

**Rooted in Faith
Strengthened by Family
Transforming the Future**

2024/2025



Father Joseph Walijewski
Legacy Guild
 Casa Hogar Juan Pablo II

Annual Report

**Three actions
One Mission
Endless Possibilities**



Dear friends and supporters,

As we reflect on another year at Casa Hogar, I am filled with gratitude for your prayers, generosity, and friendship. For nearly forty years, this home-founded by Father Joseph Walijewski-has been a place where faith and family transform lives. It remains a beacon of hope for children who might otherwise have no safe place to call home.

Life in Peru continues to present many challenges. Political unrest, economic strain, and rising crime weigh heavily on families, especially the poor. Yet amid these realities, Casa Hogar stands as a sign of stability and love. Here, children grow in faith, learn resilience, and discover that with God, even in hardship, there is hope.

Our mission is to form young people not only to overcome difficulties but to flourish as men and women of character and service. We do this through five guiding pillars that shape every part of daily life at Casa Hogar

- Prayer, both personal and communal, which grounds each child in a deep relationship with God.
- Holistic formation-educational, moral, and spiritual-that builds virtue and skill.
- Conversion through community life, where children learn to forgive, support one another, and seek God's will.
- The Eucharist, our daily source of grace and strength for the mission.
- Friendship, teaching the value of working together for the common good and serving others.

These principles are not abstract lessons-they are lived realities at Casa Hogar. Each day, our children and staff pray, study, work, and grow together as one family. They are learning that holiness begins in the ordinary: in chores, in study, in prayer, and in love shared across our "home of homes."

This year, two of our young people, Eli and Richard, gave us glimpses of how faith is bearing fruit in their lives. Eli shared her moving testimony at Confirmation, while Richard expressed his faith through music, writing a song titled Sáname ("Heal Me, Lord"). Their stories remind us that God continues to work wonders through this mission.

These stories-and so many others-are possible because of your generosity. Every act of giving, every prayer, and every word of encouragement has a direct impact on the lives of our children and their future. Together, we help them discover their dignity, their purpose, and their calling to serve others in love.

Thank you for walking with us in faith and carrying forward the legacy of Father Joe Walijewski. Your love and support make this mission possible. You are remembered daily in our prayers, and we thank God for each of you who bring hope to the children of Casa Hogar and light to their future.

Monsignor Joseph Hirsch, Director of Casa Hogar Juan Pablo II



Forming Hearts, Building Hope

Living Faith through Action and Love

Ronald Vargas, Attorney for Casa Hogar

Although I have only been part of Casa Hogar for three years, this mission has deeply changed my life and strengthened my understanding of what it truly means to live my faith in action.

I come from a Catholic family, and as I have always said, I don't want to be a "desk Catholic"-I want to be a "field Catholic." That means not only praying on Sundays but also going out to help others and living what Jesus taught us.

Three years ago, my university friend Luis, the administrator of Casa Hogar, reached out for help with some legal matters. I didn't hesitate to assist him. During those visits, I was moved by the way Casa Hogar cared for the children. As a father of an 18-year-old, I understand the importance of guiding young people-without direction, it's easy for them to lose their way.

Luis later asked me to serve as Casa Hogar's attorney. Though I had spent my career as a corporate lawyer, this was something new-and it quickly became something life-giving. I handle the legal work, but I also spend time with the children: playing, listening, and encouraging them. I'm even the godfather of one of them. They have taught me as much as I've tried to teach them.

There are many moments that have touched my heart, but a few stand out. One was when a young man asked me to be his Confirmation sponsor. He has no parents but a generous heart-he plays the guitar and sings at Mass. I remind him often to keep studying and working toward a better future, and I won't stop until he succeeds.



Another was with Esau, a boy full of determination. We took a construction course together because the academy required an adult to accompany him. Now, we're already looking for our next class.

Perhaps the most unforgettable moment was when I stopped to help an elderly man wandering along the road, disoriented and injured. We later learned he had Alzheimer's. As we waited for help, he shared memories of harvesting bananas with his father. When his family was finally found, I discovered that Father Joseph had once visited their humble home. I believe it was no coincidence-God's will brought our paths together, once again connecting back to Casa Hogar.

There is still much work to be done. Our mission is to give the children of Casa Hogar a brighter future-and we can only achieve that with the support of friends like you. Let us not be "desk Catholics," but "field Catholics," living our faith through action and love.





Heart and Hands at Casa Hogar: My Journey in Service

*Luis Tomasevich,
Casa Hogar Juan Pablo II Administrator*

Dear friends from Wisconsin,

I have had the privilege of serving as Administrator of Casa Hogar Juan Pablo II since March 2013, arriving around the same time as Father Joseph Hirsch. My connection to Casa Hogar goes back even further, as I had visited with my family years earlier and witnessed the incredible mission that Father Walijewski had begun. In December 2012, Father Sebastian asked me to leave my previous work and join this remarkable family with its invaluable purpose—and I could not say no.

From the start, my goal was clear: to improve the quality of life for the children, the caregivers, and all staff, addressing both the administrative and operational challenges that had grown over time. We strengthened security, starting with the bamboo wall, then installing video surveillance and solar lighting in key areas—with the children themselves helping to install it under the guidance of Wilder, who was the Maintenance Supervisor at that time and now lives in Arcadia, Wisconsin. We also built an efficient water and sewage system, including a hilltop water tank and a cistern, and established internet access throughout the

campus to support the children's studies and welcome our benefactors.

Every improvement—from upgrading rooms and bathrooms to creating safe, comfortable spaces—has been made with love and care. Visitors and mission teams in the last year even helped with painting the family rooms, leaving them bright and welcoming. The children notice and appreciate these gestures, realizing that people from far away care deeply about their well-being.

Casa Hogar is always growing and changing to meet the needs of the children, and we do it with the guidance of our founder, Father Walijewski. As Father Hirsch often reminds us at Mass: "With God, everything is possible; without God, nothing is possible."

This work has profoundly impacted me and my family. Every day at Casa Hogar brings something new to learn, new challenges, and new joys—whether addressing administrative or pastoral concerns or witnessing the team's incredible synergy and dedication. For the first time, my





Luis secures in-kind donations from local markets, retail businesses, and contractors - all to save money for the mission he holds dear to his heart.

wife and daughter have shown a genuine interest in how my day went, something no other job has ever inspired. Father Hirsch's guidance helps us see things from different perspectives, ensuring that every decision respects both the children's spiritual and practical needs.

I love hands-on work-repairing fixtures, painting, and upgrading spaces-because it gives me the chance to enter the families' lives, see their needs firsthand, and speak directly with caregivers and children. These moments of connection are priceless and deepen my bond with the Casa Hogar family.

Thanks to Father Hirsch and the prayers and support offered in Father Walijewski's name, this work has grown and flourished. The children now have opportunities that once seemed like dreams-completing their studies, pursuing higher education in Peru or the U.S., and learning to give back to their families and communities, just as Alex Huayta, a Casa Hogar graduate, has done. Watching these children grow into strong, compassionate, and capable young adults brings me immense joy. Even when challenges arise, we encourage perseverance and remind them that the mission of Casa Hogar does not end at 17-it is a lifelong journey.

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There are times when the work feels overwhelming, with so many goals to achieve and improvements to make, but every conversation, every interaction-especially with the children-reminds me why this mission matters. Their honesty and innocence teach us as much as we guide them.

I hope to be remembered as someone who took on this challenge and, in doing so, made it part of his life. This vocation, this calling to serve, began with a small step and has grown into a life devoted to the children and the family of Casa Hogar. The support and generosity of friends from Wisconsin make this work possible, and it is invaluable. Thank you for helping continue Father Walijewski's legacy.

I look forward to welcoming you to Casa Hogar next year-whether at the Optical Mission, with groups, or individually. Seeing the children thrive and the community flourish is an experience that will stay with you forever.

Meet the 2025 Graduates

ADRIAN



Adrian is a hardworking and determined young man who has successfully completed several short vocational courses that have equipped him with practical skills for the workforce. While he is not pursuing a technical

degree, he is seeking employment in a bakery or hardware store near his home in Puente Piedra. Deivis will live with his family, who are ready to support him as he continues to grow in confidence and independence, applying his skills in meaningful, hands-on work.

Esau is an ambitious young man with a strong desire to build and create. He hopes to pursue a career in Architecture or Civil Engineering and is currently preparing for the Beca 18 scholarship exam, which would

allow him to attend university. If not selected, he plans to study at an architecture institute to continue developing his skills. Esau will also be working in construction alongside his father, gaining valuable hands-on experience while continuing his education. He will live with his family, who are ready to support him in this new chapter of independence.

ESAU



NATALY



Nataly has shown great talent and enthusiasm for art and creativity. She hopes to study Graphic Design at SENATI, pending confirmation from the Psychology Department regarding her aptitude for a technical program.

In addition to her studies, Nataly is developing a small business project creating custom t-shirts, allowing her to express her creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. She will live with her family, who are eager to help her build a stable and fulfilling future.

Juan Gabriel has a creative spirit and a growing interest in technology. While he originally planned to study Interior Design, he is now considering a degree in Computer Science and is awaiting vocational guidance

to finalize his decision. In the meantime, he will be working as a waiter on weekends, balancing work experience with discernment about his future studies. Juan Gabriel will live with his family, where he will continue to receive encouragement and support as he transitions into adult life.

JUAN GABRIEL





Finding God, Finding Home: Eli's Journey of Faith and Healing

Eli Romero, age 15

At Casa Hogar Juan Pablo II, transformation happens one story at a time. Each child who arrives carries a past marked by hardship-but also an incredible capacity for resilience. Eli, now 15, shared her testimony as part of her Confirmation preparation. Her words remind us of what hope, faith, and love can rebuild.

Eli's Story:

For me, Confirmation means taking another step toward God. I want to receive it because I know it will help strengthen my faith, even though I still have many doubts and questions. Sometimes I feel I have more questions than answers, but I trust that little by little, I'll keep growing closer to Him.

When I was little, my family was very close. But when I turned four, my mom left for the jungle, promising to come back soon. Months passed before she returned-and when she did, she took me with her without telling my dad. We went through very hard times. I remember living in bars, watching her struggle, and wondering if I would ever go back to school.

I'm deeply grateful to my dad. Even though he didn't know where I was, he searched for me until he found me and brought me home. Thanks to him, I could continue studying. I didn't understand everything back then, but now I know those experiences shaped me. I carried resentment for a long time, but I'm learning to forgive-even without being asked-and that brings me peace.

I arrived at Casa Hogar in February 2022. At first, it was very difficult. I cried at night, missing my family and feeling lost. But I realized that being here, though painful, was the best decision for my family and for me in my future.

Here, I've learned that I'm not alone. I have people who care for me-Father José, Rigoberto, my teachers, and everyone at Casa Hogar. The rules that once felt strict now make sense; they've helped me grow in discipline, respect, and responsibility.



“
At Casa Hogar, I discovered I'm not alone. This place has given me strength, faith, and the chance to begin again.
”

When I arrived, I believed in God, but my faith was uncertain. Through catechism, I learned what it means to truly know Him. I was baptized and received my First Communion on the same day-a moment I'll never forget. Even when I've felt lost, I've never stopped praying. I've found peace knowing that God has a plan for me.

I'm grateful to God for giving me strength, and to Casa Hogar for giving me a new beginning. I dream of finishing high school, becoming a professional, and helping my family. I want to show that anything is possible with faith and perseverance.

I chose Saint Maria Goretti as my Confirmation saint because she inspires me to forgive, to stand for what's right, and to trust in God completely-just as Casa Hogar has taught me to live with hope, purpose, and the courage to believe in my future.

Finding Light After Darkness

by Richare Lecca, age 16

Before coming to Casa Hogar, I lived with my mother. We didn't have a home of our own—we were always moving from place to place, renting small rooms. Sometimes we went without food because we didn't have money to buy any. There were nights we slept on the streets, wrapped in cardboard for warmth.

When I was still very young, my mother became sick with tuberculosis from drug use. During that time, we met a nun who ran a small shelter helping adults with illnesses. She grew very fond of my mother and cared for us deeply. But my mother couldn't recover. She passed away when I was nine years old. Losing her was one of the hardest moments of my life.

After her death, I went through a very painful time—facing both psychological and physical abuse. The same nun spoke with a social worker, and soon my brother and I were accepted at Casa Hogar. I was ten years old when I arrived. I remember crying a lot because I was afraid that the same painful things that happened outside might happen again. It was hard to adjust to the new rules and structure. Everything felt unfamiliar.

When I turned fourteen, I realized I could no longer carry all the hurt I had been holding inside. I decided to speak with Father Joseph and my teachers, and they helped me begin to heal. One day, when I was feeling especially low, I went to the chapel with Father Joseph. I prayed for an hour, and afterward I felt something change—as if a heavy weight had finally lifted off me. I felt peace for the first time in years.



Weeks later, I began thinking: What if I wrote a song that could reach people's hearts? A song that invites them to welcome Jesus into their lives so He can heal their pain and help them let go of their past? That idea gave me hope and a sense of purpose.

Casa Hogar has completely changed my life. Before, I didn't believe in God. I treated faith like a joke. But through the patience and guidance of Father Joseph, I came to understand that life has meaning and that God has a plan for each of us. Today, I feel peace—and I feel loved.

Here at Casa Hogar, I'm surrounded by people who care for me like family. Their love has helped me grow and believe in myself. I have many dreams now: to support my family, to become a professional singer, and to use the gifts God has given me to inspire others. I love to sing, dance, and write songs. Thanks to Father Joseph, I've also been learning to play the guitar and to develop my talent.

I am deeply grateful to Casa Hogar and to all of you—our benefactors and friends—for giving me the chance to heal, to grow, and to dream again.



Heal Me, Lord

by Richare Lecca

VERSE 1

Lord Jesus, I take refuge in you. You are my strength.
I'm grateful for all you have done for me.
You took me off the streets.
You rescued me.
You have placed me in a safe place.
Where I learned values, and I learned about you.
Therefore, I invite you into my heart.

CHORUS

VERSE 2

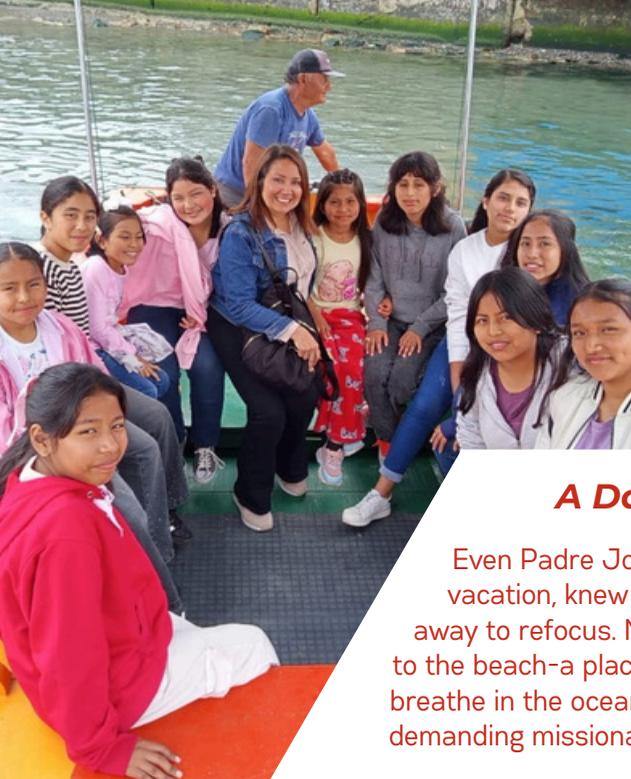
And even though I fall into various trials,
I will rise victorious at your side.
Lord, enter the emptiness of my heart, Lord,
illuminate the deepest holes.
I used to think you were not by my side and that
you were absent in my most difficult times.
But I realized you were always by my side.
And I know that I need your help.

Nothing compares to what you have done for me.
CHORUS

CHORUS:

*Heal me, Lord Jesus. I invite you into my heart.
Heal my past and heal my open wounds, Lord. (Repeat)*





A Day Away.

Even Padre José, who never took a vacation, knew the value of stepping away to refocus. Now and then, he'd head to the beach—a place to listen for God's voice, breathe in the ocean air, and recharge for the demanding missionary work that awaited him.

Recognizing that same need for renewal, Casa Hogar carries on the tradition each October when schools close for a short break. It's not Disney—but for our kids, it's pure joy! A day to laugh, play, and simply be a kid.

Since there's never enough room in one combi for everyone, several mini trips are planned—and each child's name is drawn to see where their adventure will take them!



frjoesguild.org/missions

PROJECT MILK

**Sharing Our Resources with
Casa Hogar Orphanage in Peru**



***You can make a BIG difference
by donating to Project Milk.***

***It costs \$100 to send one bag of milk to Peru. 100% of your
donation is used for the purchase and delivery of an annual
shipment of 800 bags of powdered milk.***



Father Joseph Walijewski
Legacy Guild
Casa Hogar Juan Pablo II

For more information, or to receive promotional resources,
please contact the Diocese of La Crosse Office for
Ministries and Social Concerns at 608-791-0161.

A Year at a Glance



JANUARY 2025

This year's Optical Mission changed many lives. One woman happily accepted used glasses, with a prescription that was as *close* to what she needed as we could get. After being fitted, and looking in the mirror, she cried with gratitude for being able to see her grandchild for the first time.



FEBRUARY 2025

Team Casa for the Goal! The kids like to play soccer against each other, but they really like playing against other community teams - especially when they win.



MARCH 2025

Another school year began and with it came the usual organizing and shuffling of 64 children, attending 6 different schools with 4 different daily schedules - it really makes first day of school in Wisconsin look pretty simple.



APRIL 2025

Visiting Catholic schools in the Diocese is a wonderful opportunity to bring the story of Father Walijewski and Casa Hogar to the next generation. Father Hirsch looks forward to this every Spring and Fall and especially enjoyed the new Classical school in Wausau.



MAY 2025

Casa is blessed with amazing woman who work tirelessly, day in and day out, to help form our children to face the difficulties that will be part of their future. It is truly with a mother's heart that these woman change the children each day.





It's always an adventure!

JUNE 2025

The mission continues every Saturday afternoon. Started by the visiting seminarians in the Summer of 2024, The children at Casa continue to provide aide to people living in extreme poverty in our very own neighborhood.



JULY 2025

Aquinas High added their name to the list of 2025 visitors, which included mission teams from McDonell, Viterbo, Holy Name, and Assumption. Along with the Optical Mission and the Footsteps Pilgrimage, it was a very busy year at Casa.



AUGUST 2025

There is no lack for holidays in Peru and August holds one of the less common, but greatly appreciated of the entire year, the Day of the Child. Each year the entire family has a fun day with relays, games and other competitions. The kids enjoy sweets and a gift, and if the family is lucky, a trophy.



SEPTEMBER 2025

The biennial *Walking in the Footsteps of Padre Jose* welcomed 15 pilgrims to Casa Hogar for 10 days to share the story of Father Walijewski, meet the people who knew him and those that didn't but still carry-on the work he started - all because of the person they have grown to know by living in the places he served.



OCTOBER 2025

The 2nd Annual Granny Basketball Exhibition Game was once again an opportunity to raise money for Casa Hogar while having a whole-lotta fun. Our very own Diocesan Padres faced the Granny team, the La Crosse Does. Similar to last year, the Granny's won - different, no priest had a 'rocker timeout'.

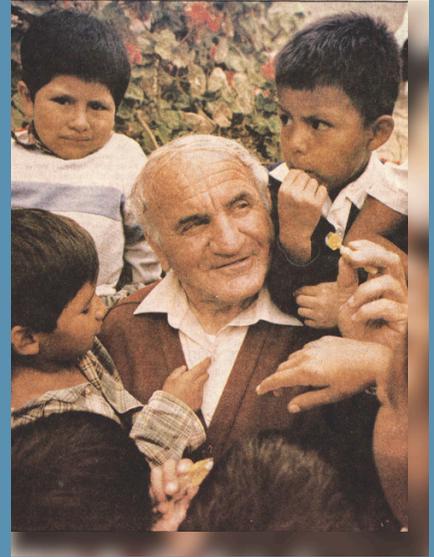




Father Joseph Walijewski Legacy Guild



Casa Hogar Juan Pablo II



VISION

To keep alive the spirit of Father Joseph Walijewski—a priest whose deep love for God and unwavering compassion for the poor revealed the face of Christ to all he served. The Guild envisions a world where Father Joe's witness continues to inspire acts of faith, mercy, and hope, especially among those who serve the most vulnerable.

MISSION

The mission of the Father Joseph Walijewski Legacy Guild is to preserve and promote the life, holiness, and missionary vision of Father Joseph Walijewski.

- The Guild shares his story so that others may encounter Christ through his example of priestly zeal and humble service.
- The Guild gathers and safeguards the memories, testimonies, and materials that bear witness to his life and virtue.
- The Guild provides prayerful and material support for the continuation of Father Joe's mission through Casa Hogar Juan Pablo II, the children's home he founded in Peru.
- The Guild also seeks to encourage and one day support other orphanages and ministries inspired by his legacy of faith and compassion.

JOIN US

As the Board of the Father Joseph Walijewski Legacy Guild, we invite you to join us in carrying forward Father Joe's mission of faith, family, and service to the poor. Your prayers, generosity, and continued support make you a vital part of this living legacy—keeping his spirit of mercy and hope alive through Casa Hogar Juan Pablo II and beyond. Together, we ensure that Father Joe's vision endures and his example continues to transform lives for generations to come.

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

Financial Report



REVENUE

Monetary Donations \$1,188,752
*Cash, Interest, Endowments,
Appeals, Sponsorship, etc.*

In-Kind Donations \$134,928
Project Milk, Food, Supplies, etc.

Total Revenue \$1,323,680

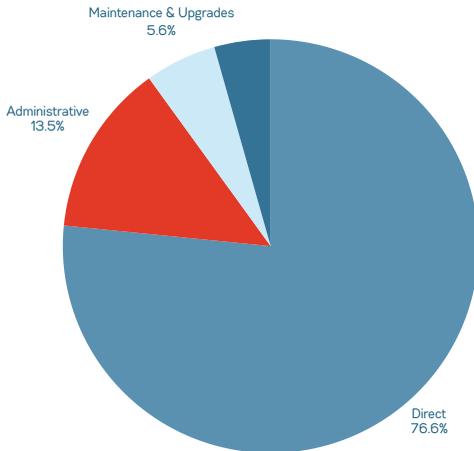
EXPENSES

Direct Care \$666,494
*Family Teachers, Program Staff, Clothing,
Food, Medical and Psychological Care,
Education, Social Services, Project of Life,
etc.*

Administrative Expenses \$117,216
*Transportation, administrative staff, taxes,
insurance, legal expenses, etc.*

Maintenance & Upgrades \$48,460
*Campus improvement, general
maintenance, utilities, security, etc.*

Other Expenses \$38,068
*Travel, printing, mailing, fundraising,
volunteers, mission teams, priest education
program, Canonization, etc.*



Father Joseph Walijewski Orphanage Endowment Trust

The Trust grows through the generosity of donors and through the strategy of value-investment. A donation to the Fr. Joe Walijewski Endowment Trust ensures that Casa Hogar Juan Pablo II can continue serving the children of Peru for years to come. Donations to the Endowment Trust in the form of cash, real estate, insurance policies, estates, etc., are greatly appreciated.

For more information, contact Jeff Reiter, Director of Stewardship & Development, 3710 East Ave. S. La Crosse, WI 54602-4004. Phone 608-791-2685

The annual distributable amount was determined in accordance to the Endowment Trust: Policy Statement and Norms, Diocese of La Crosse. This policy ensures that the Trust principle cannot be touched and will always remain intact. Trust assets are held by Trustpoint.

Thank You!



Because of you, lives are being changed. Your generosity makes every story in this report possible. Without you, none of this could happen – with you, everything is possible.

Together, we carry forward Father Joe's mission of love, family, and hope—serving children and families in need, and building a future rooted in faith.



Contact Us



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