



Until that moment, I am simply watching the scene unfold before me. I am a bystander, listening to the whispers of the past. But the moment I read the sign, it is I who fall to my knees. For I do not see Jesus' words to Peter and John. Rather, I see my own plea to Jesus staring up at me. Overwhelmed with gratitude, I remember all the ways that Jesus has answered my prayer and stayed awake with me during my darkest of hours. Carried me, held me, led me into new life. Overwhelmed with the truth that each time, I have forgotten. How could I forget? How could I take the gift and then sleep? Overwhelmed by the truth that even though he sits with me in my times of darkness, I cannot stay awake for him. I cannot.

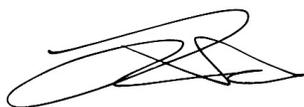
So, I return to Guatemala. I return to those who show me with every sacrifice what it is to stay awake with Jesus. To sleep on a concrete floor in the cold, to protect the medicines of the medical clinic. Staying awake with Jesus. To organize a bus, gather patients, shepherd them across the country, without being asked, or compensated. Staying awake with Jesus. Refusing to accept "no" for an answer to be a volunteer, until we finally agree to bring a medical team to his remote village. Staying awake with Jesus. Those who have been enfolded by Jesus in their darkest of hours, who have been carried, held, led into new life. And, then who have not forgotten, but have lived out their gratitude in humble and extraordinary ways. I confess I cannot do it alone. I need them to show me the way. So, I return to Guatemala.

Today, I shall journey with him, yet once again, to Gethsemane. As he wanders and stumbles, as he cries, "Please take this cup from me." As Peter and John sleep.

Today, I shall have the opportunity to enter into the story yet again, to listen for his voice. To hear him say, Stay Awake with Me. To remember that day long ago, when I fell to my knees knowing that I could not.

To give thanks to God that now, I need not fear. For I know that I shall be able to stay awake, because of you. Because of this mission, because of each Guatemalan, each U.S., volunteer. Because God has placed you all in my life. Because God has entrusted us to each other's care.

So, in these most holiest of days now before us, may we journey beside him together. Together, to Gethsemane, to the foot of his Cross, and to his grave. And, may we rise yet once again with him. Awake and ready to follow him. To serve him. Together.



Rev. Linda L. McCarty

*May your Good Friday and Easter Sunday be truly blessed.*



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