

WALK IN MY SHOES: CUBA 2016

Guiding Principles

- *"Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on [people's] dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival."* (John V. Taylor: *The Primal Vision*). This quote sums up the stance we will take as participants seeking to learn about the cultures and faith of the people we encounter in Cuba. We are committed to "treading lightly" in our host country and to approach the people we meet with respect as listeners and learners, as opposed to seeing the negative aspects of the realities we encounter and reacting to those realities by attempting to "fix" or make them better.
 - Pope Francis is admired the world over for his capacity to listen to people, meekly reaching out to understand others, and embracing what he has called a "culture of encounter". This spirituality of humility contains an attitude of willingness to be evangelized by members of other cultures that may take us to a new and deeper understanding of our faith and what it entails. An important goal on this mission trip is to improve our skill of listening and accompaniment, formulating intelligent questions and creating powerful dialogue so that our encounters with other will both evangelize them and open us up to being evangelized.
 - We value and seek a deeper understanding of the perspectives of people working at the grassroots level for social change, and those who shape the local church and society in Cuba. We recognize that these individuals and their realities are not often visited on typical mission trips, nor are their voices heard from in the wider media. We endeavor to provide them with a means to make their lives and work known to us and to share their stories with our friends and family at home.
 - The approach to ministry is that of presence over service. In our ministry of presence we recognize that we are all part of the human community and therefore each person is important and valued. We believe that supportive relationships can build dignity, confidence and a foundation for self-empowerment. We hope that the ministry components of our mission will first and foremost convey our love and concern for those we meet, as well as help communicate who we are and what we believe as Christians.
1. **Development of Social and Cultural Awareness:** To nurture an appreciation of the culture and customs of Cuba, and to be exposed to the economic and social realities faced by the average Cuban by experiencing daily life as it is lived by people from various socio-economic levels, we will engage in the following activities:
 - Enjoy the hospitality of local families from San Antonio and Santa Cruz parishes by eating one lunch and one dinner in their homes. These home meals offer both hosts and participants an unguarded opportunity to discuss the complexities of living in a socialist society that does not encourage or value freedom of religion.
 - Visit the family of Br. Miki Ulloa, OFM and discover the resourcefulness and tenacity of the Cuban people, while learning how some families are compelled to supplement their meager incomes received from government controlled salaries.
 - Discover the importance of Santeria, which, along with Catholicism and the Socialist Ideology, is one of the three dominant belief systems in Cuba. Santeria is a syncretistic religion that is based on the traditional religious beliefs of the Yoruba ethnic group

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who live in modern day Benin and Nigeria. Santeria also incorporates some Roman Catholic elements and developed during the slave trade which flourished in the 16th-18th centuries. This pragmatic approach to religion is currently practiced by 47% of the Cuban people.

- Explore two typical farming villages and learn how Cuban farming techniques differs from those used in the U.S. This visit includes time spent with two families who are part of small Christian communities formerly serviced by the friars. Each family is engaged in either sugar cane farming or animal raising.
- Take a walking tour of Old Havana and see the faded beauty of this once regal city. You will also see several other sections of the city and observe the realities of life for the poorest of Cubans, all while riding in a classic North American car from the 1950's.
- Tour the Valle de los Ingenios (Valley of the Sugar Mills), a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This educational tour will highlight the role played by Afro-Cuban slaves in the production of sugar and molasses for the European and North American markets. See how the slaves and their masters lived and worked, and learn about the importance of the sugar trade in colonial Cuba and how it sustained the triangle trade.
- Experience traditional and modern Cuban culture while partaking of the rich cuisine and world renowned music and dancing.
- Spend the day at Ancon, one of Cuba's many beautiful beaches, or trek up the Escambray Mountains where you'll be rewarded with a refreshing swim in the turquoise green pool of the Caburní waterfall.

2. **Community Engagement through the Ministry of Presence:** The Franciscan tradition offers some insightful wisdom on the importance of making the ministry presence part of our mission experience. An old legend states that St. Francis once said his brother friars should "preach the Gospel always and when necessary, use words." A ministry of presence is also about living the gospel as reflected in our actions and deeds--spreading the gospel message by giving our attention and time; two commodities that are important parts of any ministry experience. Most mission trips place emphasis on 'doing' rather than 'being'. Our Cuban Mission Trip is based on the principle that when we enter other cultures, it is more important for the people to see us, get to know us, and to be known by us; this is the essence of a ministry of presence. Rather than coming with the intention of implementing programs or ministering to the temporal needs of the people in our host country, participants on the Cuba trip will engage in a ministry of presence, spending time with, and listening to our hosts as learners and ambassadors of our schools, faith traditions, and country. Opportunities to practice the ministry of presence include:

- **La Parroquia de Santa Cruz:** Attend Sunday Mass at one of two parishes staffed by Franciscan Friars in Havana and experience the faith life of this vibrant worshipping community.
- **Visit the Focolare Community:** The Focolare Movement was founded by an Italian woman, Chiara Lubich, in 1943 and has a presence in 182 countries with over 100,000 adherents. Their goal is for lay people to live in community and work more cooperatively to build a more united world by living out the precepts set forth in Christianity in harmony with other religions. The community in Havana lives in the beautifully renovated former Franciscan House for Novices. Learn how this unique religious community witnesses to their Roman Catholic faith in Havana, while living out their daily lives in various occupations.
- **Home Meals:** Engage with local families from San Antonio and Santa Cruz parishes and enjoy several meals in their homes.
- **Socio-Economic Reality Discussion:** Visit the family of one of the Franciscan Friars and discover the resourcefulness and tenacity of Cuban families, and have a discussion about how they supplement the inadequate incomes.

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- **Explore a typical farming villages:** Discover how rural life differs from city life in Cuba. This visit includes visits to two the local families who engage in sugar cane farming and animal raising.
 - **Spend Time with the Franciscan Friar Community:** Isolated by years of political and social separation, the Franciscan Friars of Cuba are a small, faith filled community who are graciously opened up their home to our group. The friars offer a wealth of witness to the faith over the last 60 years since Cuba adopted a Socialist Government. Enjoy spending time getting to know and appreciate these holy men.
3. **Grow in faith with a particular understanding of Franciscan Charism:** To engage participants in a faith-based ministry of presence so as to enhance their spiritual growth and gain a better understanding of the Church's fundamental option for the poor while developing an appreciation for the Franciscan Charism of solidarity with the poor.
- Participants will learn about the role of the Catholic Church in promoting social change and development as it is carried out by Franciscan friars, and other Catholic organizations.
 - Participants will join in, and have an opportunity to lead daily prayer as a way of helping them become leaders in their spiritual communities. Participants will also be introduced to the Pastoral Circle which will be used as a framework for daily reflection and to better discern their responsibility as Christians in building the kingdom of God on earth.
 - Participants will acquire an understanding of the value of serving others through good works and through sharing themselves and their lives with the people they meet. Particular emphasis will be placed on the value of "being" with the people as opposed to "doing" for the people (aka the ministry of presence), and participants will learn why this is a vital and important component of any ministry.
4. **Mission Advocacy:** To prepare participants to effectively share their mission experiences in their own communities upon returning to the U.S.
- Participants will meet daily throughout the trip at reflection time to discuss, debrief, and process what they are experiencing.
 - Participants will make a short verbal or visual presentation to the group before departure for home, the purpose of which is to prepare them to share their experiences with friends, family, and their faith communities.
5. **Commitment to Service:** Participants will deepen their commitment to service and be inspired to respond to the needs of all of God's people.
- Participants will be educated on how to use their faith, newfound knowledge, growing advocacy skills, and mission awareness acquired while visiting Cuba to deepen their commitment to ministry and service at home.

Scheduling

1. **Morning Prayer/Prep for Days activities:** One of the trip organizers will lead Morning Prayer. After prayer, the trip guide will brief the group on the day's activities. This will include an explanation of the objectives of the day's activity, where we will be going, what we will be doing, as well as what to along bring/not to bring.

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2. **Evening Prayer:** Participants will form groups of two or three to prepare for and lead evening prayer. Each group will be responsible for leading evening prayer one or two times during the mission experience. Preparation for this can be done before departure as well as in Cuba. What's most important is that prayer be reflective of the talents and gifts of the group leading it, rather than form or substance of the actual prayers being used (i.e. leaders shouldn't be focused on perfection, just on making it meaningful).
3. **Reflections, debriefs, social analysis:** Either before or after evening prayer a deliberate time of reflection and debriefing will be led by one of the group organizers. This will provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on their day, express their observations and feelings, and discuss what they have learned or want to know more about. Daily reflection is one of the most profound and important parts of each day.
4. **Workshops:** Participants will be given three (3) informal workshops on various topics that will help contextualize and form purposeful reflective judgment in the following areas: an orientation to this mission trip and to Cuba, a workshop on socio-economic realities in Cuba today, Peace and Justice Issues related to slavery, class, colonialism, Socialism, US- Cuba relations.
5. **Cultural Activities:** Participants will be exposed to the natural and cultural wonders that Cuba has to offer by making visits to *Havana Vieja*, various national sights in and around Havana, Afro-Cuban Santeria tour, the Shrine at *Remedios*, the town of *Trinidad* and the National Park at *Toppes de Collantes*.

Logistics

1. **Accommodations and Meals:** Participants and chaperones will stay at the Franciscan Friary at *El Santuario Nacional San Antonio* (Saint Anthony Shrine) in the Miramar neighborhood of Havana. Meals will be taken with the friars and at local restaurants. In Trinidad, participants will stay at two Casas Particulares (Bed & Breakfasts owned and operated by local families out of their homes). Meals will be taken at local restaurants and the Casa Particular of Rosy and Meca.
2. **Transportation:** Participants and their chaperones will be transported by mini-bus while in Cuba and in 1950's North American cars during one tour.
3. **Health and Safety:** All travelers to Cuba must take out international trip and health insurance in order to enter the country. These insurances are part of the airfare and included in the trip expenses. We will address other health and safety concerns during our Orientation workshop at the beginning of the trip. Local resources persons will accompany participants on all community engagement excursions.

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Pre-Trip Preparation

- 1) **Pre-Departure Materials:** Educational resources for participants who sign up for the trip will be sent via email and include the following: relevant movies, documentaries, books and periodicals with the aim of educating them on their host country and help them gain an awareness of the issues they will encounter in their reality visits.
- 2) **Pre-Departure Forms:** Participants may find all forms on the FMU website (these can downloaded and printed if needed as well as signed electronically). Br. Paul will provide practical information on what to bring for the trip, a health and wellness form to ensure your health and safety should you fall ill or have an accident, as well as a travel contract which is to be signed and returned to Br. Paul by each participant.

