Voices of Sisters
Spirituality



Members of the Ayllu Guadalupac Misioneracuna Congregation in Otavalo, Ecuador, are, from left to right, top row: Srs. Cecilia Perugachi and Mariana Lechón. Middle row: Srs.Anita Bedón, Isabel Andrango Cepeda, Carmen Tixi and Jenny Castañeda. In front is Sr. Delia María Albatabango. (Courtesy of Congregación Ayllu Guadalupac Misioneracuna)



Sr. Delia María Albatabango

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We are the Ayllu Guadalupac Misioneracuna Congregation, a community of consecrated Indigenous religious of diocesan right. We follow Jesus, poor and missionary. We walk with our people, speak their language, share their daily lives and their work on the land. We want to root the Gospel in our culture, in our people, in our ancestral memory.

Our history was born from the dream and struggle of our founder, Monsignor Leonidas Proaño, a man who knew how to see and love the Indigenous peoples like no one else. He used to say, full of conviction: "I have been a witness, for more than 30 years, of the liberating power of the Gospel." And with his life he taught us that no one could ever again take away our dignity. It was in 1987, in the community of Pucahuaico, Ecuador, that we took our first steps as a congregation.

Monsignor Proaño was clear: It should be we, the Indigenous people, who would carry the message of God to our communities. And when St. John Paul II visited Ecuador in 1985 and said: "What a happy day it will be when your communities can be served by missionaries, by priests and bishops of your own blood," we felt that his dream grew even stronger.

> We feel part of this living church with its own face, a church that breathes our Indigenous identity and spirituality.
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An inculturated celebration in a sacred pastoral place brings the community together around the four elements, symbolizing the union of peoples from different regions. (Courtesy of Congregación Ayllu Guadalupac Misioneracuna)

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Sr. Maria Isabel Andrango Cepeda, a co-founder of the congregation, during a Mass in honor of our Lady of Guadalupe (Courtesy of Congregación Ayllu Guadalupac Misioneracuna)

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From left to right, Sisters Rosita Castañeda, Anita Bedón, Delia María Albatabango, and Mariana Lechón participate in an inculturated Mass at the Ayllu Guadalupac Misioneracuna Congregation house on December 12, in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe. (Courtesy of the Ayllu Guadalupac Misioneracuna Congregation)

Since then, we have walked hand in hand with our people, sharing their suffering, their joy and their hope. We feel part of this living church with its own face, a church that breathes our Indigenous identity and spirituality. We Guadalupanas find God in the wind and the trees, in the land we cultivate, in the animals that walk with us and, most specially, in our communities. God is hidden among our people! He shows himself in the warmth with which the people listen to his Word, in their simplicity and humility and in the deep love they have for him.

Our journey of faith is woven into the celebrations and traditions of our people. We celebrate Pawkar Raymi, the beautiful feast that announces the beginning of the Andean calendar, when the earth blossoms and gives us its first fruits. In this time of flowering, we feel that God wraps us in the colors and scents of creation. We also

live the *minga*, an ancestral tradition of community work, where we all gather to help wherever we are needed. And in every home we visit, in every sick person we accompany, in every natural remedy we prepare from what the earth gives us, we find a God who is close, a God who walks with us.

The people share with us what they have, with love and tenderness. At harvest time, they bring us little bits of corn, potatoes or whatever they have. And we share too, with open hands. How great is God's love when it is lived in community! In the Eucharist, we offer everything we've gathered, and there we keep discovering *Diosito* — the tender God who walks with us in each joy, in every every difficulty and in every step we take.

Our vocation is to walk alongside our people, to journey with them through life and faith. We support ourselves through the work of our hands: We cultivate the land, make handicrafts, raise animals and produce honey and natural cosmetics. With everything we are — with our Indigenous identity, our history and our faith — we go forward, with joy and with hope, convinced that the Gospel, lived from within our Indigenous roots, is a wellspring of life for our people.

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