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

The Common Good

The common good is the complete development of all the people in the world.  Pope John XXIII describes it as “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.”  It is not what the people want, but what would be authentically good for the people, letting us flourish and fulfill our potential.

For us as Christians, it means that if the conditions are not good enough to be able to fully love God and others then we have not reached the common good.  Committing ourselves to achieving the common good is what we call Solidarity.

The common good is reached when “ we work together to improve the wellbeing of people in our society and the wider world.”  The common good helps us as individuals to achieve the greater good which is found in God. We can reach it by helping out those in need to help create their version of a perfect environment, not ours.

Some examples of the common good would be:

1. In today’s society there are many countries that don’t have water, food, shelter, etc. so these places do not have the conditions for the well-being of people therefore the common good is nonexistent for them.  Helping them and giving them what they need would be achieving the common good.
2. To us, the government is thought of as a way to achieve and keep the common good among us.

Instead of going to Guatemala with everything we have and showing them our ways of doing stuff and doing things for them, we can achieve the common good for them just by helping them to gain what they need and want, not what we want for them.  “A community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.” (Centesimus Annus 48)  We just need to support them and do what they tell us to do to reach their common good.