

# Parroquia San José Obrero

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Dear .....

We are now well launched into the New Year and I hope that things are going well for us all. There is a lovely Spanish phrase which reads: "lo último que se pierde es la esperanza". (I am getting quite good at Spanish!). Hope is the last thing that goes. The same phrase has a depth of meaning because hope is a virtue which our modern mentality does not put much store in. We want everything and **NOW** is the current way of thinking. In this way the future holds very little for us. It even affects the way we think about God. Anyhow, it is good to be in contact and my best wishes goes to you all.

**Health Bulletin:** how I would like to forget about my health and just keep on living as was always my way. My state does not really permit me the luxury. I am like a President Roosevelt, seated on a wheelchair in my non-oval office receiving groups and individuals. Then I am like hundreds of others disabled, trudging down the dusty street on two crutches going for my morning roll. (Oh, for a Glasgow roll. The bread in Quito was excellent but it is not very good here at all).

The bone which they cut loose in order to place the prosthesis has not fixed itself very firmly to the femur and so I have to nurse it carefully. It is the one slim chance I have of not being operated on again. That is my present state of being. Things have improved 85% but the last 15 is very slow indeed. Say a prayer to hurry on things.

**Rainy Season:** The rains have started and they have come with a vengeance. Just another street! The boys enjoy it.



**Dictators:** the word itself sounds nasty and its history offers few redeeming features whether it be in Latin America or elsewhere. At the same time the most socially minded president of the neighbouring country of Peru was a military dictator. (Though I think that it would be most difficult to find a worse combination!) The last dictator in Ecuador was a rather benign character. His name was Rodrigo Lara. He served for a couple of years but then the other generals wanted a shot at being "dictators" so they told him that they were exiling him to Argentine. He assured him that the only objection he had to that was the fact that he had promised his daughter a Presidential marriage which was to take place the following month in the Palace. So it was over his dead body that he would go!



The generals agreed reluctantly but the marriage had to end at midnight and then he was to be off. Agreed. The marriage was going with a swing and the entrancing hour arrived but the old man was so enjoying it that he said that he could not stop the wedding at that hour but that 3 a.m. would be a more acceptable time. Zero hour arrived once again but good Rodrigo was not to agree to the whole package. "I will not fly over the Andes at this time of the night. I am taking my old Ford car and will live in my wee home village ten miles outside Quito and that is my last word. He kissed his daughter and friends goodnight, walked out of the palace and into his car and is still living in his "wee village" I have talked to him a couple of times and he seems quite a contented man.

### Registration Time:

The schools are on holiday – well 50% of them at least. The rainy season, which coincides with winter at home, are holiday times for the children on the coastal strip. This is due to the fact that most of the rural schools will be flooded – or the approaches to them. On the Highlands, school holidays are during the Scottish summer.

It is also the time when we start the registration for catechetical classes in the parish. Catechism will start at the end of March. Catechists have to be prepared, courses and retreats organised during these two months. It is quite a programme. I simply admire the dedication of the young people. Last Sunday, for instance, a group of 45 left from here at 5 a.m. to attend a retreat in a nearby town. I had hired a place where they could work till the afternoon, go to the beach for a couple of hours and then back home. It proved very successful. There are on-going courses at the weekend and at times during the week for these two months. We will have about fifty catechists and about 700 children to cope with. It is a miracle that the system works at all.

**Corner note:** it is fashionable to talk about the credit crunch and why should I remain silent! I look at a pound note and at one time I would be assured of trading it in for TWO DOLLARS. Now I only get one dollar for that pound note. My finances have been more or less halved. **But I have a master plan which is assured of success.** I am asking my nephews and nieces, cousins and young working people to pledge a monthly amount in the Scottish International Trust Fund which is lying dormant. Alan, the young lawyer who emerged from the university three years with two first class honours and is much sought after by Law Firms will be delighted to organize it all; my doctor niece, whose pay for her **first month** was more than the salary received for working for the St James Society for **TWENTY THREE YEARS**, will, I am sure give a generous inaugural signature to the scheme. And there are so many other stars worth mentioning if the page would only permit it.

By the way if any of you want to contact me let it be known that I am from this moment changing my telephone number, my E-mail address and, if it proves necessary, my residential address! So, as they say, it is 'goodbye to all that'!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

**An eye for nature:** I always marvel at the fertility of the earth. Within the same patch a carrot, a pineapple, a potato, and an infinite number of distinctive flowers, plants, trees, vegetables can emerge – all so different but all from the same patch of earth!

Below you see the rock on which my house is built. How that flower managed to emerge from the rock after eight months of drought just amazes me but it is daily before my eyes.



**Our prayers for Simon:** How I would like to conclude this letter with words of rejoicing on hearing positive news regarding Simon, now missing for more than one month. It is not the case.

At the same time I would like to renew my prayers and support for the family Angus, Ealasaid and young Angus. We can only make reference to their suffering but feel incapable of relieving it. Despite what has happened may they feel the nearness and the blessings of a loving God. It is the one and only thing constant in our lives. When we look at the Cross with faith we are facing the greatest act of love ever known. The dusty roads of defeat lead to victory and hope for all humanity.

It would also be proper to add a word of praise for the people of Uist in their solidarity and cooperation in the extensive search for Simon. To live in a community which lives up to the best values of the human spirit is indeed a privilege and all are to be congratulated.

Simon and all of us are in the hands of God and the more we are aware of this truth the more peace of mind we shall have. We wish this blessing on the McMillan family.

Blessings,

Padre Colin

