

THE GOD OF SURPRISES

I arrived in Ireland April 16 to attend a congregational meeting on the 18th and later to spend a months holidays in the Green Isle. Two days after the meeting I made a routine visit at the doctor's office to get my usual prescription for blood pressure medication. Instead of giving me the prescription he said, "You are going to the cardiology unit at the hospital, TODAY." Before the day was over, following several tests I found myself in the hospital on a waiting list for a quadruple bypass. "You have no choice", the surgeon said. Even the two weeks on the waiting list had to spent in the hospital. I most certainly must have had a guardian angel watching over me as I walked the hilly roads of Alto Trujillo the previous months.

In Peru whenever a taxi driver asked me where I was from I always gave the same reply. "I am Irish by birth, a USA citizen and a Peruvian at heart." That was proved true after the operation. I have no memory of the three days in the Intensive Care Unit but they tell me I only spoke Spanish and could not understand why nobody would answer me!! I was blessed with a wonderful surgeon and excellent aftercare. Ten days later I came to the Care Unit at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Mercy here in Cork City. It was heavy surgery, the trip back is long (14 hours on the plane) but I hope to return to Peru at the end of September. I am so grateful to so many in Florida who prayed for me, had Masses said for me and sent greetings.

Another thing that was a wonderful help to my recovery was knowing that all our projects in Peru continued to flow smoothly in my absence. Sr. Dora Castro managed the financial side of things which is of course so well organized by Antonio, our expert accountant and on the ground how blessed I was to have my able assistant, Jesica, whom the Ministry funds. We had our yearly Plan of Work done so everything flowed. The Care Centers are doing fine. There was just one crisis when it was discovered that a little 7 year old girl, the only girl in the family and whose mother is dead, was being sexually abused by a sixteen year old brother. Our coordinator Rosa, whom many of you know presently takes her to her house every night until a more permanent solution can be reached. We are fortunate to have such Christian people working with us. The librarian is in touch constantly, also the Director of Santo Toribio School where our 41 special students attend. Thank God for email.

I look forward to going back towards the end of September and to having Marjorie, Antonio and some new friends visit in October. The visit of members of the Ministry is so life giving for the community in Peru, to meet firsthand some of the people who do so much to help build the Kingdom in their area of poverty. They know that they are loved by people who may live far away from them.

While it was difficult for me not to be able to work I decided to make it a sort of mini-sabbatical and so I had time to do a share of reading. There is so much being written today on the fact that "The walls of Western Christianity are collapsing and in many parts of the West that collapse can only be described as seismic". Many writers are calling for a new birthing of Christianity. Among the major features of this are listed:

- Reconnecting with COMPASSION
- A re-dedication to NONVIOLENCE in the Christian household and among nations.
- Making LOVE the seed-force of new birth in our lives and world. There is no other energy that can truly bring together human beings from different communities and nationalities.

The Ministry of the Good Shepherd is surely putting all that into practice. May the Lord bless you all for what you do for the "least of the brethren" here in Peru.

Sr. Immaculata Murphy

Save the Date!!! Sunday, October 18th , St. Joan of Arc's 7th Annual INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL at Mercy Center and Sports Arena at 1:15pm, \$5 Donation. Join us for an afternoon of friendship, enjoy delicious authentic dishes from around the world, learn about the many cultures that make St. Joan of Arc a great and strong faith community. ALL PROCEEDS WILL SUPPORT THE MINISTRY OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD, THE WONDERFUL WORKS OF OUR SISTERS OF MERCY IN MACHE AND ALTO TRUJILLO, PERU!!!
Thank you! Grazie! Merci! Obrigado! Salamat! Gracias!

GIVING THE GIFT OF SCHOOL

Every January we launch the "Send A Child To School" fundraiser. It enables young children, who would otherwise be wandering the streets, instead they attend school equipped with books, new shoes and dressed with dignity in uniforms. Many are further empowered in after school Care Centers and visits to the library. These opportunities are invaluable. We know it is equally important to assist college and graduate level students with their tuition. We thought you might be interested in some beneficiaries of The Ministry of the Good Shepherd funds who are working at that level. Sister Immaculata has an interesting agreement with these young adults. She says: "I need you, and you need me!" So scholarship recipients are men and women who contribute to the life of the parish, usually as catechists. Sister says they are vibrant evangelists! Here are some examples:

- Emmanuel - Mechanical Engineering
- Charito - Executive Secretary
- Kathy - Technical Accountant
- Beto - Technical Construction
- Diana - Psychology
- Karal - Elementary Education
- Rita - Civil Engineering
- Leslie - Education for Special Children

Sister notes that last year Catholic University made an agreement with the parishes in Alto Trujillo because it is politically recognized as an area of "extreme poverty". The University will cover half the tuition if the parish will pay the other half. The students must maintain a grade level, nearly twenty students are benefitting from these scholarships. Education is invaluable. The simplest solution to poverty is a good job with decent wages. Good jobs go to educated people. The Ministry is proud to be part of that solution and as donors, you can be too!

WHAT'S IN A (MISSION) TRIP

Many people are familiar with pilgrimages, usually trips to far away shrines. The very expense and difficulty of the journey is often part of a spiritual process which can make effort heart and soul changing experiences. Think of El Camino, the long trail leading to the church of St. James deCompostela. Mission trips can be transforming but usually involve connecting with a poor community on a short term basis, and performing some services (medical care or house building). Some have reflected that these visits tend to feature the capacity and resources of the visitors and may not give enough weight to the strengths and the gifts of the poorer community. Also if there is no long term commitment, it is less likely that lasting relationships will be formed.

The Ministry of the Good Shepherd has been committed to communities of extreme poverty in Alto Trujillo and Mache for over twenty years. It began with a connection to Sr. Immaculata, a member of a community of Irish and Peruvian Sisters of Mercy. Sister had worked at St. Joan of Arc for over twenty years. She had many friends. Her approach with the poor was the build Bible Study groups, forming leaders and equipping them to go back into their neighborhoods. These leaders and the people would prayerfully study God's Word, then reflect on their own harsh reality and seek inspiration for actions to make life better. When they brought these ideas to Sister, she would reach out to Good Shepherd for funds to implement the vision of the people. The fruits of this collaboration have been nothing short of amazing: chapels, scholarships, over twenty after school Care Centers, a library with trained librarian, transportation for special children to St. Toribio, an Adult Technical School.

When we visit Peru, as we do regularly, we connect with these programs, facilities and keep building the bonds of friendship with the community affirming all they are accomplishing. Sister was drawn to Peru by a sense of the "reign of God" alive there; and visitors have commented: "I could see the Gospel lived."

All this is by way of noting that an Adult Mission Trip is planned for October 18-26. Marjorie O'Sullivan will coordinate the trip with the assistance of Antonio Muradaz, our Peruvian born treasurer. We will stay at Hotel Colonia in lovely downtown Trujillo (\$36 /night). Travel is on JetBlue -Ft. Laud-Lima about \$570. And then Lima-Trujillo \$378. There is a bus for \$32 but it does take nine hours. In Trujillo we will be using dependable taxis and buses to get to all our programs and gatherings. Two young women are registered, there is room for more people to join us.

A mission trip can give us an experience of "the poor" as real human beings with needs and struggles, but also as persons of strength and faith, and dignity. It can also be an experience of the Catholic Church as expressed in different cultures; we see liturgy, leaders catechesis and music in a whole new way. Finally there is an appreciation of religious vocation as an exciting, challenging and meaningful way of life. Who knows, you might be inspired to add your own spark to the reign of God! If interested, you may contact Marjorie O'Sullivan at mab395@bellsouth.net or 561.395.6029.