

Grace and Peace Missionary Fellowship

NEWSLETTER: January, February and March 2025



Evangelism
Widow Program
Children's Program
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Church Planting Support
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Medical Missions

Widow Ercida Bocio Diaz was 65 years old when she qualified for our Widow Program in early January. Although she has 2 children, our rule is if the widow's children have children, we know it is too difficult for them to help their mother because they are all so poor. She said one of the children would help now and then but she had to sell ice cream in order to buy food as their intermittent help was usually so little. We found out through her initial interview that she didn't attend church, she wasn't a Christian and she had no health problems, but we could tell right away that she qualified for the Widow Program. Whenever a new widow comes into the program who doesn't know the Lord, Widow Claritza will visit her a few times a week to get to know her and to minister to her. Claritza didn't have to go visit Widow Ercida too many times before Ercida made a commitment to be a Christ follower because Ercida was already attending the widow Bible

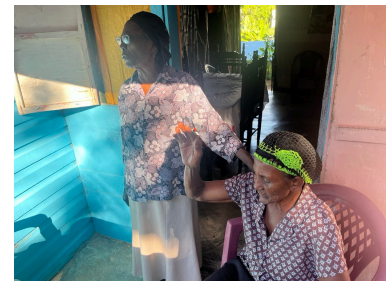
study right by the ministry and had been hearing the Word from Claritza. She had gone to get help and in the meantime, heard about the Lord. Once she gave her life, we did a second interview to see where she came from spiritually. In Ercida's childhood, she did not hear much about the Lord because there were no churches close enough to walk to. Most poor Dominicans will go to church if the church is within walking distance. Throughout her life she heard snippets about the Gospel but nothing in depth. Then approximately 2 years ago, she was invited to visit a church close to where she lives now and she started going every now and then. Ercida said her son and daughter-in-law were going with her and one day they answered the call to give their lives to Jesus. Now, what Bill and I have learned over the last 26 years there is that a lot of times those giving their heart don't fully understand what they are doing. Yes, we all had so much to learn at the beginning, but this is different.



Widow Ercida Bocio Diaz



Widow Claritza shared the Gospel with Widow Ercida



Widow Ercida making a commitment to become a Christ Follower

Bill and Karen Rumple - Directors

Linda Simmer - Administrator

Support Address: 2055 Pleasant Valley Rd., Niles, OH 44446

Phone: (330) 883-8131

Many don't always read or write, they have no experience reading any Bible, so they don't comprehend the Gospel. We have learned to ask the right questions so we can see the ones that don't fully understand. It may have been an emotional commitment when other family members went forward or they were at a street meeting and a lot of people went forward. At times, we come right out and ask, "Did you fully understand what you were doing?" Generally they will say no. To compound this situation is the fact that they can't read the Word to understand better. They only hear the Word when they go to church, and unfortunately as soon as something small goes wrong, they stop going to church. We meet a lot of Dominicans like this. We know they need to know exactly what they are doing before they commit their lives to Him and then get plugged in somewhere to get discipled. Ercida said she went forward with her son and daughter-in-law at the church she was visiting, then a few months later her son and daughter-in-law stopped going to church and went back into the world, according to her. But she stayed. A short while later when she was out walking, she walked up to her son's house and her daughter-in-law didn't know she was outside. Ercida could hear her speaking to a member of the church. They were saying very hurtful things about Ercida and she got upset and stopped going to church and

she stopped speaking to her daughter-in-law. Once that happened, if she heard someone preaching, she said she would turn away and didn't want to have anything to do with Christianity. Simply put, she had a lack of understanding from the very beginning, let alone how the Lord could work through that situation. She told us the day we prayed with her to become a Christ follower that she needed a healing in her heart because she was harboring so much anger towards those 2 women. Then she told us another reason she left the church is because she smokes. Although we don't know the topic of her daughter-in-law's conversation with the other member of Ercida's church, it's a good bet they were talking about her because she smoked. Another great example of the legalism we deal with there. If someone gives their heart to the Lord and has one drink or smokes, the church will ostracize them, literally turn their heads when they walk by or cross over to the other side of the street to avoid talking to them. If they aren't perfect, they can't be part of the church. It's a harsh reality there. Ercida was so ready to pray after just a few visits from Widow Claritza because of everything she had learned prior to that day through the Bible study. She said she wanted to forgive her daughter-in-law and the other woman and asked for prayer. This was something extremely hard for her because of the deep hurt. These are the widows at the Bible

study right by the mission house. Ercida was learning from Claritza even before she qualified. She felt the love there. She felt respected. She wasn't judged for smoking. They loved on her right where she was at. This is one special group of widows. Our Widow Leader, Claritza is the 1st widow on the right.



Then one day last week, one of the leaders contacted us that Ercida passed away. She had a heart attack. She was so poor, she never understood the importance of getting a physical. When we asked her if she was on any medication, she said she was not. I would say this is the first time a widow came into the program stating they were in perfect health, who passed away so quickly after being qualified. A hard lesson for us. We have learned we need to probe a little more when they say they are in perfect health. As we all know, the best part of this story is that she is in heaven with our Lord - thanks to this Program and thanks to our supporters. I'm not sure if we've said it enough. We appreciate your support so much.

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