

“...the stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” Mt. 21:42

March 2023

Behold the humble, multi-purpose **Madreado Tree** (*gliricidia sepium*)! Here on the North Coast of Honduras it is about as common as



dirt, and noticed about as often. Its bark and body are like a Honey Locust, its flowers like Wisteria, and its second growth like a Mimosa (which is not too surprising as it is

related to all of those more famous family members). From the globally ubiquitous and shamelessly inbred *fabaceae* family, its cousins range from Acacia to Alfalfa, from Clover to Kudzu, from Lentils to Licorice.

But only farmers pay the lowly Madreado much attention. In the campo, it's pretty useful as firewood. Its seeds make a passable rat poison. Its leaves work well as cut-and-carry fodder. But mostly it is used as live fencing. You just chop it back to a stump with your machete, let it sprout out multiple straight branches for a few months, cut those branches off, stick 'em in the ground in your fence line, and they sprout as living fence posts. So around here the humble Madreado spends most of its life looking like a stumpy fencepost growing out a bad hairdo.

Yet, for an evanescent few weeks in the springtime, in the month before Holy week, the whole hidden population decides to bloom all at once. That resurrection lights up and outlines the pastures and roadsides with flames of white lavender, the edge of the highway or the edge of the jungle dressed up in its finest, and waiting for Easter.



Madreados in bloom

Life out here in the campo most of the time seems to be a tapestry of interwoven dull strings of dying and dormancy... but punctuated with such luminescent resurrections. Most of the time Mangos are just big leafy trees that the termites and the philodendrons like... until they all bloom at once. Then they all make mangos at the same time. Fireflies spend most of their mundane existence as unremarkable grubs, chasing earthworms around... until they all decide to metamorphose together and turn into galaxies of starlight in the grass.

Hospital Loma de Luz has recently been undergoing such a beautiful period of resurrection. These resurrections can be physical, like with some of our patients. Don Marcos comes to mind as just one example. The mountains above and around us, like much of the interior of Honduras, seem to be inhabited by two primary demographics. The most common group is subsistence farming families... kind of clannish, a bit rough around the edges, and not likely to be trending on Instagram, but tough,

hardworking, generous, and generally good citizens. Then perhaps the second most common demographic up there seems to be crazies and criminals on the run. So it was not at all an uncommon story when this Christmas Eve past, Don Marcos was minding his own business, working in his field way up in the mountains above Lis Lis, and "Jacobo," the local demoniac, sauntered up to Don Marcos and, under pretense of asking for a cup of water, proceeded to try his drugged-up but determined best to cut Marcos's head off. Yet, Don Marcos didn't quite die up there all alone in his field. Though a man of few words, as best we can tell, when Jacobo tired and staggered off to assault the next relatively innocent bystander (before he in turn was killed later that day), Don Marcos--with more than half the muscles and ligaments which usually hold your head in place disconnected, and losing half his blood volume--somehow got up.

Holding his head in place with his hands, he walked down the mountain toward the hospital. Starting with a call from the Emergency Room from Dr. Asfura that Christmas Eve (a little worried, I think, that Marcos's head was not going to stay attached to his body), putting him back together was a group effort involving several stages, and at least 5 different "doctors sewing" (we invented a new verse to "The 12 days of Christmas"), as well as those keeping him alive in the true Christmas Eve spirit.

The "before" photos were considered just too graphic for publication. But here is a less offensive "early after" photo.... Just keep in mind that that repair goes around at least that far on the other side of his head and neck.... And a whole lot in between.



*Don Marcos and his injuries
in early stages of repair*

And here is Don Marcos just 10 days later, standing kind of non-plussed next to a grateful Dr. Javier (one of those "5 doctors sewing").



Now, in the material realm, the realm of Madreados and Mountain Men, all of these little physical resurrections sadly come to an end. There is always another diminishment and death to follow.

But there is a different kind of resurrection, one that lasts, a resurrection in the realm of the Spirit. And, as well as in our patients, we are seeing a season of spiritual metamorphosis and new life in our medical staff. There are several good examples I could share, but I'll just give one. Gerardo is one of our bright young Honduran doctors. He came to Loma de Luz last year as one of the first two doctors to do their Social Service obligation at Loma de Luz under a significant modification of long-standing Health Ministry policy. Three are now doing their Servicio Social at Loma de Luz. The last (and only other) doctors to do their Servicio Social Medico at Loma de Luz were myself and Leon Greene, which, as I recall, was back in the days when the Industrial Revolution was still just a minor Industrial disagreement. So, it was a welcome wind which brought Gerardo to us at the end of his medical school training. Now Gerardo's story of dying and dormancy and resurrection... is just that... his story to tell. Ask him about it the next time you are at Loma de Luz. But with his permission, I present as much as illustrates the theme I'm following. In Dr. Gerardo's words, when he arrived at Loma de Luz

last September, his faith was what he called "a work in progress." By early December he realized his need to change, to come closer to the Lord. He made a decision to make a commitment "to try to follow what His path is for me in the best way possible." He made a decision to be baptized.... And so, he was, here in the Lucinda River on 8 January. Within the body of Christian Orthodoxy, I understand that there is a broad range of theological convictions on the Christian sacrament of Baptism. I do not presume to be qualified to parse out these divergent perspectives. Even to list them would be swerving way off the track of my story here. But I think it safe to say that they all agree that baptism is a fundamental sacrament of our faith and that, whether it is basically a matter of commitment and obedience or an essential life changing passage, baptism is about death and resurrection. Whatever else it involves, it foreshadows the death we shall all pass through....and the resurrection which follows.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection....Romans 6: 3-5



At Loma de Luz we seem to be coming into a period of walking "in newness of life." Sure, in this world, there will be diminishment and death someday. The Madreados in bloom today will be fenceposts tomorrow.... But not today.... And next year they will bloom again.

And, sure, all of these cycles of life out here in the campo, of growth and diminishment and death and resurrection, all of them strung together are just a second on the real clock on the wall, the clock of Eternity. They are just a spark from the campfire, brilliant for an instant as it rises into the night sky, then disappears. But the Resurrection we are promised, that is forever.

I went to bed thinking on these things. It must be morning now. The rooster is calling in the first light of dawn. It seems I just put my head down half an hour ago. Still, I suppose it's time to rise and meet the new day, to make the coffee, let loose the chickens, do devotions, get ready for work. Another day at the hospital. Another day taking on the overwhelming need of the diminishment and death of others. Frankly, I'd rather go back to bed. But, I'm reminded it won't be all bad. There will also be resurrections. There will be Madreados in bloom along the road.



In His Service,

Jefferson McKenney, M.D.

News and Needs

The Land Invasion of property adjacent to Loma de Luz continues to threaten the property, the Foster Children's Home (just across the fence from it), and our water source across the road & up the mountain. **So please don't forget to continue to pray about this threat to Loma de Luz. Please also pray for Honduras as a whole. Honduras has been assaulted by a 1000% increase in such land invasions** just in the first year of this administration.

So keep praying. (And, if you have contacts in the US or Canadian State Department who might listen or help, please connect us.)

The Effects of an Absentee Work Force:

Whatever your perspective might be on current US immigration policy, you may not have thought about its effect on Honduras. The draw of the "open border" of the world's largest economy (the US) has been (for Honduras) akin to offering cotton candy to the hungry. According to World Bank figures, it is estimated that now more than 30 % of the GDP of Honduras is attributed to Remittances (the money sent back to Honduras from Hondurans who have left the country, the great majority coming from "undocumented aliens" in the USA). To put this into perspective, the total contribution to the GDP of Honduras by Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing combined in 2021 was only 11 %.

At first glance, this might look like a good thing financially for Honduras, but in reality, it is precarious. A country which depends for nearly 1/3rd of its economy to be sent back by its own workforce living & working & producing in a different country as a semi-legal underclass is a recipe for a failed state. This has sacked the workforce of Honduras, exporting them to another country where they live in limbo as 3rd class non-citizens. In Honduras, this bankrupts the family unit, puts an almost insurmountable burden on development, decimates the country of potential community leaders, and robs Honduras of its culture, its children & its future. This is not just some theoretical challenge for the country. This is a clear and present critical situation for this region, these communities, and the entire work of Loma de Luz. These are issues certainly beyond our ability to control. Yet we remember that *Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear* (Isaiah 59:1). **So please remember the plight of Honduras in prayer.**

Education: One small way we can contribute to the future of Honduras is by raising up well-educated, bilingual, ethical Christian future leaders. At **Escuela Bilingue El Camino** we are doing just that, and we are **in need of several Junior High to High School teachers**, particularly in **Science and Math**. If you or someone you know is willing and able to offer a year teaching these bright young students, and the Lord so leads, please contact us at volunteers@lomadeluz.net. It does follow the great commission to *mathetusate panta ta ethne*—that is, to make learners (disciples) of all nations.

Art Benefit: On Saturday, April 1st (2023) from 10AM-5PM, at the property of the Cornerstone Office, there will be an Open Studio event to benefit The Cornerstone Foundation / Loma de Luz. Seven artists will be painting new works of art, and 170 art pieces will be for sale to benefit the work. It should be an interesting and fun way to support God's work. If you can come, we would love to see you.



The poster features a central image of a young girl in a red dress. To the right, text reads: "Open Studio Benefiting Cornerstone/ Loma de Luz Hospital, Honduras 7 Artists • 170 art pieces • 1 Day www.crsstone.org Saturday, April 1, 2023, 10am-5 pm". A smaller image of a colorful bouquet of flowers is in the bottom right corner.

The Hospital: At Hospital Loma de Luz, we are in need of mature physicians, fully trained in their area of specialization, volunteering for a couple of weeks or a couple of months at a time, to care for patients in great need and ready to invest in the next generation of young Honduran Christian Physicians. If you do feel so called, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at volunteers@lomadeluz.net.



Through Hurricanes and invasions, through unrest and pandemics, from the early days...

to the present day..., as it says on the sign at the gate (DIOS OBRA AQUÍ), God is still at work at Loma de Luz.

Thank you for all you do. We are truly grateful.



medical and missionary staff leading praise & worship before outpatient clinic

--Sally Mahoney for Cornerstone