



September 1, 2020

Dear Ministry Partner,

May you be at summer's end rejoicing at the goodness of the Lord! Yes, the times are odd and challenging. But His care, His protection and provision do not fail. Great is His faithfulness!

I just got back from Mexico—and I bring good news!

Many who knew of my going were concerned because of the pandemic. I felt safe! Every establishment requires you to wear masks; they take your temperature with a touch-free scanner. Then you have to step on a mat suffused with a Clorox-like substance to disinfect your shoes, and then onto a separate damp mat to take the substance off your shoes. Finally, a paid worker squirts sanitizing gel into your hands!

Even then, in some places, it wasn't over. At some sites, I had to walk through an ozone chamber. In other places, they had me stand under a body sprayer doing a 360-degree turn inside a spray arch. *Mexico's people seem to have gotten the message: The virus is real!*

On the other hand, with COVID killing thousands, the murder of four security guards and the assassination of a drug lord's son are just blurbs in the news.

But here's what I sensed clearly: **Mexico is RIPE for the harvest!** It's a huge mission field. Mexico City alone is the home and/or workplace of 30 million people—it rivals some of the biggest cities in China.

Two friends working with our ministry made this trip with me. I took them to a little gas station where 50 years ago I slept on the floor next to the toilet every night. We were amazed to see the place still standing—and not only that, but doing good business—on the elegant Paseo La Reforma, the wide boulevard that runs diagonally across the heart of the city.

We also visited the Intercontinental Hotel nearby where, ten years later, I stayed with my wife, courtesy of the airline that cancelled our flight. They'd run out of "regular rooms," so they asked if we'd be willing to stay in the only spot still available: The Presidential Suite. (We were 100 percent willing to cooperate!)

Mexico has drifted in and out of my life since my early years, but the itinerary of this trip brought my years-ago visits vividly back to memory. I could remember conversations and activities from 55 years ago.

I also remember that Mexico was off-base morally back then—yet today it's clear that in many ways, it has sold its soul to evil even more since then.

- If bribery were common practice then, it's a well-established *industry* today. Bribery as a system permeates Mexican society from top to bottom, from the rich to the poor.
- Every time I visit, the situation seems to be getting more desperate. People are making dismal salaries, while the cost of living seems to be getting more and more inaccessible.
- Constant drug wars and territorial disputes have made death a constant.
- A mafia-style system charges 20 to 30 percent of the earnings of businesses large and small. Typically a territorial group collects the "protection" fees. The people have no choice but to pay. They can't afford the consequences.
- In an environment of so many killings by drug cartels, other shootings and crimes are chalked up to gang violence. It's easy to commit crimes because the police force is overwhelmed, insufficient for the tidal wave of criminal activity. So many private crimes occur and disappear in the chaos. Life is cheap in Mexico.

With danger so constant, millions are turning to a new so-called "Cult of Holy Death." You supposedly get "protection" from "Saint Holy Death" if you pledge your devotion and your loyalties to it—in the same way that you pay the territorial drug lord in the natural realm.

In many stores and businesses, you find skulls and skeletons dressed up with silk scarfs or other ornaments and posted prayers to the Holy Death saint.

The Catholic Church has condemned the cult as blasphemous, satanic and heretical. It warns of the dangers to those who get involved—it can lead into dangerous situations, the opposite of what the cult's followers are seeking.

The Vatican is dismayed, as Protestantism has expanded greatly in Mexico, and now this cult is also competing from within the culture. The Mexican government has actually sent its army to destroy hundreds of altars to the Holy Death in various parts of the country. Narco-traffickers are upset because they themselves are among the most fervent followers of the cult!

Meanwhile, on the political-economic front, the Pope has condemned Mexico as a country "by the few and for the few," slamming the super wealthy, whom he sees as involved in deeply corrupt schemes.

So there's good news in all this? Yes!

The work of God is advancing in Mexico! Mexico needs the Lord, and Mexico is ready. It is as true as ever: We must discover where the Lord is at work, and join Him!

In this whitened harvest field, people are witnessing the sinking of their economy, their society, and their way of life. They know they need another vessel to rescue them from the failed systems that they've trusted for so long.

Parents are horrified that their kids don't want to study in school—but the kids see it as futile. Young men in particular either want to be "Narcos" (drug dealers) or go to the U.S. to live. From their point of view, there are no other alternatives!

The only message of peace, of hope, of deliverance, or of abundant life, is with Evangelicals. Mexico needs to hear it. They need to have it explained. They need to know that it is totally true!

Such was the case for Tomás, our driver.

He drove us around the massive grid of Mexico City. (There are nearly 100,000 streets in greater Mexico City, so it's good to have a guy who knows how to wrestle with the amazing maze and its clogged passages.)

Tomás did not know the Lord when our week began. He heard our conversations before and after each contact and each interview. He was very attentive to our conversations—he noticed our lack of profanity. He also noticed that there was no proud “lordship” in our demeanor—in contrast to wealthy people he works for at other times.

He wanted to know who we were—and why were we different? I shared with Tomás how I had come to his city years before he was born. (He got to see the bathrooms where I used to sleep!)

The rest was easy. It was all about wanting a personal relationship with God and not living like the rest of the people did. It was about explaining how salvation is free—and why it *had* to be free! It was about how changes began to happen in my life, and about the life that resulted from using the Bible's teaching as a lamp to guide my steps day to day.

Tomás prayed to receive the Lord!

Over the course of our remaining days together, he had questions. We provided a lot of answers, with joy. We'll be friends forever.

Gas station attendants were curious about our picture-taking—who shoots a toilet? I told them my story, and we gave them Gospel booklets. I told them what a difference the Gospel had made in my life, and how such a transformation happens. (These young men were amazed that I could tell them what life was like in that gas station 35 years before they were born. I'm sure they wondered if I was there for the Mexican Revolution!)

The Pope says Mexico's rich are to blame. He has blasted them for oppressing the poor to feed their comfortable lifestyles. To be sure, there is enough blame to go around. The Catholic Church drank in a vast amount of Neoplatonism, selling a distinction between the spiritual and material planes of our existence, and teaching that neglect of the material enriches and enhances the spiritual. . . .

“The suffering of the body tempers the soul”—This was a common belief. So being poor was somehow “better.” Meeting only spiritual needs was the priority.

Then came liberation theology, denouncing the results of this thinking because it produced destitution, offering nothing to meet people's physical needs.

The Evangelicals made a different mistake—trying to get away from the “social Gospel” in which salvation is supposedly achieved by extending social justice to the poor and the dregs of society. Many in evangelical circles retreated to a “spiritual-only” doctrine—repeating the earlier “distinction of planes,” the same preference for the spiritual over the material!

We had yet to learn that man is not a duality but “*one being*,” with physical and spiritual needs: James 1:27 says, “**Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.**”

WE ARE CALLED TO MEET NEEDS, physical and spiritual, in Christ’s name.

And so, we forge ahead. We’ve had one of our richest summer harvests ever. We have gone out to people in need in Cuba, Morocco, India, Mexico. *We have ministered to both the physical and the spiritual needs of people.*

We have provided water wells where people didn’t have ready access to this precious resource. Thanks to your giving and your prayers, we have been able to see so many be helped.

In their gratitude to God who sent us, they have opened their arms, opened their hearts to embrace the Bread of Life, the Living Water.

The Scriptures declare that a wise son gathers in summer. We have a collection of pictures that speak eloquently of what you accomplished in obedience to the Lord!

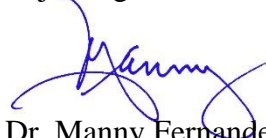
Now, another year of ministry is upon us. Some are focused on the paralysis that COVID has caused. But not us. ***We see before us a year of bountiful opportunity like we have never seen.***

Please join us as we join Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the harvest of souls. There is not a moment to waste!

In Matthew 20, Jesus talks about the owner of a field who needs workers in His harvest. You know the story. He hires some early in the morning, some at noon, some in the afternoon, and at the last hour. He starts paying the last first—and he gives each the *same* reward!

What does it mean? It means we have a chance to make up for lost time! No one else offers this kind of grace. Join Him. His reward is coming with Him. He will bless you even now!

Rejoicing in His harvest,



Dr. Manny Fernandez

P.S. Please let me hear from you right away. Give your best. Let us come together as a team of His own choosing! May the Lord bless you as you join Him and as you build for yourself treasures in heaven!