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## Lent—Spring 2011



### ***If you want to follow me pick up your cross daily (Luke 9:23).***

I used to think I knew what it meant to carry the cross. Accept the burdens—the aches and pains of the day. Don't complain about poor health, or anything else. Help others. Smile once and a while!

Then I moved to Mexico and started working with the Maya. I have learned a lot. I hope sharing some of these experiences with you in this Spring newsletter will help you to realize that some people have crosses we never dreamed of.

Their stories might be able to help us understand how gifted we are. With your help, Maya Missions is making their lives a little easier. Together we CAN make this world a better place!

Here's a true story. This comes from our lay leader, Sheila Christiansen, who works with a group of women from Sierra Papacal. They would never tell me things like this.

*Julia was married quite young. She had six children and a husband who drank a lot. When he drank, Julia knew she was in for some harsh, horrible treatment, like being held to a wall with a knife at her throat because "he" did not like the supper. When I spoke to Julia, her response was not bitter or even angry. It was: "What could I do? The children needed a home and food."*

Sheila continues: *Julia is just one of so many that I have spoken with. How these women suffer such abuse and still come through sane and faith filled, I will never know. As I listen to the stories, I think of the strength of*

*these women, but I also wonder: Why? How can they suffer so much? I don't know what the answer to it all is, but I do know I have met some saintly women.*

When we began our Centro Comunitario in Sierra a year ago, we focused on helping the kids in grade school get better grades. But we also knew their families needed a lot of help. Monica, the director of the Center, has done an excellent job with the kids.



They are getting better grades. She has also gained the confidence of their moms and dads. Now she is setting up special meetings to help their parents deal with violence, abuse, sexuality—the list goes on and on. We only have two small rooms in Sierra—we need more property, more rooms and more "Monicas." With your help, we hope to duplicate this program in other villages for other "Julias."

See a live video interview with Monica and the parents on our website: [www.mayamissions.com](http://www.mayamissions.com).





## Oasis San Juan...life and death...death and resurrection

*Why can't they be like we were—  
perfect in every way!*

I think that song is from the movie and play *Bye Bye Birdie*. I sang it all the time when my nieces and nephew were growing up. They didn't like it! I did.

I think most of you know that I have ministered at Oasis San Juan—Hospice for HIV-AIDS victims for the last three years. The men and women there would never say they are perfect. Most of them have arrived at the Hospice at the edge of the village of Conkal because there was nowhere else for them to go. No family. No hospital. No nada!

Some die within a few days. Others get the medicine they need. They continue the struggle for life. Many are fine one week and dying the next. Last week, right before Communion, Pancho, who cannot walk or speak, suddenly couldn't breathe. Someone ran for an injection and he survived. Who knows for how long? These men and women carry an unbelievably heavy cross.

Three weeks ago I baptized Jesus Lorenzo. I was sure he would die within a few days. He was six months old and he looked more like six weeks. His mother had dropped him off and then disappeared.

Last week, I couldn't believe it. Jesus is growing. He smiles a lot and looks a lot healthier. I think he just might make it. And I think I know why. He is loved by everyone at Oasis San Juan. Everyone—from the smallest child to the oldest person—cares about little Jesus Lorenzo. They hold him, bathe him, rock him, and smile with him. He is never alone. He is never without love.

Can you imagine what our communities would be like, if we lived like the people of Oasis San Juan? Can you visualize how healthy our families, our communities, our churches would be if we cared for the least among us, like they do at Oasis San Juan?

Oasis San Juan is just about out of funding. I'm not sure they can continue much longer without additional funds for food, medicine, and counseling. People think and act as if the community there is a Leper Colony. They just drive by and don't think of stopping or helping.

I have a hunch Oasis San Juan is where Jesus can be found. We need to be there too. I hope you can help.

I've changed the words of my song. It now goes like this:

*Why can't WE be like THEY were—  
perfect in every way!*

There are some more pictures and even a video of San Juan. You can check us out on the website: [www.mayamissions.com](http://www.mayamissions.com). There is also an envelope included here to help make this world a better place.

Thanks and May God Bless You.

Fr. Bill

