



Dear Friends,

The season of cold, dark Lent has shifted to the warm spring of Easter and our solemn purples have turned to glorious whites and golds. The fifty days of celebrating Easter resurrection will end with the liturgical celebration of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit empowering the fear-struck disciples gathered in an upper room. Jesus had left but not without leaving them and us the Helper and Advocate.

We are helped in many ways, and one way I think is through education. Education potentially brings hope and empowerment that can break the cycle of poverty that so many experience living in underdeveloped countries. Years ago, this led us to develop a scholarship program. At present, Ixcán Ministries is providing scholarships to nineteen young people: five in junior high school, five in high school/technical, eight in university, and one in elementary school.

Recently, a Maya Q'eqchi woman appeared at my door asking for a 'scholarship.' I had met her during a pastoral visit in nearby San Antonio Tzeja with a group of Catholic women there.



She came on behalf of her 12-year-old daughter, Adriana, whom she described as 'special.' Adriana can't walk. "When she was born," her mother shared, "she almost died. Plus, her legs and feet were disfigured. I cried for three months! Three women came and counseled me to poison her and be free of the burden. I could not. I would not." Adriana did not die.

What makes Adriana 'special' in my mind is her resilience and fortitude. She wants to study but the school is approximately a mile away from her house. Her mother explained, "We don't have the money to pay for a tuk-tuk (the three-wheeled vehicles used for transportation in lieu of taxis) to pick her up and bring her home." So, Adriana decided to get there herself crawling on her hands and knees! "Sometimes her pants are torn and knees bloodied from the stones on the road, or muddied when it rains. Could you help pay for her transportation to and from school?"



I sat there, my mouth hung open. I found it hard to believe. There are many ways I have been led to help the materially poor, but this particular need I hadn't heard or seen before.

I walked outside and called a trusted woman friend in San Antonio and asked her if this was true. "Sí, hermana," she said. "Da pena." "Yes sister, it's sad."

I gave Adriana's mother the 'scholarship' for the tuk-tuk for one month and vowed I would go and meet Adriana soon to assess the situation in person.

The next month I did. I was moved by the child's beauty and resolve. Her face was gentle and kind. But she was determined. "I was bored!" she said. "I wanted to go to school with the rest of my brothers and sisters." She told me her teacher was happy with her work and showed me her notebook of in-class notes and assignments. "You have good penmanship," I praised.

"Her teacher told us her mind is good. And she has the capability to study," her mother proudly chimed.

I wish I could say to Adriana, "Rise take up your mat and walk..." but that is not what the Holy Spirit is doing in this case. God's action is not only in providing her a ride to and from her classes but more so in her spirit and determination to study regardless of the sacrifice. In this young girl I see the power of God in her determination to broaden her mind and life through reading and writing- even if she has to crawl to achieve it. But for now, she will be lifted up from the ground and driven to and from school in a little red tuk-tuk that could.



On a side note, it is humbling for me to be a 'bridge' between the U.S. and Guatemala like knowing Jan in North Dakota who grows flowers and plants every summer. She sells what is grown and generously donates the earnings to our scholarship program.

Thank you for your prayers and financial support of our mission's ministry in the Ixcán. We are deeply grateful as are the people who are helped.

May you have a safe and blessed summer!

Sincerely,

Kathy

Mission Update:

Mary Fristad, vice-president of Ixcán Ministries board of directors, and her husband met Kathy in Guatemala to make a pilgrimage to the village of Santiago Atitlán. There missionary Blessed Father Stanley Rother from Oklahoma was martyred in the early 1980s and beatified in 2018. It was an inspirational experience.

Vilia Morales, from Santiago Ixcán and mentioned in other newsletters, has been declared 'cancer free' after a long battle with breast cancer. Thank you to all who prayed and donated directly to defray her medical costs. She Is alive and well. Praise God!

Kathy will be back in the U.S. from May 8th to early August.

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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