

Postscript

TODAY THE PEOPLE OF GUATEMALA, ESPECIALLY THE indigenous people, continue to live in horrendous violence amidst excessive structural and social inequalities between those who live in luxury and with power and those who are excluded. The drug trade, youth gangs, relentless intimidation and life-threats, extra-judicial executions, and escalating organized crime have penetrated deep into the public institutions including many facets of government: the judiciary, the army, and the police.

Yet, in spite of such insecurity, Felipe and Elena have chosen to return in mission to live among their people in Guatemala. And this year they have been joined by their son, Julio.

The book of Genesis reflects that from the beginning humanity began to suffer the risks and pain of childbirth and the onerous struggle for daily sustenance in tilling the soil. Elena and Felipe have helped to open a mid-wife center in the region where they live in Guatemala in order to assist mid-wives and expectant mothers to healthfully give birth and care for their children. As well, through their gardening experiences over the years, they have introduced new vegetables to the people's diet; and they have offered alternative farming techniques that yield abundant produce by the use of organic compost in place of the imported commercial chemical fertilizers promoted by big agri-business. These imported fertilizers initially yield positive results for the people's crops, but eventually deplete the soil and require on-going investment for further chemical intervention.

Elena and Felipe continue to work tirelessly for human rights and to raise to full consciousness the dignity and self-worth of the people through the recovery of their ancestral cultural and spiritual heritage.

Their daughters: Sonia, Alicia, Juanita, and Maya have each set out to develop their own careers. Juanita now works for the legal and human rights of indigenous peoples; Sonia and Alicia are engaged in social services among immigrant communities in the United States, especially those coming from Guatemala, Central America, and Haiti; and Maya flourishes in the computer arts.

Thomas Merton's poem at the beginning of this bulletin proclaims: "a destitute wanderer with dusty feet, finds his [her] way down a new road." These wanderers, this refugee family, have brought us hope and delight. The beauty of their persons, and that of their indigenous people, continues to gift our lives. Through them we have unearthed the call of God: "I have heard the cries of my people (Exodus 3); ... I have called my children out of exile(Hosea 11)."

In Jesus, God has crossed the borders to embrace our humanity. Jesus has shown us the face of God. In discipleship we are called to

cross the difficult walls of our hearts and to reconcile ourselves in our relations with the other, especially with the stranger and the alien. They are our neighbor in need. They may come “without papers, without identification,” but we must see in this unexpected new neighbor a mirror of ourselves, the image of Jesus standing at the door knocking, the call to risk human solidarity. Through a heartfelt response we can discover the gift of new life awaiting us in our world today. This is truly Eucharist! This is God-with-us, Emmanuel. And for this gift we shall always be grateful. ■