

Mission Focus



Issue 12
Summer
August 2016

Serving in Mexico



At the end of each season as I sit to share some of what I experienced and witnessed God doing, I am always overwhelmed. There is so much to share and only a little space to do so, especially if I hope to keep the attention of the reader.

At the end of this summer I became very sick and found out that I had typhoid. And though the worst has passed, I continue to struggle with low energy and difficulty concentrating. The good news is that each day I get better and this hardship has drawn me so much closer to our Lord. For this I am deeply grateful.

On the following pages I will share just a little splash of the joys and sorrows shared this summer. We had 8 teams join us from different areas of the US. We went to some new places and engaged in some new types of ministries as well.

*Playtime fun
during VBS*



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Camp Vergel children.



Camp Vergel

Camp Vergel is the main migrant camp left in the Valley of San Quintín where Los Pinos is the largest producer of cucumbers and tomatoes in Mexico. Indigenous people are brought up from southern Mexico by bus to work in the fields. Most of them are moved into Vergel. There are over 2000 people there from many different people groups and more than 100 dialects spoken. These families live in long buildings split into 15 x 15 foot spaces. Their one-room dwellings contain bunk beds and a burner for cooking food with a propane tank outside each unit. The restrooms and clothes washing areas are spaced throughout the camp. All clothes are washed by hand and hung out to dry in the community area.

The workers' days consist of rising at 4am and preparing lunch for the day. Then they drop the youngest kids at the camp daycare and go out to wait for the bus to take them to the field they will work in. Upon returning to camp 8-12 hours later, they pick up their kids, go to their dwellings, then go to the wash area to hand-wash the family clothes and hang them to dry. They then take bucket showers and prepare dinner.

The elementary age kids go to school or are left at home to fend for themselves. These parents love their kids but have little time to spend with them. That is where we come in by taking teams to go play and love on the kids (among many other ministries we provide) to help fill the deprivations that this hard life creates. These indigenous people descend from tribes that were contemporaries of the ancient Mayan and Aztec cultures, which were conquered by the Spaniards. These days their spiritual beliefs are a mixture of Catholicism and witchcraft, so they don't yet know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

We have special permission to enter this camp. There is a common area where we hold our VBS, do health fairs, and show Jesus films. We can and do take pictures in this area. And we are allowed to go into the living area to give invitations to what we have come to offer, but we have agreed to never use our cameras in the area where the workers live. This is where the heartache and hard life can be seen. I want to share with you a couple of my journal entries to help give you a picture of what I see.

The fact that we have been given permission to enter this camp feels like holy permission. And when I am there, I am on holy ground through Jesus' invitation to come spend time with Him and His beloved ones.



Camp Vergel June 20

As I led a team through some of the living area of the people at camp to invite families to come and watch the film we were going to show, I was overcome with emotion. There are so many kids there. I felt like I could see some of their horrific stories written on their little faces. One little girl had bruises on her face that looked like an adult hand. I saw several drunk men and in one dwelling the drunk man was there with several little girls.

Later as we were in the common area (a park) playing with the kids, I invited a young child to come play duck, duck, goose with us. She was soaking wet and very cold, so two of us sat with her sandwiched between us to warm her up. This little 2-3 year old never spoke but continued to look long into my face. I could feel the love of Jesus flowing out of me. Before the movie began, her mom showed up angry and I saw the little girl's eyes change from expressing the joy of receiving love to eyes of deep sadness. After scolding her daughter for having wet clothes, the mom grabbed her by the arm and dragged her away. We asked the mom if she could come back to watch the film, but she didn't come back.

Then I went and joined 7 kids sitting on a bench together playing a game. I watched and laughed with them. Later I realized that these kids were not a family but seemed to have formed a pack of their own for love and protection. This is the first time that I had seen kids that were not family stick together in this way.

Camp Vergel July 11

Tonight I led a small team through the back part of Camp Vergel to invite families and kids to come into the common park area to watch a film. Most of the people living towards the back of the camp were indigenous coming for the first time to San Quintín to work. Many children and mothers were dressed in traditional dress and most did not even speak Spanish. Even among the children, I could hear indigenous dialects being spoken. They are very shy and even a bit frightened of us white people. Once again I am so aware of how blessed I am to be given permission to be among these people as Jesus radiates his love and light through us, his common vessels. This is holy ground!

My heart cries out loud for each heart I encounter! Thank you for partnering with me allowing me to be here with these beautiful people. Though many practice a mixed religion of witchcraft and Catholicism, I continue to hold out hope for their encountering Jesus.



*All cement
was mixed by
hand.*



*Our Youth
Center roof
going up*



*Trusses
being
painted*



Work Projects

I can hardly publish this newsletter without at least mentioning some of the summer work projects. We helped a new church by pouring a cement floor over their dirt floor and painting the outside of their church. We also poured a cement sports court for the youth in our village, and we almost completed putting up the roof on our new youth center. All the trusses were built by hand by the summer teams.

Buen Samaritano Senior Community

We went to Buen Samaritano today. This home cares for 25 elderly men and women, all abandoned by their families. The enemy uses this to inflict a deep loss of dignity, as their culture values caring for aging family members in their own homes. Upon our arrival, one of the residents, Carmelita, told me that each time we come they get treated like kings and queens. I told her that is because they are kings and queens.

As we were departing, I went to say my goodbyes. Many of the residents were sitting in a half circle. I saw them in my mind's eye raised up at the feet of Jesus, all dressed in their royal robes. I could not help but bow before them, acknowledging them again as kings and queens. It was a holy moment!

Next week we will return to wash their feet and pray for each one!

A holy kiss from a queen.



Worshipping with the residents



One of the residents prays for Pastor Russ.

Praise & Prayer - I received a donation specifically for purchasing a vehicle. I was hoping to find a 2008 Ford Escape (Compact SUV) with low mileage, but have broadened my search to include a Toyota Corolla between \$7,000 and \$9,000.

I would appreciate your prayers for the car hunt.

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Ps 46:10 Be still
and know
that I am God.

Bringing hope and healing
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