



Summer 2014

Issue 23

Restoring Dignity

SC037458

A newsletter about the Missions from Fr. Martin Chambers



Bienvenidos

Welcome to the summer Newsletter which keeps you up to date with everything that has been going on lately in the Martin Chambers Ecuador Trust charity. This summer marks 10 years of our charitable link to the community of Nueva Prosperina and, in particular, to the people at Sagrada Familia School. To that end, this edition of *restoring dignity* is dedicated to the people of Guayaquil: to Adela Villacres who has led Sagrada Familia since the start; to Anny Ferrin and Miguel Angel Gonzalez Lino who have recently graduated from the school despite setbacks. These are people who have inspired us to realise that, in spite of various setbacks in life, it still can be a life of dignity and hope. They are our inspiration in charitable giving.

We also have two articles which highlight how people from Scotland continue to be inspired to travel to Ecuador and share the life of our poorest sisters and brothers.

10 Years of Sagrada Familia

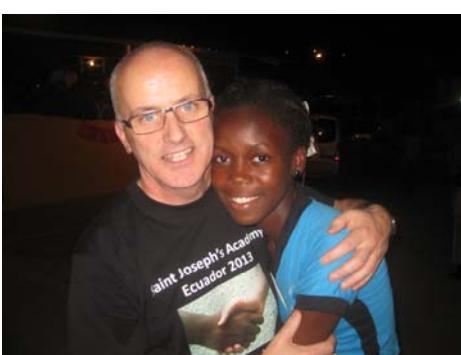
From Adela Villacres, Headteacher of Sagrada Familia from the start...

Dear Friends,

For me it has been a great pleasure to work at Sagrada Familia School from its beginning in 2003 and, since then, to offer a quality education that shows warmth towards the children and young people we serve.

This beautiful project was the brainchild of Fr. Con Keily, a missionary priest of the St. James Society and, in the spring of 2003, we started with seven bamboo huts for classrooms and around 300 pupils. Since then we have continued to grow so that now we have around 550 pupils.

In 2004 we were blessed with the arrival of Fr. Martin Chambers who brought enthusiasm to our project and helped pupils and staff to realise they could have inner dignity even in the face of great poverty. The ECUADOR TRUST has been a great friend to us over the years and allowed us to offer quality education; when we only had bamboo huts, it wasn't easy to be a teacher and I'm sure it wasn't easy to be a pupil either. The Ecuador Trust has also helped us with EDUCATION GRANTS that has meant our school is open to the poorest within our own poor community; time and again, we have seen that the poorest people have, through your help, been given the chance to study at Sagrada Familia and dream that one day they could also get the qualifications they need for a better future.



Letter from Anny Ferrin

Dear Scottish Friends,

My name is Anny Ferrin who, for the past 9 years, I have received a grant from the ECUADOR TRUST that has allowed me to study at Sagrada Familia School. Thanks to your help I have been able to continue studying and get the qualifications I need for life. I have only had the fortune to get to know a few of you over the years - the Scots who have visited Guayaquil - but all of you have gained the respect and trust from your Ecuadorian friends for all that you have done for our community. That is why I want to say a heartfelt thanks to you all and ask God to continue to bless you with love.

Chaocto, Anny





10 years of Sagrada Familia (contd...)



A further project that has been running for ten years with the help of your Charity is the SOUP KITCHEN. In the early days of the school we realised that most of the children were coming to school without any breakfast and were returning home without the hope of a decent meal. We set up the Soup Kitchen and, for the last ten years, it has provided 120 of the poorest children with a nutritious meal each day - a cup of home-made fruit juice, a plate of soup and a bowl of rice. We get no other financial help for the Soup Kitchen and, if it wasn't for the Ecuador Trust, it would have to shut down.

During these years, the bonds of friendship and solidarity between our two countries have been strengthened. Many of you have travelled to live with us here in Ecuador and, on two occasions, a group of young people has made the trip of a lifetime to spend ten days in Scotland. Together we have learned to appreciate and love one another's culture and people. Therefore I want to take this opportunity to thank every one of you who has helped both economically and spiritually in these last ten years to build up the community of Sagrada Familia School - may God continue to bless you all.

"ECUADOR Y ESOCIA POR SIEMPRE AMIGOS"

Spotlight on Miguel Angel Gonzalez Lino

What is your name?

My name is Miguel Angel Gonzalez Lino

What age are you?

I am 23 years old.

Can you tell us a little bit about your family?

In my family there is my Dad, my elder brother, Luis, and my younger brother, John. My Mum died of a heart attack some years ago.

My family life has never been very stable; when I was four years old, my parents split up and the three children were also separated: Luis went to live with an aunt; I went with another aunt, and John went to live with our grandparents. When I was eight, I was reunited once more with my brothers as we came to live in Nueva Prosperina with my Dad and his partner, although I have never got on well with her.

How did your family background affect your adolescent years?

My Mum died of a heart attack when I was 13 years old and, at the time, I blamed my Dad for causing her all sorts of stress. I began a very difficult period in my life: while studying at a local state school, I joined a "*pandilla (gang)*". At the same time, my Dad went to live in another part of the city leaving myself and my brothers alone at home; I was free to come and go at any time of the day and night with "*my gang friends*".

How did you decide to study at Sagrada Familia School?

Because I was spending so much time with my gang friends, I began to miss days at school. When I did go, I never showed respect to the teachers and I failed my exams. They threw me out of school and I missed a whole year of education. At the same time, my younger brother, John, was already studying at Sagrada Familia and I eventually asked my Dad if he could pay for my entrance fees to get into the same school. That's when I became a student at Sagrada Familia.

What were your first days like at the new school?

Sagrada Familia is only a few streets away from my house so I couldn't "*run away*" as easily. I also noticed that in the new school, there was different type of atmosphere from what I had been used to in the state school.

Although it was difficult to get used to, I realised that the school was not so much

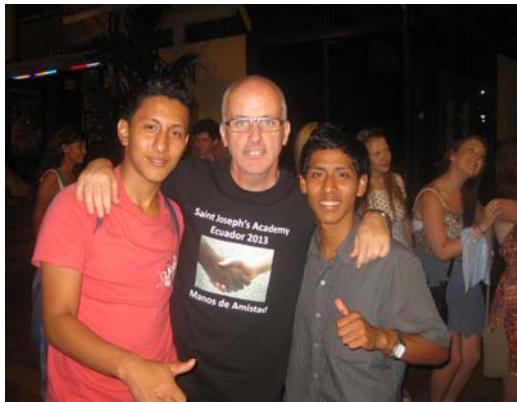
an institution as a family. Everyone was friendly from the youngest pupil to the oldest teacher. The teachers became good friends and, by showing me respect, taught me to respect myself. All of this helped me to think differently about myself and about my education. I began to feel loved.

How has being at Sagrada Familia helped you in life?

The first thing I noticed was that the teachers began to believe in me. Sagrada Familia became a "*home from home*". Each morning I would wake up wanting to go to school as quickly as possible and, more and more, I wanted to spend my evenings there too. Sagrada Familia gave me the chance that other schools had failed to do; I fell in love with learning, spending more time studying: Maths, Accounting and English. All of this gave me the chance two years ago to go to University.

What would your message be for young people reading this article?

Never give up even when you are in the depth of despair. At the lowest point, someone will always be there to extend you the hand of friendship and a light for your darkness. Always fight to achieve your dream.



Sagrada Familia's Most Recent Visitor

I flew in to Guayaquil ragged after four months of travelling, with little Spanish and badly needing a shower after having spent the previous night on an airport floor. One month, two bottles of sun-cream, three cans of ineffective mosquito repellent, thirty ice-cold showers, sixty-five mosquito bites and hundreds of Spanish slip-ups later (which included inadvertently asking if a lovely woman in the Soup Kitchen had male reproductive organs), I left with a heavy heart.

Much of my time in the school was spent teaching English to the pupils. On weekday mornings my old-fashioned alarm clock (a pack of crowing cocks next door) would sound at five in the morning, I'd unfurl my mosquito net which might as well have been a football net, and I'd be on my way to Sagrada Familia.

As you might expect, schools in Ecuador are still far behind what we have come to know in Scotland. Nevertheless, the sense of camaraderie between pupils is something schools here could learn from: there was no bullying, no exclusion and a great generosity of spirit among the students. Maybe it's because I don't know many/any bad words in Spanish, but the students genuinely did not have a bad word to say about any of their classmates and showed a profound gratitude to their teachers.

Most people go to volunteer with a view to giving back or making some sort of difference. The irony is that the people of Nueva Prosperina did more for me than I feel I could ever do for them. While they undoubtedly deserve a higher standard of living, they'll never lose the bonds they share with family, friends and the wider community, nor their unrelenting gratitude to God for the little that they do have.

David Fitzpatrick



Fundraising Events

To celebrate ten years of our connection with Sagrada Familia, the Ecuador Trust hopes to raise enough cash this year to build a further classroom which is needed as the school continues to expand. These events are:

Charity Cycle

A group of 50 year-olds will attempt to cycle 100 miles in one go this August. Although they are keen cyclists, their age has never allowed them to do such a long distance. Do you want to sponsor them? You can do so online at <https://www.justgiving.com/Martin-Chambers4/>

Charity Dance

This will take place in the Kerrydale Suite at Celtic Park on Friday, 3 October from 7pm. There will be music to dance to, hot foot to eat and raffles with stunning prizes to take part in. Tables for ten people are being sold at £250 (£25 per person). There are only a few tables remaining to be sold - so please book a table at:

mhartino2004@yahoo.co.uk

Donations

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!

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.





Cheques made payable to the
Martin Chambers Ecuador
Trust

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

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And Finally... from Morgan McKenna

In October of last year, I was given the opportunity to visit Nueva Prosperina in Ecuador. After a long interview process, fundraising and a lot of anticipation, I couldn't have been happier when I was told that I had been selected for the life changing trip. Whilst in Ecuador I had the pleasure of seeing at first-hand the difference the Trust makes both for Sagrada Familia School and for the locals. It got me thinking of all the ways I could help and I couldn't wait to contribute in my own way to give back to such deserving people who had treated me with kindness.

I decided that a skydive from 10,000 feet with the Paragon Club in Perthshire would be a perfect way of proving to people how much my trip to South America had impacted on me. My friends and family were so supportive and my parents encouraged me in order to boost my confidence. On the day of the dive, I could feel my nerves rising and I began to question what I had let myself in for. Strangely though, when it was time for me to jump, all I could think about was how blessed I had been to meet my new friends in Ecuador. I took my leap of faith and the rush of wind on my face was exhilarating, I free-fell from 10,000 feet at 135mph and, at 5,000 feet, the parachute was opened. I was then able to do my turns, spirals and tricks in the air. For the rest of the day I had a buzz about myself.

It will remain one of the best experiences I have ever had. In total now, I have raised £1,693 (*excluding gift aid*) for the Ecuador Trust and I cannot express how excited I am to see the money continue to improve the lives of people I love and care about. I will be eternally grateful to the people who have stood by me, supported or sponsored me. Gracias amigos!



Newsletter

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

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

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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