



LOVING HANDS



The Manos de Cristo Newsletter
Volume I, Issue 5

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Hands of Christ

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory... full of grace and truth...From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

John 1:14, 16

Dear Friends,

It is the season of Advent in which we anticipate the coming of Jesus Christ, God in human form. During this season, let us remember – or perhaps discover – the ways God has revealed himself to us this year, and the ways we have perhaps revealed God to others.

At Manos de Cristo (“Hands of Christ”), this is what we strive to do daily – look for Christ in others, and be his hands and feet to others. In the hustle and bustle of classes and dental appointments, programs and activities, it is easy to forget that God comes to us daily in each person we meet. And in the busyness of Christmastime, it is easy to forget that we need to be Christ to the world more than ever. But during Advent, we are encouraged to slow down and recognize that God truly is Immanuel, is truly here with us, if we would only just stop and recognize his presence.

At the Back-to-School program this past summer, I saw the face of Christ in the volunteers who lovingly helped a family of ten select clothing, backpacks and school supplies for the new school year. I witnessed the love of Jesus Christ at work in a young boy, who instead of choosing a new

pair of shoes for himself, picked out a pair for his father to be buried in. The God of kindness and love is here with us.

When I walk through the dental clinic, I witness our staff working as the very hands of Christ, bringing healing to our clients who want to smile with dignity. I have seen the gratitude on a mother’s face as we provide free sealants for her child. She is thankful she can help protect him from the suffering she endured as a result of growing up without proper dental care. The God of healing and hope is here with us.

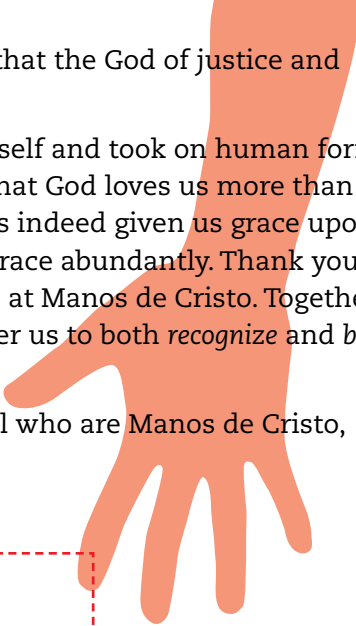
At times it feels as though God is far away, allowing injustice to prevail. I recall the young woman who pleaded for us to intervene with a landlord who refused to fix her family’s furnace because they were undocumented. This family was cold, and I couldn’t comprehend why they should suffer when I have a warm home to return to daily. It broke my heart to see small children like hungry little birds, patiently waiting for our volunteers to fill their food orders. In these instances, I struggle to recognize God. And yet God suffered along with us in Jesus Christ, knows our suffering, and is at work bringing about his kingdom – a kingdom of justice, abundance and peace. And while it is sometimes difficult to believe, this God chooses to use us to bring about this kingdom. And so, even in my

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times of doubt and sorrow, I say with faith that the God of justice and mercy is here with us.

Two thousand years ago, God humbled himself and took on human form, that we might truly know who God is and that God loves us more than we could ever love anyone or anything. God has indeed given us grace upon grace, and asks that we in turn share that grace abundantly. Thank you for being bringers and spreaders of God's grace at Manos de Cristo. Together, as we enter the New Year, may God empower us to both *recognize* and *be* the Hands of Christ in the world.

With gratitude and love, and on behalf of all who are Manos de Cristo,
Julie Ballesteros, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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