



Testimony.

A missionary Newsletter.

Miguel Arenas Herrera
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Back to School

Dear Friends,

Two months ago, we initiated our school activities and it seems that the time has flown. Nevertheless, from Monday, March 8, when the pupils began the classes, many things have already happened.

March was a month of "welcome". Welcome for all of the pupils and teachers as we began a new academic year. Especially for you newcomers, I remind you that the school is a small school of approximately 220 pupils. It is divided into pre-school, primary and secondary education. This began a new stage in the life for many.

The beginning of the school year had a new flavor for me. Last year, the Board of the Methodist Church of Uruguay (IEMU), had invited me to assume the role of chaplain for my school. As of yet, I have not been confirmed in this charge. This new position will create for me a new mission here in Salto in addition to my responsibilities as a teacher of English as the second language. I will be given new functions that are more related to the pastoral life, spiritual life and that of counselor for the school community.

I have assumed this new position with a great expectancy. The school does not have a large experience with the office of the chaplain. I have been allowed to initiate a work in quite a new field. Some of the activities that I have been able to take part in so far, are visitation to different people related to the school, interviews with parents and pupils, reflections in meetings. Certainly, everything has been of great blessing for my life.



Juan Pablo and Gonzalo – Secondary School Students.

One of the activities of my congregation that I would like to mention to you is that we have already begun the snack bar (Merendero) for this year of 2004. We have, at this moment, 10 young people who come and share not only a cup of milk and bread but also the fondness, affection and love of the people of the congregation. Especially, those young people and women of the church, who help with this special program for the youth. We give thanks to God because once again, caring brothers and sisters in Christ have managed to give a gracious beginning to this place of hope, for many hopeless youngsters.

As of my activities with the community, we have, once again, begun the violin lessons. The number of pupils and those who are interested has increased. I do not doubt that many people in this city have been blessed by this special power that exists when music is shared.

Finally, I want to give thanks to God for this new period of 2004. I thank God for giving to me His love and hope so that I may continue in this journey of faith.

In Christ Miguel

"Merendero" (The Snack Bar)

On Monday, the 12th of April, after the celebration of Holy Week, our snack bar began its activities. The snack bar is a program of help, provided by the Methodist Church of Salto. This program is for young people of the community who have not finished their studies of high school.

Rubén Beliusci, Pablo Stabile, Walter Balino, Paola Fagundez, Nestor Bastos, Ruben Pimentel, Andres Teliechea, Eduardo Fontoura, Jorge Rodríguez, Alvaro Gonzalez, Jose Stabile, Silvina Tabarez and Rodney Reyes. These are the young people who are being favored by the snack bar. They receive a daily meal before attending their classes in night school. It is impressive what value there is in a cup of warm milk and a piece of bread, to these young people who have a life of work and a desire for improvement.



Students at the Merendero 2004

The snack bar is maintained with great effort on the part of the local church. They see that in spite of the few means that they have, it is important to be a light inside the darkness of many. We are grateful to those who have collaborated with this initiative. God bless you!

The Holy Week.

The week of Tourism in Montevideo and other parts of the Uruguay; the Week of the Beer in the city of Paysandu; the "Creole" week for all of the gauchos (the Uruguayan cowboys)--these are all names that correspond to what we know as Holy Week.

During this week, a great part of the Uruguayan population takes vacation. Some of them go away to tourist places; others go to distant places far from the city next to the field in their farms. Still others only dedicate this week to rest at their homes.

During this week, the city of Salto is transformed into a tourist city. Many of these tourists are Argentine, Brazilian, Chilean and Paraguayan. They visit the spa of Arapey and Dayman.

Knowing about Uruguay (The Yerba Mate.)

The Yerba Mate. (*The ancient drink of health and friendship*)

Mate (pronounced "yerba mahtay") is a tea-like beverage consumed mainly in Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and southern Brazil. It is brewed from the dried leaves and stemlets of the perennial tree *Ilex paraguayensis* ("Yerba Mate"). The name "Mate" derives from the quichua word "matí" that names the gourd (*Lagenaria vulgaris*) that is traditionally used to drink the infusion. The scientific name *Ilex paraguayensis* was given by the French naturalist and botanist Auguste de Saint Hilaire in 1822,

More than a drink, Yerba Mate has become a cultural phenomenon throughout South America. Its benefits are obvious. In "Uruguay", where people carry their Mate with them throughout the day, the site of an obese person is rare.

I have tried *mate*, it has a bitter flavor. Nevertheless, it is like a cup of coffee for us.

It is a friendly drink, which gathers people and their families.



Miguel drinking mate

Be watching for more *mate* issues in upcoming newsletters--*How to prepare a traditional Maté infusion.*

Covenant Churches

I would like to thank all of you who support my ministry in Uruguay. I have been informed by the GBGM offices about the following covenant churches, whose support to this ministry is gratefully accepted.

- ❖ Rockbridge UMC, Rockbridge, IL
- ❖ Grace UMC, Millersburg, PA
- ❖ Martha UMC, Julian, PA

I would like also to mention the following churches and communities: East Naples UMC, FL; Union Quincy, IL; Grace Urbana UMC, IL; Readland Community, FL; Hardy Meml, Texarkna, TX; Calvary, Dillsburg, PA; Fishing Creek-Salem, PA; Coalmont, Saxton, PA and Middletown, Geyers, PA.

God Bless you all.



Web Page

I am not a computer geek or an expert. I am just an amateur at it. But I would like to invite you to visit my webpage, so that you may have more information about this Journey of Faith. I am still working on it. Nevertheless, you will be able to find some good articles, pictures, the scripture of the week, some curiosities, all the numbers of the previous newsletters, and other good stuff. Stop by at <http://www.marenas-mission.tk/>

Prayer Requests

- The Evangelical Methodist Church of Uruguay.
- The community of the Crandon School in Salto.
- The Merendero (Snack Bar) and the support for it.
- This mission and its challenges.

“Lord of heaven and earth, give us courage to face our fears, give us trust to respond with faith. Give us confidence to follow your promptings. Give us strength to serve with honor and to know your presence.”
Amen.

Camp to be reborn

The “*Renacer*”– (Reborn) Methodist Camp, is located just outside of the city of “Paysandu” (380 kilometers north of the capital, Montevideo) It is a field of 9 hectares with wild vegetation and a wide variety of birds. Pastor Miguel Bogado, from local Methodist Church of Paysandu, invited me to visit. He, along with 5 youngsters and myself visited the place as a local work team to cut some bushes and do some cleaning. When I saw it, I was caught up in the native beauty and in splendor of it. The shores by the “San Francisco” channel and the area has been declared as a national sanctuary for birds and native trees. Unfortunately, the place has been

abandoned for years. There are quite few cabins, in really bad condition, two restrooms and an open lounge. The Paysandu congregation has been working on it. They are doing some cleaning of the place and trying to restore the buildings, as best as they can. (Paysandu Congregation mostly consists of poor people from a neighborhood in the city. None the less, they own a church building called "Saint Luke Methodist Church" that was built by a missionary who was a pastor there in downtown Paysandu.)



I was thinking that this would be a good place for VIM work teams. If you are seeking for a place to work and give time, energy, love and service to God for these people please contact me. I will send you more information about the place and the available projects.

Brief news.

- New World Outlook magazine has invited me to write for its July-August 2004 issue. I personally invite you all to keep it in mind, and be prepared to read about the new experiences of life in this journey of faith.
- "Compartiendo" (Sharing) is the name of the newsletter I write for the school each month. This month, the office of the chaplain has offered the second issue. We (the Christian Education Department) have

planned to distribute it monthly among the students, teachers and school community. It normally contains reflections (or what you may call devotions), a monthly activity schedule for the community and curiosities (stories of life, important dates and testimonies).

- The School community had its first "Fe con Café" (Faith and Coffee) meeting. It is a special service offered by the Christian Education Department and the office of the chaplain to the teachers and the school staff. It is an hour activity which gives us time for sharing daily experiences through the Bible, and also have some time for friendship and of course! A good cup of coffee or something else.
- Salto Methodist church doesn't have many kids around, but it has been a nice beginning for this year's Sunday school. We have had an average attendance of 6 to 7 kids' during these last Sundays. So we hope to increase the number and work more for it.

Information.



If you or your church would like to support this mission, as a Covenant Church, receive this newsletter, or (e) mail me, please

take note of the following information.

General Board of the Global Ministries
 The Advance for Christ and His Church
 Covenant Relationship Program
 475 Riverside Drive, Room 320
 New York, NY 10115
 Phone: (212) 870-3797
 Email: covenant@gbgm-umc

Missionary Code # 14286Z
 Miguel Arenas Herrera
 Artigas 611 – Apt. 503
 CP. 50000 – Salto
 Uruguay.
 Email: marenas_chile@yahoo.com
<http://www.marenas-mission.tk>