

Llevando el Evangelio a través del Pan y la Tortilla

Chiapas Project Bulletin # 13, April 23, 2021

These Bulletins are providing us with a way to get to know our fellow parishioners at the Church of San Benito while keeping us in touch with the Food Pantry and the growing congregation there. Today's feature is a woman who visitors to San Benito will recognize; she always sits at the front of the congregation. Doña Rosa is, in many ways, the matriarch of that church: she is the mother of Esteban, Porfilio and Hermalinda Lopez Gomez. She is pictured here (right) with Hermalinda and her granddaughter (and interviewer), Rubi.



Visitors who have engaged her in conversation will remember her warm welcome as well as a woman with forthright opinions. The following narrative from Doña Rosa comes through her native Tetsel to Spanish and then to English.

Doña Rosa was born in Yochib, May 22, 1940 but, she explains, there was no church in the community at that time. So, to attend church she walked with friends to a Catholic church in Tenejapa, about ten hours away, "we would leave Yochib at daybreak and arrive there about 4:00." She has recollections of being told about catechism and learning to sing songs in a choir. "I was about ten years old when I first saw San Cristobal; it was not nearly so big as it is now, but I remember there being a few houses and a town full of trees. It was an extremely beautiful place, and the streets stay in my memory because they were cobbled."



"I was married when I was young, as was the custom then. I was 14. I had the first of my seven children when I was 16: they are Albina, Margarita, Esteban, Porfirio, Hermelinda, Patricia, and Guadalupe Lopez Gomez. Today Albina lives in Ocosingo, in Chiapas; all the others live here in San Cristobal. Altogether, they have blessed me with twenty grandchildren. Today's children have more support than I had when I was raising my family, and the churches are closer to their homes."

"If I were to tell you two things that are different for today's children from my time, it is that they do not need to walk a long way to get to church, and today's parents accept that there is equality between men and women."

“When I got married, I stopped attending church for years because my husband did not sympathize with any church. My reunion with God and with my church came in about 2005. That was when I moved from San Juan to San Cristóbal de las Casas where I live now, and that is where my family met the late Father Davis.

“What does the church mean to me? I want to tell you, that if I am not active in the church, I feel something is wrong. When I am in my church, that is where I find both physical and spiritual peace.”

These, Rubi writes, are some of the words my grandmother told us.

If you want to pass along birthday greetings to Doña Rosa next month, I am sure Rubi would be pleased to forward them in person if you write Rubi at: rublez08@hotmail.com



NEWS: Beginning in April, San Benito has been offering English classes on Wednesday evenings, taught by Esteban Lopez Gomez and Marlene Gomez Ruiz, pictured left.

This afternoon was the 13th delivery of food staples to 45 families in the barrio of San Juan de Dios where the Church of St. Benedict / San Benito is located. The security that the food pantry provides (christened by Father Florencio as the *Llevando el Evangelio a través del Pan y la*



Tortilla) is thanks to donations from St. Chrysostom’s Church, Church of our Saviour and Church of the Atonement and other friends in Chicago.



From Father Florencio:

I have been thinking about what will happen when Covid 19 is finally under control. I think we will have a very different life in our dealings with God and with our neighbors. I have a vision of our living more deliberately in every way, with God and ourselves. It will be up to us human beings to be able to enter a better relationship with our environment. I want to think that in the aftermath of this pandemic all of us will have a closer relationship with God, our Lord. Amen.