

# Merry Christmas!

December 2008

**“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son”**

**Jn 3,16**

*May this Advent and Christmas be of grace for you and all around you!*

Here's our yearly **family newsletter**, to **thank God** for all the blessings and challenges received, as we **send you our best wishes** of the season. After three years in Clarion, we feel much more familiar and comfortable with the town, the University and the surroundings. Here is a summary of our past 12 months or so...

One of the greatest blessings we had was a visit to our family in **Cuernavaca** last January –after two and a half years! The children had the opportunity to practice their Spanish, celebrate the Mexican feasts like “King’s Day” (Epiphany) and “Día de la Candelaria” (Candlemas), see the city, and even visit the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe!

Of course, they enjoyed all the attention from Grandma Lucy and their Great Aunts Male and Nina (who’s now 91). Uncle Tavo (Xhonané’s brother) took all of them to the circus and Joseph to a wrestling match. An

experience so unforgettable that they immediately asked if we could come back the following year!

Another great blessing was **hosting our Godchild**, Juan Samuel Collins for three weeks during the summer. We met his parents in the Jésed Community in Monterrey when we were single. One of the best experiences was to have him and Joseph play a violin duet. We all enjoyed his visit and thank God for him and his family!

An ongoing blessing has been participating in the **“People of God”** community in Pittsburgh, which we met since 1997. Even though we cannot participate as much (we live 1.5 hrs. away), we try to reciprocate their love and support. God has blessed us with their friendship and mutual support in the Faith. It is an awesome gift in this society in which many live only for themselves.

For our family, offering a **homeschooling** education to our children is another great blessing. This year, we were able to go with Miguel to some of the conferences in which he presented in Philadelphia, Valley Forge, Erie, and Allentown in Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C. These have been great opportunities to study places, historical events, and also enjoy a bit of tourism.

We also worked with two **homeschooling groups** from the area. One of them is formed by almost 60 families who get together every other week for common classes, excursions and special events like a “Talent Night” in which every child has an opportunity to play an instrument, sing, dance, or act out. The other group has about seven families with whom we made a Catholic Geography Club. Besides studying countries, capitals, and important facts, we studied the lives of saints; we prayed the Rosary for each continent and had adoration to the Most Holy Sacrament. All of these have been wonderful experiences!

## **Eddie**

is now three years old. He’s noticeably speaking much more in the past months; apparently he will soon stop using “baby talk” (for example, he would say

## **WHERE DID EDDIE GO?**



“sacadillas” instead of “quesadillas,” or “matita” instead of “mamita”). The most impressive thing this year is that he can spell all letters and recognizes the digits and has started reading small words. He loves singing and “playing” any instruments he runs into, and he imitates Steve (from “Blue’s Clues”) and many other children programs.

## Montse

is now in 1st grade! She’s been making great progress in reading both English and Spanish. She and Xhonanita have started taking voice lessons and we are very proud that she danced with her mother and her big sister during the “International Cultures Night” at the University. This year, the theme was a Northern dance from Nuevo León, so we would not forget where we come from!!

## Xhonanita

has reached 4th grade. Her favorite classes are Vocabulary and Geography. She is now brown belt (7<sup>th</sup>) in Tang Soo Do and is making consistent progress in the piano. We thank God because she obtained top scores in a Music Club! In the past few weeks, she has been drawing what she calls her “Chalk Girls” in the pavement. She’s very creative!

## José Miguel

is now in 6th grade. His favorite classes are still Spelling, Geography and Vocabulary. In fact, he’s very excited with the possibility of participating in a local Spelling Bee in February. To date, he is a brown and red belt (8<sup>th</sup> of 12) in Tang Soo Do (a Korean martial art) and he is enjoying his violin and musical studies. He participated in a “Talent Night” with a “blues” piece that had everybody clapping. He loves practicing chess so much that now he’s teaching his sisters.

## Xhonané

has kept giving bilingual homeschooling to the kids, in addition to teaching them Mexican culture through important celebrations such as the Revolution and Independence and of course, religious feasts. Now with three years as the kids’ instructor, she is confident to make changes and adjust the school year to take advantage of museums, cultural events, parks, farms, and many other opportunities that complement the children’s formal education.

In her “free time” (yeah, right!), she’s been writing a book that summarizes some of the activities suggested in the Internet site ([www.familiacatolica.org](http://www.familiacatolica.org)) that she has been building along with other moms; we hope this book will be published in the short run.

## Miguel

For Miguel, this year was professionally and personally very successful. Among the highlights (which thankfully were many!), he was invited to present his research findings in Paris, Barcelona, Anaheim, and Atlanta, in addition to the trips that the family was able to join. In May, the College of Business Administration granted him the 1<sup>st</sup> place as Researcher of the Year and a few weeks later the *Society for Human Resource Management* (the largest association of Human Resource professionals) invited him to join a panel of experts in Global HR for three years. He has started receiving royalties as author (though the eight co-authors of his book decided to divide them in equal parts, so, this year’s payment is barely enough to go out to the movies!). In his “free time” he organized a series of talks on Catholic Social Thought for the local community and served in a variety of groups.

## What about you?

Well, that’s it for this year! Thanks for reading; we **look forward to hearing from you** and all around you!

God bless!!!!

*Here’s Eddie! He was taking a nap on picture day!*

