



Hector (right) is our maestro, teaching and training a large group of kids to play the guitar and to work together as a team. It is already much more than a hobby for these adolescents, as the place where they will be playing is already awaiting them. Learn more about Hector and his understudies on page 6.

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unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty” (see Lk 17:7-10).

Carrying the Cross daily, to which Cardinal Ratzinger alludes, helps us to orient ourselves to an overarching prayer, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” Viewed this way, celebrating the Mass can have victories and defeats, even temptations to discouragement. No wonder we recount three times that Jesus fell

when we pray the Stations of the Cross. But we can learn to live the Mass in the context of our daily duties- our personal calling and overall meaning in life. May the Lord continue to teach and form us in the “full and active participation” which can train and transform us to be apt for heaven.



# La Semilla

the hope

of the harvest is in the seed

Fall 2022



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# Saints, MISSIONARIES and Martyrs

– by Juan Antonio & Coral

**Coral:** I'm a stay-at-home mom, but all three of our boys are in school or working, so I run a little store out of our house. It is somewhat of a specialty shop for girls and women, featuring some jewelry and accessories like hairpins and bracelets, etc., as well as blouses, scarves and limited apparel. My main way of attracting customers is by way of a group of advertisers online. We have a group website which I have organized for other gals who display their merchandize on the same web page. We are now a group of thirty-five.

On my link I post pictures of some individual products and sometimes of the displays in the store itself. One customer, whose name is Ana, called me as soon as I posted a shot of the display showing me at my desk in my shop. Behind me on a shelf was the book whose title was big enough to read with ease, "The Power of a Praying Wife". She sent me a text on my phone, not by way of the Facebook page, inquiring as to where I buy my books! She was interested in that book on prayer which she had never seen. So, I called her— although she

followed my page, we didn't know each other previously— and took advantage of the opening to speak about the Lord Jesus and how He is working in our lives. She wondered what church we attended so I explained about the *Seguidores de la Cruz*, a Catholic center for families. We talked for quite a while and I was able to explain that we love the opportunity to experience a "culture of life and love" as Saint John Paul had opened up to us.

She was taking it all in and wanted to know where and what time



*Coral and Juan Antonio after Mass at El Rancho Nazaret. They were asked to pose as a prim, proper and serious couple.*

one which implies, that if you assist at Mass really well it will yield an immediate reward and consolation.

In our mission we teach two courses on the Mass: *Understanding the Mass* and *Living the Mass*. They are very helpful for understanding your personal vocation (husband and father; wife and mother; single woman looking to get married; etc.) as the context for assisting at Mass. Your personal prayer time and the daily priorities and duties of your vocation are intimately linked with the celebration. We are striving to align our living on earth with God's will in heaven. The blessings and graces for going forth once the Mass is ended, are also flooding our lives according to God's calling, so that we can give testimony simply and sincerely to the Lord's mercy and grace. A father can reflect, "I know right where I need patience with my second son and with the ambitious saleswoman at work. These were my intentions at Mass; Lord show us your grace with that younger son and help me at work peacefully with the saleswoman."

Consolation, that sense of God's presence which brings peace and the fruits of the Holy Spirit, is the goal of personal prayer and *lectio divina*. St Ignatius Loyola indicates that when your meditation is touched by the Lord directing or speaking or drawing near, it is now no longer meditation (mental prayer) but now contemplation

(prayer of the heart). Generally speaking, the goal of personal prayer is consolation, experiencing a personal visit from the Lord. Liturgy and public prayer have a different goal, that of glorifying the Lord. The Father is specifically the One we aim to glorify at the Mass, offering to Him the acceptable sacrifice of Jesus His Son. A good scripture for understanding this is 1Kings 10:4-9. After seeing the quality of servants and ministers in attendance to Solomon, the way they are dressed, and their impressive bearing, the Queen of

*Sometimes, by the Lord's mercy, we are afforded a consolation at Mass. But that is not the goal, as it is in personal prayer.*

Sheba glorifies Solomon and his God. Our role at Mass is similar to those servants and ministers, as it will be in heaven— to serve and glorify God with our attendance, our dress, our attention. If our interviewer asked a cupbearer of

Solomon how rewarding is his job today, he would look askance, puzzled at the disconnect. He might reply, "I'm very tired and distracted, my wife is about to go into labor, but this is what I do. I glorify my king. We have been rehearsing for this moment for months...". Sometimes, by the Lord's mercy, we are afforded a consolation at Mass. But that is not the goal, as it is in personal prayer. Missing that point can lead to very crucial mistakes and bad decisions about the future due to disappointed expectations. Sometimes training is thankless and devoid of consolation. It is helpful to remember the words of Jesus in this context, "We are

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God himself is the principal actor. We are to participate in the action of God who does what is essential. That takes a great deal of getting used to, a lot of training, especially for those who are enveloped in a culture of activism.

[St. Paul] also uses the discipline of athletes as an image of training in one's own life. This training is an essential part of everyday life, but it has to find its inner support in the liturgy, in the liturgy's "orientation" toward the risen Christ. Let me say once again: it is a way of learning to accept the other in His otherness, a training for love, a training to help us to accept the Wholly Other, God, to be shaped and used by Him<sup>1</sup>.

Our first paragraph already reminded us that training promises a deferred reward.

Many articles and podcasts about how to get more out of the Mass, what if I feel like I'm only going through the motions? getting your children to enthusiastically participate at Mass, etc. These miss this fundamental point. If you assist at Mass very well, you may not (immediately) "get anything out of it". Going to Mass today will cost us something and the reward is often deferred until later. That is a healthier expectation than

1. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000.



Get ready you parents and teachers, (l-r) Carmen, Ana Maria and Mateo, friends in the same classroom, are raring to go— already in action.

## In this Issue

page 1 Make sure you can continue to receive our newsletter, *La Semilla*. If you are on our mailing list, receiving *La Semilla* in the U.S. mail, you need to send us an email address to [mexsoc@gmail.com](mailto:mexsoc@gmail.com), or call us at 956 683 6309.

page 2 Coral and Juan Anotio explain their zeal as a missionary couple to invite others to know Jesus Christ and His merciful love.

page 4 Some timely mission needs—you may be able to help us.

page 6 Hector stepped up to offer guitar lessons to a group of our young kids. He is doing a great job and while some of the young students are musically gifted, they are all enthusiastic and grateful for the opportunity.

page 8 Padre Tim reflects on the spiritual disposition and expectations at Mass, which is quite different than other times of prayer.

she and her husband and kids could come. My son had to help me send her a pin with the location of *El Rancho Nazaret* by phone, but they were at Mass on Sunday morning with their two sons, Teo, ten years old and Lucas, four years old.

Ana was enthusiastic and eager

to "jump in". Her husband, Leo, more observant and testing the waters. Without mentioning their plans, they returned a week later, while my husband, Juan Antonio and I had planned to be out of town with our boys. Now on their own in this group of strangers, they found people hospitable and eager to include them in their conversations and relationships, before and after Mass. That in itself is a somewhat strange, but attractive, experience for folks who have been to Mass off and on. They decided to sign up for the upcoming introductory course offered at the mission.

**Juan Antonio:** We have been called to action by the slogan of *Seguidores de la Cruz* as a call to be "saints, missionaries and martyrs". As missionaries in our daily life circumstances, we are always on the lookout and also have a specific time set

aside to pray for the couples and the individuals we are trying to speak to about the Lord Jesus.

Unfortunately, Leo got sick after the second week of the course and then both of their children took ill after their father was recuperating. After battling sickness for sev-

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# Mission Needs

## MUCHAS GRACIAS

- Finally, after years of COVID and other delays, Fr. Tim was blessed with the opportunity to travel and personally thank some of our patrons. The parishioners of St. Martin of Tours in Valley City, OH have been faithful to us from the beginning of the *Servants of the Cross Mission* even through the entire pandemic. Thanks to all he saw and to those he wished he had time to visit.

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## The School

- Cement-eating termites have inundated several buildings so that we need to fumigate. We need urgently 5 liters and in the near future, 25 liters. Can you sponsor us at \$15 per liter?
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donations are tax exempt

## Grounds & Maintenance

- Repairing a damaged cistern will cost us \$1500.



Our unusually wet spring turned El Rancho Nazaret into a silouetted paradise.

pews, as opposed to “doing things” around the altar:

Much more is required of the body than carrying objects around and other such activities. A demand is made on the body in all its involvement in the circumstances of everyday life. The body is required to become “capable of the resurrection” to orient itself toward the resurrection, towards the Kingdom of God, in a word: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” Where God’s will is done, there is heaven, there earth becomes heaven. Surrendering ourselves to the action of God, so that we in our turn may cooperate

with him- that is what begins in the liturgy. And is meant to unfold further beyond it. Incarnation must always lead through Cross (the transforming of our wills in a communion of will with God) to Resurrection- to that rule of love which is the Kingdom of God. The body must be trained, so to speak, for the resurrection.

The cardinal goes on to quote St. Paul in 1Cor 9:27, “I train my body and subdue it,” as he further unfolds our calling to serve Christ daily. Ratzinger also underscores the uniqueness of Christian worship which understands that

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eral weeks, they dropped out of the courses but are still in contact with Coral and me. My wife has kept in contact with Ana since their “meeting” through text messages. It was during COVID, so we had time to pray and ask the Lord to show the family His mercy, and we made some headway in the friendship. At the

first social event after the restrictions relaxed a little, they came to El Rancho Nazaret. We took advantage of the opportunity to get to know them face-to-face and invited them to go out and get some tacos. They are trying to reorganize so that they can come back to the courses, but it appears that Anna has more interest than

## SERVE THE LORD WITH GLADNESS

– by Fr. Tim

Imagine approaching an Olympic athlete eight months before the initial commencement of the international games. One contender is training for the decathlon. Just as a grueling four-hour workout comes to an end, you approach him and inquire as to how he feels. He answers with difficulty, still hyperventilating, that he is quite exhausted after concentrating on cardiac stamina and a leg muscle cramping issue. How does he feel? you insist. He affirms that he feels that he gave himself diligently. You observe that he is closing in on eight years of preparation for this year's competition. Impressed by his dedication, you throw out a statement that his life focus and all-encompassing concentration on this project must be very rewarding. Although it is a statement rather than a question, your voice inflection allows, invites, nearly demands, a reply. He looks at you askance, puzzled at the thought... puzzled by your obvious disconnect. The reward will be seen or denied in eight months! He obviously doesn't take his motivation from the notion that today's workout is rewarding. Some workouts are rewarding, for

example when he breaks a personal best time. But workouts are often a grind and even at times present a temptation to discouragement. A sports interviewer who doesn't understand that is very, very unfamiliar with his or her material.

I find the above "interview" helpful in how to assess my assistance at Mass. Before he became the pope, Cardinal Ratzinger wrote a book called *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. He characterizes the Eucharistic liturgy as training— i.e., training for our life in the Kingdom once we are admitted to heaven. Especially in terms of understanding "full and active participation at Mass", to which we are exhorted by the documents of Vatican II, he emphasizes training in the



L-r: Karla, Ana Paola, Juani (foreground) and Sofia enjoying the adolescent course outdoors during perfect Fall weather.



Coral, (right) talking to some of the ladies after Mass on a beautiful, Fall Sunday morning.

her husband, and he is dragging his feet. That's okay, I'll keep in contact with Leo and they are firmly now on our list of couples to pray for and are hoping that we can win their hearts.

**Coral:** We have seen how true it is that when evangelizing others to the Lord, most often you can only win peoples' will – their decision to follow Jesus faithfully – by first winning their hearts, in friendship, and their minds so they understand better how following the Lord is beneficial. In my little business, I always try to encourage and give the women a pleasant experience whether they buy anything or not.

Always an appeal to their heart. Often it starts a conversation and many times they will comment... For example, yesterday a woman named Gloria observed that I am always positive and she wondered whether I go to church in a regular way. That opened the door for me to speak of Jesus' faithfulness and we ended up talking about our adolescent sons. So many ways I can thank the Lord and tell of his faithfulness to our three boys and to our family. May Gloria respond to the Lord Jesus and open up to His love.





Photos above: Pedro waits, a little impatiently, for the guitar class which he really gets into. Right, above: Hector introduces the group who performed for parents and guests at the closing of the previous nine-week session of all courses. They lead the entire assembly with confidence. Right, below: pictured l-r: Itzel, Max and Dulce. The musicians' enthusiasm spread quickly through the crowd and we sang better and clearer than should be possible with face masks.

Hector, the maestro who directs the guitar classes, learned to play guitar as an adult, while taking courses at Seguidores de la Cruz. He wanted to be able to lead his family in prayer when they were together as the domestic church. He has a good ear for music and quickly improved to an impressive proficiency by playing at home and in our choir at Mass.

He even taught guitar in the public schools for several years, and though now retired, he was very enthused to take on the group of adolescents at El Rancho Nazaret. Hector tends to be reserved, but blossoms unselfconsciously with the kids.

For their part, the adolescents pick up his excitement and freedom by osmosis. They have quickly overcome the dreaded self-consciousness so domineering at that age. Some of them will go on to play in the choir and to lead music in their individual classes. But many fathers are eager for them to help lead the family singing for which a musical instrument is so effective.

