olabe

Our Testimony of JOY Ministries

We bought Olabe in 2016 as a ruin. A run-down, crumbling, ancient Basque farmhouse on the Bizkaian coast. But we had a dream – a vision that had been born out of prayer and fasting.

Since getting to know Rick and Bill through Summer in the USA, and subsequently deepening our friendship and connection through JOY Ministries, we can say, hand on heart, that without them, Olabe simply would not be open today.

JOY stands for "*Jesus, Others and You*". It is a simple but profound expression of what ministry should look like, and in our experience, Rick, Bill, Syd and everyone involved, genuinely live it out. JOY Ministries is about connecting the dots – bringing together people, churches, skills, resources, finances and opportunities to help turn God-given visions into reality.

And that is exactly what they have done for Olabe. We have now been open for two years, and the reception has been far beyond anything we could have imagined.

Our business strategy for these first few years has been to establish Olabe as a guesthouse, offering accommodation for up to 34 guests, with space to relax, connect and immerse themselves in an incredible Basque setting and its local culture.

The practical support has been invaluable. The teams JOY Ministries have facilitated to help with the restoration, alongside the financial support they have worked so hard to raise and dedicate towards bringing Olabe back to life, have made an immeasurable difference.

Through JOY Ministries, we have also been blessed to experience the generosity and commitment of a much wider family of churches. PBF, Coram Deo (and particularly the Easley family) and Sunrise have all played a significant part in helping bring Olabe to life. The people who have given their time, skills, resources, finances and prayers have been an extraordinary encouragement to us. It has been a beautiful example of the Church coming together across geographical and cultural boundaries to invest in something God has placed on our hearts.

What makes JOY Ministries particularly special is that it is a real-life, practical, hands-on ministry. It isn't simply about good intentions, encouragement or words of support. It is about rolling up sleeves, building relationships, identifying what is needed, connecting the right people and finding ways to make things happen. Rick and Bill have been instrumental in making those connections and helping mobilise people around the vision.

Quite simply, we wouldn't be where we are today without them and the wider family of people they have helped bring alongside us. But perhaps the most remarkable thing is the response we receive from our guests. So many of them say exactly the same thing:

> ***"There's just something about Olabe. It's different from other places. It's special. There's a peace here, a feeling that is difficult to explain."***

We know what that is. We believe it is the presence of God.

And this is where the Kingdom purpose of Olabe really comes alive. Through welcoming people, sharing meals, conversations and experiences, building relationships, evangelising, breaking down stereotypes and creating opportunities for connection, we are seeing people begin to piece together a different picture of faith and of who God is.

Olabe is much more than a guesthouse. It is a Kingdom outpost in a place where the Gospel can be culturally difficult to share. It is a light in the darkness, a place of welcome, hospitality, peace and encounter. A place where people can disconnect from the noise of everyday life in order to reconnect – with themselves, with others and, we pray, with God.

We are profoundly grateful to Rick, Bill, Syd and every single person, church and family who has contributed, in faith, prayer, finance and practical service, to giving Olabe new life.

Their investment has gone far beyond restoring an old farmhouse. They have helped create a place of possibility, a place of relationship and a place from which Kingdom work can grow in the Basque Country.

If there is one thing we would want the PBF missions group to understand, it is this:

JOY Ministries is Jesus, Others and You in action. It connects the dots between vision and reality, between people and opportunity, between faith and practical action. It gets alongside people, believes in the vision God has given them, rolls up its sleeves and helps make it happen. Olabe is living proof of that and for that, we will always be grateful.

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