

Filmmaker Ernesto Quintero's remarkable documentary, *A Sacred Journey*, will make you want to run home and hug your loved ones. In this must-see film, the camera glides into the complexities of a brother's devastating terminal diagnosis and the immense care that will be required to see him through the three years he was given to live.

At 35, Juan Jose Quintero was diagnosed with ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease), a ravaging disease that eventually renders patients completely immobile as the nerve cells that control muscle movement begin to die. This shattering disease is still a mystery to the medical field, and as such, it is considered incurable. To compound the tragedy, Juan's diagnosis came at a time in which he was also dealing with his own young son's extremely rare blood disease (Diamond Blackfan Anemia, or DBA) that would require him to receive life-saving blood transfusions every two weeks of his life.

That said, the story is so much more than the tragic circumstances of Juan's life. Somehow, amidst the sadness and loss, emerges a story of transcendent love and unity. One of the many miracles the film demonstrates is the fact that his brother's diagnosis proved to be the catalyst that pulled filmmaker Ernesto Quintero out of a near-fatal, ten-year drug addiction. He describes the journey he hopes the film will take its viewers on: "It's a story that fills you with compassion for Juan and his family, for all the challenges they experience, and it's a powerful barometer for taking a look at your own life. You get to feel the contrast of something so tragic butted up against the incredible beauty of the family and community coming together, almost racing to show Juan who can love and support him the most. "

*A Sacred Journey* traverses the difficult terrain of a story of illness with a graceful balance of necessary rawness and intensity, contrasted with laughter and celebration. We are fully along for the ride as Juan receives the diagnosis and the family scrambles to cope both financially and emotionally; we sigh with relief as we laugh at the silliness of family outings, and we celebrate with joyful tears at the birthdays and community fundraisers that demonstrate the power of love to elevate even the most heartrending of circumstances.

What also becomes utterly apparent throughout the film is the heroic nature of caregiving, a 24/7 endeavor whose contributors receive a much-deserved spotlight. A 2014 study from the Clorox Corporation, avid supporters of this film, revealed that there are currently 66 million caregivers in the nation; it is a sobering thought, as echoed by a quote at the top of the film from former First Lady Rosalind Carter, that at some point, most of us will either be on the receiving or giving end of care. This concept is most powerfully personified in the film by Micaela Quintero, the family's matriarch, who at sixty-eight gave up her successful thirty-year flower shop in order to go back to school and obtain a Certified Nurse Assistant certificate which would allow her to best care for her son at home. Additionally, her husband and five children all fulfill their roles as caregivers; it's truly a family affair.

Finally, there is the story of the legacy that Juan wishes to leave the Sacred Heart community he was raised in, a "token of gratitude," as Juan christens it, a mural that will serve as a powerful reminder of the beating heart of the film.

Ernesto sums up his message of hope: "Ultimately, it's my intention that you be left with an immense appreciation for your own life, for even the small moments of true connection or silliness, for the love of your family and a real gratitude and awareness of all the things that really matter in life."

Be sure not to miss this powerful film.

A Sacred Journey

Director: Ernesto Quintero

Running Time: 75 minutes

English w/some Spanish Subtitles.

Trailer and Website:

<https://asacredjourneyfilm.com/>

LA Press Release:

<https://mailchi.mp/theherreraagency/a-sacred-journey-film-to-honor-als-awareness-month?e=fd9463d387>

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