

## Tragedy calls us to plant hope faster than it can be uprooted!

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Hope and Despair swirl in a cosmic battle around recently devastated Cerocahui, a town where 31 of our Canyon Scholars students go to school, paid for by 14 of our loyal sponsors!

**Giant steps forward:** For 22 years, thanks to educational scholarships from Americans like you, 100's of Tarahumara youth in Cerocahui have learned about a more hopeful world beyond them that is NOT always subject to a reign of terror. And in bringing that message, we've unofficially partnered with local priests who nurture, protect and guide the same children each week spiritually. It takes a village... That's why nearly every one of our students say they regularly pray or read the Bible. Sadly, on June 24, terror struck those spiritual fathers.



AP Photo/Christian Chavez

**Major step backward:** Three of these Cerocahui students are sponsored by the Madison Kiwanis Club in Madison, WI, where I spoke just weeks ago. Preparing for that visit, ironically, I had just read the touching words of an orphan written to his Kiwanis sponsors: "What I like most about my village is the church, waterfall and valley." That's when I heard the news that his two beloved priests in that village church were just shot and killed!

"A drug cartel boss was chasing a victim who ran into the church to find refuge, and while the priests intervened, he shot and killed them all," my father Ren, founder of Canyon Scholars, explained on our weekly phone call. "Did you know them?" I asked.

"Oh yes, Father Javier was very well loved. The Tarahumara playfully called him Father Gallo, meaning 'the rooster that rules the chicken yard!' I remember seeing him one day in a hardware store, and his face just glowed. He welcomed us warmly, even as Protestants, and said he appreciated how Canyon Scholars partnered quietly, not drawing attention to ourselves."

The Revs. Javier Campos, 79, and Joaquín Mora, 80, "provided a moral balance in marginalized communities controlled by gunmen," reported the *Associated Press* (*Washington Post*, June 27). Cartels fight over "illegal logging, extort money from local businesses and grow marijuana."

## Our Seeds of Hope are Making THE difference!

In a Mass honoring the priests in the state capital of Chihuahua, a fellow priest recalled Mexican President Obrador's call for **"hugs not bullets,"** but lamented that "there aren't enough hugs anymore to cover the bullets." But little does he know...

**This exactly what YOU, our sponsors, bring every year though these scholarships! Hugs, empowering relationships, and real hope for change. You may not think of it every day, but many of your students do, already working for a better world!**

**The power of evil is formidable. But we are planting seeds of hope, and tending them, with greater, longer lasting results, faster than they can get uprooted -- as did these priests, for generations. Don't be fooled. In the long run, embodied faith and love triumph over fear, in the U.S. and in Mexico.**

"The caskets made their way up the winding roads into the mountains where the priests had worked for decades among the impoverished (Tarahumara)," the AP article reports. "They were buried in Cerocahui on the grassy lawn of the church, amid shouts of praise from parishioners."

"The leader of the Jesuit order in Mexico, Rev. Luis Gerardo Moro, "pledged during the funeral that the Jesuits will not be frightened off. 'We are not leaving here,' Moro said. 'We want to continue here near you, learning from you.'"



Canyon Scholars is not leaving either, and not from any of the drug-war-torn Tarahumara villages our students occupy. Why not?

...Because this young fellow, the above-mentioned Cerocahui-based orphan Adalberto, is preparing to be **an engineer** with skills to improve his community, and he just graduated from middle school this year!



...And 21-year-old Luz sees and wants to solve the lack of employment and public services in Cerocahui, and plans to do something about it as **a teacher**.

Ironically she too said that what she likes most about her town is "the church." We suspect she will partner with its next leaders to be a force for stability there!



...And big-hearted Cesar, who just graduated from high school this year, told us "I pray at night to thank God for all I am able to do during the day. I want to **work at a hospital** to help people who are sick."

...Finally, Alexca is one year from being our 111<sup>th</sup> college graduate, and **first professional** in her family!



## Support Another Child in this Battle of Hope

These future leaders may need to keep a low profile at times for their safety. But they are in our spotlight, and are not missed! We connect with them at least 5 times a year. Quietly, one young adult after another is being raised up to be educators who will teach dozens, engineers who will build a city hall, and moms who will teach their kids -- and they are grateful for the opportunity you've given them!

Meanwhile, in the U.S., a battle with time continues on another front. A dear saint, Joan Halverson, died last week, the next in a line of our wonderful original sponsors who are passing away. Joan was sponsoring 9 of our students, these 4 wonderful Canyon Scholars currently going through the university!



Only days before Joan died, she told me, "I was totally thrilled to hear that 3 of my students have graduated from college, with 4 more close behind!" But when we lost this dear Canyon Scholars legend, the way I see it, hope in the Copper Canyon battle took a hit! And we hope you feel the call to adopt one of these students in her honor. What a great way to support the team and be a part of world change!

**Please Take the Baton!** My hope is that you see how connected you are to this Battle of Hope for these kids' lives -- that you see your scholarship as ammunition in this war between worlds. My dream is that, as we're able, each of us would take on more of the dozens of children that wait to be adopted by co-parents, now with potential personal Zoom-call conversations with a translator.

You can encourage a healthier cross-cultural worldview for us all, and be blessed by some of the most resilient young people in the world, giving them knowledge, faith, and skills to remake their communities.



**For just \$43 a month for a high school child, and \$63 a month for a university student, you add hope for a lifetime! Feel free to call me at 414-204-4768 with questions or to learn how to set up autopay, email me at [svanoet@gmail.com](mailto:svanoet@gmail.com), or send a check (\$500/yr., high school, or \$750/yr. college student) to Treasurer Tom Pierce, Canyon Scholars, 5595 Tancho Drive, Apt. 104, Madison, WI 53718. THANKS!**