



**Created by Love: Miguel and María Ferrer**

By José R. Astua | Photography by Paloma Olvera

## EARLY YEARS

María and Miguel Ferrer are a couple from our diocese who belong to the community of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Wyoming. The first years of their lives were spent in Mexico, in the state of Guanajuato where they were born. They remember their childhood with endearment as they grew up surrounded by their family and friends. During those early years their faith did not play a significant role in their lives or that of their families. María tells us: “in my home we weren’t practicing Catholics, only in the sacraments. That is, we only attended church on special

occasions such as baptisms, first communions, confirmations, weddings, or funerals.” However, María remembers that faith formation classes, was where she first felt a connection with God. In Miguel’s case, his grandmother was the one who taught him to pray and, like María, has fond memories of faith formation classes, he tells us: “I went to religious education classes with my older brother, and I wanted to receive communion before I was old enough.”

Miguel describes his teenage years by telling us: “When I was 16 years old, my father asked me to come to the United States to live with a relative. Something that left me very disconcerted because it was not a part of my plans.” Miguel arrived directly to Grand Rapids where he had many difficulties since he did not know how to navigate the new environment and received little support from his relatives with whom he lived. Additionally, the change in climate was too strong for him, Miguel could not withstand the extreme cold weather of his new home. He shares: “those were very difficult days, but things changed when I gained the courage to ask for what I needed.” On the other hand, María, who still lived in Mexico, had been working since she was 10 years old where she found a space to escape from the situations that overwhelmed her at home.

Miguel and María met when Miguel returned to Mexico in 1993. It was thanks to some mutual friends that the two began to form a relationship and although they were not very close to the church, they had very high moral values which allowed them to respect one another until marriage. Miguel tells us: “that is something I have to thank my mother and father for, they

taught me to be respectful.” Once they were married in a civil union, they made the decision to emigrate to the United States, where their faith began to grow. During the first years in the US, they lived the faith in the same way as they had in Mexico, attending church only when they needed the celebration of one of the sacraments for their children.

## **BLESSED BY THE CHARISMATIC RENEWAL**

María tells us: “In 2002, when my oldest daughter was very young, she had an accident in which she almost drowned, and it is due to the anguish that this incident caused me and the criticism we received from society that I began to seek refuge in my faith. It was then when I was about 22 years old, that I learned about the Charismatic Renewal, and I began a new chapter in my life.”

“In 2003, I participated in a 3-day charismatic retreat where I had my first encounter with Jesus. During which I identified with three characters: the figure of Zacchaeus, who felt less than the others; with Mary Magdalene who was asked: “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?”; and with the disciples of Emmaus who had lost faith and the meaning of life.” She adds: “...before I did not know the Blessed Sacrament and during this retreat, I received that great blessing... There I was able to recognize my mistakes and correct them.” This conversion urged Maria to ask Miguel to accompany her to the charismatic meetings that were held at St. Joseph the Worker Parish and Miguel agreed to go because he had seen the change in their lives. This was the beginning of a 4-year period of participating in a small charismatic community in which they met weekly to reflect on the word of God.

## **MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER**

In 2005 they had the opportunity to experience the Marriage Encounter, and there they realized the importance, value and meaning of the sacrament of marriage. Understanding this, they decided to receive the sacrament regardless of whether they could have a formal party, but the other couples who were members of the Worldwide Marriage Encounter assisted them with the party to celebrate their marriage in the church.

## **THEOLOGY OF THE BODY**

Although they had lived these wonderful experiences of faith with the Charismatic Renewal and the Worldwide Marriage Encounter, groups for which they are very fond, the Ferrers still felt that something was missing in their lives. In their prayers, they asked God to help them find what they were looking for and that something was inner healing. Maria tells us: “I asked God to send me a psychologist, a priest or something so I could heal.” It was after this that Maria received a video about Theology of the Body which talked about the healing of the relationship between you and your mother. From here on Maria and Miguel discovered the abundance of teachings found in Saint John Paul II's Theology of the Body. From there they explored this new path together; It has been almost two years since Miguel and María have been reflecting, studying, and praying in harmony with the principles of Theology of the Body. Thanks to this they have been able to heal their wounds by discovering their roots and learned how to live out other areas of their life.

Miguel shares: “Theology of the Body is important because it teaches us to reflect on the love of God that is manifested in the Incarnation of Jesus and we who are His body. This area of theology is something we should all learn because it helps us realize that we have been created out of love and with a purpose in life.”

Finally, they, along with a group of local leaders, have taken on the task of bringing the Theology of the Body initiative to the Office of Hispanic Ministry to develop an initiative on Theology of the Body in our diocese. We invite you to join us on February 16 and 17 for a conference on this topic, it could change your lives as it did theirs.