

## Ambiance

**Fruit of the month.** Mangos, the ubiquitous fruit of the dry season, have suddenly come to an end. This month we have the *mamón*. Like many tropical fruits, it consists of a thin layer of sweet-sour flesh covering an oversized seed, and tough skin. The size of a large marble, *mamonos* have a rigid, rusty-green shell that splits open under the pressure of the thumbnail to reveal juicy, pale salmon fruit with a creamy texture, and a large, ivory seed. They are sold in bouquets of woody stems topped with one fruit each. Eating lots may pucker the mouth and leave a strange sensation on the teeth. Ah, but they are irresistible!



**Drippy nose?** Kleenex is not the universal response to a cold. Many people here carry a terry washcloth or hand towel as a handkerchief and between mopping or blowing their nose, drape it over their shoulder to dry.



**Illness.** Particularly in rural areas, people tend to be uneducated around basic health issues. Folks will describe a person with a perfectly predictable set of symptoms as “critically ill” and refuse any explanation to the contrary. Access to adequate health care being rare, they self-medicate, popping antibiotics like jelly beans, layering medications, and combining with folk remedies, with no regard to interactions or excessive dosages. “This worked well for me,” women inform each other, sharing medications designed for other complaints (blood pressure meds for an URI, for example). Should I attempt to point that out, I am treated to an indulgent half-smile, and the pills change hands regardless. I am frequently appalled. I am also amazed that patients survive their treatments...



Even though my brother Ted mails out the newsletter, continue to write directly to me. Email is [dcsjanet@hotmail.com](mailto:dcsjanet@hotmail.com). Regular mail takes about 2 weeks.

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# July 07

## in Honduras

-- Janet Alcántara

*“For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against...the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” —Ephesians 6:12*

**Besieged.** If we doubt the value of the work of the ICLH, the devil apparently does not. Work has virtually stalled as all staff have been simultaneously attacked with a panoply of illnesses—various serious (Pastor Armindo had to go home to Brazil for treatment). Since mid-May, I have had one virus or infection layered on top of another. At first I traveled sick, but eventually was unable to continue. It is very tiresome and disheartening, as the communities are left abandoned. I seem finally to be almost well again; your prayers are welcomed.

**Salud para la Vida.** Again this month I participated in training volunteer health workers in our preventive health program. The theme, Gender and Sexuality in the Bible, showed how our perceptions and theology impact our physical and spiritual care of others.

**Deaconess Conference.** Thanks to a full scholarship and to North East Area deaconesses, whose generous giving purchased my airline ticket, I attended the 5-day Regular Annual Meeting of the Lutheran Deaconess Association in Valparaiso, Indiana. I had the honor to participate as a homilist. Being with my community always renews my sense of call.

This week a 79-year-old sister whom I hugged at conference was murdered in her Wichita community advocacy office.

She is quoted as pointing out earlier that to live an authentic life of service to the poor, one must accept risk. Indeed. I live that reality constantly, and truly depend on your prayers for my safety in the often-violent milieu in which I do ministry.

In faith and service in Christ,

---- *janet*

Deaconess Janet Russell Alcántara/Iglesia Cristiana

