

Name: Juan Luis Calderón, OAR

Ordination: 7/23/94 Augustinian Recollects Monastery, Marcilla, NA, Spain

Order: Order of the Augustinian Recollects

Section / Area: 16, area #3 NJ North

WWME Weekend: February 2002 in New York City, NY



Fr. Juan Luis Calderón, OAR

Where were you born?

I was born in Valladolid, Spain, on June 8 1969.

Can you tell us about your family?

I am the fourth of five siblings, 2 girls and 3 boys. My parents were married for 42 years before my father passed away. We were a very close and Catholic family. Our parents never tried to hide the problems from us. I believe they were a positive example for their children.

Can you tell us about your call to serve God? How long have you been a priest? Which congregation are you a part of?

As any other child, I wanted to be a policeman, teacher or priest, besides being an actor. At the age of 17 all illusions had come to pass, the desire to be a priest remained strongly. My brothers and I attended San Augustine Catholic School in Valladolid, a school belonging to the religious order of the Augustinian Recollects. This is how I came to know priests that lived as a community and I

felt deeply attracted to their family characteristics, I felt a calling to be religious and a priest.

I am an Augustinian Recollect since 1988 and a priest since July 23, 1994.

The Order of Augustinian Recollects is a reform of the Augustinians of the XVI century. As children of St. Augustine, we are characterized by our communitarian life. In fact, our daily schedule reserves a lot of time to be together, in prayer and spending time as a family. This welcoming and simple way of being of the recollect friars is what attracted me the most when the time came to make the decision to live my priesthood vocation inside the religious order.



Fr. Luis shows his enthusiasm at a 2005 Convention

When and where did you live you ME Weekend?

I lived my first ME Weekend in New York, on February of 2002, four months after establishing myself in USA. I came to the United States for the first time in 2000. In Union City, NJ, I met Frank and Migdalia Fernández, they were the first to speak to me about the WWME. I am the Assistant Director at "Centro Guadalupe", Hispanic Pastoral Institute of the Archdiocese of Newark, since September 2001.

I decided to live my WWME Weekend with the intention of helping couples coming to Centro Guadalupe looking for help with their marital problems. To my

surprise, the experience was of great enrichment for my own priesthood and communitarian life I wished to help other with my WWME Weekend, it helped me instead. I was filled with excitement and was ready to collaborate with WWME. Immediately after, I went to the deeper WWME Weekend? I had prepared my speeches in only seven days.

Can you tell us about your experience and apostolate with the WWME?

In my mind and in my heart, the WWME is like an explosion of wonderful things. I feel blessed to be able to walk with the encountered of the world, more so, because WWME goes above and beyond national and religious frontiers.

WWME offers me much respect and love for my priesthood. I know not of another laity movement which appreciates priesthood more, and at the same time, understands the human side of the presbyter. Since April of 2003, I have presented 22 ME Weekend in my area of northern New Jersey and other parts of the country.

Another part of my service is coordinator in northern New Jersey (Archdiocese of Newark and diocese of Paterson), which is part of Section XVI, since August of 2002, first with Sergio and Brenda Londoño and at present with Frank and Migdalia Fernández. My relationship with them is the best gift I have received from the WWME.



Fr. Luis (R) at the presenting table.

What is most significant for my priesthood life in the WWME?

What I have learned in the WWME Weekend has greatly helped me in serving my apostolate, as a professor of Theology, forming lay leaders and preaching retreats. The WWME offers me much love and a desire to give love. I have developed a matrimonial spirituality which inspires me to live my priesthood with a loving relationship with my spouse the Church. Everyone that comes in contact with me (thousands pass by Centro Guadalupe every year), enrich their lives from the richness I have received as an encountered priest.

Most significant for me is to see how couples leave on Sunday after completing a WWME Weekend. I feel blessed to be a part of the work of God in them, seeing how in only 2 days, they are able to see that marriage can be something wonderful and different.

Two special events come to mind, the 2005 Convention and a community night in April 2006 in Valladolid (Spain), where I participated as an encountered priest for the first time in the city where I was born, there, the WWME is a strong and very committed movement.

Do you have any messages for our readers, particularly those who have lived the experience of the WWME Weekend?

I am very happy to be part of the WWME. My life has changed and I have been able to help others to change theirs. I truly hope that all couples and all priests around the world are experiencing the same joy, and, are enjoying the sacraments as we are. My last words will be the shout of Latinos in the USA: **"Yes, it can be done!"** We can change the world living marriage and the priesthood in the example of Jesus.