



TASH TIMES

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■ GREETINGS

Dear Friends:



Fr. Scott, pictured outside of the Clinica del Pueblo, with his nephew Mike Seethaler and his son, Michael, during their August visit.

In the last newsletter I said that I would wait until this newsletter to tell you about my visit to Oaxaca during this past August. Dr. Charley Gates in his reflection covered very well the itinerary we had during our visit. What I want to do now is tell you about my emotional reactions during the visit.

It had been five years since I last visited Oaxaca. This was due to the Covid epidemic as well as problems I was having with my health. I was more than ready to go down this year. As in the past, I visited all the groups that we have been helping for years. However, I was most eager to visit the orphanage that we began to support during the past three years. You may remember that TASH got involved when an earthquake destroyed half of the orphanage. With your help we not only restored the second half of the first floor, but also built the second floor so that they now are able to house one hundred children instead of fifty. I was impressed with the cleanliness of the place. The

children were bright and clean in their uniforms. Their beds were neatly made. We ate with them and the food was good.

One little girl attached herself to one of our men and went everywhere he went attached to his finger. I found out later that she was not so much interested in him as his watch. He had one of those new watches that does lots of things and she was amazed at the colors and movements. She would not let go of his hand. She looked to be three-years-old. Some of our travelers left with tears in their eyes.

My emotional moment came when we were at St. Cecilia Church. After having Mass, we had refreshments and then listened to their school of music. They played a variety of music. Being grade school and high school students, they were very impressive. However, after they played, a young boy was introduced who would play some classical guitar pieces by himself. His name was Dani (Danny). The pastor told me that he came from the poorest neighborhood in the area. He was twelve-years-old but looked eight because of malnutrition. He played a guitar that was almost as tall as he. He played from memory. He played very well and received a lot of applause. When I thought about what his home life must have been like I began to choke up. During my twenty-five visits to Oaxaca, I had seen a lot of poor people. Yet I never choked up. Dani somehow touched my heart profoundly. Just as we were about to leave, Dani asked if he could say something to us. He thanked us for his guitar and promised to take good care of it. You could tell that it was the most precious thing he had. I often pray for Dani.

Christmas will soon be here. Please consider giving us a special gift so that we can continue our ministry to the poor in Oaxaca. Your gift will be the best Christmas present they will receive. Some will receive free medical attention. It will supply a safe place for children to study and play. It will help young people like Dani find their talents and use them for the honor and glory of God.

After twenty-seven years of asking you for financial help, one might think that I would grow tired of asking. I will never grow tired because God wants me to do everything in my power to help the poor of Oaxaca. During my first visit to Oaxaca during Thanksgiving 1998, God spoke very clearly to me that I needed to help the poor of Oaxaca. I said yes and amazing things

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Father Scott, continued

started to happen. Of course, we had our share of problems and disappointments, but I never grew discouraged because I knew that God was on my side.

This past June I turned 81-years-old. Although it is true that none of us knows how long we will live, I certainly am in my senior years. I already have outlived my parents and my older brother. It is up to God how many years I have left.

During the Seasons of Thanksgiving and Christmas, I will be praying for you in a special way. You are the people who made my dream come true. Allowing me not only to build a hospital but to enlarge a Church. To work closely with organizations that help children. To feed the poor during Covid. To supply clean water for school children. To rebuild and enlarge an orphanage. Thank you, thank you, thank you! May God reward you for your generosity!

Wishing you many blessings!

Fr. Scott

■ Servant Leadership – “Proactive versus reactive healthcare” - by Charley B. Gates, MD

There are two types of healthcare: proactive healthcare and reactive healthcare.

Proactive healthcare emphasizes early intervention while a patient is still healthy. These include screening tests, lifestyle changes, and the initiation of appropriate medications. The idea is to diagnose and treat a disease before any significant symptoms or complications have developed.

Reactive healthcare begins after significant symptoms of a disease have taken hold. These treatments include surgeries, procedures, and often stronger or more toxic medications. The idea is to mitigate the damage that the disease has caused, seeking a cure when possible.

Though both types of healthcare are needed, proactive care undoubtedly leads to better outcomes and lower healthcare costs. Despite this, the US healthcare system focuses most of its efforts on reactive care. This can be explained by the following reasons:

- Financial incentives favor the development of expensive treatments, like devices and surgeries, which are more easily monetized by individual corporate entities. Though preventative treatments are cost-efficient, the savings are shared by all of society and are harder for an individual corporation to capture.
- Patients are often not willing to make lifestyle changes or take medications before they have symptoms. In fact, many do not make these changes even after they have symptoms.
- Medical training focuses on learning how to treat diseases. Much less time is spent learning about how to prevent diseases.

At La Clínica del Pueblo hospital in Oaxaca, proactive healthcare is front and center. La Clínica’s community health program sponsors town hall gatherings and school workshops that focus on early disease detection and treatment. At these events, La Clínica physicians conduct screening tests and provide education. For patients who test positive, referrals for treatment are made. It is no exaggeration to say that these timely interventions save patients’ lives and potentially spare them years of suffering.

The case of Don Miguel Ortiz illustrates this perfectly. Don Ortiz is a 46-year-old man who makes his living selling red clay



Ruth, a Clínica nutritionist and member of the community health team, applies a Type II diabetes screening. Credit: Stephen Rubin

Servant Leadership, continued

pots and mugs on the streets of Oaxaca to tourists. He is the sole provider for his son. His economic situation is delicate. He has little savings and no economic safety net in case an illness or calamity strikes.

Though he did not realize it, Don Ortiz was in the early stages of type II diabetes mellitus, an acquired resistance to insulin. In its early stages, diabetes is silent. Higher than normal blood sugars are not felt by a person. However, those sustained high blood sugars over time lead inexorably to devastating complications: kidney failure, coronary artery disease, neuropathy, non-healing foot ulcers, blindness, and amputations, to name a few. Type II diabetes has almost reached epidemic status in Oaxaca. One government agency estimate is that 50% of children born in Oaxaca after 2010 will develop type II diabetes.

Enter La Clínica and its community health program. At a screening event in 2022, Don Ortiz was diagnosed with pre-diabetes. He was referred to La Clínica, where a multi-disciplinary team featuring an internal medicine physician, a nutritionist, and a social worker treated him. Don Ortiz received vital education. He learned how to test his blood sugars. He learned what foods he should consume and what foods he should avoid. Armed with this information and motivated by concern for his son, Don Ortiz made important lifestyle changes.

At his most recent follow up, Don Ortiz's blood sugars have normalized. He now has the knowledge and lifestyle habits that he needs to maintain his health and continue to provide for his family. With tears in his eyes, Don Ortiz thanked his physicians at La Clínica, crediting them with sparing him from the complications of this silent but deadly disease.

La Clínica's community health program does not earn any significant revenue. It is funded by TASH. TASH recognizes the powerful impact of early disease diagnosis and treatment. This is one way that TASH, working through La Clínica, maximizes its impact in Oaxaca.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support.

God love you.

Charley B. Gates, MD
President, TASH Board of Directors

■ Witness to Oaxaca – by Pete Noll



Doña Rosa outside her make shift home in the outskirts of Oaxaca City. October 2024.

Doña Rosa has lived a very difficult life by all accounts. Rosa Guadalupe Martínez Hernández, 61, was born in a rural village, Santo Domingo Tepuxtepec, Mixe. The staff didn't know a lot about her early life, as she was reserved when she first arrived at the Clínica del Pueblo. She went to the Clínica because she had cataracts in both eyes and had lost her vision. She sought out the surgery so that she could work and regain some quality of life. As part of the pre-op revision, they also detected that her blood sugar was high and that she suffered from diabetes. Doña Rosa is so economically poor; **she often doesn't have the \$1 US to take the bus round-trip from her home to the Clínica.**

Thanks to the compassionate approach taken by the social workers, she began to open up more. She had been abandoned by both her ex-husband and two of her three sons. She had moved to Oaxaca City with the youngest and seven-year-old son at the time. However,

he seems to have held a lot of resentment towards her, perhaps because of the absence of his father. It is not uncommon that certain communities and cultures believe in curses. Doña Rosa shared that she believes her problems started when she was cursed. She believes that led to the destruction of the family and the loss of income. She had also been scammed out of her land where she had livestock, when the buyer decided to never pay her. Apparently, the lawyer never did anything or was

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Witness to Oaxaca, continued

complicit in the scam. In addition, her youngest son, the one who was living with her, fell into addictions with drugs.

However, near where she now lives (in a one room abode on a hilltop about 45 minutes from the Clinica), she was invited by several Pentecostal sisters to make a mid-life conversion, which she credits with providing her with purpose. “Gracias a Dios,” “Glory to God,” she said and quoted in full, John 3:16. Now she says, “I am able to struggle on”. Her son is in a center for addictions and scheduled to be released in early December. She hopes that God will have touched his heart. Apart from her health, that seems to be her biggest desire. **One might ask, what more might the Clinica be able to do or what more could I do?** These are worthy questions.

On October 18, as I visited her, along with Ivette, the Clinica social worker, my heart was heavy, and my mind was racing. By the end of the hour, I felt a sense of peace. Rosa said, tengo esperanza (I have hope). Doña Rosa had recovered her eyesight in both eyes. She was managing her diabetes. She was caring for a small vegetable and flower garden. I purchased two small market bags (\$8 USD each) that she weaves and sells to provide a little income for her basic needs. Ivette left her a small food basket, which the Clinica provides during home visits to the most in need. I left feeling, **if she can have hope, can't we all!**

As we arrive at the end of the calendar year, I am grateful that I can listen to and share with you these stories in **Witness to Oaxaca**. They are brights lights of promise and made possible due to an incredible community effort including you, the TASH Board, the patients who trust in the Clínica, and of course, the devoted Clínica del Pueblo staff. ¡Muchas gracias!



FUTURE EVENTS & UPDATES

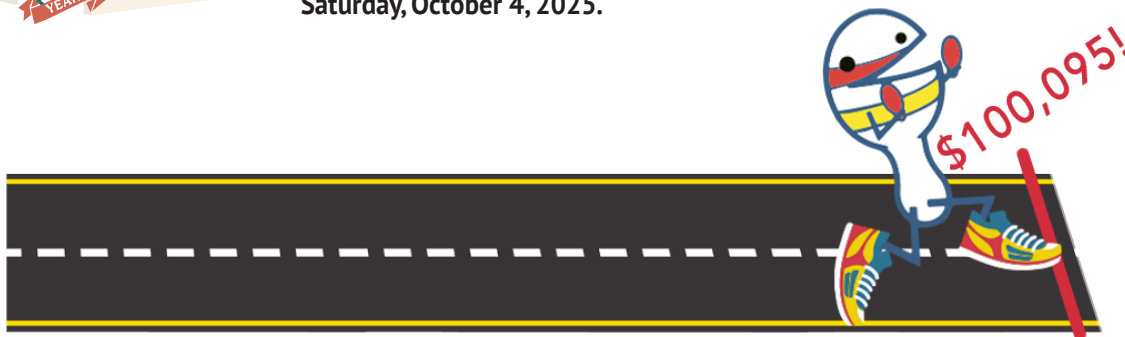
“Keep the dream alive! Support the next 25 years of the Clinica del Pueblo!”



In the next newsletter we will be sharing with you a calendar of activities for this important milestone: Celebrating 25 years of the Clinica's success in 2025!

Olé 5k Benefit Race Results:

Thanks to you, we reached 55 sponsors and raised over \$100,000. This success will allow us to continue our support to health, education, and economic opportunities for those most in need in Oaxaca, Mexico. Save the date. We have booked North Park for **Saturday, October 4, 2025.**



If you are able 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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