IXCÁN Ministries

El Puente The Bridge

Bridging cultures for transformation and hope

November 2026

Dear Friends,

Part of our outreach ministry is providing people with corn, the main food staple here. Due to inclement weather, corn prices have gone up, making it even harder for those with limited resources and without land to feed a family. The women of our luchadora group are monthly recipients. In return for corn, they complete a service, which usually means washing clothes for someone who can't.

One person who 'can't' is Petronila, a mother of two, who suffers from crippling rheumatoid arthritis. In addition to having her clothes washed, she also receives a monthly 100-pound bag of corn to help her and her family. (No service required in her case.)

Giving corn and sending someone to wash clothes is helpful – but it can feel impersonal. That is why Javier, Carmen (IM staff) and I went to visit Petronila in her home.

We found her sitting in a wheelchair in the partial sunlight of her cement patio. It had been years since I had seen Petronila, but I have always been surprised by her beauty, even now that her delicate hands and feet were twisted by the ravages of arthritis. She lit up to see us. We visited at length and learned how her brother is paying for a medication prescribed by a rheumatologist in Coban, giving her relief following a month-long hospital stay, how her estranged husband, who lives in the U.S. and had abandoned her and their two children, was now paying for some of their living expenses, and how she previously had suffered, bed-ridden, in her mother-in-law's home for years… until now.



When the topic of conversation turned to faith, I sat awe-struck as Petronila shared her relationship with God. Her life has been a long road of suffering, and she told us about angry conversations with God, asking what she had done to deserve such pain. She also had a fear of dying, that is, until the words of St. Paul in Philippians 1:21 changed her life. She said, "Para mi el vivir es Cristo y el morir es ganancia." (To live is Christ and to die is gain.) That was all. "Death is gain. What is there to be afraid of?" Her faith did not diminish- but grew. And life shifted for her.

I looked at Javier. Our eyes met. Her words touched deeply. (And I am still reflecting on them.)

Before we left, Petronila began thanking me for what she was receiving from us – the corn, the women's service of washing her clothes. I felt like these were such small things, and it was a privilege for us to be in her life. That afternoon, she was our holy messenger whose faith had been refined like gold in the fire through all that she had suffered. I told her so.

"You are oro. You are the gold of God," I said.

Then I remembered one of my favorite stories… the story of St. Lawrence. "Do you know the story of St. Lawrence?" I asked. She said, "No," as did my companions. So, I recounted the story:

Lawrence served as one of the seven deacons of Rome under Pope Sixtus II during the reign of Roman Emperor Valerian. His job was managing the material goods of the church and distributing alms (charity money and goods) to the poor, widows, and orphans. In AD 258, Emperor Valerian issued an edict ordering the execution of Christian clergy and the confiscation of church property. Pope Sixtus II was arrested and

martyred on August 6, 258.

Before his own anticipated arrest, Lawrence quickly distributed all remaining church funds, gold, silver vessels, and resources to the poor and marginalized. When the Roman prefect (or magistrate) demanded that Lawrence hand over the "treasures of the Church", Lawrence asked for three days to gather them. Instead of gold or silver, Lawrence assembled the poor, the crippled, the blind, the widowed, the orphans, and the sick. On the third day, he brought them before the Roman authorities and declared: "These are the treasures of the Church." Enraged by the bold act, the prefect condemned Lawrence to a painful death.

We left that day from Petronila's home moved and enriched by her faith and what she had shared. "That was worth doing," is all Javier could say. I nodded, still unable to speak, as we made our way in the mud, stepping over twisted roots of trees along the path to the parked truck a few feet away. I won't forget that visit, nor Petronila's words – nor her gratitude.

I am reminded every time someone thanks me for what we give or do, I know that it is only possible because of God – and you our donors, our board of directors, and our staff on the ground of Ixcán Ministries.

Thank you for empowering us to help 'the treasures' of the church.

May God bless and keep you and yours.

Sincerely,



Kathy Snider

Mission Update:

Kathy returned to Guatemala in early August just in time to receive two visitors from North Dakota, Clarie and Ben. At the end of August, she participated with 70 other local 'missionaries' in a week-long parish mission that visited every Catholic family in the four villages surrounding the pastoral area of Santiago Ixcán. The Ixcán region has experienced much rainfall without the flooding happening in other parts of Guatemala, allowing the corn and cardamom crops to flourish. Our scholarship, library and outreach programs continue to help and empower the people of the area.

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.

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