



TASH TIMES

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www.tashinc.org

GREETINGS

Dear Friends:

When I first visited Oaxaca, I was 54 years-old. As I have mentioned before, the reason why I went was to see a good friend who was working with the poor as a lay Maryknoll missionary. My trip lasted four days. I planned on going home after the trip and asking my community if I could send my friend some money from our alms account to help his ministry. However, as Saint Teresa of Kolkata often said: "If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans." During my first visit to Oaxaca in 1998, it became very evident that women and children were the most vulnerable members in society. God spoke to my heart and told me to help them, and the rest is history. Since that first visit, the goal of TASH has been to help make the lives of women and children safer, healthier and more hopeful. Their faces appear in our newsletters because a picture is worth a thousand words. You can see in their faces how resilient they are in spite of the difficult situations in which they find themselves.



Amazing Grace - Dedicated Clinica Staff

During this past Advent I gave three-night talks at a parish. The talks were entitled Amazing Grace. These two words have become a regular part of my vocabulary when I speak about our ministry in Oaxaca. The word Grace means gift or favor. For me, when I put Amazing in front of Grace, it means incredible. Consider the following: I was 54 when I first went to Oaxaca. I knew very little Spanish. I had no intention of getting involved in a major undertaking to help the poor. I had a very busy preaching ministry. Yet what started as a small attempt on my part to help a friend with his ministry to the poor turned into a time of Amazing Grace. Since then, God has given me Amazing Grace many times during my 23 years of involvement in Oaxaca. Each time I received a Grace, it allowed me to reach out to more people in need because I trusted that I was doing God's Will.

People say to me that I am an amazing person to have accomplished so much. I can't take the credit; it belongs to God. The secret is not to get in the way when God starts working through you. Over the years I have asked people to join the Board of Directors and they said yes. Their support and guidance have been a big help as I learned how to deal with financial advisors, audits and bank statements. Yet nothing would have been accomplished if it were not for wonderful benefactors who got excited when I told them about my desire to help the poorest of the poor. Your generosity is another Amazing Grace in my life.

2022 will bring challenges for all of us. Every year does. This year will continue to be a difficult year for the people of Oaxaca. In his article about his visit to Oaxaca in December, our Board President Dr. Charley Gates will share with you what TASH has been able to do with the donations you sent us. I hope you will agree that many good things have been accomplished. With your help, we hope to accomplish much more in 2022.

Continue to count on my prayers every day for you and for all your intentions. May Our Lady of Guadalupe protect you in 2022.

God bless you!

Fr. Scott

■ Servant Leadership: “Reflections on My Week in Oaxaca”

I had the opportunity to make my ninth visit to Oaxaca from December 4 – 11. Accompanied by Pete Noll, TASH’s executive director, I spent two full days at La Clinica del Pueblo and divided the rest of my time among the other organizations that TASH supports. I met with hospital patients, scholarship winners, parents, and students who participate in programs sponsored by TASH. I also engaged the leaders of our partner organizations in deep and strategic conversations.

I witnessed firsthand the impact that TASH is having on the ground in Oaxaca, and I would like to share some of my thoughts and observations.



Charley tours La Clinica - Dec 2021

The pandemic has hit Oaxaca hard. Before the pandemic, Oaxaca was the second-poorest state in Mexico. Then Covid hit. Tourism tanked. The local economy became paralyzed. Without any government support, companies cut costs and reduced wages. Many workers lost their jobs or faced wage reductions of up to 50%. Inflation in Mexico is the highest that it has been in 20 years. Schools temporarily closed and classes moved online. However, many children do not have stable Wi-Fi and the truancy rate is climbing as a result of disengagement. There is no definite timetable to return to in-person classes.

The Oaxacan people remain resilient. Despite the hardships, I saw many positives. Construction projects funded by TASH are proceeding unabated for several partners. At one of the orphanages, the director is working 12-hour days, seven days per week to ensure that the children are well-cared for. Christmas decorations adorned the walls, and the children looked peaceful and content. At the school of music, I listened to one of the students masterfully play the violin concerto “Summer” from Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons*. It took my breath away! During a site visit at Canica, I asked some of the children what they wanted to be when they grew up. The answers ranged from doctor to teacher to accountant. These are remarkable answers from children whose parents are street vendors with little formal education. The indomitable spirit of the Oaxacan people never ceases to amaze me.



Charley visits Canica, a street children project supported by TASH

La Clinica del Pueblo is stronger than ever. The local Board has added new members and now consists of two Franciscan Brothers, one Catholic priest, two accountants, one surgeon, and one lawyer. This is a talented group with a wide range of expertise. During our Board meeting, they engaged in a healthy and lively debate. I have confidence in their commitment to La Clinica’s mission. I spent significant time with the executive director of the hospital, Dr. Gabriel Herrera. He is honest, hardworking, and capable. During a hospital staff meeting, employees viewed a video message from Father Scott and expressed in their own words the mission of La Clinica to serve the poorest of the poor. The staff embraces the idea that they are on the front lines of realizing this mission. The number of patients treated per month is on the rise as the pandemic eases.

The dollar goes a long way. I am always amazed at how far the US dollar goes in Oaxaca. Here are some examples of the costs of recent projects that TASH has funded:

\$0.20	The cost per person for one nutritionist-approved meal (with a protein)
\$3,000	The annual cost for one university scholarship (covers tuition and all ancillary expenses like books and transportation)

\$10,000	The annual salary for one internal medicine physician in a rural area
\$20,000	The cost to build two new dormitories that enabled an orphanage to double its capacity from 8 children to 16 children

Truly, a seemingly small donation can make a significant difference in Oaxaca.

In John 20:29, Jesus tells Thomas, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen, and have believed.” During my week in Oaxaca, I had the honor to witness TASH’s work firsthand, and I feel reinvigorated and inspired. I give my heartiest thanks to you who have not seen TASH’s work and continue to support and donate.

God love you.

Charley B. Gates, MD
Board President, TASH Inc

■ Witness to Oaxaca (by Pete Noll)



Miriam and her four daughters

As a prelude to the patient testimony, I wanted to share with you why our day 1 start was so special during Dr. Gates’s visit. On December 5, we attended Padre Renteria’s Mass at el Templo de Sta. Cecilia. To give some context, el Templo is a spacious, intentionally modest, yet incredibly well-constructed (to withstand regular seismic activity) Catholic church, located in Vicente Guerrero, one of the most marginalized communities in Oaxaca. Padre Renteria remembers that when he first approached Fr. Scott about support for the project, Fr. Scott wisely asked, “Why do you think the people want this project?” P. Renteria answered non-equivocally, “They say that it gives them hope.” Immediately Fr. Scott responded, “We will help.” I shared with Charley, there could be no better way to launch the week!

Miriam Luna Pedro was born in San Pedro Pochutla in 1989. When she and her siblings were little, her parents moved to San Martin Mexicapam to look for work. She recalls her childhood as happy, being close to her aunt, and going to school. She remembers being close to her loving father, while her mother was stricter and more distant. Unfortunately, things turned more difficult in secondary school, as she also had to be a caretaker for her younger siblings. Also, due to economic troubles, she would have to drop out of school to find low-wage employment.

Shortly thereafter, at 15 years old, she met her now ex-husband. He was 12 years her senior as they began their relationship. At 17 years old, she found out she was pregnant. This did not go well with her parents, and only months into her pregnancy, she decided to marry and move in with her now-husband. Her first daughter Maricela was born without complications, as were her other three daughters. She said, “I feel supported by my oldest daughters, who help care for the younger ones.”

As can be imagined, hardships compounded. In 2020, she started to have health problems and she found out her husband was in another relationship. Fortunately, her parents then welcomed her back home. Her parents had heard good things about the doctors at La Clinica del Pueblo and she decided to seek help for her health problems. In 2021, she was operated on at La Clinica and has been in an expected slow recovery.

Currently, she lives with her sister and four daughters in a home without electricity and running water. They have a neighbor who loans them a place to shower and clean themselves. Miriam hopes to recover fully soon, as she needs to find employment to help with the purchase of basic foodstuffs and other family expenses. While the situation could look bleak, Miriam says they feel optimistic, that together they will make ends meet.

At TASH, we recognize that Miriam's path forward won't be without new challenges but will continue to follow up with her and try to provide supplementary aid. Her surgery was a critical intervention and only made possible by the support of the TASH community. We are truly grateful for your continued support and prayers for patients and families like those of Miriam. You can continue to follow our work on our website: www.tashinc.org or contact us at any time.



One room dwelling reflects humble means of Miriam's condition

■ FUTURE EVENTS & UPDATES



Olé 5k Benefit Race: Save the date October 8, 2022

Please visit our website at www.ole5k.com for current information on the Fall race. We will be providing more updates on how you can become involved, as a race participant, sponsor, and/or volunteer.

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 Clinica, 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.

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.



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