

“I have learned in whatever situation I find myself, to be self-sufficient/content. I know how to live in humble circumstances, I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things I have learned the secret of being well-fed and going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need.

I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me.”

-Philippians 4: 11-13

Dear Friends,

I find myself with the rest of the world in an unsettled inner and outer place in light of the coronavirus pandemic. It seems life has changed overnight. We are confined in our homes where food and basic supplies (like toilet paper) that once overflowed shelves in grocery stores, are now empty. Church services are suspended, and restaurants and coffee shops are closed. Isolation has been normalized and we are being asked to live with less in many respects. This can be hard.

I was perusing through some stories I had written years ago about my life in Guatemala. I came across this one I called *Full Bowl*. It speaks to me now in a way I hadn't experienced before. I want to share it with you.

I arrived on a Sunday around noon to weaver Josefina Mendez Garcia's humble home to visit and share a meal. Her 4 year- old- son Yoel, and 1 ½-year-old daughter Maria, were with her; her husband Ruben and their eldest 11- year- old son were passing time in the village center.



After touring her simple wooden house we went to a separate small makeshift structure that was the kitchen. “This is what my house looked like before. Just like this.” She pointed to the walls of the room made from a hodgepodge of thick wooden poles and thin boards planted in the ground and held together by rope.

She invited me to sit at the rustic wooden table in the dirt-floor room while she built a fire on the top of an adjacent raised earthen platform. The flames ignited and she proceeded to pat soft cornflour into perfectly round tortillas she deftly formed and placed on the hot, round-shaped, metal grill called a *comal*. Then in a beat-up frying pan, she whipped eggs with oil and salt and cooked these over the fire.

The smell of the eggs stirred hunger, not just in me but I think in precocious Yoel sitting beside me, who chatted away unafraid. She proudly placed a white china glass bowl decorated with red flowers in front of me filled with steaming eggs. “Eat,” she said smiling.

Josefina then placed another glass bowl with scrambled eggs and tortillas in front of Yoel and returned to the stove to prepare more eggs. Then for reasons I didn't understand, the small boy whined, pounded his fists on the table in a tantrum.



My fork held in midair, I watched the drama. Josefina walked over to him, leaned across the opposite side of the table, made eye contact and said, “What's the matter, son?” He continued to complain, shook his head ‘NO’ and mumbled something I didn't understand. “The eggs are there. You don't need to whine,” Josefina reasoned. She raised her head, looked at me and said, “He's angry because the bowl isn't full. He wants more eggs.” The child refused to eat until his bowl was full. To keep the peace, Josefina complied and filled Yoel's bowl to full.

"It is hard when there isn't enough food. He doesn't understand that when there is a small amount of food we have to ration portions. My older son understands and accepts this without complaint. Yoel doesn't understand, so it is very hard when there isn't enough for everyone."

I watched this interesting child take a tortilla and break it into small pieces and lay each piece systematically alongside his china bowl. Then he took portions of egg and placed it on top of each tortilla piece. With a smile, he took each piece one by one and stuffed it into his mouth – savoring, chewing every bite. He was full.

Yoel's demand for a full bowl of food meant that someone in the family would go with less, and I can tell you, on that day, it wasn't me.

Yoel wasn't content with less. Am I?

In the reality of this pandemic, we are faced with having less. For me, I can go without toilet paper (my Guatemalan brothers and sisters use pages from newspapers or leaves!), but I ache for Mass and the Eucharist, and the personal, direct interaction with family and friends.

St. Paul said in his letter to the Philippians that he had *learned* the secret of being content in whatever circumstances he was faced with. He *learned* it, and God gave him the strength to do it.

There is much to learn here. Words like *solidarity, contemplation, gratitude, and trust* come now as invitations for deeper integration in my life.

Perhaps, less is more.

And the One who allows also promises to give the strength to go through it. The bowl might not be full, but it is enough.

My prayers are with you as we walk together in this season of Lent ever mindful of our brothers and sisters near and far who are suffering due to the coronavirus. May God strengthen and protect you and yours in this challenging time and carry us in hope to the new life of Easter resurrection!

Thank you for your prayers and financial support of Ixcán Ministries. We hold you and yours in our hearts and prayers. May God bless you.



Sincerely,

Kathy Snider

Mission Update: Kathy is presently in North Dakota near her family. Guatemala at this time is closed to travel. The people of Santiago Ixcán along with the rest of the world are under quarantine. We continue to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the Ixcán through our country on-site administrator, Javier Gonzales. Kathy is in regular contact with him by telephone.

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.

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