



TESTIMONIAL 7/18/2024

Esther and Juan Emilio Fernández, Paraguay

"For the Mighty One has done great things for me..."

Juan Emilio: Good morning, dear team members. We are Esther and Juan Emilio Fernández, from Asunción (Paraguay). We have been married for 28 years and have been in Teams for 21 years. The Lord blessed us with 4 children: Raul, 27, Gustavo, 24, Juan Diego, 22 and Ana Elisa, 15.

We would like to tell you briefly about our life in the movement and share with you the fruits that we have begun to harvest thanks to it.

We joined Teams of Our Lady because of the need and desire to find a guidance that would lead us to God, that would form and strengthen us in the faith, and thus be prepared to fulfill our commitment to the spiritual formation of our children.

We were blessed to be part of a team, Asunción 12, with excellent people with whom we bonded from the very first moment and forged a beautiful and close friendship during these 21 years.

Our life in the movement was very active, we went through a series of journeys that helped to strengthen our faith, and to know and love Teams. We are convinced that joining Teams marked a "before and after" in our lives, as we felt directed and strengthened as Christians, as a couple and as a family.

What we want to share with you mainly focuses on our commitment as parents to form our children spiritually since we are convinced that, as Pope Francis says: "The best inheritance we can leave to our children is faith".

Little by little, from an early age, we introduced them to prayer, catechesis and church life. For more than 15 years as a family we have been serving our parish as part of the Liturgy Team, the choir and they have been helping as altar servers. We feel a lot of emotion and happiness when we see them at the altar, and above all knowing that they are growing and strengthening in faith and love for God.

Esther: In the year 2016 we lived one of the strongest events of our lives, which marked us and brought us very close to God: our eldest son Raul Emilio, after completing his discernment process, decided to enter the Capuchin Franciscan Order and give his life to the service of the Lord.

On February 7 of that year, we took him to the Capuchin Center, which is 200 km away from Asuncion, the city where we live. He was happy, radiant and very convinced of the step he was about to take. His eyes had a special glow, and he could not stop smiling. He was filled with joy. On the other hand, we found it impossible to keep some tears from flowing, which we quickly and discreetly wiped away. Honestly, it was a very difficult day, it was too hard for us to realize that this special person we loved so much would no longer live in our home. He was our trusted son and the head of the household in our absence.

After two hours of travel, we arrived at the Capuchin Center, a beautiful place with large gardens where the presence of God was felt. The Capuchin brothers in charge of the place received us very kindly and we were ready to unload his luggage and install him. We spent about two hours in that paradise that would become our son's new home. And finally, the hardest moment had arrived, we had to leave him and return home. He came up to us with his hands clasped together and said: "Mom, Dad, I want you to give me your blessing". With the immense love we felt for him, we gave it to him,



we embraced each other and said goodbye, from that moment on we left him in the hands of God and our Blessed Mother Mary.

We started our way back home with immense sadness, leaving a part of our heart in that place. For many kilometers we were in silence and wiping our tears that did not stop flowing, like the disciples of Emmaus we were sad and desolate.

His absence was harder in the beginning because we had no news of him, since he could not communicate with us.

Our Spiritual Counselor at that time, Father Arduino Petris, enlightened us with a thought of St. John Bosco: "When a son leaves his parents to follow his vocation, Jesus Christ takes his place in the family". And believe us, this is how it happened, as the days went by, we increased our moments of prayer, our visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the weekday Masses, we really needed this. It was as if Jesus himself was accompanying us on this path of detachment, he showed us his closeness, he tenderly consoled us and above all he opened our eyes so that we could see three truths: Firstly, we were giving God our beloved son as an offering, handing over a loved one to be his instrument; secondly, that we should respect the decision that Raul made when he accepted the call; and thirdly, that we were receiving an immense blessing: a son of ours was going to be a priest!

We have always been aware that our children are temporary gifts that God gave us and that their lives do not belong to us, they belong to Him. He is the one who saw them even before they were born and already had written each of the days they would live. It moves us to think of the phrase from the book of Jeremiah that says: "Before I formed you in your mother's womb, I knew you; before you came forth from the womb, I consecrated you". It fills us with joy when we think that those tiny hands that held us tightly when he took his first steps may one day consecrate and raise up the Body of Christ. May they bless, forgive, soothe and heal.

May that voice that we hear so many times saying "Dad or Mom", be able to speak the same words that Our Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed. May your whole person become Him, to bring joy where there is pain, light where there is darkness and comfort where there is difficulty.

Juan Emilio: It has been 8 years since he joined the Capuchin Community, he is currently in his 3rd year of Theology and Philosophy, he has already professed his vows as a religious, and if God permits, in a few more years he will be ordained as a priest.

It fills us with satisfaction and excitement to see our son preaching the Word of God with faith and passion, giving vocational talks to young people, going on mission to the interior of our country and sharing his reflections through social networks.

We miss him very much, but we see him every day fuller and happier with the path he chose and that makes us very happy too, and the most important thing: Jesus stayed with us, he took his place in our home and that is our greatest grace.

We want to leave you a message: it is very important to take care of the spiritual formation of our children, especially to be open and accompany them if we notice a vocational awakening occurring in their life.

Our Church needs Priests! The commendable work they do is absolutely indispensable. Let us never forget that without priests there is no Eucharist, no sacramental forgiveness of sins, no accompaniment for so many people who seek the presence of Christ at their side. Let us be aware that we must always support our priests, both the priests of our parishes and the priests of our province.



And if we ask ourselves: where do priests come from? The answer is that priests come mainly from the families, where they were made known and taught to love God, and what greater blessing that they come from the families of Teams! They will be future Spiritual Counselors, knowledgeable and convinced of the great richness of our beautiful Movement.

Esther: For all our family and friends it is a source of joy and pride that Raul is on the way to his vocation, and it is even a source of inspiration for many of them. With great joy we constantly visit our son's religious community, since we now have a new family there and we try to support in everything we can the needs of his Congregation and to make known all its activities, especially those related to the call of new vocations.

We feel very honored and loved by God, and we give Him thanks and praise Him, feeling in our souls the fragment of the Magnificat that says: "For the Mighty One has done great things for me", because definitely "The Mighty One has done great things in our family".

Thank you very much.

