



Restoring Dignity



A newsletter about the Missions from Fr. Martin Chambers

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Bienvenidos

Welcome to this Christmas 2022 Newsletter which keeps you up to date with everything that has been going on lately in the Martin Chambers Ecuador Trust charity.

Our TV screens have been ravaged this year by the war and violence in Ukraine. It has been shocking to see the threats and the violence day after day. Of course, we know, in our mind's eye, that there is also violence in many other parts of our world. Sadly our friends in Ecuador have also been living through terrible times recently.

A wave of insecurity has gripped the country with people's daily lives being affected by attacks and by intimidation. This is on top of the poverty that has taken greater hold of people's lives and finances as they recover from the pandemic.

The work, therefore, of this Ecuador Trust becomes clearer as we strive to give people hope in the midst of their fear. The hope they receive from us may come in the shape of a bag of shopping, a proper meal or in the shape of a decent education; but it is hope in great measure. Let's continue that support!

Message from Adela Villacres

Hello my dear friends of Ecuador Trust, I take this opportunity to tell you a little about the situation of our beloved Ecuador. After two years of Covid-19 pandemic, many families were left without work and, as you will know through the media, we have also suffered very hard times socially due to the rise in crime.

However, we are very convinced that, through the grain of sand that you send us, our children now know that they do have a future, that they have the hope of a tomorrow, full of dreams and illusions. Mocha's Gracias.



State of Emergency



One of the factors that has shaped life recently in Ecuador has been the great insecurity that the people have had to live with. During the past two years there have been prison riots throughout the country with the largest riots by far being those in the Guayaquil prisons where around 180 people were killed.

Martin Chambers explains: *"Even from the comfort of my home in Scotland, I knew last year that these riots were serious and that the government had lost control for a time. The problem is that the prisons are largely run by drug barons and drug gangs.*

While I was in Ecuador recently, the Ecuador President decided it would be a good idea to move some of the gang leaders to another part of the country. This turned out to be a very bad decision

as it caused riots that spilled out onto the streets where, in one night, 5 police officers were killed.

The problem also is that the prison violence indeed has spread throughout the shanty towns where

people are already very vulnerable. What happens is that ordinary people who live in the shanty towns are forced to join 'protection schemes'. This is a dreadful situation which causes distress amongst a people already dreadfully poor.



 **Dr. Luiz Arzube School**

The Ecuador Trust has been helping this school for some years now. It was the school set up by Fr. Tom Oates, a priest of the missionary Society of St. James. Like other schools throughout Ecuador, it remained shut during the two years of the pandemic and only opened again in April of this year. Because it is the only school in the very poor area it serves, its numbers have remained high and presently has around 380 pupils.

When Martin was in Ecuador recently, he visited the school and joined in a Sports Day celebration. He recalled:

“Dr Luis Arzube school had a great welcome for us all. The children and the teachers danced and sang for us. And one girl - from Primary 4 - went up to the microphone and - unscripted - said how grateful the school

was for all the help they had received over many years from their friends in Scotland.

I was overwhelmed by the kindness they showed us while there.”

Over recent years the school has received grants from the Ecuador Trust which has helped them provide a food programme as well as paying the school fees of some of the neediest children.



 **Sagrada Familia School**



One of the special moments during Martin’s recent visit was the reunion of past pupils of Sagrada Familia. As Martin explains:

“I have been to plenty of school reunions over the years and I think I was expecting around 30/40 pupils that night. So I was totally shocked when 130 former pupils turned up to what became a great event. Yes, there was dancing, yes there were eats. However, two main things struck me: that the former pupils who had left Sagrada Familia up to ten years ago still had a great affection for the school; and that many of them had used their education as the basis for going on into industry, to medicine, to law and, for some of them, to becoming teachers.”

Sagrada Familia continues to be a beacon of hope for a desperately poor community. However, one challenge in this year is that, with families struggling with finances, they have been turning to the free education the state provides in the nearby state school. The only difficulty with the ‘state option’ is that pupils are squashed together into tiny classrooms - up to 60 pupils per class. Numbers in Sagrada Familia, as a result, are down: perhaps over 100 pupils less than pre-Covid. However, with the help of the local Archbishop and his Education Network, they are hoping to attract more pupils in the new school year starting in April 2023.



We wish you all a holy and blessed Christmas

Abandoned Communities in Portoviejo

Over many years the Ecuador Trust has been helping families in the communities that were ravaged after the 2016 earthquake. In previous years, friends from Scotland have visited some of the coastal communities that have been helped by the Ecuador Trust. This time, however, Martin visited some of the more remote communities high up in the mountains.

Two families in particular stand out:

ISABEL FALCONES and her two daughters, Nieki and Maria. They live in what can best be described as a ramshackle hut. It has no concrete walls and no floor. To protect their privacy they have put up tarpaulin sheets, which also provides a separation for 'bedrooms'. They got the land some years ago at a cheap price - because they are very near a fast-flowing river. The only income they have for themselves comes from Isabel's husband, Efren, who works in the other end of the country sending money home every month. As Martin explains: *"I was struck by the sheer scale of the poverty. They have nothing, no possessions, and they struggle every day. Yet I also noted their great hope and joy in life: they are not knocked down by life but greet every moment with happiness in their hearts."*

Heroes for the Trust

Two people recently have come to the attention of the Ecuador Trust as being people who have gone above and beyond in their care of the poorest and neediest people:

SR. TERESINA is a Portugese nun who works in the San Isidro district near the city of Portoviejo. She has dedicated many years of her life to make sure parents and children are 'registered' according to Ecuadorian law. She was shocked to find in many of these abandoned communities that people had been scared to register themselves with the state. This meant that they were never able to register for school, never able to receive health care from the state and never able to receive state aid nor a pension. In one case, Sr. Teresina found a grandmother who knew she was in her 80s but was not very sure of her exact age because her own parents had never signed a birth certificate for her. It seems a very simple thing to do but Sr. Teresina has dedicated herself to helping people to register themselves with the Ecuadorian state. This opens them to many state benefits and helps lift them out of poverty.

Sister Teresina is a Hero!



PEDRO AND MANUELA VERA have a wooden hut which they call home. They live with their eight children and are expecting their ninth child in 2023. *"The overriding thought I had when visiting Pedro and Manuela"* says Martin *"is that whole communities in that part of Ecuador have simply been abandoned. Abandoned in terms of health care, in terms of education and in terms of the welfare state. Abandoned by society."*



FR. JOSE works in the Parish of Barraganete in the jungle region of Ecuador. From that central town, he serves over forty other communities which he can only reach over very rocky mountainous terrain. The most striking aspect of Fr. Jose's life is that he lives, like many of his people, in a ramshackle hut: *"I give all the money I get to the poor and needy!"*

Fr. Jose is a Hero!



Soup Kitchen

In the past year the Ecuador Trust has provided money to run two Soup Kitchens at the two schools of Sagrada Familia and Dr. Luis Arzube. Each day around 40 or 50 children in each school get a very good meal: freshly-made fruit juice; vegetable soup; and a main course of rice with chicken or tuna.

These meals are a lifeline to families that often struggle to feed their children. On his recent visit, many families and children kept coming to Martin to say *"Gracias a todos en Escocia por darnos de comer - thanks to everyone in Scotland for feeding us!"*



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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'.

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.

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:
SC037458

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.

Ecuador Trust 200 Club

We've recently set up the Ecuador Trust 200 Club to help raise funds for our friends in Ecuador. Would you like to join? Here are the basic details:

* The 200 Club is a members prize draw club with draws held monthly.

* Membership is £5 per month which provides each member with entry to a monthly draw.

* The monthly draw will be drawn in the first week of the next calendar month after payment is made.

* The initial prize is £150 but, as more members join, this may be reviewed.

* Members may purchase more than one membership if desired.

* To join the 200 Club, you can either message the Ecuador Trust Facebook page or send an email to

theecuadortrust200club@hotmail.com ... we'll get back to you 'muy pronto'.

* Gracias amigo!

And Finally...

Gloria and her family have always had a special place in the hearts of Scots who have visited Guayaquil because of her work in Sagrada Familia school. She is a lovely woman who lives with her Gran, her Mum and her four children. They live, and have always lived, a poor existence. Fourteen years ago, the Ecuador Trust gifted Gloria and her family the wooden hut they now call 'home'. The only thing about that fact is that such wooden huts only have a lifeline of five/six years. This is why a massive hole has now appeared in what they call 'the living room.' And that is why the four children - Carlos, Luciano, Andrea and Jair - who used to sleep inside the house now sleep on mattresses outside in the dirt yard.

This is why the Ecuador Trust exists - to help Gloria and such families find a way out of poverty!

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We use this data solely for sending you this newsletter and from time to time other communications.

We never give, sell or share your data with any other organisation.

You may visit our full privacy policy on:

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

If you wish to be removed from this list please let us know and we will remove it within 30 days.

2022 Christmas 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 here are three ways you can help them at Christmas time this year:

by **PAYING THE SCHOOL FEES.** We now support children's education in the two schools of Sagrada Familia and Dr Luis Arzube. As the schools emerges from the pandemic, classes in-person have returned.

by **SUPPORTING THE SOUP KITCHENS** at Sagrada Familia and Dr Luis Arzube schools in Guayaquil. This has been a great help to needy families especially during the tragedy of the pandemic.

By **SUPPORTING THE FOOD BAG PROGRAMME** in the northern area around the city of Portoviejo. In some of the most abandoned communities of Ecuador, food is often in short supply.

So, **CAN YOU HELP FEED AND EDUCATE POOR FAMILIES IN 2022?**

