



FRIENDS

THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST JAMES THE APOSTLE

July 2021



Yesterday and today in Monte Sinaí

Dear Friends,

Recently Fr. John Molloy called me to share an update on his former parish in Guayaquil, Ecuador. We handed over his parish to the Archdiocese of Guayaquil in 2014, but we have maintained close contact with the Sisters of St. Philip Neri from Columbia, who staff the parish school.

The following is the text of the update from Sr. Lucely:

Fourteen years ago, the Missionary Society of Saint James the Apostle arrived in Monte Sinaí, Guayaquil, Ecuador, and while working here, they forged a huge indelible mark on our hearts as they established the San Felipe Neri School (for 1,500 pupils), the Parish Church, (“El Bautismo de Jesús,”) the Rectory, the Parish office and Parish Center, as well as the Santa Teresa de Ávila Chapel.

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

The great evangelizing work of Frs. Colm Hogan and John Molloy, who with their love and dedication to this community, led the spiritual development of the people while they also catered to the physical and intellectual development of the children and youth, supported by the adults.

Funding for the San Felipe Neri School was provided by the St. James Society and the construction was completed by parents of the children. These parents lived in very difficult circumstances, and resided in straw shacks. They usually worked from dawn to dusk, often leaving their children at home alone. Many of the families were indigenous farmers from the Altiplano, while others were Mestizos. Even more of the population were of African descent from the nearby coastal areas.

The buildings were built and equipped for recreation and sporting events. They are large enough to accommodate many young people who participate in these events, on the weekends. The classrooms are also used for family catechesis, preparation for sacraments and Christian Formation. During the week the classrooms are often used in the evenings, after school, for training workshops for teachers and also for programs for women.

The support of the Religious Sisters from Colombia has been vital, since they continue to administer the school while also caring for the families in the surrounding areas.

Until 2019, the School boasted over three hundred students enrolled from kindergarten to seventh grade. Then, in 2020 after COVID devastated the country, classes were conducted virtually. Many children could not continue their studies, since they did not have a device or computer to connect to virtual classes.

Many parents were simultaneously laid off work, while others were forced to take a cut in salary. Many children opted not to continue in the school or had no other choice but to enroll in a State school. With



Fr. Hogan baptizing at El Bautismo de Jesus



Fr. Molloy overseeing a building project



the suspension of all gatherings as part of the anti-COVID Campaign, all Church activities including catechesis, masses and all meetings, were suspended. Presently, there are one hundred and eighty children enrolled in the school, who are all learning virtually, from home. Many people have died from COVID in Monte Sinai. Most families have had at least one member become ill with the virus. People who lost loved ones are traumatized. Funerals, which were a daily occurrence pre-covid, are especially distressing at the moment since people cannot have a wake nor a funeral mass, which makes the death much more difficult to accept. In the early



Students at the San Felipe Neri School

days of the Pandemic, people were so scared that they took the sick person to the local hospital and left them there, just inside the front door, to die. The virus is still raging and when it ends, life will be very different and very difficult for the people who live here.

The situation is further complicated by changes brought about by Climate Change. This is very evident in the severe and frequent flooding of the school, which occurred often during the winter season. This has damaged the infrastructure and property, not only of the parish, but also of the school. Maintenance and repair work are almost impossible to complete, due to very high unemployment rate and unjust

salaries for workers. School fees have also been frozen by the Government.

The teachers have been very generous, teaching virtual classes from home, without pay, hoping they may eventually get paid when the emergency ends.

The current situation makes for very sad reading especially when we remember the great love with which Fr. Colm and Fr. John got the project up and running and did their best to support the children of this sector. The Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle came to work in the "Parish of the Baptism of Jesus" full of great faith and boundless enthusiasm. They left immense lasting footprints.

May God repay them for their Great missionary zeal and for their international solidarity. From the beginning they generated Basic Ecclesial Communities (CEBs) in the various neighborhoods and also established Cooperatives so that people could live their Faith, improve their community, and work together in the social context of their daily lives. Even though these people live in very difficult conditions, in which poverty and injustice make life very challenging, they face the future with a tremendous, deep, solid faith in the God of Life, which



Current photo of San Felipe Neri School

is enriched by their great human qualities of solidarity, hospitality and love.

We all hope that in 2022, the situation will improve, and the pandemic will be just a bad memory of the past, so that all members of the community can continue the great project which got its initial incentive from two great Missionaries of the St. James Society aided by the mighty contribution and hard work of the local community.

We ask for God's blessing on all who have selflessly supported this project from the very beginning, and which became a reality here in our sector.

We also thank the local priests, who have taken on the task of replacing the original missionaries,

continuing to provide leadership and loving care for the parish community.

From a distance, we send our love and gratitude to all members of the Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle.

(Sincere thanks to Fr. Joe McCarthy for translating the text from Spanish to English)





July 25th, Feast Day of St. James the Apostle

St. James Prayer

James, man of prayer,
pray that we may listen and respond to God's call in our lives.

James, holy apostle,
pray that we may be disciples of Jesus in word and action.

James, devoted friend of Jesus,
pray that we may be strong in our devotion to one another

James, the fisherman, patron of laborers,
pray for us in our labors and help those seeking employment

James, witness of the transfiguration of Jesus,
pray that we may see the glory of God revealed in our lives

James, compassionate teacher,
pray that we may serve one another in love.

James, faithful to God's call,
pray for us in our efforts to live our Catholic faith.

James, comfort of the troubled,
pray for those who are suffering.

James, holy martyr,
pray that we may be prepared to accept our own death

Blessed James, may your inner spirit of peace, good work, discipleship and prayer always be an inspiration to us.

Holy Apostle, walk with us on our journey of faith. May your prayers obtain for us the wisdom to discern God's call and the strength to endure, so that we may grow in holiness and rejoice in communion with all the saints.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

With Every Good Wish in Christ,

Rev. David Costello, Director



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

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