

Ixcán Ministries



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O Lord, Have pity on us, for you we wait. Is.33:2

Dear Friends,

Advent, the season of waiting and preparation invites us in winter darkness to *wait for birth*. This waiting and birthing takes many forms as the 'child who saves' continues to come not only at Christmas but in the ordinary and not so ordinary events of our lives. Here in mission, I remember such a time.

It was over a year and a half ago that I accompanied my friend, 36 year old Rosa, to the hospital six hours away in Coban. Weak, in pain and struggling to breathe she was diagnosed with pneumonia in addition to chronic asthma and hospitalized for two weeks. Upon release the doctor warned, "Don't have any more children. Another pregnancy could kill you."

Months later when her husband, Javier, informed me, "Rosa is pregnant," my heart sank. I knew Rosa's life was at risk. I knew the family was very poor and already struggling to provide for five children ages 18 to 4. I knew that Javier also suffered ongoing health issues. I knew that the hospital was two hours away and that women died in childbirth here. With these thoughts swirling in my head, I feigned a lighthearted "Congratulations!" And with them began the long, nine month wait.

Six months into Rosa's pregnancy we were jarred with startling news. "Perhaps she is wrong," I consoled. "Get a second opinion." Javier and Rosa looked at me wide-eyed with the midwife's disconcerting report. "She says there are two! It's twins! One is already pushing us to our limits. How will we be able to manage another?" Javier fretted. Then in the next breath he said, "Well, we are in God's hands. We will trust in God's will for us." "Know that I and Ixcán Ministries are here for you." I said. We continued to wait.



As the months went by Rosa's belly grew bigger and bigger. An ultrasound confirmed that she was carrying twins. The couple made the wise decision for Rosa to leave the village a month and half prior to her due date and live with a family member closer to the hospital in Playa Grande. We also learned that there was an OB-GYN in Playa Grande who became Rosa's doctor. Javier juggled his time between his family in Santiago and Rosa. We continued to wait.

When I learned that I had the opportunity to attend a retreat in Denver for returned missionaries with Franciscan Mission Service I felt torn. The retreat was right around Rosa's due date. I felt the need for community and support of other lay missionaries but wanted to be present when Rosa delivered and be assured that she and the babies were safe. After much prayer and consulting with Javier, I felt led to go. I booked the flight two weeks in advance of departure hoping that Rosa would go into labor before I left. Day by day went by with Rosa's condition the same. I agonized, hoped, and prayed that the babies would come before I left Guatemala. We continued to wait.

When it was time to leave for Antigua en route to the U.S. and Rosa still hadn't gone into labor I went to see her before leaving the Ixcán. Javier, Rosa and I shared and prayed. I tried to hide my sadness and fear when I kissed her cheek good-bye. "We'll be in touch. I'll let you know when she goes into labor," Javier assured.

I called Javier the two days I was in Antigua and the answer was the same. Still waiting. As I boarded the plane for Denver I thought of Rosa and the babies. If something happened now I knew that I could no longer return to the Ixcán. I fought to trust and not allow my mind to imagine the worst. If something happened to Rosa I would have a very hard time forgiving myself for leaving. Perhaps I had made a mistake?

Touching down in the Denver airport I was determined to contact Javier as soon as I arrived at the retreat center nestled in the Rocky Mountains. Once in my room I dialed. No reception! There

was no cell phone service in the mountains! Exasperated, I took a deep breath and finally let go.



Rosa with twins Rigoberto and Moises

The three days of retreat with former lay missionaries who had served with FMS from all over the world was life-giving and inspiring. As we hustled into vans for the hour and half drive to the airport I had my cell phone ready. I waited to check my voice mail when we stopped at a gas station for fuel and coffee. I walked to an isolated area of the parking lot and dialed. I held my breath as the long awaited message came in a weak but familiar voice, "Hermana Katy, this is Javier. Rosa is fine. Two boys." Little Rigoberto and Moises are

growing daily. They don't look at all alike and have distinct personalities. Rigo laughs and smiles a lot and Moi is more pensive. Both are healthy and active. Ixcan Ministries has provided baby formula to supplement Rosa's breast milk which wasn't enough to meet their needs. The entire family is involved in the care of the twins. What Rosa and Javier lack in material possessions and wealth is made up for in faith and love. The boys are thriving! The waiting is over. God's plan in these two little boys is among us. Joy to the world!



In this busy season of holiday celebration ... might we take some time for silence to reflect on what is being birthed in and through our lives? Thank you for your prayers and support of this ministry. On behalf of Javier and Rosa, Rigo and Moi, and the many whom we share life with here I extend a heartfelt, "Muchas Gracias and Dios les Bendiga!"

A most blessed Christmas and Joyous New Year!

May the Peace and Joy of Christ's birth be with you and yours,

Kathy



Typical toddlers, tired of the photo shoot Moises stretches out of his mother's arms as Rigoberto checks out the photographer.

A Song of the Word

*The message of Christ is the Christ Himself.
So, Father, may we become the heart and flesh of your Word,
To love, to heal to teach to console.*

*Send us as people of Good News
To proclaim the time of your favor;
A word that will touch and make whole.*

*Your Word finds an answering word
In the sick, in the poor, in the children;
The Word knows itself in its own.*

*Send us to be a healing from pain.
Or just to bear peace out of sorrow;
A birth that will free and give hope.*

Written by: Sr. Margaret Mary Whiteneck Used
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On behalf of Ixcan Ministries we wish you a Blessed Christmas and hope filled New Year.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Ixcan Ministries provides a prayerful, pastoral presence through lay missionaries living in solidarity with the poor of the remote Ixcan 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.

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