

12/2016

In memoriam

Xaverian biographical profiles



P. Humberto Vega Aviña

10 January 1970 ~ 13 November 2016

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Fr. Humberto Vega Aviña

Zamora, Michoacán (Mexico)
10 January 1970

Piracicaba, São Paulo (Brazil)
13 November 2016

Fr. Humberto Vega Aviña died on 13 November 2016 after suffering a severe attack of asthma which led to a respiratory failure. He was 46 years old and had been a religious for 25 years.

On 15 November 2016, Fr. Luigino Marchioron, a former rector of the International Xaverian Theology in Mexico City, wrote: «I remember two characteristics of Fr. Humberto Vega Aviña that enriched our theology community from a human and spiritual perspective.

The first characteristic was his “creative heart”, which he put to good use in any kind of circumstance, such as a birthday, a meeting, a celebration, a joke, prayer, difficult relationships, a mistake, a very heated discussion, and it came to him almost naturally to restore peace and serenity to troubled moments.

He was famous for his practical jokes in the daily life of the community. He also avoided exceeding any limits that might annoy or hurt others. He loved celebrations and the festive character of the most simple and daily moments. This aspect of his personality attracted many people.

The second characteristic was his sense of inner and outer beauty: the beauty of certain stages of his personal growth, service and self-giving, which was accompanied by his openness to the spiritual life.

His intense experience of God's mercy was at the heart of his missionary spirituality. He had a keen sense of solidarity with people who struggled and looked upon themselves as unworthy or far from God».

Humberto was born in Zamora, a city in the State of Michoacán de Ocampo, Mexico, on 10 January 1970, the tenth of twelve children born to Luis Vega Castel and Eloísa Aviña Linares. He spent his childhood and adolescence in the district of Caracol, in the city center.

He attended primary and secondary school in Zamora and senior high school in Jacona. He also attended a course in pedagogy at the Centro Escolar Juana de Asbaje in Zamora. On 15 August 1990, when he was twenty years old, Humberto joined the novitiate of the Xaverian Region of Mexico. The Novice Master, Fr. Giuseppe Scremin, said of him: «He is well accepted by the group. He shares his things with others. He is responsible in his work and diligently completes the tasks entrusted to him [...]. He feels at home in the Xaverian world and is in love with the missionary ideal».

He made his First Profession on 4 August 1991 and continued the normal course of studies — three years of philosophy in Guadalajara at the Instituto *Libre de Filosofía y de Ciencias*, run by the Jesuits (1991–94) and four years of theology in Mexico City (1996–2000): he spent the first year in the *Colegio Máximo de Cristo Rey*, run by the Jesuits, the other three years at the *Universidad Pontificia de México*. These years of study were interrupted by one year as prefect (1994–95) in the Minor Seminary of San Juan del Río, and by another year (1995–96) in the parish of Santa Cruz in the diocese of Huejutla, which was run by the Xaverians, and where he worked mainly in pastoral ministry to youth and in the formation of catechists.

He made his Final Profession on 31 July 1999 and was ordained priest on 30 July 2000, in Guadalajara. He served in the parishes of San Lorenzo Tezonco and San Antonio de Padua in Guadalajara and in the Colonia Agraria, Delegación Iztapalapa.

In his application for admission to Final Profession, he wrote to the Superior General, Fr. Francesco Marini, on 10 May 1999:

Ten years ago I wrote to the Xaverian community of Guadalajara asking for information about joining the Xaverian Institute. Ten years later I am satisfied and grateful for the welcome I have received in the Xaverian communities and from the confreres. I am very happy because the Lord

has given me the opportunity to fall in love with Jesus, the Missionary, and to invest my entire life in the project of the Kingdom according to the Xaverian proposal.

They were years of struggle and dedication that called for a great personal effort and the commitment of those who followed my formation process. Today, I can say that I made this journey with the help of a psychologist and my spiritual director: a positive journey for the good results it has produced and for the incentive it has given me for further growth, especially in being frank with everyone and the positive use of my sensitivity so that I may nourish my heart and dedicate myself to all the activities.

My decision was based upon prayer and reflection and I have concluded that I am being called to the missions according to the charism of St. Guido Maria Conforti, in the light of the Word of God and the Eucharist, with a profound self-knowledge and a serene awareness of the responsibility that I wish to undertake; I believe that I will be able to deal with the difficulties, demands and sacrifices that charity entails, recognize my brothers as gifts and live in fraternal love with them.

Through the final vows I wish to commit myself to following the Lord and grow in the knowledge and a more profound understanding of my identity as a son of God; I wish to be more and more consistent in my thoughts and action, to love myself and to share the joy I feel at being called by God [...]. I also wish to make more concrete my belonging to the Xaverian Institute because, mindful of my baptism, I feel called to share my faith with people who do not know Jesus.

These years of formation have led me to discover the Lord's call and they have given me the desire to serve in the missions, despite the current difficulties of war, violence and rejection of God; furthermore, the desire to offer my life and energy is the fruit of a profound love for Jesus, the Missionary of the Father: a love that calls upon me to become capable of seeing, experiencing and loving God in everything and everyone.

On 17 May 2000, Humberto sent his application for admission to the priesthood to Fr. Natalio Paganelli, the Regional Superior of Mexico:

First and foremost, I wish to express my gratitude to the Lord and acknowledge the Xaverian fraternity I have received from the confreres: this experience has helped me to know and to love Jesus, the Missionary of the Father, even more and to make my own the Project of the Kingdom, as it is expressed in the founding experience of Conforti. I therefore believe I am ready for the priesthood, mindful of the Church's urgent need to send "messengers of the Gospel" throughout the world.

In presenting Humberto for ordination to the priesthood, the report of the Regional Direction of Mexico thus described him:

Humberto is cheerful, courteous, affable, creative and serene. He is an enemy of formality and phony behavior. His formative accompaniment and spiritual direction have given him a good inner clarity, self-knowledge and the ability to understanding and manage his emotions and sentiments.

He now finds it easier to understand his intuitions and emotions and did so with trust and an open heart. He looks upon his life with objectivity and a shared and qualified reflection [...]. He is a man of integrity.

During the years he has lived with the Xaverian Family, he showed a well-motivated love for the doctrine of consecration proposed by the Congregation. His right intention and determination to follow the Lord in poverty, chastity and obedience were always acknowledged by his formators at every stage of his formation.

The practice of the evangelical counsels has enabled him to grow in a dialogue with others that is sincere, frank and objective.

He enjoys a more filial and faithful relationship with the Lord Jesus and this relationship has benefitted the prayer of the community through his shared convictions and participation.

He celebrates regularly the sacrament of Reconciliation with an evangelical sensitivity and his participation in the Eucharist is fraternal and well-motivated. His personal prayer is spontaneous, direct and constant.

In the last year of theology, he dedicated himself to missionary animation and vocation promotion, living the apostolate as an opportunity to share his life, experience and communication of the faith and living his prayer life with conviction and as a preparation to apostolic activity [...].

The formation team believes he is suitable for the priesthood and acknowledges his ability to embrace its responsibilities with an integral faith and right intention.



After his theology studies were completed, Fr. Humberto was assigned to the Xaverian community of Torreón to work in missionary animation and vocation promotion, and the Missionary Youth Center run by the Xaverians. In addition to this, he also worked as a councilor in the pastoral ministry to young people and in the CEEAFF movements (*Centro de Evangelización, Compromiso y Actualización para Formarse en la Fe*) and FEF (*Familia Educadora en la Fe*) [2000–2004].

In the year 2004–2005, Fr. Humberto worked as a vocation promotor and missionary animator in the Xaverian Theology community in Mexico City.

In 2005–2006, he was put in charge of the Xaverian publications in Guadalajara. During this brief period, he was also vice-rector of the Xaverian Provincial community. In 2006–2011 he served as vice-rector and formator

of the theology community in Mexico City. The Regional Superior said: «In Mexico, we always appreciated his contagious kindness, his creativity in the youth groups and in our communities. He always helped to create a serene atmosphere and solve problems by trusting in God's divine providence and Word».

In the meantime, in connection with a possible assignment to the missions, Fr. Humberto wrote to the General Councilor, Fr. Armando Navarrete, on 16 January 2010:

I thank you for your birthday wishes and for what is about to happen in my life: this too is a time of grace and I wish to live it as such.

As I told Fr. Javier, I also wish to tell you that I want to go to the missions, mindful of the fundamental experience I had in Tavernerio (*in August 2010, Fr. Humberto had taken part in the Tre Mesi aggiornamento course*). I am convinced that this experience will help me to recap these years of service in the Xaverian Region of Mexico and to prepare myself in a profound way for a new field of work.

I am convinced that all cultures and peoples offer the opportunity to grow as a person, as a priest and as a Xaverian religious missionary. I therefore tell you with some trepidation of my preferences: South Brazil, Mozambique, or Cameroon, with no other motivation than that of working for the spreading of God's Kingdom in the world.

Mozambique attracts me: it is a young mission, where we can propose, especially to young people, a lifestyle that is in harmony with our charism and where I think I would find a good terrain for the pastoral ministry.

I have no wish to jump from one continent to another, but if I had the opportunity to choose, I would insist on this list.

I am aware of the obstacles that must be overcome and the sacrifices which, if I am called to make them, must be faced with attention, prayer and love in order to wholly fulfill our vocation.

In December 2010, Fr. Humberto was assigned to the Xaverian Region of South Brazil. After studying Portuguese at the CENFI (*Centro Cultural Missionário*) in Brasília, he worked in the pastoral ministry in Piracicaba, in the district of Paulicea, first as assistant priest and zone coordinator (2012–2015), then as parish priest; he was also in charge of 13 chapels (2015–2016).

He was appreciated and admired for his pastoral care of young people, his missionary animation and his simplicity. His presence and person as a missionary parish priest was a great blessing for the families, associations and entire society of Piracicaba. Through his words and actions he nourished a missionary faith and discipleship that conquered many people, thanks to

his loyal commitment in animating the life of the parish of the Imaculado Coração de Maria.

From 2014 he was a Regional Councilor and worked very hard, especially to build up the Xaverian Young Missionaries movement, for whom he organized two regional meetings.



Fr. Juan Rosales Rodríguez thus remembers him: «I knew Fr. Humberto since his time as a student and I accompanied him for four years during the development of his vocation. He was a cheerful, friendly, creative young man who was a good listener and helpful to his brothers, even at the cost of personal sacrifice.

During each stage of his Xaverian journey he confirmed his intention to consecrate himself to God with all that he had received as a gift, ready to be sent to wherever he could serve the mission entrusted to the Xaverian family.

In Mexico we always appreciated his kindness, his creativity in missionary animation among young people and within the communities, which helped us to live joyfully and solve problems by trusting in Divine Providence and in the Word of Jesus [...].

Our God, who is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, is not a God of the dead, but a God of the living. Fr. Humberto now lives in the eternal embrace of God's mercy».

Danilo Mendes da Costa, who animated one of the Masses that were celebrated for the repose of the soul of Fr. Humberto, remembers that «at the end of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, everything was ready for the Mass and the closure of the Holy Door, but it remained opened. Fr Humberto did not close it, but kept it open so that all of us could enter».

The servant must not place any limits to his own service, because love knows no limits; he must not be afraid of running risks, because love knows no fear [...]: love alone can give us courage, generosity and freedom¹.

Fr. Domenico Calarco S.X.

¹ Cf. Mt 25:14-30.

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