

Sponsoring Birthday Parties in a Children's Home

A Letter from Jim and Gloria Hintz to "Friends of Alto Cayma" - 6 Apr 06

You're already somewhat aware of the work we've been doing with Father Alex' church and Rotary Club in Alto Cayma (Arequipa), Peru. Now we have just come back from our last trip with a brand new initiative that we need to "jump start", and perhaps you can help us in some way, either directly or through people you know.

On our last trip to Alto Cayma (Dec 05-Feb 06), we became aware of another institution needing help. It's a home for abused, abandoned and orphaned children which is run by Father Frank Cortis, another Maltese priest in Father Alex' order. The home is located along the main road up to Alto Cayma, just a couple of miles from Father Alex' operation. Father Frank inherited this facility in a state of ruin 5 years ago, and it opened its doors to children one year later.

Some of the 50+ children in the home are orphans, but most of them were rescued from abuse or abandonment and placed there by the courts. As you can imagine, these kids have been deprived of a lot, but Father Frank and his staff see to it that they all are given shelter, education, love, care and understanding. What the children don't know is that people outside the walls of the home care about them too.

In a leap of faith, just before we left, we committed to Father Frank that we would sponsor birthday parties for every one of the children in the home, a treat which many of them have never had in their lives. Then, in characteristic fashion, we began to look around for people who could help bail us out in fulfilling our rash commitment. The first people we turned to were Victor and Charo Galdos and their two children. (All of you recent visitors especially know Victor, and his taxi, very well.) We asked them if they would administer the program for us, and they enthusiastically agreed.

The first thing Victor and Charo did was research what things might cost. In the way of presents, Father Frank indicated that clothing was needed much more than toys. Another groundrule we set for ourselves going in was that the party should be for every child in the home. Reviewing Victor and Charo's data with them, we determined that for \$30 a child could get essentially a complete outfit of clothing, and that another \$20 would buy enough cake and soft drinks for all 50+ kids plus the staff. Thus we defined \$50 as the cost of a "birthday sponsorship package".

We started the program with a child whose birthday was March 3, and it was a great success. At that point, a similar party for their own birthday became a dream and an expectation in the mind of every other child in the home. Then we discovered that a disproportionate number of the children have birthdays in March and April! Hence the need to "jump start" the program through people like yourselves, who already understand what we're trying to do and why, and can react quickly.

You are certainly invited to sponsor a birthday yourself, and/or you can talk to your family, friends and associates about doing so. A sponsorship is a one time event, with no obligation to do anything the following month or even the following year, unless you wish to do so. Anyone who wishes to participate, please make out a check to Advent Lutheran Church (for tax purposes), with "Peru Mission Birthday" on the memo line, and mail the check to Jim and Gloria Hintz, 14618 South Brent Drive, Huntersville, NC 28078.

We thank you for taking the time to read this.

"Love God, Serve Neighbor/Sirviendo a Dios y a su pueblo",

Jim and Gloria Hintz

P.S. The program is brand new, but we already heard one very touching story back from Victor. One little boy received a pair of shoes as part of his outfit. They were the first new shoes he had ever had, and he didn't want to put them on. When pressed for his reasons, he said that he was afraid that if they didn't fit properly, they would be taken away from him and he would have no new shoes.