

## **Saturday, October 31, Reformation Day, 7:00 a.m. (By Pam Mann)**

Last weekend Roberto, a Dominican technician, set our apartment up with a new inverter using four 6-volt batteries. When the big clinic generator runs during the day for clinic operation, the little inverter/battery system in our apartment gets charged. Then when the generator shuts off at 5:00 p.m., our apartment still has power from the batteries. Evenings this past week have seemed heavenly: an electric lamp to grade papers, an oscillating fan in the main room as we cook, eat supper and work, and even a tiny fan to blow across us all night. After two months of sweating and straining our eyes in kerosene light, we know the joy of empowerment.

Dave had asked Hugues on his last trip to Santiago to buy us the four deep-cycle batteries for our inverter set-up. At that time, Hugues said, "I wondered how long you guys were going to keep going without power at night. I'm hot even with a fan blowing."

## **Sunday, November 1, 2009, 8:00 a.m.**

Yesterday morning, Dave and I hosted a workshop for area high school English teachers. We were disappointed to have only eight in attendance. Jacob, the UTEC director who was our only PR, had expected a group from Fort Liberty to come. In fact, they were the ones who had wanted a weekend date and not a school holiday. It turned out they agreed to the 31<sup>st</sup>, mistaking it for a Sunday. They are mostly Adventists who worship on Saturday morning, not Sunday. They follow Old Testament dietary and Sabbath laws.

The eight teachers who did come were very engaged. We worked on pronunciation, dealt with questions on vocabulary and idioms and explained the present perfect tense which is widely mistaught in Haiti. At noon when we finished, the group was appreciative and hopeful of a future gathering. Dave stayed on at school to check email and college football scores. I headed home to bring in our laundry and to make a trip to market for groceries.

En route, I met Rosemarie, dressed in a nice navy suit, accompanied by two other neatly dressed women. They definitely had the just-out-of-church look. "You're dressed for church, Rosemarie," I said after greeting her. "Are you Adventist now?"

Her companions smiled proudly. They must have been the ones who reeled her in.

"Yes, I am. You didn't know that? We're just going to my house for prayer. Come with us. You can see where I live now."

So she and I walked in front. Her two friends followed behind. "You don't want to be an Adventist?" she asked.

I shook my head, unable to contain a smile. What a question to ask a committed Lutheran on Reformation Day! Then she asked what denomination I was and why.

So I said, "Adventists believe that you make yourself right with God by obeying the Law. You follow the same laws as the Jews who do not accept Jesus as the Christ. Lutherans and people influenced by the Reformation believe that we cannot make ourselves right with God. We always have and always will fall short of the Law. Only Jesus Christ is perfect in keeping the Law. Only by being in Christ can we have any hope of a relationship with God. We celebrate our victory in Christ over sin on Sunday, the day He rose from the dead, crushing the power of sin."

Poor Rosemarie. Her eyebrows pulled into a knot. She was too new at the Adventist temple to have a retort and her more experienced buddies were too far behind to have heard. "It's by grace we're saved, Rosemaire," I continued as we turned into the courtyard where she had one room in a small cement brick house. "In thanksgiving for such undeserved grace, we want to serve and obey." End of Reformation Day speech.

Young men were engrossed in a domino game on the front porch. Two boys rode by, sharing one rusty bike. The bigger one shouted "Blanco" at me. A teenage boy, watching the domino game, glanced up. Seeing our entourage, he looked suddenly sheepish. "Junior, where were you this morning?" Rosemaire asked, part scolding, part teasing.

He and I exchanged a smile and friendly nod of recognition. He had attended I.U. for primary school. "I was there for the children's class," he defended himself to Rosemarie. Then he quickly turned his back, maybe to avoid recognition by the church pillars who might lecture him on the evils of dominoes.

Rosemarie unlocked her door of corrugated aluminum and pulled back the pale blue doorway curtain to invite us in. A fourth goatskin chair was handed in to us from the dirt courtyard so we all four had a seat. Clearly Rosemarie had anticipated a post-morning-worship visit. Her room was dust-free and neatly arranged. Her bed filled half the room. Propped up on bricks, it stood four feet from the cement floor with a nubby pale yellow bedspread. Two small tables filled another quarter of the floor space. One was clearly her dining table, covered with a frayed clean tablecloth and a small stack of dishes. The room seemed dark after I'd been in the midday sunlight. I could notice no further details because Rosemarie decided I was to be the one who prayed. The Adventist sisters frowned at this proposal but Rosemarie insisted. I had prayed her through sickness and grief, even paid for medical treatment when she had no money, she said. So they stood reluctantly to pray.

Guessing that their prayer method was like Baptists and Brethren (even though none of them wore a head covering), I suggested they choose the hymn to sing. After some fussing over which hymn, Rosemarie began to sing in French. Her friends joined in. I didn't know the words but I hummed along. Sister Closest-to-the-door announced, "Psalm 23. They recited it in French. I mumbled along, saying a line correctly here and there. I've spent time memorizing it more than once but it doesn't seem to stick like the Lord's Prayer has.

Then I prayed in Creole, telling God how we long for the day when every tribe and nation will bow down around the throne of grace in heaven. Rosemarie's 12-year old son (who died in an accident this past summer) will be there with all who have trusted in the blood of the Lamb. I prayed for each of us to have strength to face each day's struggles until that great day.

When I said Amen, the other three echoed an Amen. Sister Farthest-from-the-door commented, "*Ella sabe*. (Spanish: She knows.)" Then she added in Creole, "You do know how to pray." I wondered what it was about me that made her think I wouldn't. What was the Spanish for? Did she think I was Dominican? Who knows? We went our separate ways: they to their Sabbath rest, and I to my ironing and grocery shopping.

Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Consume the dross of our denominational differences. Keep us clinging purely to your grace in Jesus.

*But now the righteousness of God  
has been manifested apart from the law,  
although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—  
the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ  
for all who believe.*

*Romans 3:21-22*