

ECUADOR
7TH – 12TH March 2007

Fr Robert and Fr Bill in South America.

An unexpected trip.

I had never ever expected to set foot in South America. A request from a young man in Ecuador who insisted that he wanted to join the Josephites was the reason behind this visit. Fr Bill generously accepted to accompany me and made all the travel arrangements which brought us to such exotic places as John F Kennedy airport and Miami airport.

Freddy Mendoza

Freddy Mendoza first contacted me while he was studying French in Marseille. Apparently he had made a pilgrimage to Lourdes where a Priest in the confessional had suggested that he joined the Josephites. I suspect the priest was referring to a Spanish congregation which had communities in South America.

Freddy found our web site and eventually made contact with me.

We spent a week together in Belgium last August.

We visited all the houses and talked a great deal about religious life and a vocation to community life.

Although Freddy was very keen to join our religious family I told him to return home to Ecuador and look for a religious congregation there.

Freddy persisted in his request and in the end I felt obliged to visit him in Ecuador in order to speak with his spiritual director and meet his family.

Some photos taken during our visit to Ecuador.

Quito. A visit to Fr Carmelo, Freddy Mendoza's spiritual director.



Fr Carmelo's Church Freddy, Fr Carmelo, Fr Robert.



Fr Carme, Freddy, Fr Bill.

On the Equator



Fr Robert and Fr Bill on the Equator.

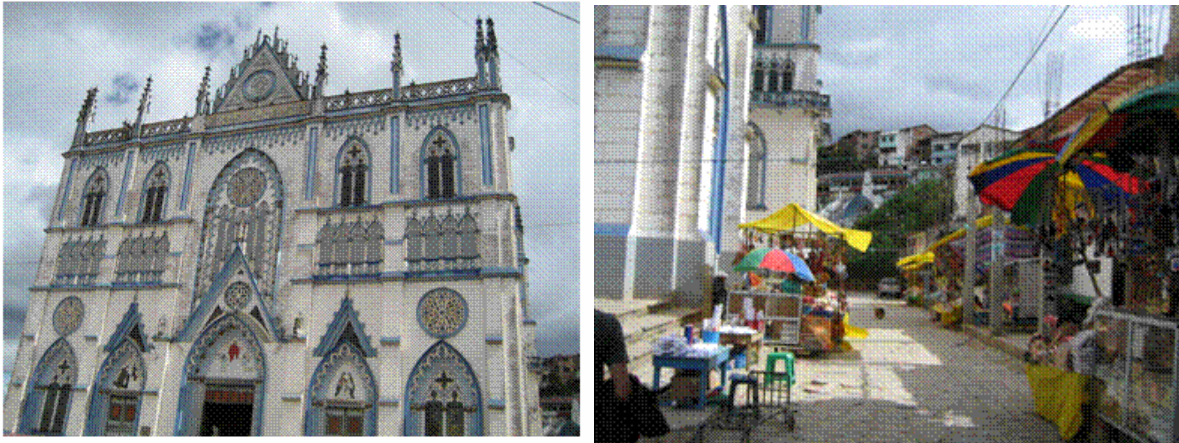
Freddy Mendoza and his family in Macara



Fr Bill and Fr Robert with Freddy and his parents.

*Outside Freddy's mother's boutique.
Freddy's younger brother on the left.*

While in Loja we visited the national Marian shrine. Ecuador is dedicated to Our Lady. We drove to the top of a mountain to discover a magnificent shrine. It was very much the Lourdes of Ecuador. Our Lady appeared here in the 19th century.



The National Marian Shrine



What next?

Our trip to Ecuador had been something of an act of faith. Having met Freddy in Belgium, I was impressed by his friendliness and openness. He speaks French, Spanish, Italian and some Portuguese. Educated by the Marist brothers, he is convinced that he has a vocation to our religious family.

The only way forward is to offer him the opportunity to test his vocation in our religious family. All being well, Freddy will come to England to study English at Bournemouth. If all goes well he can do his novitiate in England. Then we shall see.

Fr Robert
17.05.07.