

## **Montse's love for sports and the outdoors**

Montse Grases (1941-1959) was recently declared venerable by Pope Francis. She loved to swim, ride a bicycle, play tennis, and hike in the mountains. With a group of friends her own age, Montse spent her summer vacations in Seva, a small town in the foothills of a mountain range north of Barcelona.

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Montse stood out for a quality found in people who love sports: she knew how to win gracefully, as also how to lose, which is much more difficult. Above all when she felt she had committed an injustice—as that time when playing a heated game of tennis she let herself lose on purpose after a bad call.

In Seva, Montse was part of a group of close friends, both boys and girls, who were about her own age—14 and 15 years old. She joined them on excursions and in playing a number of different sports. With their cheerful and clean lives they showed that it is perfectly possible to lead a strong Christian life during the holidays, while having a good time without the need for abundant material means.

On July 10, 1955, Montse turned 15. She had recently started going to Mass daily and decided to continue

doing so during the holidays, and to receive Holy Communion also on the days of their excursions to the mountains, even though it meant rising earlier.

Mosén (Father) Garolera, the parish priest in Seva, had a great affection for Montse's group of friends. On days when they were planning to go on an excursion, he too would get up at dawn in order to give Communion to those who wanted to receive our Lord before leaving on their hike.

"All of us usually went to Mass in the mornings," Montse's brother Enrique recalls, "since we didn't want the holidays to mean any break in the Christian life we led during the school year."

On the way back from their excursion to the mountains, the young people would stop by to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in

the church of Holy Mary of Palautordera.

That summer, the group of Montse's friends decided they were old enough to attempt to scale the highest peak in the mountain range. But their parents didn't share this opinion, and told them they would have to be content with climbing one of the lower peaks. "When you are a bit older," the parents told their sons and daughters, "then we will allow you to attempt it."

So they had to put off scaling the summit. Meanwhile, they spent their days playing sports, swimming in the Gurri river, and hiking in the mountains. But what highlighted almost every day was the morning Mass.

**Excerpt taken from the biography by José Miguel Cejas, *Montse Grases: la alegría de la entrega*. A shortened version in English,**

***Montse, A Fun-Loving Teenager*, is available from Scepter UK and in Kindle format.**

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