



FRIENDS

THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST JAMES THE APOSTLE

April 2020

A UNIVERSITY OF THE PEOPLE

Dear Friends,

Recently at our annual gathering in Lima, Peru we had the good fortune of welcoming two new members to the St. James Society. Fr. Edward Rogan is a priest of the diocese of Killala, Ireland and Fr. Ixon Chateau is a priest of the Archdiocese of Boston, USA. I have asked Fr. Rogan to introduce himself to you in this issue of friends:

My name is Eddie Rogan. I am a priest of the diocese of Killala in the west of Ireland, I was ordained in 1981. Ever since childhood, I have been interested in the missions. When I was studying theology during my seminary years, I developed a particular interest in Peru. Indeed, in my last year as a seminarian I focused my theological studies on the writings of well-known Peruvian priest, Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez. However it was to be roughly forty more years before an unexpected opportunity presented itself for me to become a missionary in Peru. In the intervening years since my ordination, I have had many interesting and fulfilling appointments, including being a missionary in the Amazonian region of Brazil for four years (2004-2008). I am grateful for all my appointments and the lessons they taught me.

In 2019, my bishop, Bishop John Fleming, proposed I return to South America as a missionary. We agreed I would do so as a member of the Society of St. James the Apostle. Two priests currently working in Killala diocese (Fr. James Cribben and Fr. Liam Reilly) had already served in Ecuador and Liam Tuffy, now retired in Enniscrone, had served in Bolivia with the St. James Society.

Bishop Fleming is a native of Limerick Diocese and he asked me to make contact with Fr. David Costello, a priest of Limerick diocese in Ireland, who is the director of the Saint James Society. It was agreed with Fr. David that at the end of September, 2019, I would travel to Cochabamba, Bolivia to begin language study at the Maryknoll Mission Institute, after which I would receive



Fr. David Costello, Bishop Bob Hennessey, Fr. Ixon Chateau, Archbishop Eamon Martin and Fr. Eddie Rogan

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

my mission assignment in Peru.

I stayed with a very kind Bolivian family in Cochabamba while attending language school. Around the time I arrived in Cochabamba, there was worldwide concern about fires being deliberately lit in forested areas of South America, and particularly in the Amazonian region. Among the first things I noticed in Cochabamba, were the smoke and smell of some of those fires on the hills overlooking where I lived.

During my first weeks in Cochabamba, Pope Francis's special Synod on the Amazon was taking place in Rome (6-27 October 2019). The Maryknoll Institute held various events to help us reflect on this synod in the light of Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si*.

Another memorable occurrence while I was in Cochabamba was the Bolivian general election, held on 20th October 2019. As soon as the election results came out, disputes about electoral fraud, the lack of transparency and legitimacy of the elections caused weeks of protests, which all too often led to violence. Dozens lost their lives. The Maryknoll Institute closed three times for safety reasons.

Eventually the newly "elected" president, Evo Morales, instead of trying to continue to cling to a fourth term in office, stepped down and hastily left for Mexico where he was granted political asylum. In the weeks following, protests by the opposing factions gradually abated.

As soon as the language course finished, I returned to Ireland for a quick visit because of two very serious family illnesses there – that of my uncle Tommy and my brother in law Oliver. I will always be grateful for the fact that, due to modern air travel, I was there to officiate at both their funerals and support my family during those difficult days.

By early January 2020 I was back in South America, in time for the annual reunion in Lima of past and present members of the Society of Saint James. As well as being a social event, this reunion always includes a retreat dimension. This year Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh, the current "successor of Saint Patrick", gave an excellent series of retreat talks.



Senior citizen art class

After the reunion I took up my role as assistant pastor in the Parish of Our Lady of Peace, Villa El Salvador, Lima, with the Pastor, a kind and understanding young Peruvian priest, Fr. César Anicama. I am very aware of my personal limitations and how little I have to offer but hope God will find a use for me. Our parish has three churches and about 40,000 inhabitants and our work includes serving a very large hospital and an orphanage. Coincidentally, a person from my home diocese works in a neighbouring parish. Sister Maureen

Kelly RSM, a very helpful Sister of Mercy from Ballycastle, County Mayo, has been a missionary in Villa El Salvador for about twenty years.



On 23rd January 2020, at about 6 am, an unforgettably sad event occurred in Villa El Salvador. A small gas tanker sprung a leak when the vehicle carrying it hit an uneven part of the road. The escaping gas spread along the road and into several houses and cars before exploding. So far more than thirty people have died from resulting burns with more deaths expected. The faith, solidarity and dignity of the community in the face of this terrible tragedy has been impressive. Thousands turned out at prayer vigils and wakes to pay their respects. The community organized itself to give whatever help it could.

Like so many others, I have been to a number of funerals and met many who are bereaved. I was deeply touched, as I was leaving one prayer vigil, when several people came up to me and asked for a blessing. One woman asked me to come and pray at her house because she had just got the news that her sister was the ninth to die. My parish priest, Fr. César, and I prayed with her. I will also never forget meeting a man who had just lost his wife, two children and home. He had left home for work shortly before the explosion. His wife and children were killed in their beds.



I cannot yet say what my new parish and Villa El Salvador mean for me. However, I hope that when I have spent some time in this place it will have as much meaning for me as for another member of the Society of Saint James, Fr. Eugene Kirke, from County Louth, Ireland. Fr. Eugene, now retired, has been in Villa El Salvador since it was founded as a desert settle-



Fr. César Anicama, center, Fr. Eddie Rogan on right, with parishioners of Our Lady of Peace



ment for migrants in the 1970s. In my visits to him, he has made inspiring comments such as: “Villa El Salvador means a lot to me. It has taught me a lot, educating me as a human being and as a priest. Living here is like living in a university of the people. Here, values such as faith, compassion, acceptance, patience and solidarity are authentic. I am very proud to live in Villa El Salvador. I and other priests came here thinking we would evangelize the people. We found it was them that evangelized us!”

Sincere thanks to Fr. Eddie for introducing himself to us.

While preparing this article, the COVID – 19 is very much to the forefront of the news all over the world. Here in Boston, St. Patrick’s Day has been cancelled and throughout the Archdiocese all Masses have been cancelled until further notice. Similar action is being taken by Episcopal Conferences all over the world. I ask for your patience if for any reason we are unable to publish future editions of Friends. Please God it will not come to that, but as of now everything is changing at a rapid pace. Let’s continue to remember each other in prayer and let us remember all those who have been affected, and especially those who have died. May Mary, the mother of the divine Shepherd and Saint Patrick, the Apostle of the Irish, intercede for us all.

With Every Good Wish in Christ,

*Rev. David Costello
Director*



**For the purpose of wills, bequests, and living trusts, our official name is:
The Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle, Inc.**

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