

Dear Friends,

We are nearing the end of Lent, the liturgical season in the Catholic church, that invites us to ongoing conversion and transformation of life. One of the Lenten practices given to help us on this journey (along with prayer and fasting) is almsgiving – giving to the poor and doing acts of charity.

In Santiago Ixcán and the surrounding area, I walk with many people whose lives are impacted by material poverty. In different ways we try to help alleviate this. I've often referred to Matthew 25: 35-40 as part of our ministries' job description. Jesus says, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to me." Then the just will ask Jesus, when did we do all this for you? And the King will say: "I assure you as often as you did it to one of the least of these little ones you did it to me."

I'm thinking now of 3-month-old Benjamin, one of the littlest ones, whom Ixcán Ministries has been helping since his birth. His mother Alicia, is Maya Q'qechi ethnicity, cannot read or write and at age thirteen, her father forced her to leave with the man whom she is with now. (He is 20 years older than her.) They came to Santiago Ixcán seven years ago, without land, seeking a way to support their lives. (He works for hire as a laborer). They are very poor.



Alicia lives down the road from me and often visits. One day she came concerned that she was sick because she hadn't had her period for some months. I said, "You might be pregnant. Go to the health post and get a pregnancy test." Her eyes filled with tears. "I can't have another baby right now. Not so soon. We can barely feed our children now." She is mother to thirteen-year-old Luis, four-year-old Lucrecia (aka Lukie), and two-year-old Victor.

She returned to me from the health post, her face visibly shaken, and said flatly, "I'm pregnant."

Seven months later, Alicia gave birth with the help of a midwife, to a healthy baby boy in her two room, dirt floor, tin roof home. When I met Benjamin shortly after birth I asked how he was. "He's fine but I don't have much breast milk," she said. I and the neighbors mobilized and bought her pinol, encaparina (ground corn and vitamin enhanced powder mix) to make hot drinks to help her milk drop and increase. Her milk finally came in, but she didn't have enough of it. So Benjamin cried... a lot... and especially at night. After I realized her milk wasn't going to be sufficient, Ixcán Ministries bought baby formula to supplement the milk that she did have. And the little guy is growing.

I have to admit I very rarely think of the people we help to be the person of Jesus. But he said that he comes to us in that very person who is vulnerable and needy. Mother Theresa said it succinctly, "Seeking the face of God in everything, everyone, all the time, and His hand in every happening; this is what it means to be contemplative in the heart of the world. It is seeing and adoring the presence of Jesus, especially in the lowly appearance of bread, and in the distressing disguise of the poor."

That requires eyes of faith.

As I wrote this yesterday, there was a knock at the door. It was Alicia. I had her come into the small room where I was writing and asked her permission to share this story. She gave it. I then asked to see little Benjamin who was tucked up snugly in a thin blanket wrapped on her back. She shifted him from her back to her lap and opened a corner of the blanket to reveal his face. "Hi Benjamin," I cooed. And then he opened his eyes and smiled. And in that moment I saw the face of the infant God of Bethlehem.

Thank you for your prayers and financial help that allows us to help the poor in the Ixcán, Guatemala. On their behalf I extend a heartfelt "Muchísimas Gracias y Qué Dios les bendiga." Many thanks and God bless you.

May your Lenten journey of faith lead you to a truly meaningful Easter Resurrection!

Sincerely,



Kathy Snider



## Mission Update:

Mission Update: Our mission outreach for the poor and educational programs are in place and going well. The country at this moment is stable with President Bernardo Arévalo in office. The weather in the Ixcán is heating up with temps varying in the 80s - 90s degree Fahrenheit. The corn crops are on track but the cardamom crops never recovered from the drought of last year.

### **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.

Our programs include- Scholarships, Community Library, Women's Micro-business, Medical, Housing, and Food Assistance, Spiritual and Pastoral Accompaniment, and Promotion of Peace and Justice.

Ixcán Ministries is a 501(c) 3 organization. Your contributions are tax deductible.

Contact us or send a donation to:  
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