

## A MONTH IN ANSE-A-PITRES

October 2023

For a month, we have been living as community in this border area, Anse-à-Pitres in Haiti, bordering Pedernales on the Dominican Republic side. This month coincides with the closing of the borders between the two countries by the Dominican government on the 15th of September. Recently the Haitian authorities have also kept their borders closed. This island "Quisqueya", its native name, "Hispaniola" as it was later called, is shared by two nations that have a history of fraternity and struggle, conflicts and agreements that have intensified in recent times. For us this has meant that we have not been able to cross the border to get certain supplies, especially food such as meat and dairy products, nor can we leave to travel elsewhere. Valle, who was in Mexico for the ANAM meeting and to celebrate the country's national holidays, had to stay a few days in Pedernales before being able to return to Haiti. On Friday, September 29th, with the help of the patronage of San Miguel, it was possible for her to return to the community.

Every Friday we go to the border market, where we can find fruits such as oranges, bananas and mangoes, as well as different vegetables, pumpkin, chayote, avocado, cabbage, beetroot, aubergines, potatoes, carrots, tomatoes and onions. We also refill the water bottles from the parish water purifier "Eau de Lourdes", which is reliable. The parish of Anse-à-Pitres is dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes. The pantry and the refrigerator are stocked. The eggs are kindly provided by Carmelita, from the Intercongregational Missionary Community, as she has laying hens.

Our community has been enriched by Carmelita's presence and support. Every Monday she comes to have lunch with us, as well as giving us the opportunity to collaborate in the mission she carries out, in particular tutoring pre-school children, where Rosa takes care of the groups and Carmelita takes care of the Primary School children. From Tuesday to Friday there are many children who attend, as not all of them have the opportunity to go to school because of the financial implications.

We have also accompanied her on visits with different families and with a group of businesswomen with whom she meets every week. We have also been in conversation with the Carmelite sisters who have received us kindly and who have a dispensary where we may possibly participate, in particular Valle as a doctor.

During this time we have continued to get to know this large town of almost 30,000 inhabitants. We have walked the roads, getting to know its neighbourhoods and discovering where to find different things, such as bread or fish. In the afternoons, Sofia and Maricruz continue with Kreyol (Creole) classes. They have already had a first test in which they were

very good in writing and speaking, but need more practice in communication.

On October 1st, we had a nice opportunity to meet and get in touch with people when we shared in the celebration of the feast of St. Therese of Lisieux in the community of Récif (Arrecife), by the sea, about an hour's drive from here. We were welcomed by the Salesian Sisters who took us there in their van. We went for a walk along the beach and then participated in the mass of the patron saint's feast with the baptism of 5 children. There was a big choir and it lasted the whole morning. Afterwards we had a delicious typical meal: rice with beans, fish, plantain and yam (tuber).

From here we have been able to join different celebrations at a distance, such as the mass in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe for the 140th anniversary of the Colegio de México, the 170th anniversary of the founding of the Province of Chile, and the first vows of Noemí Martínez (MEX) in the Society of the Sacred Heart. It is true that the internet signal is not always very good and sometimes we have connection difficulties. However, we have been able to connect to meetings by Zoom, two of them organised by Jesuit 'Fe y Alegría', one at international level and the other for the congregations running schools in Haiti. We also participated in the sharing of the ANAM meeting with the Province of the Antilles and we had a couple of dialogues with members of the General Council (Barbara and Bodo) and with Soco. At one point, Maricruz connected with those gathered at the meeting of the Popular Education Network - JPIC in Santiago de Chile.

The issue of electricity is included in the annual budget. The technician has come and we have made the necessary arrangements so that the electric light can be functional during the whole day and not only while there is sunlight. We also met to plan our community project, using the text of the women who seek the Lord at dawn and find Him risen.

So we go forward with what we have, attentive to the reality of what is happening in the country and in the world. Every evening we unite in prayer, entrusting to the Heart of Jesus the people in need of peace, asking for justice and that everyone may live the Kingdom of love, communion and dignity for all humanity and creation.

We feel blessed in what we are doing to accompany the Simon Bolivar School in Balan, encouraging those responsible to carry forward the educational project. It was wonderful that they celebrated the anniversary of the school on October 13th and we were happy with what they organised with the coordination of Rosa and Valle.

We want to continue to follow the signs of the times, with openness to discern what the Lord is showing us and to make choices according to what we discover is His will.



Parish of Notre-Dame de Lourdes in Ansapit



A fishing neighborhood by the sea



RSCJ Community of Haiti; Rosa Vásquez, Maricruz Tigueros, Sofía Baranda and María del Valle Adame.  
Below with Carmelita Santoyo of the Intercongregational Missionary Community (CIM)





In front of the house where we live in Anse-à-Pitres



In Recif



At the seaside on the trip to Récif, with the Salesian and Carmelite Sisters, before the mass.



Tutoring with pre-school children.



Anniversary celebration at Balan school.