News
EarthBeat



Leticia Ochoa Adams on The Land (Courtesy of Leticia Ochoa Adams)



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A little over a year ago, my husband and I sold our 2,000-square foot house in the suburbs of Austin, Texas, and moved into a 32-foot RV in a 10-acre cow pasture. The land is raw, which means there is no electricity or running water. So we started from scratch with "The Land" — that is what we called the ranch before it became anything that looked ranchy.

The past 17 months I have built a relationship with The Land, and it has taught me many lessons, like the peace described in the readings for the second Sunday of Advent is not a peace that comes without conflict.

I cried the first night we spent on The Land. There was a terrible thunderstorm that shook the RV with every thunder boom. The land rolled underneath the camper.

On a 110-degree day last summer, our air conditioning broke and it was cooler in the shade of our trees than it was in the RV. I work from home, so I had to try to work outside while sweating under the trees until the sun went down.

I live in Texas, so there are a lot of different things trying to kill me at any given moment, but fire ants and chiggers — two insects that leave painful bites — are worse than anything trying to murder me. Fire ant bites burn like hot lava for almost an hour before huge blisters rise up. Chigger bites do not show up for a few hours, but when they do they make you want to scratch your skin off. Last summer, I had chiggers in my tennis shoes and didn't realize it until I went to bed after taking a shower. I wanted to cut my feet off. They itched for a week and I have scars.

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When we got chicks, I had to take care of them in the cold, heat and rain. They depended on me, so I could not just wrap up in a blanket if it was cold or sit in the air conditioning when it was hot. I had to go out into the weather, whatever misery it was, and care for them. This created an unexplainable bond. Even now that they're grown hens laying eggs, they know me and my voice.

These realities of life on The Land remind me of the verses in the Book of Isaiah about lions eating hay and cows and bears being neighbors and what that kind of peace looks like (Isaiah 11:1-10). It is not without its conflict and struggle. On The Land, we live next to animals and amid weather that could kill us, and yet we live in

harmony most of the time.

And living in this relationship with the land has deepened my relationship with God. I no longer think of God as a fairy Godmother who makes my wishes come true. Our relationship is now imbued with much more honor and respect.

The clear sky at night with the moon and stars is a masterpiece that God made. God also made me. That means that I must look at myself with the same awe that I look at that night sky. This new relationship of respect with the Creator and creation — The Land and everything that lives here, including myself — has changed my life. It has made me a person who is kinder, more patient and more intentional in my stewardship.

It took a lot of learning to get The Land to be a ranch-like place with bunnies, chickens, horses and dogs all learning to live with each other and the wildlife. Those lessons are priceless because they are not just lessons in homesteading, they are lessons in the peace of God: the peace that comes in the cool of the evening, the peace of the poor, the peace of trusting that God loves you when an unexpected tornado hits the ground or lightning strikes a tree outside of your tiny metal camper.

There has been hard work and tears, but for the first time in my life I am experiencing that kind of peace.

This story appears in the **2022 Advent Essays** feature series. View the full series.