

*Instituto Básico Rural Agropecuario Juanita Petrik*  
*Centro Escolar San Ignacio de Loyola*

August 26, 2017

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family, and Friends,

Summer days are gone, and it is time to get back in the saddle. Here there have been numerous changes: house, director, teachers, schools.

The house from a humble dwelling place, purchased by Sr. Joan Petrik, RIP, was enlarged to become the center for the work here. An important component was room for the IBRA teachers from the mountains to have a place to stay overnight on their way to studies, meetings, or other needs. It was a place to come for a drink or water, take care of their personal needs, and wait for their next bus (which could be a three hour wait). Sometimes they would bring their aging parents who had just seen the doctor and had no other place to rest before the next bus.

After Joan's death, the house was purchased with a generous donation by one of her high school friends, and Fe and Alegria became the owners. A few years ago it became the Northwestern Regional Center House for that group and rooms were added to accommodate office, a meeting room and other needs.

Our dearly loved Fr. Fernando Cardinal died last January. His role has been filled by a much younger Panamanian Jesuit. He comes with an excellent background for this work. His energy and clear vision are welcome assets.

What started as a much needed change of a leaky roof, grew as better accommodations are needed for other solidarity groups who send volunteers needing more adequate facilities and space. The end result is that the building is being divided into an apartment for the religious and the rest to accommodate other groups and their needs. Life goes on. Meantime we live with noise and a glorious dusty mess as this is transformed.

SIL has seen much needed additions. Two new classrooms have finally released our auditorium and library to their former use. Cement walkways now connect the buildings whose surroundings were constantly flooded during the rainy season. The donated land always had poor drainage which has defied our efforts to respond adequately. Two primary classroom will have new roofing which will make them much cooler, thanks to our San Jose Presentation girls who yearly do fund raising for us. Their donation also covers a number of other needs for which there is no budget.

Personnel also has seen changes. We have a new English teacher, Dania Velasquez, and are about to receive a new Computer lab teacher as of September. Personnel changes have also affected our parish. A new pastor was named just before the Parish Fiesta, which gave him an excellent introduction to the existing parish groups and our local religious customs.

At IBRA, thanks to nature in which lightning struck a tree last year, we were able to send it to the sawmill to have rounds cut from the trunk for tables and the rest into lumber for other uses. We did

need to invest some for this step, but it also saved us a bit of money. This thanks again to our San Jose Girls. They too made possible glass cases for school supplies from which to sell at cost to the student body here in their about to be installed bookstore, saving the students a trip, fare, time, etc. into town. These costs are always over and above the money spent for shoes, an improvement in their diet occasionally for both schools, and a limited number of scholarships.

Prizes awarded: at the local science fair, one of our SIL high school students, presented a homemade air conditioner made from a plastic bucket and plastic containers. Water and ice were poured into the bucket. On the cover he attached a small electric motor that moved the cooler air through the plastic containers on the sides to produce a fairly cool stream of air: ingenious and very inexpensive. A few weeks later one of our girls placed second (among six contestants) singing English songs in English. The main purpose aside from identifying talent is to get the students interested in English which along with computer literacy opens doors to better jobs.

Last year's top SIL student almost made it to Queen of the Town Patron Saint Fiesta. She is currently studying at a local branch of the National University and working as a TV presenter at our local TV station. Beauty paired with talent and brains!

The neighboring town of Villanueva is mourning their former pastor who died at the age of 100. He spent most of his priestly life not only there, but as the only priest in this northern corner of Nicaragua serving 6 towns bordering Honduras. His Mass was a testament of the love, respect, and honor of many who came from near and far.

Last week, we also had a beautiful six-month anniversary mass for one of our dearly beloved parishioners, a woman who had faithfully served in various roles in the Church to keep several traditions alive. Her mass filled the church, the celebrant was a nephew, and one of the Eucharistic Ministers was a niece who is a religious. She also had people coming from far and wide.

All this happens within the very difficult political and economic situation of the country. It suffers from the many ills afflicting so many of its neighbors: corruption, violence, low salaries, few stable jobs, lack of gender equality, early childhood pregnancies, child workers, childhood illness due to poor diet, climate change, single mothers including many whose husbands are working in other countries, etc. This is truly a grim picture, which calls forth a greater commitment from us, to work for systemic change which here is very difficult. So know that your economic and moral support is greatly appreciated.

### *Sister Rachel Pinal*

**Donations to: Development Office  
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**On a separate note paper, state: For Sr. Rachel Pinal's ministry.  
Please make checks out to: Sisters of the Presentation. Thank you.  
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