



## Walking Onward

*Introduction* This is a summer 2006 CPTNet release written by Adaia Bernal and translated by Kim Lamberty; it is used with permission.

A few weeks ago members of the CPT Colombia team raced to arrive on time to the memorial Mass for a community member who was assassinated the day before (see CPTNet release dated 29 June 06). With each step, I became more certain that I did NOT want to go to any more funerals for people who had not died a natural death. The saddest part is that more and more, the deaths are of people we know. I do not know how to express the pain this causes me. All I can do is try to carry it. I think about the families that remain, the mothers, the children, the closest family members, who in some way die a little themselves.

*I remember those who I knew in the Opon and who now are no longer with us.*

*I remember their smiles and the sound of their voices.*

*I remember the effect of their deaths on the community.*

*I remember the value of their lives.*

*I remember the life-giving gaze of the Creator.*

Some time later we walked, at the same rapid pace, to attend to yet another situation with another family in the region. This time we were witnesses to the rapid departure of Maria\*, Jose\*, and their family, persons dear to us, who were displaced by force. The paramilitary forces threatened them, and so they had to remove themselves from their land, from the campo, the center of their life. With every step my heart beat harder, until I thought it would explode. Once again, seeing the faces of each family member, pain and profound grief took hold of me.

In spite of the fact that I do NOT want to continually experience such heartbreaking moments, my heart also longs to walk in solidarity with those who have no choice but to experience them.

*I long to walk in sensitivity and compassion for the sake of others.*

*I long to walk with others in order to transform moments of profound grief.*

*I long to be a witness to the miracle of life.*

*I long to offer who I am for the sake of life.*

*I long for a better future for these families so dear to us.*

Each of these events is a small death for us. They are moments that discourage, and which do not provide any answers. In my personal life I have also experienced situations so difficult that at times I felt “almost dead.” But witnessing the horrible things happening to the people around us, I have come to believe that what has happened to me is not so hard, and I feel an intense and sincere desire to continue, despite everything. I affirm once again my commitment to do everything possible with my life to help construct a better future for my beautiful country. I hope and dream that:

We can affirm life as equally important and valuable for all persons.

We can envision a future for our children.

We can reveal our beautiful country to the rest of the world.

We can live full lives and grow old.

We can every day create more hope.

I remember the words of a friend who told me, “When you share the sadness and worries of others, it makes those things smaller and weaker. And when you share the good things with others, it makes the good more powerful.”

*\*names changed*

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