

SISTER DIOCESE MISSION

San Juan de la Maguana, Dominican Republic

Faith • Service • Education • Sustainability • Hope

In 1983, Bishop Thomas Grady initiated a sister-diocese relationship with the Diocese of San Juan de la Maguana, the poorest of the dioceses in the Dominican Republic. What began by responding to medical needs has grown into a long-term ministry of faith, education, water, housing, and human development in the central mountains.

FROM HELP TO SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

Our early efforts included medical care, followed by the construction of homes in Guayabal and 57 homes in Vallejuelo. Local families and volunteers worked side by side with a shared goal: to build solutions that would last. For more than 20 years, our mission has focused on the communities high in the central mountains of the Dominican Republic.



Children of the mountain communities



Joy, friendship, and community

A STORY OF TRANSFORMATION

When we first arrived in the mountains, many adults could neither read nor write, children were dying before school age, and many children left school as early as fourth grade to help in the fields or at home. Government schools were struggling to meet the needs of the communities.

A study of the water supply led to the development of a simple water-filtration system that changed lives. The introduction of a preschool program, similar to Head Start, and adult literacy programs opened new possibilities. As teachers in the Catholic school became better prepared, the entire community began to see what could be possible for its children.

EDUCATION: INVESTING IN THE NEXT GENERATION

Today, education is at the heart of the mission. Our Catholic school in Los Frios serves 603 students. In 2026, Centro Educativo Maximilian Kolbe reached a new milestone by welcoming its first high school class: 20 students. The school has earned an extraordinary academic distinction, ranking 66th among 5,515 schools on the island. International Student Program: 32 international students have graduated from high school in the United States; 16 have graduated from college, and 5 are pursuing university studies under the scholarship program. These students are a beautiful testament to the lasting impact of investing in young people and opening doors to new opportunities through education.

MISSION IN ACTION

8

water projects completed

1,300

households with access to water

36

homes built in La Cueva

4

chapels renovated

20

mission trips each year

~360

missioners participating annually

10,000+

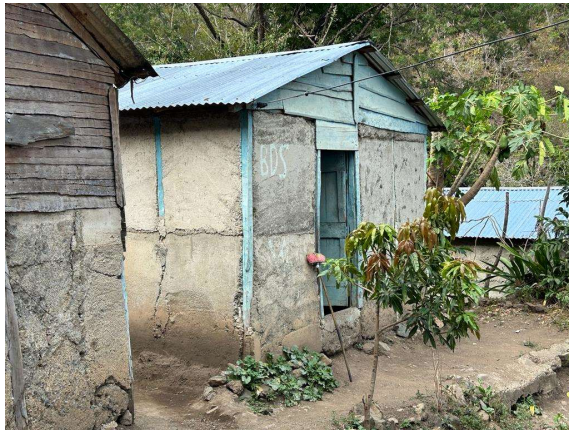
volunteer hours donated each
year

1–2

shipping containers of essentials
sent annually

WATER, HOMES & COMMUNITY

Access to clean water has transformed daily life for families who once had to travel long distances for water. Eight water projects have been completed, giving approximately 1,300 households access to water. In La Cueva, 36 homes have been built. Families who once slept on the ground beside mud puddles now have a secure home, a metal roof, and a bed to sleep in.



A home that reflects dignity and hope



From an old home to a safer home

NOURISHING BODY, MIND & SPIRIT

The Orlando Diocese community continues to respond with practical love. Mission partners sponsor water-filtration systems, donate peanut butter and school supplies, and provide shoes so children can walk to school. For some children, peanut butter and bread each morning means the difference between beginning the school day hungry and beginning it ready to learn.

The mission also supports an open-air, covered multipurpose court, made possible through a grant from the Ruckstuhl Foundation and Japanese partners. The court is heavily used for sports, gatherings, and community activities. Four chapels have been renovated, and one or two shipping containers of essential supplies are sent each year.

FORMING LEADERS WHO GIVE BACK

The High School Residence Program in Azua currently serves 32 students. Through scholarships, our teens continue to grow academically and in their Catholic faith while attending a San Juan Diocese Catholic high school that prepares them for university.

Our International Student Program brings exceptionally bright students from the Dominican Republic to the United States to study and graduate from one of our five Catholic high schools. Graduates have received university scholarships in the United States or the Dominican Republic. Many alumni of both the International Student and Residence programs have returned to the mountains where they grew up as teachers, engineers, and school psychologists—giving back and changing the lives of the next generation just as others once changed theirs.

MISSIONERS: THE HEART OF THE WORK

Each year, approximately 20 mission trips bring about 360 men, women, and young people together with local villagers. Missioners and community members donate more than 10,000 volunteer hours. These relationships are at the heart of the mission: people serving people, sharing faith, learning from one another, and building a future together.

ALL OF THIS IS POSSIBLE THROUGH THE LOVE, FAITH, AND GENEROSITY OF MISSIONERS LIKE YOU.

Mission Office • Diocese of Orlando • Sister Diocese of San Juan de la Maguana