Columns
Spirituality



"Like other boys and girls [in the 1970s], I enthusiastically joined a youth group that went on missions to Huitel (a town in the state of Hidalgo), always guided and accompanied by Luis," said Sr. Lucía Herrerías. (Pixabay/Pexels)



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I was 15 years old, and my mind and heart were full of dreams. That young Marist brother spoke to us about Jesus as a close friend, and he shared with us his informal conversations with Him. He introduced us to a Jesus who understood our rebelliousness, shared our ideals, and made them greater and loftier.

In the get-togethers he organized for us teenagers in the '70s, I learned to build deep relationships with the youth, talking with them about important issues. We were acquiring analysis techniques and tools to critique the world in which we lived.

The team that supported Luis Salguero in those gatherings was composed of teenage boys who assumed tasks and responsibilities in the most natural way. We knew we were protagonists of the story there.

> Luis Salguero treated us in a way that made us grow in responsibility and self-confidence, capable of undertaking projects and doing something good in this world.
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Like other boys and girls, I enthusiastically joined a youth group that went on missions to Huitel (a town in the state of Hidalgo), always guided and accompanied by Luis. He had confidence in us, he instilled self-confidence in us, and we grew in responsibility and sensitivity toward real and concrete people who needed our help. We knew we were co-responsible in that team, and not just helpers.

Luis left the [Marist] congregation a short time later, but continued to collaborate with the school and accompany us in the mission group. On one occasion, we were all about to board the bus that would take us to Huitel for the weekend, with our parents waiting to see us leave.

Suddenly, Luis arrived, very apologetic, saying that, because of reasons beyond his control, he could not leave with us at that time. He explained to our parents that he would catch up with us the following day, and that he had full confidence in us. My mom was on the verge of not letting me go. Luis approached her, spoke to her, and reiterated again that he trusted us: a group of 16- and 17-year-old boys and girls going "alone" on a mission to a village!

It was a wonderful experience that marked my life forever. We arrived at the village feeling the weight and support of the trust that Luis placed in us, settled in and organized where we would sleep: the boys on the straw in the barn and the girls in a room that they had to clear of spiders and other bugs.

We then prepared dinner together and organized ourselves for the next day. When Luis arrived at noon on Saturday, we were divided into groups visiting families or helping villagers with different tasks.

Personally, I was happy to have responded to the trust placed in me. Luis Salguero treated us in a way that made us grow in responsibility and self-confidence, as people capable of undertaking projects and doing something good in this world. He knew, as he often said, that none of us was indispensable but that we were all needed.

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One morning last February, after many years, I met one of those mission companions. If that trip had happened today, we would have thousands of photos of those experiences: preparing meals, nights of campfires and guitar songs, walking house to house at the end of a day, sunbathing … Perhaps we would have recorded the conversations in which Luis spoke to us of his dreams and his friendship with Jesus of Nazareth. We have the images and the words engraved in our hearts.

The memory of experiences and missions of Huitel still make us tremble after so many years. We have followed different paths in life, each with our own ups and downs, but we all recognize that we would not be the same without Luis Salguero. The way he treated us, respected us and encouraged us has always been, in my missionary life, an inspiration for my dealings with young people.

Luis died while still young in an unexpected and tragic way — in a car accident — but he is still so alive! On that February morning, I learned that several of my friends from the Huitel group had already passed on to eternity. But it fills me with joy to see that Luis Salguero left a beautiful and indelible mark not only on me, but also on many other restless, dreamy, and rebellious teenagers who found in him a guide, a friend, and a messenger of Jesus who is close and a companion on the journey.

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