



# FRIENDS

THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST JAMES THE APOSTLE

September 2023



## God is Good....

*Dear Friends,*

Fr. Denis Parry is one of our long term missionary priests, having spent the last twenty-six years working on mission with us in Peru, with a brief spell as well in Ecuador. Having reached the canonical age for retirement for priests (75) Fr. Denis writes to us from Peru as he prepares to step down as Pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe parish on the north side of Lima. I have asked Fr. Denis to reflect with us on his twenty-six years of mission ministry in South America:

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



**G**reetings from Peru to the readers of Friends newsletter. Over the years I have contributed various articles, sharing with you my experiences of life on the missions. However, it is with mixed emotions that I write this final article, as, having reached the age of seventy-five in June and spending the past twenty-six years here in South America, the time has come for me to retire from active ministry with the Missionary Society of St James the Apostle.

I would, therefore, like to share this final article with you reflecting upon my journey to the priesthood and life on the missions. I was born in Liverpool, England, in 1948, the youngest son in a family of ten children. As an altar-boy I thought of one day becoming a priest. However, that idea was put on hold during my teenage years and early adult life since I suffered with epilepsy. But God is good, and in His time not mine, He allowed

my childhood dream to become a reality. I was ordained a priest as a late vocation in December 1994 at the age of forty-six. I was assigned as assistant priest to an inner-city parish in Liverpool, where I was to remain for two and a half years. In September 1996 I went on vacation to visit some friends who were on the missions in Peru. It was a visit that would change my life radically. I was captivated by the warmth, faith and joy of the Peruvian people, and knew instantly that it was a place to which I wished to return. Upon returning to Liverpool, I expressed my sentiments to my archbishop, and with his grace and blessing was allowed to return to Peru in June 1997, as a missionary, under the auspices of the Society of St James.



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I spent five months in Cochabamba, Bolivia, adjusting to a new culture and learning the Spanish language, before being assigned as assistant priest to the parish of Cristo Rey, Chimbote, a coastal city in northern Peru. I gained much wisdom from a Boston-born missionary priest, Fr Bill Pearsall, who is now retired and living at Regina Cleri residence in Boston.





*I* quickly adapted and settled into my new surroundings. It was in this parish that I was to spend the next six wonderful years of my life. I discovered how my life as a priest was enriched by the people, who despite the poverty and hardships they endured, demonstrated the values of the gospel by caring and sharing with each other the little they possessed.

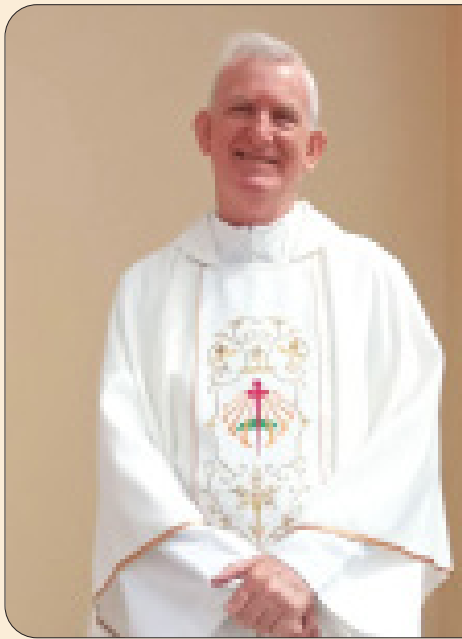
In September 2003, while home on vacation, I went with another priest to visit the shrine of Our Lady of Medjugorje. While there, I noticed that my left eye began to itch persistently. Although I felt no pain, I sensed that something wasn't quite right. Upon returning home I went to a hospital for a check-up, where I received the devastating news that I was suffering with a malignant tumour (melanoma) behind the eye. I underwent an emergency operation which resulted in the loss of vision in my eye. After recovery I returned to my parish in Peru, but in 2004 the bishop of Chimbote, concerned about my health, decided that it would be in the best interests of all for the parish to be handed back to the diocese. The decision broke my heart, but however painful it was I needed to accept this decision. I returned home to Liverpool to fully recover my health. Rejuvenated in health and spirit, I returned to South America in 2005 to begin a new chapter of my life on the missions. I was assigned to the parish of San Juan Diego in the city of Guayaquil, Ecuador. Although I was to remain in the parish for only one year, the people left a deep and lasting impression upon me. Never have I experienced such



deep and profound faith in a parish community as that which I experienced in the parish of San Juan Diego. Unfortunately, I had difficulty in adapting to the intense heat in Ecuador and suffered constantly with intestinal health problems. So, in 2006, I was on the march, returning once more to my beloved Peru.



*T*he final chapter of my life on the missions began in the diocese of Carabayllo, northern Lima, where I was asked to found a new parish from ground zero. The last three articles written by me for Friends since 2016 give a detailed account of how the parish progressed and developed from 2006 to 2021. It was on the 12th December 2021 that the beautiful church of Our Lady of Guadalupe was consecrated. This was an unforgettable day in the short history of our parish! A day that the dream we dared to dream became a reality. What began in 2006 with Mass on a piece of waste land with just a handful of people present, had been transformed by 2021 into a thriving parish community with a beautiful church to call their own.



As I now prepare for retirement from active priestly ministry, I would like to close by expressing my thanks to so many. First of all, I give thanks to God for his call to the priesthood; the joy I have experienced in my vocation cannot be expressed adequately in words. I give thanks to the Archdiocese of Liverpool, family and friends, for their prayers and generous financial support over the years. A special thanks goes to the Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle for giving me the opportunity of working on the missions over the past twenty-six years. I have been privileged and blessed to live and work with many excellent priests from different parts of the world. I thank God for the love, warmth and patience I have received from the beautiful people from Peru and Ecuador. Their humility and faith have taught me so much. Last but not least, I thank you, the benefactors and friends of the St. James Society, for your prayers and financial support over my years here in South America. May Our Lady of Guadalupe bless and protect you and yours with her mantle of motherly love. Goodbye & with much love,

*Fr. Denis*

Sincere thanks to Fr. Denis for sharing and reflecting on his journey to priesthood and mission ministry with the St. James Society. We are most grateful to Fr. Denis for his dedicated service with us over the past twenty-six years. We are grateful too, to the Archdiocese of Liverpool for its longstanding support of the St. James Society and its willingness to have allowed Fr. Denis the freedom to remain in South America for the greater part of his priesthood. We wish Fr. Denis well in retirement and we look forward to enjoying his company at our annual gatherings in Lima, Peru. Please continue to pray for priests who are discerning a call to mission ministry with the St. James Society.

*With Every Good Wish in Christ,*

*Rev. David Costello, Director*



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