



Volume 13, Issue 5

December 2013

“That the mountains may yield their bounty for the people, and the hills great abundance, that he may defend the oppressed among the people, save the poor and crush the oppressor.” -Psalm 72:3

Dear Friends,

It is Advent, the season of waiting and preparing for the coming – *His coming*. We wait for His first coming into history as the God child with us who saves, we wait for his second coming as the King of glory who brings justice, and this past Sunday, the First of Advent, Father Dan Maloney in his homily mentioned a third coming. A third coming?

Fr. Maloney said that the third coming of Jesus is in our here and now.

This reminds me of a saying I heard somewhere that states, “When you go to the poor, you go to Jesus.” This past June two members of our Board of Directors -Marlane Peterson and Mary Kay Tokach packed up their suitcases, said their prayers and made the long journey from Bismarck, ND to Santiago Ixcán, Guatemala. They came bringing gifts and they found *Him*.





Mary Kay writes:

Sitting on Kathy's bench he wears a tattered yellow shirt over his frail, thin frame. With him sits two waif-like young children- a girl and a boy. They are waiting for Kathy to ask for assistance. He has left his wife and baby with their two other little ones at home. He's sick and unable to work. Men's work in the Ixcán is agriculture related; very physical and includes long days in tropical heat and high humidity. An arrangement is made for us to visit his family in their home.

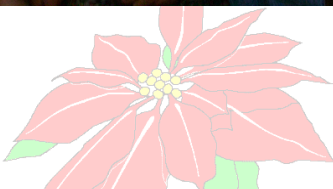
We wind our way through mud to a wood shanty. Kathy visits with him about concerns of basic necessities: food, uncontaminated water, clothing, and education. His 10 year old daughter, his first child, doesn't want to go to school because she is bullied. Education is important, a way out of the poverty. I ask myself, how can we keep these parents involved and assist them in intervening on the daughter's behalf to get her back to school? I look around the one room shack with dirt floor and mud puddles in the cooking area and look up to see numerous holes in the roof where screws should be to fasten down the tin roof. How do you stay healthy and disease free in this environment? After we listen, we pray with them...and later come up with a plan to address their needs (the daughter's return to school and the tin roof).

The gift I received was to witness the sense of community, faith and family between Kathy and the people that also happened between us and the people – and what I realize now is at the heart of Ixcán Ministries.



Marlane shares:

What I anticipated most personally was seeing the people I had gotten to know during the three prior trips I had made to Santiago. The thought that stuck with me during this visit was the visible fruit of our long term mission presence there. I have been involved in the development of the mission from the beginning 16 years ago.



One of my great joys was visiting with Pedro, Suzanna and their mother at the mission house and trying to communicate with them in my very poor Spanish. I had met them and their father on my first trip, 11 years ago, when they had come to the mission house to visit. Suzanna and Pedro were just children then. The father had a patch over one of his eyes because of cancer. He knew he was dying and didn't have much more time to live. He asked us to look after his family after he was gone. We said that yes, we would and over the years have kept that promise. Pedro, a handsome young man, is now a self-supporting farmer and Suzanna is married with a little darling son and helps Pedro take care of their mother.

When I first met Cristina, she was a single, hard-working young woman living with and helping support her mother. The first meal I had in the people's homes was at her sister Carmen's house which Ixcan Ministries helped to build. Carmen and her five children were so excited and so grateful! I feel a special closeness to Cristina and Carmen as they often came to see me during my visits – they are part of my Ixcan family.

Cristina once again came to see me. Her life however, has changed drastically since that first visit. She is now a mother of five small children, raising them all alone as the father had abandoned them a year or so ago. She was exhausted. I sat down beside her to say hello and we embraced. She then put her head on my chest and wept. Through the generous help of our benefactors we have been able to help her and her children on a consistent basis. I am so grateful that we can do this. Being around her that day I realized- we need each other.



Pope Francis recently said, "Looking after the poor should not be the work of 'specialists' but engaged in by all members of the church." I think that might be part of the third coming- the looking after the poor – looking after Jesus who is in our midst - who comes to us right here in our hearts, our homes, neighborhoods, churches, work and communities. Jesus has many faces. So does poverty. Many.

I ask myself, "Do I recognize him? Am I prepared for his coming at Christmas whenever that might be like in June in the Ixcán jungle or in cold December in North Dakota?"

Might we have eyes to see and ears to hear above and beyond the competing frenzy and consumer overload of the season that does everything to prevent us from seeing his coming – right in our midst – right in our Here and Now.

May your Advent Season awaken you to God's presence and prepare you for a Christmas filled with community, faith, and family and giving to the poor.

Thank you for your generous support of Ixcán Ministries. We are so grateful for you.

Paz y Bien,



Kathy Snider



Mission Update: Kathy returned to Guatemala on Dec. 11th following 6 months here in the U.S. She spent part of those initial months helping her mom recover from shoulder surgery and then travelled to write, promote the Ixcán Creations women's product, and visit with family, friends and benefactors. Her journeys took her to Aberdeen, SD, St. Cloud, MN, Bathgate, ND, Seattle, WA, Sisters, OR, Sundance, WY, El Paso, TX and Vado, NM. She also spoke with students in two different classrooms at the University of Mary in Bismarck, ND.

Thank you for your prayers as she returns to mission in Santiago Ixcán, Guatemala to walk with and support her people there.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Ixcán Ministries provides a prayerful, pastoral presence through lay missionaries living in solidarity with the poor of the remote Ixcán jungle of Guatemala to learn from as well as to assist both spiritually and materially the people with whom life and ministry are shared. The organization strives to be a bridge between two cultures and nations allowing for the exchange of varying gifts between the rich and poor for the ultimate purpose of empowerment and transformation of lives and society.

Ixcán Ministries is a 501(c) 3 organization. Your contributions are tax deductible. You may contact us at:

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