



Restoring Dignity

SC037458

A newsletter about the Missions from Fr. Martin Chambers

Bienvenidos

Welcome to the Newsletter which keeps you up to date with everything that has been going on lately in the Martin Chambers Ecuador Trust charity. In this edition we are remembering the devastation that was caused in Ecuador in April of last year when an earthquake struck the northern region of the country. There is a report on how the Trust has been helping the victims of the earthquake in the immediate aftermath but also how it proposes to continue providing help where needed.

The Newsletter contains other news: about the Trust's friend, Jose Luis, was ordained a priest last November; and about a community near Guayaquil city which experiences flooding every day of the year.

I also hope that, by reading this Newsletter, you will be encouraged to continue to think about the needy of our world and to stretch out a helping hand ...

Of course, the Trust continues to focus on the community of Nueva Prosperina and the Sagrada Familia School. There is ongoing support by the Trust for the children's education, the Soup Kitchen and for wider community programmes.



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People of the Earthquake Zone

While we are tucking into our Easter eggs this coming Easter Sunday (March 16th), our friends in Ecuador will be marking the first anniversary of the earthquake that devastated the northern region of the country. On my recent visit I managed to spend several days visiting families who had been affected by the tragedy. Let me tell you the stories of a few of the people I met ...

He stood up and tried to escape but he was thrown to the ground unable to move. He managed to crawl over to the door, where he remained in case the building collapsed. The house shook violently from side to side and the ground moved up and down both of which caused terrible destruction. As Padre Vicente described that night, I could only imagine so much movement, both building and ground that it would have been like trying to crawl out of the waltzers at the showground.

- After 57 seconds, the earthquake stopped.
- 57 seconds and hundreds of lives were lost.
- 57 seconds and buildings were razed to the ground.
- It will take, I think, a generation before communities are restored.

On my first day there, I was the guest of Padre Vicente Saltos, the Parish Priest of one of the towns that has been torn apart. I asked him what actually happened the night of the earthquake and what was it like to be caught up in it. He took me to his own house where he related the story of that night. He had been upstairs getting ready for the 7pm Saturday Vigil Mass. Suddenly everything started shaking and he realised it was the 'real' earthquake.'





People of the Earthquake Zone (contd)



Padre Vicente's experience of the earthquake was repeated again and again by the people I spoke to. They told stories of fear, of absolute panic and of terror at being trapped.

Many families had lost their homes and the homes of many others had been so badly damaged that they were unsafe and had to be demolished. In the midst of all that devastation, I met a woman from the city of Portoviejo with a remarkable story to tell. Before the earthquake, Rosalia is desperately poor. Her only income is the \$50 a month she receives as a government subsidy to provide for her Mum, her two children and herself. They live in a small, two roomed house and on the night of the earthquake, they were all inside the house. Their experience was the same as everyone else's - the walls and ground shook violently again and again. What was miraculous is the fact that the house didn't fall down! This was amazing because the building has no steel columns to strengthen it. The house is made of brick placed lightly on top of bricks with little to support them, so it was a miracle that it survived. Rosalia was an inspirational person who in the midst of extreme poverty and such a bleak outlook for the future, was still hopeful that her family would find happiness in life.



I met a group in the seaside town of Playa Prieta which is where Sister Clare Crockett from Derry was killed. She belonged to the order of 'House of the Mother' and was with her community on the night of the earthquake. She had been on the second floor of a four storey school, teaching guitar to four young pupils from the town. As the earthquake started, they all tried to run to the staircase, but it was too late. The whole building collapsed in on itself and Sr. Clare and her young pupils all lost their lives. Amazingly several of the nuns who were on the third floor were pulled from the rubble and survived their ordeal. It was an inspirational moment when I prayed with the community in their makeshift chapel. They spoke in glowing terms of Sr. Clare and asked through her intercession for hope to be restored to the devastated communities. As I travelled nearer to the epicentre of the earthquake, I saw hundreds of tents dotted along the roadside. These had been donated by the United Nations and by individual governments around the world.



What Can The Trust do?



The Trust can continue to help the victims of the earthquake by sending funds to be managed by CARITAS PORTOVIEJO which is the equivalent of SCIAF. The organisation will be able to direct donations to the building of new houses, to urgent medical care and to rebuilding schools which have been lost.

If you wish to help with a donation, please do so. I believe that it will be a whole generation before people will be able to return to where they were before the earthquake. They were poor before - now they have nothing!

Fr. Dennis O'Brien

Fr. Dennis is a priest of the St James Society. He has lived and worked for the last seven years in the Duran area of Guayaquil. His parish is in a low-lying part of the city, which means that for a large part of the year, the area is flooded and the parishioners have to travel the 'streets' in boats. Last year the Trust started sending funds to Fr. Dennis' Parish to help two projects:

Fr. Dennis writes: **"If the Trust could help, we would appreciate donations to defray the cost of the meal for 114 children on Fridays and to help with the cost of medical examinations, treatments and nutritious snacks for the children."**

- the LUNCH CLUB where 120 are fed every day;
- the SCHOOLS SUPPORT PROGRAMME where 30 secondary school pupils are given additional classes after school. All of these pupils get a physical examination and, if there are symptoms of parasites, anaemia or malnutrition, they are given medical treatment.



Nueva Prosperina & Sagrada Familia School

As ever when I was in Nueva Prosperina in November, I made sure I visited as many people as possible to get a good idea of how things were progressing and how families were tackling the ongoing poverty. I would say that for some people life has got better as some former bamboo huts have been transformed into quite decent homes. However, the greater number of homes I visited have remained the same: although the house may be built of brick, they still have mud floors and no internal walls with only a hanging curtain to provide separation and privacy. Sadly, some of the homes I visited seem to have deteriorated because of the extreme poverty. There is scarcely any employment and the bamboo huts that growing families live in are in poor repair. Overall, I found that there is still a huge amount of poverty which the Trust can help to alleviate.

The school, Sagrada Familia, provides an oasis of hope for a needy community. There are 520 pupils, divided equally between the Primary department and the Secondary department. Not only do the children come to a well-built school, but they also come to a place where the staff look on their work not only as education, but as a mission to people in dire need. My impression in November was that educationally the school is now on a much better footing. It is now working within the Church's Schools Network and receives plenty of support from the Archdiocese. The national government has established a system of state exams which means that all senior pupils in the secondary sector have to sit the same exams as the counterparts in other schools. In terms of the commitment of the staff, I was very impressed by the fact that the teachers stayed on long after the pupils had gone home in order to prepare for the following day ahead and to correct the pupils' homework.

When the Trust pays many pupil's school fees, it is offering them hope for the future. It is paying for a school which is well run and well managed by a committed Headteacher, Adela Villacres and a dedicated staff.

Please think about helping the poorest children in Nueva Prosperina through Sagrada Familia school.



Soup Kitchen



Gloria has been working in the Soup Kitchen since 2006. Her eldest son, Carlos, was been a pupil at the school and continues to be a 'character' around the place although he is now in his teens. As I often do when I am in Ecuador, I spent some time working in the kitchen, peeling potatoes and making fruit juice. I had plenty time to speak to Gloria and to find out why she enjoys working with the girls and boys that come to the Soup Kitchen.

She told me: "When the pupils come to school in the morning, I know that many of them have not had any breakfast. I know this because I sometimes do not have enough money to buy breakfast for my own children. When they are fed at the Soup Kitchen - with soup, a plate of rice and beans and some juice - I know that it doesn't just fill their bellies but it makes it easier for them to concentrate in class. It makes it easier for them to learn. It will give them a chance for a better future once they pass their exams and go on to work. That is how it helped my son Carlos."

The money needed to run the soup Kitchen comes entirely from your donations. It costs £10 per month to feed a child in the Soup Kitchen. CAN YOU HELP FEED A CHILD IN 2017?

It costs £10 per month to feed a child in the Soup Kitchen. Can you help feed a child in 2017?



Charity Events



Cheques made payable to the Martin Chambers Ecuador Trust

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

Martin Chambers
St. Matthew's Church
Grassyards Road
New Farm Loch
KILMARNOCK
KA3 7SH

Donations

Please send your donations to me at:

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

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.

Charity Registration No:
SCO37458



Last year there were two main fundraising events for the Ecuador Trust...

- **CYCLE AROUND GALLOWAY:** Joe Sikora and I cycled over 250 miles around the Galloway Diocese. We took in the rolling hills, the Galloway Forest and the stunning Ayrshire coastline from Largs to Ayr. We cycled in glorious sunshine and in pouring rain - Scotland in July! All along the route we were supported by people who welcomed us and fed us. Of course, it was all worthwhile as we raised over £9,000 in sponsorship.
- **CHARITY DANCE AT CELTIC PARK:** On Friday 7th October, 350 people gathered at the Kerrydale Suite for an evening of dance and entertainment in support of the Ecuador Trust. Div McKendrick and his band provided the music for the event, the catering was provided by Celtic FC and the pupils of St. Joseph's Academy, Kilmarnock helped make sure everyone was made welcome and knew what was coming up next. All this effort was worthwhile as everyone enjoyed the night and together raised £16,000 for the Trust.



Jose Luis Becomes a Priest

On 19th November, over a thousand people packed into Guayaquil Cathedral for the Ordination to the Priesthood of six young men, among them Jose Luis Velez Lopez, who comes from the sector of Nueva Prosperina. He was a catechist there for some years, working with the youth of the Parish and with children preparing for First Communion. I was able to be present at his Ordination and to help him put on his priestly chasuble for the first time. For me, it was an incredibly emotional day as I remembered the first day I took him to seminary a number of years ago. Equally emotional was the meal I shared with him the night before in his family home. His family still lives in a humble home and I was glad to see that Fr. Jose Luis continues to visit and support his family as much as he can.

Fr. Jose Luis wrote this letter recently:

"I was so glad that Padre Martin was able to be with me at my Ordination to the Priesthood. I am glad because I know how much people from Scotland have supported me throughout my journey. My family comes from a humble background and I couldn't have made this journey without your support. May God reward you for your kindness and generosity."

Newsletter

If you know of anyone who would wish to receive a copy of this 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>

