

*Hola from Cuernavaca!*

We're well into our language study now and have collected some episodes to share with you.

So many people have said to me, "Annette, you don't need to study Spanish, you already speak so well." I do have a good foundation to build on but here's a glimpse into why I need to be studying full time.



*Lunch time at home with our family, the Martinezes.*

Teacher: So tell me what you think about Cuernavaca.

Me: Cuernavaca is a beautiful city full of flowers, and fountains, and pimples.

Teacher (who is used to hearing Americans say odd things): Let's see now, what do you mean exactly?

Me: Well all of the streets are lined with the big pimples surrounding the houses.

Teacher: Ahh, you mean *bardos* [walls], not *barras* [pimples.]

Me (rather embarrassed and glad the other students haven't understood): Yes, I mean Cuernavaca has lots of walls.

Before we left the US we saw an issue of the magazine *Colours* that had only pictures, no captions or articles. The only words in the whole issue were on the editor's page where he explained how much we depend on words to explain life to us. Without captions we can only guess the context of a picture. And these guesses reflect our cultural context.

In many ways our life here is like that magazine: full of pictures, devoid of captions. Our days are full of seeing things that are different from our own cultural context. As we make observations we write captions in our minds and then try to validate them. Sometimes our assumptions are correct. But sometimes the reality of what seems so clear to us is very different.

One day walking back from the "Zocalo" (the center of town where the Palace of Cortez and the Cathedral are located) I noticed a beauty shop that listed among its many services "arreglamiento de novias." I had never heard of arranged marriages in Latin culture, but there is a lot I haven't heard of so I put that into "observations to be verified" category of my mind. That particular shop had a Christian fish symbol in the window so when Tim needed a haircut we stopped in there. We had a nice time talking with the Mexican family who ran the shop. The father is a sort of Protestant circuit preacher who travels to small towns in a neighboring state teaching and encouraging small churches there, while the family earns a living in Cuernavaca.

Well into the conversation I asked the mother, "Do you do arrangements of girlfriends?" She answered, "Oh, yes." I was incredulous, thinking I had discovered a hidden part of the culture, "How!?!?" "Well, they come in the day before and we do their fingernails. Then the day of the wedding. . ." Ah, the missing piece. They didn't arrange the wedding, they arranged the girl for the wedding.

So you see we need lots of help as we learn to understand and communicate in our new home.

For Christ and His kingdom,

*Annette*

Annette, for us both



*One day we went to the market and saw these dolls in elaborate clothing. They are baby Jesus, called "child gods" being sold for a festival of blessing of the dolls for the next Christmas.*