SATURDAY IN FIANAR

Posted on April 29, 2006 by Sue

Category: Madagascar

Well, I'm almost half way through my trip and I think I may have got the water system sussed here. Since the water is heated by solar panels, there is hot water in the evenings, but it's not necessarily still warm by the morning, so best to shower in the evening. Then from mid-morning to mid-afternoon, most days there is no water at all. I don't know whether this is because of low pressure or whether water has to be pumped up to the tanks. The Sisters are feeding us well with plenty of fruit and vegetables each meal. At lunch there were the biggest avocados I've ever seen, even in Africa - delicious. At breakfast I tend to go for a simple continental breakfast of bread and jam with cafe au lait, though the Malagasy tend to eat rice at breakfast too, either with some meat or with a little milk.

The Catholic Sisters who run this retreat centre are mainly Malagasy with a couple of Europeans. They have vegetable gardens and also a little 'farm' next door with chickens, sheep and pigs, so they can always provide fresh meat.

Talking of food, I discovered as we were translating John 4 (where Jesus stops beside Jacob's well and the disciples have gone off to buy food) that in Tandroy there are 3 different words for 'food' depending on who it is for: whether the person is of equal status or is considered to be superior or inferior. In each case you have to make a decision. Of course in everyday life this is second nature to the Tandroy, but when it comes to biblical passages, which one to choose is not always so obvious. Again, not something which tends to feature in the average commentary on John's Gospel.....

I am relieved that Mirana and I are no longer on the waiting list for flights to Tana next week and we now have tickets! An hour's flight will be much easier than repeating the 10 hour road journey. But talking of road journeys, we will be taking the opportunity of getting a lift with one of the Sisters who is going to Ihosy tomorrow. Apparently it takes about 3 hours and the road is good tarmac and also much straighter than the one from Tana. We are going to visit Manonjo Gabriel, who is one of the Bara translators I worked with. Although I have worked with the team over the last few years, I never actually made it to Bara country, so I'm really pleased to be going as far as Ihosy. Unfortunately I won't get to see Alvilde who lives another day's drive away in Betroka on a bad road, and her brother Jean-Moise another

day beyond that and then you have to cross the river and walk! From the UK it's not easy to imagine how inaccessible some of the places here are. It's not possible to contact either of them as there is no phone. This is apparently quite a pretty area that tourists visit, so it should be interesting, and great to see Mananjo again.

Well, if I'm going to post this blog, it means I need to see if the phone is free and try and connect. Sometimes it takes about 20 attempts to dial, sometimes less, though I also tend to lose the connection in the middle too. So it could be that messages I thought had been sent OK actually got lost, so please forgive me if you have emailed me and haven't received a reply. (Though you can email me, HINT HINT!) How we have come to take Broadband for granted!

At the end of a busy week when I've only been outside the compound walls once, to eat lunch with Pere Benolo at the Seminary up the road, I think it's time to get a breath of fresh air before the sun goes down around 5.30 pm and the mosquitoes come out to play!

Bye for now,
Sue