

SNAP-SHOTS

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"What's going on over there?"

It was a question Hortencia asked in a phone conversation, puzzled by what she had seen. Just over 2 weeks ago she, Lupe and driver Juan had gone to pick up supplies at Costco. While there, they had noticed a significant increase in the number of Mexican American and American customers at the TJ store and they had also noticed that they were all buying up toilet paper and food in large volumes!

News of the spreading Corona virus north of the border, had not yet reached front page headlines in Tijuana and in the poor areas of town, even less so.

The answer to Hortencia's question is now of course widely known, as we all enter into another month navigating through the uncharted waters of the COVID 19 pandemic.

The effects have been felt by everyone. The virus is no respecter of borders, race, class, occupation, wealth or gender. However of course, some are more vulnerable than others.

Not many days after our phone conversation, Hortencia started receiving calls from anxious, confused Moms in our barrios. Arriving at their small local stores to buy staple food items, the stark reality of the crisis, (which they had up until that time been unaware of), confronted them... shelves stripped bare!

The middle and upper-class sector of society who'd had earlier warning and more means to buy and transport goods in bulk, had already emptied the stores of the staple essentials. For the lower sector, with no reserves, (most live meal to meal), and no transport to search in other areas, the reality of the situation hit swift and hard! Since then the peso has devalued 20%, food prices have risen, factories are laying off workers, street markets have been shut down and the border has been closed to tourists and groups who usually come to help. Like many of the cities in the US now, Tijuana is also on official lock-down.

Due to this, we at V&O have cancelled all community and group events until further notice and have moved our focus to finding and supplying food to those most in need. Over the last week we've been able to purchase some staple foods in bulk through one of our regular suppliers. We've also been reaching out to some of you in our local SD area asking for help with supplying and dropping off food. (Thanks so much to all who have responded. It's been a great help!)

Fortunately, as a non-profit humanitarian organization we qualify as "essential travel" across the border, so at this point we are still able to cross. We, (Philip and I), have been making regular trips delivering/dropping off food to our bodega, while also being mindful to adhere to the rules/guidelines concerning social distancing, handwashing etc. Hortencia and our reduced team are doing the same. We have also prayerfully put plans in place for strategic and discreet distribution of food. We are asking Christian families in our communities to help us with this. We'll continue to re-evaluate the situation as it unfolds each day. Health and safety for all is a concern and priority.



Dark clouds over quiet streets in Tijuana this week.



Hortencia delivers food and treat bags for kids.

Despite the challenges and uncertainty with everything that's happening, we know that **God is still in control**, and our faith, hope and trust are fully in Him. Opportunities to show and share His love abound and we want to make the most of them. Each time we give out food, we include either bibles, scripture verses, tracts or Christian books to point people to Christ as the only solid and true source of hope, strength, peace and salvation. We pray many thanks for you who make it possible for us to do that and ask that you continue to keep us all in your prayers. As we are reminded by the words in Psalm 46:1 **"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."** Be encouraged and thank you again! Joyce, on behalf of us all at V&O

Below is a prayer our pastor shared with us 2 Sundays ago. Although written as a prayer of encouragement for "sick days", it's also relevant to us as mere mortal beings in such a time as this. Worthwhile reading!

A LITURGY FOR A

Sick Day

FROM THE BOOK EVERY MOMENT HOLY,
Douglas McKelvey

For this brief pause, for this reminder of my own weakness and of my dependence upon you, I thank you, O Lord.

A day such as this, in which I endure a measure of sickness or unease, is a reminder that the redemption of all things is not yet complete. It is a reminder that this body will decline and one day fail, and so it is also a reminder that the ways I spend my days matter, for my hours, revealed like veins of gold beneath a rushing stream, are a limited resource to be purposefully mined or forever lost.

A day such as this is a reminder that good health and vigor are gifts to be consciously and gratefully enjoyed, and to be invested while they might, in eternal things.
So let me finish this day, O Lord, wiser than I began it.

Let me live now, in light of the knowledge that a time might come in this life when I feel such sickness and discomfort for a long season, when I must adjust to a "new normal," when my abilities are limited either by the slow decline of age or from some accident, injury, or disease. Therefore let me use the good health that I have while I have it, presuming nothing.

Let me use it to serve well, to love well, to care for your people, your creation, to spend my allotted days cherishing hearts, creating beauty, bringing order, offering healing, delighting in your goodness manifest to me in a million ways, and so to one day come to the end of my days having stewarded them well.

Heal my body from this sickness, O Christ My Healer. Be gracious. Give rest.

Raise me again to health with a heightened sense of thankfulness for the unmerited gift of well-being, and also with a greater sense of compassion for those who suffer lingering ailment, disease or discomfort.
Teach me by my own small sufferings to be a better minister and friend to those who suffer greatly.

So let even the unease I feel today work as your servant, accomplishing your better purposes in me.

Amen.

Paty, Noe and Eduardo pack healthy snacks and treats for delivery to kids.

