



# Dr. Saúl Cruz Ramos

1954 - 2014

*With grateful hearts and profound sadness we share this tribute for our beloved Saúl Cruz Ramos, who together with his wife Pilar founded Armonía, a ministry that has been walking alongside the poor in Mexico for over 31 years, and left to be with the Lord on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014.*

Saúl's wake and funeral lasted for three days and around a thousand people attended to accompany his family and speak about the loving friendship they had with Saúl. There were five services of reflection held during those days and people from many different backgrounds attended and spoke about Saúl's impact on their lives. Members from the very poor communities and the mountains of Oaxaca where he and his family have worked, theologians, pastors, intellectuals, dear friends from other countries and family members, all joined Pilar, Eidi and Saúl Jr. with their tears, sharing about the love they felt through Saúl's life and ministry and how he honored God throughout his life. Many children from all the Armonía community centers together with their parents attended the wake and funeral, and they walked in singing and crying at the same time, sharing how they got to know and understand the love of God through Saúl. Many said that

Saúl looked after them when they were in need, that he helped their marriage, that he helped them to continue studying, that he was there when they were ill, that he was there when they lost a parent and became a father figure to them. Every service lasted several hours and people of all ages kept sharing their love for Saúl, expressing their grief and telling the stories of their times with him and how he touched their lives, thanking God for his life and ministry.

People referred to Saúl as a true disciple of Jesus, a visionary leader, a man of great compassion, personality and warmth. They called him a 'renaissance man', because of his many talents, knowledge and expertise. They spoke about his strength, his stories, sense of humor, his wonderful intellect and gift for communication of biblical truth. Many said that Saúl was full of vitality, purpose and faith and that he was an inspiration to them, that he changed the way they thought and lived their lives.

A tribute written using some of the many lines that were sent to his family, which was published in Mexico's national newspaper on December 31<sup>st</sup>, said this:

*Humanity has lost a great man.*

*Mexico has lost a leader of great intelligence and even greater integrity.*

*Indigenous people and other marginalized members of society have lost a champion who was passionate to help them.*

*The church has lost a fine example, a brother whom with his life and word constantly challenged us to serve our Lord and our neighbor with our hearts.*

*Psychologists have lost a great teacher, a pioneer and a colleague.*

*Those who knew him have lost a friend of great warmth and a wise counselor.*

*We as a family will deeply miss the wonderful and exemplary husband, a loving, inspiring and beloved father, our hero.*

*Heaven has gained a citizen whose arrival, we are sure, has increased the joy of everyone there!*

*In the eternal moment which includes the now, our beloved Saúl is hearing the voice of his beloved King saying:*

*"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" Matthew 25:23 (NIV).*

*With tears we thank God for the life of our deeply beloved Saúl, for the enormous gift that it was to have him in our lives, and for all the love he gave us and gave so many.*

*We will continue to listen to the passion, the joy, the wisdom, the laughter and the voice of Saúl through the years.*

Saúl Cruz Ramos was born in Oaxaca, Mexico in 1954. A child of school-founding parents, education was always an important part of his upbringing. Saúl became a Christian at age 13 after reading Basic Christianity by John R. W. Stott, who would later become one of his mentors and friends. Since he was a young man, Saúl's vision was to bring transformation and hope to poor communities, sharing the love of God with them and helping them to take responsibility for the steps necessary to transform their own situations. As a university student Saúl was a Christian leader at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Saúl studied Psychology and won an international award for his research in Experimental Psychology during his early twenties, and then worked as the Quantitative Methods Area Director at the Psychology Department at UNAM. Having obtained this academic background, Saúl moved to work for several years in the area of business strategy for the pharmaceutical industry.

During 1983, because of their convictions, Saúl and Pilar, and their children Eidi and Saúl Jr., moved to Oaxaca for two years and founded Armonía, working with those living in the city's poorest conditions and starting a center of education for children with special needs. In 1985, Saúl was invited to work as one of the Directors for World Vision México, in order to respond to the needs that the large earthquake that year left in Mexico City. In 1987, after having spent time at the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC) founded by John Stott, Saúl and Pilar continued the work of Armonía by starting to work in the Jalalpa Ravine, one of Mexico City's largest slums, and established a community center that was built on a garbage dump. Saúl, Pilar and their children, together with friends, donors, local community members and many volunteers from around the world participated in the construction of other community centers in two of the poorest areas of Mexico City and its surroundings. The centers provided these communities with programs in health, education, nutrition, entrepreneurship, art, house construction, emergency relief and biblical training.

Saúl also had his heart with the indigenous communities of the Sierra Juárez mountains in Oaxaca, who are marginalized and isolated, and where the children rarely receive more than elementary school education. As people from these villages heard more about the work of Armonía, Saúl and his family were invited to several of these communities, including Villa Hidalgo Yalálag, where they worked for 10 years. In 2007 Saúl, with the participation of donors and friends, designed and began the construction of a beautiful and strategic complex in the surroundings of Oaxaca City. Casa Margarita became the first student residence on this site, and provides an educational platform and training to indigenous students who complete high school and then go on to university. Several generations of graduates who belong to many of the indigenous ethnic groups in Oaxaca now have the opportunity to transform their future and that of their communities.

In addition to a Masters degree in Clinical Psychology, Saúl completed his Doctoral research in this field. He was a renowned speaker in numerous countries, where he preached, as well as taught about the work he did through Armonía. Saúl visited 61 countries during his lifetime, and was an avid lover of history, architecture, culture and God's creation. He served as part of the Board of Compañerismo Estudiantil (IFES-Mexico) and the Board of SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics). Saúl participated in the creation of UNTI (National Association of Indigenous Translators), as well as in several international movements, including Care and Counsel as Mission, part of the Lausanne Movement, and was a member of the Panel of Reference for the Micah Network.

Saúl lived his life with Pilar and his children Eidi and Saúl Jr. walking alongside the poor, and through his vision, words and actions inspired many to “together transform poverty into life”. The story of Saúl's life and ministry, and the many wonderful, colorful and insightful stories that so many loved hearing from him, would take many more pages, but for now, all of us, his family and friends, will deeply miss him, and will continue to hear Saúl's passion, teaching, voice, wisdom and laughter.

*From his wife Pilar, daughter Eidi and son Saúl Jr.*