

Report From Mexico: Mary Kay (and Dave) Ness, January 28, 2025

JUQUILA. The second outreach (January 25) we were involved in was for one day to this mountainous city nestled at 4860 feet of elevation. I should have brought my flannel shirt. It's the second most popular site in Mexico, primarily for Catholic pilgrimages to the Virgin of Juquila. Carmelita, the pastor here, started an evangelical church there 37 years ago, and 15 years ago they moved to a bypass around the city perched on a hillside just by one of the hairpin turns on this 2 lane road. We first met Carmelita about 15 years ago, and at that time she was a single woman doing pastoral work at the local prison. Our outreach was to the prisoners themselves, with a clinic being set up on the basketball court. At the time, I was quite impressed with her courage, and with her almost "in your face" approach to some of the prisoners, yet very compassionate if appropriate. Clearly they respected her, and that respect was extended to us as we addressed their medical needs and gave them medication and provided spiritual care for them. That experience made quite an impression on me. Our next encounter with Carmelita was about 5 years ago, and we met her on the road at the Roca Blanca Base where she and her new husband Rigoberto had come to attend the Bible School. They seemed very happy, and she was gentler in her demeanor.

Once we had been served a meal, we set up a clinic in their large, open air (but with a roof) sanctuary: four consultation areas with providers and translators (Spanish to English), 4 spiritual care areas manned by their church leaders, a registration area, and a pharmacy area. We saw about 56 patients. My first patient was complicated. He was 70+ years old, accompanied by his daughter. He moved slowly but was alert and communicative. 10 years ago, he developed a lung problem (probably short of breath). A chest x-ray showed "one lung was mostly black, the other mostly white". Over time, one lung became completely black and the other white. I am assuming (as we had no records) that the black one was non-functional and they subsequently removed that lung (on the left) through an incision between two ribs, part way down the rib cage. The wound never healed though they performed 4 more surgeries (again no records). When I examined him, there was a large, unhealed area with a tunneled connection to the lung cavity; pus drains out constantly, and air goes in and out into the cavity where the lung had been. Since the last surgery 4 years ago, his daughter has changed that dressing (not a small job) every day. I thought about taking a photo, but somehow that seemed inappropriate. Therapeutically, we did order antibiotics for 3 weeks. We recommended they return to Oaxaca where the prior care had been given to request a referral to Mexico City (likely after a reevaluation). They went to spiritual care for further support. I searched down the daughter who was working in the kitchen preparing a meal for us and promised to continue to pray for her father and for her as well-a tearful time.

Now at this current church, they reach out in support to 5 churches in nearby pueblos and to the prison in the city. In this church there are more volunteers for these missions than they can use. Several elders in the church gave spiritual care. At the teams debriefing there were as I recall 11 salvations. One patient with pain and disability on walking accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior. They then prayed over him for healing, and he walked out with no pain. It is common to have a few miraculous healings at most outreaches. The pastors take the names and contact information, then the church reaches out to them to assist their spiritual growth in their new found faith. Also offered is assistance in food and clothing as necessary, now being part of a family of believers. We have had pastors bring sick people from some 4 hours away in the mountains to be seen at our clinic on the coast. As we wended our way home I counted some half dozen landslides that blocked one lane, some with boulders as big as our smallest cars. A tarantula skittered across the road in front of us.

LAURA: She has been the nurse here since almost the beginning of Roca, heads the clinic, and is a full-time missionary. She continues to give consultations in the clinic but also has various other hats to wear. The knocks at her door in the night, the small pharmacy she keeps there, and the many home visits speak to her compassion and grace caring for others. She was critical to the planning and building of the current clinic, and to the developing nursing school that is planned to open in 2026. She is involved in the training of nursing students from ORU who come for 2-4-week sessions. The planning & coordination of mission teams coming from the states, as well as the especially needy chronic patients who see her only, are some of the other parts of her job. She has seemingly endless patience and compassion. Our being here for 2-3 months in a busy time of the year, and mostly able to give consults in Spanish, helps free her up so that she is not so overwhelmed.

ENVER: He is a Mexican licensed physician and medical director of the Clinic. But he is also pastor of the local church here in Cacalote. He starts his work week with a 5 AM Monday morning men's intercessory prayer group at the church. He holds private hours for adults with complicated medical problems. Living

upstairs to the clinic with his wife and two children, he is a devoted family man. We find him both knowledgeable and compassionate. His specialty is adults and children (sort of like a mixed med-peds specialty offered through UR Med School). But he also has great skill in minor surgery, caring for all types of infections in the legs of diabetics. He recently repaired the foot of a fisherman who had a lacerated artery from the fin of a fish. So just as for Laura, our working in the clinic helps him tend to multiple other responsibilities. His father, also a pastor, has come again to stay with him a while.



Rigoberto and Carmelita



Dave and Mary Kay Ness with patients



Church staff and team eating lunch in Juquila



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