



*"If you can't feed a hundred people, feed just one."
-Mother Theresa*

Dear Friends,

Last year, during a retreat at the *Benedictine Monastery of Assumption Abbey* on the prairie of North Dakota, one of the monks said to me after a community meal, "Say, there is a visiting priest here who works in Guatemala." "Really! Could you introduce me to him?"

My monk friend guided me to the dishwashing area, where a man with blonde hair, in his 50s, with sleeves rolled up wearing an apron, was hard at it. There I met Australian born Father Stephen, a priest with Mother Theresa's Missionary of Charity Fathers.

I learned that Fr. Stephen lived and served with four other priests in a rough area of Guatemala City. They run a soup kitchen there feeding 100 - 180 homeless men daily. "Could I visit you sometime and see your ministry when I am back in Guatemala?" I asked. "Sure," he said, "Just give me a call." So a few months later, I did.

At a bus stop at one of the main congested black exhaust-strewn, horn-honking streets of Guatemala City, I met Fr. Stephen who guided me to a neighborhood a few minutes away to Casa Padre Jose (Fr. Joseph Langford, co-founder of Missionary of Charity priests) soup kitchen.

Fr. led me into the kitchen area where I was introduced to the cook, a friendly middle-aged Guatemalan woman, and the 'staff' – men who had once eaten here, got cleaned up and now served. I was impressed.

Then the men without a home filed into the receiving area where they were greeted and then searched (for knives or drugs, I guess). Each haggard face carried the pain of life on the streets; some were tattooed, some bleary-eyed. All hungry.

Eventually all of the cafeteria style tables in the dining area were filled with the 'guests' and one of the male staff read the gospel followed by a short reflection and a prayer. Then, he exhorted all to change their lives through a relationship with Jesus and offered a way out of addiction through a program they ran. "Wow!" I thought. "I wonder if..."

I was invited to help serve, so I mustered up my small tank of courage and wandered in the sea of them, and handed out steaming bowls, one by one, that were filled with homemade chicken soup. Many smiled and responded with, "Muchas gracias." Fear left.

Afterwards, I asked Fr. Stephen, "You provide addiction treatment for these men?" "Yes, we do." He introduced me to two lay men in charge of the addiction program. They told me about their four month program which included detox and living in a community of others in recovery with prayer (daily Mass and the rosary), work, recreation, and AA meetings.

"Would you consider taking someone into your program from my village in the Ixcán?" I asked.



At the door of Casa Padre Jose

Sadly, alcohol abuse has increased at an alarming rate in Santiago Ixcán over the past ten years. It is heartbreaking to see young men staggering or passed out along our dirt streets, or learn of a drunken husband beating his wife, or a man spending the last queztales earned on beer or caña (almost 100% alcohol) when his children have no food. There are no easy answers.

One man in our community, Domingo, early 40s, has a severe drinking problem affecting his health, his marriage and the well-being of his family of four. (Ages 14 to young adult.)

Would Domingo, one of the worst weekend drunks in our community, accept treatment?

I prayed a lot. I consulted his wife. Then I invited Domingo and his children to my house one evening to discuss the possibility. Ixcán Ministries would pay for his expenses including- travel, treatment, and help with the basic needs of his family while he was there. After prayer then much discussion with all; he miraculously accepted to go!

I and his wife accompanied him to Guatemala City. We met Father Stephen, who led us to the soup kitchen to speak with the men in charge of the program. After introductions and more orientation of the program, I left.

I knew something was happening in Domingo's life when his oldest son who lives in Guatemala City visited him a month later. He called his mother, "Dad has really changed. He asked me for forgiveness and cried for 15 minutes. Then the next thing I knew he was leading the men at the soup kitchen in prayer!"

Before leaving Guatemala for the U.S. in April, I visited Domingo. We went to the nearby church of the Missionary of Charity Fathers, sat on a pew, and talked for two hours. He seemed softened, clear and committed to finishing the program. Before leaving, he said, "Let's pray, Hermana." So, we knelt at the altar, my hand on his shoulder and prayed. A large banner of Mother Theresa hanging from a wall to the right, looked on.

I don't know what the future holds for Domingo. I know if he can stay sober with God's help, things will be much better for him and his family.



What I do know is, if we can help just one person get free from addiction, with God's help, we can do it for one more, and who knows what can happen from there. But, it starts with just one.

Thank you for your prayers and financial support of Ixcán Ministries. On behalf of Domingo, and of all those our ministry touches we extend a "Muchas Gracias" and may God bless you!

Sincerely,

Kathy Snider

Mission Update: Kathy returned to the U.S. in April and will be here doing reverse-mission activities throughout the summer.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Ixcán Ministries is a Christian lay mission serving as a ministry of presence with the Maya 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:
Ixcán Ministries
PO Box 51
Mandan, ND 58554

www.ixcanministries.org
ixcan_ministries@yahoo.com
Marlane Peterson, President
(701) 426-9276

Purchase Ixcán Creations products at:
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