



Ecuador



The Republic of Ecuador is located on the west coast of South America. It gets its name from the Spanish word for equator—the imaginary line that divides the earth into northern and southern hemispheres—which crosses through the northern part of the country. Ecuador is about 109,400 square miles in area, which is close to the size of the state of Nevada. Its



Bishop Rafael Cobb Garcia (5th from right) and priests of the Vicariate of Puyo gather for Mass

population is almost 15 million—about 5 times that of the state. The capital, and second largest city, of Ecuador is Quito, which sits high in the Andes mountains.

The official language of Ecuador is Spanish.

Most people who live in Ecuador are Catholic (about 80%); about 12% are other Christian denominations with few Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, or Hindus. The Christian faith was introduced by Spanish settlers in the 1500's. Since then, many areas of Ecuador have been able to establish their dioceses and parishes as self-sustaining and are no longer mission dependent. There are still many places within the country that have not; these areas are called Apostolic Vicariates. This means that there are not enough Catholics in the area to create a diocese yet. They still need our help to sustain the everyday running of their parishes, schools, health clinics, and Catholic social services.

One such place is the Apostolic Vicariate of Puyo. Located in the southeastern part of the country, Puyo is home to 15 priests who serve almost 61,000 Catholics in an area as large as the state of Massachusetts. Their Bishop is Rafael Cobb Garcia (pictured at left with some of the local clergy). Travel outside the main town can be difficult as the roads are not paved in many areas.

MCA Makes a Difference in Puyo, Ecuador

Communication is hard as well. Bishop Rafael counts on a Sister with a ham radio to



keep in contact with some of the more remote parishes, schools and clinics because there is no reliable telephone service or internet.

By radio, Bishop Rafael and his staff are able to be in regular contact with Padre Patricio (Father Patrick), a hard working priest in the Vicariate who was ordained in 2006.

Just six months after becoming a priest, Padre Patricio was put in charge of a mission project in the town of Canelos. His parish is called St. Theresa (one of the patron saints of the missions!). Besides the regular duties of a parish priest, Padre also runs a day school for elementary students and a boarding school for high school age boys and girls. With help from the Missionary Childhood Association, Padre Patricio and the teachers are able to bring not only the basics of education to the little ones at the day school but also sets them off on a life long journey of faith formation. The students love coming to school every day—some walk many miles for the privilege! They are so happy to be learning that even on national holidays, like the day these pictures were taken, the students still came to school! They didn't want to miss a lesson or the daily meal provided with funding from the



Missionary Childhood Association. Knowing the students would be there, their teachers came as well.



For the older children, school is much more than reading, writing, and math: it is a place to learn a trade. Padre Patricio also runs a full farm so that each student can learn the skills they will need to become self-sufficient in life. They learn to raise cows, goats, chickens, pigs, and tilapia (a small white fish). They also are trained in the art of growing local crops — sugar cane, plantains and corn just to name a few.



For those students who are not interested in farming, sewing is taught. Students make all their own school uniforms!

At last report, Missionary Childhood members worldwide sacrificed \$31,000 so that the children of Puyo could learn how much God loves them!

Missionary Childhood Association

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