

Ministerial Experience in the Dominican Republic Novice Gillian A. Jerome

I had the privilege and gift of going to the Dominican Republic for ministerial experience from October 27th to December 27th. I stayed with Sr. Roselyn Nichols from October 29th to November 15th in El Llano and with Sisters Arabia Jaramillo; Bernie Palma and Corita Ortiz in Santiago, from November 15th to December 27th.



Assisting medical team from El Llano

My stay overall was wonderful though I must admit I fell in love with El Llano. Some of the ministries that I was able to partake in included: assisting the distribution of vitamins and weighing of the children during the medical visits to the “compos”; preparing the daily breakfast for the children. Conducting sensory activities (stretching exercises; coloring project; games) at the “Asilo”, which is the Day Care Center for the Elderly. I joined Sr. Roselyn in delivering lunch to the home bound elderly. We also visited and prayed with the sick.

In Santiago, Sr. Arabia and Marissa (volunteer from Spain) were my Spanish teachers. I assisted Sr. Corita with the packaging and distribution of the monthly food hampers in November and December. We visited the various “barrios” to chat with the people and to update the records.



Coloring with the elderly in Day Care Centre



Lunch distribution with Sister Roselyn



Handing out gifts at SSM sponsored pre-school in Dehabon

I joined Sr. Bernie in delivering Christmas gifts to the children in the schools on the frontier; accompanied the medical team to the frontier and attended two separate workshops on health education. From both locations, I gathered that the people are extremely appreciative of the sisters and the SSM community for all that is being done for and with them.

It is impossible to write in detail the many experiences I have had; they all were very rewarding and transforming. I am challenged to review my interpretation of "poor", recognizing that each one is poor in different ways. I also

understand that they do not see themselves as poor. I am more compelled to refer to them as persons who may be materially disadvantaged. In spite of the material lack, they were very happy; simple, warm; welcoming; very generous; showed that they were content and were willing to share from the little that they have. They expressed their conviction in the providence of God and in spite of their living conditions they were overjoyed to invite us into their homes.

I ask myself, am I that willing and free to risk? Am I a welcoming person? Am I that grateful for all the sacrifices that my ancestors, my immediate family and the community have made/are making for me? Do I really understand what it means to live simply and to be detached? Do I radiate such deep and profound joy in spite of the challenges that I may face from time to time? I continue to ponder seriously on the lessons of the experience.

I am grateful to God and the community for the gift afforded me to share ministry along-side the sisters in the Dominican Republic; for the sisters who welcomed me into their community; their warm hospitality and for all the stories they shared; for my brothers and sisters that I encountered in the communities and the lessons I have learnt just by observing them, and for the employees who are truly loving people. I shall forever cherish the memories. **"Muchas Gracias!**