**14473, Kenneth Vanderhye**

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to welcome everyone to the annual fund raiser for the First Church here in Lansing, IL. Many of you have been to our previous annual fund raising events but this year’s is special. This year, in addition to raising funds for our trip to Mexico, we are celebrating 25 years of ministry to the needy people living in Mexico’s Baja Peninsula. Some of you here today are long standing volunteers as well as long standing financial donors for this ministry and I want you to know how very much we appreciate all your hard work and faithfulness. For those of you who are new we are a not-for-profit, 501(C) 3 organization that we began after our first trip to Mexico in March of 1990.

Every year Medi-Mex, Inc. travels to Mexico where we build houses for the poor; we monthly support “Welcome Home Orphanage” by providing daily meals for the children. We provide uniforms for the children and visit the migrant work camps to also provide medical needs. Over time we helped to expand a clinic from a one story building to a three story hospital. The orphanage we support feeds approximately 40-50 children daily, and we also help support a senior care facility, “Good Samaritan”. There are children in work camps and we have handed out several thousand shoe boxes with toiletries and a toy to them. Over the years we have made over fifty trips and brought over a million dollars in donated medical equipment to provide for these people’s health care needs. We have also built over 10-12 homes for needy families and helped to build and support a community center. In addition to all our humanitarian aid, our main focus is to hand out New Testaments in the camps and help the underprivileged people as much as possible.

As I tell you about the things we have seen and done I know that you can only get a mere glimpse of the way these people live. Living here in the Midwest we cannot truly know the poverty and lack that these people live with on a daily basis. The things that we take for granted they cannot even imagine. Living here with so much of everything, we cannot imagine what it’s like to experience real hunger and starvation or a bare bones existence. The children are skin and bones with pot bellies from lack of food. They live in 10 foot by 10 foot cardboard huts and go to sleep hungry every night. We are late eating and say we are starving, but these people from the youngest to the oldest, know what true starvation means. It means a parent going without so their child will survive. It means learning to survive on the least amount of food possible. It means wearing clothes that are either worn out or provided by strangers. Even the homeless here in the United States do not live such a barely surviving existence. They can’t go to a local homeless shelter. If they have their own shelter, it’s not anything that could be called a home the way we think of a home. Children here in the United States are so overwhelmed with toys that parents end up giving them away to those less fortunate. The children in this area are thankful to even have one toy, regardless of whether they chose it or it was just given randomly. These people cannot imagine having hopes and dreams of wealth or fame or even doing better than they are now. At least they can’t without the help of people like you who are here today.

I know that not everyone will be able to make the trip with us. For those of you who prefer to donate funds, we greatly appreciate every dollar you donate, for it provides food, clothing, shelter, medical equipment and medicine, and most of all, hope to people who have no hope without our help. For those of you who can, I would encourage you to make this trip to minister directly to the people of Mexico’s Baja Peninsula. When you arrive you will see first-hand the poverty that these people take for granted. Most of them can’t imagine life could be any different. The older people, just like our older people, want more for their children. They want their children to live a better life and have more of the nicer things in life such as a real house to live in, good food to eat and proper medical care. They also hope for a better education for their children so that they can continue to improve their lives just as we hope for with our children. They are parents, grandparents, husband, wives and children, just like us. They just don’t have the benefit of our culture.

For those of you who can travel with us I can promise you a life changing experience. You will never be the same once you have seen how these people live, felt the desperation that they live with on a daily basis. You will feel, in a very real way, what it is to give as Jesus wants us to give. These people couldn’t go on without God’s help and we need you to be the hands and feet of God as we reach out to them. There is no way to put into words what it feels like the first time you come face to face with the abject poverty these people take for granted. It will shock you the first time or the first few times. But, when you are able to present them with food, clothing, and medical care and truly show them the love of God in action, you will know what it is walk out your faith. The rush of love you feel when a small child rushes up to you to thank you for something so small as a used toy or a donated piece of clothing or a hot meal, cannot be explained. Your first visit will be overwhelming until you begin to accept that these people are used to living this way and unless we bring them aid, their life won’t ever get any better. We truly are God with skin on for these people. We don’t have to give them long sermons on salvation or fire and brimstone sermons to make them fear Hell. What we do is example the love of God to them and that draws them to Christ. When you look into the eyes of a person who had thought their life was over due to sickness or loss of everything they owned, who has now accepted Christ as Savior and God is working in their life to restore what was lost, you will see the definition of real joy. Joy from knowing Christ, not just happiness because they got their wish for something.

I promise you that if you make this trip you will come back a changed person, for the better. You will never look at what you have and take it for granted again and you will never forget the needs of these people or the real gratitude when we help them. And, I promise our donors that every dollar you give will go to help these people in one of the ways we have talked about tonight and you can go to our Facebook page to see what is going on regularly.

It is my hope and prayer that our donations continue and increase and that as many of you as possible can go with us to witness the difference we can make in the lives of this group of people.

Thank you,