

## FAMILY COUNTS

## Interview with Alex

By Fr. Julio

I had heard about people with the marks of Christ. For most of us, stigmatized men or women are very far from our culture and time, but speaking with ALEXANDER AVENDAÑO I came to know a stigmatist very closely. Why? Most probably because all of us, sooner or later, go through a deep experience of pain and suffering, and ALEXANDER knows a lot about being wounded. Our conversation was not only about his wounds; actually, through these wounds, a new man was born three years ago.

**HOLY FAMILY MAGAZINE: Who is a stigmatized person?**

**ALEX AVENDAÑO:** He or she is a person who has received the marks of the crucifixion. We can read that from Galatians 6:17, where Paul speaks about "no one giving me any more trouble because I bear in my body the marks of the crucifixion." The word "stigma" means "marks." Many of these marks can be visible, some of them can be invisible; but the pain is the same.

**HFM: When did you first feel that something different was happening to your hands, your forehead and to your whole body?**

**AA:** It was on April 23, 2003. I'd started having a sharp pain in my hands, and two drops of blood came out from the top of my hands. I showed it to my wife, but like me, she didn't know what was going on. She thought I had fallen or done something to myself. The pain was very severe. The next day there were two holes in the top of my hands. To tell you the truth I thought I was cursed because I didn't know what was going on.



ALEXANDER AVENDAÑO

**HFM: Did you go to the doctor?**

**AA:** I went to see my pastor, Msgr. Bonnell, and then he talked to our bishop. Bishop Niederauer told him what to do, so I went to see psychologists, psychiatrists, and a medical doctor. All the tests came back normal, or as my wife says, "as normal as men can be." The medical doctor put some ointment and gloves on my hands. He told me not to take them off for ten days. However, the same evening my hands were soaked in blood. I couldn't wait more than three days, so in front of Msgr. Bonnell a deacon took them off. When we took off the wraps both hands had a beautiful cross.

**HFM: What did your bishop say?**

**AA:** I didn't go to see the bishop until

a year later. A friend of mine who knew him very well arranged a meeting and we went to visit him. His position was the usual position of the church in these cases. He was very neutral. He didn't approve but he didn't disapprove either. We have to wait for the fruits, which is what Jesus taught us in the gospel. Before we left though, he asked for my prayers and he gave me his blessing.

**HFM: What do these wounds mean for you, Alex?**

**AA:** For me this is a great blessing with a great responsibility. I believe it is very important for me to be humble, to submit myself completely to God. You have to live the gospel. There is one passage in the Bible where Jesus says, "Be perfect as my Father in heaven is perfect." I try to read the gospel to obtain what he asks us to do to be holy. And to be an example for others, too.

**HFM: How do you see yourself within your local church? Do you feel that you have some sort of call to answer to?**

**AA:** When I received the first visit of Our Lady, she asked me if I was willing to suffer some of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ for the conversion of sinners and establishment of the Immaculate Heart. At first, these words went over my head. I didn't understand what they meant, but later I understood that through these holy marks people will reinforce their faith and bring others to their faith, which already has happened a lot. And she asked me to build a house of prayer in Utah, where there are many Mormons. I said, "Well, I'll see what can I do." I gave the message to many people.

One family received the call, and the house of prayer built by them should be done by the beginning of the next month. It is a kind of ecumenical house of prayer where everybody can go and learn about Jesus and Mary and the Catholic religion.

**HFM: Once this project is finished, what's the next step?**

**AA:** I think my job upon the earth might be shortened. However, I am not sure about that. I'm just passing by on this earth. Maybe my time will come and it will be time for me to go home.

**HFM: Do the wounds hurt?**

**AA:** A lot.

**HFM: Do they always bleed?**

**AA:** Not always. Normally, my hands bleed on Tuesdays and Fridays. Also on feast days like those of St. Francis or Padre Pio and Our Lady feasts days or for Corpus Christi. On First Fridays all the wounds open; the crown of thorns, the side and feet. In Lent I can be bleeding every day for two or three weeks.

**HFM: How do you treat your wounds?**

**AA:** I don't do anything. I normally take my shower, but I don't treat them at all.

**HFM: Do they ever get infected?**

**AA:** No, never.

**HFM: How do you see yourself differently before the wounds and after the wounds?**

**AA:** Like my wife said to the people after this first happened, "This is not my husband." I am completely changed. I was very self-centered, anti-social, and a computer-geek, who didn't care about people at all. I

was very much into my work. I had a very good salary. Besides, I couldn't say a word to a group of people, but now I am able to speak in front of seven hundred people. I can do this only by letting the Holy Spirit just work. I don't miss my previous life at all, it's just different. One of the good things now is that I have the greatest boss anyone can have. You know that, Father.

**HFM: Do you know any other person with the stigmata?**

**AA:** Not personally, but I have talked to one that lives in New Jersey. I try not to read or to talk to someone else that has the stigmata because I don't want to self-suggest myself with other people's experiences. My wife is the one who does all the reading of the other people with the same blessings.

**HFM: Do you think that these wounds are forever or that one day they could be gone?**

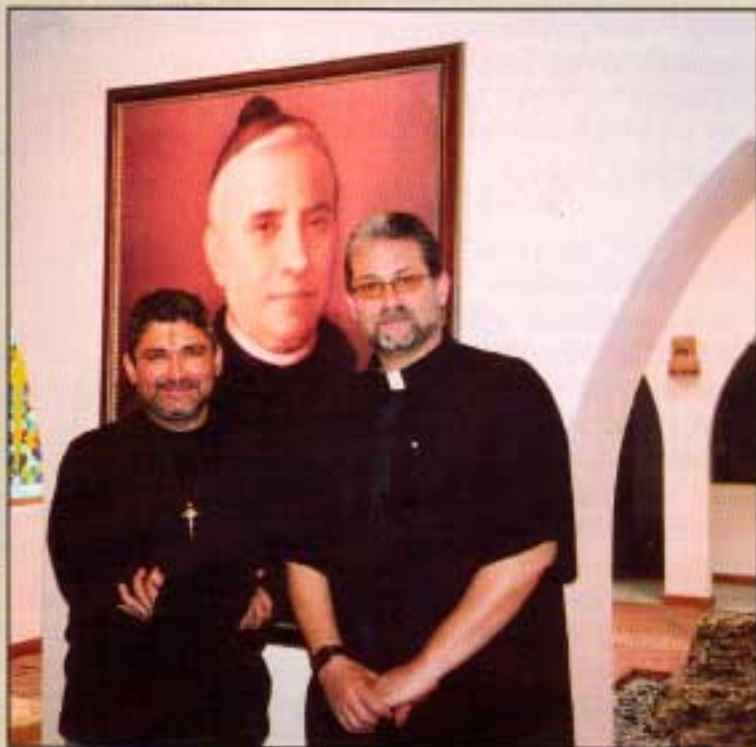
**AA:** Well, these wounds can be forever or can be momentary. I know that when they need to be taken from me they will be. How long this will be with me, I am not sure. Maybe until I die, I am not sure.

**HFM: How can our physical and**

**spiritual wounds heal us, our families and our culture?**

**AA:** When you are afflicted you learn something very important: that you are nothing without God. That teaches you that humility is very important. We are God's co-workers, and if he asks us to suffer we should just receive it with open arms.

**HFM: A last thought to share with our readers.**



Mr. AVENDAÑO AND Fr. JULIO AT HOLY FAMILY PARISH

**AA:** I just want to make sure that they will know that this is not about Alex. I am just a messenger. This is about our Lord Jesus Christ and our Lady. Yes, our Lord still is with us; yes, he died for our sins; yes, he resurrected and yes, he is our God and redeemer. And that through our Blessed Mother we can get closer to him and learn to love him more than anything in this world.