

## Archive for March, 2013

March 30th, 2013

### **Long Threads of History**

Long threads of history.

All of our lives are part of the tapestry of life. We see the tapestry from Earth. God designs it from heaven. Dr. Montessori was gifted with this amazing way to teach in Italy at the turn of the last century. Before the mid-century there was the tragedy of World War II. My Dad was a soldier sent to Europe, my mother was a French war bride. They married and I was born in America. (Would I have heard the Gospel had I been born in France?) When I was five my parents divorced. When I was ten my mother married a man from El Salvador in New York (How would my step-father have met my mother except both were miles from their homes?)

When they married I gained another family (and another country which I also fell in love with.) When I took my bride to El Salvador for the first time 40 years ago she said she would love to start a Christian Montessori school here. Now forty years later due to many threads – running schools for years, setting up the Christian Montessori Fellowship, doing the training on DVD – we are about to start that school. Last year my step-father passed away and returning after his death we looked at each other and said what a fitting tribute it would be to start a Christian Montessori school in his honor. This will be our first international effort and it is more than starting a school, it is also starting a training center at the same time. My wife gets blessed thinking about our starting the first international training center in a small out of the way place (it reminds her of Bethlehem) in a country named after our Savior – El Salvador.

New threads of history woven with mini (and many) miracles.

In November 2011, the director of World Vision El Salvador was in San Antonio. The church we attend sponsors almost 1000 children in El Salvador. We met Dr. Calderon, he visited our school and we had dinner. He shared that they minister to preschoolers in over 300 places in El Salvador. He said it would be great to introduce Christian Montessori to his teachers. We didn't know how God was going to move but that love for El Salvador quickened again.

In June of 2012 when my step-father passed away he left us a little money and we thought what a fitting way to turn an earthly inheritance into an eternal inheritance. In November of 2012, we took my step fathers ashes back to El Salvador. During that trip we met with the people at World Vision. They took us to see some of the work they were doing in the countryside. They were also having a teacher training day in the capital and they asked Barbara to present hands on Bible lessons to 150 of their teachers. God spoke through those lessons. During that trip we also got to share the hands on Bible lessons with several principals and teachers and a pastor. Everyone was excited about the possibility of using these great tools to share the Gospel. So before we left, we decided to get an idea of what it would cost us to rent a place to start a school. Our real estate agent was an angel sent by God. Patricia de Barriere showed us four houses. It was the first house that took our breath away. (The other three didn't compare to it.) It was an old house that hadn't been lived in for several years and needed repair but it had a great living room, dining room and covered patio that would make a great indoor/outdoor classroom and it all opened up onto a magnificent garden. It will make a fantastic school and training center. Patricia called an architect friend to go over what it would take to bring the house up to date. It wasn't enough to stagger us (but it should have been) but it was too late because this seemed to be the place that God would use to start the first international school and training center. We had Patricia make a lease purchase offer for us. All we wanted to do was to see what a place would cost and now we were committing.

The two sisters who own the house both live in Europe so there was a lot of back and forth but they finally agreed to a three year lease with an option to buy. "God" I wondered "are you moving this fast? Or am I ahead of You?" The sisters agreed to come in January to sign the papers. When we returned to El Salvador in January we were ready to sign. We had dinner with an old family friend, a retired attorney, and shared our progress. Barbara did not understand any of the conversation as it was in Spanish but she said she could watch my face drop. I had asked for advice and wisdom and Armando had given me some. Never ask for wisdom unless you plan on taking it. Armando

said we should sign no papers until we receive our permit from the Ministry of Education. Otherwise, we would own a very nice house with no children to put in it. (I hate wisdom when it puts speed bumps in the way) but I learn to take it because it is wisdom. The sisters understood and were gracious to offer us 45 to 60 days before they would put the house back on the market. Now, all we had to do was to get permission from the Ministry of Education. So we hired an attorney to begin the process. The process of getting permission can take six months or a year and sometimes two years but we were starting. (It does help to be an optimist, even though sometimes it is not realistic.)

God continually gave the small signs of His presence. We had to go and get a tax id number. It was probably the least expensive process of this whole adventure. It cost \$1.25 to get your card. It cost 8 cents for a copy of the passport. And to get our new tax number laminated it cost 46 cents. As I stood there to pay, I looked at the change in my hand and I had only 45 cents. A lady standing next to me put a penny in my hand. It is very humbling to know that God cares even about the pennies (while we worry so much about the dollars.) One night Barbara was coughing with allergies. We were in the bed and breakfast and it was a little after nine in the evening and there was a knock at our door. The little cook said she was passing by and heard Barbara coughing and had brought her some hot honey and lemon. Humbled again by God's care and love for even the smallest details of our life.

On our second trip (I'm getting to feel a little like Paul in counting up missionary journeys – even though ours are at 35,000 feet and a whole lot more comfortable.) we also met Sissi Gustavo de Quintero who also runs a Christian school (another friend of Patricia.) Sissi's daughter, Rebeca expressed an interest in Christian Montessori. Rebeca (that is how her name is spelled in Spanish) has that soft-spoken demeanor you look for in Montessori guides. Rebeca teaches for her mother. I asked Sissi are you willing to lose your daughter to come with us in Christian Montessori? Sissi replied whatever is in God's will.

We returned home but within two weeks the attorney emails us and says that he cannot file the papers for the permission unless we have a location secured by lease or purchase. Barbara and I looked at each other and all we could do

was laugh. She told me that we have come this far by trusting and following God, what is one more step on the water. The papers are signed and the architect begins the remodeling process. And the attorney continues to work on the application.

We return to El Salvador during Spring break. When we walk into the house Barbara's jaw drops – there is no roof on the house, three bedrooms have only dirt floors and one of them has piles of dirt and ditches in it. The side yard is full of construction debris and the front yard is full of neatly stacked roof tiles. Where is the beautiful house? From the beginning the architect had advised that we replace all of the sixty year old wiring and plumbing and to fix the roof for leaks. It was a bigger process than we had anticipated. Wow! You can't make omelets without breaking eggs.

The week was full of meetings (and miracles.) To submit the application the attorney needed for me to get documents from the judicial system and the police. We went down to the first office. There were at least fifty people in line outside. The first guard took us to the head of the line and lead us inside where there were another fifteen or twenty people in line. The next guard took us to the cashier immediately and by passed the line and took us to the counter where they finished the appropriate paper work and we were on our way in less than thirty minutes. (The good news is I've got a clean record!) The next adventure was to go to the police station to get another document. Again, a guard bypassed the line got us to the cashier, somebody then motioned us to go upstairs where there was no line and we filled out the appropriate paper work. We handed it in downstairs and in a few minutes someone came out and took my fingerprints. We bypassed another fifty people in line and were out in thirty four minutes (my wife was counting.) They said we should have our paper work in eight days. Three days later they called and said the paperwork was ready. We went to pick up the paper but the police station was closed. Our friend Patricia asked a policeman on the corner about getting the document but he said the computer was down. She said the document had already been prepared. He walked back and unlocked the door and we had our document. Either God was parting the seas for us or the guards were worried that we were so old that we might die in line and what would they do with the bodies?

Everyone who has come in contact with this project has taken it to heart and taken it as their own. On our second trip Patricia literally spent morning noon and night with us and now on our third trip she and Sonia were sharing the duties of moving everything along. And then, there is Sissi the friend of Patricia who we met on our second trip. Sissi runs a Christian school and is very interested in Christian Montessori. She told Barbara that they needed us there twenty years ago but she is very glad we are there now. Sissi has dealt with the Ministry of Education for years and God has graced her with all kinds of contacts. She called up one of the directors of the ministry and made an appointment for us on Friday. She explained that the school would like to operate on the International calendar (school starting in August) instead of the national calendar where school starts in February. She is concerned that we are investing all of this money and none is coming in yet. The director told her that the rules ask for the application to be presented in January to open in August (here we are in March.) After some conversation he set up a meeting with two other department heads. The meeting was formal but as we shared you could feel God in the room. The very serious lady began to smile, the other director said that we really need what you have to offer and made suggestions about coordinating with higher Ed people. As we approached the end of the meeting they acknowledged that you can't get your permission until you have all of your papers in a row and you can't get all of your papers until you have your permission and then he said the miracle words, "We are going to give you a temporary permission." We now can start!

Later that afternoon we had a meeting with two ladies from World Vision who continue to be interested in the Montessori to help their teaching mission. Patty de Moran has done her research and is really excited about what we can do working together. In fact Patty is going to begin to translate materials that we both can use. In our discussion about the progress of the school and the blessings that are being given to us, we remark on how blessed we were to have Sissi with us that morning. Patty said her daughter went to Sissi's school. When I told Patty that Sissi's daughter was going to be our teacher, Patty's face lit up – Rebeca had been her daughter's teacher. Small world huh God?

Before we left our architect took us to her beach house. She wanted us to see their community building in the development. It is only used twice a year but would make a great Christian Montessori school. The children in the neighborhood don't go to school until they are seven. Sonia said that she wanted to start a school there. She might even give up her profession to teach. It is overwhelming to think what God might do.

Future threads.

And the miracles continue. Our friends at Nienhuis Montessori are excited about supporting this adventure too and have committed to help us get started. But we need a couple of more miracles and we pray that you will be part of that. We have raised about a third of the money needed. Prayerfully this is a project that will stir you to support Christian Montessori with your individual membership. There are 300+ Christian Montessori schools in the US. If each school committed to taking a school membership we would be well on the way to meeting our goal. How about a mission project for each school to buy a piece of material! Donations can also be made that will go to furthering the Gospel through Christian Montessori education. From this new school and training center will rise dozens of new Christian Montessori schools and hundreds and thousands of children will be nurtured in the Lord.

Please let the risen Christ speak to you about this great international outreach.

You may send your donations to Christian Montessori Fellowship  
22630 East Range, San Antonio, TX 78255 or  
you can make your donations on line as well as  
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