

## From the Amazon: Not to sound like empty vessels

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By Lorena Pérez (Ecuador), volunteer in Leticia.

*'If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.(1 Cor 13: 3-7)*



This is one of my favourite passages of the whole Bible, I have read it many times in different contexts of my life and it has always touched my heart deeply.

During this month, from this triple border through my small contribution to the pastoral team as a volunteer, I feel that, in spite of myself, God, that Father who is Good, is letting me live this work intensely, motivating me to put all my heart into what I do. I am passionate about the contact with the children in the schools, who in these months have gradually come to know me: now, they feel they can approach me with confidence and familiarity. They love to pronounce my name by shouting

"Lorena" to get my attention, I turn to look at them, I wink at them and I smile, they answer my smile and come to embrace me. Perhaps, both they and I, we do it out of necessity, yes, the need for affection, closeness, to feel the love of God through the other. How good and rewarding it is to give and receive a hug, we should do it more often, we would certainly create more bonds and less walls in the world.

I am a person of very few prayers, what's more, I probably learned the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, Soul of Christ and Take Lord and receive only when I joined CLC. I have never



liked to repeat prayers by heart, I prefer to pray with my own words, trying to let what I carry in my heart flow into words. Sometimes, when I do not feel the inspiration to pray, I choose to remain silent and let the hearts meet and talk to each other. Perhaps that is why this is the way I like most to spread the Gospel is to accompany, of simply being, talking about a topic, listening, asking questions and motivating those deep desires that flow out of the people with whom I share, children or adults, men or women, young or old.

Sometimes, as I work with the children, enjoying what I do in raising awareness about human trafficking, or while we are watching a video, during some group dynamic, singing or

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reflecting with them about our work, I freeze for a few seconds as I ask myself: what am I doing here? why am I here? And the answer that comes from the depths of my heart is the memory of my mother who through her example always taught me to serve and struggle against injustice, and my father who was and still is a fighter, who taught me never to give up, to finish everything I start, a man who silently helps people in need. That moment, that flash, provokes in me a great feeling of gratitude for them, my parents, because it is thanks to their example that I am living this experience. Because of them injustice and exclusion still hurt me.

Often what I do is not so well seen and often labelled as subversive, crazy or communist: they tell you "what you are involving yourself in is dangerous", "speaking against human trafficking here you must be careful". Yet for me to talk to children so that they do not allow themselves to be touched abusively by parents, teachers or adults, to want them to know they have a right to take care of their body, a right to protest if they feel that their heart is saddened when an adult, whoever they are, hurts them, for me that is evangelisation. After all, I am only letting them know what happens in the world so that they can take their decisions in full freedom, based on what they learn, so that they no longer fall because of ignorance.

During a conversation I had with a priest here, I told him that I think Jesus was a leftist; he looked at me, laughed and said, "I too believe that", because being here is for crazy people, and Jesus would do again what he did two thousand years ago, that is, he would not be in the churches, he would be travelling in the river or in the mountains, he would probably not be very well qualified according to professional standards, he would surely be confronting and motivating people to ask themselves what is going on around them; he would be motivating us to leave our comfort zones and be his feet and hands to build the reign of God.

That is why I ask God every day to let me do things, in this mission and in my entire life, big or small, with all my heart, with love, because if I do not think about this every day, I will become like an empty can that makes noise: there are already enough empty cans that pollute the world.

I can describe my activity this month as continuing to raise awareness against human trafficking in the communities of Arara, Santa Sofia, Nuevo Jardín, Loma Linda, Maloca and Progreso. We are welcome in all the schools and we work with all the children and their teachers in the mornings until one in the afternoon. In some communities providentially this is also the time for parents' meetings in the afternoons, so that we took the opportunity to speak to them on this topic. In the evenings we have a celebration of the Word, and then project a video that serves to inform the people about human trafficking. This mission is touching my heart so much, I am so happy to see how after our inputs the children and adults leave better informed and more sure of what they can do.



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We also had the support of two Jesuit novices from Brazil (Eduardo and Fernando) who came for a month to this triple border to live a short experience of insertion with the indigenous communities. It was a real pleasure to share with them and motivate them so that when they become priests they will not forget their first missionary vocation, of going to the borders, of rowing into the deep, where very few want to go because it involves leaving our comfort zones and that always costs us, it scares us, but in the end the consolation is very great.

After finishing this short account, I will prepare myself for the Holy Week missions. I hope it will be a time for personal and community reflection. And that, at the end of Holy Week, we will all rise again, full of the motivation to move on and plunge ourselves into those missions at the frontiers that Jesus is all the time calling us to, and which we are all the time postponing.

May you all have a blessed Easter!  
A big hug and let us continue praying for one another.

Lore