

# From Ship to Shore...

April 2003



Dear family and friends,

The Caribbean Mercy's time in the Dominican Republic has come to a close, and many sad goodbyes were said as the ship headed back to the U.S for another public relations tour. This is certainly a challenge in working with Mercy Ships – constantly having to say goodbye to new friends.

For the first two months of the ship's outreach I was traveling throughout the country, as I wrote about in my last newsletter. This past month I have been back on the ship working in the computer department and helping out with the various ministries that the ship does. I was able to go to the various medical outreach sites; the Caribbean Mercy's main outreach is in the form of optical and dental surgeries and clinics.

Almost 250 eye operations were performed onboard, mainly restoring sight through cataract surgery. More than 3,000 pairs of glasses were distributed in our optical clinic. Close to 2,000 dental procedures were done, primarily in the form of extractions. Community Health Education teams went into many towns to teach classes on basic sanitation and health care. Our Community Development teams spent the outreach constructing churches, pit latrines, and water purification systems among the poorest villages.

Of course behind each one of these statistics are individuals whose lives were radically transformed by God's healing touch working through His people. One day I happened to be walking along the route where patients are led into the operating room on the ship, and I saw a man going in to have eye surgery. His face showed a mix of fear and anxious expectation. An hour later I saw him walking out of the ship with a completely different expression; his smile shone



brighter than the sun, and he was speaking a mile a minute in Spanish to the nurse even though she didn't understand a work of what he was saying! It was a beautiful thing to be able to witness. We truly do have a good God!

Perhaps my favorite experience from this past month was a trip I took to a prison in Puerto Plata. We set up a basic health care clinic for the prisoners, who seldom get any health care. A group of us talked to them as they waited in line for the doctor, and many great conversations emerged from that time. I was scared at first; I felt a bit naïve going to talk about hope to people who have probably seen worse things than I could ever

imagine. But I was reminded that the hope that Jesus offers us reaches far beyond the messes we create or the seemingly hopeless circumstances we get ourselves into. He



blessed that time as we worshiped Him together.

It was such a privilege to go to the Dominican Republic and meet so many wonderful people there. I feel that I know better how to pray for the nation as a whole, and also for individuals that I met. Please join with me in praying that the churches in the DR would continue to grow and be a light in dark places. I would also appreciate your prayers as I decide what my role on the ship will be in the

future. I have been offered a leadership position as DTS staff starting in the fall. That would mean mentoring DTS students and leading them in outreaches in the different Central American countries the ship goes to.

The Caribbean Mercy will be traveling on the east coast of the U.S. before the next outreach starts. We hope to be in Boston for three weeks in the end of June/beginning of July. I know many of you are within driving distance of Boston, and I would love to have any of you come out and see the ship!

In Christ,  
Katie