



FRIENDS

THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST JAMES THE APOSTLE

DECEMBER 2022



May Your Hearts Be Lifted in Praise...

Dear Friends,

As we close out the year of 2022, I want to convey my deepest thanks to all of you whom continue to generously and faithfully support the Society of St. James and our mission to serve the poorest of the poor in Peru. We appreciate your ongoing prayers, your sacrifices and your kind generosity, all of which strengthen and support our missionary priests and the parishes in which they serve. Fr. Simon Cadwallader now writes to us from his parish in Lima, Peru, reflecting on the Christmas season...

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

Was that Christmas? Did it really happen? It still amazes me that we can invest so much time thinking about the great feast of the birth of the Saviour of the world and here in Villa el Salvador the people are back working in the markets by the afternoon of Christmas Day! Like everywhere else in the world, Christmas tends to begin here, for commercial reasons, by the end of October...with buying, selling and a bit of haggling thrown in! Yet, for most people, Christmas is celebrated with their family between the hours of midnight on Christmas Eve and 4 am on Christmas Day. That's it! The celebration will consist, for those who are better-off, of a meal of cooked ham or chicken, (rarely turkey); and for those with less, the Christmas meal will be a cup of hot chocolate and a piece of the Italian sweet bread, panettone.

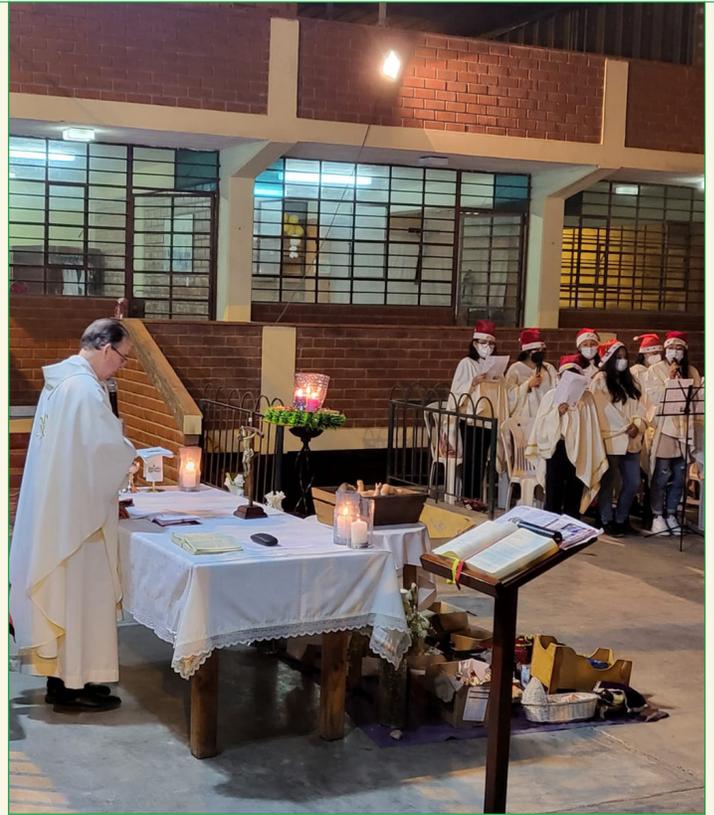


At midnight fireworks abound across the skies while children get excited and the dogs go crazy. Then, it all settles down to the family gathering. Everyone has to be in their house by midnight. I was informed of this when I first encountered a Peruvian Christmas. However, when you think of the toil and anticipation that goes into the feast, it is sad that we, like many other countries I suppose, do not catch the true essence of Christmas.....a feast that should be run over with joy and celebration, even for the poor, over a period of several days, at least up to the coming of the Magi in early January. One needs a little longer than 4 hours to celebrate the greatest interruption in history.....the life-changing event of the Incarnation and its implications for the whole of humanity!



Nevertheless, it all begins so profoundly and beautifully here. For me it is a highlight of the year to celebrate in at least one of the three masses on Christmas Eve which includes a live nativity scene with a whole array of animals. These animals might range from llamas to sheep to hens, and of course the dogs never wait for an invitation as they are always present on the streets of Lima and they are always ready to get in on the act and join the crib scene. Both young and old dress up as shepherds, and it is a grace to be chosen for the parts of Mary and Joseph.





At the heart of this theatre is always a recently newborn babe, and I guess the angels really are around as I cannot remember a time when the babe has cried for the attention of his mother, during the Mass. The latest addition to the parish normally gurgles and looks around serenely as the gospel is read and the drama plays out. As for the homily on this holy night, the priest is blessed. As soon as I pick up the baby in my arms I am guaranteed rapt attention and, among the cooing of the congregation, the wonder of the first Christmas percolates into the minds and hearts of those who have decided to come out and mark the feast with Eucharistic food.

When I first arrived in Villa El Salvador, many years ago, the streets were nearly all sand and one could imagine that outside in the cold of the night air, this place was not much different from Bethlehem all those years ago. Now, there are more and more paved roads in evidence; but just as there was no room at the inn that famous night, so there is no more room to expand here for families seeking accommodation in this area. One thing that has not fallen here is the birth rate. As new generations are born, so the need for housing them becomes more insistent. As a result, my parish of Our Lady of Peace is no longer growing horizontally but vertically. Houses that began years ago with single story of a few estera mats are now soaring towards the heavens with some having up to six stories, to accommodate new family partnerships and the babies that will follow quickly. The gospel story of the *house built on sand* will certainly apply here, should the owners of these properties not establish really deep foundations into the ground below. An earth tremor or, worse still, the possibility of a more serious seismic shift could spell the most horrendous consequences.





Back to Christmas! As the year-end approaches, more fireworks are purchased and the new year is brought in with a well-lit sky which mirrors the bright hopes for a new year. As with most countries, the effects of the pandemic and the war in the Ukraine is taxing the economy and the purses of the poorest.

It is why family life here needs to center on the journey of that Holy Family who put their trust in God's providence and His omnipotent control of human affairs. Whether you discover in your home that Christmas lasts a few hours or many days, Peruvians who struggle to keep the wolf from the door would be at one with you in echoing the sentiments of this Christmas Card wish:

*May your heart be lifted in praise this
Christmas!*

*Feliz Navidad y Un Prospero Año
Nuevo!!*

Before the Paling of the Stars

By Christina Georgina Rossetti

Before the paling of the stars,
Before the winter morn,
Before the earliest cock crow,
Jesus Christ was born:
Born in a stable,
Cradled in a manger,
In the world his hands had made
Born a stranger.
Priest and king lay fast asleep
In Jerusalem;
Young and old lay fast asleep
In crowded Bethlehem;
Saint and angel, ox and ass,
Kept a watch together
Before the Christmas daybreak
In the winter weather.
Jesus on his mother's breast
In the stable cold,
Spotless lamb of God was he,
Shepherd of the fold:
Let us kneel with Mary maid,
With Joseph bent and hoary,
With saint and angel, ox and ass,
To hail the King of Glory.

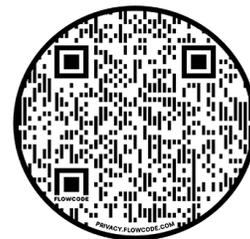
*With Every Good Wish in Christ,
Rev. David Costello, Superior General*



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

The Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle, Inc.

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