

DESERT BLOOMS

September 2012



Little Juanito is now six weeks old and weighs over six and a half pounds. His mother, Cinthia, is doing a beautiful job with him. On one of her first days at Santo Niño she had asked Sister Carol if Down's syndrome was the result of incompatible blood between herself and the baby's father. Carol was quick

with her reply: "You know that God makes us out of love because God is love. Well sometimes there's just extra love leftover and God puts it into these special children and that's what makes Down's syndrome. These children are full of God's extra love." Her answer made sense to Cinthia- and to the rest of us.

On a reflection Saturday for the mothers, Cinthia was quick to share her experience of coming to Proyecto Santo Niño: "When I found out that my son has Down's syndrome I wondered what I would do and why God gave me such a baby. I'm only fifteen and all alone. I could hardly take care of a normal child. But then I came here and I saw all of you with your special children and how you fight for them and how much you love them. You give me courage. If you can do it, so can I."

And the mothers do have to protect their children, sometimes from well-intentioned people who do more harm than good. Sandra told about the man who asked if he could pray over her daughter, Conchita. Not one to refuse a blessing, Sandra consented. The man put his hands on the child's head and began calling for a demon to come out of her. Later Conchita asked her mother, "Why did that man think I have a demon in me?" Sandra had no answer but Conchita continued, "Well I think he's the one with the demon!" Several other mothers recounted similar experiences and asked our opinion about why people of faith would believe such things. Not so easy to find an acceptable answer this time.



Organized chaos would be a good description of our back-to-school party at Santo Niño. Tracy assigned each of us to supervise one of the "play stations".

After a very brief glue-gun tutorial, Sister Janet was placed in charge of the pencil-pinwheels craft. Romina set up a face-painting booth on the floor mats in the corner. Andrea was on the patio creating homemade bubbles of dishwashing liquid and Karo syrup. Sister Peggy was responsible for our version of Corn Hole which we called "Sock-Full-of-Rocks-Toss". In addition to coordinating our efforts, Tracy managed the craft table where moms and children created thank-you cards for the teachers.

After everyone had an opportunity to visit each booth we had games with prizes. Most of the games involved dancing. We never realized how much Nena enjoys a good cha-cha-cha! She was the belle of the ball! The competitive spirit was quite evident and family ties did not bind. When a prize is at stake it's every person for her(him)self! When it was time for lunch we still had more prizes so we resorted to a more egalitarian approach. We gave everyone a number and raffled off the last of them.

After lunch we had a three-course dessert. We had a donation of specialty cupcakes thanks to Sacred Heart parish. One box featured Spiderman red and blue frosting topped with "Transformer" rings and the other box had pink, yellow and light blue frostings and rings portraying the Disney "Princesses".

The cupcakes were followed by chocolate swirl ice cream cups with extra Hershey's syrup if desired- and *everyone* desired! To top off the sugar load for the final course we gave each child a little bag of candies as they left the clinic to participate in a water balloon extravaganza. It was the perfect ending to a perfect party on a hot summer afternoon.

