

Claire's El Salvador Update for IC

Everyday it's usually an average of 95 degrees. However, when we entered upon the rainy season, it was not how I expected. Nothing here has been what I could have ever expected. The rain was not something pictured in the movies or that compared to a monsoon flooding the streets. Instead, the days remained sunny and for an hour or two in the evening, the heat broke, and the rain came. I had to ask someone if the seasons had finally changed. Now until November, the lush, green plants will only become that much greener and the fruit will be limited on the trees. I never realized that I would be living in an eternal summer. That my Christmas' would be hot, there would be no pine trees, 70 degrees would be considered "freezing," and the water from the faucet is always cold. Nothing here has been what I could have expected.

My first time to El Salvador I was deported. The locals get quite a laugh out of this, and now I'm able to laugh, but at the time I couldn't understand why God would put me through something like that. I already said goodbye to my friends and family, packed up my things, and I *thought* my heart was ready. In the two weeks of my being home, I had quite the crisis of discernment. However, here I am, hot and sweating, covered in a rash, and my heart overflowing with the blessings of Christ. I am not a missionary, if anything everything and everyone else here is a missionary to me. I am merely a volunteer who does not know what to say or do most of the time. Coming here was truly a rebirth. My language was gone, my friends, family, diet, everything. I was forced to find a new identity, and although it has been one of the biggest challenges, the Lord has spoken loudly.

Here, the people call me Clara. I work at Centro Arte para la Paz which seeks to heal the community through artistic expression. It's quite a beautiful mission and the weekends here are full of music, laughter, and lots of individuals creating. I teach violin classes Sunday mornings and during the week I make videos, tend to the museum, and am in the works of putting together a community garden. My Spanish is slowly, but surely improving--my moto has been '*poco a poco*' or "little by little."

I thought it to be important to share a little about my journey here, because I owe a big piece of my spiritual calling to the parishioners of Immaculate Conception. In 2017, I nervously stood in front of the congregation in need of financial and prayer support to go to Chile. It was there that I felt the Lord tell me that Central/Latin America was where I was supposed to serve. That mission trip to Chile gave me lifelong friendships and set my life on a course that led me exactly to the hot and vibrant city of Suchitoto, El Salvador. Thus, from the bottom of my heart, thank you, thank you, thank you.

With loving & blessings,
Claire Horrell

P.S I have a website that I post blogs on if you would like more updates along the way!
<https://claraelainesphotos.wixsite.com/claraelaine/blog>