

HOW WELL WE ARE!

Juan Carlos MARTÍNEZ and Ana URDIALES

Given that we make up one very large family from Cartagena, Spain, the year 2020 was a stupendous opportunity, as” thanks” to the Covid pandemic, to the enforced confinement and to the time restrictions on the roads, we were able to spend more time than normal enjoying life together.

However, 2021 came and, when it seemed that the pandemic was coming under control, a succession of events was set in motion, which threatened to disturb our family peace. That's where our phrase *How well we are!* Took on more meaning than ever. For us this phrase is a way of giving thanks to God and also an expression of abandonment, because we have the full conviction that we are well because we are in the best hands, the hands of God. We all know what Charles de Foucauld wants to express in the Prayer of Abandonment, and that it is a doorway to hope.



The death in January of Ricardo, a grandfather to so many of us when we Ana and Juan Carlos and our nine children were affected by Covid, which prevented us attending the funeral as we spend the time in isolation, Teresa (2 years old) our youngest's entry into pre-ICU in February with the first diagnosed case in our region (Murcia) of SIMPED (a post-Covid inflammatory syndrome) which affected her heart, Javier (7) our seventh child's entry into hospital in March and his subsequent discharge without a diagnosis and the surgery that Ana underwent for breast cancer in April, helped us to prepare to receive the diagnosis we didn't get the day of Javier's discharge: it was a leukaemia that showed its face on June 6, 2021.

Suddenly, we saw that God grants the grace to those who need it, and that we able to discover that every situation in life is an opportunity to obtain good things and from the hardest situations, spectacular things. We experienced how suffering brings the best out in people: family, friends, schoolmates, hospital staff...all gave their best to let us spend those moments in the best way possible. For example, when his schoolmates and siblings learned that one of the things he found hardest was the thought of losing his hair, when that time came, they all shaved their heads. But, above all, thousands of people, not only from Spain but from many countries who, thanks to an Instagram account, @howwellweare, created by our three eldest daughters, prayed for Javier and for our family. There we experienced the power of prayer and discovered that suffering is compatible with joy, and that one can live everything that comes in life without tragedy or pessimism, when one lives close to God. Our hope was strengthened by the capacity for solidarity of many people we did not know.

When we had to explain to Javier everything that was to happen, without hiding anything, it was an opportunity to talk to him about the Christian meaning of suffering. We are supernumeraries of Opus Dei and our faith in Jesus is not limited to personal prayer

practices: Jesus calls us to make his life present in each one of us, in good and bad moments. We asked Javier to think very carefully about who he wanted to offer everything for, because what was coming to him was going to be very hard and the Lord would do wonders with so much suffering offered. He didn't need to think about it for long, he was clear that he wanted to offer his illness for the cure of his cousin Lucia (with a brain tumour). We also suggested to him to offer it for priests and priestly vocations, and he did so from day one.

Javier's illness was not only a catechesis for him, but also for his siblings. They have discovered how God does not will our suffering, but allows it, in the same way that He allowed the suffering of His Son, to bring about wonderful things: some of which we will not see until we reach Heaven. And also for us who, although we did not stop praying that he respond to the treatment, at every moment we have been clear that, if our requests were not met, nothing would have gone wrong, because something that we have instilled in our children, from a young age, is that our goal is Heaven, our hope is to share the joy of God. who rejoices with all her children when they are home.



We saw this reflected in the rest of our children, who were alone at home, the older ones in charge of the little ones, the first weeks in which we were in the hospital without leaving Javier; They made a list of rules, among which the first of them particularly caught our attention: "You can cry, but never alone." The objective was to be together and to support each other.

Thank God, as of today, Javier is fine, he has finished the treatment. Ana, after the cancer surgery, did not require chemotherapy and, so far, the results of subsequent check-ups could not have been better. And Teresa was definitively discharged, with no after-effects.



Javier's suffering has brought us closer to God and to each other.

"How well we are" is not a pretty phrase, nor a matter of avoiding the barbs of destiny, but the expression of a faith and hope that we have always asked for and that God has granted us.

**The MARTINEZ-URDIALES family :
Ana & Juan Carlos
Araceli, Ana, María, Juan Carlos, Ignacio, Ricardo, Javier, Álvaro and Teresa**