

Camino Ignaciano – A path of gifts

By Georgina Treviño, Monterrey, Mexico. Camino made from May 8th to 24th 2018

Trees, birds, insects... nature. Back home I return to the forest nearby to recall the Camino Ignaciano and all the experiences lived during the way. I brought my backpack, with water and something to eat, and I remember those days I carried my lunch, hat, raincoat, sunblock, notebook, water... and wondered during the way if everything I was carrying was really important. My shoulders pained after some kilometers, and the next day I had to reconsider its content and put some of the stuff away.

But the important things and the heaviest ones were those I was carrying inside: my history, my failures, my inner pains. The silent time in meditation during the long walks, and God's grace helped me to give them a new sight and let go the heavy weight they meant to my soul. Jesus Christ gave me the grace to look back at them with peace and thankfulness, to consider each one as the building blocks of the person I am today. I received as a gift the grace of reconciliation with my own history.

One of the most difficult days for me of the camino, was the day we climbed to Arantzazu. The first kilometers seemed easy for me, but in the highest part, I faced one of my worst fears: to fall down and have a broken leg or something else. I started to be fearful when trees and plants disappeared, a steep climb was ahead, under my feet loose stones, and to my left, what I felt as an abyss down the mountain. My fear was in the limit to become paralyzing panic, so I kept to my inside telling me "Don't stop, don't stop" and never stopped climbing until I reached the kind hand of Father Joseph waiting for me to take the last step up. I looked back at my meditations of the day, and realized that such is life: how many times I have had very fearful times, and God was there, encouraging me with a "Don't stop!" and giving me His hand to enter in His grace and love.

Another gift I received was a strong sense of community. When I considered going to the camino, I thought of it mainly as a spiritual experience, to let God reveal His Will in my life. I considered doing it alone or in a group. Alone: I could take my time and do not have to adjust to others. But also alone, I thought I could mess up with my thoughts and do not have the inner experience I was wondering it could bring. ¿With a group? It could be safer and also have a spiritual guide during the way, but I would have to keep up with the group dynamics. Then I called the Camino Ignaciano Office and they told me about the organized groups, and chose the second option.

And that was the best choice I could have made. Every day a family was being built kilometer after kilometer. If someone had a physical difficulty, there was an angel to help him/her with something she was carrying or even with a massage. And sharing the inner and outer experiences with each of my new brothers and sisters, created a bond that even now when I'm back home, I can feel it in my heart.

The longest walk of our camino, was around 35 kilometers. That day, the family came up with a very cheerful afternoon: after lunch, we started singing during the way, catholic music that was the same in Mexico, USA, Australia and Singapur!! Then one of my camino sisters put some music of past decades in her cel phone, what made me even dance during the way. We had a

wonderful time, even when it was a very long way to our next town and at the end of the day I got a very bad blister. God blesses my Ignatian family, so loving and joyful.

For me, to follow Saint Ignatius steps walking and in the spirit, was living a bunch of feelings as he had: the gratefulness of confirming the presence of God's love in my life, the regret for the sins and failures I've had, the relief of being pardoned by God, the energy (and fear too) of accepting God's invitation to follow him, the tenderness of His hug in my life, the enlightenment of the changes I need to make to be a better knight in His kingdom of Love... From the exit of Loyola, to his confession in Montserrat and his new pilgrim life at Manresa, Saint Ignatius in an example to follow, and I can understand him when I look back at my life, so similar in a very different world, 500 years after he lived.

The arrival to Montserrat was another of the most wonderful moments during the way. There, Iñigo prayed to Our Lady for his conversion and put under her feet all his intentions to live in a different way he had been doing during his past life. The meditations during the way also let me to that same mood when I got there. The past days, I had felt how Jesus had pardoned me, and accepts me as I am. I also had experienced His love when I decided to leave behind my blames and errors. He asked me "Do you love me?" and I answered "Yes I do, accept my humble and imperfect love". So He told me "Take care of my sheep". And there, in front of My Mother Mary, I gave God my promise to live in a different way, to be docile to His Will in my life.

The Camino Ignaciano is a path of gifts, I received more from it than all the effort I made in every step, and every town. I received the gift of reconciliation, the gift of the desire to give my life to God and the gift of a new family. Thank you, Ignatian way! Thank you, Jesus Christ! Thank you, Our Lady of Montserrat! Thank you, Camino Family!