



**The Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle**  
*Diocesan priests serving the poorest of the poor since 1958.*

**September  
2025**

***F  
R  
I  
E  
N  
D  
S***



***"A Calling Within a Calling..."***

***Dear Friends,***

Fr. Matt Anscombe, of the Diocese of Clifton, UK, has been accepted as a member of the St. James Society. As he prepares to leave his diocese and make his way to Peru, he reflects with us on his experience thus far:





*"I remind you to fan into a flame the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands".*

Those are the words that I read at the beginning of a retreat late last year. "2 Timothy 1:6" had popped into my mind as we were encouraged to be open to the promptings and gifts of the Holy Spirit. So, I opened my bible, with a little apprehension, and those were the inspiring and encouraging words that stared back at me and spoke to my heart. I started to sense something new and fresh was coming my way. Something that might accord with the heart of my vocation. What might that be?

I had wondered for twenty-five years, since first meeting Jesus and hearing the call to follow Him, about the possibility of mission work in Latin America. Ten years ago, a priest from another diocese had talked to me about his own mission experience in Peru, and I had said that I'd often wondered whether I was called to something similar too. He mentioned the Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle as being the main way these days for English-speaking diocesan priests to explore such a 'calling within a calling'. "They're an outfit based out of the Archdiocese of Boston", he explained, which seemed a far cry from my own diocese, let alone South America itself. Anyway, back then, as a bit of a punt, I contacted Fr. David Costello, the Superior General, to find out more about the possibility of mission but, in reality, the timing and discernment didn't feel right and I didn't pursue it. So, the idea of a pure mission experience went firmly on the back burner. For the past ten years I had been so focused on multiple parish work, and other ministries within my diocese, that I had not even thought about mission work in Latin America per se. It was something of a surprise, therefore, when the word "Peru" came to me very clearly shortly before Christmas last year and just after the aforementioned retreat. So, I contacted Fr. David, not realising it was he with whom I had been in touch before, and the reply came back, "Hello again Fr. Matt. Ten years on! Still thinking about mission?" Simple as the reply was, it seemed so personal, so insightful. A dialogue ensued. I went to speak with my bishop about a possible sabbatical and then took some time off to get away. It was in the quiet of that time off in early January that the desire for mission in Peru crystallised. "Be Bold! Ask for five years."





Those were further words which came to me clearly after the feeling of the crystallisation of the call. Yes, I heard the Lord calling me to be courageous. “Ask for five years”, was what I heard Him saying. And so, here I am, writing this between parish and travelling to Peru in a few weeks’ time. The farewells to my former parishes have been said and the diocese has sent me out as a missionary!

To give a bit of a lowdown, I’m a priest of Clifton Diocese in the south-west of England, which includes such cities as Bristol, Bath, Gloucester and Salisbury and many other great towns, villages and lots of beautiful countryside to boot. I’m somewhat of a late vocation, having been ordained now for fifteen years. I met Jesus in power back in 2000, having first acknowledged that the Holy Spirit was somehow guiding me. Mission and proclamation have always been close to my heart. I started out on my journey with the Redemptorists. Mysteriously, I was led to them and, after five years, led away from them and to my home diocese, where I was ordained in 2010. I have always had a strong focus on mission and evangelisation. Charismatic Renewal has played a large part in shaping my priesthood and helping me to understand my spirituality. I have been involved in vocations ministry in the diocese; have led parish missions; have been creative in working with multiple parishes; and have sought always to lead people into deeper discipleship, especially through a focus on the Holy Spirit. So what about Peru? Well, I said to Fr. David, early on in my discernment with the St James Society, “I don’t know what to expect and I don’t have any experience of working with those living in extreme poverty.” His words really assured me. “None of us did, Matt. We simply heard the call and came.”

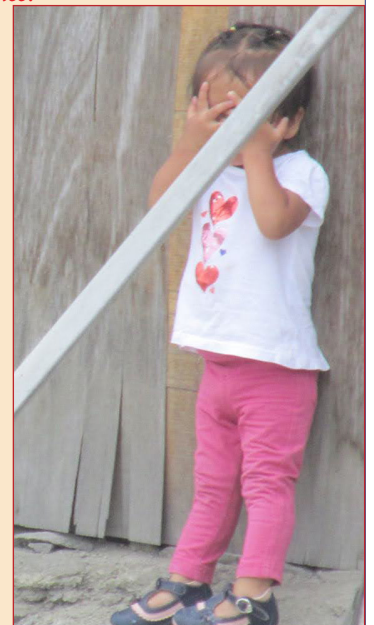
That’s where I am. I’ve heard the call. The doors have opened. I’m on my way. I feel a bit like those two disciples (one of whom is Andrew) in Chapter 1 of John’s Gospel. In response to Jesus’ question, “What are you looking for?”, they ask, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” Jesus replies with an invitation, “Come and see” (John 1:38-39). I sense that this is what Jesus is saying to me. “Come and see where I live, Matt, for I live among the poor.” Is not the Gospel heard first among the poor, the outcast, the oppressed? Does not Jesus say, “Insofar as you did this to the least of my brother and sisters, you did it to me?” (Matthew 25:31-46). I sense a two-way process here.



*Fr. Matt with parishioners on a recent pilgrimage*



*Vicar General Msg. Liam Slattery, Fr. Matt Anscombe at the Mission Sending Mass.*





*Paddington Bear - ready to depart from Peru for England.*



*Fr. Matt - ready to depart from England for Peru!*

The Lord has granted me gifts to use at His service and He also wants to minister to me in a new way. As one former St. James priest exhorted me, “See this as a gift Matt. Go and serve Christ in the poorest of the poor. Reflect something of this pure mission experience back to your own diocese.” What more can I say? Perhaps in a few months’ times, I’ll have something deeper to bring to you. I think a few of the words of my Bishop, Bosco MacDonald, read out at my Farewell and Mission Sending Mass, feel appropriate to share because they really capture my feeling in this time of preparation, mixed with joy, excitement and a certain healthy trepidation: “Our Lord says in the Gospel, ‘Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News’ (Mark 16:15). It is a command but also an invitation, a call to the priest to leave the familiar shores of home and to cast the net again, this time in deeper waters. Fr. Matt has heard that call and, like Abraham, has set out ‘not knowing exactly where he is going,’ but trusting that the Lord goes ahead of him.”

So, as I prepare to “Come and see”, not knowing exactly where I’m going, but surely knowing the Lord has gone ahead of me, please pray for me, my fellow missionaries, all those who support the St. James Society, and all those served by the Society. In turn, I will pray for you.

*~ Fr. Matt Anscombe*

*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)**