

Rafa, Elma and Mercedes Guatemala 2002

We are three young missionary volunteers. All of us lay Marianists, as we like to be called. We come from different parts of Spain: Cadiz, Jerez and Madrid. We have different professions, although all of them are connected with education. Our ages also represent three different generations: the 60's, the 70's and the 80's. Our names are Rafa, Elma and Mercedes, and our common bonds: our Christian commitment to the Gospel, to the liberating transformation of our reality that the message of the Gospel brings about, and to our immense love for the aboriginal, poor, excluded, persecuted, and massacred communities in this country: Guatemala.

With these ingredients and the infinite support and understanding of our friends, partners and brothers of the Spanish Communities, and families in particular, our love story with this corner of the world unfolds, which we are happy to share now. Our story is a story of participation and involvement to many people that ended up in what we have today, our, and your central office, created in Cadiz in March 2002. It was named after the community we want to blend with "Las Conchas", in a real, tangible, fraternal hug, implementing human, economic and technical resources, among others. All of them are highly necessary for the development of a dignifying and sustainable future in this area, and above all, to initiate an authentic process of approach to the brothers and sisters here, who have always been totally neglected.

It is in this particular aspect that we are all involved in at the moment, offering our living presence in these lands in the north of Guatemala, almost on the borderline with Mexico, working in educational, pastoral, and social areas. Our mission (that is the name that we liked best and which straightforwardly launched the project) is no more than to be at their complete disposal. At their order as they say, perhaps in remembrance of that tragic military argot that these lands have suffered for so long as their lands were being exterminated and their aboriginal communities massacred, on the grounds that they belonged to the guerrilla, according to the military. Our mission is then to serve them with all humility, accompany them in their every day lives, with their problems, their sufferings, their jobs, their dreams, their projects, their claims, their prayers, their lives, which are to be nothing but ours.

Thus, just by living with them, in the same way, in the same environment of wild and at times hostile nature, yet always beautiful and maternal to this culture, with their same poverty, with their own tools, immersed in their deeply communitarian social structures, and using their same beautiful language, Q'ueqchi', which we are obviously learning here in Coban (capital of the department of Alta Verapaz). This works as an entrance to their extraordinary as well as beautiful Mayan culture, as sign of real and inexcusable service to the Community, and as the only way of access to their trust, door of their broken and humiliated hearts, with little to no strength or self-esteem due to the cruel harassment that these peoples have been suffering since the Conquest times. This is how we fervently believe that we can contribute in the construction of this Kingdom of the Poor that here acquires a special meaning and charisma because of its won history and circumstances.

Hence, as simple facilitators, aware of their needs, their feelings, their sufferings, their requests and closely coordinated by the very actions of the Evangelization and Social Pastoral of the La Verapaz Dioceses, under the guidance of Monsignor Valenzuela, and with the rest of the lay people, catechists, priests, community leaders, rural teachers, and other people involved, we expect to carry out our humble job, or rather, MISSION.

First God. A strong hug and we look forward to keeping on sharing our experiences. May God bless you all.

Your brother and sisters Mercedes, Elma and Rafa.