

SNAP-SHOTS

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Juan was 16 years old when he first met Pastor Von. At the age of 13, after the death of his mother, Juan had hitch hiked over 1600 miles from his home in Mexico City to the infamous streets of Tijuana, in the hopes of finding work and a better life than the one he'd been living, with an abusive stepfather. Following his arduous journey, Juan wound up at the Tijuana Dump where he like many others with similar hopes, scavenged amongst the trash to survive. Eventually, Juan was taken in by a poor, yet generous woman, with whose family he stayed with and became a part of. A few years later, this same family would become instrumental in the early beginnings of Pastor Von's ministry in the Tijuana Dump.

Today the dump is no longer there, it was moved to another part of the city many years ago, however some of the original inhabitants like Juan, remained living on the dump site, which became an unofficial colonia known as "El Trincerazo," (The Trench), or more commonly just "Trinche."

Last week, at the age of 62, Juan breathed his last breath, minutes after arriving at General Hospital. The cause being a series of compounded health conditions associated with his diabetes. Never being one to complain, Juan had left things a little too late. The effects of poverty and neglect of his treatments had taken its toll.

Juan's familiar, friendly face and simple, steady, quiet influence in his neighborhood will be missed. Through the years he remained single, lived humbly and never succumbed to the drinking and drug culture surrounding him. We're thankful and rejoice in knowing that Pastor Von, whom he loved and looked up to, impacted and influenced his life for eternity, as Juan surrendered it to Christ many years ago.

A while back, during a year that V&O held bible class meetings at Trinche's community center, Juan would wait for us to arrive each week and help with set up, clean up etc. He would also keep watch over our vehicles outside, (a wise move in Trinche), while the lessons/worship etc. were in session. Juan loved to listen to the worship music and songs we sang, and a few years later, he asked if we could put all those songs onto a USB card so that he could listen to them at home.

Last week as we were taking Juan with his (adoptive) sister Kuka, to an appointment with Dr Santos, Juan took a turn for the worse and it was quickly decided to take him straight to the hospital. On the way, as Juan struggled to breathe, he kept reaching for his pocket indicating to Kuka that there was something important in there that he wanted to give her. As she helped him pull out what had obviously become his most treasured possession, he uttered his last words... "Don't lose it." It was the USB card.

Juan's family and friends told us that over the last year, Juan would spend hours sitting under his fig tree at home, listening to the songs on that USB. His favorite was "En Totalidad a Ti." The English version; "In Total Surrender to You." The lyrics read...

*To the one and only God,
I surrender heart and soul,
and I have nothing left to give.
Use my life it is all yours.
Hold me in your arms Lord Jesus,
into your hands I place my future,
and do with me as you see fit now,
Use my life Lord, here I am.*



Happy Easter, from us at V&O... He has risen indeed!



Reflecting on Juan's life is a timely reminder of God's unconditional love that transcends all social, cultural and personal differences.

He welcomes ALL, offering hope, healing and heaven, to those who put their trust in Him.

Psalm 19:7

"The Law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple."

IN MEMORY OF JUAN...



Above: A young Juan.



Center: Pastor Von with Negra, the lady who took Juan in, and Juan on right.

Right: Juan's chair under the old fig tree.

(Figs were a favorite of Pastor Von's. Every year he would receive a bag from Juan).



ANGEL ELIAN

Earlier this month Hortencia received a call for help concerning little Angel Elian who was born premature in December. His mom Flor, from Chiapas, (way down south), had been visiting her only sibling, who lives in one of our neighborhoods, when she went into early labor. To complicate things further, little Angel was born with a cleft palate. He and his mom have spent a lot of time in General Hospital these last few months.

It's too early for surgery yet, but in the meantime V&O has been able to help with clothes, blankets and funds to pay for special feeding equipment and transport for mom and baby to hospital appointments. Flor is extremely grateful for the much needed help and sends sincere thanks. Angel is her first child. Please pray for them both.



OTHER HAPPENINGS THIS MONTH...



Yair, Cristian & Kevin preparing materials for Easter outreach.

Keeping kids busy during school break!



Erik (far right), performing with his Christian drama group to kids and teens in rural Sinaloa.



Enjoying crafts at Manantial Orphanage.



Estrella sorting & organizing sewing supplies.



Kids in Sinaloa with their lesson activity page on "the Last Supper."

Mission trip to Sinaloa!

Many thanks once again for your prayers, support, gifts, encouragement, and partnership with us in this ministry!

God's blessings to you All!
Joyce, Philip, Hortencia,
Erik & the Team.