



SOLIDARITY BRIDGE

HEALING & EMPOWERING IN LATIN AMERICA

Solidarity Bridge began in 1999, prompted by its founder's deep desire to connect with and serve people in need and to do so through the embodiment of solidarity. His deep faith and commitment to Christ was the context and motivation for his response to the call to solidarity.

Juan Lorenzo Hinojosa is a native of Cochabamba, Bolivia, but he has lived most of his life in the US. At age 54, he sensed an inner stirring that felt like a departure from his business career and various appointments related to his doctoral degree in Spiritual Theology. Life was good, but God was calling him to something new, something that would connect him with his Bolivian birthplace and allow him to create a sustainable, practical application for his vision of solidarity as "a natural extension of embracing the reality that we are all inter-related and profoundly connected."¹

On multiple visits to Bolivia over his lifetime, Juan Lorenzo witnessed the wealth gaps, and subsequent healthcare gaps, in South America's poorest country. Deeply moved by this, he invited his wide US network to get involved. His long-time friend, the late Cardinal Francis George of the Archdiocese of Chicago, supported the idea of establishing a lay mission effort, and established contacts with Church leaders in Bolivia that opened conversations with various health institutions. Dr. Enrique Via-Reque, a Bolivian-born anesthesiologist from Chicago's western suburbs, came on board as co-founder of the first effort, helping to organize the medical mission trips. And in October 1999, our inaugural team flew to Bolivia, crossing the bridge for the first of many times to come.

Solidarity Bridge soon evolved from a mission trip organization to one focused on year-round medical programs in Bolivia and Paraguay that provide care to the underserved via partnerships with well-trained and equipped local doctors. In 2005, Puente de Solidaridad was established as a permanent local office in Bolivia to nurture and oversee the ongoing programs, safeguard and distribute donated supplies and equipment, manage patient selection, documentation and follow-up, and perform a myriad of related activities.

Solidarity Bridge continues to evolve and adapt, propelled forward by the integration of more and more partners moved by the same conviction as our founder: "Solidarity is something that we have a duty to fulfill, and is not just an option."²

¹Juan Lorenzo Hinojosa, The Spiritual Foundation of Solidarity Bridge, 2009

²Ibid.