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## Thank You!

Luis Angel López

*[Mandy] wanted to be a homosexual man  
to be hated and rejected like them,  
to teach you not to hate them anymore,  
so that they can stop suffering in your hands.  
—Jesus Christ*

I was very young and innocent and I did not know what homosexuality was. I did not know of prejudices nor sins, as some intolerant people who believe they are perfect understand, for it is not a sin to be homosexual, but to judge and hate them. I found out that I was attracted to men, and I did not know if it was good or bad to love them. As I grew up, I became aware of the evil of the world and I feared becoming the object of their ridicule, because I realized that when they joked they were really laughing at me.

When I was in sixth grade I met a very special person who made me believe in chivalry: that good boy, the most handsome jock in my physical education class, beautiful inside and out, who, without even knowing me nor being my friend, always defended me from that bully who made fun of me because of my Spanish accent, when I was just beginning to learn English and used to roll my r's ("herre"). Poor guy! It seemed like he had to make me suffer to feel good about himself, because I never offended nor harmed him. But the knight in shining armor always came to my rescue and saved me from the dragon. He was afraid of him, and he was everything that he could not be: the most handsome and popular boy in my class, a boy with a courageous heart and a real man. That happened some time before I knew I was gay. After that I suffered very much at the hands of my schoolmates that I completely forgot that beautiful gesture of love.

I do not know why he defended me so many times. I never knew his name. I do not remember having ever thanked him, either, and that hurts me very much in my soul, much more than all the pain that that coward could have caused me. I just stood there in silence, while he defended me, without being able to say anything. But it was not because I did not value him, only that when you are a victim, many times you simply do not know what to do or say. I seem to remember how he used to tell him to pick on someone his own size and leave me alone. And after that I would go and play in peace. A year later I changed schools and never saw the knight in shining armor again.

Now I would say these words to him: writing this, I think of you with many tears in my eyes like you cannot imagine, tears of love and not sadness, because I remember you with so much love (a pure love because I was in love with my first love) and so much fondness, and I will never forget you anymore. How much I needed a friend like you to defend me during that hell that was my adolescence! Thank you for all your love. Now I will shower you with gifts and blessings so that you may always be very happy. May God light your path and watch over you always.

In middle school, I never had a single friend who defended me from the harassment, the humiliations, the insults and jokes of my classmates for being gay (even some of my teachers made fun of me once). I did not want anybody to know for fear. I was not feminine nor acted gay (if such a

thing exists). But sometimes when I talked the devil changed the tone of my voice, even though I did not notice it, so that everybody would make fun of me and make me suffer. That is how they found out. At such a young age, they were cruel and evil. I do not want to remember all the pain that they caused me, for God knows how much they made me suffer.

I will only say how my blood boiled that day when one of my classmates who hated me the most, a sadist homophobe, made fun of another classmate because her brother had a mental disability, and he imitated him with grotesque movements and horrible noises, while she told him that it was not his fault that he was like that, until he finally made her cry. I could not do anything because they were stronger than me and my hands were chained, and that made me even angrier because I could not yell at him to leave her alone. I only wished with all my heart that he would stop tormenting her, but the seconds became minutes and the minutes became hours, and nobody did anything. But perhaps God listened to me, because if that had continued a just little bit longer, I would have forgotten that he was the strong one and I was the weak one and I would have faced him with all my strength to defend her (not me). But at least I was there so that they could make fun of me and not her nor anybody else for three long years that seemed like an eternity.

But the problems always stayed at school for fear of the truth. I never could confess my secret to my parents. Some time later I met Mrs. Lucy, a little angel of God that the Lord took too soon because He missed her very much. The first time she saw me she asked me if she could give me a hug, because she told me that God very rarely sent people like me to the world and she was very happy to see me. Once she hugged, I did not want her to let go of me, because I also loved her very much even though I did not know her. And thus we remained hugging each other for a long time, and not enough. She also shined with the Lord's Blessed Light, just like my mom and me. And when she let me go, I only wanted her to hug me again. She did not want me to leave her side because she wanted to protect me from all the pain that my enemies would cause me. And how much I needed her after she left us...

She advised me to tell my parents the truth because, without telling me anything, she knew that it would be more difficult later (and I also knew it). She told me that one day I would know what it meant to be gay, and she told me that my star was small, but would become great once I told them; once my chains fell and I was finally free. But I never had the courage to tell them the truth; I do not know if it was because of all the pain that they caused me at school and so much suffering, or because I was afraid that they too would reject me. And time went by, and they only found out when I told them that I was sick, because a social worker at the Children's Hospital advised me to tell them. But afterward I regretted it very much, for there is no other person in the world that I love more than my parents, and I never wanted them to suffer because of me.

And now, where are the ones who made fun of me? God wanted to confuse the beauty, the wisdom and the power of men by sending me to this world to suffer for them so that they could be happy. The ones who rejected me and even called me ugly fall in love with me the first time they see me. The ones who made fun of me because I liked men, actually made fun of the woman who loved them so much. They judge me and said that I could not be a servant of God just because I was gay. But my Father gives me so many miracles, to me who am just a sinner, that cannot even be counted, like the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea, and to that decent people He never gives anything. The Almighty Lord has put my enemies who hated me so much at my feet, and has humiliated all their power and pride. Thank you, Father, for all Your Love and Your Mercy. Blessed be You forever. May Your Holy Will be fulfilled in me for Your Holy Glory and Your Blessed Happiness.