



You raise me up to new life; You dry my tears, and guide my feet on straight paths.

Psalm 116:8

Translation from Psalms for Praying

Dear Friends,

"It's the flowers and the river.... at 6:00a.m," said Sabina my neighbor in response to my question, "Is there a healing rite for sadness?" We were sitting at the table in her dirt floor kitchen. Her 65 year old mother, Rosa, listened attentively.

I've been living in Santiago Ixcán for 10 years now. Even so, I feel as though I've just touched the surface of the richness of the Mayan culture here. Recently, I renewed a commitment to learn and experience as much of the local culture as possible within the time constraints of my life and as opportunities arose. Doing so is consistent with a recent study I did along with the rest of church lay leaders in a Parish Assembly in Playa Grande. The focus was on spirituality of mission. It was noted, "We cannot think of spirituality of mission outside of the context of the world in which we live." Context was defined as the place and time, the culture of the people, and the group of persons (youth, elderly, adults, children) where the mission is realized along with the life experience of the missionary.

These past months I've experienced loss on various levels from the death of dear friends to the ending of a significant relationship resulting in my own personal journey of pain and grief. I intentionally chose to feel the pain rather than to stuff or deny it and made space and time for grieving and forgiving in solitude and with contemplative prayer. I also reached out to friends and felt led to open myself up to other ways that God might wish to help me in this healing process.



I had heard that there was a Mayan healing rite- prayer for “asusto” (fright caused by trauma resulting in emotional and/or physical illness) and was curious if there was a cure for sadness. So, I asked my nearby neighbor and friend, Dona Rosa, an experienced midwife and natural healer. “Oh yes, and it’s easier to cure than asusto,” she assured. “Could you do it with me?” I asked. “Yes,” she nodded and began to explain. The curación (cure) would require three separate visits at daybreak to the nearby river Jordan and we would need flowers of distinct colors. We set dates on the calendar and made our plan.

I am a big fan of flowers and we are blessed to live in a tropical jungle filled with exotic varieties of all sizes,



shapes and colors. At dusk, the evening before our prayer session, Dona Rosa carefully picked flowers of various colors- vibrant reds, yellows, purples, gold - with marigolds, roses, hibiscuses, and unnamed others. With these she created seven small bouquets of exquisite beauty which were placed in a small plastic basin with water and set overnight in a place conducive to receiving the morning dew also referred to here as the ‘water from heaven’. The next day at 6:00 a.m., in morning mist and golden light, with the plastic basin brimming with color, we walked the dirt path to the River Jordan.

“It’s important that we go to a place where the current is strong,” advised Rosa, as we entered the river ankle deep. The water, cool and refreshing, swirled at my feet and hinted of the promise of purification and change. We stood on the riverbed, multicolored stones where the water level was low but the current strong. Then we prayed. Dona Rosa is a very committed, evangelical Christian and her prayers for my healing were heartfelt and spontaneous acknowledging the Spirit of God in all of creation; the river, the air, the clouds, the flowers and always praying in the name of Jesus. Lastly, we prayed a blessing over the flowers and the water they were in. Then she said, “Close your eyes and do not open them until I tell you.”

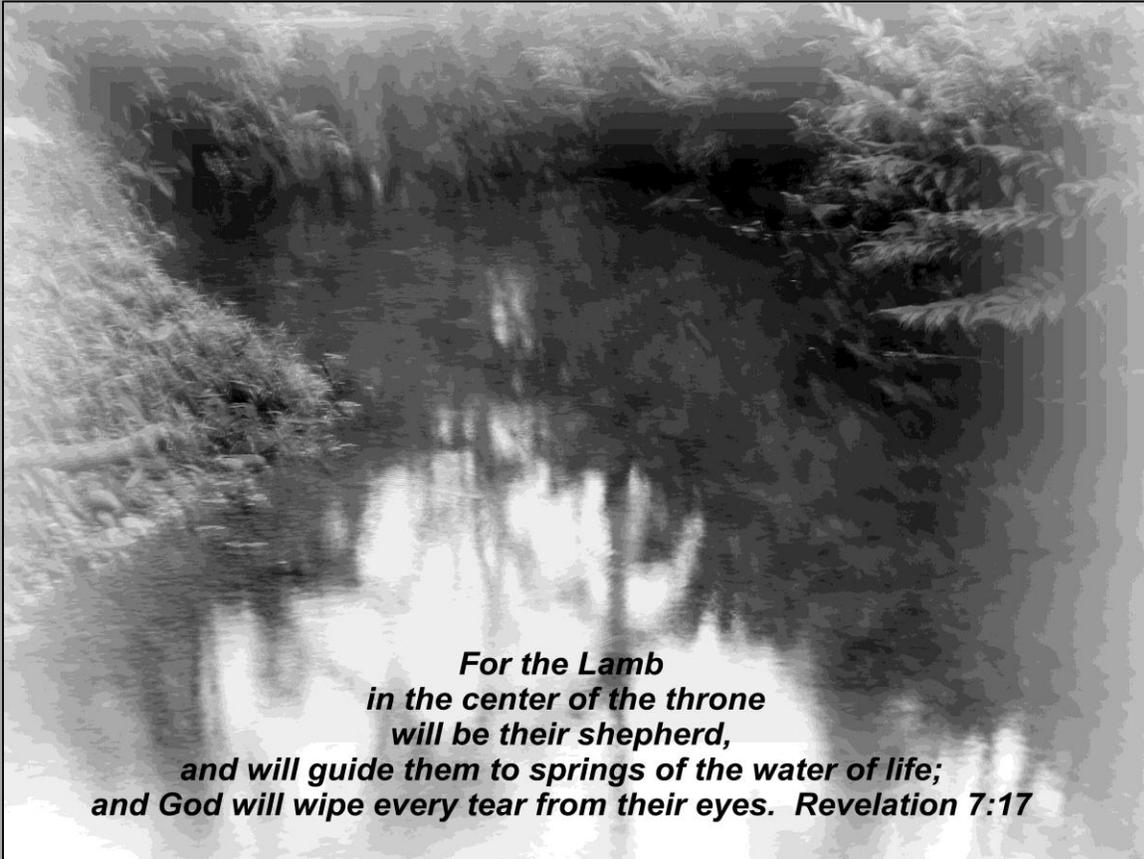
Praying continuously, she dipped one of the bouquets in the water of the basin and began to sweep it over the top of my head moving down methodically with the same sweeping motion over my body. She paid particular attention to my face brushing gently over my eyes, cheeks and lips. I smelled scents of wet marigolds and unnamed others... and basked in the gift of water, flowers and her prayers. After sweeping over my entire body, she said, “Mira, Ud. - “Look.” As I opened my eyes she threw the bouquet of flowers into the current of the river. The little bouquet of beauty now filled with my sorrow and pain was carried along the rivers’ current Away from my heart and soul. “Ya, se fue,” she said. “It left. It’s gone.” This process was repeated with each of the remaining bouquets.

Finally, all that remained was the water in the plastic basin with remnants of the flowers’ multi-colored petals. Rosa instructed me to wash my face with the water. As I cupped the holy water mixed with petals in my hands and splashed it on my face over and over again, I felt it washing away the sorrow, the resentment, the self-pity that comes with painful endings. With water dripping off my face, I looked up and smiled at Rosa. With her big, motherly smile mirroring mine, she took my hand, grabbed the empty plastic basin and we walked up the bank of the river toward the path home. I remembered the words of St. Benedict when he counseled in his rule, “**Always we begin again.**” At that moment I deeply believed it. Now, that is resurrection.

Note: In our Ixcán Ministries promotional literature it says, “We are a bridge promoting the generous exchange of gifts between cultures to transform lives...” This is just one of the many gifts I have received in my own journey of transformation as a lay missionary living with the people of Santiago Ixcán.

Thank you so much for your on-going support and may you experience the power of the Resurrection during this Easter Season!

Thanks! Blessings!
Kathy



Mission Update:

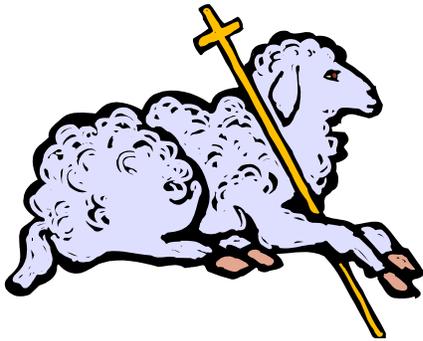
Kathy has been asked to work again with the instituto basico. She is working with the Junior High School committee in helping the newly elected leadership with their transition. This committee is also working in partnership with Familias de Esperanza (non-profit organization from Minnesota) to assess and define the needs of the school.

She continues to work with the scholarship committee and program. There are 19 young people at various levels of education receiving scholarships.

On this side of the "The Bridge", the Ixcan Marketing Committee continues its efforts to promote the sales of jewelry, rosaries, and weaving handcrafted by the Ixcan women, through Ixcan Creations. If you would be interested in hosting a Home Party to make these items available to your friends, colleagues, family or neighbors please call Rhonda Schafer at 701-776-2998 to schedule a party, or to answer any questions you may have regarding purchase of these unique, beautiful items.

We will also be selling the women's handcrafted goods during the Bismarck Diocese Centennial Celebration in June. See the "Save the Date" info in this newsletter. Please stop by and check it out! We look forward to seeing you!

SAVE THE DATE - On June 11, 12, and 13th at the Bismarck Diocese Centennial Celebration will be held at the Bismarck Civic Center. Ixcán Ministries will have a booth set up at the Exhibition Hall. Stop in for a visit! You will also have an opportunity to see and purchase some of the products the women have created.



WE ARE A NEW CREATION
WASHED CLEAN IN THE
BLOOD OF THE LAMB

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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