



Michael, Elizabeth & Anita

The view from *This Little Row in the Lord's Vineyard*

The Dohn Family ~SAMS Missionaries in Health Ministries

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500 Years of Disappointment

We went to drop-off a stethoscope and blood pressure cuff for one of the volunteer health promoters in a rural community. A visiting short-term team bought the equipment the day after one of the young health promoters said that it would be helpful for monitoring blood pressures in the community, as well as for him personally as he begins medical school next year.

When he received the equipment, he gave heart-felt thanks on behalf of the community as well as himself. His voice broke as he spoke; it was an emotional moment for him. A visitor from the team who was there mentioned the emotion and that is was somewhat more than he might have expected. Part of explanation of the emotional response could be that people with limited resources are often very appreciative. But there may be more to it ...

Not long after we arrived here in 2000, the Rev. Ricardo Potter (who was born in a similar rural community not far from here) offered us an insightful observation.

He noted that Columbus landed here in 1492 and had built the settlement of 'Navidad' somewhere on the north coast of the island before the end of that year. That was the beginning; people have been coming here ever since. The residents of this island have more experience with 'foreigners' coming here, making promises, and then not fulfilling them any other place in the hemisphere. Disappointment is the norm.

There are several implications to this observation. People will not commit quickly; they want to wait and see if this latest 'promise' seems as though it will really bear fruit. One of the advantages of long-term mission is that it is ... well ... long-term. People can see that we are committed and we are laboring with the people. Credibility is easier to generate.

Another implication is that when a need is expressed and then a 'foreign' short-term team fulfills that request two days later, it is a genuine surprise. It goes against the norms. It may engender a degree of astonishment. And that can get emotional.

Keep praying, Michael

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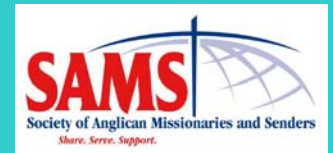
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