

## Understanding Grief

### Support the Salvatorians

Novice Ricardo Rivera Gutierrez has a history of interest in helping people process their grief whether it is from the loss of a pet, a parent, a relationship or even a job. He earned his bachelor's degree in educational psychology while living in Mexico, but had to go outside of the university to gain his focus and ultimately submit his thesis on grief. He said, "I didn't go to college just to get a degree, I love to learn about things that will help me and others in my life."

Ricardo's grandmother was distraught when her beloved dog died. "I was dismissive – it was 'just' a dog," said Ricardo. He did not yet have the tools for understanding the depths of how a person could experience grief.

Fast forward, to his early novitiate with the Salvatorians. Ricardo was asked to consider presenting at a conference in Dallas, where a large Hispanic population was expected to be in attendance. The session was titled "The Loss of a Loved One." Before he spoke, he started with a song in Spanish on losing a loved one and continuing to live your best life. The tiny room overflowed its capacity; he was asked to repeat the session in a larger room the next day.

"I now understand that when we open our hearts to another person's response to their loss and grief, when we try to understand what it feels like to walk in their shoes, it is then that we can help the healing process and help the person to move forward in life." In the USA there are grief counseling options but not many spoken in Spanish. For Ricardo, it started with a song at a conference. It has bloomed into a healing Hispanic ministry with the Salvatorians.



*Ricardo uses music in his ministry.*

