

Parishes of ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST AND ST.TIMOTHY

Casilla 09 010- 5825, Gye, Ecuador

Dear

In Boston there are tall glass towers gracing a walkway depicting the names of the six million Jews exterminated in the Holocaust. The walkway invites reflection and awe. Is it possible that human beings could treat others with such brutality and ruthlessness? The sad answer to the question is "yes". The Holocaust did happen. We cannot deny what history teaches us but the question of our day is whether we can learn from the hard lessons of yesterday?

It was in October, a number of years ago, that I walked the "walk" maintaining, like others who accompanied me, a reverential silence. Names had little meaning for me but what I will never forget was an inscription by Martin Niemoller which read: "First they came for the Communists and I did not speak out because I was not a communist; then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew; then they came for the Catholics but I did not speak out because I was not a catholic; then they came for me and there was no one left to speak for me."

I cannot easily explain why I wrote the above except that we are beginning the month of octubre and I am reminded that my first visit to that monument in Boston was in October and that the words of that inscription have stuck in my mind ever since. It has such a clear message for every soul, every individual living in our planet: why are we so silent as we progressively destroy our planet, the "homeland of us all" in the words of Pope Francis; why do we tolerate violence and war and answer violence with more violence and war with more wars when we know that it is a response doomed to failure; why do we accept a superficial anti-God and anti-christian campaign orchestrated by a superficial form of atheism to contaminate the mind of our youth; why do we surrender values which have been the basis of a more sane society to minority pressure groups that are destroying the very fabric of human existence; why, why? Gender did not mean sex till a gender ideology made us think that it did and we now have the situation of a wife divorcing her husband in order to marry her eldest son; political correctness should never be the social ethic and so I could continue. But to brighter things!

ONE OF THE CATECHETICAL GROUPS



Religion is not taught in the schools in Ecuador – the country has to be politically correct – despite the fact that parents would want to have their children educated in the faith. We have few classroom facilities in the parish and groups go to a nearby school courtyard for their catechetical lessons. The teachers are generally young university students who are prepared to give of their time as catechists. There are problems, however. Many students have to work in order to finance their studies and as a consequence the only time for formation and preparation of class I have with them is from 9 to 10.30 at night.

ONCE MORE IN HOSPITAL

Once more I have had problems with the hip replacement. A worrying lump appeared on my hip but the doctor told me that it was the wires and nails that had come loose after my last hip replacement. It would be a simple matter of extracting them. Well I went under the surgeon's knife and when I emerged three hours later he told me that he had to graft some part of the bone and then screw on a plate to hold it in place. The matter was rather more complicated than first thought. I go round with two crutches but I hope that before long I will be able to manage with my ever present Canadian crutch which I have been using during the last number of years. I suppose that age also brings its problems but there are many far worse than I.



Every day I pass this young lady who makes a living roasting bananas or making them into thick cakes with a slice of cheese inside. She is only ONE FOOT SIX

INCHES TALL (small) but makes a living parked on the pavement from early evening till late at night. She also provides for her elderly mother who often keeps her company. She is to be admired.

I am sure that there are few cities in the world with so many “pavement restaurants” and there is no limit to the variety that they offer: all types of soups – chicken, vegetable, crab, potatoe; sausage and chips; prawns and rice; crushed corn cooked in corn leaves – the list is endless. Just a few weeks ago three of these restaurants opened opposite my house just a few yards apart.

As you go into the city street vendors are there to supply you with bottles of water and all every conceivable fruit flavour that you can think of; all types of trinkets are pushed through the car window (if you leave it open). All this is a sure sign that the economy of the country is at a low ebb.

PEACE IN COLUMBIA Santos, the president of Colombia and the head of the terrorist forces which has been waging war against the State and Government finally signed a peace treaty to end fifty two years of fierce fighting and close the book on war casualties at not an insignificant number TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTY THOUSANDS coupled with a figure of over TWO MILLION displaced refugees. A referéndum was held on Sunday to ratify the treaty but it did not win the support of the people and so the country is living very tense moments. The terms were too soft on the terrorists. I ask for your prayers for a people who have suffered so much through the years. Despite suffering, displacement and sacrifice they are always optimistic and cheerful.

PARISH FEAST DAY

Celebration runs deeply in the blood of Ecuadoreans and they never miss the opportunity to celebrate. Parish feast days require many days of celebration which are more of a spiritual nature. On Sunday we had what was supposed to be a caravan of cars through the parish. In fact people out numbered the cars one hundred to one! Tonight we have the inaugural Mass of the feast day. It will be in the open street and the retired Archbishop of Guayaquil will be present. Each night for the next twelve days we have a street celebration in each of the twelve sectors and on the 15th, the feast of Santa Teresa de Jesús, all will come together for a final Mass and an artistic festival of song, dance etc.

CATECHISM IN THE STREETS



Once every six weeks the catechetical groups leave the classroom to go into the community. At times the groups choose a few families and, equipped with visual aids, they give one of the catechetical lessons they are studying to surrounding families. To conclude the lesson they build a small altar and give a bible, prayer and hymn service. It is astonishing how well they do it though it is a first experience for all. At other times they collect food to give to poor families; or visit the sick etc. It is an effort to make them realise that faith must be lived and practised in the community.

Hope that you are bracing yourselves for the winter cold. I have to prepare for intense heat!.

God bless you all,

Fr Colin

