

MEMORABLE SCENES FROM
OUR SISTER PARISH CLINIC

Floods of farmers' faces, craggy and weathered from a blazing sun, breaking into deeply crinkled smiles when trying on a pair of glasses for the first time and seeing a whole new world.

Homemakers waiting patiently in long hot lines wearing their "Sunday best" topped with colorful aprons trimmed with ruffles, ribbons and lace.

Young men and women with beautiful deep-set brown eyes eager for their exams, hoping new glasses will allow them to study without headaches.

Rows of patients seated outside the back door in the dispensing ine, baking in the hot sun until some resourceful volunteers stake a large tarp that provides both shade and shelter from afternoon lightning and thunder storms.

A typical afternoon storm leads to a 90-minute power failure which limits the team to flashlight and candle use and almost causes clinic closure. But our prayers are answered, and patients cheer the decision to continue.

Merry music making by the parish band at both our welcome and farewell dinners with Matt supplementing the percussion with his acoustic eggs.



See more photos online at <http://home.comcast.net/~wardian4/vision2004/images/picsandstories/>

QUARTERLY COLLECTION

The quarterly collection for our Sister Parish will be taken up next Sunday, July 24-25. For your convenience, special



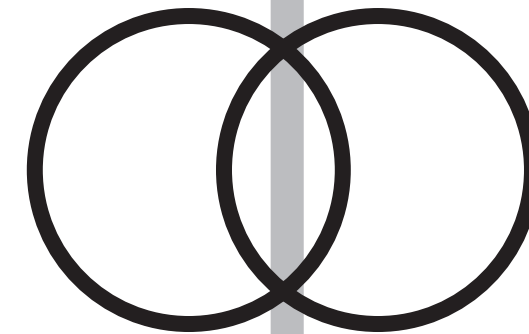
envelopes are included in your monthly envelope package. Your generous monetary support is greatly appreciated.

News about our Sister Parish

San Jose

August 2004

No. 31



Sister Parish Relationship

On Saturday, June 12, at midnight we board the Continental "Red Eye Special" from Seattle to San Salvador, El Salvador's capital city. We arrive at high noon and are warmly greeted by Padre Manuel, Mennonite volunteer Carmen Horst, and a host of smiling parish representatives. We are whisked away by bus 2 1/2 hours north to a fantastic welcome dinner at Ojos de Agua parish house, then shuttled to our sleeping quarters at the Chalatenango Diocesan Retreat and Conference Center to unwind with a cool shower. The temperature is 95° with 98% humidity. It is the rainy season.

Sunday morning we all gather for Mass at La Ceiba followed by a procession through the neighborhood carrying a statue of St. Anthony whose feast day we are celebrating. A little group of 6 to 7 year old girls cluster around me and reach to hold my hands throughout the service. After Mass four young boys escort me up a 20-ft. crumbling stone staircase to the bell tower to ring the bell.

The trip down is a bit more intimidating, but with a cheering section above and below me, I alight without a scratch.

We feast on a most delicious luncheon at the home of Tina Cruz in El Zapotal where we meet Tina's welcoming husband and entire family. Then we journey to the site chosen for our vision clinic and unload 20 boxes of equipment and glasses and set up for our Monday morning opening. Our headquarters is the unfinished house of the former mayor who generously has made it available. Four small rooms are divided into functional stations: the Registration and Eye Chart area, the Doctor Exam area, the Autorefractor area, and the Dispensary. Clinic hours are scheduled from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M., but we are still working at 6 or 7 P.M. Padre Manuel and his chief organizer, Alonzo, have registered over a thousand patients with appointment times and tickets for each day to assure smooth processing.

Our vision clinic not only opened eyes but hearts as well



Story by Joan Wardian



The parish volunteers are absolutely exceptional. They arrive early, walking or riding buses from villages near and far. They learn to administer all the eye chart exams and accompany each person from one station to another with great care and love. Translators play a major role at every station since only a few team members are fluent in Spanish. Special thanks to Andy, Carmen, Fidel, Jeannette, Mark, Matt, Padre Raphael, and Dr. Lis and Dr. Jose for their interpreter skills. You were vital to our success.

A vision clinic in our sister parish! A year in the planning and now the dream has been accomplished!

At our farewell dinner on Friday night in Ojos de Agua, a full complement of musicians have gathered from many villages and are entertaining us with Salvadoran folk songs that speak of love and hope.

A gracious group of women are serving us fried empanadas with a rich brown sauce, cheese-filled pupusas topped with curtido (a pickled mixture of cabbage, carrots and scallions), and heaping plates of homemade cookies and tasty fruit punch.

A very special guest has joined us and rises to address us. He is Monsignor Eduardo Alas Alfaro, the bishop of Chalatenango Diocese, the home of San José Parish. He speaks with gentle affection about our team and our decision to come. He says the eye exams and fitting people with glasses were great gifts, but even more important were the gifts of empowerment and the development of even deeper relationships with our Christian brothers and sisters. We were the leaven that empowered the people to rise to the challenge of working together to make a large project happen.

VISION 2004



Mucha gracia to our hearty, fully determined mission team whose spirits were always high:
Our St. Francis parishioners who were part of the Vision Clinic volunteers included: Matt Wardian, Joan Wardian, Dr. Cindy Murrill, Dr. Joe Pfeifer, Tommy Murrill Pfeifer, and Marsha Sullivan. Our other key team members were: Dr. Lis Faulstich, Dr. Tom Kvamme, Dr. Jan McVey, Paul Caletti, Gene Frogge, Carol Rich, Ed Rich, Linda Heath, Jeannette Corkery.

And in the action, more love was shared and greater community was built. He reminds us that God will reward us many times over for serving as Jesus did.

Matt Wardian thanks Padre Manuel for his Herculean organizing effort, for putting all the wheels in motion to allow us to examine 1080 pairs of eyes, for the unmatched hospitality, the feeding, housing and transporting of a 15-member team. Most of all, we appreciate his unbelievable energy and contagious enthusiasm even though he was battling a serious flu bug the day we arrived.

As we pile into the van for the journey home, I ponder Archbishop Romero's words about community:

"A Christian community is a group of men and women who have found the truth in Christ and who follow the truth and join together to follow it more strongly. It is not just an individual conversion, but a community conversion. It is a *family* that believes, a *group* that accepts God. In the group each one finds that the brother or sister is a source of strength, and that in moments of need they help one another and, by loving one another and believing, they give light and example. The preacher no longer needs to preach for there are Christians who preach by their own lives."

The sermons preached by our sister parish's tender love and care of our team have strengthened and transformed me. Today, as we celebrate the feast of the Assumption, we are called to bring the person of Jesus to our world just as Mary did. Jesus has indeed been re-born in me through the love of our sister parish.

