

Faith In Practice

Life Changing Medical Mission



Aminta

“The deepest impulse of religion is to move from obligation to something entirely more intuitive - - the telling of truth, the doing of truth, the living of a life...”

Padraig O’Tuama

I often turn to Padraig O’Tuama when I know I need to listen more deeply. And he never fails to open avenues through which I might hear God’s voice. It may come through a turn of phrase which reveals a longing in my heart I had not been able to name or through a reflection on a familiar scripture that becomes my own in a new way because of his insight. Or, in this case, in a gentle and bold statement that immediately evokes an image. So, when I read the words above, Aminta immediately jumped to mind. The way she told the truth, did the truth, lived her life intuitively, humbly, and without a thought of whether she was fulfilling an obligation or whether she would be praised for her actions. Aminta, simply and humbly embodying God’s love.

Aminta. After waiting for more than ten hours, the moment had finally arrived. Martina would hear the news of her daughter Carla’s surgery*. But, Martina would not approach the door to hear that news without calling Aminta to her side. Aminta rushed over, and Martina grabbed her hand. They both looked up into Dr. Sean Boutros’ face with hope and worry. Looking at them, you would have thought they were sisters. You would never have guessed that Martina and Aminta had only met ten days earlier.

From Jalapa, at least a seven-hour drive from where Martina and Carla live, Aminta, one of our Guatemalan volunteers, was staying at the Casa de Fe patient guesthouse with patients she had brought to Antigua for surgery. While at the Casa, Aminta had met Martina and Carla and simply enfolded them into her flock of patients. That meant that Aminta had prayed with Martina and Carla when they awaited the Boutros’ team arrival. That she had assisted Martina and Carla on triage day, managing the additional testing, the pre-operative shots, shepherding Martina and Carla from place to place. And she had waited with Martina hour after hour as the surgery, which they both knew could take Carla’s life, was taking place. So, when the time came for Dr. Boutros to share the news about the surgery, Martina needed Aminta at her side.

Aminta, who had no obligation or responsibility for Martina or Carla, who already had her hands full with her own patients. Aminta, who had no thought of acknowledgment or desire for praise, but rather who simply did what she always did. She showed up and loved. With her whole heart. Aminta, telling the truth, doing the truth, embodying God’s love.

Hesed. Knowing Aminta was from Jalapa, I had been surprised to see her on triage day attending to Martina and Carla with such tenderness and competence. Curious, as I saw how much they relied on her, trusted her. And as I watched Aminta through the surgery and the first few days of Carla’s recovery, I kept thinking of *Hesed*. This rich and elusive Hebrew word that defies translation, that tries to hold within it, embodied loving-kindness. Of course, I thought, this word defies translation be in Hebrew or English. It can only be known, understood, by seeing it lived out. Acts of kindness done without any expectation of return or acknowledgment. An act of love given freely, so much so that the one acting is unaware of the depth of meaning of his or her actions. Unaware of those watching. Just as Aminta was unaware that I was watching her. Unaware that in her I knew that I was witnessing God’s truth and love lived out before me.

I believe, religion is, at its best, when it creates space and community that encourages us to forget ourselves and simply, intuitively, allow God’s love to flow through us. Moments when we forget ourselves and simply act out of gratitude for God’s presence in our lives. To forget ourselves and in so doing, others, unbeknownst to us, see God’s truth and love in us.

I know I have many memories of the kindnesses others have done for me, and I have no doubt that they have no concept of what their acts of kindness have meant to me. How their acts of kindness have been woven into the story of my life. And, I know that I have memories of the many Amintas I have met in Guatemala who have enriched my life beyond measure as I have watched them from afar living out *hesed* before me.

I have no idea what kindnesses I may have accidentally done that somehow might have allowed another to glimpse God’s love through me. I do know, however, that any of them, such as they are, have been a direct result of those I have seen doing something similar. A community of faith that has experienced God’s grace in their lives. A community of faith such as Faith In Practice. A community for which I will be forever grateful. For through it, through you, I continue to witness God’s love in ways beyond anything I could ever have imagined.

So thank you. And, as you come to the end of this very long reflection, I encourage you to think of those through whom you have seen God at work, through their own acts of *hesed*. And I encourage you to say a little prayer of thanks to God for those souls through whom God’s love has flowed so unassumingly and beautifully. All to God’s honor, glory, and praise.

**Carla, 26, received her grueling surgery to remove a 30-pound tumor, requiring extensive skin grafting, on July 26 by the Dr. Sean Boutros team.*



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