

Faith In Practice

Life Changing Medical Mission



Intertwined

It was dark on Monday morning. The only sound in my silent living room was the rain drumming on my window with increasing impatience. Impatience that mirrored my own. I had been staring at a blank page for nearly an hour. Nothing was coming. I needed to write this devotional, and yet I felt devoid of any inspiration. I felt empty and tired. My prayer asking for a flicker of insight hung in the air. Then my phone pinged.

Floralma Quintanilla's name popped up on WhatsApp. She had attached a video. I tapped on the play arrow and Guatemala entered my silent room, my empty heart. I could hear Flori's voice clearest, but there were many, many other voices, warm prayers flowing into the cool still air.

Flori's voice strengthened. "Thank you, Lord, for you have allowed each person here to greet this new day. You have given each person life this day. We place into your hands each patient, Lord. You know their pain, their illnesses, their anxieties. Today, you will place your healing hand upon them. We place into your hands the doctors. We place into your hands this hospital that you are guiding. We place each person into your hands. You are a doing a work in each and every patient, each and every person, this day. We place them all into your hands. We give you all the praise."

As she panned the crowd with her phone, I could see them, those who were praying. Their hands raised, or heads bowed, I could see the emotion even behind their masks. Pure devotion abundantly overflowing into my wilderness, into 'my dry and weary land.' It was the first day of surgery at Hilario Galindo Hospital. I could see the other Guatemalan volunteers who had brought patients for the Askenasy team to serve, framed in my phone. I stared at the screen as I watched the answer to my prayer play out before me.

How many times did Flori use that phrase, 'We place into your hands'? As I listened, as I watched, I saw in my mind's eye Jesus on his cross, breathing out his last words. 'Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.'

This time, though, I was not steeped in the mystery of Holy Week, in the greater drama of the salvation story. Rather, I heard these words as Jesus teaching me yet again how to live each day. To place my life into God's hands so that God might work through me in some way. And, then to give thanks for the precious lives of those I know and love and place them into God's hands with gratitude and love too.

I had sat in the darkness of a stormy morning for an hour trying to force the Spirit to move within me so I could find a message for you, and then, God burst in with light and song to give me the message that I, myself, needed to hear. All in the little ping of a phone.

You have heard me say this many times, I know. And yet, I must say it again. I need the people of Guatemala in my life so that I might hear God's voice in a deeper way. I need their witness to remind me to receive the gift of my unique life in each unique day that God entrusts to my care and then offer that day to God in return. That certainly was the case this past Monday morning.

But, Flori's message reminded me of something else. Her message reminded me that when we show up to meet the Spirit, to listen for the Spirit, we never do so alone. I had felt alone staring at the blank page, but that was not true. I was not alone. We are never alone when we come to a place of prayer, even though we might feel that we are.

In the video, as I listened, all of a sudden, I heard Flori praying for me. Specifically for me. At the exact moment I was struggling to connect to the Spirit, as the rain pounded on the window, Flori was praying for me on a sunny morning at Hilario Galindo Hospital, thousands of miles away, among a host of others who were praying too.

I will never forget a sermon I heard years ago. The pastor said that there are times when you simply do not have it in you to pray. In those moments, he said, you should allow others—rest in the knowledge that others—will be praying on your behalf. And then there will be times when you will have the chance to pray for them, lift them up, when they falter and cannot pray. When they feel alone and unable to connect to the Spirit.

So, this day, as you open this devotional, my hope and prayer for you is that, in some fashion, God is mysteriously using this message as an answered prayer for you, just as Flori's video was somehow an answered prayer for me when I needed it most. And, I hope you know that as I wrote this devotional that I was saying a prayer for you.

It is also my hope and prayer that this day you might offer a prayer for those in your life. That you might place them into God's hands, so that they might feel God's presence in a way that they uniquely need to feel at that very moment.

Into your hands we place our lives, O God. All of us together, connected and enlivened by the mystery and reach of your love that intertwines our hearts. Now and always.

Amen and Amen.

Rev. Linda L. McCarty

President & CEO



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