Naturally enough, I had never heard of Pica. I was newly arrived to Honduras, as well as many of the things medical that have occurred are far beyond my very limited scope of knowledge. Nevertheless, as the four nurses continued to discuss their day, and the two cases of Pica, I felt my stomach drop.

The occasion of the nurses’ presence was the first ever nursing brigade done at St. Benedict Joseph Medical Center. Judy Craig, Linda Mendelson, Jeanne Teter and Bridget Jungwirth were welcomed with a smile and treated. Dr. Carlos, the condition the nurses mentioned, is a vitamin or iron deficiency. They diagnosed it by what the children were eating: one sand, the other dirt. Listening to their conversation, I was in a state of shock. There was part of me that simply could not believe that within a short drive from the friary there were children eating sand and dirt for lack of proper food. Yes, I live a relatively simple lifestyle, but certainly at a level of comfort and security far above what those little ones will ever know.

To what does the realization of such realities lead one? To question God? Yes, perhaps. To feel pangs of guilt at having an abundance when others have so little? Yes, again, a very natural reaction. I sincerely hope I continue to be challenged by the poverty and need of those around me, without ever thinking or imagining that I have all the answers or even could have all the answers. I am not God – nor should I pretend to be.

This heartbreaking story also led me to a further reflection: thank God the nurses came. Thank God they took the time to come to Honduras, give their professional help for a week, traveling through the mountains to reach the poor, the pregnant, the malnourished, the struggling, and the hurt. Thank God SBJ is able to be a constant presence of mercy for so many.

Every day that I walk from our friary here in Comayagua to the medical center, there is invariably a line of people waiting to be seen by the doctors – thirty, forty, or fifty strong. Young and old, men, women, and children all come, five days a week, eight hours a day, almost every week of the year. I am grateful for the small role I play in a place that impacts positively the lives of so many. I am so grateful for your role in keeping SBJ going exactly for those folks that line up each day. You keep SBJ going for all the people who are operated on during the surgical missions. And of course, you keep SBJ going for those two little kids up in the mountains of Honduras, who we’ll never meet, but who were treated one April day by four generous nurses. On behalf of all of these people, thank you very much.

Please continue to keep us in your prayers. We need them to help us do just not good work, but God’s work. I sincerely thank you ahead of time for your prayers and financial support. Please know that we commend you, your families and your needs to God. May God bless you and keep you.
¡Bienvenidos! St. Benedict Joseph Medical Center is delighted to welcome two new-comers. Pictured here with Fr. Francis Mary, CFR, is Doctor Angela Maria Rivera Calix, the newest addition to the medical personnel at SBJ. Fr. Francis has recently arrived in Honduras and will be ministering at the medical center.

Our most recent medical mission brought us the skills of (l-r) Dr. Rick Seeger, Dr. Constantine Kokenes, and Dr. John Kelley. They arrived in June for a week of surgery, and brought with them a team of volunteers from Mary Our Queen Parish in Georgia.

In the Gospel, it is often the smallest and most vulnerable that Jesus chooses, embraces, and heals. In the photo above, Jeanne Teter holds one of the many little ones that were helped during the nursing mission in the mountains of Honduras.

Here the latest Light of the World surgical team poses for a shot. The group was composed of people of various creeds, expertise, and backgrounds. They were, however, as always, united with a firm purpose of committed service to the very poor, free of charge, with dedication and, as can be seen, a smile.

Patient Profile

Noé (in English, “Noah”) first came to know the friars at the age of 13. He was a part of a program run for boys and young men in Comayagua called the Compañeros de Cristo. As the program changed Noé lost touch with the brothers. Sometime after this he moved to Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. While riding a bicycle in December of 2008 a bullet came out of nowhere and struck him in the back. He still has no idea how or why he was shot. After a month he left the hospital paralyzed from the middle of the chest down, and with a terrible bed sore.

He returned to Comayagua, and eventually the brothers regained contact with him. One of the friars, Br. Damiano, aided the healing of the bed sore through regular cleaning and dressing of the wound. Finally, a special machine to keep the sore clean was loaned to assist Noé, all told the healing process still took over a year. Along with the medical care, the friar priests began to minister the sacraments to Noé, and a process of spiritual deepening took place in his life.

Most recently, during one of the surgical brigades at SBJ, Dr. John Kelly was able to perform a surgery which will allow Noé to bend his legs and be seated. Previous to this his hip joints were fused in such a way as to preclude all bending. This surgery means that Noé will not be restricted to lie in a bed all day long. While it may not seem like the most significant thing, for a 21 year old man, even the chance to be seated for part of a day, or to be able to travel sitting in a car, is a wonderful advance.

After the surgery, the nurses commented how joyful he was through the whole process. The truth is he smiles all the time. In the midst of his suffering, he is a beautiful example of patience, acceptance of God’s will in hard situations, and joy. As for himself, he is exceptionally grateful for San Benito and the difference the surgery will make in his life.