

# Parroquia San José Obrero,

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My dear .....

It was not my intention to write you this month but as I am waiting for a couple to come in for marriage instruction I will make a start and see how far I progress.

## Weather:

Write that headline but it is a topic that is rarely mentioned here. That does not mean that they run out of conversation. There is not great change in the weather here from day to day. We have an eight months dry season and then there are another four months of heavy rain. The rain could start around the end of December.

We are at the moment suffering from a bad draught. Crops are not growing, the ground is cracking, and cattle are dying. As the main electrical supply was hydro power there is a national shortage of electrical power so we cuts from six to eight hours daily of electricity.

You can imagine the effect on industrial output along with the social inconvenience it causes. It is a sorry situation and it is not easily remedied.

## First Communions:

We have first communion for the kids on 20th December. It does not appear a likely date but it is also the end of the scholastic year. The school holidays on the coast begin January and last till the end of March. A lot of the land and yes schools will be partially underwater and it would almost be impossible to keeps classes going and so holidays for all.

Referring to schools, how would you like your children to spend their first six years in this building – two or three teachers and a school role of one hundred and twenty.



And if you are not convinced there follows a photo of one of the classrooms.



At least one teacher has appeared. Last year they were threatening not to turn up as they were not being paid regularly and then it was only \$40 a month. Of course, most schools are in much better conditions but in the marginalized barrios where we work there are truly pitiful situations which are tolerated. The couple have arrived ... only half hour late!

## Health Bulletin

I have been going round on crutches for the past nine months and so a health bulletin might be in order. When I was in the USA in August I had a number of examinations at the expense of generous benefactors. They confirmed that I needed to be operated for a third time on the same hip. There was an outside chance that the bone could grow and strengthen. I am giving it till Christmas time before arriving at any decision. I was also warned that it would be a very specialized operation which only the few specialists should undertake. That is the background but I am happy to say that there has been a considerable improvement in my condition although I have still to use crutches and I live with the hope that I might not have to be operated. Do say a prayer for me.

**The Greatest Gift:** Life's bounty is rich and one of the most beautiful gestures I have received in the last twenty/thirty years happened last week. When they heard in my previous parish that I needed an operation they decided to have an all-day festival to raise funds and they have raised about five thousand pounds for the cause. When I asked how many had attended the festival I was told "about ten or fifteen thousands". That so many groups could come together (song, dance, theatre and music) is a great tribute to the people there and that they should have raised so much money is totally incredibly. I remember that my Sunday collections during the first two or three years would not have been more than three or four pounds. I am totally astounded at their generosity and the fact that they should have organized such an event. The saying in Ecuador is that memories are short and so make the best of the moment because it will only last a moment. My love for them will last forever. God bless them.

## Christmas blessings to you all

## Love and joy in all your homes



Fr. Colin