

DESERT BLOOMS

October 2011

“Oracion!!” The call sounds throughout the clinic at 11:30 a.m. every Tuesday, Thursday and every other Saturday. The community of Proyecto Santo Niño gathers and joins hands to form a circle. We come together to pray before sharing a meal. Standing, sitting, in wheelchairs or with walkers, from the mats on the floor or the playpens at the periphery, we turn our hearts to God.

Most often Sarahi, Neftali’s mom, or Celia, Martin’s mom, is the prayer leader. They begin as Jesus taught us: “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.”

They continue with a litany of gratitude: “We thank you, God, for the gift of life and for the lives and health of our children. Thank you for keeping us safe. Thank you for this place, for the Sisters, the volunteers, the therapists. Thank you for the benefactors who make this place possible, even without seeing us or knowing us. Bless them, God, for their generosity and keep them in your care.”

There is inevitably some outburst- a shout, a laugh, a cry.

Martin squirms and squeals from his mat to get Celia’s attention. Monce drives her rolling walker into Christopher who can’t get out of the way because he’s holding hands. Nena walks into the center, clapping her hands and giving random hugs. Who can keep a straight face?

The prayer continues: “We ask you, God, to be with those who are sick, with those who are lost and alone, for those without work,

for those affected by the violence, for those who have lost family and friends.

Give us peace here, O God, and in all the world.”

Pablo is a young man who is mentally challenged. He lives down the street and when he joins us he is always willing to lead the prayer. “God, take care of those

children who live on the streets, those who have nowhere to go. Help all those addicted to drugs and alcohol, those who are in the rehab centers. And bless all the handicapped children in the world.”

Our prayer concludes with the Our Father and Hail Mary. In that split second before we drop hands and form a line for lunch, we get a glimpse of what the kingdom of heaven will be like. For God hears the cries of the poor, the fatherless and the widows, the strangers and the outcasts. When little Reyna makes her version of the sign of the cross on her head and

heart, we know that God has surely heard our prayers, that peace is possible and the kingdom of heaven has overtaken us. To that we can say a rousing “Amen!”

“The Lord protects the stranger, and comes to the aid of the widow and orphan...”

Psalm 146:9



Photos

- Top right: We gather in prayer before the noon meal.
- Center: Sarahi leads us in prayer.