

The Shared Table

Greetings from Yanaoca in the Southern Andes of Peru to all our supporters of the Shared Table. In this edition of the newsletter, I would like to concentrate on the Children's Centre in Yanaoca called T'ikariy, as well as a brief report on some of the activities back in Lima.

T'IKARIY

T'ikariy is a Quechuan word, a verb, which means to flower.

It was chosen as the name for our Centre that provides social support and tutoring for children from low income families who are below their expected educational standard.

Presently, T'ikariy is offering support to a number of children experiencing setbacks in learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When I arrived in Yanaoca at the end of 2021, T'ikariy was suffering from the effects of the recent pandemic, and the number of children attending had dropped considerably. It was essentially operating as an after school child minding centre for parents who were working – a far cry from its original purpose.

Since the children have returned to school after the pandemic, it has been identified that the academic progress of a considerable number of children has been severely impacted. Currently there are children participating in classes up to the third year of Primary School who cannot read or write.

With the commitment and support of the Shared Table and assistance from Sacred Heart Primary School Mildura, we have been able to upgrade our professional resources by employing experienced teachers who's expertise is providing a higher level of learning for children in need of extra tutoring in the areas of numeracy and literacy.





T'ikariy also offers the children space for social interaction and skills in arts and crafts as a way of balancing out their learning experience and providing an environment that is enjoyable and exciting for them.



Since reorganising and restructuring our Centre, enrolments have doubled, and we are now providing a service to more than fifty children a day over four afternoons a week.

Personally, I am delighted at this development and extremely grateful to the friends of the Shared Table for the support committed to this project.



I am happy to report that the project is operating extremely well, and by the end of the year, we will be in a position to review the developments to date and plan for an even more productive Centre next year.

No doubt if enrolments continue to increase, we will be in need of more teaching staff who's salary is also partly supported by the modest fee paid by the parents of the children participating.



KITCHENS IN LIMA



Lucia Cuentas regularly reports on the kitchens in Lima, noting that since the pandemic there are also a number of elderly people benefiting from the kitchens in some of the communities.

COVID was not only a time of danger for the population in general, it also exposed the level of poverty among the elderly and isolated in the community. The Shared Table has remained committed to providing assistance to these vulnerable people.

YANAOCA KITCHEN

I am happy to report that the renovations for the kitchen in Yanaoca are slowly but surely advancing. A bit slow for my liking, but by the end of the year we should be operational. This kitchen will initially be providing meals for the elderly.

I am sure the service will eventually extend to school children who walk long distances to attend school here in Yanaoca. We are currently investigating the reality facing these children and assessing what sort of service we can provide them – whether it be before school hours, or after school.



VEGETABLE GARDEN CANGALLO



Andrés reports regularly on the state of the Vegetable Garden, and as stated in the last newsletter, we have managed some renovations of the terraces and revitalisation of the soil.

Vegetable production continues as a support to the kitchens, and surplus produce is sold at the Parish Centre providing income for the maintenance of the garden.



BAKING WORKSHOP RECOGNITION



The Baking Workshop has never been a regular recipient of funding from the Shared Table, as it is basically self-sustaining. It did receive support in its earliest inception through the Shared Table and the Terang Branch of the Knights of the Southern Cross, to buy an oven and kitchen appliances.

Recently we were delighted that this project has received recognition from a not-for-profit organisation 'Acción y Desarrollo' (Action and Development), and we have signed a two-year arrangement as the recipient of assistance to further develop and expand the capacity of the project.

This is a true community development project and has been supported by a committed group of women providing an income and bakery skills training for the participants.

BALLARAT DIOCESAN SUPPORT

The Parish of Yanaoca consists of three main pueblos of Pampamarca, Tungasuca and the major town of Yanaoca itself. Besides these three main centres, there are another twenty-five communities that each have their own chapel. The country communities celebrate Mass monthly, and are cared for by trained Catechists who regularly visit and celebrate liturgies with them. The Catechists also assume responsibility for the formation of people seeking to celebrate Baptisms, Confirmation, First Eucharist, and Marriage. Their presence in the communities is indispensable, and their commitment is essential for the ongoing spiritual growth of these communities.



Much of the terrain covered by the Catechists is harsh and during the wet season inaccessible by car. Three Catechists are provided with motorbikes to enable them to reach the most isolated communities. These bikes had well and truly passed their use-by date by the time I arrived here, and were in fact in a dangerous state of disrepair. With the assistance of donations from the Diocese of Ballarat, kindly facilitated by Bishop Paul, we have recently purchased two new bikes, and I am seeking options of further assistance to replace the third.

May God bless you all for your kindness and generosity.

*Fr Michael McKinnon
Yanaoca Peru, October 2023*

I wish to acknowledge the kind assistance the Diocese of Ballarat has provided for this mission.