

## HAVE A MERRY CHRISTMAS 1997 AND A BLESSED NEW YEAR

Dear Family and Friends,

I always thought “The Grinch That Stole Christmas” was a fairy tale, but for sure he’s been in Panimaquin. There are no trees or songs, if we’re fortunate, we might see two houses with lights. Like the C.S. Lewis book, “The Lion, Witch, And The Wardrobe”, “it’s always winter and never Christmas”. For all who have ever complained of the over-commercialization of Christmas, be careful what you ask for.

The Grinch in Panimaquin is religiosity and poverty. The evangelical churches don’t want to resemble the Catholic church, so they have literally thrown the baby out with the bath water. Even though we believe Jesus was born, we don’t celebrate His birth. The twenty fifth of December is just another day.

The life style, poverty. The school year ends in October and begins in January. The children here spend vacation looking for fire wood, food for the livestock, fetching water, and helping in the fields. The parents are always busy planting and going to market to sell vegetables and flowers to people almost as poor as themselves. For example, three carrots bring about four cents and one cauliflower sixteen cents.

Trish and I are fortunate to have friends in the capital so we can sneak away and celebrate Christmas Day. Our job is difficult, because we can’t right all the wrongs. We must move slowly especially with traditions. We are seeing much fruit in the entire community, but we must not move too quickly .

Trish and I want to thank all of you for your prays and support during 1997. This year has gone very fast, but we have accomplished a lot in the name of the Lord.

Love in Christ Jesus,

Bernard and Trish