



Prayers Are Answered, and Then Some!

Following nearly two and a half years of drought, Nicaraguans were pulling out all the stops on prayers asking God to bless the land with rain. The country was in dire condition: lost crops and livestock dying from hunger and extreme heat. Hope waned for relief.

Then in October and November hurricanes in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans were followed by rain. So much so, that in a short time flooding was rampant.

Because of poor reforestation on mountainsides coupled with shallow top soil, as the bulk of the land is rock, the water raged everywhere.

Streams, rivers and streets overflowed, fields became standing pools, houses were swept away, bridges collapsed, animals were stranded, every type of tree from plantains to shade to precious woods were uprooted. Devastation was everywhere from the capital of Managua to the smallest towns, settlements and villages. People were relocated, supplies became short, food and drinkable water were scarce.



The rains eventually ended but the aftermath remains with many still trying to clear fallen trees and rebuild homes. Although lives are slowly getting back to normal, the priority is planting with hope for a good harvest.

Nature cannot be managed. We learn to live and do the best we can with what is offered. The conditions that exist, especially for the poor, form a resilience in those in Nicaragua who do what needs to be done and hope for a better tomorrow. Through it all, they put all their trust in the Lord.



Working to Meet a Need

On the edge of the city of Granada, there is a building housing teenagers brought to the city from the poor countryside settlements outside the town of Tecolostope. They are brought from a dire, remote area to a place that will hopefully give them a better outlook on life.

Maria Luisa, who is from Spain, has been working with disadvantaged youngsters for about 24 years. She now has a place to house the teens, see to their schooling and give them a sense of ethics,

common decency and Catholic values.

The home, Casa de Pilar, is dedicated to the patron Virgin of Aragon, Spain, Our Lady of Pilar.

The wonder of Maria Luisa's dedication to youth is that she battles cancer which saps her strength and stamina but not her will to see that those in her care have a chance for a better future.

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- Your comments and suggestions are welcome. Send to Nicaragua Mission Project, 10100 Transit Road, East Amherst, NY 14051.
- If you know someone who would like to receive a copy of "LA VIA," email info@projectnica.com and a copy of "LA VIA" will be sent or emailed to them.

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Support for her work has waned as donors seem fearful that, should she die, the project to which she has devoted her life will not continue.

Funds are used primarily to repair and maintain Casa Pilar and the 25 teens housed there.

One of the biggest problems is a poor water system with pipes that no longer carry water to bathrooms, showers, and the kitchen.

After visiting with Maria Luisa and hearing all that she has done, hopes to do and the difficulties she is facing, the Nicaragua Mission Project has taken



Maria Luisa, above, stands at the flowered shrine of Our Lady of Pilar. At left is a well that is used to supply water to Casa Pilar. At right, some of the youngsters served at Casa



on the “Water Project” to fix and replace water pipes and update the water system.

Coincidentally, Fr. Marcos Martinez, a monthly donor to the Nicaragua Mission Project, works with the Mexican population outside Corpus Christi, Texas. He is also from Spain and his patroness and the patroness of his Texas parish is Our Lady of Pilar. His donations to the Nicaragua Mission Project are now being used to fund the needs of Casa Pilar.

Through the generosity of Father Marcos and many like him, miracles happen in the lives of those who need them most.



Memories of Christmas Traditions Bring Joyful Reminders of the Season

At Christmas time 52 replicas of Jesus’ manger may be found along an avenue in Old Managua. Thousands of Nicaraguans and tourists visit the sites each day from December 1 through 9.

The tradition begins as altars dedicated to “Purísima,” Mary Immaculate, patroness of Nicaragua, are displayed after which they are redesigned into Nativity scenes.

These huge, lavish displays, which are in place from Dec. 10 to Jan. 7, are prepared by state ministries and other institutions. They elicit admiration and acclaim from visitors who walk more than a kilometer (0.62 mile) on Bolivar a Chavez Avenue, a main street in northwestern Managua, to take in all the lavish scenes.

Each Nativity scene, set along both sides of the street, features its own unique theme ranging from the ancient city of Bethlehem to symbolic Nicaraguan cathedrals and scenes from around the country.

Some of the manger scenes are adorned with vivid colors, natural trees, metal structures, water, flowers and huge numbers of Christmas lights.



All who visit are amazed by the brilliant and unique representations at each station. In the evening choral and instrumental musical groups add to the beauty and magic of the displays.

During these weeks, a continuous number of those anxious to share the beauty of the Christmas season in Nicaragua visit this amazing place.

Perhaps next year you will be one of the visitors to this amazing display, even as we now look forward to Spring and Easter.

Your Email Address Will Cut Costs, Add to Project Funds

Every newsletter sent by email saves more than a dollar in printing and mailing costs, particularly valuable when it comes to “La Via.”

We thank the many readers who answered our invitation to send us their email addresses.

We invite you to join them in doing so.

Email addresses are kept confidential for the exclusive use for the newsletter.

Please help by sending your email address to info@projectnica.com

In the subject line, mention “Nicaragua email.”

The savings translate into more funds for the poor in Nicaragua and an opportunity for you to forward the newsletter to others.

Long Awaited Visit Generates Lifetime of Memories

By Janet Murray



Marianne & Janet

I came to Nicaragua with Marianne Rosenthal. The visit, often referred to over the years, became a reality in October 2017. Thoughts of the trip remain foremost on my mind. Each task I do, or place I go, thoughts of Nicaragua are present.

My initial drive home from the airport was one without motorbikes, bicycles, and buses with rooftops laden with goods, horse or oxen drawn wagons, cattle, cabs, mini cars, vendors, and people.

As I toss my laundry into an automatic washing machine, I think of the Nicaraguan washboard tubs, or in some cases rocks in streams, and the toil of their washing process.

I turn on my electric stove to heat clear water and I think of the wood fire stoves and the water wheel wells of Nicaragua.

I am drawn to mangoes, papayas, pineapples and coconuts in the grocery store. I check the ice cream section for flavors I enjoyed in Nicaragua.

I open my mail, knowing that the mail system in Nicaragua is certainly not as we know it.



Some memorable aspects of my visit:

* **The natural beauty** of lakes, lagoons, volcanoes, the ocean, the mountains, and the countryside. Colorfully painted houses on the streets of every town and city. Other homes that were most humble dwellings: tin walls, zinc roofs, plastic bag sidings.

* **The gracious,** welcoming, caring, and genuine people who show visible signs of faith, affection, and emotions commonplace and beautiful.

* **The elderly,** to whom we served a simple lunch and distributed towels and toiletries, were extremely grateful and thanked and hugged each of us.

* **Ornately handcarved** gourds of the jicara tree, exquisite designs carved onto wooden doors, hand-caned furniture, art work at the marketplace, are all handmade by Nicaraguans.

My head and heart are filled with sites and sounds of Nicaragua. While in Nicaragua, I thought of family and friends back home, and wondered if, when back home, I would think of Nicaragua. The answer is a resounding YES!



Journey of Hope Foundation is a not-for-profit foundation enacted under the Section 402 of the not-for-profit corporation law.

Its mission is to solicit and procure funding through donations, loans and grants for the promotion and support of indigent people, especially in Central America.

The Foundation at this time is looking toward helping the needy of **Nicaragua**. With the recent completion of the buildings at the Sinai Center, funding has returned to helping fund the 42 18-wheel containers that Ann Marie Zon sends each year. The more people learn of the hopes for the future of Nicaraguan poor, the more that future can be made brighter.

If you would like to help support the Foundation and its mission, go online to www.journeyofhopefoundation.org or send your donation with the form to the right, to: Journey of Hope Foundation, 200 River Road, North Tonawanda, NY 14120 or call 716-874-4074.



YES! I want to do my part to continue the work of the Nicaragua Mission Project.

Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift. Make checks payable to: **Journey of Hope Foundation.**

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

E-mail _____

Amount enclosed _____

Lent For Me or For God

Isn't it ironic that Lent begins this year on St. Valentine's Day — the day we celebrate love by sending cards or gifts of flowers and candy to special people we cherish in our lives. And here we come to THIS YEAR when Ash Wednesday falls on the same day. We are ready to celebrate and Lent calls us to do penance!

It is the day we celebrate love and what could be more appropriate as we begin our trek to Easter. Isn't love the whole motivation for Lent?

The secular world calls for gifts but Lent calls us to look to the one WE love and that is Jesus.

Remember when we were kids and we gave up candy for Lent or as adults gave up smoking? Were they really worthwhile for us as adults?

On Holy Saturday we sat at home, candy bar in hand, waiting for the clock to strike noon and then we gobbled down candy and waited for more.

Did our Lenten practice really help us to lose weight permanently? Or to have a smaller waist? Our motivation for these practices and others like it was to please God. Ask yourself what you could do to please the Lord, to show gratitude for what He did on Good Friday. What can I do, known only to me, that will make me a better Christian?

The only thing church law orders is fasting and abstinence on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

What can you do this year that has no ulterior motive other than to please the Lord and become a better Christian? How can I respond to His love by my love? Will I be able to look at that cross and say I did it for you?

The Church leaves it up to each of us to decide how we can make ourselves more open to Christ. Let's make our Lent truly worthwhile. Let's show Jesus that we truly love Him.



Msgr. Richard Wetter

Msgr. Richard L. Wetter

Think Summer: Hammocks

It is not known exactly when hammocks were first made or used but history tells that they began with the Mayan culture about 1,000 years ago. Hammocks were supposedly invented to offer a safe and comfortable alternative to sleeping on the ground.

It is said the Mayans were conceived, born, slept and died peacefully in hammocks. Today it is generally held that the Yucatan of Mexico, Columbia, Brazil, and Nicaragua make the best, most beautiful, brightly colored and durable hammocks.

Nicaragua adds decorative hand-crocheted fringes on the outer edges making them distinct from any others.

The Mayan process of making a hammock, still used today in Nicaragua, is done on a loom of two poles tied together with horizontal wood pieces which may be adjusted to the length of the hammock.

The spring-woven method, where threads are crossed over each other, make a very sturdy, reliable product.

Cotton threads are double woven by hand, allowing the hammock to expand to comfortably accommodate the person using it.

Nicaraguan hammocks also include the spreader bar - something invented by sailors - which allows for easy expansion and prevents one's body from being enveloped, almost swallowed up in the yarn or fabric.

Thank God for the inventiveness of the brilliant Mayan inventors of the hammock. Along with so many of their advances in time keeping, science, architecture, sports, and agriculture, the hammock ranks right up there as a wonderful lasting gift from the past. Once one relaxes or takes a "siesta" in it, the hammock becomes a "must" for anyone to enjoy.



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