

San Lucas Toliman Mission News

April, 2011



Dear Friends,

As the month of January surrounds us, we living in Guatemala have school on our minds. Our new school year begins the first month of the calendar year and continues on until mid October. Teachers begin formal preparation in schools throughout the country on January 2nd and the students arrive at the classroom doors on the 17th. For elementary students the class day is quite short. Classes begin at 8:00 a.m. and finish their day at 1:00 p.m.

The school year itself is laced with official holidays, fiestas, religious celebrations like Holy Week, and a Community's own Titular Saint's Day(s) as well as anniversaries of various occasions. This makes for quite a challenge for a serious teacher with much material to cover adequately during a school year and limited time with which to cover it.

It is a delight to visit with good friend, Don Mario Maldonado, and touch on the subject of the limited hours per day and limited class days per year of our elementary education today. I like to watch his eyes light up, flash lightning strikes, and listen to his voice take on the deep serious

tones of a dedicated educator citing studies from various sectors calling for much more effort being put into education nationally.

Don Mario's life has been dedicated to education. On June 21, 2006 this dedication was recognized nationally. Mario Maldonado was one of ten teachers to receive the La Orden Nacional "Francisco Marroquin" for exceptional work in education. That year and that year only these ten recipients received also from the Ministerio de Defensa: **La Cruz de Servicios Distinguidos** (The Distinguished Service Cross: from the Ministry of Defense). Returning from the National Palace the day

following the presentation of this Prestigious Award, Don Mario Maldonado was received with cheers, loud clapping, and fireworks by family and friends from throughout San Lucas Toliman. One of our own is honored. We all savor the honor.



Don Mario Maldonado

The year was 1940 when Mario finished his studies, passed the oral and written exams given by three teachers in the Jefatura Politico en Solola and was given his Teacher's Title/ Certificate. He began work immediately in the small community of San Jose Chacaya outside of



Typical Colegio classroom

Solola and continued teaching in that community until 1947.

By then the pleas of parents of families in San Lucas Toliman were finally heard and proper authorities sent Mario Maldonado to his own home town as School Principal (Director). He came to a boys' school with four teachers and a girls' school with two teachers. First, second, and third grades were taught with classes from 8:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon and then 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. six days a week. Memorization of a dictated text was emphasized and discipline was 'super strict'.

Parents urged Mario to offer a fourth grade to those who wanted to continue their studies. Mario did just that - taking class into the late evening hours. As Director he wanted to increase the grades taught to six, the official number of grades for a complete elementary school. He brought the boys' and girls' schools together freeing up teachers for further grades. Then

one year at a time he added 4th, 5th, and then 6th grade. He increased the student population of San Lucas Toliman to 150. Quite an accomplishment for the young school Director making San Lucas proud.

In 1965 Mario Maldonado was consulted by the School Sisters of Notre Dame as they took the first steps to begin the second school in San Lucas Toliman: el Colegio San Lucas. With pre-school and kindergarten classes begun in the church hall, Mario advised the Sisters to begin with a few students in first and second grades until the Colegio San Lucas could formally open its doors in 1968. By 1970 there were 1000 elementary students in the Municipality of San Lucas Toliman.

Today we begin the new school year with 116 schools opening doors to students on several levels of education in the school district of San Lucas Toliman. A total of 490 teachers will be preparing for the eager students. Those teachers will be received a total of 10, 612 (5,375 girls/ young women and 5,237 boys/young men) into their classrooms on



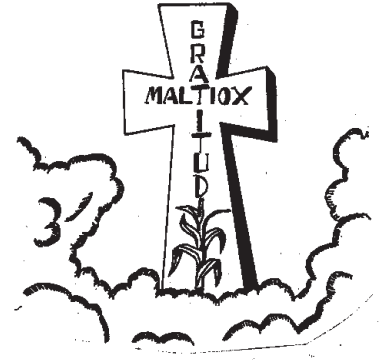
Early Learning Center Classroom (Montessori)



*Playgroup/Physical Education Area
(limited space calls for fences)*

Guatemala. May God bless you always!

To each of you reading this, know of our prayers for you in gratitude. We ask God's special blessing on you this year of 2011!



January 17, 2011. Besides the usual morning classes each day from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (primary school), there will be a secondary school (basicos and diversificado) classes in the afternoon hours. Classes in the evening hours offer continued education to those who work during the day and use their evenings for study. Weekend classes are available to adults who did not have an opportunity for study as children.

Don Mario Maldonado, now well into his eighties, smiles when we visit about the differences in educational opportunities for youth today in comparison to such opportunities available in his own youth. 'And yet, he will muse with concern in his eyes shading the smile on his lips, "we have so far to go. We simply must get better in our teaching itself, classrooms themselves, as well as quality of educational materials. Our social climate reflects that need. What do you think - Padre - better education, better Guatemala?' Well, Don Mario, it certainly would be a giant step forward in the right direction. 'And, Don Mario, thank you for all you have done for your country - for education in



Colegio students participating in Semana Santa (Holy Week) procession.

Gratefully,

Fr. Greg

Top front cover: *Typical Colegio classroom.*

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
Paid
Mankato, MN
Permit No. 66

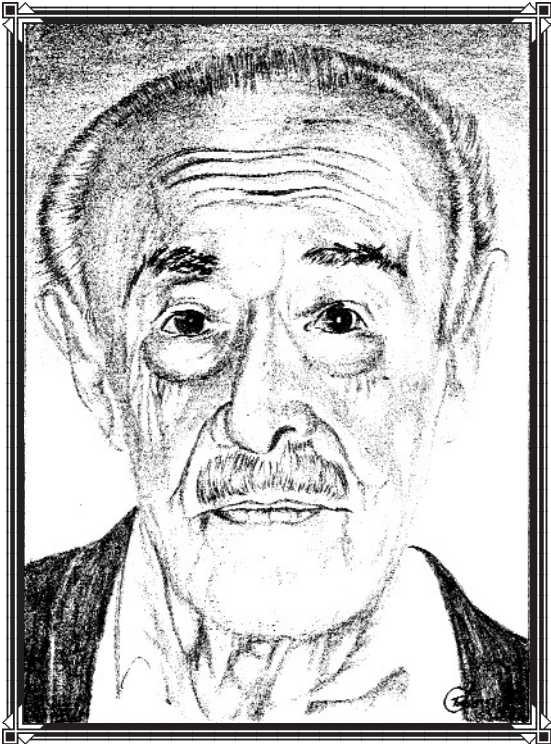


*Fourth Grade Teacher,
Sandra Quiaguan,
holds class in the Patio*

La Parroquia
San Lucas Tollman
Solola, Guatemala
Central America
011-502-7722-0112
San Lucas Mission Office
Kathy Huebert
1400 6th Street North
New Ulm, MN 56073-2099
507-359-2966, ext. 304
e-mail: khuebert@dmu.org

San Lucas Tollman Mission

*When one of
our own is
honored.
We all savor
the honor!*



Don Mario Maldonado