



Fall 2011

FIAT Happenings



A RESPONSE IN SOLIDARITY

Dear Friends of the Mission,

Lynette and I returned in late September from El Salvador during the week of heavy rains and mud slides. It is with great sorrow and pain that we keep up with what is happening in that dear country and especially in Las Delicias where we and the volunteers spend so much time and effort. Although the news is sad with one death and several houses destroyed by the mud slides, there is still a spirit of optimism and the desire to overcome obstacles that have been placed in their way by the storm. In response to such devastation, a FIAT volunteer from Canada is traveling to the hardest hit areas to survey the most urgent needs and provide financial aid. Volunteers from Missouri have written to pledge money in order to help in the rebuilding efforts. Miguel, our driver, has been delivering food packages from the volunteer house to the many families in need. In addition, we have been in contact with the people at the clinic to offer help with buying materials and providing volunteer labor to rebuild the homes destroyed by the mudslides. This work has been made possible because of the generosity of our many volunteers who have been touched by the lives of the Salvadoran people.

We are truly a people in solidarity with our valiant brothers and sisters of that country . Let us continue to offer them our prayerful support.

Sr. Gloria Petrone, acj



"Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime."

Confucius







Rosinda is a single mother who courageously left her abusive husband. FIAT volunters and staff all participated in educating and providing her with the equipment needed to start her own bakery business. She proudly supports a family of six.





WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

It is the evening of the sixth day in El Salvador. From somewhere beyond the walls and padlocks the sounds of music and singing are drifting into the Casa Voluntariado. I can hear the excitement of the party and people yelling happily. It sounds like a different El Salvador than we have been working with during our time here.

A profound thing happens when one blindly embarks on something. You can read articles, surf the Internet, search YouTube, but nothing hits you quite like the brick wall of actually being in that situation. That is what happened to me when I got to El Salvador. The brick wall could literally be one of the 10 foot barricades that surround every building in San Salvador, but luckily we haven't run into any of those yet (nor had to contend with the barbed wire on the top). However, no amount of research or worldly experience could have prepared me for this.

As we quickly learned, we all come from very different circumstances around the country. I do not pretend to know any one's story, nor them mine, but a healthy awareness of that fact is just the starting point for a group like ours to come together. We have all come here for the week from different experiences and are all experiencing different things. Different emotions. Different highs. Different lows. I would be remiss to say one of my lows has been the sinking feeling of realizing the abundance and wastefulness of my day-to-day life. Working with people who have next to nothing and thrive as best they can is humbling. There are, of course, highs to negate the lows: the high of working with your hands, speaking to the locals, laughing with the children, learning about a people and a country with incredible spirit and hospitality. There are few feelings like it.

> ***"Working with people who have next to nothing and thrive as best they can is humbling."***

Learning from my fellow AFLV group members and the people of Ilobasco and Las Delicias has had an impact on me that will be different from anyone else's, yet we all see that if we go back to our respective homes and sit idly by as if we had not come to El Salvador, we would be no better than if we had not gone. However, I believe (for myself in particular) that I can go home and share this experience and give back on a local level. Tonight we remembered that El Salvador is not unique in its struggle. This poverty exists in our schools, our neighborhoods, our cities. This service can be amplified back at our homes with our abundant resources and unwavering conviction. We have talked a lot about drops in the bucket, and how this trip is one of those drops; but drops create ripples and it only takes one off those ripples to take off on a new mission and spread further. The more drops in the bucket, the more ripples, the more people on the mission to make our global community better. This week is an incredible experience, but it is about what we do after the trip, once we don't have AFLV organizing a immersion, or Sister Gloria's air horn in the morning.

As Dean Brackley reminded us, it is not about the impact we have on El Salvador, but about the impact El Salvador has on us. How will El Salvador affect us in the coming days, months and years?

Katie Burwell - Ohio State University and a member of Chi Omega Fraternity





It's difficult to explain the kind of abject poverty you see and experience in a third world country. Strangely, though, it is not depressing. Although these people don't have much property or material things, they are so grateful for their lives. I don't mean that they are grateful for their heartbeats, or some proof of vitality. They find deep, happiness in their families and their friends. They delight in seeing the sun rise and set everyday, ever hopeful in laughing and praying, and loving.

Sara DeNault





COMPLETED BUILDING PROJECTS





Don Santiago and his family moved into their three bedroom home in April of 2011. For the first time the children were not embarrassed to invite their friends over to play. This endeavor has been made possible by some special friends of Project FIAT.

The Angel Mia Day Care Center in Villa Zaragoza was finished in time for the January 2011 school year.

A special thank you to Angie Nonis and her foundation in memory of her daughter.





"If you judge people, you have no time to love them."
Mother Teresa

A HOUSE WAS ALL IT TOOK

The people of El Salvador taught me how to work, how to play, how to smile, and how to love. The work day started around 8 a.m. when we were greeted at the site by many locals already hard at work constructing a house for a family in need. Traveling with Sister Gloria and the project FIAT team, we were welcomed with a smile and a shovel, prompting us to start working. My group, from the University of Scranton, arrived in El Salvador straight from a week of final exams, and we were anxious to get to work.

By lunch time my shirt was drenched in sweat, my gloves covered in dirt, and my body already sore. Lunch time was a welcomed recess. Lunch, as I would soon learn was more of a play time than a relax time. The children of the village only went to school for a half day, so they were ready to play as I was ready to eat. Deciding to eat at a later time, I joined in a game of soccer. Being a soccer player myself I looked forward to the chance to play in El Salvador. In the courtyard of a church, using the front door as a goal, we played a game of soccer. No one organized teams and skill was not a factor; we just wanted to play, laugh, and have fun. The game lasted all of lunch break and only ended when Don Miguel reminded us that we had to get back to work. Back at the work site many kids and neighbors came to help work on the house. This influx in personnel helped to speed up the job but it also created some situations where the language barrier provided a challenge. What I quickly figured out was that a smile was all I needed to overcome this challenge. A quick exchange of smiles told them that I was appreciative of their help and that they were thankful for mine.

After mastering the language of smiling I could finally interact and learn more about the Salvadoran people. They are the most loving, generous, and family oriented people I have ever met. The afternoon was filled with hearing stories told by Salvadorans about their families and their country. I learned about their hardships and triumphs. They taught me to love life with all of its ups and downs because life is better lived with love.



Working on a house in El Salvador showed me what hard work was when I was drenched in sweat and already sore by lunch time. I learned how to have unorganized, unadulterated fun purely by laughing, smiling, and doing what felt natural. El Salvador taught me that anything could be said or done with a smile. The people I met taught me to love everything including my family, my friends, and most of all my life. Building a house in El Salvador didn't just teach me how to work, how to play, how to smile, and how to love. It taught me how to live.

Drew- University of Scranton

IN MEMORIAM



On Oct. 16, 2011, Dean Brackley, SJ. died in San Salvador, after 5 months of struggle with pancreatic cancer.
Our deep sorrow for his passing finds an equal emotion in our inmense gratitude for his life and friendship. We, the many Fiat volunteers who met Dean in El Salvador, will remember him as a passionate friend of the poor- their lives, their struggles and their dignity- wrenched his heart and ours, as he spoke about his people.
Dean inspired us by what he was as well as by what he said and wrote. His was a personal witness to Christ. His simplicity, humor, self-gift, presence and single- heartedness made the gospel come alive for us and challenged us to a fresh vision of life.
Thank you, Dean. You have touched our lives, and we are grateful.

Sr. Sagrario Nuñez, acj

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"Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words."

St Francis of Assisi















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