

Restoring Dignity

SC037458

A newsletter about the Missions from Fr. Martin Chambers

Bienvenidos

Welcome to the Christmas newsletter, which keeps you up to date with everything that has been going on lately in the Martin Chambers Ecuador Trust charity. As well as looking back over recent months, the newsletter invites you to look forward and see how life will be changed for the people of

Nueva Prosperina as the school has a new classroom built and the soup kitchen continues to feed 150 of the poorest children each day.

Sponsor a Child's Education

2014 marked ten years that the Ecuador Trust has had a live link with Sagrada Familia School. It has been an inspiration to see how lives have been transformed not just through attending classes there but through being part of a loving and caring community; the young people who graduate from the school have life skills to help them well into the future.

I remember distinctly being at a Sagrada Familia prizegiving in 2007 when Katrina won the prize for being top student in P6. As she came forward to receive her prize, I was moved to tears as I remembered that she had missed two years schooling because her family could not afford the school fees and she was only in school that year because the Ecuador Trust had paid her fees.

Your donations really does change lives!

This Christmas we would like to offer you the chance to make that relationship with the pupils. In the photo below there are 26 children who are looking for you to sponsor their education for the coming academic year (April 2015 - February 2016).

The school fees for the coming year are:

- Primary School - £10 per month/£100 per annum.
- Secondary School - £12 per month/£120 per annum.

If you wish to sponsor a child for as many months as you wish or indeed for the whole year, please send your name telling us whether you wish to sponsor a child in the primary or secondary school. Email: mhartino20014@yahoo.co.uk

Could this be a Christmas present for this year?

Spotlight on Alexander Ulises Vidal

Alexander (in the photo in page 2) is a 7 year old P2 pupil at Sagrada Familia. He is the youngest of eight children, five of whom study at the school. All 8 children live with their mother, Gisella, in a traditional bamboo hut that is probably about the size of one of our large garage sheds. Each time I am in Guayaquil, I visit the Vidal family. I am always amazed how their economic situation never seems to improve. The reason for that is Gisella was widowed some years ago and has never been able to hold down a stable job because she is always busy keeping the house together for her eight children. Two years ago, Alexander was operated on for 'hole in his heart'. Of course, Gisella had to beg and borrow amongst her family members to raise the necessary funds for the operation. Thankfully the operation was a success



Alexander Ulises Vidal (contd)...



Operation was a success and Alexander was able to return to school and to his friends. The only work Gisella has been able to find recently has been taking in washing from her neighbours. This brings in only enough to buy food for daily living. Gisella does not have enough money to set aside for the future. Of course, this situation of living from day to day is replicated throughout a shanty town like Nueva Prosperina and it will take generations before Alexander and the Gisella family are able to plan for their future.

Sisters. She and my Mum are so good to me - I want to work hard each day so that I can help them make Sagrada Familia the best school ever.

I asked Alexander what he likes about Sagrada Familia School and he replied: *I feel at home here. The Head Teacher, Adela, is like a second mother to me and my brothers and*



Charity Events



100 Miles in a 1-er

In August some Ecuador Trust friends took part in a cycle run called '100 Miles in a 1-er'. The cyclists were some of those who had taken part a couple of years ago in the Lands End to John O'Groats Cycle. This was much shorter but was completed in one go around the Cambridgeshire countryside. Although relatively flat, the route still provided many hills and, of course, the endurance came with simply completing the 100 miles in one go. Thanks to the cyclists achievements.

£2,700 was raised - thank you!

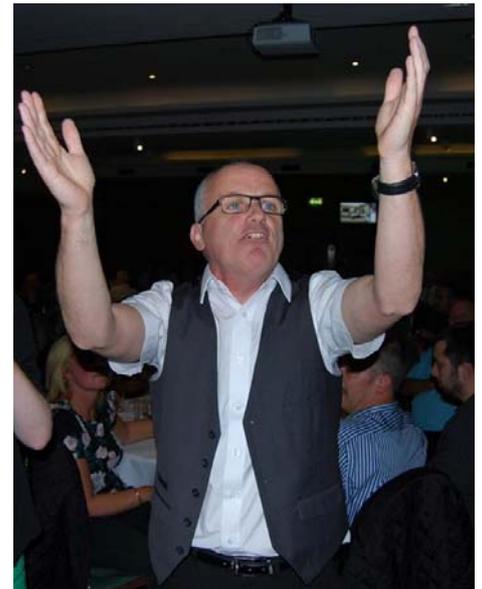
Sponsored Walk

At the beginning of September this year, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, East Kilbride once again organized a sponsored walk around the James Hamilton Heritage Park. This has become something of an annual event with everyone from children in prams to older parishioners taking part to raise funds for the Ecuador Trust.



Charity Dance

The Ecuador Trust undertook its largest fundraising event this year when it hosted a charity dance at Celtic Park on 3 October. When the decision was taken at the start of the year to hold such a dance, it was a step-in-the-dark for the Trustees not knowing whether there would be enough interest in such an event. The fears, however, were undounded as the Kerrydale Suite was filled with over 350 guests on the night. Dancing to 'Long Time Coming', enjoying a buffet meal and taking part in the fund raising raffle. All the guests had a terrific evening and were helped on the evening by twenty S6 pupils from St. Joseph's Academy, Kilmarnock who welcomed the guests, escorted them to their seats and went between the tables selling raffle tickets. Of course, the main purpose of the evening was to raise enough funds to build a further classroom for Sagrada Familia, so when over £18,000 was raised, it was clear that the school would have its new classroom and much more. Gracias to all who organised the event, to those who helped on the night and to all who came along to enjoy the evening's entertainment and raise a fantastic total.



Over £18,000 raised - thank you!



Reflections from Jamie Maxwell



Jamie Maxwell is a teacher in Glasgow, but, while studying at University, he took a break from his studies and in 2007 visited Guayaquil. Here he reflects on the visit he made back then and the impact it has had on his life...

In 2007 I had the good fortune to spend three months living and working in Nueva Prosperina. My time in the shanty town helped me to realise my vocation in life, and forever altered my perceptions regarding faith and belief.

Throughout my months in Guayaquil I worked in Sagrada Familia, the school that is the educational home to so many of the young people we have all come to know through Fr. Martin's newsletters and social media updates. I helped out with English Classes, PE activities, music, the tuck shop, and even tried my hand in the soup kitchen (which will come as a shock to my family). Yesenia, in particular, took me under her wing and I aided her in delivering the English lessons, which it was hoped could give some of the young people an added tool in their battle to gain employment in the city. It was whilst helping out with an infant class, who were learning how to say their ages in English with a Glaswegian twang, that I realized teaching was the career for me. As I led that particular lesson I was enthused by the children's thirst for knowledge and their genuine excitement to learn. I was struck by the fun I was having whilst 'working' and immediately decided that teaching was the career for me. Upon my return to Scotland, I started to look into education courses and I am now a teacher in a primary school. I love my role as an educator and I have the children of Nueva Prosperina to thank for opening my eyes to the gift of teaching.

I also enjoyed helping out with the music during the many masses throughout the area. The form of prayer, which I witnessed as Fr. Martin celebrated Mass was initially a shock to the system. The people of Nueva Prosperina are ardent in their faith and very vocal when it comes to prayer and song. I found the passion and fervor revitalizing, especially as a 21 year old that had started to miss Mass on the odd occasion without a second thought. Celebrating Mass with friends such as Freddy and Tito emphasized the importance of prayer in my life and reinvigorated by own beliefs. These sense of community within the various parishes was beautiful to behold. Indeed, the way in which I was immediately accepted into each parish was very humbling and allowed me to develop friendships with a wide range of folk; friendships that will last a lifetime.



My time in Nueva Prosperina is a constant factor in my life. Every day I think about my friends there, look at the numerous photos and mementos around me, and most importantly continue to receive numerous Facebook messages from friends in Guayaquil, which I can only understand thanks to Google Translate. My own faith and career were shaped by my time in Ecuador and every day I thank God for giving me the opportunity to be able to call the people of Nueva Prosperina my friends.

What's Happening at Sagrada Familia School?

Presently there are 550 pupils at Sagrada Familia with 250 pupils in the primary school and 200 in the secondary school. Although the school continues to be a vibrant place to learn and a safe place to educate your children, the last year has seen many changes in the school, in particular with many familiar teachers leaving to find employment elsewhere - teachers like Freddy and his sister, Yesenia. It was a sad moment to see teachers who have given so much to our school leaving for pastures new, but they had been given teaching promotions and the offer of better salary, which would give their families a better chance in life. We owe a great debt of gratitude to all the teachers in Sagrada Familia who time and again view their work there not simply as a job but rather as a vocation to help and support disadvantaged children and families. Gracias amigos!

Looking to the future, the new classroom to be built soon will allow the secondary school to offer more courses to the pupils who are preparing for national exams. Two years ago a classroom was built at the far end of the school complex; there had always been the idea that a second floor could be built in the future, but the money was not available at the time. Now the Ecuador Trust has raised enough money to build the extra classroom, which will allow the senior pupils to fulfill their courses, their dreams and build a better future through their education.

Let's continue to support Sagrada Familia!





The Soup Kitchen

One of the key projects that the charity supports in Nueva Prosperina is the running of the daily Soup Kitchen. This has been operating for almost ten years and the purpose has not changed since the first day: to feed 120 of the poorest children in the community each school day - children who otherwise would be returning home to an empty house while their parents are out looking for work. Inevitably there will be no food on their table at home. At the Soup Kitchen, however, the children are provided with a healthy meal - a bowl of home-made soup, a plate of rice and beans and a cup of fruit juice. The money needed to run this comes entirely from your donations.

If you want someone from the Charity 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.

Cheques made payable to the Martin Chambers Ecuador Trust

My e-mail address: Mhartino2004@yahoo.co.uk

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Donations

Please send your donations to met at:

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Cheques should be made payable to the 'Martin Chambers Ecuador Trust.

Thank You!

It costs £10 per month to feed a child in the Soup Kitchen. Can you help and feed a child this Christmas?

And Finally...

Without fail, the people who are fortunate enough to visit Nueva Prosperina end up with a sense that they have been humbled. Travelling to Ecuador with a sense of 'helping people', they all seem to end up with a sense of being humbled, of being taught some essential lessons about what is actually important in life. So many individuals have touched the hearts of visitors from home, none more so than the former Deputy Head of Sagrada Familia school, Freddy Pincay or 'teacher' as he is called by the Ecuadorian pupils.

How could I ever forget the kindness shown from Scotland who helped convert our bamboo school into not just the best educational complex in the area, but also a community school that makes students feel welcome and gives them a set of values that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Now Freddy has moved on to a local state-run school where he is Acting Head Teacher. Since its humble 2003 beginnings in the nine bamboo huts, Freddy has helped Sagrada Familia School to grow into a welcome oasis away from the grinding poverty all around in Nueva Prosperina. He sent the Ecuador Trust a letter, expressing his feelings as he moves on to pastures new:

Through supporting our school you have helped so many pupils but you also helped many, many teachers. Most of us came to Sagrada Familia without qualifications, but through supporting us financially, you helped us go to University and achieve the degrees we needed to be qualified teachers. Now I move on to a new school, but I will always carry Sagrada Familia in my heart as it was the first place which taught me to have dignity even in the face of poverty. Escocia y el Ecaudor - amigos por siempre!



Newsletter

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

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Charity Website:

Why not visit:

<http://www.ecuadortrust.org.uk> where you will find photos and many articles about the charity. We have a link to facebook :

<http://facebook.com/#!/EcuadorTrust2>



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