

In Communion with our Sister Parish

El Sitio, El Salvador

St. Catherine of Siena, Portage, MI

Reflections from the Fall 2007 Delegation



I experienced a very emotional reaction in returning home. It surprised me, since I expected a bigger challenge in going to El Sitio! The more I think about it, this journey got me back in touch with my younger self – the idealistic young woman who was open to new experiences and people, who heard

God's healing message without all the filters, and who thirsted for doing what was right. A pretty good way to spend nine days, don't you think?
– Pat Hillmann Shields

It was the experience in the clinic that meant the most to me though. The time I spent there gave me an opportunity to be used by God. The building and the tools we had to use were rudimentary to say the least, but I found a profound sense of pride being able to use my hands, eyes and ears as my most important tools when caring for these people. Men, women and children came from miles around to see the doctor. They sat in hard plastic chairs, in the heat, for hours, and never once did you hear a child cry or a man or woman complain. They were just grateful.
– Bekki Miller



Bekki Miller, Steve Sobeck, Pat Hillman, Rich Shields, Fr. Bob Flickenger, Pat O'Hara, Dr. Bert Cabala

During Lent Deacon Al Bell spoke about his mountaintop experience and asked members of the congregation to share their stories. I believe that my experiences with our sister community in El Sitio, El Salvador have been my mountaintop experience. My first trip to El Salvador was in February, 2002. During that trip Fr. Flickinger celebrated mass, and the gospel was the story of the transfiguration (the same gospel Deacon Bell's homily was based upon). That trip changed my life.

Before that trip my only experience outside of the United States was our honeymoon in Bermuda. The trip to El Salvador was more reminiscent of Boy Scout camping than our honeymoon. These trips have made me increasingly aware of the events in other countries, and our impact on one another.

Every Sunday we profess our faith in the holy Catholic Church. St. Catherine's sister parish program is an outreach to other members of our worldwide church. We provide humanitarian aid, and help to better the education of the children of El Sitio, but the gifts we receive are far greater. Many parishioners who have gone to El Sitio refer to it as a reverse mission. The people of El Sitio have little materially, but their faith teaches anyone who visits it a lesson.

Join us in this ministry. The ability to speak Spanish is helpful, but not absolutely necessary. We especially can use medical and dental professionals on future delegations. I never tire of sharing my memories (just ask my family). If you want to learn more call or stop me after mass.

- Dr. Bert Cabela

For more information and/or ways to get involved
check out our website: www.elsitioes.org