



# JOYFUL REFLECTIONS

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

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## GREETINGS

Dear Friends: What is truth?

In St. John's Gospel, when Jesus was brought before Pilate, Pilate wanted to know what Jesus was about.

**Jesus said that he was there to bear witness to the truth.** Pilate said, "Truth, what's that?" In today's world, many people would repeat what Pilate said. Others would say that all truth is relative. They believe that everyone can have their own truth.

For example, two people can have a discussion on a particular point and disagree. However, they wouldn't accuse the other of being wrong, because their opinions were both valid. **Truth is relative for many people today.**

Believing that there is an absolute truth depends on whether you believe there is a God. Christians believe that there is a God and Jesus came to testify to the existence of **God**, who is **the source of all truth**.

Throughout all of history, **groups of people were killed because they were considered non-human**. The slaughter happened because people in power declared them non-human. Hitler is a prime example of this with the extermination of the Jews.

I used to give retreats to Confirmation candidates. I would use skits to make a point about truth. If there was a student with blond hair, I would ask the student to come forward. My goal was to make them think, question, and get angry at me. The conversation would go like this.

Fr. Scott: "Blond people aren't human."

Student: "Yes we are."

Fr. Scott: "Who says so?"

Student: "God says so!"

Fr. Scott: "There is no God! I have all the power, and I say that blonds are not human! I am going to kill all blonds."

Student: "You can't do that!"

Fr. Scott: "The one who has all the power can do whatever he wants. Blonds are nothing. You should be exterminated because you are not human."

By this time, the student is upset and frustrated. The student believes that he is human, and it should be obvious to everyone that he is. At the end of the skit, I would ask the students if the skit was unrealistic. I would ask if this ever happened in history. After pondering my question, some would respond that it had happened. I asked for examples. One mentioned what happened to **black people**. Another would give the example of what was done to **Native Americans**. Sometimes, one of the students would give the example of what often happens to an **unborn child**.

**In some of our colleges and universities, our young adults are being taught that there are no absolute truths**, that all truth is relative. The professors teach that when truth is relative, a person has much more freedom.



*Father Scott congratulates the winner of the Olé 5k.*

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*Father Scott, continued*

**Once we take God out of discussions, then everything becomes relative.** Although our Pledge of Allegiance still has the words “One Nation Under God,” it doesn’t create the same level of excitement as it did in the past. When the Founding Fathers wrote the Declaration of Independence as well as the Constitutions, they clearly wanted a separation of Church and State. However, they did not intend for the State to be protected from the Church—rather, that the Church should be protected from the State. They had seen how many times in Europe the State had controlled the Church.

Here is an example from **Oaxaca**. Up until about 30 years ago, children had no rights and therefore no legal protections. In all respects, **the children were the property of their parents**. Then there was a recognition on the part of more and more adults that children need laws that protect them. After much heated discussion, the laws were finally passed.

It is vitally important that adults teach children right from wrong, especially in our society today. **Please pray for our young adults.**

**God bless you!**  
**Fr. Scott**



*Charley welcomes new staff members at La Clínica, explaining Father Scott's vision for the hospital to serve the poor.*

## Lessons Learned a Long Way from Home

**“A healthy person has a thousand wishes; a sick person has only one.” – Proverb**

As the first day of **the 2025 TASH donor trip to Oaxaca** came to a close, I informed the group that I would skip dinner that evening. I was not feeling well. Alone in my room, I stepped into the shower, hoping that the solitude and the revitalizing effects of the warm water would ease my growing sense of malaise.

I could not have been more wrong.

When I stepped out of the shower a few minutes later, I could barely breathe.

As a physician, I had read about **“air starvation”** before. Now I was living it. Put simply, not enough air was going into and out of my lungs to meet my body’s needs for oxygen. I began to feel dizzy. The pain was excruciating. Panic seized me.

What was happening? A heart attack? A blood clot that had traveled to my lungs? Some sort of infection?

As my condition continued to deteriorate, I realized that I had no choice but to do something that I’d hoped I’d never need to do: **seek urgent care at the local emergency room (ER).**

As the hotel was located some distance from La Clínica del Pueblo, I chose to make my way to the ER closest to the hotel. My experiences in that ER that night could fill an entire newsletter. The physician gave me an injection for the pain and some oral antibiotics, along with the recommendation that **I return to the US immediately**. Needless to say, I followed his advice.

Looking back, I remain grateful for the physician in Oaxaca who recognized the seriousness of my condition and urged me to seek definitive treatment without delay.

**Within 24 hours of my return, I was in the operating room** for surgical decompression of a pulmonary empyema—a severe type of pneumonia that carries a double-digit death rate. A chest tube was inserted into my right lung, after which I spent five days recovering in the thoracic intensive care unit (ICU). **Multiple organ systems had malfunctioned.** I received eight weeks of IV antibiotics followed by four weeks of oral antibiotics. I missed three months of work.

Since the illness, I have spent a considerable amount of time reflecting on what happened, why I survived, and how I could apply what I’d learned to however much life I have remaining.

So, here, I would like to share some brief thoughts on the lessons I have learned.

**1) The present moment is precious.** There are no small moments, no insignificant events, nothing to look past or to “get through.” Every moment counts. The past often generates regret, and the future generates anxiety. The present moment is the only place where life is actually lived. I now try to do ordinary things in an extraordinary manner.

**2) The proverb that opens this article holds a good deal of truth, but my experience has taught me something that goes beyond that.** Physical health is a tremendous blessing, but it is never guaranteed. If our peace depends entirely upon our physical condition, we place it on a foundation that cannot last. The real journey is inward; spiritual health always trumps physical health. The true test is to live genuinely in the present moment, cherishing every situation in which you find yourself.

**3) Live authentically.** As John Henry Newman once said, “God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another.” Our job involves discerning what that service is, and then doing it regardless of what others may or may not have to say about it.

**4) We are all connected.** Throughout those difficult weeks, I was carried along by the prayers, encouragement, and

support of family, friends, colleagues, and members of the TASH community. Serious illness reminds us that none of us are self-made. We depend on one another far more than we realize.

My experience also gave me a renewed appreciation for those who live with illness every day and for the importance of ensuring that quality medical care remains available to the people we serve in Oaxaca.

**TASH remains a major part of my life**, and I believe that God has entrusted my role within TASH to me—and me alone. I am committed to executing this role to the absolute best of my ability.

One year ago, I sat alone in a hotel room in Oaxaca struggling to breathe and uncertain what the next day would bring. Today, I have been given another opportunity to serve. **None of us knows how many opportunities remain.** What we do know is that this moment has been placed before us. For that gift—and for all of you who make TASH possible—I am profoundly grateful.

God love you.

**Charley Gates, MD**  
**Board President, TASH**

## Joyful Reflections: Building Strong Families, Building God’s Kingdom

As you read this newsletter, our country has just celebrated the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its Independence Day. Many of us were fortunate enough to spend time with family and friends while celebrating. In this issue’s Witness article, I would like to focus on the importance of the family to the Church. I’ll even throw in a little patriotic twist as well.

**Family is often referred to as the Domestic Church because it is the first place where faith is lived, taught, and nurtured, forming the foundation of Christian life.** St. Elizabeth Ann Seton knew this well. As the first U.S.-born citizen to be canonized as a saint, she planted the seeds of Catholic education in America. As a widowed mother of five, she cared for her family as well as those in her community, nourishing the Domestic Church and strengthening the Catholic faith throughout her country.

In some contexts, care cannot be focused on a single individual because health, economic, and social conditions are intertwined within the same family unit. In these cases, the approach requires a holistic perspective that considers multiple caregiving responsibilities,



*Karla and her sons, Israel and Juan Ángel*

family dynamics, and shared needs. **In many cases, your donations to TASH help not just an individual, but an entire extended family as well.** By improving the health of individuals within the family unit, we are nourishing the Domestic Church. Once health issues are addressed, families can focus on successfully tackling the next hurdle.

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*Joyful Reflections, continued*

With this theme in mind, we introduce you to the family of Karla Patricia. Karla is a single mother responsible for the care of her sons, Israel and Juan Ángel. She also cares for her father, Nemesio, and her sister, María de Jesús. Her situation did not require care for just one individual, but rather support for the entire family. By supporting one person who assumes multiple caregiving roles, an entire family benefits.

Karla was first introduced to TASH's partner in Chalcatongo, SERCADE, when she brought her sons to a clinic when they were in need of dental care. During the evaluation process, a complex family situation was uncovered. In addition to being a single mother, Karla is the primary caregiver for her father, who has a joint condition, and her sister, who lives with schizophrenia. The family receives no support from the children's father and faces limited financial resources. This hardship is compounded by the scarcity of jobs in their community.

While caring for every member of her family, Karla also lives with type 2 diabetes. She is an incredibly strong woman who cares deeply for those she loves. SERCADE

was honored to work with Karla to ensure her sons received the dental care they needed. They also provided rehabilitative care for her father and secured medication for her sister. In addition, SERCADE educated Karla about managing her diabetes so she could improve her own health. Receiving the care she needed enabled Karla to continue caring for her sons, father, and sister. The care the family received reminded them that they are valued and loved as children of God.

In his *Letter to Families*, Pope St. John Paul II explained **that nurturing the Domestic Church means living your faith within your family, parish, and community. He believed that living out this calling creates a ripple effect that can change the world.**

We are grateful to join with you in supporting the families of Oaxaca. God bless you for your continued generosity and support!

**Charlie Baker**  
*Board Vice President, TASH*



**Left:** Charley listens as La Clínica receptionists explain their policies and procedures. More than 1,200 patients per month pass through the welcoming doors of the hospital. **Right:** Father Pech, OFM Cap, (far right), local Board President, tours the remodeled inpatient area at La Clínica.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

Please join us in congratulating TASH Manager Amanda Rampone and her husband, Brett, on the birth of their beautiful daughter, **Viviana Grace!**

Viviana was born on **March 23**, weighing **8 pounds, 7 ounces** and measuring **19.5 inches** long. We are delighted to celebrate this special addition to the Rampone family and wish them all the very best as they embrace this exciting new chapter as a family of four.



## FUTURE EVENTS & UPDATES



The Ole 5k will take place on **October 3, 2026**. A private **Mass**, followed by **brunch**, will be held for sponsors on **October 4** at the St. Augustine Friary. **Volunteers are needed!** Please visit <https://tashinc.org/ole-5k/> for more information.



To make a donation, please make a check out to "TASH, Inc." and use the included donation envelope. For more information, or to become a sponsor, please visit: [www.tashinc.org](http://www.tashinc.org)

**Transparency:** Visit [tashinc.org](http://tashinc.org) to learn how your donations support those in need in Oaxaca, Mexico. Contact us at [admin@tashinc.org](mailto:admin@tashinc.org) with your questions.

