

Parish of St. Joseph the Worker

Email: sanjoseobrero05@gmail.com

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Home visit: Many will be aware that I was at home recently, courtesy of the BBC Alba. It was a real five star visit. Fr. Donald was waiting at Glasgow Airport and from there we journeyed to Oban and then to Uist by ferry. A gourmet meal of Uist lobsters awaited us – the fine wine glasses could only be used for the finest of wines! My bedroom suite would satisfy the most demanding Sheikh; a private car was at my disposal from day to day. Nieces (and husband) arrived from various parts – which I much appreciated. I managed to see Fr. Calum in Eriskay and I was driven round Barra and given a detailed description of every scene which maintains Barra as the jewel of the Hebrides. A fitting end to the week was enjoyed with Katie, Robert and family in Mearnskirik. My thanks to all.

Bishop Toal to visit Ecuador

I have just opened my mail and find a letter from Bishop Joe. I am so pleased to hear that he is to start his visit to Ecuador on the second of July and will be here till the 16th. I am delighted and very much appreciate that he should show his concern and support for the mission and come to visit me. God bless Bishop Joe.

Strange things are happening I saw a rather unusual sight: a pick up van had the two drag bars of a cart tied in side the back loader, and was pulling the two wheeled cart with the horse standing upright inside his own cart. The good horse looked somewhat bored and quite unconcerned that he was in the fast lane of the

motorway! I was sorry that I did not have my camera with me.

On another occasion I saw four sheep standing upright on the outside top rack of a bus. Not only that but they were on a road at an altitude of 12,000 feet!

Once in Quito I was overtaken by a solitary wheel which rushed past. I looked behind and there was a car coming to a screeching halt just behind me! Reality is sometimes stranger than fiction.

Religious education in Schools When I was at home Mary gave me the curriculum for religious education in the schools and it is very heartening to see how much development there has been during the past 20 years. Remember the time when the first communion class was still learning how to grow wheat on the prairies of Alberta only months before making their First Communion! (The wheat which was to be used in the host!). Religious education has ceased to be an “exam” subject but rather something useful for life. The divorce between faith and reason of the Enlightenment philosophers like Descartes and Kant has been superseded and a serious attempt is being made not only to learn “about” religion but to learn “from” its tenets so as to enrich one’s life: head, heart and conduct seem to be the process. Surprised that parents are not much involved. Here we have a meeting of parents once weekly so that they will accompany and help their children with their lessons. It is a difficult process but we are trying.

More general Elections

It is possible that there be a general election in Britain before the end of the year but you need not complain. Four years have elapsed without you being disturbed. The situation is somewhat different in Ecuador. There have been FIVE general elections (or the equivalent) in the past two years and now another is scheduled for next month – to elect representatives for the Andean Parliament and for the local regions. The Andean Parliament is not even a talking shop as two of the five countries involved have broken diplomatic relations. Yet, all adults must turn out to vote. If they don't they will not receive a certificate which is indispensable for many jobs where the State is involved. It is democracy gone mad at times in this country – at least on election days!

Micro Finance

SCIAF provided me with 15,000 pounds about a year ago to start a Micro-finance scheme to help women better their financial budget. Illness, absence from the parish has prevented me from starting the project but now that some sixty people have come for a formation course I will start the loan system within the next two weeks. It implies a lot of administration, unfortunately and I have not found a competent person for doing it despite extensive advertising. Strict control is indispensable and there are as many laws attached to the project as there are to crofting. A Swiss group in another sector has three professionals in charge of a similar scheme.

SOMETHING DIFFERENT



You may ask what this is all about! Well, with the youths we have started a system of outside “radio” productions. We have music, local news from the barrio, advertising, spots on health, sport, national news etc. The first attempt proved quite interesting but unfortunately the youths secretly “borrowed” the Church amplifier and when it was returned the inevitable happened – it had been damaged and so we are now without an amplifying system for Mass!

It is well over a week since I wrote this letter but have not got round to sending it.

Hope that you are all well and in good spirits.

God bless,

Fr Colin