

# The Chimbote Foundation

“...a bridge of love and hope.”

Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh

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“The Chimbote Foundation is a response to the call of Jesus to make His kingdom come to be, to manifest through our works of faith and love the power of His love.”

— Bishop Donald Wuerl

May 2004



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## All are Called by God to be Missionary Sowers of the Seed

The readings from the Acts of the Apostles remind us that we are all called to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus. This seems to be a particularly appropriate time to reflect on the encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, “The Mission of the Redeemer.”

The pope’s eighth encyclical, dated Dec. 7, 1990, was promulgated to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council’s Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes*. The purpose of the pope’s letter is to remind us of our participation in the missionary activity of the church.

Sacred Scripture provides us a clear indication of the intense commitment of the infant church to missionary activity. There was both an urgency about the need to spread the Gospel and an awareness that the missionary activity and the identity of the church were intimately linked.

Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, begins his reflection on the missionary activity of the church by raising the question, “Is missionary work among non-Christians still relevant?” He also asks the ultimate question relative to missionary activity: “Why then should there be missionary activity?”

The pope notes that in recent years there has been widely reported a breakdown of commitment or enthusiasm in missionary work. Those who comment on this “breakdown” speak of a need to redefine or refocus the missionary activity of the church

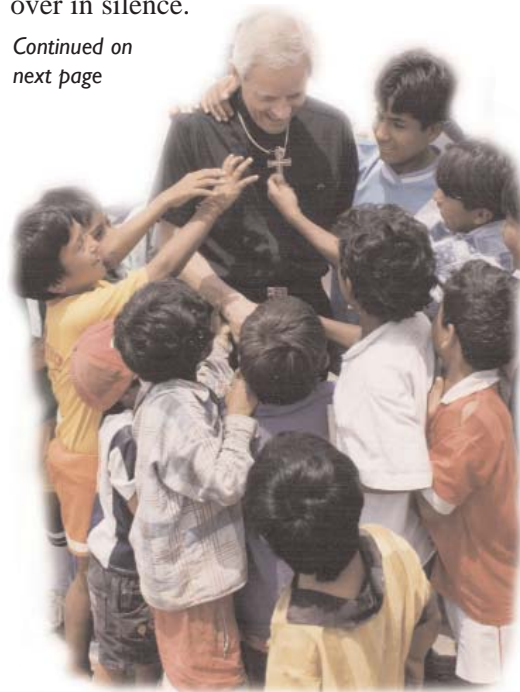
precisely in terms of the doctrinal basis that life in Christ, in and through the church, is an essential part of the proclamation that leads to new life.

In speaking of some of the reasons for this breakdown in the missionary activity of bringing people into the church, the Holy Father says this question is raised for several reasons.

“Nowadays the call to conversion which missionaries address to non-Christians is put into question or passed over in silence.

“In [Christ] and only in him are we set free from all alienation and doubt, from slavery to the power of sin and death.”

*Continued on next page*



Continued from page 1

It is seen as an act of 'proselytizing'; it is claimed that it is enough to help people to become more human or more faithful to their own religion, that it is enough to build communities capable of working for justice, freedom, peace, and solidarity" (RM 46).

In answering the above objections, the pope refocuses the missionary activity of the church in terms of its profound doctrinal basis. "What is overlooked is that every person has the right to hear the 'good news' of the God who reveals and gives himself in Christ, so that each one can live out in its fullness his or her proper calling. This lofty reality is expressed in the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman: 'If you knew the gift of God,' and in the unconscious but ardent desire of the woman: 'Sir, give me this water, that I

may not thirst'" (Jn 4:10, 15) (RM 46).

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"Lord," said Thomas, "we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus told

him: "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me" (Jn 14:5-6). Jesus is the way to God. He is the only Savior and the sole mediator between us and God.

To the question, "Why mission?" the Holy Father answers: "We reply with the church's faith and experience that true liberation consists in opening oneself to the love of Christ. In him and only in him are we set free from all alienation and doubt, from slavery to the power of sin and death. Christ is truly 'our peace' (Eph 2:14); the love of Christ impels us (2 Cor 5:14), giving meaning and joy to our life. Mission is an issue of faith, an accurate indicator of our faith in Christ and his love for us" (RM 11).

(This is the first of two columns on Pope John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio*, published by the Pittsburgh Catholic, and is part of an ongoing series on the Holy Father's encyclicals and apostolic exhortations. For full text of the article visit [www.diopitt.org/bishopscolumns/042204.htm](http://www.diopitt.org/bishopscolumns/042204.htm) For full text of *Redemptoris Missio* visit [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).)

## Local Man Volunteers in C

Earlier this year, Zelienople resident Brian Wolford departed for a six month personal mission trip to the Social Works Center in Chimbote. Brian, 24, lives with a local family while working at the Center helping the nurses conduct home visits. The following is the first "journal entry" which Brian provided to the Chimbote Foundation chronicling daily life at the Social Works Center. Brian also has provided the pictures which accompany the entries.

January 20, 2004

Hello Friends,

I've made it to Chimbote safe and sound. Thanks so much for all your prayers.

Monsignor Roos and Sister Maggie were waiting when I arrived at the Lima airport. From the airport, we went to stay in a small hotel. The next day we rode a bus six hours north to Chimbote. Next, we hopped in a taxi to drive over to the mission, or the "compound" as it is sometimes called.

After dinner, I went to the home of the family with which I would be staying. The next morning I made my way back to the Social Works Center for a complete tour. As I was leaving the home in which I stay, a garbage

**CELEBRATING GOD'S GIFTS:** Brian Wolford takes part in a birthday party for an orphan at the Social Works Center.



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# Chimbote

making its way down the street. A truck blew its horn, most doors opened and out a resident carrying a bag or two of the many dogs that roam the street. It is not possible to set your trash out for a period of time before the truck comes to collect it.

I continued to walk toward the center and found that most of the side streets were unpaved. One may not notice this because the streets are generally well worn from the traffic. It is in the desert, one need not worry about rain and any corresponding mud or flooding problems.

We were welcomed into the gate of the center by a friendly security guard. By 9 a.m. the grounds of the Center were already crowded with people and more were arriving as we entered. Sister Maggie and Monsignor Roos led me on my tour of the center. I showed me to the wide range of services offered at the center. Throughout the tour I met the many staff members who work to maintain the center's high level of service. In each department, we were given a brief glimpse into its daily

rooms and the staff of the Center are so friendly and so well trained that it is difficult to believe the small beginning of the place. For example, the laboratory appears as modern as any that I have seen or could imagine. There are at least five specific departments within the

laboratory, each with at least two staff persons busily testing samples, peering through microscopes, or recording results.

Also, we toured the maternity ward section of the hospital. In the materni-

**All of the children were very happy to see Sister Maggie and Monsignor Roos. Each child received special hugs, greetings and even a few secret handshakes.**

ty, there are approximately five or six births each day with some days reaching eight or nine births. At the moment, in the beds there were at least 10 mothers who had recently delivered their babies.

Before going home, each child receives a pediatric exam. The exam is done at least 24 hours after birth, the amount of time it takes for certain birth defects like a heart murmur to become detectable.

Next, we stopped into the orphanage wing where 17 children currently live. We learned that most of the orphans are adopted by those living outside of Peru. Apparently, this is what the government prefers. While all of the orphans are quite healthy, some have a range of physical and mental disabilities.

At the time of our visit, there were three staff members in the room caring for the children. Two of the staff were feeding children and another was changing a child's clothes. All of the children were very happy

to see Sister Maggie and Monsignor Roos. Each child received special hugs, greetings and even a few secret handshakes.

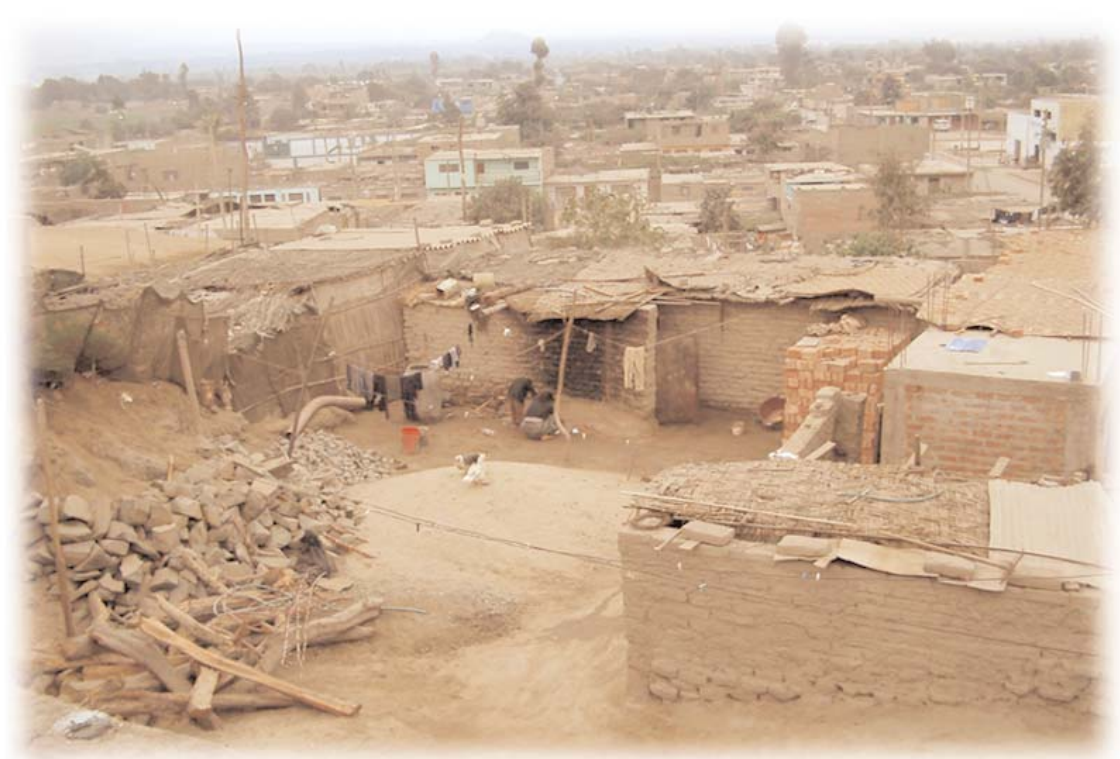
We made our way through a full waiting room to check in on the Lamaze class. Sister Maggie showed us the charts and paperwork kept for each mother and child. Each mother is monitored closely throughout her pregnancy. Pre-natal care is a high priority. A new program even addresses the relationship between the child and parents at a very early stage of pregnancy.

The Center keeps a record of the mother's progress and vital signs. The mother is given her own record to keep with her. The same system is kept for the child when he or she arrives.

Sunday there was Mass in a large space in the compound. In the front row, there were four new mothers in attendance with their day-old babies in tow. After Mass each received a special blessing from Monsignor Roos.

Thanks again. I'll be in touch.

— Brian



**HUMBLE HOMES:** Many Chimboteños live in simple thatch and brick huts constructed atop dirt floors.

## ✠ Diocesan Youth Support Chimbote Mission Through Events



**PASSION PLAY FOR THE POOR:** For the tenth year in a row, St. Sebastian Parish in Ross Township donated funds raised through its annual Lenten Passion Play to the Chimbote Foundation. The parish youth group presents the play each year. (Photo from 2002 Peru Mission Dinner when group presented a selection of the play.)



**PRAISING THE LORD:** On Palm Sunday, April 4, 2004, 1,800 youth gathered at Duquesne University's Palumbo Center in Pittsburgh to celebrate Hosanna '04. The day-long conference centered upon the theme of chastity and included a liturgy celebrated by Bishop Donald Wuerl, music by Who Do You Say I Am, presentations by Cultivation Ministries and a charity dance benefiting the Chimbote Foundation. \$2053 was raised for the foundation.

## ✠ Meet Two of the Social Works Center's Special Children



**Jhon Rodriguez Pimillos**  
Age: 5

Jhon and his two siblings were abandoned by their mother. They were taken in by a family their mother worked with. Their furnishings consist of a single bed and some small boxes in which they keep clothing and personal items.

The Center provides free medical care for the children along with nutritional supplements.



**Luis Garcia Saldana**  
Age: 6

Luis is one of five children in a single parent home. The family was abandoned by the father. The mother works in the fish factory and — when there is no work there — washes clothes. The family lives in a straw shack with a dirt floor and no electricity.

The Center provides free medical care for Luis. It also provides food and used clothing for Luis and his family.



# Major Earthquake Fails to Derail Work, Mission of Center

## Remembering a natural disaster that caused mass devastation in 1970

*“This is why I came here — to help wherever I could. I find the work interesting and a challenge, and I have to admit that I just love it.”*

These are the words of Sister Edith Mary Selik, a nurse and Sister of St. Francis of Millvale who served three decades ago at the mission dispensary and outpatient clinic in Chimbote.

The words were written in May of 1970 in a letter to her community in Millvale — just a few short days before she was called home by God. Sister Edith Mary was one of an estimated 33,000 people killed in a disastrous earthquake that ripped through the region on a quiet, warm Sunday afternoon, May 31, 1970.

The small Center for Social Works maternity hospital was destroyed in the earthquake and the convent toppled, killing two religious sisters. The earthquake, described by many as the worst of the century, devastated an entire sector along the northern coastal area of Peru and well up into lower levels of the Andes Mountains.

The city of Chimbote was all but destroyed and countless smaller towns were swept away under collapsing hillsides or were buried in mudslides. More than 500,000 people were left homeless.

The scene of the local public hospital was one of mass confusion. Only one doctor was available since most had gone out of town for the Sunday afternoon. As observed first hand by Monsignor Roos, “We were very sadly lacking at that time for the medicines and dressings needed for this type of operation because, well, you just aren’t prepared for such earthquakes.”

As described by Father Roos to



**“BRING ME THE LITTLE CHILDREN”:** During a recent medical examination nurses care for a young patient at the Social Works Center. Since 1981 the maternity hospital has cared for mothers and children throughout the region.

Rocco Sacci, the Director of Information of U.S. Catholic Relief Services in 1970, that day was “a scene of panic, with screams and shrieks filling the air, followed by a grim, dismal week of searching for loved ones, mass burials and continued fear as more tremors toppled whatever structures still remained. It was awful to see so many years of work on the part of priests, nuns and lay people, done with the help of so many people

on the outside, just begin to collapse before our eyes that afternoon,” the priest said. “It is hard to describe the scene, all this wailing, weeping and this running and confusion and the screaming and, well, you might say, a bit of hell.”

Notwithstanding great hardship, Monsignor Roos kept the medical

facility open during this time as he pursued construction of a replacement facility — an endeavor that would take many years to complete. While still providing services in a makeshift, chip board building during the entire reconstruction period, the new Maternity Hospital was completed and opened in 1981.

In a letter to her community in November 1969, Sister Edith Mary Selik wrote, “and don’t forget us in your prayers, especially that our health remains good so that we can help these people for many years.” It has been more than 30 years since Sister Edith Mary gave her life for those she loved, yet her request remains as timely and significant today as it was then.

**That day was ‘a scene of panic, with screams and shrieks filling the air.’**

## The Chimbote Foundation

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### How You Can Help...

The following list offers a glimpse of how your generosity translates into care for God's children.

- \$14,000 operates Medical Clinic for one week
- \$6,000 operates Well Baby Clinic for one month
- \$3,000 underwrites the cost of vaccinations administered during an average week
- \$1,500 operates Outpatient First Aid Treatment Unit for one month
- \$750 provides a month's worth of medical treatment for high-risk newborns
- \$300 underwrites cost of ultrasound tests administered during an average week
- \$150 underwrites cost of Electronic Fetal Monitoring tests for one month
- \$75 underwrites cost of medicine, supplies and labor used in Clinic for one hour
- \$40 underwrites cost of medical treatment for 10 people during an average day

*Please use the envelope provided with this newsletter to make your donation. Thank you.*

## Annual Peru Mission Dinner

October 29, 2004  
Sheraton  
Station Square  
Tickets \$125

For information  
call 412.456.3085