

Ortiz Family Serving in Arandas and San Miguel el Alto, Jalisco, Mexico

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NEAR AND DISTANT WARS

I am sure many of you have seen on the news all that is happening in Ukraine. Physical wars are tragic because they hurt many people. They are hard to miss because they leave devastation in their path. Our hearts and prayers go out to those who are in the middle of the onslaught.

You and I must not forget that we are in the middle of spiritual warfare as well. It is invisible, but discerning Christians see its aftermath every day.

The Bible says that the gates of hell will not prevail against Christ's church. For a long time, I read that backward, thinking that hell was fighting at the church's gates. Jesus didn't say that. He said that the war was waging at hell's gates. This means we are not retreating but pressing forward. This means we should not cower and run away but charge and run toward the enemy. I believe that to the very day Christ returns, the church will still be snatching souls from that fire. So do not give up hope, though it seems sometimes a lost cause.

Nothing I say in this letter will make the news, but the battles are as real as any other. Your prayers will help us in this spiritual warfare. I want to start by mentioning the battles and then three victories.

We have been working with Lupita on-and-off for more than four years now. She is closer to receiving Christ than ever before. When we met her, she had just moved in with a married man who had promised her he would divorce his previous wife and marry her. Four years later, his promises continue, but he hasn't done anything, and she feels used. We have told her for a long time that she needs to come to Christ, and that will also mean leaving him. This has been her big hold-up. This year, she is again asking uncomfortable questions with even more uncomfortable answers. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force." Pray she surrender to Christ and be violent enough to declare war on sin!

I mentioned a disciplinary case last prayer letter. Five different accusations were made against a specific family by multiple families in church. We have talked to them several times about these things, but they denied all of them saying that they were either exaggerations, lies, or misunderstandings. Maybe some are, but I told them that everyone involved will need to sit down and talk in order to clarify this issue. The fog of war makes it hard to know what to believe. Pray we have clarity and that it will not bring division in the church.

Many might feel Daniel is a casualty of war. He came to our church in January

PRAISES:

- Salvation of Azelia
- Salvation of Carlos
- Victory over Voodoo
- Covid recovery
- God's patient work
- Beto's parents allowed him to continue in church

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- Nena's time in rehab
- Lupita's decision
- Daniel's recovery
- Discipline situation
- God's will for Missionary Antonio and us
- Hannah's pregnancy
- Traveling in April and May

hoping for healing. He is a pastor's son and a former missionary in a nearby state. Last year his wife sold everything they owned, walked out on him with their four-year-old daughter, and moved in with another man. His cuts are deep, but he is beginning to heal. Pray I can be of help to him for the time he is here.

Let's move on to the victories!

One really incredible blow dealt to the gates of hell involves a young man named Carlos who is temporarily working in Arandas. He has been coming to church since last fall. Several of us have been working with him. Just last week he called me and told me that when he lived in Mexico City he was practicing Voodoo. He asked me what to do with some magical bone necklaces and talismans he still had. I pointed him to Acts 19 where those of Ephesus burned their books of witchcraft. I told him that certainly was the right thing to do but that the key in the passage was that they believed and confessed their sin. He made a solid profession of faith all on his own, decided to burn the Voodoo stuff, and is planning on getting baptized.

Another victory is that Nena (the one who has been backsliden and for whom I have been asking prayer) finally asked me to take her to a Christian rehab center. She is the one who would get drunk, somehow find the new people we were working with, and tell all sorts of outrageous things about our church. She would sometimes apologize, then do it all over again. She had never been willing to work on the drinking issue. Pray God will deal with her in a special way while in rehab.

For me, the victory of greatest joy is that Azelia, our oldest, put her faith in Christ! As I was writing this, she was looking over my shoulder and said, "I want everyone to know that I believe in Christ!" This is worth everything to us!

This year, we were able to contact all of our supporting churches in the East and will be reporting to all face-to-face. Though on one side I am uneasy about being gone for 8 weeks in the spring and 5 in the fall, I know the work is in God's hands, and I am looking forward to seeing many of you in person and being able to share our defeats and victories firsthand.

Finally, I am excited to announce that our newest 24/7 disciple is another girl! Please, do continue praying for each of our children to commit their lives to Christ. We would not want to lose them in the midst of the battle for Mexico's souls.

