



"Restoring Dignity"

A newsletter about the Missions from Fr. Martin Chambers



Welcome

It is amazing to think that over a year has passed since I left Guayaquil last summer to finish my five years on the Missions. So much has happened since then, both for me and my Ecuadorian friends. So I was very much looking forward to visiting them in October of this year. I had hoped to be going with some Kilmarnock youngsters but that was not to be. The fact that I went on my own allowed me to be more relaxed about what I did while there.

This newsletter, therefore, is a report about what I found while there, the various changes that have taken place and the progress that you can see around the shanty town of Nueva Prosperina. It is also, of course, an appeal for financial help - for the Soup Kitchen, for school fees and for the forthcoming trip to the Ecuadorians to Scotland. Read on and may God bless you and your families at Christmas.

Soup Kitchen

While I was on the Missions, my only involvement with our daily Soup Kitchen was to provide the cash from Scotland to help run it. I would from time to time have my dinner there to share in their food. But on this visit I was able to spend more time in the Soup Kitchen. Most days I spent some time preparing the food and helping Gladys and Marlene, our two cooks. I had felt that maybe less people were coming each day to the kitchen since I knew that costs had increased so I was amazed to find out that they had increased their numbers: they now serve 150 meals

each day to the neediest kids in the area. And while preparing and serving the food, I was able to speak to the children that came to eat. Their parents were out all day and so they were returning home after school to an empty house and an empty stomach. This Soup Kitchen - with its soup, fruit juice and a rice dish - definitely feeds the poor of Nueva Prosperina.

Can you help feed the poor? It costs £5 per month to feed a child each day at our Soup Kitchen. Please help; you can really make a difference.

School Fees

Just before I left for Ecuador a woman gave me a donation for the children. When I asked whether she wanted it to go to the school fees or to the Soup Kitchen, she replied "they can always get into education but they might never be fed. So put it to the Soup Kitchen". As I journeyed over to Ecuador, I thought about that conversation and I realised that for many people in Scotland, there is always the idea that education is provided by the state. Indeed, if you went onto a website about Ecuador, it would say that the state provides education free. Well, I have to tell you that it doesn't. For thousands upon

thousands of Ecuadorians, especially those crammed together in shanty towns, education is not free. You have to pay for it. And in our Nueva Prosperina situation, families have to pay to get their children educated - charging school fees is the only way of bringing in cash to pay the teachers. And since education is the ONLY way out of poverty, it is vital that we continue to support paying the school fees of as many children as we can.

At the moment we help 100 of the 600 children at Sagrada Familia School. **It costs £5 a month to pay the school fees of each child at our school.** Can you help?

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The School Building



This is a great year for the Sagrada Familia School since it is the first year that youngsters will graduate from secondary school. As you know, we started the school as a simple Primary School but year on year it has expanded to take in another year of secondary education. So, when the school year finishes in January 2011, there will be 30 youngsters graduating. This is a moment of great pride for the pupils, their families, the teachers and all associated with the school. However, it also highlights a problem: the school has been growing and expanding and will continue to do so in the coming years and they are in need of new classrooms. They will need 2 new classrooms for next year. Can we help build 2 new classrooms so that the Sagrada Familia School can continue to expand lifting the children out of poverty?

Medical Centre



It has been a long time in the coming. Some 2 years ago, while still on the Missions, I started the whole process of moving the Medical Centre from the school property to be near the Nueva Prosperina Parish Church. There were disputes over land, worries about the finances needed and who was going to support it once it was built but the building work was eventually started in May. So I was rather surprised to find that not a lot of work had been done by the time I started my visit. I managed to have a visit with the Priest at the head of the housing charity that will run the Medical Centre and he suggested that we have a short Blessing Ceremony while I was in the country. That seemed to spark the workers into action and, by the time we had the Ceremony at the end of my trip, the

only work needing done was the painting and work around the grounds. So the good news is that the Medical Centre will be up and running within the month. It will have a general medical room, paediatrics, gynaecology and dentistry as well as a pharmacy. Being run by the housing charity that provides the bamboo homes for so many poor people, the costs of medical treatment will be minimal so that it will be a great bonus to the poor people that live all around Nueva Prosperina.

Of course, the Medical Centre could not have been built without financial support from back home - people all over Scotland but, in particular, the '2 Hands' charity from England. The people of Nueva Prosperina asked me to make sure that you all know how deeply grateful they are for your generous help.



Exchange Visit: Ecuador - Scotland

Next February, 8 Nueva Prosperina youngsters will come to Scotland for a 10-day visit that will be part of an exchange visit between St. Joseph's Academy, Kilmarnock and the Sagrada Familia School in Ecuador.

The girls are:
Virginia, Yesenia, Jennifer and Nicolle.

The boys are:
David, William, Dario and Fernando.

They will be accompanied by: Adela, Freddy and Carol (who were part of the last trip to Scotland) and Tito who is well known to many through the stories in these newsletters.

The group will spend a few days in and around St. Joseph's Academy but there will also be a chance to visit other schools and parts of Scotland. If anyone has any ideas of what the group can do while they are in Scotland, please let me know at the address below. Also if anyone wishes to contribute to the costs of the trip, this would be gratefully received. So let's meet our visitors individually:



Name	Age	Comment
Adela Villacres	38	Head teacher of School and just married
Freddy Pincay	26	Depute Head of School
Carol Ibarra	32	Teacher at school
Tito Tenorio	28	Parish Youth Leader
Jessenia Loor	17	6 th year pupil
Jennifer Avila	18	6 th year pupil
Yessenia Saltos	17	6 th year pupil
David Chavez	17	6 th year pupil
Fernando Franco	15	5 year pupil
William Quimis	18	6 th year pupil
Dario Arreaga	18	6 th year pupil
Nicolle Cisneros	18	6 th year pupil



Please visit the charity website where, between now and the trip itself, there will be regular updates on who is coming and what they will do while in Scotland.

What we must remember is that these 12 people come from the poorest backgrounds in Ecuador and we need to make sure that for them it is "the trip of a lifetime".

The Napa Wedding



Some very happy news. While I was in Ecuador I took part in the wedding celebrations for Luis and Flor Napa. You will remember that Luis Napa had a very serious accident

some years ago that left him paraplegic. At that time in 2007 he had just been on the verge of qualifying as a teacher which would have assured him a steady income for his wife Flor and their 6 young children. The accident plunged them further into poverty and left them wandering the dusty streets of Guayaquil looking for a home. It was then that I came in contact with the Napa family who turned up at our school looking to get some of the children enrolled. With Adela the Head teacher, we decided that their story was so severe that we would pay the school fees of the 4 children that were of school age. I decided to go and visit them and found that they were crammed together in a badly damaged bamboo hut. They called that 'home': while 6 children slept upstairs in a single bed. The parents stayed downstairs since it was impossible to get Luis, by now confined to a wheelchair, up the stairs. It was a story that touched the hearts of all the visitors that came that year from Scotland; and, through their generosity, we were able to put up the outer walls and floor of a future house.

When I went back this year, I was very pleased to find that they had got some money together to build the internal walls to create 2 bedrooms and a toilet large enough for a wheelchair to get in. I asked if they had paid for an expert to build those walls but, to my surprise, they said that the 2 eldest sons, David (14 years) and Abel (12 years) had built them. "How

Newsletter

If you know of anyone who would wish to receive a copy of the newsletter, please let me know:

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Whether at the moment of tragedy or trying to build a house or simply getting their children to school, Luis and Flor have shown tremendous hope and belief in a life worth living.

And so I was very happy to be present at the wedding reception for Luis and Flor's wedding. Even more touching was the fact that they brought the wedding forward by a week so that I could be present. As I was leaving, Luis pulled me aside and told me from his wheelchair that in spite of being paraplegic, he was truly blessed by God, blessed by generous friends from all over the world but, more importantly, blessed with a loving and caring family.

Talk on a "Life on the Missions"

One of the things that has kept me busy over the months that I have been settling back into life in Scotland has been the regular talks I have been asked to give on the Missions. I have been at schools, parishes and other groups where the people have been very keen to hear about Ecuador. They have also been very generous in supporting the Missions. If you want me to come and give your group a talk on the Missions, don't be afraid to get in touch by e mail: mhartino2004@yahoo.co.uk or by phone at St. Matthew's Church on 01563 533587.

Charity Website

Why not visit:

<http://www.ecuadortrust.org.uk> where you will find blogs, photos and articles to do with the charity. There is also a space to make a donation online. There are regular updates on the website. Indeed it is on the website that I will be posting regular updates about the forthcoming trip of the Ecuadorians.

And finally...

One of the first people to meet me off the plane last month was Carmen and Edgar. I was so happy to meet them because they had been my first neighbours when I moved into my Nueva Prosperina flat all those years ago. Many of you will remember that they lived in a bamboo house with their 5 children sharing a double bed. Their house always seemed so cramped with only a small table to sit at for a meal. So I was very happy to visit them and remind myself how much their house had changed over the years. Wall by wall they had changed their house. No more bamboo walls and now they had laid a concrete floor stretching from the street right back into their back garden. Onto that space Edgar himself had built 3 internal walls to create 3 rooms: a bedroom for the 3 young boys; a bedroom for the 2 girls, and a bathroom. Of course the walls are still bare brick walls and there is no running water and no sewerage. Still this is clearly progress. Slowly but surely this lovely Christian faithful who are committed to the Parish and to the wider community are crawling their way out of poverty. Edgar has never had a steady job, neither has Carmen, but now by making and selling detergents around the sector, they are paying for the education of their 5 children and making great changes to their house. They are an example to all families in the area: that change is possible; that the name of Nueva Prosperina (New Prosperous Town) can actually become reality; and that in the midst of great poverty, you can have great dignity.

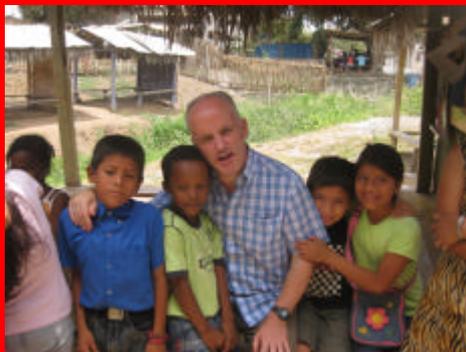


REAL CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Can you help feed the poor? £5 per month and you can make a difference



Can you pay a school fee? £5 per month per child



Can you donate for 2 new classrooms?



Can you help with the exchange visit? Help with a day trip or clothing?



Cheques made payable to the Martin Chambers Ecuador Trust

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Hope you have a wonderful and blessed Christmas!

