

## “EMMANUEL”

“Emmanuel.” “God is with us.” I believe that this simple phrase really frames and encapsulates the experiences of today, beginning with the school physicals in the morning, followed by our efforts at the construction site, and culminating with dinner and Mass. It was at Mass this evening, having an opportunity to simply “be” in community, that the recognition of Emmanuel began to emerge in a profound way.

God was certainly present in the face and fellowship of the San Lucas Tolimán community, which had gathered late on a Tuesday evening to honor a parishioner who had recently died: the pews awash with color from the skirts and camisas of the girls and women, the altar packed with twenty or so singers and musicians energizing us all.

God was present in the person of Padre Gregorio Schaffer, who has given 40 years of his life in service to the people of San Lucas. It was visibly apparent in his smiles, handshakes, and the kisses on the forehead to the children during the offertory how tangible his love is for them, and how much he is loved in return. Physically, he looks like the reincarnation of Vince Lombardi, and likewise commands an authoritative respect, but not in the sense that he forces his will on people; rather, in the gentle manner which connotes truth and trust. What a beautiful thing for a person to have found his life's vocation, a vocation lived out by his *presence* to the needs of the community. “Donde está tu tesoro, allí también estará tu corazón.” (“Where your treasure is, there also you will find your heart.” -- Luke 12:34)

There was a point during the Liturgy of the Eucharist which was particularly instructive tonight in regard to God's presence. As Fr. Greg was blessing the bread and wine, some people around us stood up, while about one-half of the others were still kneeling. I found myself wondering, “Well, do I sit, or stand, or...?” This happened several other times in the course of the prayers... eventually, I got the feeling from those around me that *both* were OK, *both* were good, and what does it really matter, anyway, Patricio?? It's not about *you* and it's not about doing what is “right.” What matters is the posture of your **heart**, in giving of yourself at this Mass to more fully unify and lose your “self” in Christ with those around you!! Transcend washing the outside of the cup and allow the inside of your cup to be filled...

Perhaps it is here, in San Lucas, that not only the Mass, but life itself, is stripped down in the sense that one may begin to see what is truly important. Emmanuel. Relationship. Christ becoming present; transformed and revealed in community. Witnessing abject poverty amidst a willingness to share generously, sickness amidst smiles and laughter, death in the midst of new life. Paschal Mystery overflowing in a little town at the base of Lake Atitlan... these indeed are glimpses of the Kingdom of God, like the end of Mass when three or four of the servers filing out turned and smiled at Connor, the blue-eyed, blond-haired ten-year-old in our group whom they had befriended playing in the parish courtyard.

It is on days and experiences like this, LORD, when my eyes are truly open: your face is revealed, and I am able to connect with your loving presence. *Emmanuel*.

-- Patrick Hoarty