



TASH TIMES

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■ GREETINGS

Dear Friends:



Fr. Scott pushing 80 :) !Feliz cumpleaños Padre Scott!

When my father turned 76, he would say that he was pushing 80. I turned 79 at the end of June, so I am definitely pushing 80. Like most older people, I find myself saying: “Where has the time gone?” I can certainly say that about my involvement with the poor of Oaxaca, Mexico. It has been 24 years since my first visit to Oaxaca, and 22 years since the Anna Seethaler Clinic/Hospital opened its doors.

With each passing year, as generous people continued to support my ministry, we enlarged the hospital and began to send medical teams into the mountains to help the people who could not make the four-hour trip to the city. At first my relationship with the people was hindered by not knowing Spanish. I didn’t want to always need a translator, so I decided at the age of 54 to learn Spanish. I believe that a person needs

three basic skills to learn another language. The first is a good memory. The second is the ability to imitate sounds. The third is not to be afraid to make mistakes.

In the United States, I have met people who have had four or six years of Spanish in school and can’t or won’t speak to me in Spanish. They don’t want to make a mistake. I decided when I was learning Spanish that if I made a mistake, I would laugh at myself and ask the people to correct me. At first, they didn’t want to correct me because I was a priest from the USA and a benefactor. I kept telling them to correct me and they finally did, which was a big help. I remember a time when I made a very funny mistake. I was at a fiesta, and I noticed that the man who was sitting beside me was left-handed, which I am. So, I wanted to say to him: “Juan, I see that you are left-handed.” However, what I said was: “Juan, I see that you are deaf.” He said, “No Father, I am not deaf.” I said: “Juan, you are definitely deaf, and I waved my left hand.” He started to laugh and told me that the word for left-handed was zurdo, but I was saying sordo, which is the word for deaf. Everybody at the table had a good laugh including me. I learned an important lesson that day. Being from Pittsburgh, when I speak fast, I swallow the vowels. Now I am careful to pronounce the vowels correctly.

As I turned 79, I challenged myself never to lose my sense of humor. There is a funny story about two elderly friars who were walking and talking. The first said: “It’s Windy.” The second said: “No it’s Thursday.” The first one said, “I am too, let’s get a drink.” St. Teresa of Avila said: “A sense of humor is a sign of the presence of God.”

When I first visited Oaxaca, I was amazed how often I heard laughter. Although the poor faced many challenges, they were able to laugh, which I think kept them from despairing. Laughter is the music of the heart. It is pain turned inside out. It is the shock absorber of life’s hard knocks. When I was on the radio for twenty years, I would often remind my listeners not to forget the Eleventh Commandment: “Thou shalt not take thyself too seriously.”

I help at a local church three days a week. At the Sunday Mass, as I walk down the aisle, I see many children smile and wave because they know there will be some humor during my homily. I believe it is okay to use humor in Church especially in the times in which we live. Life is quite challenging right now. There is enough doom and gloom in the

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Father Scott, continued

media. Why subject people to it during Mass? The purpose of preaching is to share “Good News.” I heard about a Christmas pageant that some children were giving. One little boy, dressed as an angel, was told to say: “Behold, I bring glad tidings!” He went on stage, he froze and couldn’t remember his line. Finally, he said: “Boy do I have Good News for you.”

It is my fervent hope that our newsletter will always bring Good News about our ministry in Oaxaca.

God bless you!

Fr. Scott

■ Servant Leadership - The ultimate human freedom

“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.” - Dr. Viktor Frankl



Charley visits the street children center supported by TASH. The letters read, “G – R – A – C – I – A – S T – A – S – H”

Dr. Viktor Frankl was a Jewish psychiatrist born in Vienna, Austria, in 1905. Dr. Frankl was a contemporary of fellow Austrian psychiatrist Dr. Sigmund Freud. In 1942, Dr. Frankl and his family were arrested by the Nazis. Dr. Frankl spent the next three years in four concentration camps, including time in Auschwitz and Dachau. Dr. Frankl’s wife, his parents, and his brother died or were executed in the camps.

Stripped to a primitive existence and deprived of all possessions and comforts in the camps, Dr. Frankl suffered hunger, humiliation, cold, and untold brutalities. The threat of execution at any moment loomed over him. Under this type of extreme pressure, Dr. Freud had predicted that people’s behavior would regress to their most basic animal instincts. While Dr. Frankl witnessed the deterioration of some inmates, he also observed that other inmates remained positive and altruistic against all odds. Dr. Frankl recalls the incident of a starving inmate sharing his last bit of food with another inmate!

Dr. Frankl defined the freedom to choose one’s attitude in any situation as a person’s “ultimate freedom.” People are always capable of choosing their attitudes and reactions even under the harshest of circumstances. A person may choose not to exercise this freedom, but it cannot be taken away.

The knowledge that we freely choose how we respond to situations is simple yet profound. At our very core, we are in control, whether we accept that control or not. This offers valuable guidance on how to handle the difficult situations

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Servant Leadership, continued

and the suffering that we encounter in our lives. Suffering is inextricably a part of the human experience. I see suffering when I visit Oaxaca. I experience suffering in my own life. I hear about the suffering of my patients during my office hours. Even Jesus Christ himself, who was fully human, was not spared the pain of suffering during his time on Earth.

If suffering cannot be avoided, what can be done? As Dr. Frankl notes, we can choose our response to the suffering in our lives. Does the suffering make us bitter, hardened, and vengeful? Or does it make us stronger, wiser, and more resilient? Does the suffering crush us, or does it propel us to new heights? Our attitude determines which path we take, and we have the freedom to choose our attitude. We make these important choices daily, even hourly.

During my most recent visit to Oaxaca, I had the pleasure of meeting Joaquin Bollo, a 22-year-old trumpet player in the school of music at Santa Cecelia. Under life circumstances that would have crushed other people, Joaquin excelled in the music program and achieved a full music scholarship from a prestigious music program in Monaco (located on the French Riviera). Joaquin undoubtedly made many conscious choices along the way to find the good in his situation.

Let us learn from the words of Dr. Frankl and from the example of Joaquin. Let us wisely exercise our ultimate freedom and choose to face all the challenging situations in our lives with positivity. The potential benefits are enormous.

Thank you for your prayers and for your continued support of TASH. God love you.

Charley Gates, MD
President, TASH Board of Directors

■ Witness to Oaxaca – by Pete Noll



Joaquin playing at the Santa Cecilia Music school.

Joaquin Horacio Juarez Bollo was born in Oaxaca in February 2000. His father is originally from Tabasco state, while his mother is from the Oaxaca coastal region. He also has two brothers. Like many young people born into difficult economic and social conditions, his upbringing presented many challenges. We will explore his notable life journey to the present, and as you have read in Charley's article, his story includes his recently receiving a prestigious scholarship to study in Europe.

His mother recounts that when he was young, he was hyperactive yet observant. Joaquin remembers many people commenting that he was especially bright. In his early school years, he remembers participating in traditional dance performances, and from those experiences, he aspired to be a star singer. At age 8, he asked his parents to buy him records of famous performers from Sinaloa and Durango, well-known for mariachi. He recalls every day after school, singing out loud for hours. "Every time I sang, everything was happier for me."

Unfortunately, at 9 years old, his family was forced to move. He would never again have contact with those childhood friends. The move was an especially trying time for the family. They arrived in Vicente Guerrero, a rough neighborhood on the outskirts of Oaxaca City. The tiny two-room house was under construction, and they didn't even have a kitchen to prepare meals.

However, after the initial shock, he and his family started to adapt. He found certain solace in school, especially with music. But because he was talented academically, his dad encouraged him to study architecture or mathematics.

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Witness, continued

Ironically, Joaquin recalls that his dad had a voice like the famous Vicente Fernandez (a famous mariachi singer and symbol of Mexican culture and tradition) and had an appreciation for music, having taken free music classes at the local cultural center. However, his day job took him on the road.

It was from one of those off-site jobs, that they got the news that his dad had passed. It was especially tough, as he had not been nearby. Joaquin remembers that days after the funeral services, he returned to school, and all his classmates hugged him. The death of his father was the most difficult, impactful moment of his life.

From the hard times, a blessing was born. Joaquin heard about a music school. (This incredible music school project has been supported by Fr. Scott and TASH for the past ten years, owing to Fr. Scott's relationship with a local priest, Jose Renteria). Subscriptions were open. He applied and was accepted. Joaquin was so emotional for the opportunity, as the school also covers the costs of low-income students. He ended up on the trombone and after their first music concert, he knew this is what he wanted to pursue. He appreciates the dedicated teachers, like Vladimir Medina and Roger Bobo. After years of effort, support, and following his dream, Joaquin has a full scholarship to the best music program in Mexico City and received the scholarship to study abroad.

Thanks to the extreme generosity of the TASH community, we can support ancillary projects like the Santa Cecilia School for Music, that allows young people, like Joaquin, to overcome enormous odds and pursue their dreams. You can learn more about the partners organizations: <https://tashinc.org/about/our-partners/>



FUTURE EVENTS & UPDATES

90 days and counting! Register here at www.ole5k.com and please share this opportunity for family fun and this occasion to support Fr. Scott's work in Oaxaca, Mexico. Thank you!



During COVID quarantine Fr Scott recorded 30 five-minute reflections for the parish grouping where he preaches masses. Deacon Rick Caruso facilitated the project, and we have this free resource available for you on-line at: <https://tashinc.org/history/archives/> Go to Joyful Reflections and click on the episode you wish to hear.

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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