
Fr. Michael McKinnon

The Shared Table

OCTOBER 2022



*Hello once again to all our supporters in Australia,
from Yanaoca high in the Andes, and Motupe -
Montenegro in Lima.*

I have not had the opportunity to visit Lima since the week following Easter, but I can pass on some news received from the Parish Social Worker, Lucia Cuentas, who is in regular contact with me.

The Children's Kitchens are back to normal operation following COVID, and the Baking Workshop in Motupe is currently operating with the participation of about 30 women.

Included are photos of recent crops from the vegetable garden at Cangallo where Andres continues to work and supervise. Andres sends the produce around to the Kitchens and also sells a portion to the locals with his stall at the Parish Centre. The yield seems to have increased after I organised for him to purchase manure and compost from a local nursery.



*My next communication will
be after Christmas, so I take
this opportunity to wish you
and your families a very
happy and blessed
Christmas and New Year.*



Yanaoca

I am still settling into Yanaoca as it is a much different reality to Lima. The poverty is more pronounced, although perhaps a little more nuanced in comparison to Lima. The spectacular countryside disguises the poor living conditions experienced by the locals living out in the campo.

Because of the simple and meagre conditions of their dwellings, people are a little reticent when it comes to inviting me into their homes. I have had several opportunities to visit and I have been shocked at their circumstances. Nearly all of the houses have dirt floors, and many have no electricity.



Most entertaining, including sharing a meal, is done outdoors. People are extremely generous with the little they have and there is almost always a feast of bread, newly harvested potatoes, home-produced cheese, and chuno (rehydrated potatoes which I still have to acquire a taste for) after each of the masses.



Most weekdays there is a least one mass out in the country, but often I have anywhere between two and four masses on a given day. Travelling is slow along the winding dirt roads, and while the views are quite spectacular along the way, many of the communities are quite isolated. When you consider the total population of these small communities, the number of people who turn up to the masses is extremely good and usually includes a percentage of young people and young families.



Hampatura

Hampatura is a mid-sized community about half an hour from Yanaoca and is fairly typical of the communities here. I was recently approached by a group of young mothers there regarding the possible use of a parish building for an Early Intervention Program that is assisted financially through the local Municipality with some very limited funds.

Project Planning

The building requires some urgent maintenance, but I was hesitant to spend too much money until I was sure that the program was going to proceed. The mothers responded with enthusiasm and cleaned the building out, covering the dirt floor with rubber matting to make it more user-friendly.

I am happy to support this program because early intervention for children in these isolated communities is such an urgent need. This also enables us to use parish facilities in a way that benefits the wider community, which is highly pleasing. I am looking forward to the continued development of this program.



Education and Tutoring

Another local concern around the District is opportunities for young people, for both ongoing studies and employment. Prior to COVID, the Parish provided a centre where a range of workshops were offered to upskill young people who had finished secondary school but were unemployed. We are currently investigating the possibility of reopening this program in a slightly different format



A recent planning process ran several surveys among young people, parents and interested adults to identify barriers and opportunities. There are currently several issues that need to be addressed before we can once again commit to the program. One issue is professionals who are prepared and skilled to work with young people and their ongoing salaries. Bringing our present facilities up to standard is another.



My observation is that it might be best to focus our attention on after-school tutoring for secondary students aiming at tertiary studies. We can develop a facility for this far more easily, and we have the possibility of providing human resources for this task at a much lower cost. This investigation is ongoing at present, and we hope to reach some conclusions and decisions before the end of the year.



Heartfelt Thanks

On behalf of all from Yanaoca and Motupe – Montenegro, many thanks for your prayers, financial support, and ongoing interest in the lives of our people here.
