

# *Solidarity Bridge*

The Chicago Catholic Missions  
Medical ♦ Enterprise ♦ Education

Mission to Cochabamba, Bolivia  
April 18- May 1, 2004

Once more, our mission was to Cochabamba, a city of about 600,000. This is our third time to this dry, sunny and flowery Andean city. We were again very graciously received by our many counterparts and support people. This time all went smoothly with customs.

We got to work and accomplished much. Our team had 25 people, including two enterprise missionaries. The medical team, headed by Dr. Enrique Via-Reque, was composed of a plastic surgeon, a general surgeon, an ENT (ears, nose, and throat doctor), three anesthesiologists, a cardiologist, an internist, a pediatrician and two neurosurgeons. Kate Scott led the nursing staff of two surgical nurses and four registered nurses. Two interpreters and our three person pastoral team made up the remainder of our medical team. Overall, the team of 25 people was wonderful and worked well together.

At Hospital Cuschieri, a number of prisons, and a rural clinic, we saw 563 patients and performed 64 surgeries. In addition to our customary delivery of surgical supplies, medicines, anesthetics, suture, etc., (approximate value \$50,000), we delivered an insufflator that makes possible laparoscopic surgeries (approximate value \$1,600), three heart valves (approximate value \$9,000), five implantable defibrillators (ICD's) (approximate value \$65,000), 16 pacemakers (approximate value \$32,000) and eight pacemaker leads (approximate value \$2,800). For this mission trip, the total value of equipment and supplies delivered to the poor of Bolivia is \$160,400.

## Highlights:

- The neurosurgeons, led by Dr. Richard Moser, explored the possibilities of raising the level of neurosurgery in Bolivia through equipment donations and training of local neurosurgeons.
- We developed all of the connections to begin a cataract surgery project for the poor. We entered into partnership with a local church non-profit to screen patients, an excellent clinic to provide the surgical arena and two local ophthalmologists to operate free of charge. We will provide the surgical kits that include lenses, suture and a gel needed for operating. Through the initiative of enterprise missionary Isaac Goff, we hope to reach 100 operations a year.
- We developed a relationship with another excellent hospital for our heart valve patients. Our cardiologist regularly finds patients who need major heart surgery that we cannot perform given our short time on each mission. To save these patients' lives, it was imperative we find a hospital that could perform open-heart surgery. We finally connected with Clinica Foianini, the best private hospital in Santa Cruz, and Hospital Belga of Cochabamba, that has the best cardiac surgery unit in Bolivia. We agreed that we will provide them with surgical supplies and equipment and they will take seven critical heart valve cases for very poor individuals.

- We met with the administrators at Hospital Cuschieri to discuss the progress of the seven patients with renal failure we helped to stay alive over the last year.
- We initiated a sponsorship program for critical cases requiring surgery or other assistance.
- The first ever laparoscopic surgeries were performed Hospital Cuschieri in Cochabamba. We brought an insufflator to complete the equipment and one of the patients who had laparoscopic gall bladder surgery was present for the closing mass two days after her surgery.
- Another exciting development with was the incorporation of a Bolivian doctor as an actual missioner, not just a counterpart. The difference is that usually Bolivian doctors and nurses partner with us through their workplace and since they still have to work everyday, they don't get to join in as much as desired. Dr. Esteban Foianini, a Bolivian general surgeon from Santa Cruz, took two weeks vacation from his job and worked and lived with us in community. The bonds of solidarity and mutual learning that developed during this time were rich and meaningful and we hope to continue the practice with future missions.
- We had a wonderful celebration of all that has been accomplished through the Enterprise Mission. The Wara Wara sewing cooperative put together a fiesta that honored Solidarity Bridge and enterprise missioner Isaac Goff. To date, they have produced and exported 4920 dresses with a 4000 piece order in progress. This amounts to over \$50,000 in orders impacting over 50 families. We also delivered our first Solidarity Bridge Clothing order to them – the uniforms for the freshman class of Maria High School in Chicago. Finally, we exploring the possibility of starting a micro-enterprise for the production and sale of fishing flies.
- We met with the personnel of *Fe y Alegria*, a Jesuit public school system for the poor, to plan the next education mission in August.
- We met with the Archbishop of Cochabamba, Tito Solari, to discuss our intention to open a permanent center for Solidarity Bridge in Cochabamba. He was very excited and supportive of the plan.

Overall, this was a very fruitful mission. The work of Christ was done, the witness of the Gospel experienced, and our missioners, counterparts and patients were deeply touched by it all. Our next medical mission will be in a new mission site in Coroico, Bolivia.