

thewhitesinspain

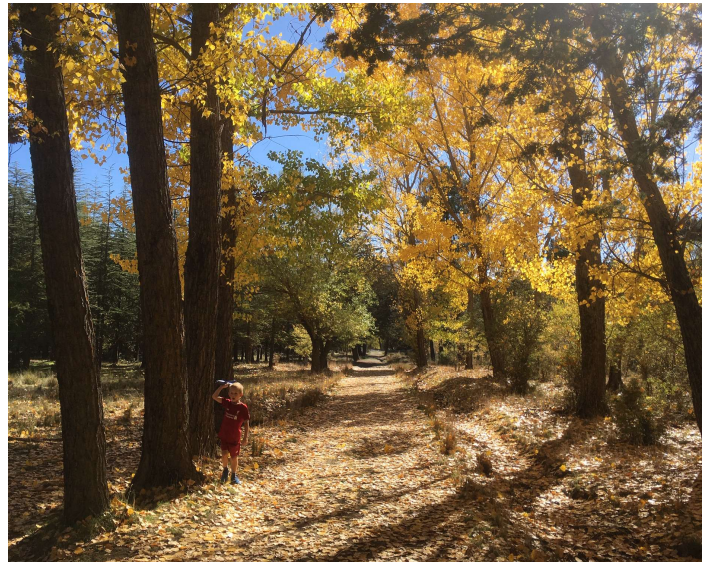
November 2019

Dear St James,

I am writing to you a day after General elections here in Spain. It's has been a difficult few years for Spanish politics as they have struggled to form a coalition government. Only a few weeks ago the socialist party, who were acting as caretakers since the last failed general election in March, removed ex-dictator Franco's body from the monument where it has been since his death and placed it into a normal grave. This was to try and bring some closure to Spain's painful past. Yesterday a new Pro-Franco, far right party VOX became the 3rd most powerful party in Spain! I know in the UK people talk about UKIP being far-right, but VOX is much more serious and would love to see Spain return to the days of Franco. With the on-going issue of Cataluña, and the Basque country re-visiting their request for independence, there are potentially difficult days ahead. Our Sate Andalucía voted strongly in favour of VOX. Please pray for Spain that people would learn the power of forgiveness and stop looking back but look forward realizing division only brings problems. Most of these issues stem from people feeling powerless, looking for identity, to belong to something tangible. We have the only answer, the only place to truly find identity and belonging – Jesus! We long for people to know Him as we do.

God cares about the details

Thank you so much for praying about the boy's school situation. Many of you will have heard by now that the day before term started, we heard that Sam could attend Leos 'school! Not only that they have opened a new class, so he is in a much smaller class then before. This is the perfect outcome! They are so happy to be together and play in the playground together every break time. After several changes Leo also has a new teacher who will now be with him now permanently throughout his schooling. She a is very warm, caring lady from our town who already really loves Leo. It makes us so happy to see the boys enjoying school and we are so grateful to God for answering!



Difficult times

We shared with some of you recently about the murder that happened close to where we live a few weeks ago. A man in his 40s shot his wife and then himself. In a 12-month period we have had a policeman shot dead, two drug dealers shot (one fatally) and now this in our little Spanish town. This is un-precedented in the town's history where someone stealing some olives off a tree normally makes headlines. It makes us sad but also, we want to understand what is happening and how we respond. Outside the sunshine, beaches and sangria Spain is a nation that is hurting, hurting from its past, hurting for the way it's been treated by the church and politicians and hurting as there seems to be little hope for the future. We feel the privilege to be living in this country and community at this time. Our desire is simply to be present, to listen, to love and bring God's word and hope into all these situations.

Praying around the world

Thank you so much for those of you who recently joined us in a 24-hour time of prayer for breakthrough before our last church gathering. It was just after Halloween, a dark time everywhere but here especially as they celebrate the 'Day of the dead' the following day where Catholics pray for dead

relatives in the graveyards. We wanted to try something different in our church gathering and asked you to stand with us. We had an amazing response with every slot filled and prayers going up from as far away as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Finland. We are always looking for ways to help our friends, who all have had a Catholic education and reference, to connect with God personally. So much of their experience is a distant God only reached through an intermediary. They really don't have any concept of who Jesus is and how He opened the way for us to have a relationship with God.

In the summer I visited a famous Catholic pilgrimage site near us and was taken by a shrine in a cave where people had brought all the things of their lives before God and then lit candles as prayers. In the cave there were photos of dead relatives, learner driver plates, kid's clothes, job interview letters and many other objects.



It impacted me that many people are trying to connect with God even if out of superstition more than a living faith and reality. In our church gathering (see photos) I spoke about God being Light, how coming into His light and grace we can be freed from shame and come to Him as Sons & daughters. We did an exercise where everyone wrote a simple prayer, brought it to the cross and lit a candle. This may sound obvious but for our friends, whom are very shy and not used to doing things publicly, this was a huge leap forward into responding personally to God. Even bringing things to an 'empty'

cross was a first and really powerful. We (Dave, Kellie, Liz & I) sensed that something had shifted spiritually and there was a different feeling and engagement from people. We wanted to encourage you all that prayer is powerful and mighty to change things! Please keep standing with us that this openness continues.



Keep on going, keep on sowing

It's a simple truth but I am constantly reminded that God loves the world and will build His Church. Pioneering a new expression of church in a foreign country can at times be hard, discouraging, lonely. But we know every conversation, every interaction, every prophetic word, every act of kindness is changing our community! We may not see it, in the same way we don't see the roots of a tree growing, but we know things are happening and know God will do what He has promised to do! We just have to be present, consistent and listen to Holy Spirit's whispers. There isn't time to share stories of all the different interactions we are having with people in our town but every day there are opportunities to invest in someone. Twice this month Liz has gone to Gibraltar for a few days to help our elderly neighbours who have a house there. I spent the day in hospital after the lady (Angela) fell off a chair and fractured her wrist. These simple things have made a huge impact on them and we have had amazing times sharing life with them and stories about what God has done in our lives.

At the weekend we fly to the UK for a few days to connect with our friends from Welton Baptist church. We are then busy building towards Christmas, having our first ever youth night for 12-14s and continuing to share life, time and meals with our friends.

Thanks for journeying with us, we really appreciate it! With much love Chris, Liz, Leo & Samuel.