Continuing our series of articles from our young people traveling to Guatemala on Mission, here is an article by Caroline Hemker:

Solidarity

Solidarity is working together with a common goal. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines solidarity as “An eminently Christian virtue. It practices the sharing of spiritual goods even more than material ones.” Saint John Paul II once said “Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all." We must work alongside the people to learn and respect the moral, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of all societies. Whether we acknowledge it or not, we see solidarity every day. An example of solidarity is the youth working together towards a common goal to raise money to help accomplish activities in Guatemala alongside with many Guatemalans, such as building a house with a stove.

In the article “Rethinking Volunteerism in America”, written by Gavin Leonard, I found two quotes that really explain what makes charity different from solidarity. “Charity means coming in and helping somebody, with a little or no regard for what that person or group of people wants or how they want to get it. There’s an assumption made that anything a volunteer does is helpful.” “Solidarity, on the other hand, is about working with that somebody to identify what it is that the people that are being helped need and want, along with how they want to get it. Solidarity assumes equality or at least recognition of a volunteer’s privilege that leads to working more collaboratively and with respect. Solidarity is based on an idea that social inequalities exist in a context that one needs to take time to understand.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states “Respect for human dignity requires the practice of *solidarity*, in accordance with the golden rule and in keeping with the generosity of the Lord, who “though he was rich, yet for your sake...became poor so that by his poverty, you might become rich.”’ Solidarity is one of many ways to keep human dignity.

In conclusion, working in solidarity takes patience. In order to show solidarity, you have to be willing to work with other people to reach your common goals, and not just do it yourself. You have to be open to the ideas of others and the insights of those you are working with.