

Faith In Practice

Life Changing Medical Mission



Reflected in Their Eyes

Good Friday. Parque Central was a sea of humanity. People draped in the trees and on the fountain. I could not see where the park ended and the cobblestone street began for the crush of people. The white-hot sun blazed down upon them. Upon their silence. A crush of people but I could not hear a sound on this Good Friday in Antigua Guatemala.

On the Cathedral plaza stood his cross. The cross upon which he hung. All eyes were fixed upon it, and him. It did not matter that he was represented by an image carved in the 1500s, because when looking in their eyes, I could see that they were gazing up at him. He was there. I could see him reflected in their eyes.

The attendants were all in black on that brilliantly hot day, a contrast to the bright-white Cathedral. They waited patiently, their black-gloved hands folded and still before them as the Last Seven Words were read, each recitation followed by a prolonged silence. After the final silence, a solemn voice asked us to touch one another's shoulder, or arm, or hold a hand, so that together we might recite the Lord's Prayer. I saw heads on shoulders, embraces among the crowd, hands clasped. I watched as the crowd quietly became one. As he hung on his cross, their voices, long silent during his passion, prayed his words to him as if in offering. Our Father....

Slowly and lovingly, the attendants then removed him from his cross. Carrying him gently, darkness descended upon them as they left the shining day and disappeared into the dark and gaping mouth of the Cathedral door. The door that somehow was transformed into the entrance of a tomb. His tomb.

The crowd then began to sing. It started somewhere in the distance, but then the song began to swell and soon they were all singing, "Lord, Come to the Lakeshore". This sea of people singing their commitment to follow him wherever he might lead in gratitude for the love they had just witnessed.

I sat on the steps of the Cathedral transfixed. It was as if I had witnessed his death. And, then I was witnessing the promise of his rising in their voices. Their voices were bathed in sadness, but also with the hope of his rising and their promise to rise with him in order to serve him with love.

Why Guatemala. For years, I have been asked Why Guatemala. For years, I have failed to capture it. The answer, however, has never been, nor will it ever be, to provide medical care to those in need. For me, the answer has always been from the first time I laid eyes on this beautiful and tragic land, that it is here, through her people, that I hear God's voice, I see Jesus's face, most clearly. I believe, that is so, because, for my brothers and sisters of Guatemala, Jesus is living and breathing among them each and every day. It was Jesus on his cross that they saw that day, and because they saw him, so could I.

So, as we enter these last two weeks of Lent, I am sharing with you the Lord's Prayer as prayed in Central America. In these words, I believe, that you will see what I mean. There is nothing routine or rote in this Lord's Prayer. Rather is it living and breathing. When I read this Lord's Prayer today, it took me immediately to that Good Friday many years ago, when I sat on the steps of the Cathedral. The day I watched them breathe into his words and then promise to live into them through their song. My hope is that you might breathe in this living prayer as you continue your Lenten journey to the foot of his cross. And, that you might, as they did all those years ago, turn from the tomb and sing.

"O Lord, with your eyes you have searched me, and while smiling have spoken my name;
now my boat's left on the shoreline behind me; by your side, I will seek other seas."
- *Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore*

Central American Lord's Prayer (Bread of Tomorrow)

Our Lord, who is in us here on earth, holy is your name in the hungry who share their bread and their song. Your Kingdom come, which is in a generous land that flows with milk and honey. Let us do your will, standing up when all are sitting down, and raising our voice when all are silent. You are giving us our daily bread	in the song of the bird and the miracle of the corn. Forgive us for keeping silent in the face of injustice, and for burying our dreams, for not sharing bread and wine, love and the land, among us, now. Don't let us fall into the temptation of shutting the door through fear; of resigning ourselves to hunger and injustice;	of taking up the same arms as the enemy. But deliver us from evil. Give us the perseverance and the solidarity to look for love, even if the path has not yet been trodden, even if we fall; so we shall have known your kingdom which is being built forever and ever. Amen
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May you, as you read his prayer and sing his song, hear his voice, see his face, as I did. As I do, through the eyes of our beloved Guatemala.

May your Lent and Easter be filled with his presence and his love.

Rev. Linda L. McCarty
President & CEO



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