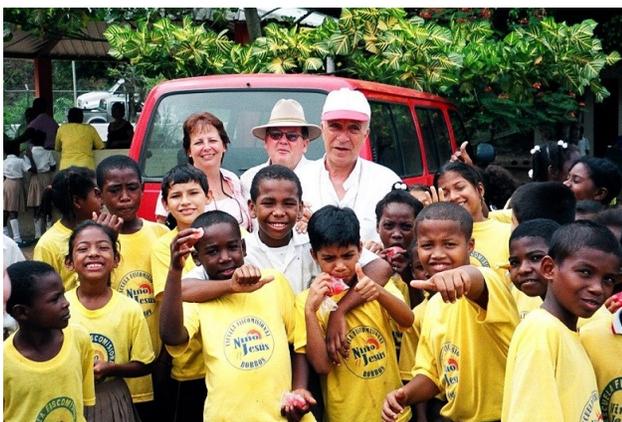


Ecuador



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 Eugenio Fernandez, MCCI, visits a school supported by MCA

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 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 1500s. Since then most 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 services.

One such place is the Apostolic Vicariate of Esmeraldas. Located in the northwestern part of Ecuador, Esmeraldas was at the epicenter of the recent earthquake. It is home to 60 priests who serve about 428,000 Catholics in an area as large as Connecticut. Their Bishop is Eugenio Fernandez, MCCI (pictured at left with visitors and local school children). Bishop Eugenio depends on Missionary Childhood support to run his schools.

MCA Makes a Difference in Esmeraldas, Ecuador

Travel in many areas of Esmeraldas is difficult; some areas are reachable only by boat. Even the bishop uses a dugout canoe to reach many of his outlying parishes and schools. Sometimes the ride can be five hours long between villages.

Missionary Childhood is a reliable partner to Bishop Eugenio and the missionaries who serve in the Esmeraldas region. Through the prayers and sacrifices of our members worldwide, we have built and equipped schools, provided faith formation materials, and provided health care at mission clinics.

Now the needs are overwhelming! On Saturday, April 16, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of northwest Ecuador at 6:58 p.m. At this writing, the death toll stands at almost 650. Hundreds of people are still missing. Thousands more are injured.

Over 30,000 people are homeless. Many towns were completely destroyed. On his regular Saturday radio broadcast, Ecuador's president, Rafael Correa, said, "These have been sad days for the homeland. The country is in crisis."

Working in the town of Muisne, near the epicenter of the earthquake is Father Navil D'Silva, SVD and other priests of the Divine World Missionaries. Father Navil tells us, "In the present time, 1,500 people are living in our chapels and in other temporary shelters

such as schools and tents. Our parish church and rectory are also partially damaged. Those who have lost homes have been told that they may have to live in



temporary shelters for three to five months. It is a long period of time. We are prepared to stand with the people!

I ask for you to pray for our people and any financial support that can be given, and for us very much affected by this natural tragedy. Thank you very much and may the Triune God bless Ecuador."



Photos courtesy of Fr. D'Silva, SVD



Missionary Childhood Association

66 Brooks Drive, Braintree, MA 02184 | Tel: 617.779.3871 | Fax: 617.542.1778

www.propfaithboston.org | mheil@propfaithboston.org