



HE RETURNS!

I take responsibility before God for your vocation

STORY BY JOSÉ ASTÚA |

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PALOMA OLVERA

PREPARING THE GROUND FOR A VOCATION

The vocation to the priesthood reaches those who are called to it. God chooses each one from His reality. There is no specific type of person who is ideal for the priesthood. It is our attitude that must be suitable to listen to the proposal that God has for each of his children and their lives. Though Father José Luis Quintana has experienced challenges, he is a great example of someone who faithfully listens to God's call.

Fr. José Luis, son of Eleuterio and Fidelia, was born into a faithful Catholic family on October 14, 1964, in a small town called Los Cerritos in Durango, Mexico. When he was five years old, his family moved to a neighboring town called Los Pinos where he attended primary and secondary school. Among the memories of his childhood, is his mother's devotion, and her image ringing the bell in the Los Cerritos chapel to invite people to come to the rosary.

Father José Luis explained: “my vocation was also nurtured by living in an entirely Catholic community, the patron saint festivals and Holy Week were very important to us.” Another thing that he remembers is the importance of the testimonies of priests, among them Father Teobaldo who gave himself fully to the community. “Father Raul Estrella was very concerned about social justice to the point of having sold his own truck to send the money to needy people in Guatemala.” But for Father José the most important thing was to see the seminarians. They arrived during Holy Week or in the summer. They led liturgical celebrations and organized picnics with the community. It was one of these seminarians, Eduardo (Lalo), who directly invited him to go to the seminary. By this time Father José Luis was about 14 years old and he made the decision to participate in a vocational retreat and visited the seminary for the first time. Among the things he remembers most from this day is the painting of Christ in one of the halls with the verse from Jeremiah 1, 5 “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you.” This impacted him so much

that he decided to enter the minor seminary and although his parents had some reservations about this decision, they let him go and young José Luis moved to Durango to begin his academic preparation.

THE ROAD IS NOT EASY

José Luis' theological studies were placed on hold during his time in Durango due to his family's move to the United States. After a year in California, he moved to Grand Rapids to work with the idea of studying at a university to improve his life. It is here that God put Mercedes Tui in his path, a counselor from Grand Valley State University who after realizing that he has been in seminary for several years which not only connects him with Ferris State University in Big Rapids, but also puts him in contact with Father Theodore, director of the Hispanic apostolate of the diocese and Bishop Rose of the Diocese of Grand Rapids. Fr. Ted convinced him to collaborate in the Hispanic apostolate of the Diocese, as he dedicated himself to it on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays teaching catechism and visiting migrant camps.

THE FLAME OF VOCATION KEEPS BURNING

After a year of living and studying at Ferris State University, Father Tom Page recognized his dedication to his studies and the apostolate. He offered Fr. José a room in the rectory of Santa Maria in Big Rapids and with the help of Fr. Ted, obtains a car to travel between Big Rapids and Grand Rapids for his ministry. These activities with the Hispanic apostolate once again fan the flame of the priestly vocation in the young José Luis and lead him to make a special trip to Durango to speak with his spiritual director, Father Campitos (as he affectionately calls him), with his parish priest and with the rector of the seminary in Durango who helped him discern his calling. Fr. Campitos, now very ill from Parkinson's, wrote these words on a piece of paper: "Return and I will take responsibility before God for your vocation". This phrase cuts deep into his heart and prompts him to make the decision to enroll as a seminarian for the Diocese of Grand Rapids.

THE DEMANDS OF PRIESTHOOD

After completing his theological studies at Mundelein Seminary in Chicago, was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Grand Rapids on June 1, 1996. Fr. José Luis was assigned as Vicar of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Holland arriving in a moment of crisis for the community as the temple had burned down during Father Stephen Dudek's tenure. Fr. José Luis explained that his "honeymoon" as a priest lasted 4 years during which the community of San Francis de Sales treated him well.

After his service in Holland, Bishop Rose appointed him pastor of the Shrine of Saint Francis Xavier in Grand Rapids where he spent the best years of his youth, totaling 20 years. One of the biggest challenges he faced during that time was helping the community transition from a

predominantly English-speaking population to a Spanish-speaking community. Looking for a way to unify this community, he traveled to Mexico City to bring the Virgin of Guadalupe on a pilgrimage from the Basilica of Guadalupe to the Shrine that he had prepared for her in Grand Rapids. Finally, and with a lot of pain in his heart, he received the news that he was going to be transferred and appointed as the new pastor at Saint Joseph the Worker. However, with tears in his eyes, he explained that his arrival in Saint Joseph the Worker provided another injection of strength for him due to the love and support this community has offered him since his arrival.