

A Joyful and Successful Mission Trip

The Lourdes delegation has returned home safely after visiting Arequipa, Peru. God blessed us with the opportunity to travel on this mission. The group from Lourdes included Dr. Joe and Ann Lohmuller, Angie and Rachel Guhin, and Gary, Cathy, Brooke, and Marc Thennes. This was a dual trip for our group. We first were participating with MMI, "Medical Ministry International", the medical mission that Dr. Joe Lohmuller is involved with and we as a parish have supported for many years. We were joined by 57 other individuals from around the world this year that helped bring physical, emotional, and spiritual care to the poor of Peru. We were divided into a Hospital team, Medical clinic team and a Teen team. We were filled with the Joy of the Holy Spirit as we tried to be the hands, eyes, feet, and voice of Christ to those we met. This takes a great deal of time and effort from MMI and the Lohmuller's to coordinate this trip each year and it is amazing to watch strangers come together and work so efficiently. We saw God's hand guide all we did. Many of you made rosaries for of the mission and they were passed out to hundreds. The people of Arequipa were so grateful for the generous gift.

Dr. Joe Lohmuller writes, "We were able to complete 66 operations in seven days and the clinic team saw hundreds of people. The dentistry team worked on a tremendous number of people and the youth team visited orphanages, schools, a boy's reformatory, and a women's prison to share health care, spirituality, and health education. The support of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish through prayer, donations, and participation in the mission has resulted in a great success for the trip. The opportunity to live the gospel by providing health care to the less fortunate is the great reward that we reap from this venture and we have all the parishioners to thank for it."

The second part of the mission trip was for our group to visit with our sister church, the chapel of Our Lady of Reconciliation, in Arequipa. On Friday, June 24th, after the Medical Mission was complete, Lourdes delegates were able to visit the chapel. We met with Lucila, pastoral coordinator, along with other members of the chapel. We brought all the items we had collected from Lourdes church and school that day. The items included, a tabernacle and monstrance from Lourdes, 1000 rosaries, 300 pamphlets on praying the rosary, 30 catholic bibles, numerous chasubles and stoles donated by Fr. Tim, a new priests Alb, small crucifixes, Holy medals, a laptop computer for Padre, and school supplies.

We were all able to tour the chapel as well as the day care center and medical clinic connected to the back of the chapel. The chapel building has one large space for Mass and a very small sacristy with a bathroom. The sunlight streams through the many holes in the roof, the cement steps are crumbling, and the wiring for the sound system is unsafe as it is exposed to the elements. Vendors line the outside of the lot where they sell food and small items to make a living. The area is very dusty and the neighborhood dogs roam freely. They were very proud of a beautiful crucifix that they raised money for which hangs behind the altar. They also had recently tiled the concrete floor.

The day care center offers child care for working mothers of the surrounding neighborhood. The medical clinic offers low cost medical care and pharmacy services to the neighborhood as well. We were able to meet with the medical director who volunteers his time and was starting his first day. This was a God moment as he turned out to be the son of the woman who was directing the medical mission

at the hospital! That night the Guhin's and Lohmuller's started the long journey home. My family stayed a few days extra for more meetings with the chapel leadership.

On Saturday, we attended Mass at the chapel. We were accompanied by Brian Piecuch from MMI (Medical Ministry International). He interpreted for us that night. They had a huge banner outside of church welcoming the Lourdes delegation. We were escorted to the front pews as the guests of honor. Padre Márcio opened all the donations we had brought to the congregation during Mass. Each item was held up to the congregation at which time the congregation broke out in applause when the monstrance was displayed. That weekend was the feast of Corpus Christi. Padre Márcio explained that he felt receiving the monstrance this weekend was a special blessing and sign from God about our mutual relationship. They were overjoyed at the generosity of the parishioners here at Lourdes. Padre Márcio also blessed all the rosaries we had brought and they were distributed to everyone after Mass. I was able to read a letter to the chapel from Fr. Tim, and Brian was able to translate it to the congregation. It was such a humbling privilege to be able to celebrate Mass with them. I learned the reason they are not a full parish is that in Peru you must have a full time priest. Padre Márcio currently covers seven churches. He is very devoted to his ministry with the poor.

After Mass we were escorted outside to where they had a tent set up in front of the chapel. They had a wonderful celebration for us. This was totally unexpected. They presented a slide show displayed on the outside of the chapel wall on the history of the chapel. Equipment problems made it difficult to hear and view. They will be sending us a copy for all to view soon. They made us delicious plates of food and we enjoyed 2 hours of native Peruvian dancing and singing. It was an evening we will never forget. They have so little, but were so generous. It was another God moment.

On Sunday, we were able to meet again with Padre Márcio, Lucila, and their interpreter. We were able to talk over many things and also the vision for our two Catholic communities. I will be submitting a detailed report to the parish about our conversations. Their interpreter was not fluent in English and had some difficulties. Marc and Brooke speak some Spanish, so between the three of them we got our messages across to one another. We were also able to enjoy a good laugh at the process too.

One last special moment was when we were flying home. We were at the Arequipa airport and were walking outside to walk up the steps to the plane. Behind me I hear, "Cathy, Cathy", and I look back and see some figures waving out on the outside observation balcony. I couldn't see who it was as it was dark. I have come to find out that they came to the airport to surprise us, say good bye and send us off.

I want to thank everyone here at Lourdes as well as others from the community for the support you have given to this chapel, both spiritually and financially. The chapel asked me to express to all of you how very grateful they are. They are praying for all of us continually. Please keep them in your prayers as well. I must comment that I have always had to ask many times to get the chapel leadership to express their needs. They continue to feel that our spiritual relationship is most important.

I also want to thank all of you for your continued support for Dr. Joe Lohmuller and the Medical mission. Our Lourdes delegation was able to witness firsthand how your support benefits those desperately in

need of medical care. I pray that other members of Lourdes will have the opportunity to participate in the future.

Your sister in Christ,

Cathy Thennes