

December 08/yr. 3

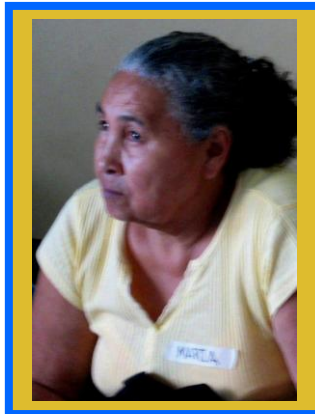
In Honduras

Janet Alcántara

*"I am the vine and you are the branches. Those who remain in me and I in them will bear much fruit." (John 15.5) "Simon and the others with him were all **scared** (Spanish translation) by the large number of fish they had caught." (Luke 5.9)*

It's the end of the year, the time when we calculate the harvest and ask, "After all our work this year, how much fruit is there? *Any?*"

My favorite group is the Health Care Volunteers. They are so open to learning! They wrote their greatest achievements on purple paper "grape bunches" and stuck them on a "grape vine" on the wall. **Soon the vine was heavy with fruit.** The women listed technical skills (*"I learned to take blood pressure,"*) but also **life changes**, thanks to the spiritual portion that I teach. **Maria de la Paz (right)**, in her 70's, said, "I reconciled with my next-door neighbor after learning conflict-resolution techniques," and "My neighbors know how I used to be, and that I'm not like that any more."



Maybe we weren't "scared" by the catch of **fish** with ICLH staff's **most satisfying accomplishments** for the year written on them, but we saw that God prospered our work in 2008. I was touched and humbled by how many people mentioned in their annual reports, "thanks to what I learned with Janet..." or "thanks to Janet's support..." This year I see much growth compared to when I first began work with the ICLH. Yeah!!

Daughter Keitlyn convinced me to use her ticket to Honduras to fly me to **Mexico** instead where, she promised, "Christmas will be livelier." The 9 days were indeed lively: a year-end luncheon with AMEXTRA staff ...two worship services and a Posada at Buen Pastor Lutheran church...hanging out with **daughters Wendy and Keit** and lots of friends...cooking and baking (and washing dishes)... blessing Mexican cooks for their imaginative, mouth-watering cuisine...sitting close to a crackling fire on a chill evening ...knitting...reading late into the night. Ah, God chooses lovely gifts!!



In faith and
service
in Christ,

-janet

Ambiance

❄ The (Mexican) look of Christmas...



Not Christmas trees but piñatas top cars in holiday-time México. No Posada celebration is complete without at least one or two dazzling piñatas.

❄The Sounds of Christmas...

The local Wal-Mart affiliate supermarket accompanies my long wait at the check-out line with "traditional Christmas music", but what blasts out of neighbours' homes and the year-end parties and dances at the 6 schools that ring my home, are robust multi-layered **Caribbean rhythms**. And then there is the nightly fusillade of firecrackers and the occasional outburst of drunken gunfire...

❄The Fragrance of Christmas...

Cedar? Fir? Balsam?

No, the smell of Christmas wafting out of open doorways and courtyards is the potent tang of **oil-based paint**. Hondurans mark the end of the year by using their Christmas bonus to repair and spiffy up the house. Congregations do the same with their church building..

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