

Restoring Dignity

SC037458



A newsletter about the Missions from Fr. Martin Chambers

Bienvenidos

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Welcome to this Christmas 2023 Newsletter which keeps you up to date with everything that has been going on lately in the Martin Chambers Ecuador Trust charity. We all hope that the birth of the Christ child will bring you and your family much hope and deep love.

As you will be aware from the news bulletins, Ecuador has been gripped in recent years by a very dangerous drugs war. For many years the country was a peaceful haven between Colombia and

Peru but now Ecuador has been dragged into the drugs trade with the city of Guayaquil becoming a major trading port. And the fear and intimidation that goes along with the drugs war has spilled into the communities and streets that we know only too well through this Ecuador Trust. Communities like Nueva Prosperina have become centres of violence and fear.

However, in recent days a new President, Daniel Noboa, has been sworn in with promises of hope and peace. Let us pray that this Christmas will bring our friends in Ecuador the peace, hope and joy that they long for.

Marcelo's World

In the near future the Trust will be sending out an educational package to Primary schools around Scotland designed to highlight the work of the Trust and to promote wider community awareness of life in Ecuador.

The programme was designed by former teachers, Joe and Anne Sikora, and takes its name from Marcelo, a P6 student at Sagrada Familia de Nazareth school. The materials provide teachers of P6/7 classes with a complete programme of learning covering certain key areas of the curriculum including language, social subjects, Spanish language, art and religious education.

As Joe explains: *"We designed the programme to give students the opportunity to learn about Ecuador and to explore what life is like for a young person, like them, who live in poverty in the shanty town of Nueva Prosperina. Through the programme pupils can explore the similarities and differences between Ecuador and Scotland and learn more about Marcelo and his family."*

Through 'Marcelo's World', the pupils will be able to see the type of ramshackle housing that many students who attend Sagrada Familia live in. They can also hear just overcrowded that housing can be, as Marcelo - in a video - lists off the huge number of extended family members who share the same home.

It is also an excellent opportunity for Primary students taking part in the Pope Francis Faith Award to act on their learning in a creative and charitable way. We thank Anne and Joe for all their hard work - it will certainly lead our pupils to understand the lives of families in a poorer part of the world.





Retiral of Head Teacher: Adela Villacres

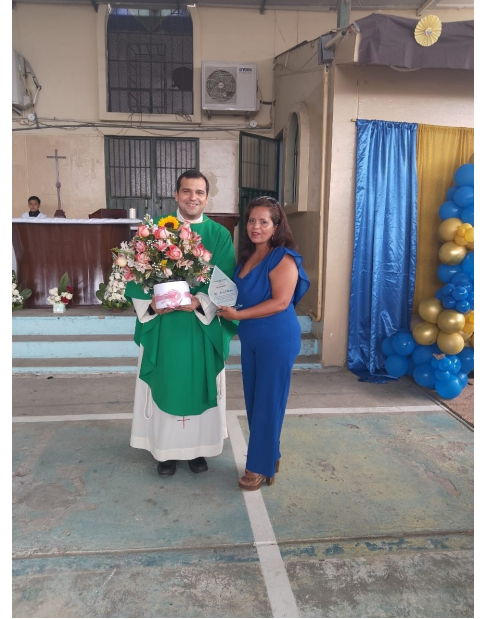
Adela Villacres was the Headteacher of Sagrada Familia School when Fr. Con Keily inaugurated the school in 2003. Earlier this year, after 20 years leading the school, Adela called it a day and retired from her position as Headteacher. Of course, since the start of the school, there have been massive changes: the school building has grown from nine wooden huts to over 30 brick built classrooms; the school has developed from simply a Primary School to now being a school that provides both Primary and Secondary education; and the school has been established as a central part of the Nueva Prosperina community that brings joy and hope to many families.

In a recent letter Adela reflected:

"I am so grateful to God for all the blessings I received while Headteacher at Sagrada Familia. I came here wanting to give of my best to the pupils and staff. It is indeed true that I gave, yes, but, in fact, I received much more. Through the stories, challenges and projects that together we shared as staff and pupils, we all grew in love and hope. I am grateful for everything we shared."

I also want to say thanks to the many benefactors, especially our friends in Scotland, for the enthusiasm they showed for the work we do in."

We, in turn, thank God for Adela's work over many years for the school. And we pray that Adela enjoys her years ahead. As you can see from the photo, recently a Farewell Gift was sent from Scotland to say thanks for her many years of service.



Sagrada Familia School

Now that Adela Villacres has retired, Sagrada Familia School has a new Headteacher, Gissela Aguirre. And, although there is 'change at the top', the central work of the school continues: in the midst of the poverty and violence that surround the community in Nueva Prosperina, the school becomes an oasis where the children are cared for by the 19 teachers and are given an education in a safe and happy environment. At the moment there are 267 students ranging from Primary 1 to 6th Year of Secondary.

Gissela, the Headteacher has plans for the new year ahead:

"We would like to create two new classrooms - one so that pupils can be given pastoral support; and another classroom which will be our Nursery. We hope to buy different pieces of equipment for the school: new computers as the ones we had have now broken down; new musical equipment; and also expand the school library."

We are incredibly thankful to the Ecuador Trust for building our school in the first place and also for supporting the school in the 20 years since it was established. Muchas gracias, amigos y amigas!"



Dr. Luis Arzube School

In an area not far from Nueva Prosperina is another school the Trust supports, Dr Luis Arzube school which is a Primary School with 370 pupils. The school is run by Sister Mayra and a congregation of religious Sisters. The area around the school is also an area of high poverty with a lack of medical care and great unemployment amongst the parents of the school pupils.

As well as offering an excellent education, the school runs a Soup Kitchen supported by the Ecuador Trust. As Martin Chambers explains: *"Last year when I visited Dr. Luis Arzube*

I saw an oasis of joy in the midst of great deprivation. The pupils sang and danced to welcome me to their school."

Sr Mayra, who runs the school, wrote recently to say thanks to the Ecuador Trust for all the donations they have sent in the past year. It has helped the school to run a Soup Kitchen several times a week which provides soup, filled rolls and sometimes a plate of rice with fish or meat.

Remote Communities in Portoviejo

Seven years ago, on the 16th April 2016, there was a massive earthquake in Ecuador registering 7.6 on the Richter scale. Its epicentre was around the remote communities in the north of the country around the major city of Portoviejo.

Most of us will have heard of earthquakes in different countries and cities around the world but what is amazing in such an impoverished country as Ecuador is that, seven years after the earthquake, the remote communities are still left without electricity, sanitation and food as the people struggle to find a decent life.

There is where the Archdiocese of Portoviejo has been reaching out with great charity, going to the remote communities, providing them with the necessary food and helping the children find a way into education.

The Ecuador Trust has over recent years been working with the Archdiocese to provide clothes, shelter and a path into education for the remote communities. One of the outstanding figures for us in the Ecuador Trust is Gustavo, who runs the charity-outreach department of the Archdiocese. He travels around for hours at a time to reach the most remote communities and provide families with the basic essentials of life. We are always happy to work with Gustavo who has quickly become an Ecuador Trust Hero!



Soup Kitchens in Guayaquil

Father Luis Palacios is the present Parish Priest in Nueva Prosperina. As well as running a very busy Parish, his Church reaches out in practical ways to the local community.

One of the projects that Fr. Luis runs is the "Father Henry Parish Dining Room" where they feed dozens of children every day in the Church halls. The children's ages range between 5 and 12 years. The most important thing they do each day is provide the children with a healthy lunch. Afterwards there is a youth club where the children play many games and are then given a short talk based on the values of the Gospel. It is hoped that the children will learn through this outreach that love and joy can be powerful tools every day of their lives.

Ecuador Trust 200 Club

Last year we set up the Ecuador Trust 200 Club to help raise funds for our friends in Ecuador. To date we have 170 members and the Club is drawing in more members with each passing month. This, in turn, is bringing in much needed funds to help the poorest and neediest families 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...

Please visit the Ecuador Trust website for regular updates: www.ecuadortrust.org.uk

Email and Website: Mhartino2004@yahoo.co.uk
<http://www.facebook.com/EcuadorTrust2/>

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Newsletter:

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

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It was with tremendous sadness that we learned recently of the passing of Fr. Tom Oates, a great friend of the Ecuador Trust.

When Martin Chambers arrived in Ecuador for the first time in 2004, he was met at the airport by Father Tom Oates, a priest of Boston Archdiocese. He took Martin in for those first months and then became a firm friend.

Martin takes up the story: *"Tom was a great friend from day one. He was always there to support me and calm my fears from the early days. He was the age of my parents and had great wisdom to impart. However, I was always struck (perhaps by his American accent) that he had the build of a film star like John Wayne. One day in particular, my truck got stuck in the mud during the rainy season. I tried to get pulled out by many different people. First a local bus attached a chain to my truck and tried to get me out. No use! Then the local police van tried - still no use! So I then called Fr. Tom who came along quickly and, in a swash-buckling film star way told everyone to stand well back and, with mud flying everywhere, got me out at his first attempt!*

As I say, he was always there to help and support. May he now receive the reward of his labours in Heaven and rest in peace."



Donations:

Donations can be made in 3 ways:

- By cheque to the 'Martin Chambers Ecuador Trust' at Our Lady & St Meddan's Church, 4 Cessnock Road, TROON. KA10 6NJ.
- By donating directly through the bank account - Martin Chambers Ecuador Trust with Sort Code: 83 23 13 and account number: 00648543
- You can also donate online at: www.justgiving.com/mcet

To all donors, Muchas Gracias!

Charity Website:

A new website has been set up for the charity www.ecuadortrust.org.uk. 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.

Your Privacy

In order to send you information we hold your name and address on our mailing list.

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.