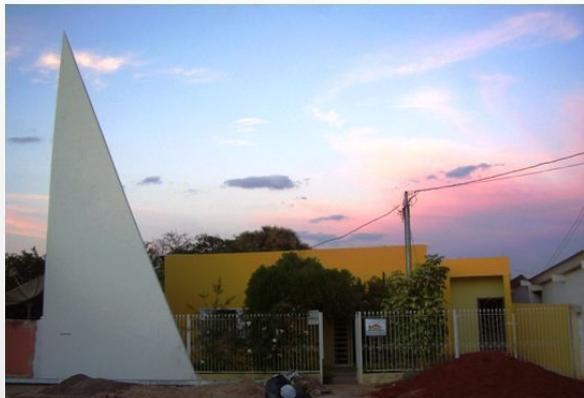


DIRECT HOSPITALITY:  
For Life  
the Whole of Life //

# We have been informed that...

## ST JOHN OF GOD HOSPITALITY HOUSE



At the beginning it was only a dream, but at the last Provincial Chapter the proposal was adopted, and in August 2007 in the little town of Aparecida do Taboado, in Central West Brazil, 650 km from São Paulo, the "Casa da Hospitalidade São João de Deus" [St John of God Hospitality House] finally saw the light of day. This small town lies in the plain, with 16,000 inhabitants and fairly well organised and public health services. But the families are widely scattered,

with a per capita GDP of 2,700 US dollars, and only one parish church, and where the vocation of the Brothers of St John of God is completely unknown, and there is a proliferation of different religions.

Under the motto "*for life, the whole of life*", two Brothers set out to try an alternative community and hospitaller way of life to the one we normally lead in the Order (through a care or apostolic Centre) in which they could easily practise the characteristics of the hospitality that St John of God lived in Granada: mercy, solidarity, creative communion, holistic care, and prophetic reconciliation, to attract co-workers.

With a sober life project, close to the local people, the Brothers share a house, do all the domestic chores themselves, and take part in parish life, cycling everywhere and visiting every part of the city, because they do not have an apostolic Centre of their own, going out to look for poor, sick, elderly, isolated alcoholics, and disabled and homeless people or families, and the recently bereaved: all these are people in need of something. At other times they try to meet all kinds of different needs, both physical and spiritual. A small advertisement in the parish newsletter explains their mission and facilitates meetings, emphasising their simplicity, readiness to serve, proximity, flexibility and free-giving.



They act in a global, universal manner, beginning with their own formation and experience as Hospitallers, and they call themselves “farejadores” (explorers following their instinct) to discover opportunities to practise hospitality. Their daily work relates to one of about 50 ongoing projects, grouped together under 15 programmes and 4 strategies. At the end of each day, the Brothers spent a long time recording the details of the day's work in order to take stock of the day, plan their work for the following day, listen to the Word and pray it, committing to God the people and all the situations they have encountered during the day.

In their second year, the first Volunteers arrived. In the course of their monthly meetings they identify states of poverty or sickness which they have encountered, discuss possible actions to take and distribute tasks. At the beginning of the third year a number of local Benefactors began to emerge and to organise themselves. At the moment there are just over 20 of them, and they should gradually replace the generous foreign

benefactors and the Province. Regular support is also expected from the local authorities. The community only needs 2000 dollars a month to cover the Community's current expenses and the mission costs.

*"We Brothers feel that this is a "work", in which the charismatic dimension ranges beyond the institution itself, and has been well received. We believe that this is a clear expression of evangelising hospitality and that it should not necessarily last for a long time because it can either end, or be taken forward by lay co-workers, after 5 or 6 years."*

The following table illustrates, with figures, the main operations in the mission area in the years 2008 and 2009.

WORK PERFORMED BY HOSPITALITY HOUSE	2008	2009
Conversations to discover and assess needs	108	69
Visiting patients in the civil hospital	47	47
Nights spent with patients at the hospital or at home	5	6
Personal hygiene and personal care	260	72
Visiting the elderly in the Home and providing support with meals	53	47
Gifts of food and medicines to deal with emergencies	41	49
Payments (electricity, water, rent...) in emergencies	24	12
Targeted cooperation schemes with non-needy persons	15	32
Distribution of the second-hand clothes received	5	24
Accompanying the students in the School for the Disabled	20	25
Accompanying students in drafting their school diary	37	
Providing material or institutional help for education and training	15	20
Emergency loans from the available funds	16	53
Financially supporting the diocesan seminary	5	7
Restructuring houses by providing materials or services	82	41
Meetings and support for the Association to reform alcoholics	89	123
Pastoral and prayer meetings in the home	83	150
Work as ministers of the Eucharist	32	69
Catechesis lessons for children and teenagers	61	44

## CASA DA HOSPITALIDADE

PELA VIDA A VIDA TODA



Hospitality house is a low-cost easy and effective model to set up for performing the Order's mission at the present time. It can apply in any small town anywhere in the world, because we will find poor and sick people everywhere, and all that is needed is to reach out to find them. This model also confirms the truth that "small is beautiful" (E.F. Schumacher, 1973) and to quote Mgr Erwin, the Bishop of Xingu (in the state of Mato Grosso) "the simple people, in simple places, doing simple things, are capable of changing the world".

The two Brothers, Vieira Gonçalves and João Pereira dos Santos, thank the Superiors for "*this opportunity that has been granted them,*" and, in poetic language, they add "*we are trying to take in everyone, with the whole of their background; people stop us in the streets here and the children call us by name, asking for candies or a blessing; when we pray in the house of a sick person, we also look at the cooking pot, because the sick Jesus can also be a hungry Jesus. Here we feel consolation because the Gospel and St*



*John of God are our strength, and they help us; here our fame comes from the homes and the streets in which to much poverty is to be found; here the Superior General's and the Provincial Superior's circular letters are read, commented on and used for prayer; here, when public services can do no more, we can still do something; here our chastity is more divine, our poverty is more human, our obedience is more obedience to the poor and our hospitality is our life; here it is important what we do, but it is even more important what we communicate to others. And here there is still a great deal more to be done!"*

