

Guatemala at a Glance

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One of our friends said “Can you write something lighter for April? You know, some Easter news.” It’s a good reminder that life offers us both, good and sad. So let’s see what we can do. (Sad?) April is the hottest, steamiest month in Guatemala. (Good) Our garden continues to grow. And so do the connections.

First with a retreat day which joined our two projects (43 of us participated) as we listened, shared and were inspired anew by the reflections of Fr. Marco Tulio Recinos, CPPS, who reminded us that “*a dream that is dreamed **collectively**, becomes reality...and all projects are measured by the life that is promoted.*” The spirituality of the Blood of Christ is at heart a spirituality in favor of life. Jesus was the one who placed himself at the service of life, that all would have that and have it abundantly. In this reality, that is so called for.

(Good) Secondly, friends and committed persons from Ohio came for a week of surgeries and sharing. This is always a high point for us... (less good) the house is FULL, very, very full: 18 people moving in and out -- surgeons, nurses, anestheologists, operating room techs and the occasional village visitors. Remember when convents were almost cloistered? (Also very good) A number of Guatemalan women from the wealthier areas have become friends of our projects, and they brought a ton of food for the visitors. They are seeing the reality of their own people in a new way. How exciting!

(Very bad) Statistics were published concerning violent crimes by areas of the city. There are 25 “neighborhoods” or zones. Our zone leads the list with 64 violent crimes since January. Second place only has 30. Truly, the Blood of Christ continues to be shed, and for that to be redeeming, we need to be and speak hope and reconciliation.

(Very good) How blessed we are to know the support of our ASC region as we walk with the Guatemalan people.

We speak of contrasts in our mission statement. We were reminded of that both humorously and sadly. Processions are a great part of Holy Week celebrations in Guatemala. In the villages, colored sawdust carpets are prepared; people walk through the town singing and praying, all the while carrying huge platforms which hold the Christ carrying his cross. In the wealthier zones, this statue of Jesus is tied down to the top of one’s flower decorated SUV and driven around. At the Good Friday celebration, all come forward to kiss the feet of Jesus on the cross. I was behind one of the poorest men in the village who after leaning down to kiss the cross, left a donation of 5 Quetzales (about 75 cents US). This from a man who is out of work and whose shoes were soled with rubber treads from old tires. I arrived with empty hands and could only pray that his witness would inspire a much greater generosity from me. And may it be so for each of us.

Praying that the good news in your lives is shared and celebrated. *Kris and Dani*