

2017 Interprovincial Experience of Charism and Mission

Report No. 2 from Sister Edie Strong

On the evening of July 25, we attended a special Mass at the local parish church. The attraction outside the in the courtyard was an iguana that had climbed high in a papaya tree to rest on a cluster of papayas. The Mass, celebrated on the 25th of each month, honored Jesus' incarnation, thanking Him for coming to us. Mass ended with a birthday blessing for a parishioner who turned 72 that day. Her whole family was invited forth for the blessing. As for every Mass, jugs of water were placed in the sanctuary for Mass and blessed during the final hymn. A chocolate drink and something like an apple turnover were enjoyed as parishioners mingled to enjoy the coolness of the evening.



We made home visits this on Wednesday and Thursday afternoon. These brought home to us the conditions of poverty in which many of the people live, as well as the graciousness with which they welcomed us and the happiness they know. One house I visited was that of a grandfather and a student at INESEM. The three-room house was made of red brick the size of concrete blocks. Walls inside were the rough brick and cement also seen from the outside. One room had a concrete



floor, a table lamp, bed, makeshift selves for a few food supplies, and a plastic lawn chair. The kitchen had a dirt floor, range without a working oven, makeshift shelves for dishes, pots and pans, and a wall of bamboo, separating the kitchen from the small courtyard which is home to four chickens and two ducks. No refrigerator, plumbing or running water. No place to hang clothes after washing. No dish soap, towel of dish cloth. No green space. A thick layer of dust over everything.

A second house was of the traditional brick. It had three rooms, a concrete floor for all rooms, a range and a washing machine. Washed clothes were hung outside to dry. Still no refrigeration, plumbing or running water. This is home for a family of five, one being a child in kindergarten at INESEM. The third was made of the traditional brick but plastered inside and out. It is home to three children, the youngest of which has downs syndrome. This home had all that the second home had, plus a refrigerator, TV, and a well-worn sofa. All three homes showed me that little advances can be made to lighten the burden of poverty.

Hans, a long-time volunteer for INESEM, said that Pedro Carbo has made advances over the years. The area was rich in cotton at one point; that means of livelihood dried up as the climate changed, leaving the people to make a living in whatever way they can. Even though small improvements are made little by little, the people are a long way from basic comfort and economic security.

July 26 was the closing event of our week of special activities with the students. We have received nothing but love and affection from the children, and gratitude for our presence and efforts on their behalf. We hope and pray that each one of the children has experienced being loved by a world broader than the one they have known and by the God who claims all of us as his own.

