

April 1, 2011

Greetings from Ukraine!

But—even though you may think it strange—it’s Mexico that is heavy on my heart today.

You’ve seen the news, I’m sure, so you’re aware of the traumatic times Mexico is going through. Gang wars are making the streets red with blood. The killing is escalating—more and more violent statements of harsh determination from one drug cartel to another, or from one cartel to a government official or agency.

Against such a backdrop of great crimes and violence, lesser criminals feel quite innocent! In the black light of gruesome violence, the “small potatoes” criminals, the mere bandits, feel like “regular folks.”

There’s also a change—mostly unseen—in Mexico-based ministries. In the midst of so much chaos and crime, many mission projects have been canceled because of the unsafe conditions. High school and church groups in general have canceled their activities. There used to be scores of groups going down to make homes for destitute families, and that is no longer happening. There used to be medical and dental trips going, and now they’re not going.

The irony of it all is that **THIS IS THE MOMENT FOR MEXICO! This is when people in Mexico are more desperate and more open than ever to hear about the hope of the Lord.**

It is no secret that it is in turbulent times that people turn to the Lord . . . people are most open to the Gospel in desperate times.

- In the late 80’s when the subsidy of the Soviet Union failed the people of Cuba, the current revival took root in the country.
- In 1976 after a terrible earthquake that killed tens of thousands and left millions of people homeless, Guatemala’s revival was born.
- Headlines scream of Christian revival amid Egyptian turmoil.
- The war in Iran is proving to be a backdrop for revival.
- Algerian persecution has proven to be the backdrop for the conversion of thousands of locals.

I know it can become so distasteful—all this chaos—that we just want to look away. We don't want to plunge *in* . . . We want to stay *out*. It's easy to adopt the attitude we read in Revelation: "Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy" (Revelation 22:11).

But God's love is relentless! Even this passage in Revelation spurs us to reconsider: since the time is near, we should move toward those in need, and quickly—because once the Lord comes, we will not have an opportunity to do so. There is no second chance once eternity overtakes us!

**God's Word is telling us that NOW is the time to take action—because eternity will be set and unchangeable.**

The circumstances are not ripe for mission? Time to cancel travel plans for personal missions? Whatever we do, we must not abandon the believers in Mexico at this time when they need our partnership the most!

The genius of the strategy that the Lord has led us to set in motion has always been one of empowering the nationals to do the work and to reach their own people from within: "It's an inside job!"

The nationals, as you already know, are able to talk to their own at the proper time with the proper approach. They know what to say and what not to say. All the more these days when in Mexico the tension is everywhere.

By God's grace, we have been led to cultivate relationships in Mexico for years . . . and those relationships are now coming to fruition in these desperate times. **We are poised for more powerful and effective ministry in Mexico today than at any time in the past.**

But we are also facing a serious challenge. Friends who were supporting our work in Mexico have decided to discontinue their support. This is a \$5,000-per-month drop. (These same friends are still giving full support to our work in Cuba.)

The Mexico field is absolutely white for harvest, no question about it! "Where sin abounds, there grace abounds all the more" . . . and in the same way, in Mexico—where chaos abounds—hope abounds all the more!

What will our response to this challenge be?

Please understand what's at stake: We have some 25 students planting churches and going through seminary in México City; Puebla; and Oaxaca. I've shared their stories of evangelism and their vision in their beloved home country. The education they're receiving is excellent for ministry in their context. We see the fruit!

**But we need to replace the support of this crucial Mexico work before it**

**expires—and it is due to expire in this very month of April.**

For each student we need \$200 per month—this provides tuition, room and board. These scholarships give students the freedom to devote their time to evangelism and church-planting. We've seen a number of graduates go on to pastor the churches they planted while in seminary.

**This is an investment—and a bargain! The amount needed to support a student is only a fraction of what an expatriate makes—and only half of what a full-time national church-planter makes.**

**Look at the “before and after.”** I first went to Mexico in response to a church who called to ask if we thought our Cuba strategy could be applied to their country. They had been investing more than \$10,000 a month—for more than a dozen years—on just THREE “missionary units.” (One missionary unit is normally defined as an individual - married or single, a husband and wife are counted as two units.)

“Ten thousand a month for more than 12 years,” they said, “and nothing to show for it.”

Today, we know for a fact that we have between 20 and 30 church plants being grown by local young leaders—for half of that amount—and we have been at it for less than five years. In fact, we hope to see the launching of 320 churches . . . 10 churches in every one of Mexico's 32 states!

But as I write you this letter, **we are in danger of closing the ministry to our neighbor country.**

What will it take to keep the ministry going, and growing? **A mere 25 friends, each one committing to “own” a church-plant in Mexico, with a gift of \$200 per month.** A family trip to Mexico once a year would cost far more than \$200 a month—yet the lasting results . . . the training of a young leader . . . the planting of a church . . . a church that is likely to reproduce . . . is a wonderful eternal legacy!

Maybe you could pledge \$200 a month personally. Maybe your family could join together to pledge this amount. Maybe your Sunday school class. Maybe your Bible study group. Maybe your church. (You are free, of course, to do more: you may want to sponsor three churches, or even five or more!)

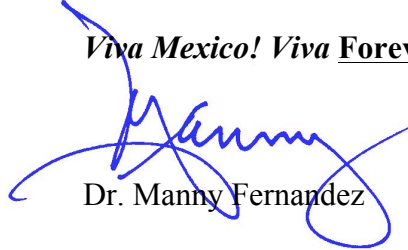
And if it's impossible to commit to \$200 a month, please prayerfully consider some other monthly gift . . . In any case, please give whatever you can today. We need you! Our neighbors to the south need us!

May we love our neighbor at a time of need. Pray that in the middle of the turbulence, we may keep our Christian perspective about who is our God and what He wants us to do. He is more than sufficient; He is more than enough; He will reward us as we step out in faith. Faithful is He who calls us.

Please let me hear from you about this. **Mexico is in chaos, but it is “snowy white” unto harvest. May God reveal His will to you according to His Word.**

Please help us to keep the field open for God’s Business!

***Viva Mexico! Viva Forever!***



Dr. Manny Fernandez

P.S. The Scriptures tell us that “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of self control.” On the basis of the abiding Spirit, we are told to stir up the gift of God that is in us—to cause it to flame up to a full blaze! We cannot let times of turmoil make us retreat into a bunker mentality. We are supposed to be bold as lions (Proverbs 28:1).

**Help us keep the ministry to Mexico going! Thank you!**