

Solidaridad



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One in solidarity with our sistering community in Teosinte, El Salvador.

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TEOSINTE? SI!

Thoughts from our parish delegates to Teosinte.

As you read this newsletter, members of our St. Sebastian Parish are already in Teosinte, El Salvador visiting with and learning from our far-away friends. The group includes Mary Beth Duffy, Ann Gehred, Beth Hammer, Cindy Seemann and Sandy Swietlik. Their plane left Milwaukee at 8:00 a.m. this past Thursday, October 16th. They will be returning home on October 23rd. Before they left, we asked them to reflect on the journey that lied before them. Here are their thoughts.

Thoughts from Mary Beth Duffy

When I called on the very last, possible day to sign up for the delegation to El Salvador, it must have looked like a spontaneous decision, a whim, a wild request. Actually, it's been a dream for many years to visit this place that is the site of so much suffering, but also such deep faith.

I first learned about the struggles in El Salvador when I was a graduate student at Notre Dame and Fr. Hesburgh was deeply involved in the peace process. When my husband Mike and I were making plans to move to Milwaukee in 1980 (and I was longing to stay put), one of my friends said, "The Archbishop of Milwaukee is offering sanctuary to Salvadoran refugees. It's got to be a good place!" And so it was. In 1989 we named our fourth (and final) child Daniel Romero, after El Salvador's bishop and martyr. Throughout the 1990's, all of our children had the great, good luck to have Judi Kearney as their first grade teacher, and all of them heard the stories she brought back as one of St. Sebastian's first delegates to Teosinte. So in many ways, my decision to join the delegation was a long time in coming, just waiting for time that worked for my family.

Over the past five years, I have taught the work of several Central American women poets in my classes at Mt. Mary, including Claribel Alegria of El Salvador. SHARE has asked us if we have any special interests in our projects to pursue, and I mentioned my interest in meeting local poets and storytellers. We have learned that the guest house in San Salvador is run by a poet/activist and that SHARE is inquiring about local storytellers in Teosinte. When people ask if we are going to build or repair something during our stay, I usually respond, "We're going to listen". It's a simple goal, but awesome when you think of it. We're going to listen to stories ... then bring them back to you.

Thoughts from Ann Gehred

"Much is expected to whom much is given." Hmm ... I like that. You know I have had a pretty easy life being an Anglo American. I have been given much! What is expected of me? I don't know. Anyways, I think I'll join that Teosinte group at church.

Teosinte? No! Actually, I'd love to go ... but now is not the time ... I've other commitments ... but I'd really like to join the committee, you know, help where I can.

I can't remember exactly when I joined the committee. I think it was in 2001. I learn a little. Get confused a lot! What is CAFTA (Central American Free Trade Agreement)? Should I want to like it? Anybody know what a G21 nation is? My fellow committee members are fun and supportive. Some might say that CAFTA is "free trade", but not "fair trade". Time passes ... logical problems. The date of the trip to Teosinte changes.

Teosinte? Yes! Actually, I'd love to go .. NOW IS THE TIME ... my other commitments have lessened ... I'd like, you know, to help where I can.

I prepare for the trip mentally, emotionally, physically. Less confusion. And this time I have learned much about my brothers and sisters in Teosinte. We have provided funding for the community to build new houses. They write back to us and say that they would like to forgo doors and windows on one of the houses because some of their brothers and sisters have homes that need more immediate attention. Could they use the money allotted for doors and windows to help others in their community?

"Much is expected to whom much is given." What does this mean? I still don't know. But I know that my brothers and sisters in Teosinte will teach me! Teosinte? Si!



MORE FROM OUR DELEGATES TO TEOSINTE

Thoughts from Beth Hammer

Like any journey, the days just before leaving for El Salvador and a long awaited visit with friends in Teosinte are filled with last minute details. Life becomes so hectic trying to assure that itineraries are finalized and plans are communicated, that the real reason for going becomes blurred.

This is my second trip to Teosinte. When I visited the first time, I had no expectations (perhaps a rather naïve traveler). This time I know what to expect as far as travel, lodging, and food are concerned. I also know that my limited (actually no) ability to speak and understand Spanish will not hinder communication with anyone in Teosinte – smiles and hugs are the same in any language.

My anticipation and anxiety of needing to accomplish some agenda during our visit were alleviated when I received an email from Leslie, the SHARE representative that is helping to coordinate the trip. After a recent visit to the community, she wrote that the people of Teosinte do not expect us to come bearing material gifts. They are extremely excited to see us and to have opportunities to share life experiences. This is the “real” reason for the trip; the hope of making personal connections and renewing relationships. It is the hope of learning how to live in the moment and appreciate the many, simple (intangible) gifts that God sends my way. The hope of being renewed in a spirit that is present in Teosinte, but is too easily lost sight of in the hectic pace of everyday life here.

Thoughts by Sandy Swietlik

I have been anticipating this trip for a very long time. I was disappointed when the trip fell through last November, and now that we are so close to our travel date, I am more excited than ever.

I feel our sistering relationship with Teosinte is a very important piece of the St. Sebastian mission and is part of God’s greater wish for all of us that we should move beyond what we’ve already known. I have always felt that we lead by example, and being part of this delegation gives me that opportunity. I am looking forward to immersing myself in a different culture; to expand my global perspective. I hope to share my experiences with my own children, my students, and my Girl Scout troop. I pray for a safe and successful week with our sister community.

Thoughts from Cindy Seemann

As I get ready to leave for El Salvador on my birthday, I am not only packing my essentials, but preparing to be open to experience a new culture and learn the many needs of our sister parish and community.

I have been asked, “Why are you going?” I believe for many reasons. This is a chance for me to give back and do something helpful for those who are in need and so much less fortunate than me. Now seems to be the perfect time in my life – a gap of time where I have the support of my family. I hope to lend support as well as immerse myself in this experience. Upon my return, I will be excited to share what I have learned and to advocate for our sister community. I feel fortunate to be part of such a terrific delegation from St. Sebastian’s.

¡MUCHAS GRACIAS! ST. SEB’S FRY KIDS

The 2002/03 St. Sebastian Fry Kids have generously donated \$180.00 of their “tip money” to our brothers and sisters in Teosinte. The Fry Kids have earmarked these funds to assist in building a church for their community. We are thrilled to be able to present this money to our friends in Teosinte during our visit October 16th – 23rd.
¡Muchas Gracias!



CHRISTMAS MARKET

The 12th Annual Peace on Earth Christmas Market will take place on Sunday, November 23, 2003 at Pius XI High School. The market hours will be from 9:00 a.m. through 3:00 p.m. Our delegates to Teosinte are excited about bringing back many new items that will be for sale at this Peace Market. The women’s sewing shop in Teosinte has been busy making backpacks, zippered pencil cases, purses, wallets, checkbook covers, coin purses, and fanny packs. We look forward to seeing you there. You’ll find many unique and interesting items for everyone on your Christmas list!