

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Interview to Isabel Artime Rector Major's (Ángel Fernández Artime) mother



Rector Major's parents, sister and niece.

“The Salesian Congregation is a ship which needs a good helm at sea”.

Father Ángel Fernández Artime has been elected new Rector Major of the Salesian Congregation at GC27. He was born in Luanco (Asturias-Spain). He was an aspirant at Astudillo (Palencia), Cambados (Pontevedra) and León; he spent his years of novitiate at Mohernando (Guadalajara); he studied Philosophy at the University of Valladolid and the two-year practicum period in León. He studied theology and made his perpetual profession in Santiago de Compostela (A Coruña). He was ordained priest in León. His first years of youth ministry were developed in Avilés (Asturias) and he then went to Madrid to study Pastoral Theology and Philosophy. Back in León he was appointed as Youth Ministry Delegate, Vice Provincial and then Provincial. Afterwards he became Rector of the school at Ourense and in the past four years he has been Provincial in Argentine South (Buenos Aires).



Luanco (Asturias), birthplace.

Q.- Isabel, who gave you the news of your son's being elected as the new Rector Major of the Salesian Congregation?

A.- The first person who talked to me was the provincial of León, **Fr. José Rodríguez Pacheco**. It was a huge surprise, I couldn't believe it! Later I got a call from **Fr. Pascual Chávez**, the former Rector Major. I couldn't talk to him, I was crying out of emotion. I also received phone calls from **Fr. Juan José Bartolomé**, Rector Major's secretary, from **Fr. Filiberto Rodríguez**, and from **Fr. Adriano Bregolin**.

Q.- Which feelings did the news of the election arouse in you?

A.- I said: "Help him My Lord, he needs Thee". But I didn't know what to think or do. I worried because the role is charged with responsibility, thus he will have to face lots of difficulties. But there was also... hope. I have always told him that God has given him talents not to be buried, but to be given to others. As his mother, I know how he is worth a lot.

Q.- When Ángel called you, what did you tell him?

A.- He didn't phone me right away. I talked to him more than two hours after the first call. I told him that I already knew about the election and that God would help him whenever he were in need. He told me not to worry because there would be a lot of people to help him. It was a very brief conversation. At that moment he was very busy and he said he would phone me later to talk at ease.

Q.- How did he meet the Salesians?

A.- God's hand is in our lives. My husband was a fisherman and I sold the fish he caught. One day, when Ángel was nine years old, Mrs. **María Sánchez Miñambres**, a cooperater from the city of León who was a good friend of us asked him if he wanted to go to study with the Salesians to that city (200 kms away from home). Ángel said he would think about it. The following year, when he was ten, he took the decision of going to study there. After four years he got the choice of coming back to Luanco (his hometown) to study High School, but he didn't want to. He wanted to remain in León. From that moment, the Salesians made an impression on him.

Q.- Tell us some of your son's good points.

A.- He is very kind and sweet, and very affectionate too. He is always concerned about his family and his duty. We transmitted him our Faith from the beginning. Ours has always been a Christian home.

Q.- You cook for him when he goes home, what's his favourite food?

A.- He loves homemade food, but he prefers vegetables, "pote asturiano" (a stew which consists of cabbage, spicy sausage, black pudding, bacon, and beans), and of course fish, any kind of fish. We have got extraordinary fish here in Asturias.

Q.- Is there any special piece of advice you have given him in his life?

A.- As I said before, I have always told him that he should not bury his talents. They are for him to give to others.

Q.- Which present did he give you that you like the most?

A.- He brought an image of Mary Help of Christians from León, when he was appointed as provincial. Since then, there is always a candle burning in front of it, here at home. I love her!

Q.- Did he get into mischief when he was a boy?

A.- He was so good that he never did. When he was born, he didn't cry and we were very worried. But then suddenly he burst out crying... and didn't stop until he was three!! We nearly got desperate, but he didn't cry any more after we moved back to my parents' house and he found himself living with other family members. He had a hard childhood, because he was alone for many hours at home, while we were working at the fish market.



Present-day parental home in Luanco (Asturias).

Q.- What have you asked for your son to God and Mary Help of Christians?

A.- I prayed for His help, so he can do things well. I asked Him to lend Ángel a hand. Without His help, nobody can do anything. The Salesian Congregation is a ship which needs a good helm at sea. God and Don Bosco, as his predecessor, will help him.

José Antonio San Martín

Photographer: José Pérez Mata