

San Lucas Toliman

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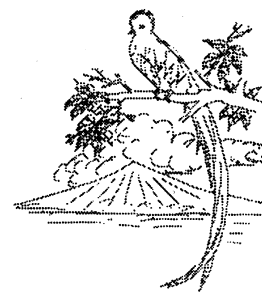
Dear Faithful of the Diocese of New Ulm,

(I have asked Bishop LeVoir's blessing on my writing this letter to you, members of the Diocese of New Ulm.)

The Parish of San Lucas Evangelista in San Lucas Toliman, Solola, Guatemala has been the Mission of the Diocese of New Ulm since 1962. We are the longest standing U.S. Diocesan Mission in Latin America. The People of this Mission have benefited much and have grown considerably because of the care and concern of friends in the Diocese of New Ulm. The Diocese has stood with these People through many most challenging times: the 36 years of civil war and especially the overt violent years of 1979 through 1985; the February 4, 1976 devastating earthquake; the 1991 earthquake that nearly destroyed the Spanish Colonial Church, so much a part of the People of San Lucas (it was four years in rebuilding); the years when corn (the People's basic food) was simply not available and the struggle to survive was daily; a cholera epidemic; and more recently the landslide in the Community of Porvenir that took thirty-seven lives and three full years to find land and housing for survivors. It has been a long and steep road to climb. However, the times of no health care available and no schools for children and young adults is now behind us. Fifteen new Communities now make possible independent/interdependent living. Growth has been considerable.

On Saturday, May 29th, we were struck by the winds and rains of Tropical Storm Agatha. The results have been overwhelming. Four Communities on the edge of San Lucas itself – *Nueva Amanecer*, *El Relleno*, *La Esperanza*, and *La Union* have been inundated by landslides, some 400 houses destroyed, seriously damaged houses filled with mud. Ten have died. Survivors are in temporarily shelters or with extended family and friends. Water lines have been strewn about. Corn and black bean crops destroyed and coffee fields swept down from the mountainside. For many it means we must begin anew. Literally we must find and purchase land for them to live on. Road access, potable water sources, sewer systems, and electricity come next and then adequate housing. Much can and I am sure will be done by the Government and larger institutions. However, land must be made available to the People so they can request and receive the other basics to live. I come to you now asking special help in purchasing land for those in such need. We have been through much together. I come and ask once again that you walk with us as we face this immediate and immense challenge. Any help can be sent to the New Ulm address. Know of our prayer for you in gratitude.

Together we pray,



Guatemala's symbol of freedom
THE QUETZAL
It cannot live in captivity