



FRANCISCAN FRIARS HOLY NAME PROVINCE

Virginia Parishioners Prepare for 10th Journey to Peru

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Terry Danner, Sharon Danner, Clarence Thompson, Bob Menard, Anne Tunney

and Charley Miller before a mission trip to South America in 2007.

A parishioner from St. Francis of Assisi Church, outside Washington, D.C., provides an overview of a 10-year relationship with the people of parishes near Lima, Peru.

TRIANGLE, Va. — In January 2000, **John O’Connor OFM**, then pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, and **Christopher Dunn, OFM**, pastor of Nuestra Senora de Lourdes in Chorrillos, in a suburb of Lima, Peru, signed a “Pledge of Solidarity” for the two communities to pray for each other, as well as to stand together as brothers and sisters in faith. The relationship grew slowly over the next several years as prayers and letters were exchanged between the communities.

In March of 2007, **Robert Menard OFM**, parochial vicar at St. Francis, led four parishioners on a visit to Nuestra Senora de Lourdes, hosted by Fr. Chris and the people of his parish. During that visit, we were introduced to **Anthony Wilson, OFM**, and the people of Parroquia Santa Ana. Santa Ana is further south in the

megalopolis of Lima and remains severely underdeveloped. Its people were — and still are — very poor.

In the 10 years since, the community surrounding Lourdes has developed rapidly. The need for the parish medical clinic declined, as did the soup kitchen to feed the hungry. Earlier this year, responsibility for Lourdes was returned to the Diocese of Lima.

Our relationship with the faithful at Santa Ana and, beginning in 2010, with the people worshipping at the remote chapels in the nearby Lurin Valley served by **Carlos Sarmiento Diaz, OFM**, continues to grow. We view our mission as one of “presence,” standing in solidarity with our Catholic brothers and sisters. We follow their lead in the projects with which we are involved, be it teaching in Fr. Tony’s school or painting one of Fr. Carlos’s mission stations in the Lurin Valley.



2016 missionaries on the way to a project site in Peru.

Resource-wise, we assist in any way we can. Since 2007, the parish has sent more than \$300,000 to help meet the needs of our sister parish communities. The money has been used to build classrooms and chapels, provide scholarships, buy computers and establish a microloan program, and purchase medical equipment and a soy cow. Also, each year the missionaries carry tens of thousands of prenatal and children’s vitamins for distribution by parish clinic doctors.

In early July, parishioners from St. Francis, including **Henry Fulmer, OFM**, will make their 10th journey to Peru. As one of the friars has said, more than the financial help, over the last decade, relationships have been made, our common faith has been shared, and love and respect between our worship communities has flourished. “There are people here in Lima who donate clothing and money to assist the people of Santa Ana” Fr. Tony said. “You do that also, but more importantly, each year you come a great distance to stand with the people.”

Appropriately, this summer Fr. John, now the parochial administrator at St. Francis, will offer a departure blessing to this year’s missionaries.