



# TASH TIMES

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## ■ GREETINGS

Dear Friends:

Did you know that Mexicans do not celebrate their Independence Day on Cinco de Mayo, May 5th? For most Mexicans, May 5th is just another day except in the State of Puebla, where they celebrate the big victory by a small group of Mexican soldiers against a much larger group of French soldiers on May 5th, 1862. The French were trying to take over Mexico 50 years after its independence.



*Father Scott speaking at La Clinica during a visit to Oaxaca.*

The actual Day of Independence for Mexicans is September 16th, a day celebrating victory against the Spanish and eventually leading to freedom. It began when a priest named Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla on September 16th, 1810, gave an impassioned speech called the Grito de Dolores, Cry of Sorrows, in which he called for Mexico's independence from Spain. He died fighting for that independence. It took 11 years to achieve it.

In 1917, a new constitution was passed in Mexico that restricted many religious practices and freedoms. It was passed by atheist leaders to curtail the Catholic Church's influence and power. Persecution against Catholics broke out,

which included killing priests. There was peaceful resistance at first, but then, in 1927, a violent uprising occurred, led primarily by farmers in the heavily Catholic areas of the country. The government called the rebels "Cristeros" since they invoked the name of Jesus Christ under the title of "Cristo Rey" or "Christ the King." The rebellion caused many deaths on both sides. It was eventually ended by diplomatic means brokered by US Ambassador Dwight W. Morrow, with financial relief and logistical assistance provided by the Knights of Columbus in the USA.

Today, Oaxacans struggle to be free of disease, drugs, unemployment, poverty, hunger, crime, and polluted water. Studies by the UN have called Southern Mexico a "Developing Economy." That is why many non-profits work in the State of Oaxaca to help the people. Oaxaca has the largest population of indigenous people in the country. Many times they have been abandoned by the Federal Government. That is something TASH will never do.

My reason for going to Oaxaca in 1998 was to visit friends. However, God had a different reason for my visit because I left Oaxaca committed to helping the poor and the sick. I asked God to open doors for me and to help me gain benefactors. I have heard people say, "The problems in our world are so big, what can one person do?" The answer is a lot. History is filled with examples of God doing amazing things through one person. St. Francis of Assisi is a perfect example. After being disowned by his father and left penniless, he began to attract men to his simple, joyful way of life so that in a few years, his community grew to three thousand friars. As a Capuchin-Franciscan friar, I have seen my ministry to the poor help more than a hundred thousand people in Oaxaca since 2000. To that end, thank you for your generous support. Without you, we couldn't help the poor and sick.

Daily I pray for you and your intentions.

God bless you!  
Father Scott

## ■ SERVANT LEADERSHIP

### Interview of La Clínica Director by Pete Noll

*Excerpts from a June interview with Dr. Gabriel Herrera Jimenez, Director of La Clínica del Pueblo, “Anna Seethaler”, A.C.*

When I asked Dr. Gabriel about servant leadership, he said he fondly recalls a doctor mentor of his who, despite being incredibly busy, always made the time to attend to those patients who couldn't afford to pay. He added that as a doctor who had taken the Hippocratic Oath, it was his duty to treat all those that he was able to help. Dr. Gabriel is 40 years old, one of three brothers, and grew up in Nochixtlan, in the Mixteca region of Oaxaca. At an early age, he dreamed of being a physicist but ultimately decided on studying medicine. He has a specialty in Integrated Medicine, a discipline that takes a holistic and humanistic approach to treat patients. He shared with me, “In contexts like Oaxaca, we are often limited by the technology and advanced medicine available, so we must use our resources carefully and focus on clinical solutions. Thus, I sought out my advanced studies and internships in Integrated Medicine.”



Dr. Gabriel has now served at La Clínica del Pueblo for almost three years, promoted in April 2021 to General Director. When I asked him why there is a need for a nonprofit hospital in a country that purports to provide universal healthcare, he chuckled, “As you know, we are far from having adequate coverage from only public or private clinics and hospitals.” He gave me a concrete example: “Last week, a man was brought in with a neck injury from a motorcycle accident. He had first gone to a private clinic, but the cost was prohibitive. The private practitioner referred him to La Clínica. Upon examination, it was clear that he was losing feeling, and if not operated on immediately, he would suffer lifelong paralysis. At La Clínica, he was moved to the OR and had a successful surgery. He will be able to return to work at 42 years old and provide for his family for years to come.” Dr. Gabriel added, “If he had gone to a public hospital, he would have been put in a long waiting line and it would have been too late.”

**This anecdote sums up, in large part, the need for La Clínica del Pueblo.** Thanks to your support of TASH, we can offer low-income patients affordable, timely, and humanistic care. It is not only accidents. In Oaxaca, there are people in their 40s who come in and need cataract surgery. With a successful operation, they can return to be fully functioning persons and not a burden to their families.



*Dr. Gabriel consulting his staff about a patient*

When I asked him more particularly about the big picture challenges of healthcare in Oaxaca, he said, “Oaxaca is a unique place, with many contrasts. It is rich in many non-material ways but also has many challenges. In terms of healthcare, a lot can be attributed to the mountainous geography and lack of infrastructure.” The current hospital system is centralized in the urban areas, but even a community that is only 25 km (10 miles) away may require a 1.5 hour trip. Or even more extreme, there are communities that can only be accessed by foot, 10-12 hours away from a reliable healthcare facility. He stressed the importance of facilitating basic preventative and culturally appropriate health information out in the communities. *(Continued...)*

As I concluded the interview, I asked him, “What would you say to Father Scott, if he were here face-to-face today?” He paused and said from the heart, “Gratitude for having started this project in Oaxaca... It is impressive to see tangible outcomes in the lives of so many people who can get timely and quality healthcare. An on-time assessment of diabetes can make all the difference in the life of an individual and their family.” His final words were, **“There are patients that have traveled up to 8 hours, knowing that they will be attended to and find a solution at La Clínica, which is an enormous testament to the reputation of La Clínica.”**

## ■ WITNESS TO OAXACA (by Pete Noll)

As the restrictions were slowly lifted in Oaxaca, La Clínica reached out to the many people who were affected by the 18-months of the COVID-19 pandemic. One very exciting initiative is aimed at the workers and their dependents who live off the landfill. Together with Father Renteria, we went out and met with their organizing committee. They shared with us that they are the third generation of families who originally settled out by the landfill and made a living by sorting and recycling all the trash brought out from the city and surrounding towns. The name of their organization is “Guie Niza,” a Zapotec name, which translates to English as “Water Flower.”

What struck me was the enormous pride they had in their work. One of the women group leaders, Rosa Luz, shared that while many saw them as invisible, it was the 180 workers who went through all the material, separating everything reusable or recyclable. They commented that we needed each other because if city dwellers continued to contaminate with disregard to the long-term effects, we would all suffer.

That said, because of recent trends where the garbage was picked through before it even arrived at the landfill, they now had to work longer days (7 am – 7 pm day shift; 7 pm to 7 am night shift with helmet lanterns) to make even a \$10 - 12 USD daily wage. Thus, they often didn’t have enough to cover basic medical care and school fees for their families.

Fortunately, as Fr. Scott shared in his letter, TASH will not abandon the people in need. After meeting with them, we agreed to pursue a medical fund that would be set up at La Clínica to fully cover their expenses. We calculate that more than 200 people will be helped by this fund over the next 60 days. And we are also working with two partner organizations to provide the youth with scholarships to stay in school.

I recently spoke with Ezequiel Garcia. He is the President of “Guie Niza,” married and with two daughters. He is 40 years old and has been working at the landfill since he was 10. He wanted to share his appreciation for this opportunity to have access to affordable medical care at La Clínica. He thanks everyone involved for being concerned about their health and well-being.



*Young boys already working 12-hour shifts at the landfill.*



*Signing the Medical Fund Agreement in La Clínica.*



*Guie Niza visiting La Clínica del Pueblo last month.*

## FUTURE EVENTS & UPDATES



Photo: BA Photography, 2020



**2021 Ole 5k Benefit Race:** Register at [www.ole5k.com](http://www.ole5k.com). We have reserved the same venue for this year's race on Saturday, October 2, so please mark your calendars. **Less than 90 days to go!**

**Planned Giving:** A gift to TASH improves lives. Behind every patient treated are loyal supporters, like you, who make their care possible. Every time an individual enters La Clínica, receives affordable and quality attention, or needs emergency care, your generosity is felt and remembered.

In addition to supporting the mission of TASH, a planned gift can provide substantial tax advantages, especially on gifts of stocks and real estate. To learn more, you can visit the website: <https://tashinc.org/donate/planned-giving/> or contact us at 412-219-9099.



Two Guie Niza families visit La Clínica for medical treatment under the new agreement facilitated by TASH and possible through your support.



Do you use social media? Follow @tashincorg for updates on our work.

**If you would like to make a donation to support the mission in Oaxaca, we would truly appreciate it.**

Please make a check out to TASH, Inc. and use the donation envelope included or you can make a secure donation online at [www.tashinc.org](http://www.tashinc.org).