

*Desert Blooms*  
*October 2006*

Dear Sisters,

This is the story of two mothers and their special children. Paula and Lorena came to the clinic faithfully throughout the past summer, taking several hours on two or three buses to make the trip. Their sons were both about 18 months old but barely looked a year. They each had cerebral palsy and required constant care. Saul, Paula's son, had been hospitalized many times and had a feeding tube inserted through his abdominal wall- a first for any of our children. He suffered from frequent episodes of pneumonia and always seemed to be struggling to breathe. Alan was the third of Lorena's sons to be born with a handicap. The others had all died in early childhood. She has one daughter, age 14, who is "normal".

Lorena actually brought Paula and Saul to our Santo Niño Center for the first time. She wanted them to experience the various therapies we offer but also the support for mothers with special children. On one of the late summer Saturday clinics both boys even got haircuts, compliments of Gloria!

Last Saturday was not a clinic Saturday but early in the morning we got a message saying that one of our children had died. It was Saul. Sister Peggy spoke with Gloria in Anapra and they decided they should go to the home. Neither of them had been to that part of the city so they arranged to meet a family member at the nearest landmark: the infamous prison of Juarez! On the way they picked up Pilar, another of our mothers, and her tiny daughter Maria de Jesus. After many wrong turns they finally connected with their guide for the remaining miles of dirt roads to Paula's house. Lorena was there with Alan. It was a sad but tender scene: the tiny still child covered with a baby blanket, lying on the little pallet bed next to his parents'. A doctor had been to the house and said that Saul's airway had probably been blocked with fluids from his stomach. It was some relief for the poor mother who felt that perhaps there was something more she should have done.

The three mothers: Gloria, Pilar and Lorena, had all been through this wrenching loss with their own children. Lorena took charge, calling a funeral home and initiating a conversation about baptism. Paula had asked her months earlier to be Saul's godmother. She had bought the baptismal clothes and everyone agreed that he should be buried in them. But what about the baptism? Everyone looked at Peggy. Peggy explained that the mother's desire and intention that Saul would be baptized was sufficient for the sacrament, but she knew they wanted more. "We just need a little water," she said. So they blessed the little body and gave him the name, "Saul", even as his little soul was in God's arms. And on the bed next to him the honor guard of the Santo Niño Center, Maria de Jesus and Alan, doubtless felt his presence tumbling around the room, freed from the physical constraints of his life on Earth.