



Eugene Peterson said, "God doesn't explain suffering. God surrounds it." Soon after my mother died in 2000, I had the opportunity to go to Argentina on business. While there I found the perfect souvenir to illustrate Peterson's point...it was the nativity scene shown here (yes, it has seen better days...having been broken and repaired several times). The way the artist used God's hand in place of the stable serves as a reminder to me that God is in control and He is with us, surrounding us, in every situation...particularly the difficult ones!

God's surrounding presence has been our reality this past month. He has surrounded us with just the right message when we needed to hear it, He has surrounded us with caring and knowledgeable health-care professionals, he has surrounded us with encouraging visits and notes, he has surrounded us with the prayers of the faithful, he has surrounded us with help from friends and neighbors at just the right time. Thank you for being a part of God's surrounding presence in our lives this month. We've been particularly touched by reports of people being anointed and prayed over on Juliana's behalf. Will you please continue to surround us...particularly Juliana...with your prayers?

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Dad asked me today if the hospital has given us our own set of keys yet. You see, Juliana had been recovering nicely at home but we returned to the hospital on Thursday night...first to the ER and then later back up to the pediatric ward...because Juliana has been suffering from an excruciating headache since Wednesday night.

Based upon all of the test results, it seems to be a very severe and long-lasting migraine. So far, pain medication hasn't been effective. Sitting and standing are almost impossible due to the pain. One of our nurses was almost in tears yesterday as she was caring for Juliana because she said, "Juliana never even cried after her surgery - so the fact that she's crying now indicates the severity of the pain!"

Our sustaining verse comes from Psalm 121. "I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." We trust that He's in control and He's got us surrounded!

The 20 days at home between hospital stays were busy ones, as Ricardo handled many issues regarding to the Area Director transition, we both worked on the Pastoral Formation project, and we participated in the Seminary graduation. We were also able to celebrate Thanksgiving with some friends (just a little early due to graduation festivities).

Beth continued her tradition of making flower arrangements on Thanksgiving Day to be used for the graduation dinner and ceremony. The other missionary who works with her is also a nurse and has been a great source of strength and help this month!

Ivan, one of this year's graduates, was part of the family during his years at the seminary; eating Sunday lunch with us, playing video games with Jonathan, acting in plays that Ricardo directed, etc. We wish him & the other graduates a fruitful ministry!

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In his introduction to the book of Job, Peterson wrote, "When people go through suffering, their lives are often transformed, deepened, marked with beauty and holiness, in remarkable ways that could never have been anticipated before the suffering. So, instead of continuing to focus on preventing suffering— which we simply won't be very successful at anyway— perhaps we should begin entering the suffering, participating insofar as we are able— entering the mystery and looking around for God."

I believe we see God at work! We trust Him to see Juliana and us through this, and transform us in the process. Thanks for surrounding us with your prayers in the process!

Blessings,  
Ricardo and Beth



