

Faith In Practice

Life Changing Medical Mission

His Pain on Her Face



A Reflection on Good Friday Procession 2018 – Antigua, Guatemala.

I see his pain on her face. His sorrow in her eyes. The night is cool, the stars prick the black night. She stands holding a candle, the tears in her eyes reflect its flame. She is one of thousands who fill Antigua's Central Park. Thousands and yet there is hardly a sound. A cloud of aromatic incense precedes him, leading the way to his crucifixion. Incense to anoint his body. Incense to recognize the blessed sacrifice he is about to make.

And, then a woman from the stairs of the Cathedral begins to sing.

“Forgive your people, Lord. For the thorns that pierced you. For the three spikes nailing you to the cross, forgive us, Lord.”

One by one, the silent crowd joins her.

“For the three hours of your agony. For your deep and cruel gashes, forgive us. For the wounds on your feet and hands. Forgive us.”

Now the crowd quietly sings as one. Candles glow. “Lord, we know you have forgiven us so many times before. Please forgive us again. Forgive your people, Lord.”

Slowly, rhythmically, the large platform, carried by the faithful, passes before us. Jesus, carrying his cross. Looking down upon his people. The 500-year-old figure appears alive. The agony and compassion, the pain and the love, in his face. It is not wood and paint that looks down, but the One whose mysterious love forgave then, the mysterious love that forgives now.

This is not a tradition fulfilled. This is a conversation playing out before me. It is their vulnerability, their presence of heart, their honest acknowledgement, that breaks my heart open. That splits it wide open so that I, too, might meet him in his suffering, as they do. That I might glimpse that pain, that love, that sets me free. That is always there to set me free, if only I might look for him, look to him, with their eyes.

I see his pain on her face. His sorrow in her eyes. “Lord, we know you have forgiven us so many times before. Please forgive us again.” And lead us into new life.

As we enter into this holiest of days, this day when God shows us just how far God’s love will go to find us, to save us, may each of us approach the mystery as our brothers and sisters of Guatemala do. Vulnerable, with a presence of heart, and with honest acknowledgement. May we let him break our hearts open, so that he might, yet once again, set us free by and through his love that shall never, ever, let us go.

In deep gratitude to our Guatemalan brothers and sisters, who throughout the year witness to us the breadth and depth of his love in this mission. The love that stretches as wide as a cross. The love that leads us into newness of life.

May your Good Friday and Easter Sunday be blessed.

Rev. Linda L. McCarty
President & CEO



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