

# Faith In Practice

Life Changing Medical Mission



## Brokenness and Rejoicing

Martina's smooth and still brown hands lay folded upon her brilliantly colored and intricately patterned skirt. Her head is slightly bowed as she speaks. Her beautiful daughter Carla's tumor began growing 20 years ago, when she was just six years old. It continued to grow and grow until it now comprised nearly one-third of Carla's bodyweight.

Martina recounts the struggle. The soaring hope followed by crashing despair as time and time again, the answer was "Yes, we can remove this tumor," and then, "No, there is nothing that can be done." Or worse, when the promise was followed by silence. The waiting for word, day after day. The hope slowing, ebbing away even as the tumor continued to grow.

The last time was two years ago. Carla, then 24, vowed that she would never go through the testing, the promises, the broken promises, again.

Martina is now lost in her thoughts, lost in that time of despair. Then she turns to tell me that this was when she asked God, she begged God, for something else. In her face, I see the intimacy and agony, the trust and anguish. I see the depth of a lifetime of breaking down and of rejoicing. I see a bond with her God that has been forged through every soaring hope, every crashing moment of despair. I see a woman whose faith is intricately woven into her life in a way difficult for me to grasp. I dumbly watch in wonder. Her face takes my breath away.

Martina tells me that after this last disappointment, she begged her God for patience. Patience to calm the fear and despair. Patience to open a new way. This mother, who had spent the past eighteen years of her life fighting for her daughter, exhausting every option, using every meager resource, begged her God to bathe her longing in patience. She did not give up. She chose to trust differently. For the past two years, she had tried each day to trust differently.

And now, Martina patiently sits before me, waiting for just 24 hours longer. For in 24 hours, Carla would literally place her life into God's hands. For this surgery, which could give Carla a new life, could also take it from her.

Shortly after this visit with Martina, I read Father Richard Rohr's words,

**"We do not really know God except through our own broken and rejoicing humanity."**

Surely, Father Rohr meant that I could only know God through my own personal brokenness, my own personal rejoicing. But as I read his words, all I could see was Martina's face. Her face that allowed me to see what really knowing God looks like.

And, I was reminded yet again that I return to Guatemala, not because the people of God need me or us. I return to Guatemala for the moments when I might see the face of God in another. For the moments when they so generously and simply and vulnerably share with me their brokenness and their rejoicing. Those moments where, in their presence, I might allow God to reach my brokenness, create in me a deeper rejoicing, because they are beside me. Moments where I too might forge a bond with my God, a bond that strengthens with each soaring hope, every crashing moment of despair. Like they do.

When this pandemic began, I shared with you how I hoped, how I knew, that our Guatemalan brothers and sisters would lead us, teach us, by their example, by their faith, as they always have. Now as the Delta variant threatens, as we find ourselves slipping back into a time of fear, I am more certain than ever that they can and shall lead us forward. Lead us forward into a place of deeper prayer, greater patience, stronger trust, so that together we might know God more deeply through our own broken and rejoicing humanity. Theirs. Ours. We, together, encouraged by each other's faith.

Rev. Linda L. McCarty

President & CEO

*Dr. Sean Boutros and his team removed Carla's tumor through an eight-hour grueling and painstaking surgery. Many units of blood were on stand-by. Emergency plans were poised. None were needed.*

*We will be sharing more of Martina and Carla's story over the next few weeks and will highlight these extraordinary women at the Gala. As you can imagine, there is so much to tell, so much for which to give God thanks. Please keep them in your prayers as Carla's recovery continues.*



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