

FROM THE PASTOR'S



Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – July 9, 2006 B

REACHING OUT TO COFFEE FARMERS IN GUATEMALA

As you know a few weeks ago I went on a quick visit to Guatemala to visit Tim Kantz and his organization *Café Conciencia* (Coffee with a Conscience). We had given Tim a \$16,000 donation from our parish tithes. I wanted to personally see the work of Café Conciencia. This coming week Tim is coming to the states to visit his parents and our parishioners, Paul & Mary Kay Kantz and to meet other people who can support his organization. Paul, Tim's dad, is chairman of the Board of Directors of *Daily Bread*, which provides a free lunch for the poor every day of the year. I have invited Tim to share with us at Mass next weekend why he chose to become involved in this work.

The following are some excerpts from Café Conciencia's web page. You can visit Tim's impressive web site www.cafeconciencia.org for full text and photos.

Mission Statement

Café Conciencia means "Coffee with a Conscience." We are an international non-profit organization that works to improve the quality of life of poor coffee farmers and their families in Guatemala. We accomplish this through:

Small business development that provides extra income and new skills for coffee farmers.

Community development that satisfies basic needs in farming communities such as water, daycare, and decent housing.

Education and advocacy that makes it easier for the international community to make a difference.

Project Profiles

The following are snapshots of a few of Café Conciencia's various projects.

Fair Trade Organic Coffee

Through our Coffee Roasting and Micro-credit Programs we help farmers create a finished product and earn more by selling their own brands of roasted coffee instead of just selling the raw beans.

Fair Trade Community Ecotours

Through our Community Ecotour Program we allow visitors to learn first-hand about the struggles of worker-owned Fair Trade communities; see how coffee is grown, processed and roasted; and enjoy the natural beauty of

Guatemala's wilderness, waterfalls, and volcanoes.

Community Development Projects

With the help of international concerned citizens, we are working on providing sustainable solutions to a variety of pressing needs in our Partner Communities. One example is the construction of Daycare Facilities to provide for the proper care and supervision, education and nutrition of children in farming communities where mothers work in the fields. Another example is helping to finance topographical studies as the first step in gaining access to a clean water source for another of our Partner Communities.

Fair Trade: For those of you not familiar with the term *Fair Trade*, this is how Tim explains it:

Fair Trade seeks to bring social justice values into marketplace relationships. The idea is to see the human face behind the products we consume, to see the working families of those who produce things--such as coffee--that we rely on everyday, and to make sure that they are treated fairly and justly, and receive a just wage for their labor.

Fair Trade principles and practices consist of several things: paying a living wage to workers in the developing world; buying directly from workers themselves, usually in the form of democratically-run, worker-owned cooperatives; engaging in consumer education to create a better-informed and more compassionate consumer public; and encouraging producers to engage in environmentally-friendly practices such as organic agriculture and the use of alternative energy sources.

Values

- We are a majority Guatemalan organization that maintains relationships of mutual respect and equality with its partner communities.
- We are a transparent organization that allows Fair Trade supporters to plug-in and see exactly how their support concretely helps Fair Trade communities.
- We partner only with worker-owned and operated cooperative communities who practice Fair Trade principles and use organic agricultural techniques.
- We actively support and collaborate with other Fair Trade projects in Guatemala, the United States, and elsewhere, utilizing strategies grounded in principles of solidarity, equality, and mutual aid.

- We foster a wider and deeper understanding of the Fair Trade movement, its principles and practices, and work toward a greater fulfillment of its potential.

PARTNER COMMUNITIES

Café Conciencia's Partner Communities are all worker-owned agricultural cooperatives committed to collective ownership and decision-making, equal distribution of resources, and organic agricultural practices.

Our 3 Partner Communities are: **Loma Linda** ("Pretty Hill"), **Santa Anita** ("Saint Anita"), and **Nueva Alianza** ("New Alliance"). Below you can read a little bit about their histories and the work they are doing with the help of Café Conciencia.

LOMA LINDA

In 1977, Celestino Gutierrez, a Spanish priest working in the town of El Palmar, collected funds to buy a piece of land called Loma Linda in response to the exploitation he witnessed on coffee plantations in the area. He then turned it over to farming families, making it possible for them to leave the plantations they had worked on for generations. The 74 original families of Loma Linda climbed steep paths to take possession of the forest-covered piece of land at the top of a mountain, and then worked collectively to build wood houses, construct a road, and cultivate the land.

Today, the Loma Linda Cooperative consists of 145 families (about 1,050 people in all). Their primary productive activity is the cultivation, processing, and sale of organic, shade grown coffee. Each year they export around 65,000 pounds of green (unroasted) coffee to Europe under Fair Trade conditions.

Fourteen women within the Loma Linda community purchase, process, roast, grind, bag, and sell a portion of the community's coffee under the brand name Mundo Verde ("Green World"). When they began in 1993 with meager resources, the women roasted coffee over open flames or in a bread oven, and had to mill and grind the coffee by hand. Despite the progress they have made in collaboration with outside NGO's—acquiring good quality roasting machinery, developing handsome packaging, and establishing a small sales network—the Mundo Verde project has been failing. Their sales and profit volumes are low due to limited access to urban centers, a lack of capital to invest in green coffee, zero promotional materials, and poor pricing policies and accounting practices. In the end, they work only a couple of days per month in their workshop, and can afford to pay themselves just \$3.29 for a full day's work. According to Rosa Maria, the group's treasurer, they

would be in the workshop all week long if given the opportunity.

What Café Conciencia has done for Loma Linda/Mundo Verde:

- Granted a low-interest, \$4,000 microloan, allowing the women to finance more raw coffee to roast throughout the year, enabling them to increase sales and profits.
- Provided office space in the city of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala where coffee can be stored, distributed and sold more efficiently to customers.
- Provided assistance with sales and marketing, including new pricing policies based on thorough market research.

What Café Conciencia would like to accomplish with Loma Linda in the future:

- Help finance new coffee roasting machinery.
- Provide roaster trainings by skilled master roasters.
- Improve the quality of the coffee packaging.
- Increase sales both locally, nationally, and internationally
- Contribute in other ways to the Loma Linda community such as helping their church choir acquire decent equipment and helping improve the quality and quantity of materials available to students in their community schools.

SANTA ANITA

Santa Anita was formed in 1998 by a group of ex-combatants who fought in the 36-year internal armed conflict that claimed the lives of over 200,000 Guatemalans. According to the Commission for Historical Clarification in their report *Guatemala, Memory of Silence*, the Guatemalan State was responsible for 93% of the violence, whose victims were 83% indigenous Mayan. After Peace Accords were signed in December, 1996, Santa Anita became the second group in the country to receive a loan from the *Fondo de Tierras* (Land Fund) which was set up to help resettle displaced populations. The community now consists of 32 families (around 180 people) - indigenous Mayan people from several different regions of the country who speak four indigenous languages in addition to Spanish.

The community spent its first year clearing the land, building houses, and tapping local water sources. By their second year they had constructed a schoolhouse and non-profit community pharmacy, installed drainage and electrical systems, begun cultivation of organic coffee and bananas, and applied for Fair Trade certification. From their 2004-2005 harvest, Santa Anita exported 31,000

pounds of organic, shade-grown coffee. Despite their Fair Trade contract, workers still earn just \$3.95 per day and live in cement-block houses with cardboard or scrap metal covering windowpanes.

Santa Anita's roasted coffee and ecotourism projects offer: 1) first-hand accounts of the experiences of indigenous combatants, 2) information on contemporary efforts to revitalize Mayan culture, 3) a picture of the Fair trade movement in the context of long-standing and ongoing oppression of Guatemalan coffee workers, 4) hands-on experience of the daily work of growing, picking, and processing organic coffee, and 5) the taste of that coffee as roasted by the community itself.

What Café Conciencia has done for Santa Anita:

- Granted a low-interest, \$4,000 microloan, allowing the Santa Anita coffee roasting project to finance raw coffee and purchase essential equipment.
- Provided assistance with sales and distribution of roasted coffee within Guatemala, and begun making contacts to be able to export more of their coffee.
- Improved the programming of their Community Ecotour project, enabling them to generate new sources of income, while providing educational, recreational, and volunteer opportunities to international visitors.

What Café Conciencia would like to accomplish with Santa Anita in the future:

- Provide roaster trainings by skilled master roasters.
- Further improve ecotour accommodations, food service, and activities.
- Help Santa Anita with their greatest need, access to clean water, through project planning, fundraising, and implementation, to allow the community to access a local water source to which they have already been granted the rights.

NUEVA ALIANZA

For four generations, workers at Nueva Alianza toiled in slavery-like conditions under a plantation owner who profited from macadamia, coffee, and other product sales. During the mid-1990's crash in global coffee prices, workers went 18 months without pay, filed suit against the owner, and stayed in contact with one another while seeking work elsewhere. Meanwhile, the owner declared bankruptcy, the plantation was repossessed by the bank, and a brother of the owner attempted to take over the land. On May 14, 2002, with help from two labor unions, Nueva Alianza workers returned to occupy the plantation and forced negotiations with the bank and the Guatemalan government. With a loan from the Fondo de Tierras (Land Fund), a Guatemalan governmental organization, they

bought and received legal title to the land on December 18, 2004. Their rare and dramatic triumph offers hope and inspiration to working people all over the world.

The 40 families (about 250 people) of Nueva Alianza sold their first macadamia and coffee harvests last year, enabling them to begin paying off their loan, invest in their businesses, and pay themselves a wage of \$3.29 per day. They are beginning the long and costly processes of organic and Fair Trade certification, a goal Café Conciencia is helping them to achieve. Nueva Alianza is engaged in a number of exciting projects including: bottling purified water from their natural springs, utilizing alternative energies like bio-diesel and hydroelectricity, growing avocados, raising pigs, and selling milk from their own dairy cows.

The community's eight-month old ecotourism project is thriving and shows great potential to provide a steady source of income. Café Conciencia is providing them with high-quality tour coordination, publicity materials and promotional activities, training of community members, and coordination of volunteer labor.

What Café Conciencia has done for Nueva Alianza:

- Provided high-quality tour coordination, publicity materials and promotional activities
- Trained community members and coordinated volunteer labor.
- Created a Nueva Alianza brand of roasted coffee and begun selling it locally.
- Assisted with sales and distribution of both Nueva Alianza coffee and macadamia nuts.
- Generated project proposals and sought funding for several important community projects.

What Café Conciencia would like to accomplish with Nueva Alianza in the future:

- Help finance needed macadamia nut processing machinery
- Develop new macadamia products such as oils and creams.
- Construct needed Daycare Facilities so that community children will be well-cared for while their mothers are working in the fields.
- Tear down and replace old, decrepit housing with new, decent and dignified housing facilities for community members.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can help improve the quality of life of poor coffee farmers in Guatemala. It's easy!

- **BECOME A MEMBER OF CAFÉ CONCIENCIA**

by making a secure online donation or sending a check to our non-profit fiscal sponsor, Yemaya, at the address listed below.

• **PURCHASE OUR FAIR TRADE ORGANIC COFFEE** online.

• **COME FOR A FAIR TRADE COMMUNITY ECOTOUR** in Guatemala. Contact us for more information.

MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

All donations to Café Conciencia including Memberships are tax-deductible for United States citizens through our fiscal sponsor Yemaya. Yemaya is a small non-profit food pantry and social justice organization in New York City who is temporarily working with us while we finalize our own non-profit status. Checks should be made payable to “Yemaya” with “Café Conciencia” written in the memo line and sent to: Café Conciencia c/o Yemaya, 18 Bleecker Street, New York, NY 10012.

Membership Levels

Social Justice Champion	\$10,000+
Solidarity Builder	\$5,000-\$9,999
Community Advocate	\$1,000-\$4,999
Fair Trader	\$300-\$999
Coffee Lover	\$100-299
Conscious Consumer	\$25-\$99

The following is Tim’s report of how he used the \$16,000 donation we sent him to help get his new ministry off the ground.

- Opened a small office in Quetzaltenango and purchased essential operating equipment including a computer and printer, furniture, supplies, etc.
- Disbursed \$8,173 in microcredits, enabling our Partner Communities Loma Linda and Santa Anita to increase their production and sales of roasted coffee.
- Coordinated 12 ecotours at the Nueva Alianza community, bringing in nearly \$9,000 in payments and donations to that community while educating over 170 international visitors about Fair Trade and other important issues.
- Developed a Nueva Alianza brand of roasted coffee providing extra income both for that community and for the women roasters at the Loma Linda community.
- Implemented internal accounting system and submitted paperwork for finalizing both local

Guatemalan legal status and non-profit statuses in both the United States and Canada.

- Facilitated the flow of volunteer labor as well as monetary and material donations between the international community and our Partner Communities.
- Secured the support of five Fair Trade coffee companies in North America.

When I went to Guatemala, I had a chance to visit all three partners. I witnessed the wonderful work that they do. As I said, Tim will be with us at all Masses next weekend. We will take up a special collection to help this young man’s inspiring work among the poor.

Sister Diocese Envelope:

Those of you who use our envelope system will notice that July 14-15 is also Sr. Diocese Sunday. The Diocese has given parishes permission to move Sister Diocese Sunday to another weekend if we so wish. I have chosen to do this. In mid-October on *World Mission Sunday*, we will have Fr. Fred Ruse, a priest of our diocese and now assigned to our Sister Diocese, speak at all the Masses about the work of our Sister Diocese. If you wish to give a donation next week to our Sister Diocese through the Sister Diocese envelope you can do so or you can wait until next October.

Have a blessed week,

