



JOYFUL REFLECTIONS

Every person you help...makes ripples in society.

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TASHINC.ORG

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

Clinica Del Pueblo
"Anna Seethaler" A.C.
EST. 2000

Called to Serve: My First Journey to Oaxaca

I still remember the first time I arrived in Oaxaca in 1998. I truly experienced culture shock. I was told not to drink the water, even from the hotel faucets. Nor was I to brush my teeth with spigot water. I was told to throw used toilet paper in the basket and not flush it because there was no separate waste disposal. I saw many poor people sitting on the sidewalks asking for money. Children running around half-naked. Dogs were everywhere. The heat was intense.

One evening, I was celebrating Mass at a church close to the clinic. After Mass, a young man asked if I would bless his parents. I agreed. They were waiting outside. The young man told me that his parents did not speak Spanish, so I asked him to translate my blessing into their language. If I remember correctly, there were over 15 indigenous languages spoken in the State of Oaxaca at that time, and the primary one was Zapotec. The Zapotecs ruled Oaxaca until the Aztecs came down from the north. The Aztecs only ruled for about a hundred years before the Spanish arrived, so their influence on the culture was minimal.

My Spanish was very basic at that time, so I needed my friend Joe to translate for me. By the end of each day, my head was usually aching, but I was excited to be there. With each passing day, I became more and more convinced that God wanted me to do something to help the poor. Slowly, I realized that health care was what the poor needed most. Joe agreed. By the time I left, a plan was in place. Joe took the lead in finding the property. A closed bakery was found, and we were able to buy it for \$150,000, which was exactly the amount I had accumulated from my preaching.

It is said that God works in mysterious ways. I truly believe this. It certainly was the case with my involvement in Oaxaca, Mexico.

God bless you!
Fr. Scott



Father Scott poses with staff of La Clínica shortly after its opening.

Break the Mirror

“I weep for Narcissus, but I never noticed that Narcissus was beautiful. I weep because, each time that he knelt beside my banks, I could see, in the depth of his eyes, my own beauty reflected.”

- Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*

Brazilian author Paulo Coelho begins his book, *The Alchemist*, by recounting the Greek myth of Narcissus, a hunter of exceptional beauty. Narcissus frequently admired his own reflection in a lake until he drowned one day trying to embrace it. The irony, of course, is that, while Narcissus was obsessing over his own beauty, the lake was doing precisely the same thing!

Narcissus suffered from selfishness, which Father Scott has said is one of the principal problems facing the world today. Despite the intention to help oneself, selfishness paradoxically hurts a person, leading to increased anxiety, depression, and a lower overall satisfaction with life. In the dramatic case of Narcissus, his selfishness cost him his life. Selfishness blinds a person to the needs of others, which harms relationships. This leads to isolation. Human beings are wired for connection with others. In previous articles, I have written about the power of being a member of a community. Without this connection, significant physiological and psychological disruptions take place. The effects of isolation are comparable to the effects of smoking a pack of cigarettes per day. Social media has accelerated the trend towards selfishness and isolation.

The opposite of selfishness is selflessness. Selflessness enhances relationships and fortifies emotional well-being. At the heart of selflessness is service to others. Service to others takes many forms, and it doesn't require large amounts of time or money either. Small acts of kindness produce as much positive energy and love as larger philanthropic acts.

We have a responsibility to give back and to help others. In a society that thrives on competition and ranking, it is important to remember that life is not a zero-sum game. Opportunities abound to create win-win opportunities. By helping another person, we have the ability to make everyone's life better and to create a positive environment in which we can thrive and find happiness as well.

In his book, *Be Useful*, Arnold Schwarzenegger recounts the speech that his late father-in-law, Sargent

Shriver, gave to the graduating class of Yale in 1974. Shriver instructs the graduates to “break your mirrors” – to look less at themselves and more at each other in the spirit of service.

In Oaxaca, Father Scott founded La Clínica del Pueblo hospital, with service to the medical needs of the poor as its primary aim. Twenty-five years later, La Clínica continues to provide quality medical care with compassion on a daily basis to those who are most in need. Under the leadership of the local board of directors, led by Franciscan priest Carlos Pech, La Clínica has undergone a rebirth. La Clínica has re-dedicated itself to its mission to serve the poor through workshops with staff members and reunions with patients. This institutional refresh has spurred the vigorous pursuit of the hospital's original mission with renewed zeal.



Father Carlos Pech gives a homily during Mass at La Clínica del Pueblo in December 2025.

As a part of the hospital's rebirth, several large capital projects were also initiated, including a "to-the-studs" renovation of the operating room and the installation of an electronic medical record (EMR). The EMR replaces paper charts and dramatically improves the ability of hospital staff to track patient outcomes and to measure impact. Other needed capital projects are in the planning phase, and these will continue over the next two to three years.

By design, La Clínica depends on donations to survive. It focuses exclusively on a population that cannot pay for its services. TASH is the principal supporter of La Clínica, and TASH will be funding the upcoming capital projects. In turn, TASH depends on the generosity of its donors. Time and time again, TASH donors have demonstrated inspiring generosity and unwavering spiritual support.

At the end of our lives, we will get much **more happiness** and **peace** from having served others and improved the world than we will ever get from our appearance, our cars, or our homes. Ignore your suffering; look at the world around you for opportunities to serve. Do not ignore small opportunities to create positive ripples in the ocean of life. Make the effort to improve a stranger's day with a smile or a helping hand; you will benefit as much as the other person will.

Break your mirror!

As always, I am grateful for your continued support.

God love you.

Charley B. Gates, MD

President, TASH Board of Directors

Joyful Reflections: The Pillar of Almsgiving

As I sit down to write this issue's Witness article, Ash Wednesday is less than a week away. Ash Wednesday will usher in the season of Lent, which calls for us to focus on prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in preparation for the Lord's Resurrection at Easter. In this issue's Witness article, I would like to focus on almsgiving. More specifically, I would like to address the important aspect of human interaction during a charitable act. Although the vast majority of TASH's donors live in the United States, the impact of their giving can be witnessed among the poor in Oaxaca, Mexico. It is my hope that by briefly introducing a few of our partners in Oaxaca, you - as a TASH donor - may experience a little bit of that human interaction that is so very important.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes almsgiving as, "a witness to fraternal charity" and "a work of justice pleasing to God" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2462). It's the human interaction that provides fulfillment for the person giving and dignity for the person receiving. One of the coolest things I have witnessed since becoming a TASH Board Member, is the donor trips to Oaxaca. This gives current TASH donors an opportunity to meet TASH's partners and the people they directly serve. It is incredibly moving to see faithful and generous TASH donors experience firsthand the impact TASH in Oaxaca and interact with the people they've been helping. If you receive the TASH Joyful Reflections Newsletter, then you've more than likely donated to TASH at one time,

or you may donate regularly. There are many ways to donate. You can use the donation form included with the newsletter. You also have the option to set up donations on TASH's website: <https://tashinc.org/donate>. You can also support the **Ole 5K** fundraiser by sponsoring, running, or volunteering for the event, scheduled on **Saturday, 3 October, 2026**.

Unfortunately, it isn't possible for every TASH donor (thank God, there are so many!) to travel to Oaxaca. In the next part of the article, I hope to introduce a few of the people in Oaxaca that TASH partners with. These people work tirelessly every day to serve the poor in Oaxaca.

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Dr. Marissabel, Dr. Paulina, and Father Carlos celebrate the 25th anniversary of La Clínica del Pueblo.

Joyful Reflections, continued

TASH is able to relieve some of the burden that they carry by providing generous donations. And they ensure that the donations are well and effectively spent helping those most in need in Oaxaca. I have been to Oaxaca several times, and it's always very moving to see them in action.

Clínica del Pueblo “Anna Seethaler” is the hospital Father Scott founded over 25 years ago. It is located in San Martin Mexicapán, which is a neighborhood on the western side of the city of Oaxaca. Today, Clínica is led by a dynamic and capable team. **Doctora Marissabel Casas** is the Executive Director. Originally from Mexico City, Dra. Marissabel has substantial experience providing medical care to the poor. Before coming to Clínica, she worked at a hospital run by Catholic Sisters in the Mexican state of Chiapas. Since taking up her position with Clínica, Dra. Marissabel's presence has been palpable. The staff respond well to her leadership, and the patients they serve benefit greatly. Dra. Marissabel often talks fondly of Father Scott and even quotes him from time to time. Two years ago, when Father Scott made his final trip to Oaxaca, he met Dra. Marissabel in person. Dra. Marissabel is assisted by **Doctora Paulina Morales** and **Mr. Daniel Conde**.

Dra. Paulina is Clínica's medical director. Her resume is very similar to Dra. Marissabel's. Dra. Paulina is also from Mexico City and spent time in Chiapas medically caring for the poor. One night at dinner while getting to know

Dra. Paulina, I asked if she knew Dra. Marissabel before coming to work at Clínica. She told me that she had not met Dra. Marissabel in person, but Dra. Marissabel was a bit of a legend in Chiapas and that she was very excited to finally get to work with her.

Daniel is Clínica's director of planning and programs. One of Daniel's focus areas is outreach and preventative education. Daniel and his team work tirelessly visiting schools and social programs for the elderly in attempts to educate and implement preventative programs. These programs are so very important because with a little bit of education, the people Clínica serves can enjoy a much better quality of life and do not have to suffer from conditions such as diabetes and hypertension that are so prevalent.

Over the years I have had many conversations with Dra. Marissabel and the Clínica staff. Their presence in Oaxaca is truly a blessing. Their tireless efforts benefit the poor, and it's easy to see God's hand in their work. Each time we talk, they express their gratitude for TASH. During this season of Lent, as you focus on the three pillars of prayer, fasting, and giving alms, please remember our partners in Oaxaca. Thank you for your continued prayers and support!

Charlie Baker
Vice President, TASH



Charley Gates with Jesus Fajardo, executive director, and the children of La Ciudad de los Niños orphanage.



Father Scott posing with participants after the 2025 Ole 5K.



To make a donation, please scan the QR code, give online at www.tashinc.org, or make a check out to “Tash, Inc.” and use the included envelope.



**The 18th Annual Olé 5k
will take place on
October 3, 2026.**

PLEASE SAVE THE DATE!

