



FRIENDS

THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST JAMES THE APOSTLE

June 2022



Education Changes Lives...

Dear Friends,

Fr. Joe McCarthy recently retired after spending over fifty years on mission, with the St. James Society, in Peru. He continues to maintain contact with many friends in the various parishes where he has worked over the years, and he remains connected with the scholarship fund which he began over fifty years ago. I asked him to share his scholarship story with us in this issue of Friends:

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



I was recruited in seminary in Ireland for the St. James Society, and I was ordained for the Archdiocese of Boston in 1966. Immediately after ordination I worked in Boston for one year, and then for over 50 years with the St James Society in Peru. These were extraordinary, exciting and fulfilling years. Through the people in Villa Maria, Chimbote, I got to know and love Peru and its people, especially the people in the barrios. They are a warm, generous people who made us so welcome. They may have been poor in economic terms but they were rich in faith and in the important matters of life. They still have a special place in my

heart. In Chimbote we had some 30,000 parishioners, mostly from the High Andes, looking for work in the fishing industry. They came to the coast full of hope and dreams. We had a very eclectic mix of very different cultures from all over Peru. They all blended in easily, enriching community life, as only Peruvians can. They were a believing, faith filled people, who might only see a priest once every year or so. Our main task as missionaries was to inform their faith, providing them with formation courses and introducing them to the Bible. They were “hungry for God” as Pope St. John Paul II said. They were eager to learn and quick to help in the community. We were blessed to have excellent teachers, theologians, sociologists, economists who provided the formation courses for leaders on weekends during the school year, and longer courses during summer vacation. These courses provided a value system, and taught people the value of critical thinking. The methodology used was based on Paulo Freire’s ‘Critical Pedagogy of Liberation’ and the methodology of “SEE, JUDGE, ACT,” developed by Belgian Cardinal Joseph Cardijn. The tradition of Catholic Social teaching encourages a process of: SEE - Look at the social justice issues as they affect society; JUDGE - Understand what is happening and why it is happening; ACT - Discern the actions needed to respond.





Poverty was a factor and the majority of the people in the barrio (neighborhood) were all very young, and poor. They came to the coast looking for a new life. They lived in straw shacks. The barrio looked like a huge building site. However, as they found employment and started earning, life changed. They organized and got schools, electricity, running water, paved roads, health services etc. A casual visitor to the barrio could be pardoned if, after a quick glance, they would rate it as a disaster area and hopeless. What they would have missed, however, was the quality of the people and their fantastic spirit. These people were resilient, determined battlers. It was easy to love them. As we accompanied the pastoral areas, we were highly impressed by the creativity and the many talents of the youth. Some were really brilliant; they would go far if they got half a chance. But the poverty meant that it was never going to be easy to realize their dreams, especially if they were girls, no matter how talented. Girls were not given the same educational opportunities as boys. Parents sacrificed to send boys to university but not the girls, since they would marry soon after high school. These young leaders gave freely of their time, in the different pastoral areas, meeting at least twice each week. A great friend from Maria Goretti Parish, Lynnfield, MA., sent me a gift of 1,000 dollars for my first Christmas in Peru (1967). This was a small fortune at that time. We decided to give back to the young people who were so generous with their time helping others. So, we set up a scholarship fund mainly for girls, offering them an opportunity to pursue third level studies.



The first girl to receive a scholarship studied accountancy. It meant leaving home and going to live in the city of Trujillo, with relatives. Her father provided water to the barrio, from a tanker truck. He had three other daughters, and two sons. All were brilliant. All went to college via the scholarship program. One boy became a medical doctor, but sadly he died suddenly in his mid-thirties. The other is an engineer. Two girls are nurses, and another is principal of a high school in Chimbote. They have all provided a college education for their own children.

Happy Pentecost!

"...I shall ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you forever, the Spirit of Truth..."
John 14:16

Over 300 young people received scholarships, the majority were girls and only ten were boys. Two did not graduate. All were leaders in the programs in the parishes in which I worked - Cristo Rey, Chimbote, San Martin, Villa El Salvador, and Jesus Artesano in Chorrillos. The program developed and grew, even though it was only an offshoot of our pastoral work.

We are amazed as we look back and realize that we spent almost 500,000 dollars funding these scholarships, over fifty years. My friend from Lynnfield sent 1,000 dollars each year!! He was joined by many more friends who supported our efforts over the last fifty years. Education changes people's lives and provides opportunities. I recently visited Peru just after Christmas, as the pandemic waned, and met some of the people who had received scholarships. They are now parents in their forties and fifties. They shared their experiences, dreams and life stories. Their lives have changed radically. Many are now leaders in their communities. They became role-models in their neighborhoods. People look up to them as professionals. Young girls in the barrios are now able to say to their parents: "Si Podemos". Yes, we can also become teachers, nurses, doctors, IT programmers, psychologists and any other career. We listen with joy and pride as they shared what they do, and how well they do it. A small break enabled them to take a giant step on the road of life. Peru and their particular neighborhoods also benefited. The priests of the St. James Society, the families in our parishes and especially those young students, will always be grateful for the help they received from our Friends & Benefactors. It transformed their lives and also those of the next generation. They will always hold you in their hearts and in their prayers.

Sincere thanks to Fr. Joe for sharing his experience of over fifty years investing in education for the young people in each of his parishes. In my own experience of being involved with similar scholarship programs the gift of education is perhaps the greatest investment we can make in terms of helping people chart a way out of poverty and look to a brighter future. We are eternally grateful to all of you who continue to make these vital projects possible.

*With Every Good Wish in Christ,
Rev. David Costello, Superior General*

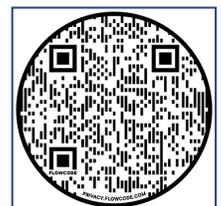


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