Window into Costa Rica--Sundays
On Sunday in Palmares, Costa Rica women and children wake up early and prepare the house for visitors who are sure to arrive in the afternoon. They clean and polish their ceramic floors until they shine almost like a mirror. Mothers and daughters prepare individual breads, cakes, and cookies to serve with coffee to their guests. They also prepare a traditional Sunday meal of "arroz con pollo" (chicken with rice). After these chores are completed, everyone bathes and dresses in their Sunday finest to walk into town for church services. Since about 90% of Costa Ricans are Catholic, the town church is almost always filled to capacity. Birds fly in and out of the big open doors and children fidget restlessly in lacy dresses or freshly pressed pants. The crowds outside the church building break up long after the service is over as people share family news--births, deaths, graduations--with friends and neighbors.

After church, the family sits down to enjoy their arroz con pollo and fruit juice made from freshly picked papaya, mango, or pineapple. They save the cakes and coffee for the guests who are suite to come. Children play ball in the streets where few cars pass, and you can most surely find a soccer tournament on the local plaza. As you walk by houses that line the streets leading from one coffee plantation to another, you shout "adios" (to God!) to children in the streets and adults who are enjoying a lazy afternoon on their front porch. Sundays in Costa Rica are a day of rest.

In the evening, young men and women surround the park hoping to meet with friends or find a dancing partner for the evening's social event. For young adults, the Sunday dance is the highlight of a relaxing day. In the mountains of Palmares, the weather cools and Sunday ends. Families gather once again in their wooden homes, the guests have left, cakes and rice are gone, and the children are tired from having played all day. The coming week will bring work and school, and everyone is glad to have had another Sunday together.