



SIFAT

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From

*Glimpses of God
...in the Lives of the Poor*

By Sarah Corson
SIFAT's 25th Anniversary Publication

"Where are the Christians?"

Looking out over the stark, majestic Andes in Northern Potosi, Bolivia, my eyes focused on a figure some distance away hurrying over a narrow trail ledged in one of the steep precipices. For some time I watched his approach thinking that he must have a health problem and was coming to see the doctors on SIFAT's medical team.

"Yes," he affirmed, "My name is Rene. Where are the Christians? My village is eight hours by foot on the other side of that mountain. The radio informed us Christian doctors are in this village this week...."

But no, he wasn't sick. He wanted to know how he could become a Christian too. No one in his village was a Christian. They all worshiped stone images as their ancestors had done for generations. They killed sheep or llamas to sacrifice to them, even though their children were undernourished and needed the food. Last year a man came to his village to talk about Jesus, but the elders ran him out with stones. As he left, he handed Rene a book.

"Read it!" He told him. "It is the Word of God!" Rene had read it for a year. He believed it and longed to be one of Jesus' followers. I had the great joy of explaining to Rene that God was with us, ready to hear our prayer, forgiving us, loving us, counting us in as one of His followers. With an intensity in his face, Rene suddenly dropped to his knees --oblivious to the crowd around us waiting their turn with the doctors. "Pray with me NOW, Sister!" he pleaded.

Rene returned to his village, asking for our prayers for his people. As I watched him hurrying over the narrow, high trail on the mountain, I looked down over the little village of Quesimpuco. A few of them still live in shelters only four feet high, with nothing in their homes except some goat skins to sleep on in this cold, high altitude.

But most of them have more food to eat with agricultural training SIFAT worker Benjo Paredes has brought them. There is now a growing church and a new building that holds 300 people. Three years ago, SIFAT started a Christian high school, and today people from 25 villages send three or four students each to live in the boarding home and study there. This year a seminary opened to train youth to reach the dozens of villages around them like Rene's village.

And there is a hospital complete with wind and solar powered electricity. There is a doctor and a nurse, and community health promoters who teach preventive health in the surrounding villages to impact child survival.

Looking out over those rugged mountains at the dozens of other villages where the poorest of the poor live, and seeing the difference in Quesimpuco after just four years, filled me with wonder and praise to God.

What is SIFAT? Quesimpuco is an example of SIFAT's work in holistic ministry. The way things are is not the way things have to be. Jesus came that we might have Abundant Life. We invite you to join us to reach out and touch a hurting world in the name of Christ.