



Volume 16, Issue 5

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Dear Friends,

I rose in the dark at 5:00 a.m. to pray and at 6:00 a.m. on the dot I heard a voice outside the front door calling, “Hermana Katy!” Immediately I began to wonder what emergent need waited for attention so early in the day? I opened the door and there was Maria, my closest neighbor sitting sideways swinging on the patio hammock; her black hair pulled back in a ponytail, her black eyes shining. “Good morning! Could I borrow a tomato?” she smiled. I smiled back. I turned into the kitchen, opened the refrigerator and scanned the tomato scene. “One or two?” I shouted. “One if it’s big, two if they are small.” I grabbed a big one and took it to her. “This is the easiest request I will have all day,” I said to myself. It was.

I returned to Santiago Ixcán in early September right before the corn and cardamom harvest. Corn means food. Cardamom, the green pod- like fruit picked for export, means cash. Persons with no land to grow crops, the self-supporting single mother with children, and the sick far from health care facilities suffer the most. The Ixcán region is in an economic low. Guatemala in general is in crisis: public hospitals are without medicines, unemployment is prevalent, prices of basic commodities high. Corruption, crime and impunity are the norm. No wonder a deluge of people have been streaming to my door asking for help from cash loans to milk to corn to medicine.

The needs seem endless like the sea. I roll up my sleeves and the day’s activities reflect the Corporal Works of Mercy: Feed the hungry, Give Drink to the Thirsty, Clothe the Naked, Bury the Dead, Shelter the Homeless, Comfort the Sick, Visit the Imprisoned.

Feed the Hungry: While I was in the United States Javier Gonzalez, our on-site administrator activated our corn project distributing 45 *quintales* (1 quintal=100lbs) of corn to the most needy in our village. Cristina, single mother of five, Magdalena and Fidel and their four children who are landless and work for hire in the village fields, Candelaria with her newborn child and two toddlers are examples from the twenty families that we helped and in some cases are still helping with corn to curtail hunger.

Comfort the Sick: Magdalena, one of our women jewelers, suffers a heavy cross. I waited to visit her. I waited to have the courage to see a beautiful sixteen year old girl suffer. Alicia, her daughter, swallowed liquid pesticide to end the pain around a problem with her boyfriend. The doctors in Playa Grande hospital told Magdalena and her husband, “You brought her in too late. We can’t do anything. Take her home to die.” When I arrived, Magdalena approached sobbing. “Thank you for coming to visit me,” she cried as I held her. In the adjacent room I heard sounds like a clearing of a throat; a gagging sound that echoed. “She may not make it, but my trust and hope is

in God,” Magdalena said. I listened to and prayed with Magdalena, then we went into a darkened bedroom. A thin young Mayan woman in blue jeans was on her side laying on the bed. Her black hair pulled back, her wide slightly slanted brown eyes filled with sadness, remorse maybe? Her skin had a grayish tint. “No quick fix here,” I think, “of death nor of healing.” Lord have mercy. I prayed with Alicia, my hand lightly touched her leg and then slowly walked out the door thoroughly shaken. I left Magdalena with some money and had corn delivered. The family is treating Alicia with natural remedies and I.V. fluids. At this writing Alicia is still alive.

Shelter the Homeless: Javier and I went to visit Candelaria, a single mother abandoned by her husband. She was sitting outside the house with a baby swaddled on her back, her two other small children peering from the side of the shack. After the usual greeting and formalities I asked, “Can I take a look inside your house?” She nodded and I poked my head inside the door. There was no need to go inside. It is one room, with a dirt floor, a smoldering fire, a few pots for cooking, scattered fragments of clothing, and a blanket. “Do you feel safe here?” asked Javier. “There’s nothing to steal,” she said. I learned later from a family member that she and her children sleep at her brother’s home during the night. Javier and my eyes met. We are looking for candidates among the poorest of the poor to help with a basic housing project. Candelaria may be one of the possible beneficiaries this year.

Bury the Dead: “Thank you Hermana Katy, thank you,” he said. Don Andres sat in a chair with his head buried in his hands slumped over sobbing. My hand was on his shoulder as I prayed. We grieved at the wake of Fernando, his thirty-nine year old son, who died of cancer. Health care in Guatemala is bad in usual cases. It is exceptionally dire when a serious illness hits -like cancer. Fernando died in Guatemala City of throat cancer after a failed surgery following radiation treatments. He left his widow and a six year old son. He was buried after the customary twenty-four hour vigil in the village cemetery.

Clothe the Naked: They come now and again to play, to eat, or to just be. Victorina eleven, Nico eight, and Felipe six, came recently from among the seven children in their family. They are the poorest of the poor. I looked at Nico’s t-shirt ragged at the ends with holes, Felipe’s faded jeans with holes in the knees, Victorina in long shorts and faded t-shirt - ropa Americana. “I have something for you,” I told them. I went into the back storage room and picked through the clothing we had brought from the U.S. stuffed in our extra suitcase. I give the clothing - boys, girls or infants - donated or purchased at thrift stores or rummage sales to children who come to the door. The clothing is in good shape, washed and ready for wear. I give it randomly, this time it was the Jimenez kids. I found a dress for Victorina, t-shirts and a nice pair of cotton pants for both boys! “Great!” I think. “There’s something here for all of them!” I brought out the clothing and they immediately put the new stuff on. They left as though they were kings and queens dressed in finery. It is their smiles that stood out. Their broad smiles of having something new.





Give Drink To the Thirsty: Everyone who comes to the door is offered something to drink. It is the culture here. A glass of lemonade or water if it is hot or coffee or *pinol* - a drink made from roasted ground corn- if it is cold. Jacinto Perez often comes to my door on his way home from the fields. Without fail he gives me food like corn on the cob, or squash, or *hierbas* – a dark green leafy vegetable. Recently he came holding in his hands a bunch of green bananas. “They will ripen, Hermana,” he said. I told him to rest awhile and handed him a tall glass of cold lemonade. He drank it down in one single long gulp. “Gracias, Hermana. I have to get home!” And off he went until the next time when he will bring me something to eat and I will give him something to drink.

It’s like that here - the giving and receiving. Sometimes all that is required of me is to give a ripe red tomato or a cold glass of lemonade. And for the moment it is enough.

May God bless and keep you and yours! Thank you once again for your support of Ixcán Ministries!

Sincerely,

Kathy Snider

Mission Update: Javier Gonzalez, our on-site administer, recently underwent an ERCP procedure to clear an obstructed bile duct. He is slowly recovering.

Deidra Lies, a single woman in her early thirties, is accompanying Kathy in a short-term mission experience. She will return with Kathy to the U.S. in late November.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Ixcán Ministries is a Christian lay mission serving as a ministry of presence with the Mayan people in the Ixcán jungle of Guatemala. We act as a bridge between cultures for the exchange of gifts to transform lives and society.

Ixcán Ministries is a 501(c) 3 organization. Your contributions are tax deductible.

Contact us or send a donation to:

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Marlane Peterson, President
(701) 426-9276

Purchase Ixcán Creations products at:

Tienda Marleny
(please call 701-426-9276 to shop)

UPCOMING SALES FOR IXCÁN CREATIONS – beautiful handmade jewelry, woven shawls, and linens made by indigenous women of the Ixcán jungle region in Guatemala. 100% of the purchase proceeds go directly to each crafter.

THIRST CONFERENCE: Bismarck Event Center, Starts on Friday evening Oct. 28 and through Sunday Oct. 30th.

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH MARKETPLACE: Wednesday evening, Nov 16 and Sunday Nov 20th after the morning services.

SPIRIT OF LIFE CATHOLIC CHURCH: Saturday, Dec 3 after the 5 pm Mass, Sunday after the 9 and 11 am Masses in the am, and Sunday evening after the 6 pm Mass.

TIENDA MARLENY: Open House Dec 10 & 11, 1:00 to 5:00 pm. As always give Marlane a call to have her open the shop doors.

**Tienda
Marleny**

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