



Faces of the Maria Madre Godparent Program: David & Arlene Christian

Jorge, our “Godson” in El Salvador, is 19 now. We’ve seen him grow—in photos and in visits—from a shy 8-year-old to a high schooler on the verge of adulthood.

Arlene and I first learned his beautiful name—Jorge Alberto Martinez Salamanca—in 2008 after we volunteered for Holy Trinity’s Godparent program at our sister parish, Maria Madre de los Pobres, in San Salvador. The Sister running the program at Maria Madre back then matched us up with Jorge and we undertook to pay his school-related expenses each academic year. A little bit of aid goes a long way there, and can make the difference between staying in school and dropping out.

Beyond the financial side came the person-to-person contact; we were challenged to provide encouragement with prayers, letters, cards, and gifts across the miles. More important was the chance to get to know him in person. I’ve met with Jorge and his family—mom, dad, and a sister—on two visits with Holy Trinity delegations to Maria Madre. We’ve been to Mass together, shared a waterpark outing, and had conversations in their home. Those encounters brought the relationship closer.

Jorge is a serious, even sombre, person who rarely smiles. His family is among the poorest in a materially poor neighborhood. Yet he has become a leader of other youths in the parish’s programs for catechesis and preparation for First Communion. He helps his aunt sell pupusas, a favorite Salvadoran dish, at soccer games and elsewhere. His family often needs him to assist at home—so much that he had to repeat a school year because of excessive absences.

Jorge is passionate about the Real Madrid soccer team. Through a mixup, we almost sent him a shirt with the logo of Real Madrid’s archrival, Barcelona, which would have been a big blow to our relationship.

With encouragement from Sister Betty and her crew who currently run the program, Jorge sends us letters, photos, thank-you notes, and Christmas cards annually. Sister Betty sends us his school report cards.

Jorge perseveres despite big obstacles. Because of our Godparent connection, he knows that people outside his parish and his country know something of him and his circumstances, including the obstacles. We hope he feels our love and caring.

For our part, being a Godparent to Jorge is a way to befriend and help someone who needs help, and to live Gospel values, however modestly. We draw inspiration from his ability to take sustenance by giving to his parish and his family.

Beyond that, I’ve been energized by my eye-opening connections to Jorge and his country to visit the US-Mexican border with



another Holy Trinity delegation to meet asylum seekers from Central America and elsewhere. After that it was a natural step to join the Holy Trinity Migrant Team, befriending and helping asylum seekers in the DC area. And to start a Spanish conversation group to improve my communication, at least a little, with Jorge and with recent Central American migrants here.

Arlene and I encourage anyone whose heart is moved by stories like Jorge's to get connected with Holy Trinity's Maria Madre committee and become a Godparent. You never know where it might lead.

