

Mission Reflections

At a recent meeting, a cohort of mine announced, ***“I’m here because I want to save the world.”*** In a nutshell, I thought, that was my initial motivation for seizing an opportunity to join Mission 6 to the Dominican Republic. Four years later, Mission 9, my driving force may be a tad less global, adding *...one step at a time* and considerably more selfish... *personal spiritual renewal*.

These are some of the reasons I come back year-to-year...

Host families... Blas and Wanda. On her 4th stay with them, Kathy Norris was asked to be godmother to their youngest son. On the 5th trip we shared in the ceremony. This year I experienced a new addition to their hospitality. I was welcomed with an award-winning smile and warm embrace by Wanda. Blas asked not once but several times, ***“Anna, you hoppy our haus?”*** Christian and Lydia. For 3 years they opened their home to my daughter, Becky and me. We played games with grandson Tommy, took pictures on their motorbike, enjoyed fresh mango and baseball on a 12 inch black and white TV. One morning, mortified because we did not have running water, Lydia ran out and returned in roughly 2 minutes with a fresh bucket (much appreciated I assure you).

A renewed appreciation for our natural resources...clean water to drink and brush teeth, heated water, electricity. All a given in our culture are intermittent blessings in the Dominican Republic. Yet there seems to be a pride in cleanliness. Each night we rested on freshly cleaned sheets. Whether cement, tile or dirt floors, they’re routinely swept clean. Most come to clinic in Sunday best, crisp white dress shirts, dresses and heels as if our motley crew in scrubs and tennies were VIPs.

Kindness... we are bear-hugged, petted & met with welcoming smiles, even when we say, ***“Lo siento, no”*** to pleas for an extra bottle of eye drops.

The clinic experience itself... In the eye drop station Kathy professed I’d never forget, ***“Una gota cada ojo dos veces el dia”***. I was skeptical...alas, she was correct. By the last day of clinic the words, though not necessarily their meaning, flew off my tongue and to date I can say them in my sleep (sometimes do, per my husband). Each year with the help of interpreters I gain a little better understanding; though speaking, not so much: (I’m hesitant to quote how I ask, ***“Who in your home can help you with your drops?”*** or state, ***“ God bless you”*** at risk of showing my **Espanola mal**.) Suffice it to say, *sometimes* I’m understood and *sometimes* I understand. Regardless, there is a nod or throwing up of hands and grin in the end.

Fellow mission travelers... We’re clergy, students, judge, teachers, nurses, doctors, parents, and professionals. No matter. All are equal here-where two doctors amble down the streets of Sevana Yegua every day with their briefcases, one a plastic bag, the other a flowered suitcase; an anesthesiologist fills in at the vision screening station; a municipal judge fits glasses. At meals there is sharing of stories, hobbies, dreams and laughter.

Mission hosts and planners...Father Oriole, Mike Wolfe and now Father Juan. For an entire year they plan, seek host families, hire cooks, arrange transportation and lodging for our entourage. At a minimum of 25 travelers, that is no small task, yet always met with optimism. Deacon Wilson, Dr Pete and Dr Steve tirelessly seek funds, arrange travel, apply for grants and network to make each trip a reality.

While I truly do want to make a difference in this world, I’m not Florence Nightingale or Mother Theresa. Yet, we’re all blessed with gifts and often aren’t aware when we’ve left an impression. If I haven’t made a difference in the lives of others, I know they’ve made a difference in mine.

~ Anne Wolfe, St Anthony on the Lake