a network of small Christian communities committed to raising up true followers of Christ. Local families meet together for prayer, worship and Bible studies and encourage one another in their faith. Though many of them have little, they share their food and other resources generously with one another. Many also choose to become catechists, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and leaders in their Missionary Childhood and Adolescence groups. The People's Holy Mission operates in the style of Jesus, discipling men, women and children, who then disciple others to follow Christ.
In addition to providing safe housing, your support of this life-transforming campaign will give children new hope and a path to a brighter future through the priceless gift of education. With access to quality schooling, boys and girls can break free from generational poverty and pursue God’s best plan for their lives.

Consider, for example, the benefits that an education will provide for 15-year-old Flor de María Mejía. Flor has five siblings, and her parents are hardworking farmers who are doing all they can to provide a decent life for their family. Without help, it would be extremely difficult for parents like Flor’s to afford an education for their children — but with support from Catholics like you, their sons and daughters can work toward achieving their dreams.

With your help, Caritas Santa Rosa de Lima can provide an education for children like Flor by:

- **Providing academic scholarships for impoverished students.** Your support will help cover tuition, books, uniforms and other supplies for 25 primary school students and 45 technical school students. The students’ families will invest in their education by covering a percentage of the tuition as well.

- **Supporting operations for the diocese’s first private Catholic school.** Friends like you helped us fund the construction of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Technological School, which opened its doors in January. As student enrollment increases, so does the school’s need for resources. You will help the school provide an excellent academic and spiritual education for at least 100 students by funding essentials such as salaries for teachers and support staff, office supplies, and utilities.

**Lack of education leads to high levels of poverty, unemployment and migration. Provide scholarships and school support to help 170 children achieve their dreams, improve their communities and break the cycle of poverty!**
AGRICULTURE

Goal: Help equip 249 families with resources and training to improve their crop yields and strengthen their food security.

How the Program Works

Step 1: Families receive seeds, seedlings and fertilizer to plant corn, beans and fruit trees.

Step 2: Families participate in a series of five training workshops to learn proper planting practices and increase their harvests. They also learn about money management and savings.

Step 3: Along the way, families receive follow-up visits from field technicians to answer their questions and ensure their success.

Step 4: At the end of each year, families tithe a portion of their harvests into a revolving fund that allows more families to enter the program.

Step 5: Families graduate from the program after three years. At this point, they have typically saved enough to continue farming in a self-sustaining way.

It has become harder than ever for poor subsistence farmers to grow enough food for their families. Deforestation, poor pesticide management and harmful planting practices have created setbacks, increased health risks and diminished the fertility of local land. Additionally, soaring inflation has caused food prices to skyrocket, making it even more difficult for struggling families to afford the nutrition they need.

Fortunately, we can bring positive changes to these communities! With the right training and resources, families can adopt farming techniques that will increase their harvests, improve their nutrition and protect their land. By supporting the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima's agricultural program, you will help provide 249 families with seeds, seedlings, fertilizers and training workshops to grow a bountiful harvest of corn and beans. You will also equip 161 families to plant 1,600 fruit trees, which will add diversity to their diets and support reforestation.

This is one of the most empowering ways that you can help families bolster their nutrition, as well as their household income. The helping hand you extend will allow families to diversify their diets, grow their household income and sow seeds of hope in their communities.

Empower 249 struggling farmers to improve their yields, feed their families and achieve a new level of economic independence!
Malnutrition is one of the most pressing issues facing Guatemala’s children. Without enough nutritious food to eat, their young bodies and minds cannot develop properly. Undernourishment leads to life-threatening issues such as stunting and wasting, preventing precious children from growing and learning as God intended.

Maria Elena Jiménez is one mother fighting to feed her three children in the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima. At times, even buying rice has been a challenge for her family — but by sending shipments of Vitafood, we can relieve the burden on parents like Maria Elena and free their limited resources to cover other essentials.

With your support, we can send three 40-foot shipping containers of Vitafood to the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima. This will **equip Caritas with 816,480 meals** to distribute to families in need!

**Fight Guatemala’s hunger crisis by providing hearty meals for children and families in urgent need of nutrition.**

**What Is Vitafood?**

Vitafood meal packs are designed to meet the needs of the malnourished. Each meal pack is specially formulated with a rice, potato or lentil base, a protein (typically soy or beans) and key vitamins to energize, strengthen and improve the health of children and families.
Fr. Raúl prays with María Elena and her family outside their home. The material and spiritual support you provide will help families like theirs to thrive!
Financial Summary

**HOUSING**
- Home Construction Materials $775,573
- Latrine Construction $61,554
- Sink and Laundry Basin Construction $22,113
- Clean-Air Stove Construction $29,531
- Skilled Labor $184,909
- Healthy Home Workshop $3,373
- Housing Technician $11,365
- Operational Costs $18,171
- Contingency $10,974

**SPIRITUAL OUTREACH**
- Diocese Strengthening $145,106
- People’s Holy Mission $46,567
- Contingency $54,541

**EDUCATION**
- Scholarships $51,944
- Teacher Salaries $90,726
- Administrative Staff Salaries $76,469
- Academic Consultants $15,000
- Office Supplies $2,573
- Utilities (electric, internet, water, trash, etc.) $19,486
- Cleaning and Maintenance Supplies $4,387

**AGRICULTURE**
- Corn Seeds $10,790
- Fruit Seeds $2,995
- Fertilizer $61,720
- Training Workshops $6,650
- Transportation and Communication Costs $4,910
- Field Assistant Technician $8,472

**FOOD**
- Shipment of 816,480 Vitafood Meals $60,000
- Cross Catholic Outreach Project Management, Monitoring and Reporting $343,980

**Total** $2,123,879

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.”

PSALM 91:1-2
Give Generously

As you read these words, struggling families in southern Guatemala are facing the days ahead without access to life’s most basic essentials. Their homes are crumbling around them. Their children are hungry. They suffer from repeated bouts of disease.

These are God’s precious sons and daughters — our brothers and sisters — and they urgently need deliverance. Together, we can help them break free from despair and affirm that God has a sovereign plan for their future!

Your generosity will deliver families from sickness and fear, leading them into the peace and security that our Heavenly Father intends for them. Please, donate today to transform families’ lives with safe housing, education, nutritious meals and the hope-restoring love of Christ!

Total Amount Needed: $2,123,879

Suggested Gifts

$16,868 will build homes for two families in need.
$8,434 will build a home for one family in need.
$4,217 will join with another donor’s gift to build a home for one family.
$2,109 will help build a home for one family in need.

Or give whatever amount the Lord places on your heart. It will be appreciated and used for the glory of God!

To give online, visit CrossCatholic.org/house

My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.

ISAIAH 32:18
Our Mission
We mobilize the global Catholic Church to transform the poor and their communities materially and spiritually for the glory of Jesus Christ.

How We Serve
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.

Good Stewardship
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.

Our Promise to You!
Donations from this campaign will be used to cover any expenditures for this project incurred through June 30, 2023, 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.