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## *A Humble Reminder from my Neighbor*

*By Kathy Bryson*

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I recently visited Lisabet, our neighbor, as she was preparing a fire to cook traditional beans. Lisabet's mother suffers from a long-term hacking cough that is exacerbated by smoke. They are a Nicaraguan family who immigrated to Costa Rica years ago in search of a better life. Lisabet's father takes care of another neighbor's cows. She is a 36-year-old mentally challenged adult. She is very precious — always telling me how she tried so hard to learn to read, but never could. The first question that she asks people she meets is if they believe in God.

I first saw her at a small neighborhood church in what was originally a make-shift settlement of marginalized Nicaraguan immigrants. The United Methodist Church has helped this community improve their make-shift homes through the years. It is neat to see how, even though they have little, the neighbors take pride in having colorful flowers in their tiny yards. It has been rewarding to share seedlings for them to plant on small slivers of land for nutritious vegetables for their families!

When I first met Lisabet at the church, I quickly noticed her because she sang so loudly and so off-key. Then, she prayed so loudly while the preacher was praying and kept on fervently even after he had stopped! It bothered me, because I wanted to hear the preacher and to enjoy the music. "I wish someone would ask her to be quieter," I

remember thinking, annoyed. It was not until days later that I realized she was mentally challenged and started to get to know her.

She recently helped me mop and hang out our clothes because I had injured my hand. We took a break to enjoy good Costa Rican coffee and cookies. I told her I sure appreciated her help and that I usually did my own housework. She smiled in disbelief and said, "People like you shouldn't be doing their clothes, anyway, because

that is a job for people like us who can't read or didn't study much in school. You studied, so you should be in an office or on computer, not working like we humble people do. "

Lisabet always speaks uncensored—she is so ingenuous and says what she thinks— like a child would. She constantly calls me the

equivalent of "Madam." (What does the Madam want? Where is the Madam? etc.)

"My sister Lisabet!" I exclaim, "you are my sister in Christ, aren't you?" "Why, yes!" she said. "Jesus became humble for us on Earth to give his life for us, so we follow his example. We are all called to be humble." She catches her breath and looks at me intently, her dark eyes shining, and then starts to laugh and laugh. "Yes! You are my Sister Kati! Yes! You are my sister!"

Lisabet gets up early in the mornings and talks very loudly as she does her family chores outside. I hear her way



through the banana trees across the backyard and through my window.

I asked her who she is always talking to when she is working outside. She said, “Oh, I’m talking to God my Father, thanking him for His beautiful world and that we have beans and tortillas and that my Papa gets to watch the cows for our neighbor, and for Mami and that we have these beautiful flowers...” “

I thought of James 2:5. Has God not chosen the poor of the world?

I look forward to being able to start the eco-stove training soon to reduce smoke and improve quality of life among these dear, hard-working people. Meanwhile, when I hear Lisabet’s loud off-key singing, I believe that her heavenly Father hears it as a most beautiful, genuine heart full of gratitude and praise that rivals an erudite rendition of Handel’s Messiah.

Lisabet and her family inspire me with their positive attitude towards life, their thankful spirit towards God

and their neighbors. It never ceases to amaze me how those the world sees as poor are often quite rich indeed. Maybe Lisabet needs our stove technology and science, but my how we need to learn from her beautiful humble spirit!

May we remain humble in our zeal to save others with our science and technology—open to learning new unexpected divine lessons in life and humility.

Thank you for supporting SIFAT’s ministry this month, so that we can continue Sharing God’s Love in Practical Ways. Though a pandemic may have forced us to press pause on in-person events while we follow government guidelines and implement safety protocols to restart our training and programs, we know our graduates and international projects throughout the world are using the skills they learned through SIFAT trainings to make a difference in their communities right now, when it is most needed. From planting urban gardens to promoting tippy-taps to help wash hands where water is scarce, our graduates are spreading their knowledge in their communities.



*Giovani is ready to start a family garden with plant seedlings from SIFAT’s Central American Training Center in Costa Rica.*



*Kathy visits with Dona Santos, whose family started a small garden behind their home with SIFAT seedlings.*

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## **Reminders from SIFAT**

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