



FRIENDS

THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST JAMES THE APOSTLE

September 2020



Clinton, MA High School staff with Fr. Gerry O'Meara and Vanesa Ricalde

Teachers Being Taught

Dear Friends,

Jim Hastings is an alumnus of the St. James Society, having lived and worked in Lima, Peru, at the parish of Jesus Artesano. Jim recently retired as principal of Clinton High School and now he volunteers his time with us as coordinator of our Mission Appeal Program. Jim reflects on his recent visit to Peru with a group of teachers from Clinton High School, Clinton, MA.

It's something most returning St James Society alumni probably contemplate, or even dream would someday happen. After serving in Peru thirty years ago, then returning home, I began a career in education. My experience working in Peru with other St. James members and directly with the people is what led to a position of a high school principal. Although one would immediately think there is no connection, I recently lived and felt there is a bond, and this can happen.

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

After accepting an invitation from Fr. David Costello, the St. James Society Director, to attend the 60th Anniversary Celebration in 2018 in Lima, I was then inspired to return the following year to spend time with many of the St. James priests. After each visit I showed pictures to teachers at Clinton High School, in Clinton, MA, where I was the principal. I also found myself using examples at staff meetings about the vision, strength in hope and will to learn and move forward I had witnessed. Concrete examples that could easily be shared between the world of education and the Peruvian strength to survive. One day a group of teachers proposed the idea of a trip to Lima, Peru. I found myself wondering if such an adventure could happen...and when the dust cleared, seventeen people were signed up and heading to Peru!



Art Winkler meets a woman on her daily walk to Ollantaytambo.

One of the first experiences of this visit was the opportunity to witness an emotional gesture in the St. James Society parish of El Rescusitado, in Ate-Vitarte. The parish, under the leadership of Fr. Loreto Jaque, was honoring and saying goodbye to Fr. Des Tynan. Fr. Tynan was returning to Boston after fifty-two years of service as a priest of the St. James Society in Peru and the parish was dedicating their new library in his name. His hard work, his strong faith and his warm personality will be missed in this parish, as well as all the parishes where he served.



As this enthusiastic group arrived in Barranco, their roles suddenly reversed. They who teach every day were now hungry to learn. Throughout the years, as groups would come, there was a saying among the priests that would reveal the truth as to whether the visit was simply for pleasure and tourism, or if the visitors were there to know, appreciate, learn from and celebrate the Peruvian culture. That saying was simply “They’re asking the right questions”.

This Clinton High School (CHS) group was indeed asking the right questions. Fortunately, the visit was immediately following the St. James Society Annual Meeting so many, including returning alumni, were in the Center House visiting. This was perfect timing as these men were always available and patient in answering questions, explaining practices and customs, and supporting dialogue to clarify. The present St. James priests along with alumnus Fr. Chris McCoy, from the Archdiocese of Liverpool, continually answered questions drawing on their experiences of working in parishes.



The goal when beginning work in a parish is to accompany the people in building

Audra Irvine, Science Teacher, chatting with a child in Las Delicias de Villa.

a self-sustaining community. One such parish is Jesus Artesano, located in Chorrillos, on the outskirts of Lima. When the St James Society first arrived many years ago there was no running water, no electricity and only a small wooden structure for a church in the Tupac Amaru section of the parish. Fr Gerry O'Meara served that parish for 28 years



Clinton, MA High School group visits church in Tupac Amaru de Villa. The church was constructed by the St. James Society.

until it was handed over to the local clergy. Our group arrived at Jesus Artesano unannounced. Upon explaining who we were and the connection to the St James Society, we were invited in. The warmth of the people, as well as their fond memory of 'Los Padres de Santiago Apóstol' was quite moving. The original wooden structure remains beside a beautiful church, built by the people with the support of Fr Gerry. As mentioned, the visit was unannounced yet before this group of eighteen people could return to its bus the people had prepared lunch for everyone. That gesture and symbolism was definitely a lasting expression of the depth of the Peruvian people. Feeding one another has been and always will be a priority as well as a way of life.

A trip to the Sierra (mountains) of Peru proved to be yet another lesson in the richness of the Peruvian culture, history and the role of the Church in an indigenous world. Our guides Rudy and Gina explained the foundation of the Church in Latin America as we sat in the Cathedral in Cuzco; the arrival of the faith and the work of the earliest missionaries takes a different light when you are in the midst of the physical setting of this endeavor. They told us of the religious practices and beliefs of the indigenous people and how these are interwoven into the new Christian faith. They focused on valuing the Religious Popularity (customs) of the people, of respecting and honoring their beliefs and practices as a way of looking into the heart of the people of Peru.



Paul Zapantis, Health Teacher, trying-freshly prepared cuy (guinea pig).

While in the Cuzco area, the group visited the town of Ollantaytambo. This was a step even deeper into the Quechua culture. Visiting people's homes and hearing their beautiful language opened new doors. To further support and enhance this opportunity we visited the parish of Ollantaytambo, a parish that had been maintained by the St. James Society and then handed over to the local clergy.



When returning to the St. James Center House in Lima, it was interesting to hear individuals saying, “we’ll be home in a few minutes”. The experience literally opened doors to interact and feel welcomed by others. Their time in the beautiful setting of the Center House in Barranco reflected a warmth and hospitality that speaks volumes. The house, under the direction of Señorita Vanesa Ricalde Gonzalez and her staff, left a lasting impression and gratitude among the teachers. Although now there was time to relax, they insisted on visiting more areas where they could interact in the daily lives of the local people. Like Christ’s instruction, they sought to literally go to the marketplace, not for souvenirs, but to know the reality of the pulse of His people.

In a time of pandemic when we should be praising our teachers, who struggle to perform their work, under such challenging circumstances, this group also took an extra step. They visited Peru, through the St James Society, in order to grow in knowledge of other cultures and worlds and continue to implement that experience in their lives and profession. What an honor it was to allow the Clinton High School teachers to know a world that I lived in many years ago and continues to stay with me.

PLEASE NOTE:

Out of concern for everyone’s health in the midst of Covid 19, we have cancelled this year’s golf outing at Windham Country Club. It is not worth jeopardizing anyone’s health to have the tournament! Please God we will come together safely next year on October 6, 2021.

I am most grateful for all the ways you have supported this important mission of the church to the most poor and needy. If you wish to make a donation, please see the box below.

God love! Fr. Pete

With Every Good Wish in Christ,

*Rev. David Costello
Director*



If you wish to make a donation you can do so online at:

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St. James Society

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For the purpose of wills, bequests, and living trusts, our official name is:

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