

# Parish of SANTA TERESA DE JESUS

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GUAYAQUIL

Dear .....

I believe that you are enjoying gloriously warm weather in Scotland and that the cold and the rain of previous months (and not only of the winter months) are now forgotten. Weather is a topic which occupies the man in the street as much as the specialized climatic investigators. It seems that the human race has done irreparable harm to our planet and now we have to suffer the consequences. I recall the words of President Obama at the World Conference in Paris regarding climate. "Our generation is the first to appreciate that we were harming the universe and is perhaps the last generation to be able to do something about it." Leading contaminating countries have now signed a pledge to reduce global warming but many say that it is too late and too little. Unfortunately the biggest culprits China, USA and Europe are least affected. The poor countries are the ones that suffer most. The heat wave killed 2,200 poor people in India during the last few weeks.



Climate was never an interesting topic of conversation in Ecuador. When you said, "Good Day" to someone you were **NOT**

referring to the weather as you would be at home. Here the sun just keeps shining throughout the year; when it starts to rain it continues to rain for a recognizable number of days and you know when it is due to stop; in dry parts of the country, rain was always a surprise factor and could only happen at determined weeks of the year. In the last parish we had the best part of two years without seeing a drop of rain. So much for climate change, greenhouse gasses, global warming etc.

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## EARTHQUAKE

The topic that continues to be on everyone's tongue in Ecuador is the earthquake on April 16. Of course we have had a few quakes since. Some have been quite strong two "quakes" reaching 6.8 on the Richter scale. I know of one person who was thrown out of bed by one of these tremors; some sixty or seventy houses in Guayaquil were damaged. A meat factory next door was damaged. Many resorted to sleeping out at night but things are much quieter now.

*There are other consequences also: the main road connecting a sizeable town to the rest of the country disappeared into a big hole. In another part, a section of a field disappeared into the ground and swallowed seventy head of cattle; in another village, what was a stream running near a village, swelled because of the rains and the rush of water swept most of the houses away. Ecuador has been badly hit.*

The official statistics of the earthquake of April 16 is as follows:

Following this natural disaster, people on the ground lack critical resources while the death toll rose to 674. In addition to a great loss of life, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports 23 missing persons, and 6,274 injured; 28,775 losing their home or workplace. Nearly 7,000 destroyed buildings and 560 affected schools, with 166 of them suffering medium to severe damage.

Today, 22,754 people remain in emergency shelters.



Just below my room there is a junior school and every week they have an emergency drill as how to act if an earthquake strikes. The siren blows and they come rushing out of the classroom with their hands over their heads and sit in circles on the cement playground till the emergency is over. Please God that there not be another earthquake like that of 16 April.



You might think that this creature came out of the bowels of the earth at the time of the earthquake. It is not the case. In fact they are quite friendly reptiles and live in a park just outside the Cathedral and are a popular tourist attraction. When Helen and Alana, my nieces were here they wanted to take one home with them in their handbag. You can imagine their purpose and motive for wanting one!



It has to be said that Ecuador has a commitment to supporting cultural events and popular artists. Throughout the city there are immense sculptures of native birds and animals that catch the attention. Many of the fly overs have their bases adorned with very attractive floral murals. It all goes to enlighten life and reflects care of the environment.

Till next month and with God's blessing.

Fr Colin