



friends

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PROCLAIMING TO THE POOR THE WAY OF CHRIST

Dear friends,

A few months ago a Columban sister from Korea made a Mission Appeal visit to our St. Stephen's Church in Boston's North End. She spoke beautifully about how missionaries had shared the Catholic faith with her, which led to her conversion. She in turn herself is now a missionary in Peru. I remain in contact with a young man from San Francisco, Moquegua, Peru, who is now studying in Lima to be a missionary. Many vocations to the priesthood and religious life were born out of the efforts of St. James missionaries over the last 53 years. Of course, the generous support of our "friends" makes these efforts possible.

A few weeks ago the Catholic Church celebrated World Mission Sunday. On that same day in Boston the Society



Fr. Colin and youth from the parish.



"A worker is worth more than all the gold in the world."
A catechetical group in Fr. Colin's parish of San José Obrero.

presented the Cardinal Cushing Award to three individuals who exemplify a spirit of educating the world in the way of Christ. Providentially enough the scripture for that day's mass articulated the spirit of mission. The reading from Exodus spoke about a code of social conduct based on compassion. In the reading from St. Paul, he congratulated the Thessalonians for the way in which their faith is a model that has reached out to the entire region with the Good News of Jesus Christ. In the reading from Matthew's Gospel, we find Jesus teaching how it is impossible to separate a love of God from love of neighbor. This teaching is the firm base upon which the mission ministry of the Church is built.



Fr. Colin speaks at a Penitential Service during a retreat.

Thanks to your generosity, Fr. Colin MacInnes, the Country Coordinator of the Ecuador Region requested and received \$10,000 towards the cost of constructing a parish office and a six room catechetical center at the Parroquia San Timoteo (St. Timothy Parish) in Anconcito, Ecuador. This month the newsletter highlights his work over the years. His words are enlightening.

"The Statutes of the Society of St. James, of which I am a member, reads: "a commitment to a ministry of evangelization where works of social action and human development are seen as an authentic expression of evangelical charity". I had some responsibility for including these lines in our statutes and through the years I have found that social action has been a very effective part of my priestly ministry.



The Christian community - A home for sixty families.



The kindergartens in San José Parish provide mind-stimulating activities for the children, while allowing the mothers to go out to work without leaving their children at home.

In 1985 I went to a town formed by the Leninist Marxist Communist Party of Ecuador that was trying to build a town community that rejected the power of central and local government and, it goes without saying, of the Catholic Church or any other religious body. The town was on the border of Quito but neither government or city officials nor police were allowed into the town. I gained entrance as it was thought that as a lone foreigner I could do no harm nor good.

The people lived in total subjection to the dictates of the directors of the town. Dire poverty had led them to raise the Marxist banner and fear kept them marching under it.

That whole situation has since changed. As a parish we could no longer tolerate the fear and exploitation perpetrated by the Marxist regime who controlled the town and, with the generous support of the people in Scotland and other parts of the world, we started a program of social action: training courses for women, a small dispensary and medical center, a shoe making business and a social center for elderly people. The most ambitious scheme of all was a water scheme which gave potable water to all of the sixty thousand people living in the town. It was through the completion of the water project that the oppressive shackles of the communists were broken. Life in the town was completely transformed. Fear was seen as less important than the quest for freedom; the population came to believe in themselves and the Marxist overlords were overthrown.



A youth group from the parish visits the home of someone too ill to go to church.



The parish youth group takes part in various activities including cleaning and tidying up around the church.



The health clinic in San José Obrero Parish.

The attitude to the Church and parish was the other significant change that came about. Faith was seen as a unifying and liberating force; Mass attendance rose, there was a spirit of joy and confidence in parish liturgies. Soon another church had to be built and two more parishes were formed in the town.

A clearer example of how social action led to mass evangelization would be difficult to find. The very Bible demonstrates that the more people are oppressed the more clearly they see God as a liberating force in the world and in their lives. Latin America provides many examples of this.

I continue to believe that our calls to solidarity and care of the poor are an essential aspect of the Gospel message and I am proud to belong to a country and to a Church and diocese which respond to that need. The charitable works of mercy, dispersed throughout the poorer areas of Latin America and other parts of the world, are eloquent testimony to this. I will mention two or three which I have been able to do because of the generosity of others.

Some families are just incapable of removing themselves from the poverty trap. Living on the Andes at a height of 10,000 meters, their pitiable shacks could not protect them from the cold and disease. I presented a project to sixty families which implied the construction of a building big enough to accommodate sixty families. They were all enthusiastic until they learned that they themselves had to construct the building. After a year's planning and training they were ready to start building. At the end of three years they were able to lay claim to their own home built by their own hands.

To construct a potable water scheme for a population of over sixty thousand was no mean feat especially as the town had been built on the side of a mountain and the variation of water pressure in the pipes had to be adjusted to accommodate the different heights of the terrain. The population had to make their contribution in work and in money. As so little money was in circulation I started a Credit Union which developed into a small bank with different branches throughout the country. At one time it was one of the leading Credit Unions in the country. We see a photograph of the main offices of the Credit Union, built from the profits of the bank.



At times you think that life is so very unfair. Why should some be condemned to live in shanty towns where hunger,

disease, violence and so many other human afflictions have to be combated daily? It is not sufficient to condemn injustice and inhuman living conditions. We have always tried to make some gestures to improve situations and with your help we have been able to build a hospital, a clinic and various medical centers. The poor in Ecuador are eternally indebted to you.

We have just celebrated our parish patron, San Miguel. Central to the celebrations is the Novena to St. Michael which we compose for the occasion in an attempt to make prayer reflect the necessities and aspirations of our situation. We also had special masses, conferences by different personalities, sporting competitions, films, street dances and of course a procession. They just love processions and line the streets to pay homage to our patron. Two memories stick in my mind: strong, rough and burly fishermen carrying the statue of St. Michael with such devotion through the streets; secondly seeing the children lining the streets and looking with awe at San Miguel as he passed by. We have to include a picture of the children."

Once again it is important to note the important role of our "friends" in the work done by the Society. For nearly three years of writing this newsletter, I have never considered it to be a "fundraising letter." Instead I view it as one more opportunity to say thank you for all that you make possible. Please keep us in your prayers as well. Happy Thanksgiving.

Yours in Christ,



Rev. Kevin Hays
Director



The children at the procession of San Miguel.



This house needs to be demolished in order to build the San Timoteo parish office and catechetical center. The catechetical groups will continue to meet in the church until the center is ready.