

Five Children on Earth and Two in Heaven

Alejandro and Adriana, who live in Guadalajara, Mexico, tell us the story of their family, with its great sorrows, and even greater joys.

04/20/2022

Alejandro and Adriana met at the university in Guadalajara. She was studying management and he was studying law. Their wedding took place soon after they graduated.

Several months later, they headed to Pamplona, Spain, for postgraduate studies at the University of Navarra.

Adriana recounts: “In Pamplona we were expecting the birth of our first child. But we lost our baby through a miscarriage.” It was a very tough experience for them, in a country they were just beginning to get to know. “It was the hardest trial we had confronted in our life up to that moment.” But their new friends in Spain came to their assistance, and their marriage went ahead stronger than ever. Some months later they returned to Mexico, with one child in heaven and a new baby on the way. Valentina was born not long afterwards, followed by Jose Pablo, Maria Ines, Natalia, Isabel, and Josemaria. “The baby we lost in Spain is a part of our family. When people ask us, we always say we have seven children, because that is the truth.”

“Our marriage has been an exciting adventure. God has never let himself be outdone in generosity, and he has brought us forward along unexpected paths.” One of these paths involves the story of Isabel. “She was our fifth baby and the pregnancy was very high risk. The doctor was quite worried,” Adriana recalls. In the end, everything turned out well, and the four older siblings joyfully welcomed their new sister. “After the initial scare because of what the doctor had told us, we were very thankful to God.”

Isabel was a lovely little girl, pious and affectionate. “When her brothers and sisters fought with one another she used to run to the image of our Lady and put it in between them all, as if to say: ‘Let’s see if you dare to fight in front of Her.’ When we prayed the family Rosary, she would ask if she could lead the first mystery because she knew she would fall

asleep after the third.” Isabel was very special; so special that God wanted her with Himself very soon.

It was Fathers’ Day, June 19.

Alejandro and Adriana, together with their three oldest children, went to Mass in the morning. The priest asked them if they would carry the gifts up to the altar at the offertory. “I remember that, while we were doing this, the priest gave each of us a blessing. What we didn’t know was that our Lord would soon ask us for a new and much bigger offering within the next few hours.”

“Everything happened so quickly. The whole family was at dinner: grandparents, aunts and uncles, dads and moms, brothers and sisters. We don’t know what happened; suddenly someone saw Isabel lying at the bottom of the pool.” They called an ambulance and tried everything possible with first aid.

Everyone was praying. “That day, the ambulance service never arrived. We had to go out into the street to hail a taxi with the child in our arms, to bring her to the hospital.”

They couldn’t believe what was happening. “Inside, I was saying: ‘this isn’t going to happen; God is going to leave her with us because I’m asking so strongly,’” Adriana recalls. While Alejandro was praying: “Lord, I offer you my life, but preserve that of my child if it is your Will.” Silence. That day Isabel ended her celebration of Father’s Day in heaven.

“It is like a living hell. Words can’t describe what a mother or father goes through when they lose a child.” But Adriana knew she wasn’t alone: “Taking out Isabel’s clothes, her toys... it was all so painful. I remember going to an image of our Lady and lighting a candle and

saying: ‘You went through this too: you gathered Jesus’ clothing, folded it, put away his belongings. You have to teach and help me to do so too.’ I am sure that Mary was there, right by my side.”

“God asked this sacrifice from me on Fathers’ Day. I knew it must have a meaning,” Alejandro says. Eventually he realized that “it was a caress from heaven. God made me see that He was guiding everything.” Despite their pain, life in their family went on as before, and Adriana learned to draw strength from the Eucharist. She came to see that “my visit to the Blessed Sacrament every day was a visit to Heaven, and thus a meeting with my daughter.”

“Isabel is in Heaven. We have a daughter who is a saint.... This certainty brought joy to our whole family. The fact that my children were sure they had a sister in

Heaven was what enabled us to keep going.” Three years later, Josemaría arrived. “One child cannot take the place of another, but the arrival of the new baby helped us to discover God’s hand in everything. It gave us great joy.”

Last year, Adriana and Alejandro celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary. “During these years, we have experienced God’s immense love. He has given us the great privilege of having an intercessor in Heaven, a direct line. He has taught us to abandon ourselves in his hands. We have learned to say: Whatever you want, we want it too.” And Adriana continues: “I feel very privileged that God chose me to be Isabel’s mother for all eternity, because I know that even though she is no longer physically with me, I am always going to be her mother.” They will be “a family for all eternity.” And Alejandro adds: “the future of

humanity is decided in the home of each family.”

“Everything in which we poor men have a part — even holiness — is a fabric of small trifles which, depending upon one’s intention, can form a magnificent tapestry of heroism” (Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 826). Adriana smiles: “these words of Saint Josemaría have meant a lot to me.” Maybe now we can only see the back of the tapestry, with the knots and figures that are hard to make out. But one day we will see the front of the tapestry and be amazed at the work of art that God has woven with our lives. Adriana and Alejandro already have two children in Heaven, who now see the whole tapestry. “God has great dreams for us. I think that it is the secret of being happy here on earth: to come to be what God is dreaming of for us.”

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