

A Story of Hope from Guatemala

In the town of Janlay, Guatemala, the streets are filled with people wearing bright, colorful clothes that stand out against the bold green of the surrounding mountains. Many in the community are talented weavers—like Maribel, who creates traditional güipiles, the embroidered blouses worn by Indigenous women in Central America.

Maribel is also mom to a cheerful little girl named Juana, who—like many toddlers—keeps Maribel on her toes. “She’s a very healthy little girl. She loves running around the house. She’s the one who brings happiness to our home,” Maribel says.

But they face challenges too. When Juana was just 4 months old, Maribel’s husband had to travel far to find work. Maribel stayed home with Juana, doing her best to take care of her. She needed help. Then she joined a CRS program that offered nutrition classes, where she learned how to make healthy food choices for her family. Her family was used to eating chips and drinking soda, which made them feel tired and unwell. But after making changes to their diet, their health is improving.

Now, Maribel feeds Juana fruits, vegetables, eggs and hot cereal full of vitamins and protein. She also makes her own drinks instead of buying soda.

“The moment we stopped drinking soda, my mom started to feel better,” Maribel says. Now, her mom’s hands don’t hurt when she knits and she can stand up to wash clothes.

Maribel also learned that it's important for her to take vitamins, like iron, because Juana receives them through her breast milk. “We learned that we need to stay healthy for our children, and not just as mothers. It’s important for all girls to take their vitamins so that we are well,” she says.

The program also taught families—and the whole community—how to save money and build better habits for everyday life.

Today, Maribel is thankful for the program. She says, “For all the support they’ve given us, we feel very grateful. Through healthy eating and the practice of saving, we have been able to improve our family's health, nutrition and financial well-being.”

This Lent, try tostadas, a meatless dish commonly eaten in Guatemala.



The CRS Collection is one of the twelve national collections established by the bishops of the United States so that, by combining resources, we can more effectively carry out the global mission of the Church. It offers Catholics a convenient opportunity to help more than 110 million people at home and abroad through a charitable contribution during Mass. The CRS Collection supports six Catholic organizations (Catholic Relief Services; USCCB Department of Justice, Peace, and Human Development; USCCB Migration and Refugee Services; Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.; USCCB Secretariat for Cultural Diversity in the Church; and the Holy Father's Relief Fund) that advance the international social ministry of the Catholic Church. The CRS Collection is taken up in the Diocese of Cleveland on Laetare Sunday, the Fourth Sunday of Lent (March 15, 2026). If you are interested in learning more, please contact Diocesan Social Action Office Director Shawn Witmer at 216-316-9544.