

# San Lucas Toliman Mission News

November, 2009



***“Padre, Gracias a Dios.  
She is free of  
leukemia!!!”***

***Dear Friends,***

Thursday morning, August 27, 2009, on the lower left-hand corner of the front page of the ***Prensa Libre***, Guatemala’s most commonly read morning newspaper, there was a notation stating that the number of cases of leukemia in children has been increasing at a high rate.

As I turned to the second page of the same paper to read the article explaining in further detail the frightening statement about that serious illness affecting children, the “buenos dias” greeting of Bonifacio Cum Coz called my attention to him and delightful little daughter Ana Victoria, smiling broadly, at the office door. ‘Padre, thank you for the use of the car to take my wife, Ana Victoria, Anita, and me to the doctor in Guatemala City yesterday. The doctor gave us good news of the results of Anita’s most recent examinations. “Padre, gracias a dios. She is free of leukemia!!!” Anita, Bonifacio’s name for his beautiful nine year old daughter, squirmed a little but smiled even more broadly as her Dad explained a bit more: “Padre, it has taken almost two years of weekly and bi-weekly trips to the National Cancer Hospital in Guatemala City.

There was medicine, lots of medicine. There were weeks in the hospital; there was a lot of

attention given us by Dr. Tun and we worried and prayed a lot but it was all worth while. The doctor at the hospital in Guatemala City told us yesterday that there is no further sign of the leukemia that Anita was suffering. He told us to be very careful. To watch her carefully for any sign of a cold or any other sickness.



***Ana Victoria Cum Tzunun***

We have to be very careful she does not get too much sun. However, if all continues to go well she will be able to start school again this coming school year (January 2010)! Thank you Padre, thank you Dr. Tun, thank you all who help the Parish for making it possible for us to receive this ‘good news’ about Anita. May God bless you all.”

Ana Victoria was one of four children diagnosed by Dr. Rafael Tun with leukemia some two years ago. In each case, Dr. Tun was convinced that the leukemia could be put into remission and maybe even cured if procedures prescribed by specialists at the National Cancer Institute (INCAN) be followed exactly

and completely. There would be time in the hospital for tests and therapy. There would be the need to purchase medications. There would be a need for regular visits to the doctors after the release from the hospital. These doctors appointments would mean a trip from San Lucas into Guatemala City.

At first the trips would have to be by car because of the weakness of the child. Also, both parents would have to be present at those first appointments to receive instructions for proper care of their child directly from the specialist attending.

It was obvious that the care needed for such a long time would be very, very costly. The trips to Guatemala City not only included the cost of the trip (either by car or public transport - bus) but also the need for funds for medicine and for meals while in the city. Such trips would mean days of work lost. Dr. Tun did assure the parents that the Clinic / Parish would help with some of the funds needed. The family would agree to do all they could, the Parish would help with all the rest.

Three of the families of the children suffering agreed readily to do all possible. One family simply gave up. Said that a child with cancer will eventually die and nothing could be done about that. Dr. Rafael spoke with them, encouraged them to please try, had parents whose sick children did find help this way speak with the family but to no avail. The youngster did die soon after diagnosis. Of the three families that did do all possible for their children with the



***Renella Vasquez de Cumez with son, Edwin Eduardo in class at the Colegio San Lucas***

help of the Clinic / Parish, two young ones are coming along nicely however one young fellow has had more than a little adversity to face.

Edwin Eduardo Cumez Vasquez continues his heroic struggle today with the constant care of his mother, Renella, and his father, Chepe and always at his side older sister, Carla. The Parish Community, the Colegio Community, the Neighborhood Community pray for and with the Cumez Vasquez family daily.

It is inspiring to see all reach out from so many

directions to support, encourage, and bless little Edwin Eduardo and family. Just after the first treatments, the little fellow seemed to improve quickly. After about a year of treatment, there was a setback but Edwin Eduardo and family overcame that. He even came to the point of improvement that the doctors told him he could try school again at least for a couple of days a week. As you can imagine that brought joy to all and cheers were heard throughout the school building the first day the little guy came to class. Regular check-ups continued and it was during one of these that a tumor was discovered.

Hope waned but Edwin Eduardo and family continued to struggle. Since First Communion was planned for classmates of Edwin Eduardo that year, the family decided it would be good to have a First Communion celebration for Edwin Eduardo early just in case the situation would grow more difficult before the whole class was ready. The whole Parish celebrated with the Cumez Vasquez family that Sunday morning!



***Edwin Eduardo Cumez Vasquez with older sister, Carla, making his First Communion***

I was called to the Community of San Jose Pampojila to bring the Sacrament of the Sick to a seriously ill child. I was surprised to arrive and find the sick child was Anastacia Garcia, one of the children diagnosed with leukemia by Dr. Tun. She had started her treatments in INCAN, was able to

return home, but was very weak and her parents were frightened. We all prayed and the Community prayed and the parents promised to continue with the care prescribed by the doctors.



**Anastascia Garcia with little brother  
'Who hits!'**

It was a short six weeks later, while I was celebrating Mass with the same Community on a Saturday evening, when I watched as little Anastascia was wheeled into Church in a borrowed wheelchair struggling to be free to the strap holding her in the chair so she could be with the other little girls in the front row fussing about as little ones are supposed to do in Church. She continues to improve and showed her spirit during a recent visit to her home when I asked her little brother's name and she answered, not with his name, but 'Look out for him, Padre, he hits!!!'

Early in the 2009 school year, Ana Victoria urged her parents to allow her to go to school. The doctors advised against it because of the exertion it would demand plus the effect of too much sun with trips to and from class. Volunteer Roberta Gomez responded by going to Anita's home daily for classes in the basics of 'reading, writing, and arithmetic'. Anita was thrilled, her parents so pleased and Roberta, well Roberta and Anita became the best of friends. Anita even talked Roberta into taking her on

a 'field trip' to the Colegio San Lucas where she will be attending class this coming school year.

It is because you who read this reach out to help all of our efforts here in San Lucas that little ones like Anita, Edwin Eduardo, and Anastacia have a chance ever if faced with serious illness. It takes a lot of effort and a lot of sacrifice by a lot of people. But in the end it is the People of God caring as God cares that brings hope to this world we live in.



**Dr. Rafael Tun Ajuac**

May God bless each of you in your care and concern for others.

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Ana Victoria Cum Tzunun  
with Roberta Gomez, volunteer

(Nichole Paladie of the Catholic Charities Parish and Community Social Action coordinator for the Worthington Deanery of the Diocese of Winona, Minnesota, while visiting San Lucas interviewed the Cum Tzunun Family and Anita. Her article found in the June, 2009 issue of the diocesan paper, *The Courier*, is excellent.

*Thank you Nichole!*