

Desert Blooms
August 2006

Dear Sisters,

Well, the rains have continued and continued! When Sisters Ann, Flo and Juana arrived on August 1 we were in the midst of a flood. All the east-west highways were closed and we managed to get to the house after about two hours. It's usually just a 30 minute ride. All the regular trips to the clinic in Anapra were cancelled because the roads were so bad. We knew that the parents and children would have a terrible time trying to get to the clinic. Fr. Bill lived in the clinic those days and sometimes was unable to use his car because the water had carved huge ravines through the streets that were sandpits in recent months. At one point our mayor evacuated downtown El Paso for fear that a dam in the Anapra area was going to overflow and flood the low neighborhoods near the international bridges. We didn't even know such a dam existed because it is usually as dry as a bone! If there was such a danger for the people in downtown El Paso, what about the 20,000+ in Anapra? There was no such evacuation plan for them.

Miriam's mother Natividad died on the night before the flood. Her other daughters had to carry the body to a neighbor's house on higher ground because their house was under several feet of water. Fortunately Miriam was oblivious to it all. We managed to pick our way through the ruts and ponds that filled the roads to get to Mass on Sunday morning. It was amazing and sad to see how little had been done to improve access in and out of the colonia.

Last Saturday we had the clinic as usual. There were two new children: Saul and Uriel. Both have cerebral palsy. Saul has a feeding tube inserted into his abdominal wall. He has such trouble swallowing and retaining food that he has had recurrent episodes of pneumonia. We are getting him a bean-bag chair so that he can remain upright more easily which will let gravity help keep the food in his tummy instead of his lungs. Uriel's dad brought him to the clinic and participates actively in his therapy. When asked about his hopes for his son he said, "I just want him to come and enjoy himself, to play and experience new things!" After work on the mat to help him develop motor skills, especially crawling, Siba had him sitting in the high chair building with new-fangled "tinker toys". Last but not least he got to play in the swing we have suspended from a beam in the ceiling. He was really looking forward to that activity as he worked through the other therapies. We saved the best for last!

Zoila and her family are living in a shelter after being evacuated during the floods. She said they had just been able to return to see the damage and pick up some belongings. Some will be relocated to other areas and others allowed to rebuild/repair. She said that finding Santo Niño has been God's greatest blessing to her in this difficult time. Thank-you for helping us help them!