



# FRIENDS

The Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle

March 2024



## Giving Thanks & Embracing the Future

*Dear Friends,*

An urban parish's twentieth anniversary celebration presented a wonderful opportunity to revisit the story of a church's place in the community amid smiles, laughter and thanksgiving. Like all of our mission parishes across the sixty-six year history of the St. James Society, Our Lady of Peace (Nuestra Señora de La Paz) began as an idea, which then germinated into a hope, then a mission and finally the reality of a parish, a living community of faith at the heart of Villa El Salvador, a bustling town of almost four hundred thousand people which runs along the desert coastal plain of Peru.

*Diocesan priests serving the poorest of the poor in Latin America since 1958.*



*The Passionist Sisters*



*Top: Centro Médico Parroquial today.  
Right: Fr. Gene Kirke, Centro Médico Parroquial, in the early days.*

On a warm summer's night in January, around seven hundred people gathered to celebrate that twenty-year journey. They came together and not just from the surrounding area. We also had the opportunity to welcome alumni of the Society. Among those present were priests, religious, and laity associated with the St James mission, from Canada, U.S.A., England and Ireland. It was in a spirit of gratitude to God that we united to celebrate an evening mass and then begin a night of hospitality and entertainment, with music and traditional dances, a children's show and, of course, the small matter of serving up hundreds of plates of food to an eagerly awaiting crowd. On such a night it was natural to recall names and faces of the many who have helped in so many different ways to build up the spirit of a parish family. The occasion provided an opportune moment to express our gratitude to all the Passionist Sisters who, with great love and commitment, accompanied so many families as the parish grew over the years. They have now completed their mission and returned to Ireland. Unfortunately, because of his frailty, a near 90-year-old Fr. Gene Kirke was unable to attend the event, but his vision was recalled, his steely determination to set our sights on assisting the poorest of the poor in the area. It was his idea to begin a parish medical centre to cater for pressing needs, such as treatment for malnutrition and tuberculosis. The centre, *Centro Médico Parroquia San Martín De Porres*, has continued to develop over the years, offering more services, especially to young women. The centre operates under the patronage and inspiration of St. Martin of Porres, the Latin American saint known for his ardent charity and humility.



Our celebration was also a night to give a special thanks for the administrative support and unfailing interest for what is happening on the ground here in our parishes from our mission headquarters in Boston; and for the thoughtfulness and generosity of yourselves, our many benefactors. The recollections over twenty years entailed the acknowledgement of, and prayer for, all those who have run their race, spent their energies here alongside us and have been called onwards to eternal youth and joy in the heights. Like any parish, there have been decisive transitions in our development: the introduction of catechetical formation for families was prioritised before construction work began on any of our three chapels: Our Lady of Peace, the mother church; St. Rose of Lima; and St. Ignatius of Loyola. In 2005 we began an orphanage which is run by the Cenacolo Community of religious sisters and lay volunteers. They have their hands full with fifteen children under the age of three, but no abandoned baby is ever turned away. Visiting the sick has always been the highest of priorities and we are trying to be ever more a church that reaches out, whether it be through our nightly processions or our rosary ministry in the markets. We like to think that our liturgical practices have improved over time, and anyone involved in parish life knows how important are the sacristans, readers, choir members, altar servers, and ministers of communion. Of course, an anniversary is not just a night to dwell on the past but to set our sights on the future development of the parish; the many challenges and opportunities that will present themselves in a hopefully exciting future. A parish needs all the talents of the flock to unite if it is to reach its full potential and there is much work to be done in evangelising those who have not yet discovered the riches of the gospel.



*The Cenacolo Orphanage*





Parish life is always a mix of shared joy and shared tears but always with a horizon of light and hope. During the mass, Fr. David Costello, our Superior General, blessed the doorway into the church. This blessing symbolised our petition to the Lord to bless anew the entrances to all our chapels, our orphanage and medical centre that galvanise our parish ministry, and through which we are united and safeguarded in the extravagant love of God. I leave you with the words Fr. David spoke to bless this parish as we set our sights on living out the synodal vision of Pope Francis - working to be closer in fraternity and unity of purpose and mission; zealous to fish for more souls and to build on the labours of the past.

*“Bless us Father in our coming and going as we recall the words of Jesus, all that the Father gives me shall come to me; and those that come to me I will never turn away. Therefore, let all of us and all those who pass through this gateway and all the doors of welcome in the parish find a warm home...a family...a community that truly celebrates the Kingdom of God around us and within us. May our worship and praise lead us to a clarity of vision: the fidelity of the Virgin Mary, the wisdom of St. Ignatius, the devotion of St. Rose and the charity of St. Martin. Lord, may we work, as the gospel beckons us, to spread your fame far and wide. Amen.”*

Our Lady of Peace, pray for us! ~ Fr. Simon Cadwallader

*With Every Good Wish in Christ,*

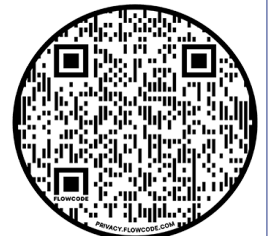
*Rev. David Costello, Director*



**GIVING MADE EASY**

Please scan QR code to donate or visit

[www.socstjames.com](http://www.socstjames.com)



**For the purpose of wills, bequests, and living trusts, our official name is:**

**The Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle, Inc.**

**24 Clark Street • Boston, MA 02109 • (617) 742-4715 • e: [office@socstjames.com](mailto:office@socstjames.com) • [socstjames.com](http://socstjames.com)**