



FRIENDS

THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST JAMES THE APOSTLE

APRIL 2022



Strange Blessings...

Dear Friends,

It is a great pleasure to welcome back Fr. Simon Cadwallader from the Archdiocese of Liverpool, U.K. Fr. Simon is an experienced missionary who served with the Society of St. James between 2003 - 2016, in Villa El Salvador at Parroquia Nuestra Senora de La Paz (Our Lady of Peace Parish), in the Diocese of Lurín. Fr. Simon returned to mission work with the Society of St. James in September, to his former parish of Villa El Salvador, having spent the previous 5 years in the Parish of St. Peter and Paul's, Crosby, Liverpool. Fr. Simon now shares his recent experiences after returning to Villa El Salvador:

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



I admire Edwin Muir's poem, "One foot in Eden." While appreciating the beauty of our original blessings at the start of creation, he asks the question, "what had Eden ever to say of hope and faith and pity and love?" Muir finishes his poem extolling the virtues of life below heaven's window sill: "*strange blessings never in Paradise fall from these beclouded skies.*"

As I muse on the often cloudy covering over the Peruvian shanty town of Villa El Salvador, I see how Muir's sentiments echo the reality of this urban dwelling on the outskirts of Lima, a place in which I have often found, amidst adversity: hope, faith, compassion and love. Even with the full

force of the Covid pandemic disrupting so many family lives, it's hard not to perceive the "*strange blessings*" that surface unexpectedly here and reveal God's presence and providence. Villa El Salvador reports the highest rate of deaths of any Peruvian town so when I returned there, after five years in England, I had some concerns about the virus. As I write this, I have succumbed to the virus myself, and am learning that it is just part of life now....how to live with Covid and adjust to the ways it affects people's lives on a social, spiritual and economic level. Wearing a double mask everywhere you go - a government mandate in Peru - is something I cannot admit to enjoying but to which I have slowly grown accustomed (although I find myself backtracking towards the presbytery every so often because I have forgotten my protective friend).



In a country in which everyone readily hugs each other, it is not easy for Peruvians to remain socially constrained and not give way to their natural warm manner of greeting each other. And still, little children run up to you, offering the warmest of welcomes, blissfully oblivious to the protocols we now live by. Currently, queues form outside our parish medical centre as early as 5 o'clock in the morning because of the impact of the third Covid wave. People are fearful, not just for themselves, but of the thought of passing on the sickness to their own family members.





I was surprised to find how organised the country has been in rolling out their vaccination program and how many have now received their third jab. Of course, we have all learned that vaccinations do not prevent infection but the signs are, as in other countries, that they reduce the level of danger to one's health.

What's new in the parish since I was last here? Well, I now have a pavement outside my house and the road building project which began a decade ago by the incumbent mayors of

Villa El Salvador, has proceeded at pace. However, the improved image of the town does not hide the lack of infrastructure which means that employment opportunities are still scarce with 75 per cent of the working population without constant labour. This problem has been exacerbated by the pandemic. That means that businesses offering loans are booming and the ensuing pressures of repayment on time are clearly in evidence. Nevertheless, our people are amazingly resilient and adaptive to new circumstances and they support each other and help out when things become trying and there does not appear to be enough food or provisions to go around. Soup kitchens are working full tilt and even our parish program for the elderly has been functioning as a distribution point for meals for the most vulnerable section of society. A recent earthquake of more than 5 on the Richter scale was a rude reminder, at 4.30 in the morning, that we are always in God's hands and that we must put our faith in the one who has always delivered his people from what has blighted them. Once a month we have a special time of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament with the Community "Cenacolo" who are in charge of the orphanage in our parish of Our Lady of Peace. At the close of our prayer, we take the Eucharistic Jesus beyond the doors of the chapel to look out on the densely populated town around us and to ask His blessing on the poor, the sick and all in need of the divine hand.





Happy Easter!

*"I am the Resurrection and the life;
He who believes in me will live, even if
he dies"*

John 11:25



The era of Covid has not prevented us from being out on the road as a Church. While obeying the social protocols in place, we have managed to proceed with our various street processions to mark assorted feast days of the year. As we enter into this time of "sinodality" (the watchword of the moment in Church circles) we are all striving to find ways in which we can walk better together, unite and see in the faces of the most downhearted and distressed our areas of mission. As the saying goes, "where love and charity are, there is God."

The summer months are coming to a close and as we prepare for Mary's month of May, we are asking Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, to direct her gaze at us in all of our many and varied necessities. I live among a people who do not have the luxury of long term planning. They teach us all to live for today, to enjoy the present moment, and to see that God is always at His very best right now.

We thank all of our benefactors for their generosity in imagining themselves in the shoes of the less fortunate and freely giving for the welfare of their Peruvian brothers and sisters. God's blessings from the "Town of the Saviour", Villa El Salvador!

Prayer for the Ukraine

*Loving God,
We pray for the people of Ukraine,
for all those suffering or afraid,
that you will be close to them and protect
them.*

*We pray for world leaders,
for compassion, strength and wisdom to
guide their choices.*

*We pray for the world
that in this moment of crisis,
we may reach out in solidarity
to our brothers and sisters in need.*

*May we walk in your ways
so that peace and justice
become a reality for the people of Ukraine
and for all the world.*

Amen.

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

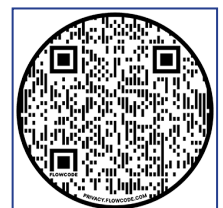


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