

## **Pre Trip Commentary**

**Jim O'Neill**

Saint Patrick Catholic Church has had a sister parish relationship with St. Wenceslaus Parish since 2000. We have exchanged many of our ministry programs with them and vice versa and have learned many spiritual ways from them and we have shared ours too. Six years ago, we invited the then parish pastor, Father Omar Jose Bernal Ruiz, to visit Tacoma and Saint Patrick Catholic Church & School for a week. Two years later, two members of our Sister Parish Committee, Florence Bucholz and Julia Narvaez, visited St. Wenceslaus Parish and a school for poor students called CASFA (Colegio Anexo de San Francisco de Asis). At CASFA, the Sister Parish Ministry and parishioners at St. Pats sponsor fifteen students, pay part of their tuition. Two years later, Father Libardo Valencia Hincapie, the current pastor, and two of his lay assistants visited to Tacoma to reconnect and to exchange spiritual and recreational activities.

Recently, we have been able to communicate via Skype, which has been rewarding for both sides. On January 22, 2015, four members of our parish, Deacon Bill Eckert, Jim O'Neill, Dr. Jim Rooks and Enrique Llanas, are going to make a reciprocal trip, at their own expense to Bogota to get to know many of the parishioners and to visit their homes, many which are in a poor area of Bogota. We are taking many gifts for their church and the members of their Sister Parish Committee. We will also visit CASFA and will be giving gifts to the students that our parish sponsors and meet their families at a weekend social. Dr. Rooks MD an ENT will be working, in conjunction with the medical director, in a health clinic near the school. Enrique will be his interpreter.

Deacon Bill will participate in all four of the Masses on the weekend, delivering a homily and Jim O'Neill will interpret for him. We will also meet the Archbishop of the Diocese of Bogota.