

Ambiance

Finding food to eat when traveling in the rural communities is a frequent challenge for anyone, so how much more for a vegetarian! I overheard one side of this conversation when Eva (head of the Women's Program and the coordinator of the communities around La Ceiba) confirmed our visit to Chacalapa: "Yes, we will arrive around 1:30...To eat? Oh, anything's fine—only, Janet's vegetarian...Vegetarian: she doesn't eat meat...**she doesn't eat meat**...yes, really...no, I'm not joking...oh, everything except meat...you know, beans, rice, tortillas...Well, if you wanted to get fancy, you could prepare an egg..."

Hosts don't know what to cook if they can't "kill the fatted calf" (read, *chicken*) to honor guests. Thanks to me, my poor coworkers were condemned to eating scrambled eggs instead of fried chicken with their rice...



When I'm on the road, I live on tortillas, beans, rice, and occasionally egg or a bit of the salty, dry, white cheese typical to Honduras. *Tajadas* (fried slices of overripe plantain, sweet and yummy) are a treat. I return home voraciously hungry for fresh vegetables and fruit.



The overdue dry season finally showed up. The emerald hills around Tegucigalpa are morphing to beige. Typical now is smoke from fields being burned for planting and the windblown, gritty dust that attacks everything (covering all surfaces in the house and insinuating itself into eyes, nose, pores, and dulling the hair).



Feel free to write. Email is more likely to get an answer. dcsjanet@hotmail.com. Regular mail takes about 2 weeks.

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in Honduras

-- Janet Alcántara

"Jesus answered the disciples, You give them something to eat."

--Mark 6:37

The church office staff was on vacation from mid-December to mid-January, but I continued to visit 8 distant communities. I had use of the church vehicle, a somewhat tattered red Toyota double-cabin pickup which made it possible to efficiently service the communities around La Ceiba, so difficult to reach by public transport + walking.

When in their areas, I team up with Herminio and/or Eva. *Herminio*, a gentle, poetic soul is an "evangelist" (title given here to persons of limited theological education placed in charge of congregations). He heads the Development of Faith Communities (Decofe) program of ICLH, and supervises three congregations along Lake Yojoa.

Eva is an irrepressible firebrand with a raucous voice and short, grey, brush-like curls. She heads the Women's Program of ICLH, and energetically oversees the congregations around La Ceiba.

Our most distant community, Chacalapa, is 2 ½ hours beyond La Ceiba (7-plus hours from Tegus), which includes an exhausting stretch of high-impassable road. But 10 adults, 3 adolescents, and a flock of children showed up in this place where there is not even a roof to meet under: we sit beneath shady trees. Eva and her niece herded the children for "Sunday" School; Herminio spoke with the men who showed up from the Pastoral Team; and I met with the women.

Well over half of the women in the group replied to my questioning that they had never had a sense of God in their life, or felt God's presence. I was astonished that they keep coming: how hungry they must be! ("Yes," mused Eva when I told her later, "They don't quite get the message yet.") What a challenge to find a way to feed the message so they "get" it.

In faith and service in Christ, ---*janet*