

Dear Friends,

Christmas greetings!

Have you ever wanted something so much that you could see yourself in that moment, receiving whatever it was that you wanted with all your heart?

That is how it was for me this year, anticipating the grand opening of *Casa de Luz* (House of Light), the new home for special needs children, which we are constructing in the outskirts of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. When we broke ground in November 2003, one year seemed like such a long time. Surely, we thought, the home would be completed before the end of 2004. Yet after eight months of work on the beautiful five acres of land near the Caribbean Sea, the construction funds began to dwindle. We had to make a decision between continuing our ongoing humanitarian relief effort to feed and care for the children as we had up to this point, or push forward with the construction. I still hung to my dream that somehow, it would all work out and we could have the inauguration on November 27, 2004, just in time for a grand Christmas celebration with all the children. But we had to make a choice between bricks and food. Obviously, our only choice was to continue to feed and care for the children.



**"I tell you the truth,
whatever you did for
one of the least of
these little ones,
you did for me."**

Matthew 25:40

Yohana, age 9 (Nov. 2004)

and taught manual skills so that they can feel useful, wanted and loved. Why should any child have to settle for anything less?

This is much more than just a desire to see *Casa de Luz* completed. It goes deeper than that. It is my heart's yearning to see our seventy-seven children and many other children with special needs in the Dominican Republic have a place they can call home; a place they can come to receive therapy, medical attention and love, a place with running water, a place where they can be taken outdoors in their wheelchairs to feel the warm sun on their faces and the gentle ocean breezes caressing their skin for the first time in their lives and not be stuck on a third floor of a dark, dilapidated building without working elevators. These children deserve a clean home and not one infested with rodents. They deserve the skilled and loving hands of therapists and caregivers that will bring them relief and comfort to their distorted little bodies while they use state-of-the-art equipment. The children deserve a chapel where they can congregate together, worship and hear the word of God being taught to them. They deserve bathrooms made especially for their needs and limitations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and not just a hard, cold floor with broken tiles. The children deserve warm baths and not just a bucketful of cold contaminated rainwater poured on them. They deserve stimulation throughout the day and to be introduced to painting, music, arts & crafts, games,

(over please)

Last month we found Yohana in a *batey* in Los Alcarrizos, a neighborhood in Santo Domingo. Yohana was born with neurological and physical disorders and was stricken with polio at the age of two. Yohana's father was killed several years ago and her mother was left to care for eight children in abject poverty. She suffered a mental breakdown and was unable to care for her children. An orphanage in Santo Domingo took the older seven children, but they would not take Yohana because their policy was to accept only able bodied school-age children. The day we found Yohana, she was lying on the dirty floor of an outhouse shared by several families. She was hungry, dirty and suffering from a severe skin rash. There was not a morsel of food in her humble shack. We are happy to report that Yohana is now with our other 76 children and her mother is receptive to hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ and receiving healing for her illness. Yohana, just like the other children, is awaiting the opening of *Casa de Luz*.

With more determination than ever, we are looking ahead and trusting that God is in control and will provide for these precious children. We are reaching out to you, our faithful friends and supporters, to send a special gift this Christmas season to bring hope, health and light to these special children. While we have resumed the construction of *Casa de Luz* through the generosity of people like you, we are \$90,000 away from completing Phase I of *Casa de Luz*. You can become a part of God's plan for the least these.

Although these children may forgotten by society, they are not forgotten by God, you, or us.

May you have the gift of faith, the blessing of hope and the peace of His love at Christmas and always.

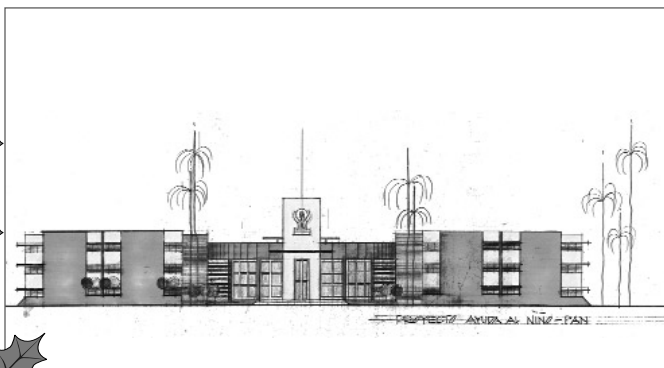
For the Children's Sake,

Lourdes Valladares

Lourdes Valladares
Co-Founder/President



Above: The construction underway.



Left: Architect's sketch of *Casa de Luz*.