



Restoring Dignity

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A newsletter about the Missions from Fr. Martin Chambers

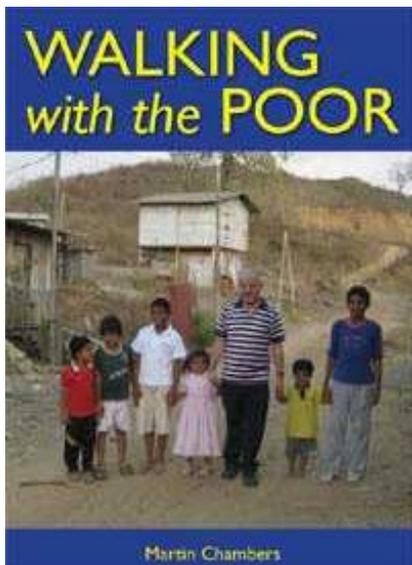
Book Launch:

Walking with the Poor

When my friend and author Joe Bradley visited Ecuador in May of 2009, he suggested to me that I should put my experiences together in a book. I had already kept a diary of events and had been writing a regular blog on the internet, so I thought that to put it all down in one book might be an easy enough task. I therefore began a two year journey which culminated in the Book Launch on 4 November of "Walking with the Poor", which details the highs and lows of my life as a missionary priest. Along the way many people helped to get the book together; from Maureen Walsh who helped edit the book, to Bishop Maurice Taylor who wrote the book's foreword

and Martin McGinty who published it. So far, people have given favourable reviews and have indicated that the people and lifestyle of the poorest people from Nueva Prosperina have already come alive. There are still many copies available and perhaps you might want to buy a copy for yourself or give a copy as a Christmas present.

The book costs £8 per copy with £2 extra postage and package. You can order a copy from mhartino2004@yahoo.co.uk or from Martin Chambers, St. Matthew's Presbytery, Grassyards Road, Kilmarnock, KA3 7SH. All profits from the book go to the Ecuador Trust.



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Lands End to John O'Groats

For 14 days at the beginning of July we cycled up hills and down dales from the South of England to the North of Scotland to raise funds for the charity. Our cycling team was made up of Joe Sikora, Graeme Cartwright, Simon Gartside, Jamie Burns, Gerard Hand, Peter Diamond and myself. We cycled around 80 miles each day and were ably assisted by David and Andy Hand in the back-up van. We passed some of the most dramatic scenery this country has to offer, from the rolling countryside of Cornwall, through the relentless hills of the Lake District, to the lakes of Argyll and beyond. Jamie Burns, from East Kilbride explained what the trip meant to him: "The Journey from Lands End to John O'Groats had its highs and lows but for me the whole experience was terrific. I think each cyclist had their good days as well as an 'off day' where the miles and the hills took their toll, but it was the jokes and the humour that kept us all going. I think I speak on behalf of the whole group when I say



that we were all really excited to cycle into John O'Groats and to realise we had reached the end of this intrepid journey". Before the journey had even started the team had received substantial donations from businesses and local groups to help with accommodation, transport and food. Then throughout the trip the team began to receive donations from people along the way: some priests gave the use of the Parish Hall; other people donated much needed food for the hungry cyclists and others simply made a donation when they heard about the cause. Of course, the purpose of the trip was to raise funds to the Ecuador Trust and by the end of the trip the original target of £5,000 had been smashed - the final total was over £16,000! Thanks once again to all who contributed.



Visitors to Ecuador



In the course of this year there have been several visitors to Nueva Prosperina: Gordon Dunlop from Largs, Esther McMillan from Kilmarnock and Michael Daly from Glasgow. All three visited Ecuador as part of a much fuller trip around South America and, while in Guayaquil, they stayed with local families which allowed them to see poverty and the cramped conditions of Nueva Prosperina close up. I was able to keep in contact with them through the internet while they were in Guayaquil and what amazed me was their ability to get stuck into life among our poor brothers and sisters. Each stayed longer than they had originally expected.

made the trip-of-a-lifetime to Nueva Prosperina. Six girls and three boys from St. Joseph's Academy were accompanied by teachers Ann McDaid, Joe Sikora and myself. During the 10 days that we spent in the shanty town we stayed in Parish Halls and spent most days working in the Sagrada Familia School where we worked in the Soup Kitchen as well as the Primary and Secondary schools. It is fair to say that the youngsters were profoundly moved by the stark poverty that they saw and by the home visits that were made each afternoon.

In October of this year a larger group of nine 6th year students from Kilmarnock

If anyone is thinking of visiting Nueva Prosperina as part of a gap-year experience or simply for a one-off visit, this can be arranged by contacting me at mhartino2004@yahoo.co.uk

Louise Sloan



Student's view on Nueva Prosperina

It's been 4 weeks since I returned from Ecuador and not a day has gone by when I haven't thought about the experience of a lifetime. Being in the heart of a shanty town and sharing every day with people who have so little, really made us all appreciate how privileged we are. The stories of some of our new friends opened up a new perspective on life - it made us realise how trivial and superficial most of our problems are. Before we complain about some little silly thing that has gone wrong, we now pause and think about all the good things in our life that we usually take for granted. It truly was an unforgettable and life-changing experience.



Freddy's Blog



We have recently enlisted the help of our great Ecuadorian friend, Freddy Pincay, to write a regular blog to keep us up-to-date with what is going on in the Nueva Prosperina community. You can find the blog on www.ecuadortrust.org.uk. Here is an abstract from his latest letter:

way of life; at the same time I am sure that our Scots friends realised that it doesn't matter what you have in life but rather that love and service alone bring true happiness. Bendiciones hermanon y hermanas de Escocia - Dios les multiplique todo lo que hacen por nosotros.

A Gift from God: The visit of our Friends from Scotland

For Nueva Prosperina and especially for the children and the youngsters of our community it was tremendous to welcome Fr. Martin and his friends from Scotland. Our time together was short and although the work the Scots did amongst us was hard, they showed total commitment. It was incredible to see the support they gave in our Soup Kitchen, their sharing with our own pupils and their reaction to the visits we made to some very poor homes. Your visit has taught us to continue fighting for our ideals and to seek improvement in our



Gloria and Gisella

When we were in Guayaquil recently we made quite a few house visits so that the youngsters from Kilmarnock could see at first hand what life was like for families living in bamboo huts. In particular the visits we made to Gloria Quijije and to Gisella Vidal made a huge impact on us all.

Gloria works in the school kitchen as a volunteer helping wherever she can. At home she lives in a tiny bamboo hut with her grandmother, her disabled mother, Carlos, her son, who is a pupil at the school and her baby son Abrahan. For her voluntary work in the school Gloria receives \$100 per month; so our group was shocked to see the reality of their poor lives and to find out that the home has no other income.

Gisella Vidal is a single parent who lives in a bamboo hut with her 9 children, 5 of whom go to Sagrada Familia School. They also live in cramped conditions with the entire family sharing only 2 beds. Until recently Gisella sent 3 of her sons out on the streets to sell sweets -

the money they earned became the only income the family had. However, a local children's charity has helped them turn their lives around. Only the eldest son goes out to work in a steady factory job which allows the other children to go to the school where they can further their education.

Visiting these families was a real shock to the St. Joseph's group and it was while we visited these families that I thought to myself perhaps we could ask for specific financial help for these 2 families as a Christmas present from Scotland - maybe a couple of walls or a more substantial roof or even a cement floor or perhaps even some financial help for the children's education - something to help them recover a little of their lost dignity.

Would you like to help Gloria's family and Gisella's family this Christmas?



Our two Key Projects

The main aims of the charity are to help the poor of Nueva Prosperina in as many ways as possible. In particular we fund two key projects:

Soup Kitchen

Each day the charity feeds 150 of the poorest children in Nueva Prosperina. In the Soup Kitchen each child receives a cup of freshly made fruit juice, a plate of home-made soup and a bowl of rice and beans. It costs £5 per month to feed a child each day at our soup kitchen. Please help; a healthy lifestyle can really make a difference to someone who is desperately poor.

School Fees

We pay the school fees of 100 of the 550 children at Sagrada Familia School. It costs £8 a month to pay the school fees for each child at our school. As we have seen on so many occasions, education is the only way out of poverty. Can you help?



Talk on "Life on the Missions"

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.

Please send your donations to me at St. Matthew's Church, Grassyards Road, New Farm Loch, Kilmarnock, KA3 7SH,

Cheques should be made payable to the 'Martin Chambers Ecuador Trust'
Thank You!





And Finally...

The 2 July this year was the date we were due to start the Lands' End to John O'Groats cycle. After months of training and weeks of getting all the preparations together, we were all assembled outside St. Matthew's, Kilmarnock and ready to board the bus for our journey south for the big start at Lands' End. We had been given the use of the school minibus from St. Matthew's Academy, Saltcoats and had taken out a few seats to accommodate our luggage and the bikes. That sunny afternoon the cyclists gathered with family members for an emotional send-off and eventually the moment came for us to leave. So, we all boarded the bus and a smiling Andy turned the key in the ignition... Nothing! Not a sound! Flat as a pancake! We all looked at one another in shock as Andy tried again. Are you sure? Was this a sign of disasters to come? We had a flat battery. Fortunately I had taken out emergency

roadside cover for the minibus and after a hectic hour and a half we were on the road to England and to the start of the cycle.

Fortunately this was the only real transport disaster we had on the journey thanks to the great organisational skills of Andy, our driver. Indeed, even in terms of the cyclists we only had one flat tyre amongst us all!

Cheques made payable to the
Martin Chambers Ecuador
Trust

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Newsletter

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

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Hope you have
a wonderful and
blessed
Christmas!



Charity Website

Why not visit:

<http://www.ecuadortrust.org.uk/> where you will find Freddy's blog, photos and many articles about the charity. there is also a space to make a donation online.

Charity Registration No:
SCO37458

