



# FRIENDS

The Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle

May 2024



## God's Ways are not Our Ways...

*Dear Friends,*

In 1958 Pope John XXIII told the bishops of the First World that he was kept awake at night, worrying about the lack of priests and religious in Latin America. He asked the bishops of the First World to reach out and help a church in need. Missionaries from all over the world answered the Pope's call and came in their thousands. In Latin America they found a land of striking contrasts, natural beauty beyond compare, and destitution beyond belief. It is a land of conflict, oppression, and persecution. At times it may seem devoid of opportunity. But even amid the despair, the people embody the virtues that make God's love so very obvious. While their material needs are great, they have a deep spirituality. They share a tremendous joy, built on faith and love. It is a spirit that is perhaps unmatched anywhere in the world, but a spirit that is eagerly shared. It is also a spirit that is transforming the lives of all who are lucky enough to have been welcomed into the lives of the poorest of the poor. They will never be the same again. When the priests of the St. James Society began their missionary task, they went to serve the poorest of the poor.

*Diocesan priests serving the poorest of the poor in Latin America since 1958.*

They went to areas that did not have resident priests and were unable to sustain them. An exception was made in the north of Peru, as the Society members assumed parishes in Piura, Talara and Negritos. They were led to believe that vocations to the priesthood would flow from these “more established communities.” History has taught us that Cardinal Cushing was correct. He believed that once new parishes were firmly established, vocations would come from these parish communities.

**T**his year some of us members of the St. James Society were privileged to witness some very significant events that clearly showed us that God’s ways are not our ways. One of these special events happened in the

Diocese of Chimbote, which has been blessed by the extraordinary number of young men ordained to the priesthood. These young men will tell you today that they had been so impressed by the priests who had come to work in Chimbote from all over the world, that they decided to walk in their footsteps. Fr. Isaac Robles Mejía was the first Peruvian priest to join the St. James Society. For three years he was assigned as Pastor at El Resucitado Parish, in the Diocese of Chosica, and he was also Regional Superior of the St. James Society in Peru. In January, he was recalled to his diocese by the Bishop of Chimbote and he was appointed Pastor

of his home Parish, ‘Nuestra Señora del Rosario’, in Huarney. Coincidentally, Fr. Isaac grew up alongside many of our St. James priests who were responsible for the parish in Huarney over many years (Frs. Ned Wall, Pat Hennessey, Des Tynan) and they were delighted to learn that their former acolyte and catechist has now assumed the responsibility as Pastor. Unfortunately, his appointment was tinged with sadness. Just one week after he was installed as Pastor, his mother died after a long illness. No doubt she is smiling down on her son as he sets out on his new journey as Pastor in their hometown. Fr. Isaac was given a warm welcome from his neighbors, friends, and parishioners. All of us in the St. James Society wish Fr. Isaac well in his new assignment, and we are grateful for his time spent with us.

**S**an Ricardo, our first foundation in Lima, named after our founder, nestles in the shadow of the football stadium of ‘Alianza’ Lima. The people of the parish recently celebrated the arrival of Fr. Jaime Calvo, one of their very own as Pastor of the parish. Fr. Jaime had been an altar server when Fr. Joe Martin was Pastor there. The young Jaime was full of high ideals. He wanted to do great things for his country. So, he joined the Guardia Civil (Police Force). There he advanced up through the ranks, in record time.



*Fr. Isaac with the Faith Formation School, El Resucitado*



*(l-r) Fr. Isaac, Fr. Melchor, Fr. Stephen, Fr. Pat Hennessey*





*Fr. Roger Clarke, Fr. Jaime Calvo*



*Fr. Nilton Iman Chero, El Resucitado Parish*



*Fr. John and Fr. Melchor, before receiving their Mission Crosses*

However, the young Police Lieutenant was not happy. His dream was far from fulfilled. He wanted to do more. So, he decided the best way to achieve his goal in life was to follow in the footsteps of his boyhood hero, Fr. Joe Martin, who was Pastor in San Ricardo for almost thirty years. On March 2, 2024, the San Ricardo community proudly welcomed a very happy Fr. Jaime, their former altar server, as he assumed the challenge of serving his friends and neighbors as their Pastor. Frs. Joe Martin, George Flynn, Bob Lapan and so many more St. James men must have been delighted also, no doubt they are smiling down with pride on Fr. Jaime. A week later, on Palm Sunday, Fr. Roger Clarke joined Fr. Jaime for Mass. Fr. Roger was delighted to be back visiting the parish, having served there when Jaime was an altar server.

*A*nother remarkable event took place at our AGM in January. Frs. Melchor Andaya and John Jimenez both received their Mission Cross from Bishop Hennessy. Fr. Melchor comes to us from Antipolo Diocese in the Philippines. He studied at San Carlos Major Seminary in Manilla, and his director of pastoral formation was St. James

Alumnus, Msgr. Allen Aganon. Fr. John Jimenez comes to us from the Archdiocese of San Francisco, CA. Fr. John did a pastoral placement, as a seminarian, with Frs. Jim Ronan and Dennis O'Brien in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Some 28 years later Fr. John is realizing his dream of becoming a member of the St. James Society. Fr. Melchor has been assigned to El Resucitado Parish, along with Fr. Nilton Iman Chero. Fr. Nilton is also a native of our former parish in Huarmey, and we are delighted to have him serve with us. El Resucitado parish came into being just eighteen years ago and it is still very much a parish in the process of formation. Frs. Nilton and Melchor have formed a new parish team there, together with Fr. Cecilio Morga. Our prayers and good wishes go with them as they continue the great work of building up the parish community in the fourteen individual communities that comprise the parish of El Resucitado.

Fr. John has been assigned to Our Lady of Guadalupe, alongside Frs. Michael Sharkey and Denis Parry. Fr. John will take up his assignment in May. He was obliged to delay his arrival, due to the fact that his mother had been seriously ill. She passed into the fullness of life recently, and Fr. John will travel to Peru as soon as the details of his mother's estate are finalized. He is blessed in that he is already a fluent Spanish speaker, which will make his arrival in his new parish so much easier. Our thoughts and prayers are with him as he prepares to join the team at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, in the diocese of Carabayllo, on the north side of Lima.

We look with delight on the bubbling life and great witness of the Church in Latin America, which make God's love so real. As always, we encourage priests from around the world to consider accepting the challenge to come and walk with the poorest of the poor. You too can help bring the Joy of the Good News to a people who hungers for God. The lives of so many priests have been enriched and blessed, over the past 66 years, as they walked with God's people, seeing the God of Life through the eyes of the poor.

*(Sincere thanks to Fr. Joe McCarthy for this article)*



## Bishop – Elect Martin J. Chambers (1964 – 2024)

The St. James Society mourns the loss of Fr. Martin Chambers, a priest of the diocese of Galloway, Scotland, who served with the Society in Guayaquil, Ecuador (2004 – 2009).

On February 2, Pope Francis appointed Fr. Martin Bishop of Dunkeld, Scotland. His Episcopal Ordination was due to take place there on April 27.

Announcing his sudden passing on April 10, the Bishop of Galloway, Bishop Frank Dougan said:

*“It is with a heavy heart and the deepest sadness that I learned today of the death of Fr. Martin Chambers, a priest of the Diocese of Galloway, and the Bishop – Elect of the Diocese of Dunkeld. I know his family and the people of Galloway diocese who knew him and loved him will be deeply shocked and dismayed at his untimely death. Together we give thanks for the selfless service he gave to our diocese; we recognize the enormous contribution he made to support some of the poorest communities in Ecuador, and we pray for the repose of his soul...To know Martin was to know a man of love, humor and a deep faith which enlivened all he did.”*

We in the St. James Society were very proud of Fr. Martin, and we were looking forward to his Episcopal Ordination on April 27. While serving with the Society in Ecuador he is remembered as being a humble priest who gave of himself tirelessly to the people entrusted to his care. He was a gifted musician with a great sense of humor, and he radiated joy everywhere he went. We offer our sympathy to the dioceses of Galloway and Dunkeld, and we pray especially for the consolation of his family at this sad and difficult time. Martin will not be forgotten.

*Que en Paz Descansa Padre Martin.*

*With Every Good Wish in Christ,*

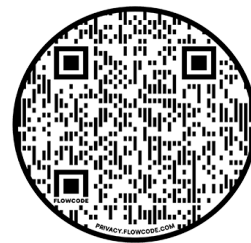
*Rev. David Costello, Director*



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