

Desert Blooms
March 2006

Dear Sisters,

They say that "a picture is worth a thousand words" and so we are sending a chapter entitled "Miriam and Natividad". We have mentioned them to you before: Miriam is about 17 years old and has autism. Her mother has cervical cancer that has now metastasized to the lungs. The family situation is both tragic and desperate. We had hoped that Miriam's two adult sisters would step in to provide care for her since they live in the same family compound. Instead, under the stresses of their own situations, they have been abusive and even more neglectful of both sister and mother.

Miriam is always filthy and half naked when we arrive to take her to the clinic. She is locked in her room most of the day without access to a toilet. We have provided a commode as well as bed linens and blankets but these are always missing from her room. She is there with a bare mattress and human excrement everywhere. The first thing she wants to do when she comes to the clinic is eat and eat. Then she runs to the tub for a bath. She smiles and even giggles when she feels the hot water running into the Jacuzzi.

Natividad is growing weaker, unable to cook, clean, or help Miriam and her many small grandchildren who roam around unsupervised. We have been helping to provide some basic food items but are never certain whether anyone is preparing meals. From Miriam's behavior we suspect that meals are infrequent. Sister Ann had the idea to enlist the services of Las Hormigas, a women's group that sells and delivers midday meals around Anapra as a fundraiser. One of her catechists cooks and drives for the group and has agreed to take two plates to Miriam and Natividad on Monday through Saturday. Your donation will cover most of the cost of this "meals on wheels" each month.

Please pray that we find a long-term plan for Miriam's care.