



# TASH TIMES

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## ■ GREETINGS

Dear Friends:

During my twenty-five years of involvement in Oaxaca, Mexico, I have had many people ask me how to pronounce Oaxaca (wa-HAH-ka). It is a Nahuatl (Aztec) word which refers to a tree called “juaje” found around the capital city.

Although the Patroness of Mexico is Our Lady of Guadalupe, most cities have their own special patron. The city of Oaxaca has for its patron Nuestra Señora de la Soledad. (Our Lady of Solitude). Legend has it that a mule driver, guiding his burro train through the streets of Oaxaca, suddenly discovered he had an extra animal carrying a huge box on its back. Curious officials opened the box and found within it the image of the Blessed Virgin of Solitude. A church was built on that site.

The Basilica of Nuestra Señora de la Soledad was built between 1682 and 1690. The architecture style is Baroque. Nuestra Señora de la Soledad was declared the patroness of the city in 1909. At our clinic/hospital there is a stone image of the patroness. The architect who built most of the clinic had the image placed on a sight that he had prepared for it with a cone over it that allows the sunlight to shine completely on the whole image once a year.

I will always remember the first Mass I had at the clinic. Present were staff members with their families, neighbors, benefactors, doctors, and nurses. The offertory procession took about 10 minutes. Fresh flowers were brought up and placed around the altar. Gifts of bread and fruit were then brought up. Since my Spanish was rather primitive at the time, a friend of mine translated for me the words of the people who were in the offertory procession. Even the little children had something to say to me.



Fr. Scott spreads joy to the people of Oaxaca – Photos from 2002.



Following the Mass, there was a fiesta with food, music, and lots of laughter due to my mistakes in Spanish. I laughed the hardest. **Laughter is the music of the heart.** It is pain turned inside out. It is internal jogging. Laughter can often defuse an angry situation. My time in Oaxaca allowed me to laugh often.

A few years later at a fiesta I attended, I met Pete Noll. He

had heard that I was from Pittsburgh and was eager to meet me since he grew up close to Pittsburgh in Sewickley, Pa. We became close friends and over the years he served in a number of important roles for TASH. He is now our Executive Director. He lives in Oaxaca. Having someone on the ground there is a tremendous help.

On another note, I had a special 80th Birthday. **I want to thank all of you for giving gifts in honor of my birthday to help rebuild the dorm at Ciudad de los Niños.** Your response has been great. I will publish the final amount collected in my next newsletter.

Wishing you many blessings!

Fr. Scott

## ■ Servant Leadership – The Power of Now - by Charley B. Gates, MD

“And Jesus said unto him, ‘No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.’  
(Luke 9:62)

In his book “The Power of Now,” German author Eckhart Tolle discusses the importance of the present moment. The “Now,” as Tolle refers to it, is precious because it is the only time that we ever truly have. There is never a moment which is not “Now.” The past consists of present moments which no longer exist; the future consists of present moments which have yet to come to pass. It is easy to inadvertently overlook the present moment because we are fixated on the past or on the future. Too much focus on the past produces guilt and regret; too much focus on the future generates fear and anxiety.

When our focus is on the present moment, it is easier to recognize the wonder, beauty, and love that fill the world around us. It is easy to lose our sense of wonder at the miracle of life on Earth. Consider this: a human cell, which is no more than 1/10,000 of an inch in length, carries enough information in its DNA to fill 600 books, each 1,000 pages in length! This type of intelligence exceeds human comprehension.

The world abounds with love (despite media reports to the contrary). Love is the most powerful force in a person’s life. God’s love for us is so profound that He gave us His only begotten Son. There is also love between friends, family, and colleagues. These love relationships imbue a person’s life with value and meaning. Too often, these relationships are de-emphasized, as the hustle and bustle of daily life overpowers the Now.

In Oaxaca, I have witnessed a strong embrace of the present moment. This is reflected by a deep Faith in God. Faith mitigates fear and worry about the future. When the time comes, the people believe that they will have the ability and resources necessary to solve the problem at hand. In many cases, **I see TASH as the vehicle through which God is working in Oaxaca.** When the 100 workers lost their jobs due to the closing of the local landfill last year, TASH stepped in to provide start-up capital to keep many of these people gainfully employed with a means to earn a living. I imagine that this unanticipated economic support was an answer to many prayers.



*Since 2022, TASH supports displaced landfill workers with micro-enterprises.*

Additionally, there is less confusion of identity with material things. This may be in part due to the poverty that is present. Despite this material poverty, there is a spiritual richness that brings with it a sense of inner peace. I have been inspired by this on many occasions. During one of my visits to the School of Music at Santa Cecelia, I was struck by a palpable aura of peace that emanated from an elderly Oaxacan woman. I complimented her on this, and I asked her how I could feel so much peace. “You already have peace within you,” she told me. “Everyone does. But you are too busy to feel it.”

There is also a powerful sense of connectivity and community among Oaxacans. A focus on the Now helps them to pay deep attention to the other person, to

listen attentively, and to let go of the past. These are crucial skills to forming and maintaining successful relationships. I see the effect of the strong fabric of relationships and community in all the organizations with which TASH works. **At the Clínica del Pueblo hospital, it is rare to encounter a patient who is alone.** There is invariably a family member or a friend accompanying each patient.

The present moment is a treasure; it is the only time that we ever truly have. I imagine that the plowman in the

*Servant Leadership, continued*

biblical parable is focusing intently on the Now, never looking backwards and only looking ahead far enough to optimize his next step.

God love you.

Charley B. Gates, MD

President, TASH Board of Directors

## ■ Witness to Oaxaca – by Pete Noll

On June 19, I had the opportunity to join the Clínica social work team on a home visit. I invited along Capuchin Friar Carlos Pech, the President of the Clínica Board of Directors. After a short drive out of Oaxaca city, we met with Rodolfo Rafael Santiago Rodriguez and his wife of 55 years, Efigenia Castellanos Domínguez, in their village of San Andrés Ixtlahuaca. Rodolfo was born on April 23, 1942, the second of ten children. He recalled that his early years were challenging as the family had little or no money; so much so that there would be barely enough to eat. His father had a drinking problem and would often disappear for several days without returning home.

Owing to these realities, Rodolfo remembers feeling a need to help with the family income and started working on their farm from as young as eight or nine years old. He doesn't recall having time in his childhood for play or social interactions. He would continue this daily routine for the remainder of his adolescence. It wasn't until at 25 years old that Rodolfo got offered a government job. He was hired by the state health department to do maintenance type work, but in the coastal part of Oaxaca. It was during that time that he met his wife, who was ten years younger. They would date for two years before having their first son, Hector, and seven years later, their daughter Xóchitl.

To return to the family home, Rodolfo renewed farming. While his income was varied, he shared that he always made enough to provide for his family. During our visit, we sat outside of their humble one-room abode. You could note the surroundings with flowers, plants, and fruit trees. They shared with us that their gardening still brought them joy.

During the next hour, Rodolfo and his wife shared with us their recent health problems. Recently, he suffered a stroke that led to a painful fall. That led them to the Clínica del Pueblo. Over the next days and weeks, he was seen by different medical specialists. He received medications, and then underwent both an extensive partial hip replacement and prostate surgery. For days, Efigenia was convinced that she was losing him and would curl up in his hospital bed and hug him; while whispering to him, "Hug me back, hold me tight."

**They believe that their love, faith, and medical care at the Clínica is what helped pull them through.** It is also thanks to the TASH donor community, as the final hospital bill would reach close to \$4,000 USD in local currency and was covered 100%. They also had logistical support from the town government, who sent an ambulance to transport them each time to the Clínica for more than a dozen follow-up appointments.



*Couple grateful for the Clínica's care and medical attention.*

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*Witness to Oaxaca, continued*

It was a true team effort and blessing for them.

As we wrapped up our inspiring time with them, Rodolfo, now 81, was reflecting on his health and the loss of their son-in-law to cancer; thus, leaving their daughter a young widow. He mentioned a word, “castigar”, which some people use to say that the higher power is “punishing” them for an accumulation of misdeeds. Fr. Carlos sympathetically intervened and asked Rodolfo to reflect about the word, “castigar”. Fr. Carlos shared, “As a person of faith, my God cares for (“cuidar”) us, he doesn’t punish (“castigar”) us. Rodolfo, with a warm smile, retracted, and said, “Yes, that makes more sense to me. This is part of aging. We have been so fortunate to have lived the life we have. We feel cared for by the Clínica.”

In closing, **ever since Fr. Scott founded the Clínica, the mission has always emphasized both medical quality and humanistic care for the poor.** I believe these one-on-one interactions where we get to listen, share a moment, and express appreciation is one of the important ways that our service contributes to many lives here in Oaxaca, Mexico.

On behalf of all the families, like Rodolfo and Efigenia, we are grateful for your continued support and wish you the best throughout the remainder of the year.



*Friar Carlos spends time with recovering patient.*



## FUTURE EVENTS & UPDATES



Four months and counting! We hope that you will join us as a sponsor, racer, volunteer, or race day attendee as **we celebrate the 15th edition of the Ole 5k Benefit.** This year, we will be organizing a sponsor “*Building Bridges Brunch and private Mass.*” Father Scott will conduct the Mass at St. Augustine Friary on Sunday, October 8.

100% of the proceeds will be sent to our projects in Oaxaca, Mexico, where many families must get by on \$5 - \$7 per day. With great need comes greater generosity. Family fun for a worthy cause! You can find more information and updates: [www.ole5k.com](http://www.ole5k.com)

**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).



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