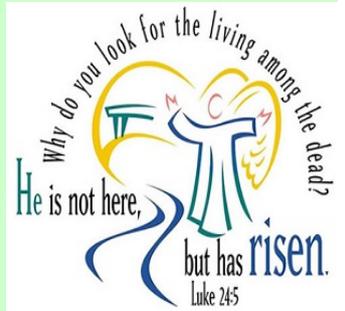




Restoring Dignity

SC037458



A newsletter about the Missions from Fr. Martin Chambers

In this Issue:

Bienvenidos	1
2021 Gifts for Ecuador	1
COVID in Ecuador	2
Sagrada Familia School	2
Sagrada Familia Pupil	3
Soup Kitchen	3
New School Project for the Trust	3
Letter from a Parent	4
And Finally...	4

Bienvenidos

Welcome to this Easter Newsletter, which keeps you up to date with everything that has been going on lately in the Martin Chambers Ecuador Trust Charity.

COVID-19 has marked all our lives in the past year: job fears; financial worries; concerns about our health. If it has been traumatic for us here in Scotland, imagine what life has been like in the poorer areas of Ecuador, where these fears are made worse

through the grinding poverty.

As we celebrate the Feast of Easter - a time of new hope - let us pray that our friends in Ecuador will feel hope rising in their hearts as we reach out to them.



2021 Gifts for Ecuador

Can you help with one of the following gifts to help our sisters and brothers in Ecuador? Our friends in Ecuador need your help all year round, but there are three ways you can help them in 2021:

- By **PAYING THE SCHOOL FEES**: We now support two schools within the shanty towns of Guayaquil. The Head Teachers know the personal circumstances of each pupil and this allows the Trust to offer to pay the school fees of the poorest children. If families couldn't afford to send their children to school, the children would perhaps lose the chance to develop in life and eventually to find work.
- By **RUNNING THE SOUP KITCHEN**: For the families who live in the shanty towns of Guayaquil, this time of pandemic has brought fresh fears as they try to feed their children. The Sagrada Familia Soup Kitchen would normally feed the children inside one of the classrooms but during COVID, they are operating a Take-Away Service.

The meal continues to include home-made soup, a glass of fresh fruit juice and a plate of rice and beans and there are 90 children being fed every day. Can you help to feed poor children during COVID? The money needed to run the Soup Kitchen comes entirely from your donation.

- By **SUPPORTING THE FOODBANK**: in the northern city of Portoviejo. The catechists in the parish of the Cathedral in that city go out to the poorest areas of the city and distribute food parcels with around 20 essential food items (including rice and tinned food), where they help the neediest families. Every week they will help around 20/30 families and this outreach only comes through donations from the Ecuador Trust.

CAN YOU HELP FEED AND EDUCATE POOR FAMILIES IN 2021?





COVID in Ecuador

It's not every day that Ecuador makes the front page of UK newspapers, but that was the case last April as stories started to emerge of how COVID was affecting the poorest people in the shanty towns of Guayaquil. At the outbreak of the pandemic, pictures emerged of coffins piled up in the streets with hospitals and morgues at full capacity. As in other countries, the Ecuadorian government has declared a closure of workplaces and schools, but it seemed to affect the poorest people in a very stark way.

Firstly, there is no national health system, so any medicines or hospital treatment costs money, which the poor people do not have. Often if they have to choose between buying medicine or buying food for the family, they will choose to feed their children; they can worry about their health at a later stage. Secondly, the conditions in the shanty towns only worsen during the pandemic; many houses are made of bamboo-slatted walls where the air-borne COVID can easily spread. Thirdly, when people were dying of COVID in the shanty towns, neither the police, nor the doctors, nor the funeral directors felt safe to go into such a dangerous area. The poor of Nueva Prosperina and similar shanty towns were therefore left in an endless cycle of health problems.

It seemed like the government didn't care but, when the news of this dreadful situation hit the world TV screens, the Ecuadorian government had to act. After an international outcry, police, doctors and health care workers made their way into the worst affected areas. Families were eventually able to bury their dead and to access doctor surgeries. There ben to emerge, at least, some hope for the future.

As in other places, education in Ecuador moved online. This however caused further problems as families couldn't afford the necessary laptops or even pay for the internet connections. All of this on top of the great unemployment in the area, which has forced families to sell their own furniture to feed their children. They will have debts for years to come.

At the same time, though, there has been an incredible sense of resilience and hope: communities come together to help the poorest in their midst. Families who do not have a lot to their name stretch out the hand of love to those nearest to them who are in greater need. Once again, it is the poorest people in our world who are teaching the wealthier nations what values are truly necessary for living: dignity, solidarity and service.



Sagrada Familia School



For many years now, this school has had primary and secondary education with somewhere around 500 pupils each year. During COVID, however, face-to-face classes stopped. Online learning has brought a different set of problems for the poorest families: they have a very basic electricity supply; they have to share the cramped spaces of their bamboo homes with several children; they do not have access to laptops. It was clear that not even all the teachers had a laptop to teach with. On top of that, the school roll has fallen to 400 pupils. Adela Villacres, the Head Teacher wrote recently:

“Our school has been running for 18 years now. It started as a primary school but then developed year on year as a secondary school too. So much so that we have now had eleven 6th year graduations. When our pupils leave after 6th year, many go on to University, although quite a number go straight into employment in order to support their families in their poverty.

Especially in this COVID year, there has been a great challenge in educating children online. What keeps the teachers going though, is the keenness of the students who tell us that they themselves want to learn and to build a better world built on love and understanding”.





Sagrada Familia Pupil



“My name is Jesus Alvarado and this year I started 4th year at Sagrada Familia. Of course it didn’t begin as I expected, because the pandemic attacked our world and changed the rhythm of all our lives.

At the start, I had to get used to watching the computer screen instead of looking at the teacher in front of the class. It also took me time to get used to studying in the same cramped house where I live with my brothers and sisters. We had to learn quickly how to get on with one another in a new way. However, we could all see how keen the teachers were to continue teaching us; it was their enthusiasm that spurred me on.

Eventually I got used to the new way of working and even got used to doing exams online. I passed! The worst thing about this COVID year is that I haven’t been able to see my friends and enjoy their love and laughter. I am longing for the day when we can get back together again. Of course, we keep in touch by messaging one another. With God’s help we will all get through this.

I want to say thanks to the Ecuador Trust for paying my school fees for the past few years. My family does not have a lot of money, my parents do not have regular jobs (it’s worse now due to lockdown) but your donations have helped me get on with my education. You have given me hope for my future. Muchas Gracias!



Soup Kitchen



The Ecuador Trust has seen at first-hand how poverty affects families in Nueva Prosperina: parents with up to six children in their family who could only feed their children every alternative day. Poverty brings malnutrition, which breeds ill health. The Sagrada Familia Soup Kitchen is a bright light of hope, therefore, for many families. Every day a hundred children would normally come to be fed: a bowl of soup, rice with beans or chicken and a glass of fresh fruit juice.

COVID, however, shut down the school where the Soup Kitchen is based and brought a halt for a while to the feeding of the children there. After the initial shock of lockdown, the Soup Kitchen was up and running again as a ‘Take-Away Kitchen’. The children come to the school entrance where they can pick up the same healthy meal.

This has only been possible through the generosity of yourselves, the donors to the Ecuador Trust. Muchisimas gracias!



New School Project for the Ecuador Trust

Nearby Nueva Prosperina is another shanty town called Canal Ocho. Like Nueva Prosperina, it is also an area of great poverty where people live in bamboo huts, where there is little employment and where there are few opportunities for education. A group of Ecuadorian nuns set up a convent in that area and built a school, called Dr. Luis Arzube School, after a local benefactor who donated money for the school to be built. The Ecuador Trust has recently started to support that school since the children of that area and the families need a lot of help to pay for their schooling.

Sister Flor, Superior of the convent there and Head Teacher explains:

“We live and work in a very poor area where you can see the poverty etched on the faces of all the children who come to our school. This has been made so much worse this year by the pandemic. At times we wondered how we would manage, but we are grateful to you, our friends in the Ecuador Trust, for all the help you give us. Of the 250 pupils that come to our school, the Trust supports more than half of them. YOU HELP TO EDUCATE OUR POOR CHILDREN!! For that, the pupils would like to say ‘Muchas Gracias’”



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Donations:

Please send your donations to me at:

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

Once the pandemic is over, there will hopefully be more opportunity to present groups with a talk on "Life in Ecuador". Don't be afraid to get in touch by e-mail (mhartino2004@yahoo.co.uk) or by phone at St. Matthew's Church (01563 533587).



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 Registration No:
SCO37458

Charity Website:

A new website has been set up for the charity. Please come and keep up to date with all that is going on for the Ecuador Trust. In particular you will now see that there is a connection to a new Facebook page for the Charity:

(<http://www.facebook.com/EcuadorTrust2/>)

where photos and articles are regularly updated.

Letter from a Parent

Thiago Banchon

"To all our friends in the Ecuador Trust I send friendly greetings thanking you for the help you have given to my family and particularly to my children. This past year has been incredibly difficult with my husband losing his job and my own wage as a teacher being slashed. My children began to wonder if they would be able to continue at Dr. Luis Arzube School. We live in a poor area of Guayaquil, in a bamboo house where there is no running water and poor electricity. Sometimes I do not have enough money to feed my children. However, I always knew that God would send angels to help me. You, the Ecuador Trust are those angels! Through you, I have learned to appreciate the gifts that God has given me. May God bless you all."

And Finally...

For the past few years there have been several fundraising efforts undertaken to support the work of the Ecuador Trust, but the pandemic put paid to a summer cycle that had been planned in 2020. However, at the tail-end of the year, Martin came up with the crazy idea to 'Cycle the Advent Calendar'. He undertook to cycle for an hour each morning of that season in the run-up to Christmas. He tells us: *"It was a crazy idea because it was always freezing cold when I was cycling and also because I wasn't sure if anyone was actually going to donate."* However, his fears were unfounded as before he had even started, he had reached his target of £1,000. Indeed, once all donations were in, £8,000 had been raised for the projects of the Ecuador Trust. **Gracias a todos y Feliz Navidad!**

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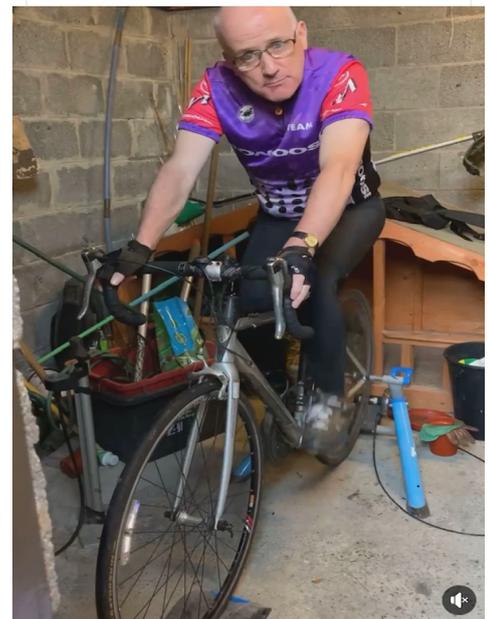
<http://facebook.com/EcuadorTrust2/>

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CYCLE THE ADVENT CALENDAR: COVID has hit us all very hard this year. Our friends in Ecuador have been hit harder still with little help availab... See more



2k views

Adela Villacres de Garcia and 7 others

1 share

