

Cuba 2020

We were happy to arrive home March 22, from a recent hiking and humanitarian trip to Cuba. Thanks again, St. Edwards's parishioners and Queen of Angels School for donating so many wonderful things, and also those financial contributions were greatly appreciated.

We came home to a very different world, the COVID-19 virus is everywhere.

We have been to Cuba 8 times, and I can honestly say this was the worst we have seen it. People are living in real poverty and now with COVID-19 they are closing restaurants and private homes. The one thing Cuba has is great health care, they were the ones taking temperatures before we could enter a hotel, they started this the last two days we were there. Doctors and nurses were doing this, and if you had any symptoms or a temperature who knows what would happen. Our group was good, thank goodness.

We visited with Fr. Matthew at the Catholic Church in Baracoa, he was so grateful for the full suitcase of items as well as money. He was just heading off to the little villages to visit and he said he would share with them our gifts.

The country has very little, but what they have is a big huge heart, the love they give you, and the appreciation they have for you touched our hearts so much. They bend over backwards to help you.

A phrase we were saying was, 'Dios te Bendiga', meaning. 'God bless you'. When you said this, right away their hands would go up and wish you the same. When they find out you believe in God, some will show you the bible that they read, or show by gestures how important God is in their lives. They say with God we will survive. Like here though, their young do not go to church, when

we ask them why, they say God is everywhere in nature and in our families and that is where we find him. A reason we go is to hike also, as hiring guides gives them money, we can give them a months worth of wages with 1 hike, and we hike in different areas which helps different villages. When the villagers know you are coming they come to help you cross a river with rafts, and oxen and carts, or they set up a stand and sell items, this allows us to tip them or buy from them. But then they want to give us something in return, no matter how many times you say NO, they want to. Beer was scarce and on a hot day many wanted one. High up in the mountains we found a little stall had some, we bought all she had, she was so grateful. I must say we were also. Our 25 suitcases for humanitarian need were given out along with financial aid to those in most need. We pray that with God's blessing we can overcome all that is ahead of us. We ask God to be with us all as we journey with him.

Blessings

Mary and Gerry Hof