

August 30 - September 16, 2010

Spanish Course for Vietnamese Priests in Costa Rica

By Father Rolando Fonseca-Diocese of El Paso, Texas.



Main Goals:

Provide a learning environment for priests seeking to master the basics of the Spanish Language.

Foster a better understanding of the Hispanic Culture.

Discover ways of integrating the Hispanic heritage into parish ministry.

Foster priestly spirituality by the celebration of the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours and creating spaces for personal prayer and meditation.

Experience the local Church through special ecclesial encounters.

Make this experience a true source for renewal and rest.

Discover the natural beauty of Costa Rica.

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How did it come about?

Actually, this was the last thing on my mind. Last year I was visiting my family in Costa Rica for a few days. A good friend of mine, Father Walter Arce invited me to have lunch with the Apostolic Nuncio, His Excellency Pierre Nguyễn Văn Tốt. I wondered if the Nuncio would be willing to tell his vocation story on video. This is something I have been doing for a while now. To this day I have recorded around 220 interviews in several languages.

To my surprise, the Nuncio agreed to my request and later on I was able to record the interview which you may watch here: www.vimeo.com/6016994

While having lunch with the Nuncio, he shared with us about the plight of Vietnamese priests in the United States who happened to have Hispanic communities

in their parishes. They had little or no preparation at all to deal with the culture and the language. He said that this was a pressing need that was communicated to him by Father Liem Nguyen, whom he met in one of his



visits to the U.S. (Father Liem Nguyen, a priest of the Archdiocese of Atlanta, is the President of the Vietnamese Catholics in the USA).

We already knew of a program for American priests to introduce them to the Hispanic culture in Mexico City. The Nuncio had in mind a similar program for Vietnam-

ese Priests in Costa Rica. At the moment I did not think much about it. However, later on that day, all of the sudden it struck me. I thought that maybe there was something I could do for this cause. Why not try? Then I told Father Walter and he then informed the Nuncio. His Excellency was very gracious and immediately welcomed my request. He then asked me to get in touch with Father Liem and since then we have been writing back and forth getting things ready for this first Spanish Course Program for Vietnamese Priests in Costa Rica.

I am looking forward to having our Vietnamese brother priests in Costa Rica and to help them the best way possible. To find out more keep on reading.

About the Program

Father Walter and myself got together last October to brainstorm ideas for the Program. We had heard from Fr. Liem that priests were looking for a wholesome experience, i.e. they wanted to have time to learn, to relax, to visit, to share, to pray and to charge their batteries, sort of speak. Not only that, they also

wanted to see Costa Rica and get a feel for its natural as well as cultural resources. Equally important was the opportunity to get in touch with the Church in Costa Rica and its faithful. This indeed presented a challenge for us. This was more than just a retreat, a gathering, a workshop or a tour of the country. We needed a holistic ap-

proach to the program. Armed with this mindset, we set out to work.

Within the context of ongoing formation, this program offers an alternative to priests who want to sharpen their pastoral and language skills. We feel that we have come out with a very comprehensive and well-balanced program.



Visit important places of worship like the Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels in Cartago.



Experience the beauty of the Rain Forest.



Admire the heritage of colonial times.



Costa Rica is well known for its flora and fauna.

Accommodations

Costa Rica offers several options for accommodating large groups who wish to do a retreat. Several religious orders offer great installations for this purpose. However, there are certain limitations which are great for anyone doing a retreat, but not for the Program we have in mind.

The first thing we need is flexibility. Many of our Vietnamese brothers would hope to be in touch with their places of work. An internet connection is indeed very desirable. These retreat places do not offer such an advantage.

Second, we need to be able to leave the premises in order to fulfill program goals. We cannot be restrained by a the logic of a retreat house which would normally close its door early in the evening.

Third, sharing rooms in a retreat facility is fine for the weekend, but not for a Program that is going to last 18 days! Privacy is an important element for learning as well. While some retreat places do offer single rooms, usually space is very limited and some people would need to

share their rooms. Right now we are planning this experience for 20 participants, but what happens if the number increases to 30 due to a good response from the Vietnamese community? We needed a place which would be able to accommodate this changes.

Forth, some retreat places are far away from the city which make access to resources a little awkward. We needed to be close to San José, the Capital to best accomplish our goals. This is where a good friend of ours, Javier Vargas stepped in. Javier is a young businessman who has the right connections. He told us about [Casa Conde](#).

Casa Conde is within walking distance from the Major Seminary, in the outskirts of San Jose. It is indeed an strategic place for our Program. Casa Conde offers great flexibility—things that you would expect in any major hotel chain: Wireless internet, pools, restaurants, shops, a gym and great security. In each suite you will find two individual rooms, a fully equipped kitchen with a

fridge, sink, stove, silverware, dishes, etc. Most units have a washing machine, an important factor if the Program lasts 18 days. There is also a living room with a TV and a bathroom. Each unit has enough space for priests to gather in small groups if they choose to. The place is also quite and serene.

The buildings are really beautiful, clean, with a pueblo-like motif to them with Costa Rican art splashing the surroundings. This place is well secured and safe and access is available at any time. All of this for only \$90 per day! Since each unit has two individual rooms, that comes down to \$45 per priest. This price is extremely economical for what we get and it also includes breakfast. A good thing is that priests may choose to cook at any time if they want.

We are very happy with Casa Conde and we feel everyone in the program will also appreciate the significant advantages that this place has to offer.

Learning Spanish

The first area that we addressed was precisely formation. Ministry in Costa Rica is quite unique. For example, we have a ministry for teachers and another one for Tourism & Faith. Father Walter happens to be in charge of both ministries! This means that Father Walter has at his command the best bilingual teachers in the country and also has access

to the best beach resorts of Costa Rica.

We got busy and scheduled a meeting with the leading representative of the Teacher's Ministry. We explained what we were looking for. Vietnamese Priests needed to be able to say Mass in Spanish, do the sacraments and read common prayers such as house bless-

ings. All of this had to be supported by a concise introduction to the Spanish language and followed by a series of tutorials. A total of 50 hours were set apart for this purpose. The ministry should be able to present their coursework later on before the program takes place. We will keep you informed.

Trips & Outings– Beach & Mountains

Costa Rica sells itself from the start. Who hasn't heard of Costa Rica's beauty, its legendary beach resorts and beautiful mountains. Since our Program allows for two full weekends, we have planned a trip to the beach and another one to the mountains. These two points of reference will be like a hub for us, since we also intend to visit nearby attractions from those two epicenters. From the start we have been blessed thanks to Father Walter's connection with Tourism & Faith.

Like we said before, this Program is not just about learning a language, nor it is a retreat per se, it is much more than that. It is also about getting to know a country, its culture and its beauty.

Our trip to the ocean includes a private resort in the Pacific shoreline. We will be staying at [Jaco Bay Resort](#). Jaco is a small thriving typical beach community filled with all sorts of shops, restaurants and other businesses. We got an incredible price break for this resort. We will arrive Friday afternoon and leave Sunday

noon. Each suite has two private rooms, a bathroom, a living room and all rooms offer an spectacular ocean view. All of this comes down to \$60 per priest per day. For an additional \$21 per day we were able to include all meals specially catered for us at the Hotel roofline. Imagine the view. Strategically located nearby Jaco there is a famous private beach resort called [Punta Leona](#). PL is like a small paradise within a paradise. Father Walter has secured access to this resort. Not only you will find outstanding beaches, but also swimming pools, restaurants, and all sorts of paths to follow and explore. PL offers first hand contact with nature. You will be able to see the monkeys a couple of feet away. You will get to know [pisotes](#) and bump into iguanas as well. Right in the center of this resort lies a beautiful chapel. We can celebrate the Eucharist and thank God for his creation.

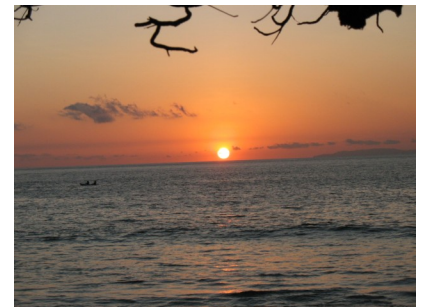
After an enchanting weekend at the beach we will embrace another ravishing weekend at the mountains. This time we will be staying at [Hotel Gran Arenal](#) in front of a typical volcano which

offers an exceptional view. From there, we will visit [Baldi](#), a renown place for hot springs. For \$25 we will have access to the springs with lunch included. Gran Arenal offers twin rooms which will come down to \$30 per priest per day and free breakfast. This is the only place where we need to share rooms, but we hope by then we will be more acquainted with each other. It has other amenities, including free wireless access. Again we expect to move around the neighboring towns and villages while we are in that section of Costa Rica. All sorts of animals are within reach for those of you who desire a more personal encounter with mother earth. There is also a nearby lake where some of you may wish to get a boat ride. That should be exciting.

During the week we have also planned several outings to important landmarks such as the Cathedral, the Shrine to Our Lady of the Angels and other places which will provide a better perspective of Costa Rica's culture. We are still working on the schedule but we will inform you when things are ready to roll.



Meet the people



Witness an enchanting sunset in the Pacific shoreline



Take time to wonder

Visiting with Families

This is not just an intellectual pursuit. Learning also takes place when you meet the people you want to minister to. We are planning a series of encounters with local families who are willing to open their homes to you. Then you can start commu-

nicating in Spanish and they can help you get a better feel for the culture and the language. They will come to get you to have dinner for example and spend a couple of hours with them. There is always someone bound to speak a little English, there-

fore we think that one way or another you will be all right with them. We recommend that you bring some pictures with you of your family or your parish communities. This is a nice way to get a conversation going.



Capture the loveliness of the landscape

Contact:

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Marfa TX 79843

Mobile: (915) 539-3534
Email: pura.vida.course@gmail.com



Costa Rica, a place to recharge batteries.



Our friend Javier Vargas who has proven to be very resourceful for this Program



Costa Rica: Between culture and faith.

Experience the Local Church

From an intellectual point of view, we have set aside some time to review of the In-service study on Hispanic Ministry by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to help us gain a better perspective of Hispanic communities. This is a PowerPoint presentation which will give us key elements when dealing with Hispanic Ministry.

Engaging in a more direct approach, we hope to have the opportunity to share with local seminarians and priests since the Seminary is so close to Casa Conde.

We also hope to foster our spirituality by the celebration of the Eucharist thus providing an environment conducive of priestly fraternity, respect and

love. An important place is also given to the Liturgy of the Hours and personal time with the Blessed Sacrament, while we visit with the Sisters of the Holy Cross located in the mountain slopes of the Central Valley.

We also plan to visit Fr. Walter's Church where we hope to have a closer encounter with the people, thus helping us to acquire basic training skills to say mass, impart the sacraments and conduct blessings in Spanish.

Volunteers will be ready to work on a one to one basis with us in order to facilitate better pronunciation skills. We stand to gain much with these personal encounters and their lasting fruits will remain with

us always. In a missionary spirit, we will have a weekly encounter with the Local Church in the context of youth ministry, catechism or sacramental ministry. The idea here is to bring instruction to practice i.e. while learning Spanish, we have opportunities to practice what we have learned.

This experience would not have been possible without the initiative and support of the Apostolic Nuncio, His Excellency Pierre Nguyễn Văn Tốt who will be at hand to welcome us as we embark in this journey. With his blessings we cannot go wrong. Don't forget to bring your cameras since there will be plenty of occasions to take pictures.

Priestly Fraternity

"All the forms of 'priestly fraternity' approved by the Church are useful not only for the spiritual life but also for the apostolic and pastoral life" (Pastores dabo Vobis 81). Encouraged by these words of John Paul II we lay down the fruits of our efforts before you. In the context of the Year of the Priest, the most significant

contribution that this program has to offer is to provide an environment conducive of priestly fraternity. This Program is gathering Vietnamese priests scattered throughout the United States to share a unique learning experience. We believe that this program will create unique and lasting bonds.

This sends a clear message to Bishops who are responsible for the care and support of all ethnic communities under their charge.

The fruits of this experience will witness to the power of the Spirit ever working in new ways to renew our beloved Church.

Program Cost: \$1,635.00

We have taken great care to make this experience affordable. This price includes transportation, meals, classes, lodging, trips, outings and personal insurance while in Costa Rica. You are responsible for flying costs to and from Costa Rica and for any spending money you may bring for gifts or other expenses. The price is out-

standing if you compare it to the cost of doing a similar experience in Mexico. That program is planned for 15 days and is for American priests who want to learn Spanish for \$3,800.00!! Our program represents only 43% of that cost and includes 3 more days. Needless to say the savings are outstanding. We have also

included personal insurance for \$85 which covers your whole stay in Costa Rica. It offers \$50,000 in case of death and \$250,000 medical coverage in case of injury. Agents will be ready for you the day after your arrival. (Please note that this is not travel insurance and it will not cover any changes to your flight plans).

Spanish Course for Vietnamese Priests in Costa Rica

August 30 - September 16, 2010

Deadline for Registration: July 30, 2010

Name

Last Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Mobile Phone

Date of Birth

Email

Diocese / Religious Order

Emergency Contact

Special Needs

Payment: Please make checks or money orders payable to "**Vietnamese Priests**"

Send payment & Registration Form to: Fr. Rolando Fonseca, P.O. Box 356, Marfa TX 79843.

Email: pura.vida.course@gmail.com

Flight Arrangements:

You can make flight arrangements using an internet connection. The airport code is SJO (San Jose, Juan Santamaría International). Make sure you don't confuse it with San Jose, California. Good places to look are [Orbitz](#), [Kayak](#) or [Expedia](#). We expect all priests to arrive on Monday, August 30th anytime during the day. Also, departure should take place anytime on Thursday, September 16th. Please email Fr. Rolando Fonseca with flight plans to keep an eye on you. Casa Conde does provide transportation to and from the San Jose airport. More detailed information will be provided for you as the time draws near. Notice that there are several night flights: from Denver into San Jose which gets in around 6:00am; from Los Angeles arriving early in the morning. Houston and Dallas have direct flights as well as Miami and Fort Lauderdale Florida. Newark also offers direct flights along with Atlanta, Georgia. Phoenix has a direct flight as well.

Visa Requirements:

If you are a U.S. citizen, then you don't need anything except your passport. If you are a U.S. Resident Alien, then you will need to bring your passport and Green Card with a letter from the Nunciature stating the purpose of your visit to Costa Rica. This letter will be provided for you before your departure. If you are not a resident alien then you need a visa to enter Costa Rica. With the same letter from the Nunciature, you could request this visa in the U.S.

Registration Form - Program Cost: \$1,635.00