

Fidel Ortega Dueñas

\* 19.4.1962 † 13.5.2023

When Fidel Ortega Dueñas passed into the spiritual world on 13.5.2023, he left behind many people who were connected to him in friendship. Not only in the "Asociación San Juan" on Tenerife, but around the world, countless people remember him in heartfelt gratitude and friendship.



29 years ago, he founded the "Centro de Pedagogía Curativa y Terapia Social San Juan" together with his partner Sabine Hermann, his colleague Pilar Lopez, the employee Eusebia García and eight families with their relatives in need of support.

Fidel in a Tajinaste field (Echium Wildpretii) in the Teide National Park, Flowers that blossom in May.

Fidel had a great creative spirit, an inexhaustible wealth of ideas and a deep sense of the beauty of life, which enabled him to overcome difficult situations and always enthusiastically break new ground.

He was born as the third child of four siblings in a small rural village in Castilla - La Mancha. His father was a baker and his mother a very creative and hardworking woman, both were great role models for their children. From an early age, he helped his parents and distributed bread in the village community by bicycle. He grew up deeply attached to the Christian and peasant annual festivals and customs: the costumes, the feasts, the songs,

the care of the animals, the theatrical productions, and the subsequent celebrations with the circle of friends marked him and accompanied him throughout his life.

Here in his hometown, he had his first deep encounter with a child with disabilities from the neighborhood. However, his path initially took him to the big city at the age of 14 to live with his older sister, where he gained his first experience in the restaurant business. After his military service, he founded a butcher's shop, which was very popular with customers thanks to his open and courteous manner.

But it was also a time of excess for him in a country where young people were able to enjoy free life to the fullest for the first time after the fall of the dictatorship.

In 1986, his friend Goyo Martinez invited him to the Camphill Perceval in Saint Prex (CH). There, Fidel met people with and without support needs whose personality and social skills deeply impressed him. A special friendship united him until the end of his life with Walter Frischknecht, who worked as a doctor and lecturer at Perceval. In 1990 Fidel completed his training as a curative teacher, as had three of his friends from his birthplace before him.



During this period of his life, Fidel also met his future wife Sabine Hermann, and together they went to Tenerife in 1993 to work in the curative education institution "Cristófero". After a short time, however, they founded the association "San Juan" in 1994 together with a small group of family members."

Fidel: second from the right, first row

Their goal was to build a community in which people with support needs are perceived in their very essence and can develop their life path as self-determined as possible. After a short period of preparation, they began their activities in a small room in the village of Armeñime.

Today, "San Juan" is an institution where 40 adults work in the daycare center, half of the community live in two assisted living groups: "Casa Hogar Blanca Cera Dulce Miel" and "Casa Los Poetas". In addition, about 35 children and adolescents are accompanied in inclusive small groups. The day care center is located in Adeje in the dry south of Tenerife. Over the years, the stony landscape has become a blooming garden where people and animals can work and live with great joy. Different rooms have been added to the very simple main building over time; the "Living Architecture" working group has provided beauty and functionality, new areas of work have been developed.



Fidel's concern was to gift the village community of Adeje and also the children of the schools of Tenerife with the meaningful life of the community of San Juan. Old festivals of the village were revived, theatrical performances were staged, exhibitions were organized, sculptures were placed in public



places and charity concerts were organized in the opera house "Teatro Real" in Madrid.

Many insights into the extensive work of "San Juan" can be seen in: [www.facebook.com/asociacionsanjuan.es](http://www.facebook.com/asociacionsanjuan.es).



Since 2004, about 1,000 children a year have learned to shear sheep, spin wool, sow and harvest plants, make pottery, draw candles and enjoyed a puppet show from people with support needs. The school children, along with their teachers, were able to forget that social media existed for one day a year.

From 2000, the first meetings and congresses were organized with other curative education homes on the mainland. Little by little, the

Spanish-Portuguese Federation of Curative Education and Social Therapy was established, together with four other institutions.

In 2000, his life was richly endowed: his daughter Eliú Inés was born. Being a father gave his life a new, deeper meaning.

In 2009, the four-year training to become a curative educator and social therapist began in San Juan in collaboration with the international training circle of the Anthroposophic Council for Inclusive Social Development. Currently the training takes place in Tenerife as well as in Madrid.

Participation in the ECCE and the international meeting of the worldwide movement for anthroposophical curative education and social therapy in Dornach were also very important for Fidel. In 2022, already suffering from cancer, he helped to organize a national meeting in Madrid for curative

educators, social therapists, parents and friends within the Spanish Anthroposophical Society.

Fidel was deeply touched by the spiritual individuality of people with special needs during his life's journey. Through them, he realized the importance of participation in social life for all of us and to fully take seriously the real needs of people with disabilities. He wanted to help people live their destiny intentions in an inclusive society. Paving ways and bringing people together came easily to him. He liked to be faithful to people, as his name suggests. On this way he developed his artistic talents: Painting, sculpture and poetry.

However, his great identification with the San Juan community of life and work and his desire to make it grow daily was not always easy for those around him. His intentions and ideals were sometimes misunderstood, often people could not follow his extensive work rhythm.

His last big project, the establishment of an inclusive Waldorf school and the acquisition of a new plot of land for the expansion of the institution was not supported by the board of directors of the association. During his year-long illness, he was repeatedly attacked by part of the administrative board and his work within the association was called into question. These attacks caused a split between the parent body and between the staff. During this time, he proposed new ways of unity with his unflinching enthusiasm and accompanied the pedagogical management team until his last days. Time will tell whether his impulses will bear fruit.

Change is often frightening, but as the Spanish poet Antonio Machado wrote, only in walking does the path emerge.

In great gratitude for all the ways you have shown us- Fidel- far into the future, we will try to seek new creative ways of shaping our lives in sincere togetherness.

Natividad Moreno  
Sabine Hermann