

Parish of Santa Teresa de Jesús, Mapasingue

Casilla 09 010- 5825, Guayaquil, Ecuador

Dear

December is a month which we often fear or even dread. As we say, “it is the weather”. It becomes the central conversational topic of the month. Will there be rain, and more rain? Will the frost make our roads dangerous and lead to accidents which we so dearly want to avoid? Or will a gentle snow fall from the heavens and cover the mud tracks, the barren grounds like a beautiful white tablecloth which hides all the blemishes of the old table. There is another, even more important factor – the Christmas event which commemorates and relives that great moment in the history of humanity when God’s love revealed itself in the person of the baby Jesus and called on us all to renew our hopes for a more joyful world free from wars and violence, from hatred and divisions and live a life of love with God and our fellow human beings. It is an ideal beyond the powers of man alone but, with the grace and power of God, is within our reach. To love as Jesus loves is what gives meaning to Christmas.

THE EARTH CONTINUES TO QUAKE



A few times each month the children run out of their classrooms to more open ground, hands over their heads to protect them from falling debris. A drill Earth tremors continue to affect Ecuador. The other day my desk began to shake. It was another tremor, 4.5 on Richter.

THE BUSINESS LADIES

Some ten years ago I received a modest sum of money from SCIAF to which I added a few dollars more that I had received from people like yourselves. I formed a fund and made loans available to groups of women who agreed to work together in creating small business to complement their home income and to rescue them from the eternal state of having to depend on their husbands for every cent they could spend. The loan is given to the group and then divided out equally. The group is responsible for paying the loan back. If one person failed the rest had to compensate. It is amazing what they have been able to do in the past number of years.

Each picture has a story which is interesting but which would take time to recount.

MERCY MEZA had some knowledge of knitting and sowing, attended a course which we organized for the group and began producing simple articles which we see below. She saved a little money and after a few years she bought on loan a sewing machine and employed her two children in order to increase her output. She now runs a very successful business.



MARTHA ALVARES was interested in craft work, did a course to develop her skills and produces small articles for sale at different times of the year – be it Christmas, birthdays, St. Valentine’s Day and so many other social dates which appear on the calendar. Her shop is simple. Four poles which hold up a sheet of plastic on some street corner or open public space.



MARTHA CHAMORRO started of in converting one of her rooms into a corner shop. She had as shrewd business mind and was one of the first to invest in what is called a TAXIMOTO –a modernized Rickshaw. Basically a motorcycle engine with a box behind which can carry four people. With time the “box” is improved and made more attractive as the picture shows. She provides work for her son whom she employs.



You may think that these ventures are modest but the employment situation is very tenuous. This week 11,000 people applied for a job in the city police. There were 150 places available. Frustration for many who queued two days and nights in the street in order to present their CV’s.

FIDEL CASTRO was he a rogue or an idealist? A statesman or a wretched dictator? Opinion will be divided. Exiled Cubans danced in the streets of Miami on hearing of his death; hundreds lined the streets of Havana to pay tribute to his name.

No one can deny that he was an extraordinary man with a special charisma which commanded the attention, not only of the common man, but also of politicians from all over the world. No other politician anywhere has been such a point of reference on the world scene as Fidel Castro during the last fifty years. He was able to defy the might of the United States, maintain his branch of Leninist Marxist communism despite it being such a social and economic failure during these fifty years. Will he be remembered as the man who rescued Cuba from a cruel capitalistic dictatorship to succeed it by another proletarian dictatorship? Or the man who eliminated, in the most cruel way, some 23,000 Cubans opposed to his ideas (taking seven pints of their blood before being shot?) Or the man who gave his all in a failed attempt to help the poor? History will judge taking into account the \$93,000,000 found in his private bank account and his son’s luxury yacht which rivals that of Bill Gates. I spent a week in Cuba living with the poor. No one would criticize Fidel – some for respect for his name; others for fear of ever present informers. If there were six million people in Cuba at the time some five million would have been delighted to go with me in the plane out of Cuba.

Just my thoughts,

Fr Colin

