



December 15, 2007

Dear Friends and Family:

Merry Christmas!

It's great to be surrounded by children at Christmas time! Their energy level seems to visibly increase with each day as we get closer to the holiday party. What a blessing to be in a Christian school where we can teach about Jesus during this season.

Each morning this week during Reading Class the children have been reading in the Beginner Bible one part of the Christmas story: the angel visiting Mary,

Mary and Joseph walking to Bethlehem and Jesus being born among the animals, the angels visiting the shepherds and finally the three kings. The children are so proud that they can pick up a Bible and read it. Luis asked to read it several times.

It is interesting to me how the Bible is new and fresh no matter how many times I read the story. This year as I read the Christmas Story I was impressed with how it is a story about people getting interrupted. Don't you hate to get interrupted? I have had to really learn how to be interruptible. I'm task oriented and focused. I get a lot done that way. Interruptions slow me down or get me off my schedule. If I'm off schedule I can't do everything on my list to do for the day. Are you like that? The culture here in Belize is blessedly people focused. Everyone spends a lot of time visiting and talking and interrupting each other's day. And whenever that happens, it seems the host graciously stops whatever they are doing and gives the guest their full attention.

It's in that mind set that I read the Christmas Story this season and it impressed me that God is a bit Belizean. He interrupts us and expects our full attention. He wants us to drop what we are doing and say, "Yes Lord. I'll do what you want." Mary did that. She was working and an Angel interrupted her and she said, "OK, do what you will." The shepherds had responsibilities to the sheep they watched, but the angels interrupted them and said go to Bethlehem. They ran. Sometimes God steps into our lives and says he has a job for us, or a person we should encourage, or even a reprimand. We need to learn to be Belizean and drop what we are doing to give God's interruptions our full attention.



While the children were reading to me in small groups the others did crafts and Angelica took pictures. It's been a fun busy week. One afternoon we read the Gingerbread Boy by Jan Brett and made Gingerbread

cookies. It was neat because Ginelli's father works in the sugar factory here in Orange Walk. He brought us the molasses for the cookies from the factory and we used brown sugar and white sugar that was also made there.



We're getting lots of people who come to our classroom door and say they want to help. One person is a high school girl who works with Edgar to learn his multiplication tables. Hey! That is a help! There was not a lot I could do to motivate him to practice...candy...stars on a chart...pride and competition. Nothing seemed to work. Then this very patient, attractive, girl showed up. She needed to spend some time doing community service. Now Edgar asks me every day at about 3:00 PM as he is primping his hair and shirt in anticipation of her arrival. Is Joanie coming today?



We also have Giovanna helping us. She is Jehovah's Witness. Hmmm. She comes every Monday. She signs well, and doesn't seem to have motives to draw kids to her church since she hasn't visited any of them in the month she's been with us, BUT, I kind of hate to let the wolf into the sheep pen no matter how tame he seems to be. In January a young woman from Goshen College is coming to do an interpreting internship and at that time I'll ask our principal who told Giovanna to come to our class if Giovanna could possibly help someone else.

Some of the members of Jesus' Deaf Church have been mucking though some difficult personal/relational issues. We've had about two Sundays in the past three months that have NOT included someone getting upset and emotional. It's boy-girl stuff that I just try to talk through with them and try to keep them communicating, teaching them about love and forgiveness and making right choices. Please pray for us. Pray for wisdom for me as I deal with whatever they are fighting about. Pray that the Holy Spirit fills us all with God's peace and love. Last Sunday two of them were listing several things that another member did

“wrong” almost as an excuse to “cut her off”. I prayed that God would give me the words to say in reply and this is what came out: “You can stop with the list because there is nothing that she can do that will make me stop loving her... or you. Hating anyone is not an option for us.” And then to my surprise the boys started confessing all the things they were doing wrong...their own sins. They turned from listing someone else’s wrongs to telling me their own. All five of us prayed and waited on God. It was a Divine moment. BUT, now four days later the boys have said they are not going to come to church anymore because of the other person who is there. Working with people is complex! Please pray for our church and that by receiving God’s gracious love that they will all learn to love graciously.



Finally I am including some pictures of “my” girls. Kristel and Sulmi give me so much joy and make me laugh. Right before the picture of them with the Barbie dolls, they were fighting over the clothes but like a light switch they turned off the fight to pose with smiles when I brought out the camera. I walked away and they started fighting again. Then I brought out the camera and they smiled. Then I walked away and they fought and I quickly turned about and they posed again. Ha! This went on for about three takes until everyone

was in hysterics. The other picture is of them doing “gymnastics”. We had just finished dinner and it was time for them to wash dishes but instead they got the giggles and did somersaults. (They hadn’t done that before). They were in gut splitting giggles and so funny, so I took their picture. Eventually we all got back to the dishes.



This Christmas I will be in Ohio for 12 days. I wanted to see my family and get some minor surgery done on my thumb which is not bending. If you are in the Chagrin Falls area from December 18 to 28, please call my mom and let’s set up a chance to visit. (440-247-6099).

May your Christmas be filled with Divine interruptions and Holy peace,

Love to you all,

Nancy

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