

Three Testimonies from Members of the Maryknoll Small Communities, Sal y Luz (Salt and Light)

As we celebrate Pentecost Sunday on 5 June 2022 we invite you to meet Elvety, Iris, and Luz -- mission animators from Maryknoll's Small Christian Communities and learn how Pentecost continues in their lives and communities.

Pentecost continues today! Since the pandemic began, the Discipulos Misioneros Maryknoll team has sought ways to continue building a community that accompanies the journey of Hispanic/Latino pastoral agents in the United States and Central America. Following the exhortation of Pope Francis, “let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of community!” and inspired by Section 92 of his document, *The Joy of the Gospel*, we developed the Maryknoll Small Communities, Sal y Luz (Salt and Light). In light of the Word of God, these small communities provide a space to pray, sing, dialogue, listen, and discern our call to missionary discipleship. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we have laughed and cried, we have consoled each other in times of many losses, but above all we have motivated ourselves to respond as disciples of the Lord to continue building a Kingdom of love, peace and justice. In this way Pentecost continues today through the Sal y Luz Small Communities, and by inheriting the missionary charism of Maryknoll. We present the testimonies of three mission animators from the Sal y Luz Small Communities on how Pentecost continues today in their families and communities of Faith.

Elvety Marisol Flores Serrano, mission animator from Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Central America:

The experience of practicing the methodology of “see, judge and act” within the Maryknoll Small Communities Sal y Luz has helped me to better understand many concepts and feast days of our Universal Church. It has helped me to grow personally, in the family, and especially in my community of faith. We can experience the coming of the Holy Spirit in our daily life by accepting and by putting into practice new charisms. It is important to go out of our comfort zone to experience the renewal of the Church, we are called to bear witness like the disciples, not to be afraid.

Just as the Holy Spirit was given to a community of disciples, it is also given to us; not only individually, but also as a community, it is important to emphasize that the movements and communities that have emerged after the Second Vatican Council have been gifts to the Catholic Church. Likewise by forming these communities, we are renewed in the Holy Spirit through listening to the Word of God that awakens the faith and strengthens the grace that we have received in our baptism.

During Pentecost, we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the missionary activities of the Church. Most of us have in mind the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They show us

the path: what is the best in our life and pursue true happiness. If we let the Holy Spirit guide us in small things, he will do much more in the big events of our lives. When each family and community opens to the Holy Spirit they speak the language of love, harmony and joy. Also when we gather to pray, and to commit ourselves to building the Kingdom of God, it is because there is a path of conversion. When we pray, we sing, we do good, when our gatherings are a joyous celebration, that is a big day. When we say yes to the Catholic Church with our hearts, when the Lord breathes his Spirit in us, then it is Pentecost.

Iris Laí Zayas, mission animator from Houston, Texas, United States:

On the feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, bursting into history, defeats its aridity, opens hearts to hope, stimulates and favors in us interior maturation in our relationship with God and with our neighbor. Let's see how we continue Pentecost in our small faith communities. For my part, I have not stopped looking for the necessary spiritual nourishment to be able to be an instrument of God every day. Despite the pandemic, my relationship with God has not remained in a vacuum. Thanks to the support we have received in the Maryknoll Small Communities Sal y Luz, the Holy Spirit has strengthened my faith, alleviated my fears. I have found a place where I am heard, where my voice counts, and it is a place that invites me to walk in a community.

Despite the fact that we all have been experiencing fear, the Holy Spirit has also been present. It has surprised us through different testimonies, and even through the death of some brothers and sisters, who have left us a great missionary legacy. We have experienced Pentecost through the gifts given to us, and learned how to better share the Good News with the stranger, the hungry, the migrant and the one who lives alone in the margins. It is time to let the Holy Spirit act in our lives and through the synodal process we can discern where and how we can walk together.

Let's take a look at our families. Starting from the principle that we have been baptized and confirmed, we have the seed of what God expects of us. I can say that even though my family is not a practicing family in faith, it does not stop receiving what the Holy Spirit wants for it. Thanks to the Spirit, we are a family that in the midst of differences we remain united, that in the face of adversity we encourage each other and get up. Like the apostles, we have had fears, especially in this time of pandemic. Fear of death, loneliness, of not knowing what will happen to this world, fear of losing faith and falling into the abyss of dryness. But we have turned this fear into hope. Although we do not live close due to different circumstances, we maintain effective communication with each other.

Every morning after my spiritual routine: listening to the Gospel of the day, listening to the *Bible* episode, listening to Carlos Seoane in his daily reflection and completing my personal prayer; I start what I call my apostolate of love: I call my brother and sister. I let them know how much I love them, I ask them how they are doing, and what project they have for the day. I feel that this is my call to be the bridge between them and the continuity of living out Pentecost every day.

Luz Veronica Matamoros, mission promoter from Honduras, Central América:

There are many challenges facing families today. Aware of what is happening around the world, we must reaffirm that God has wanted to call men and women in order to be part of Christian movements and communities with the objective of strengthening all those dimensions that are necessary for the Christian person to be a builder of peace. For today's families, Pentecost must be the new paradigm, where they bear witness, live and make their loved ones experience that joy that only Jesus gives, through dedication in service and evangelization. It's a starting point to revive so many families that, according to their different realities, today continue to be very hopeless due to migration, loss of values, family disintegration, etc.

The Catholic Church is Mother and Teacher, she is attentive to our needs and she must be a "house with open doors", as Pope Francis says in *Evangelii Gaudium* (Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*).

Another way in which families and small faith communities can contribute to continue building the Kingdom of God here on earth is by being promoters of an integral ecology, especially in the care of our common home.

Each community must promote the desire of each baptized person to continue with their Christian formation process contributing to evangelization from their own reality. Undoubtedly, today we find a great wealth of small faith communities that enliven their journey through the different apostolates that generously show that they have had their personal encounter with Jesus. With the pandemic we have experienced the coming together of people living in different realities and places. As a missionary family, we have been called to integrate the Maryknoll Small Community Sal y Luz, where the Holy Spirit that guides and gives life to the church through this community. We share the faith and all the pastoral work that every day strengthens our missionary discipleship through prayer, sharing, and formation. All humanity suffers and needs God. Let us be bearers of good news that builds peace, love and justice in this globalized world that is becoming more and more vulnerable, especially the children and elderly. Let's take care of our families as homes and schools of Christian formation. May our missionary task, driven by the Holy Spirit, lead us to be co-responsible for the evangelization of today's world. "LET US GO TO THE EXISTENTIAL PERIPHERIES WHERE CHRIST IS PRESENT TODAY.

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