

September 2008

A NEW START

I am writing this on a bank holiday to celebrate the 'August Virgin'. There are so many variants of the Virgin Mary, most linked to towns and villages, that people forget which one is being remembered – so even the main Spanish TV station refers to this holiday as 'La virgin de agosto'.



For those not on holiday, it's the last break before the start of the new academic year. The 'Back to School' signs have just gone up in the shops, and talk in the plaza last night was all about the preparations. The biggest hurdle is not getting out of bed on the first morning of school or buying new pencils and pens. Unlike British schools each pupil has an attractive text book for every subject.

In principle, it's a great system. Acquiring all these books, however, is 'a challenge'. Because the publishers don't print the books until the last minute, they don't end up in the shops until a few weeks or even days before the start of term. And then not all of them are available at once, since the less important subjects are printed later. Yesterday parents were regaling each other with 'horror' stories of interminable queues and fruitless trips around the town's bookshops. Nor are the first few days easy for the children, since they have to carry nearly half their body weight in books to school, and then up the stairs to their classrooms.

Many of us start new things in the autumn—perhaps 'September resolutions' would be better than New Year ones! New starts can be both stressful and exciting. So Jesus' words to be with all of us who seek to make disciples of all nations, which includes both Spain and the UK, may help us get things into perspective.

For Prayer

- All those starting something new this autumn, especially children starting school
 - For the seminary's new residential students as they leave their present situations and start their studies at the end of September
 - SAMS's new Executive Director as he takes up his post later this year
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