



# Reflections from Honduras

## Keeping You In Touch

Fellow Man International

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### Special Points of Interest

- FMI Intensifies Farming Efforts to Provide Food for the Hungry and Income for the Project
- A Day in the Life of the Clinic Provides a Unique View of the Difficulties Faced by FMI Medical Staff
- A Story by Lisa - A New Lesson About God's Love

## Food for Thought and . . . the Hungry



This child was so weak by the time his mother sought me out at the mission's new agriculture project, he couldn't even hold his head upright. The child was lifeless and his

frail body flopped around like a rag doll in his mother's arms. When children are close to death you can see it in their eyes. This little boy's eyes were dark and dull. It was almost as if the life was being sucked out of him. His mother's eyes were filled with tears as she told me about the constant diarrhea, vomiting and fevers. But the child's condition was more than just a serious case of dysentery. This child was also severely malnourished.

After a considerable amount of questioning always being careful not to offend this little boy's mother the truth finally was made known. The family was trying to survive on \$22.00 a week. Not only was the family's water source contaminated, but there simply wasn't enough money to buy even the basics of beans, rice and tortillas.

What a terrible sight to behold while standing in the middle of the new farming project where soon there would be an abundance of food.

And it was then that I realized there is a horrible decision that must be made when it comes to the problem of poverty and especially hunger. It's a gut-wrenching decision most Hondurans know all too well. Do you calm your hunger pangs now by expending the last of your resources or do you plant for tomorrow and maybe watch you children suffer and even die while you wait for the harvest? Many mothers have sold their valuable hens to buy corn for tortillas sacrificing their only source of protein the family may have. Once the hen is sold and the tortillas are eaten, there is nothing left.

This newsletter is about the decision to opt for a better and more prosperous future. Do we dare ignore today's sufferings in the hope of finding self-sufficiency for the future? If we ever want to put an end to this little boy's tragic story, I believe the only answer is yes! If love hopes all things, then let hope reign.





It's an exciting time in the life of the FMI agriculture project. Earlier this year, arrangements were made with the Alfonso Vilella family to rent their entire ranch located just outside of Pinalejo. The ranch called "The Jewel" is more than 80 acres of arable lands. It also has pastures, a river as well as facilities for cattle. Some of you will remember that Alfonso was the gentleman who had a large brain tumor last summer. He allowed the mission to use his land last year and the corn harvest was plentiful. This year however, we wanted for the arrangement to be more formal. Alfonso and his family were delighted to see their ranch return to working order.

**Preparing the Soils**—Preparing the soils at the ranch was a tedious process involving hundreds of hours of labor. Many of the fields were overgrown with weeds, forbs and even some small trees. For several weeks, there were more than twenty field workers laboring away under the hot tropical sun. Every weed, rock and stump was removed to make way for tilling. By the time the tractor began to till the field, more than thirty acres had been cleared for cultivation.

**Planting the Corn**—Because last year's planting of corn was so successful, we decided to start with what works. Roundup Ready Pioneer Hybrid corn was purchased from a DuPont distributor in San Pedro Sula. This year our goal was to plant more than 13 hectares of land, almost three times as much as last year. The DuPont distributor (DuWest) has a very knowledgeable sales staff and also employs professional agronomists to help their clients achieve their goals. Along with the hybrid corn, we were able to purchase herbicides, pesticides, fertilizer and foliates. The

agronomist who worked with us genuinely seemed interested in our success, especially when he learned part of the harvest would go to feed school children and the hungry.

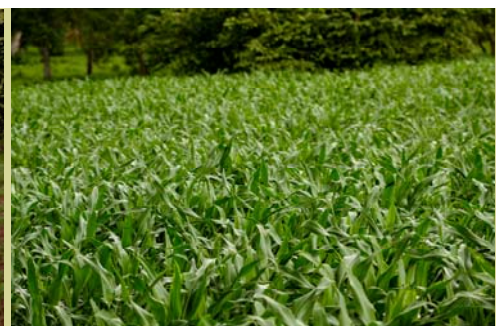
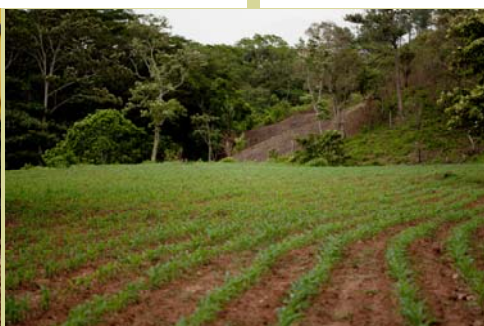
Finally it was planting day. We used a two row planter and seeded the corn in with a pop-up fertilizer specially formulated for our type of tropical soil. It took several days to plant all of the land. The seeds were pre-treated with an insecticide that would protect them from insect damage in the event that it did not rain immediately as anticipated. Thankfully, it wasn't more than 48 hours when the first rains fell on our freshly planted fields.

**Watching the Crops Grow**—Within a week's time, the corn had germinated. It seemed as though to all of us who were watching the fields, that the corn was taller in the morning than it had been the night before. As the weeks pass by, the corn has become taller and taller. Because this hybrid corn is resistant to local insects, the plants are dark green and have no signs of pests. We sprayed for a particular fungus that attacks corn in Honduras. Soon it will be time for what is called a reinforcement fertilizer application that includes all of the micronutrients the soil can not provide. Any day now we are expecting the corn to tassel. As the corn grows taller and basic grain prices in Honduras continue to rise, these fields represent a great deal of hope to the local people. These green fields also represent much hope for the Fellow Man project. Even if the yields are half of what this hybrid is known for, there should be a goodly amount of profit that can be used to help run the Fellow Man Clinic. How exhilarating it will be to tell all of our wonderful supporters that we too are helping to make this mission work. More to come as the fields mature and the project develops!

"I think the best way of doing good to the poor, is not making them easy in poverty, but leading or driving them out of it."

*Benjamin Franklin*

*On the Price of Corn and Management of the Poor, November 29, 1766*





# Clinic Days

A Day in the Life of the FMI Clinic

Have you ever wondered what a day at the FMI clinic might be like? Take a step inside our world to see what love in action can do for those in need!

Have you ever wondered what a day at the Fellow Man clinic might be like? Nearly every day a large number of patients from many different places throughout these mountains come to the clinic in the hope of finding the treatment they need. Lately though our patient numbers have increased along with the demand for services.

This is a busy time of the year for the clinic. As the rainy season begins, many water borne illnesses bring some of the youngest patients to the clinic. On the day the above photos were taken, we had three different children under the age of three receiving IV therapy for severe dehydration due to vomiting and diarrhea. Finding veins in these small patients, especially when they are dehydrated can pose quite a challenge. Most of these cases remain in the clinic's emergency area while they receive rehydration therapy along with other medications to stop the vomiting and diarrhea. If we are unable to stop the severe loss of fluid in our most vulnerable patients, we usually have to ship the patients and their parents to the public hospital in San Pedro Sula.

Another highly sought after service at the clinic is by women who have leg ulcers because of circulation problems. We seem to be the only clinic anywhere that uses special wound care techniques which usually result in healing. Some women come from as far away as the city of San Pedro Sula seeking help with their leg ulcers. Many women have suffered with these ulcers for years and have spent large amounts of money in search of a cure. Thanks to some special bandages that help to keep the wounds moist, most ulcers can be healed. As one woman was healed of a wound that had lasted more than ten years, little by little word spread of a small clinic in the mountains where effective treatment could be found. Dr. Marvin Pineda never ceases to be amazed at the distance some of our wound patients have traveled hoping for their own version of a miracle.

Unfortunately, another problem that must be dealt with is that of patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The wood-burning stoves the women use for cooking do just as much damage as smoking if not more to the lungs. As the temperature fluctuates and cold and flu seasons comes upon us, the treatment area is frequently filled with people who need albuterol breathing treatments to help them breath. This year, we have already experienced an unusual amount of pneumonia in very young children. Asthma is also a huge problem in this area. Often times patients from the more remote parts of our service area find their way to the clinic's door air hungry and desperate to breathe. Our nurses have been kept busy providing breathing treatments for patients in need. Incidentally, many patients may require several breathing treatments in one day. They may also need breathing treatments for several days in a row before other medications begin to resolve any of a number of respiratory ailments.

Finally, we are most pleased to report a very large increase in the number of patients who are seeking dental care at the FMI clinic. Dr. Vicki Rivera, the clinic's dentist has created a lot of enthusiasm for better oral health. Every morning Dr. Vicki's appointment schedule is filled. Patients have expressed great appreciation for the dentist who "really loves teeth". In addition to seeing 8 to 10 patients a day, Dr. Vicki also sees all pregnant women who come for prenatal visits and examines every child who is diagnosed with malnutrition. Every Thursday of the week, Dr. Rivera packs up the portable dentist chair and fluoride to visit a local grade school located in the mission's service area. She is quite good at generating excitement among the schoolchildren. Dr. Marvin Pineda, the mission's physician feels that one of the reasons the clinic is seeing more medical patients is because patients are drawn to the dental clinic. Truly it's miraculous to see all of the work being done in this one building for the benefit of all God's children.

# What to Do When It's Not About You



My heart sank into an abyss of despair as my daughter's birthmother made her way to our home in labor. She was crying and grabbing her abdomen and back because the pain was intense. For

several months I had suspected she was pregnant, but honestly never imagined she would seek me out when it was time to deliver.

I invited Maria Lucas into my home, making her comfortable in my bed so that I could determine how close she was to delivery. She was very close so there was nothing left to do but see the rest of the process through to its conclusion. Marie cried out, "can't you just cut me open, I can't take the pain anymore." As hard I might, I knew in my heart I couldn't fully comprehend the depth of her pain. She had already given birth to five children all of whom had been given up for adoption. Suddenly this miracle of birth seemed more like a curse as I contemplated the future of the child she carried within.

And then it hit me. Was she here because she was planning on leaving her infant with me perhaps imagining that I would raise my daughter Jessica with what was soon to be her newborn sibling? Suddenly the situation became intensely personal. I was jerked into another reality as I thought about what I would do should this woman ask me to take another child. As Maria screamed out in pain, I too wanted to scream. I was terrified that she would ask me to take her child. And, given the terrible state of malnutrition my daughter Jessica had suffered prior to finding my arms, I was also terrified that she wouldn't want to leave the baby with me.

Thankfully, there were things to do which also occupied my troubled mind. Maria Lucas has no place to live and frequently moves from place to place with her common law husband. She had been sleeping on the ground and was terribly dirty. There was just enough time for a shower perhaps so I asked her to step into the bathroom so that I could bathe her. A warm shower was foreign to her I was sure, but I hoped it would help with some of the pain and at least bring a touch of comfort to her. My mind was racing between how this would affect me and my family and how to best take care of this laboring woman. Then suddenly I was overcome with a very strange realization. As I washed the soap over Maria's naked body I could see she was built exactly like my daughter. Every curve of her was a likeness of

Jessica. It was an eerie feeling to wash her and feel almost as if I was washing my own child. As I ran my fingers through her hair working conditioner into every inch of her mistreated locks, I recognized the texture. I was caring for the person who had blessed me with a child to call my own. The familiarity of this woman who has left her imprint in my daughter suddenly made her family. And I realized, "Lisa, this is not about you". It was like I could hear the voice of God challenging me to look at this person through His loving eyes. Yes, the decision she would make when the baby was delivered would have consequences for me and my family, but her suffering, her pain and her desperate need for love at that moment made me realize I was being asked to place my egocentric interests aside in favor of loving my neighbor.

Soon it was time for the baby to be delivered. Maria Lucas cried out during the pains. My daughter had a friend over that day who was familiar with the birthing process. Even behind the closed door I heard a humorous conversation ensue between the two five-year-olds. Jessica asked, "why do you think Maria Lucas is crying?". Clarissa, her friend answered, "that's what all ladies do who are having a baby." "First they cry, then they scream, then they push and then the baby cries." Thank goodness for the innocence of little children!

Shortly thereafter, a healthy seven pound baby boy was born. He was beautiful in every way and looked very much like his big sister. I handed the baby to Maria Lucas. She immediately began to breastfeed her newborn. It was then that I knew in my heart Maria Lucas wanted to be a mother just as much as I did. How to help her was going to be a challenge, but it was something I was willing to try to do for the sake of everyone. Perhaps her in-laws, who I now know well, would be willing to help. They are poor, but really wonderful people. Surely there must be some way to bless this woman in the same way she has blessed me.

Jessica and her friend Clarrisa were standing outside of the door begging to come in to see the new baby. I asked Maria Lucas if it would be alright. She readily agreed. As Jessica came close to the bed, Maria Lucas held the baby up and said, "you have a new baby brother Jessica." Jessica looked up at me and then looked at her best friend Clarissa and said, "we (meaning Clarrisa and her) have a new baby brother!" Although there have been many discussions in our family about adoption and birthparents it seemed to me that my daughter's innocence was both profound and wise at that moment. We are all God's children. We are all brothers and sisters. Let us love with that in mind. Blessings, Lisa

# Medical Student Samira Villela Begins Clinical Rotations

For several years now, Samira Villela has been studying medicine with the help of a scholarship from FMI. Recently Samira has passed a huge milestone in her education. She has officially moved from classwork to clinical rotations. This transition marks a huge accomplishment for this young woman.

Samira studied business management in high school. She had relatively little knowledge or experience in biology or other science related fields. Yet, Samira has been able to achieve high marks at the University. She has passed difficult coursework such as pathophysiology, pharmacology and radiology with flying colors. And all without the benefit of high school general biology courses.

Now Samira dresses in her “whites” which means she is ready for her clinical rotations. She will be spending more and more time at the public hospital in San Pedro Sula as she learns to apply what she has learned in the classroom

to “real live patients”. Samira just glows as she talks about her future as a physician. After she finishes her mandatory public service, she will return to the Fellow Man International Clinic to care for those in need. She wishes for all of those involved in providing her scholarship to know the depth of her gratitude. Samira writes,

***“I give THANKS because all of this has come to me THANKS to His kindness. I am grateful to God, to Lisa my angel and of course to my supporters and donors for this opportunity. To have this life, this opportunity is such a privilege in my country. Thank you so much, thank you so much!”***

**Samira**

We would also like to thank those who support Samira’s education. She will be an awesome addition to the clinic some day!



## It's Not Just a Drop In the Bucket

I just love the way dandelion seeds blow in the wind. Every time a breeze comes along a few more seeds float away. They almost look like little parachutes. Still, who among us would throw their precious seeds (talents) to the wind in the hopes of landing on fertile ground like the dandelion does. I think it's safe to as-

sume most of us try to be a little more careful and purposeful than that.

For years now, you have been giving of your time, talents and monies to the Fellow Man project. We have done our very best to make our project a land of fertile soil. A place in which your seeds of hope can make their home to grow, flower and multiply. Still, it might be easy to think with all of the world's troubles, what one does is just a drop in the bucket. It would be easy as well to just turn inward because the problems are too big and the difference made is too small.

I wish to say to all of you who have been so faithful to the people of Honduras that what you do is not just a drop in the bucket. Your generous gifts have changed lives in ways that you could only imagine. How much would it be worth to you to know you have saved children's lives from illnesses that once spelled certain death for those living in the remote corners of this place. Have not those blessings you have bestowed upon us even if drop by drop soon pooled until this bucket overflows? Indeed they have!

Recently Cruz Cardona, our mission's agronomist/right hand man took two children to San Pedro Sula in the middle of the night because they were too sick to wait until morning. Yes, your gifts pay his salary, but your kindness and generosity planted the seeds of hope and love in his heart that caused him to act on behalf of the desperate need of his fellow man. Love and compassion are fruits of the spirit that can not be cultivated overnight. May God richly bless each and every hand and heart that has been so moved to respond. And may you know, what you do is far from just a drop in the bucket.

