

## Fr. Philip Nathaniel's Peruvian Mission

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"Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me"

(Matthew 25:40)

### ***Serving the people of the Amazon Jungle***

Iquitos – February 2008

Dear friends,  
Greeting and peace to you all.

I thought it was about time I wrote to let you how things are going with the new Parish Centre project I wrote about last time. We've acquired the land and are now in the process of building a protective wall around the property; providing work for at least 25 local men. This wall will also serve as the outer wall of the classrooms, Meeting Hall and other work areas we hope to continue building.

We missed a fantastic offer. Last November the Regional Government offered us 18 teachers for a "CEO" – Centro de Educación Ocupacional – an occupational training centre for local people of all ages; unfortunately we didn't have the buildings necessary and so the teachers have been sent elsewhere.

What an opportunity missed!!! A parish based "Occupational Training Centre" funded by (or at least fitted-out and the teachers paid by) the Regional Government, providing courses in: Sewing / Tailoring / Dressmaking, Computer Studies, Welding & Metal Work, Cooking, Carpentry, Agriculture, Fish & Pig Farming, plus adult courses in Reading & Writing, Art & Music, and all sorts of occasional workshops on health, welfare and other social issues.

It would be such a tremendous blessing for the poor people we serve, they have little if any chance of studying careers because of cost and distance – especially if they already have children to care for; courses in the city are costly and take place in the evening between 6 to 10pm.

There's a good chance that the offer from the Regional Government will be repeated at the end of this year and we hope to be ready and able to accept; so, as you can imagine, we're in a hurry to get classrooms etc. built.

I know that with your help we can do it!!! And, on behalf of the people of this area of the Amazon jungle, I'd like to say "Thank You" for your concern, for the sacrifices you make – for caring for and helping us as you do. May God reward and bless you.

The communities where I'm working are growing day by day. Every week there are new faces at Sunday Mass; new young families looking for a few acres of land to work and start a home on, also, many people are leaving the rivers, where life gets evermore difficult and where prospects for the future appear very bleak and insecure.

As you know – from your own personal and family experience – parents want the best for their children; they want them to have better opportunities in life and will make all the sacrifices necessary to ensure that.

Along the rivers of the Amazon the health and education systems are either of very poor quality or non-existent; many people are leaving their homelands, their few acres of farmland, and their far-flung traditional communities to be nearer the larger centres of population where better and more modern services are available. It is a hard choice to make – to leave their homes, their lands, their customs – all they've ever known and loved – but they do it for the sake of their children.

They are wonderful people, simple and filled with a natural and spontaneous joy. It gives me great happiness to be with them as they struggle to establish their homes and build-up their

new communities; for me it is a privilege and a joy to serve them and to help them live their faith with hope and joy despite all the suffering and neglect they've endured for years. I really feel the grace of God working and a very pleasant and faith-filled atmosphere growing in the communities I'm now serving.

The summer holidays are coming to an end and the school year begins next Monday – 3<sup>rd</sup> March. Starting this year students no longer have to pay a fee to matriculate in school, thus making education free – in theory but not in practice. All the other costs linked to school still exist – text books, notebooks, pens, pencils, uniform, sports kit; the list is endless, all have to be bought before classes begin.

For families already living in utter poverty – struggling to put just one meal a day on the table – to cope with these costs is both backbreaking and heartbreaking. Many come to us seeking help, they are embarrassed to do it but the charity of the Church becomes their only hope in a desperate situation.

Most of the financial aid you send through me is used for two main purposes. 1 - To provide medicine and medical assistance to the poor who are sick or old and who otherwise would not be able to receive medical attention. 2 - To help children, teenagers and young adults have the chance of an education which will stand them in good stead for the future.

Many of the students you have helped to fund over the past 19 years are now in university or technical college; others have finished their education, have good jobs, a family, and are helping to support their parents and younger brothers & sisters. You have done that!

**Your generosity has helped to give many a chance in life and the possibility of making their dreams a reality.** Now we have the chance to continue that mission and to extend it to those who have never had a chance to train and study to enrich their lives. The Parish Centre we are starting to build will be a meeting place for all, a place for Catechetical Formation in the Faith, a place for Occupational Training – the learning and practice of skills to finance and dignify lives; a place to sow seeds of community and hope for the future.

I will be visiting England in the next few months, to see how my Mum is getting on, to have a check-up with the doctor and review my medication. These days I have to look after myself better – as everyone keeps telling me. Fr James Saénz (a Peruvian priest from Iquitos will be accompanying me). We both hope to get a chance to meet-up with some of you and thank you personally.

Keep us in your thoughts and prayers – I never forget to offer Holy Mass for you every Wednesday. Love and thanks to you all. May God bless and reward you,

**Padre Felipe X** (Fr. Philip Nathaniel)

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#### MAKE A GIFT FOR THE POOR

If you can help the poor of the Amazon by making a gift, send a donation to the following address:

Fr. Nathaniel's Mission

C/O: or

Maureen Bennett

Kids Allowed

Derwent Avenue

Manchester

M21 7QS

England

C/O:

Fr. Brendan Curley

St. Cuthbert's Presbytery

3 Palatine Road

Withington

M20 3LH

England

Or, by Bank Deposit or a Direct Debit Order to:

Fr. Nathaniel's Mission - Royal Bank of Scotland - Sort Code: 160002 A/C N $\square$  20071227 (A registered charity in Great Britain)

When making a donation via the bank, please, inform me by letter to the above address or by e-mail to [felipenathaniel@msn.com](mailto:felipenathaniel@msn.com) in order to acknowledge your gift.