

Cochabamba, December 2014

Dear Friends,

We are already in the middle of the Advent season, close to Christmas, and in the Netherlands people are busy with an Adventcollection in the churches, which this time will be partly for one of the houses where I am the director: Casa Jerusalén. That will be a big help for us, because we really need the money: in many ways, the financial crisis continues. I am therefore very grateful that the Third World Group of my village, my family and friends and other people whom I don't know very well as yet, are working so hard to make this collection of funds a success. Many thanks to all of you!! Where would I be if all those good people were not doing all that good work? Pass on the news to others and also tell people that you can follow us on facebook (a little at least) under my own name (there is also another new facebook page, but so far that is only in Dutch). That way you will get some more news and photographs apart from this newsletter. Thanks to all of you and keep working and fighting for all these kids and youngsters over here!!

Looking back on a year there are always a few things which come immediately to mind, some sad and others which make us happy. Two of our great friends have passed away this year, well, really more, but these two have really made a big impact here. Judy used to come every year from the U.S.A. with a group of dentists and others and they came here to help us. She was a very special person and we miss her a lot: she has done so much for so many people all over the world! And also Bill Goeres is no longer with us, also someone who used to come here almost every year and who has helped us a lot and brought us a lot of joy. Two persons who were always willing to help us, who have done a lot for us. They will forever be living with us, they are not far away. There is not enough space here to write about them... We must celebrate their lives, but that is not always easy. I am glad that they are my friends! Both Judy and Bill still visited us this year...

There have also been many happy moments during the year. In the past few days we have had a number of our (ex)youngsters finishing their secondary school. There will be more to come, people who are with us, who have been with us, their girlfriends, etc. There was one special celebration: Alex, who has been with us in Casa Ana Maria for a few years, was one of the ones who finished school, with a bit of "help" from the school and a lot of help from the staff and others. Alex constantly has epileptic attacks, and he has at least had this joy! He was very proud! His family was also there, even though Alex did not care much for their presence, but a mother is always a mother, and we have had a small celebration together. There will also be one finishing the institute where he is studying to be a cook, and another one will be taking his official oath as a chartered accountant, and there are more, too many to mention them all. Our little school has for many of them been the first step in their education and we always need help for that school!!

There was a lot of commotion in one of the prisons of Cochabamba this year, and during the fights between prisoners four people were killed. I always go to the women's prison and the most important thing that I can do there and also now and again in the other prisons is to bring a bit of happiness and a smile before, during and after Mass. It is a very special moment for them every week. In the same way in the celebrations I have in a few of our houses, in the parish and a couple of religious communities. Before Easter I was in the maximum security prison of Cochabamba, to hear confessions in the unit where there is space for 8 people in isolation, but in actual fact we have really just talked a lot and laughed a lot: the joyful message of the gospel I think.... Our night shelter keeps on going with it's good work, very difficult work with kids and youngsters who are still living on the streets, and our staff works very hard to get them to change and to move in a different direction. An enormous task, but we have e.g. again a couple of youngsters in Casa Jerusalén who have come straight from the streets. Little drops in the ocean? Yes, but they really help!! Even if it is only one now and again! I really admire the people who are doing that work!!

With myself things are going alright. Some pain in the back now and again, but when you get older... My car is now 16 years old and also starts to have some problems now and again!! I must say that I have really used it a lot and he/she is still faithful!! Maybe we'll have to do some bigger repairs soon... In

november I have been to Brazil for a meeting with others of my congregation – there are only six of us in Latin America.... and I am happy that I am always the youngest!! When I am there, I am far away from my mobile phone and from all kinds of people who are knocking on my door at all hours of the day. We still want to continue a long time with our work here, but the financial problems are still big. I am very grateful for all the support that I have received from you and through you and I have to appeal to you to continue to be generous next year! Without you all, we can't continue! I would love to do a lot more, but, as one person wrote to me after my last general newsletter, “ you only get 24 hours a day, just like everybody else, and rightly so”!! Together we do all we can and that is already quite a lot.

I want to wish all of you a very Happy and Blessed Christmas and all the very best for the New Year. I hope that all of you will especially receive peace and health and happiness and that, together, we may mean something for our fellow human being who are not/have not been so lucky. Many thanks to all of you and I count on you in 2015!! With kind regards!!

Theo Raaijmakers

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Bolivia

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If you don't want to have further information about Theo's work, please let us know:

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