What is it to be a companion of Jesus today?
It is to engage,
under the standard
of the Cross,
in the crucial struggle
of our times:
the struggle for faith
and that struggle for justice
which it includes.
Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J.

"Ellacu"

b. Nov. 9, 1930; d. Nov. 16, 1989
Rector, Central American University

The first of the three principal periods of Ellacu's life as a Jesuit, that of his "formation," or education, began with his entrance into the Society of Jesus in 1947 and lasted until he

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got his Ph.D. in Madrid twenty years later (he was ordained in 1961). One constant during these years was the method of formation he followed for himself—attaching himself to great men, who in his opinion were few. The “greats” were not those of towering intellect, but those who understood and taught in an integrated, convinced, concrete and innovative way, not tied down by rules. Among these greats he always mentioned Miguel Elizondo, who left his mark, as Master of Novices at Tertian, on five of the six martyred Jesuits. He also cited Karl Rahner, about whom he used to say that Innsbruck wouldn’t have been worth the trouble except for him.

When Ellacu arrived in El Salvador for his regency in 1955, there began a period of profound personal development. He began to write for ECA (Estudios Centroamericanos) and came to be admired by people outside the Society who heard him speak at one or another lecture. When he went on to Innsbruck in 1958, he once again had to take on the role of student. But the theologate was being buffeted just then by preconciliar winds, and that occasioned Ellacu’s first clash with authoritarian “structures.” The Spanish speakers used to congregate in his room, and he was so much the leader of the opposition that superiors in Austria were on the point of sending him back to Central America.

A second period of his Jesuit life (1967-75) is that associated with the interior reform of the Society of Jesus going on at that time. Ellacu became the guiding intellect in Central America for this examination of conscience, whose most intense moment and watershed was the Province retreat at San Salvador in December 1969. Ellacu was the organizer and principal speaker, forcefully applying the principles of liberation theology to the Province’s situation. Among the archives of the Province one can find the transcripts of these texts, still fresh and brilliant.

Ellacu’s leadership was formalized when he was named Delegate for Formation (1971-74). But in 1974, Father Paolo Dezza, one of Father Arrupe’s principal assistants, asked that the Provincial superior remove Ellacu as Delegate for Formation. In that same year he also stopped being Province consultor. Ellacu said that is was “back to the trenches” and that he would just dedicate himself to the university.

There, too, he was an innovator. Immediately upon returning from Europe in 1967, he had been named to the board of directors. At that time the university had been in existence for three years, having been conceived as an anti-Marxist alternative to the National University. Its orientation was one of development, both economic and social, for El Salvador. But the arrival of Ellacuria meant that the university took a new turn, toward liberation theology, and it began to conceive of itself as the critical conscience of the country.

The university’s new quest for truth and its attendant denunciation of unjust social structures made Ellacu look for a means of communication. The Jesuit Province had the magazine ECA, in which he had been writing since 1956. Ellacu and his team caused it to take off in a new direction with a special edition in 1969 on the Salvadoran-Honduran war. They showed that the root of the conflict lay in the unjust landholdings in El Salvador. This was the first issue of a new ECA, and, from 1970 on, having passed to the university, the magazine became the principal exponent of the university’s critique and Ellacuria’s public discourse.

Born in Spain, he became a Salvadoran citizen in 1975. This was necessary to be university rector, and he could see that appointment coming. Moreover, national politics was entering a crisis, and obtaining citizenship would only be more difficult later on.

In that year he also took a political position different from that of certain Jesuit scholastics who would later leave the Society. Ellacu, along with the university, took a public stand distinct from that of groups like the Populak Revolutionary Bloc, and in distancing himself from these, Ellacu also separated himself from young Jesuits who had been dear friends and for whose formation he had fought. So this period ends with Ellacuria getting more and more involved in the university, less and less in intramural Jesuit matters. He was becoming a public personage, and this would lead to his death.

The third and final period of his life (1976-89) is that of Ellacuria the public personality. In 1976 he wrote an editorial in ECA strongly criticizing the government for capitulating to the landed oligarchy. This cost the university its national subsidy,
and for some months the so-called White Warrior Union set off bombs on the campus. In 1979, Ellacu was named rector (university president, in U.S. terminology), a post he held till his death. After the coup d'etat of that year, a wave of violence swept the country. The university suffered various attacks, including a machine-gunning on the night of February 16, 1980, that left a hundred bullet holes in the Jesuit residence. Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated in March.

By 1981, editorials in ECA show that Ellacu had come to believe that only a "third way"—a strong societal push for negotiation—could resolve the stalemate between the guerrillas and the government. In October 1985 he became even more important on the public scene as a go-between, along with Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas, in the exchange of President Duarte's daughter for 22 political prisoners and 101 wounded guerrillas. This activity gave him greater familiarity with the two contending sides and helped legitimate his call for the way of dialogue.

With the coming to power of Alfredo Cristiani in 1989, Ellacu was hopeful there might be a new impulse toward dialogue on the part of the government. In an ECA editorial he distinguished three groups in Cristiani's ARENA party—the Cristiani moderates, the D'Aubuisson militarists, and the secret death-squad "cacos"—and saw the Cristiani line getting stronger. In private, nevertheless, he spoke for the first time since 1982 of the possibility that "it could happen now," by which he meant they might kill him. During the Duarte presidency, when people were anxious and told him to take care, he would say nothing could happen because U.S. policy would not permit it. With ARENA in power, he considered that brake weaker. He did not approve of the guerrilla offensive in November 1989 because he thought it damaged attempts at dialogue.

Ellacu was in the community residence Monday night, November 13, when government soldiers searched it. But he did not sleep there, since he had not yet moved from the old residence. On Tuesday and Wednesday he brought his things over, although he still had not finished moving his books. He did not consider Monday's search a reconnoitering mission, and when someone said it might be, he answered that they should not be paranoid. Since the soldiers had seen they didn't have anything, that would be the end of it. Besides, if they went into hiding, that could be interpreted as a sign they had done something wrong.

How could someone so intelligent have been so mistaken? Many have wondered about that. When people would ask Ellacu if he were not afraid, he would say no, but, he added, he no more took credit for that than for lacking a sense of smell. He just didn't have one.

His last theology article contains the following sentence, much quoted nowadays as prophetic: "The Spirit breathes in many ways, and supreme among them is the disposition to give one's life for others, whether by tireless daily commitment or by the sacrifice of a violent death."
As a young Jesuit, "Nacho" was very observant and disciplined, even somewhat rigid and unyielding, one of those who adhered to the letter of the law. Some of his classmates were not at ease with such perfectionism, but once they got to know him and like him, they worked at "humanizing" him, to the point that Nacho, boon companion that he became, was the one who would be sent to ask superiors for tough permissions. And at parties, he would sing with the guitar and relax, laying aside his mantle of seriousness.

In fact, Nacho seemed to be two people: the one who was strict with students and worked too hard (16 hours a day), intense and mysterious, sometimes neglecting to return a greeting; and the one who was amiable, considerate in a thousand ways with secretaries, students and campesinos, the one who always enjoyed birthday parties, the beloved pastor of Jayaque. These two Nachos were one and the same, or so it seemed to those who were closest to him. Ten days before his death he was celebrating his own birthday and announced aloud his plans to relax his pace—"Celebrations help release tension."

As everyone knows, Nacho was not only super-gifted but multi-gifted. Nevertheless, he concentrated his interests. From the time of his philosophy studies in Colombia, he pursued the study of psychology, devouring books on his own. He continued studying and teaching psychology at the university in San Salvador after he was ordained a priest. Given his talent and the need he felt for further training in theory and method, he was sent to the University of Chicago, where he got his doctorate in three years (1979). This professional preparation meant that his research and publications then took off, gaining international recognition for their quality and rigor.

Administrative tasks bored him, and he often said in the last few months that he was going to resign as academic vice rector. Research is what attracted him, and he felt fulfilled when he sat down to work at his computer. He wrote for many journals, and when they asked him for scholarly contributions, he would tell them they had to wait, because he always had six or seven articles in the works. In this, as in other things, he was so obliging that it cost him to turn anyone down. He joked that he was like a prostitute who said yes to everybody.

His interest in personal psychology, and especially among the poor, was not just bookish. Once a young girl tried to kill herself in the street next to his office. He gave her medical attention, counseled her and told her to come back and see him when she was released from the hospital. After listening to her whole story, he took her to a cafeteria, gave her some money, then got her a job and a place to stay. After his funeral, she said: "I never
believed such goodness existed,” and, tearfully, “Why didn’t I die instead of him?”

The university was his base of operations for the weekly trips to Jayaque, a campesino community surrounded by coffee plantations. He begged rolls of film so he could give photos to the campesinos. Looking for a statue of the Virgin to put in a country chapel, he even went to the cemetery where they made such statues from cement. He bought the children candies and always carried some with him. Nacho was accustomed to give interviews to foreign journalists according to set appointments, but whenever his campesinos came from Jayaque, they entered his office without waiting.

He did this pastoral work in Jayaque with a team of sisters and a group of younger Jesuits, some of whom were priests, but for the sisters he was always “the” priest. The campesinos, too, accorded him special respect. He said Mass in the town and outlying districts, took part in their parish meetings (always according to plan), was on hand for cursillos and fiestas. The younger Jesuits, who at the university regarded him as severe, saw him here in a new light.

Nacho died next to Ellacuría. They were always complements to each other. Ellacuría did social analysis to draw from it a policy that he might then put in practice. Nacho, on the other hand, as an outstanding social scientist of rather more empirical cut, offered data from which the public might draw its own conclusions. He had a religious passion for the poor and for justice, but his writings were calmer. At the moment of death, however, it was Nacho’s voice that was the strongest. His was the only one that the witness heard, shouting at the soldiers: “This is unjust! You’re rotten!”
Pardito was nonetheless able and intelligent, both precise and profound, if not so creative. At any rate, his lack of a doctorate had nothing to do with ability. He never got a chance to do higher studies.

He started out in biology. That was his forte. For three years as a young Jesuit, he taught it in the high school of the San Salvador seminary. At the same time, however, he had to jump from subject to subject, no matter how disparate from one another: history, civics, math, English, geography. As the years went by, he gave up biology, but he kept an interest in science as it touched on philosophy, and in bioethics especially. He had a taste for exactitude. (Who would have thought so, looking at his messy desk?) He had become an expert in computers by the time he was killed, and he had already modernized the library catalog system at the Center of Theological Reflection.

He got a good grounding in the principles of Ignatian spirituality from his novice master, Miguel Elizondo, who left his spiritual mark on five of the six slain Jesuits. But Pardito did not have to concentrate on studying these principles till he himself was named novice master—at precisely the moment (1969) of the great changes in the order in Central America. Those were to be his tough years, for the new formation was just starting to jell, and nearly all his novices later left the order. That weighed on him a lot.

From this period dates his commitment to the intramural life of the Society of Jesus: He was a Province consultor, gave classes in the novitiate and juniorate, served as secretary to the Provincial and edited the Province newsletter. And he made Ignatian spirituality his specialty. While in Panama, he founded an Ignatian Center, and he took it with him when he was transferred to Managua, Nicaragua. He started the magazine *Diakonia*, which was indeed, as the name denotes, a "service" for religious. In it he gathered others' articles. He hardly ever wrote himself. The pen was not his charism, or perhaps it was, but he seemed to feel overshadowed by others.

His charism was preaching. Although somewhat self-effacing, he caught fire when he spoke in public and became strongly persuasive. He gave many, many retreats to priests and religious, including Jesuits. His approach was quite dynamic, really—along
the lines of liberation theology—but even though these ideas were incendiary, his manner was reassuring because he knew how to ground social commitment in spirituality and faith. People had confidence in him because he was not "radical." No wonder then that, wherever he went, he became influential among the conferences of religious, and he was elected president of these conferences in both Panama and Nicaragua.

Unlike others of his companion martyrs, he had not put down deep roots in any one country of Central America, since those roots were really to be found in the world of religious. Nor was he one who had a lot of lay friends to visit. This was due partly to shyness, partly to his having moved from country to country. Perhaps his closest such friendships were among the people near Boaco, Nicaragua, where he had lived for several intense months during the literacy crusade of 1980.

At the Central American University in San Salvador, he served as librarian for the Center of Theological Reflection and assistant director of the Oscar Romero Center, whose offices and library were on the first floor of the building where the murder took place. As part of the slaughter, the soldiers firebombed the filing cabinets, destroyed the computers and also, apparently, wiped out all the information Pardito had stored on disks and tapes.
San Salvador, he had been named rector of the seminary. He had to deal with two years of serious crisis that ended with the Jesuits giving back the management of the seminary to the bishops. The seminarians had grown conscious of unjust social structures in their country and of the church’s complicity in them. Certain bishops were unhappy with Amando, though he always felt supported by Arturo Rivera y Damas, the current archbishop.

From there he was named rector of the Jesuit high school in Managua where he had taught as a scholastic. He picked up old friendships—but in quite different circumstances, because the Sandinista revolution that would topple Somoza in 1979 was already underway. He sought out people when he saw them in trouble. He knew how to give his words a touch of humor. People came for his counsel because they knew he was frank, would not curry favor or dispense bromides, and was discreet as a tomb. In this way he picked up a lot of information that in turn helped him give realistic advice to those in danger.

After the Sandinista triumph he became rector of the Central American University in Managua. During this period he was probably the Jesuit who, without actually being a member of the government, had the best relations with the Sandinistas. But the ideological splits that followed the revolution also found their way into the church and the Society of Jesus, and Rome sent him a “visitor” (an official who draws up a special report). Amando took it all with calm, never losing any sleep. But this conflict within the church hurt him deeply, and the upshot was that he left his rector’s post.

After a year’s sabbatical studying theology in Spain, he returned to Central America, this time to teach theology at the Jesuit university in San Salvador. His lifework became more hidden, without all the connections he enjoyed in Nicaragua. And the Nicaraguans used to complain: “He’s not doing anything there. Why did they take him away from us?” As a teacher, his students recall, he was a little boring, although he prepared and knew a lot. He was always open to anyone who might need counseling.

During his last year he had begun to do Sunday pastoral work at Tierra Virgen, a semirural locality on the other side of Soy-
apango. The affection he lavished on these simple country people, his spontaneous yet well-tuned happiness and his clearly evangelical preaching immediately captivated the whole community. Twenty-five of these friends crossed through perilous combat zones to get to his funeral.
What is the relation of the church to the poor?

The church never advocates revolution, but there is much coincidence between the church's commitments to the poor and the growth of the struggles that have now become part of the war. Often the fighters were taught originally by priests about justice and that God is for the poor. When they saw their government imposing its will to keep the will of God from the people, they became fighters. Many of them did not want to fight—many still do not want to fight. But they believed what the church taught about the fair distribution of wealth, of the dignity of all persons. And they began fighting for that.

We used to have two newspapers that were moderate, more open. They were both bombed by the army, and their journalists killed. There were many priests here who once stood with the people who are dead or are now in hiding. The people see that and they are angry. They take up arms to right the wrongs that are being done to them.

Why have you not advocated fighting also?

We believe in some of the goals of the FMLN, but I cannot fight and I cannot tell others to take up arms to fight. But that does not mean that we do not understand the position of those who do. We sometimes talk of leaving, also. But our hope is not in leaving, it is here. If I leave, the crisis will stay. Here I may be able to effect change.

We try to work with the government. To let them know that the real route to peace lies with them, not the rebels. We try to tell the United States embassy that if they would not supply the military aid, the Salvadoran government would listen more sensibly to what the people are saying. We try to keep close ties to the government because we believe that they hold the reins of peace.

Segundo Montes, S.J.

b. May 15, 1933; d. Nov. 16, 1989
Superior of the Community

We knew Segundo as fiery-spirited from the moment we met him in the novitiate. He kicked the soccer ball with all his might, rocketing it into the neighborhood to break roof tiles. Afterward would come "fraternal correction," which Segundo accepted with humility and without resentment. But it cost him, because he was so ardent. Next recreation period he would break more tiles.

He was practical. He loved to take things apart and put them
back together. On the night of his death, he was going around the new house, connecting up the telephone. In his early years he taught physics. The exact sciences always held an attraction for him, and the sociological writings of his later years were always accompanied by statistics.

He was forceful in expression, even exaggerated, and judgments on antagonists were strong. Anyone hearing him on such people might suppose them quite irredeemable, but those who knew Segundo also knew of his compassion and, indeed, his knack for being a reconciler. This latter was recognized in his often being named a community leader.

In the 1970s he had realized he could serve El Salvador better as a social analyst than as a physicist, so he studied anthropology in Madrid, where he got a degree with honors in 1978. He arrived back in Central America with his characteristic energy to teach sociology at the Central American University and to head up the department of sociology and political science. With the help of students he launched surveys in the countryside and the city. Of the six Jesuit martyrs, he was the one who knew El Salvador best from direct personal experience. He wrote about landholdings and social classes, about refugees and human rights. He filled page after page. He wrote easily and gracefully, though not much given to the study of letters as such.

He became director of the Human Rights Institute and began to go to meetings abroad, where he presented the results of his study of refugees and human rights, principally. He was aware, therefore, that he might be a marked man. His last trip, at the beginning of November, was to Washington, D.C., where he was honored by CARECEN (which in Spanish means "they need"), an organization that aids refugees, and by the Washington Office on Latin America (WOILA), for his refugee and human-rights work.

He never lost touch with the people. Every weekend he said Mass in a poor neighborhood of Santa Tecla. They loved him there because he was so simple in his personal dealings. To this community he would narrate his experiences in the even poorer refugee resettlements, and they tell how he could make them "feel like worms," describing how a refugee family would give him the one egg they had for the whole family. He evangelized

the poor with the example of those who were even poorer. He told them how he had celebrated Mass under gunfire in Perquin, where he had spent Holy Week a couple of years ago.

The people recall his face especially—his Viking beard and fiery cheeks, enough to put the fear of God into anyone. At the university they had nicknamed him Zeus. But little children did not fear him. They liked to put their faces right up against his. And in that face the most outstanding feature were his eyes, which deep down had a trace of sadness and seemed on the watch for God, eyes that looked surprised when he received a gift. Then they would fill with tears, and he would say with a few, abrupt words: "Thanks, I don't deserve it."
Joaquin López y López, S.J.

"Lolo"

b. Aug. 16, 1918; d. Nov. 16, 1989
National Director, "Fe y Alegria"

"Lolo" (López y López) is the only one of the six who belonged to a different generation. He was the oldest and the only native Salvadoran. It seems the murderers separated him from the others. Not only did they put him in a room, but they did not blast his brains out, as they did with the other priests.

His family were from Santa Ana, rich people, owners of coffee plantations and a famous dairy. But he left that at an early age, finishing high school in a minor seminary. Throughout his life he was exemplary in his self-denial and fondness for secondhand things—never a trace of luxury. Though he handled a lot of money in his day, none of it ever stuck to him. Friends from his own background helped him in works as important as starting up the Central American University, but he kept his independence. He spent his entire apostolic life in El Salvador.

He was a man of few words, not always audible or well-pronounced. He seemed at times to regret what he was saying. He was timid, without the charism of a university professor. But what an impresario of education at the more popular level! The harbinger of what would become Fe y Alegria ("Faith and Joy"), the movement he directed, could be seen in the catechism classes in poor neighborhoods that he organized from the boarding school where he worked. He knew how to motivate students from various schools to spend part of their weekend among the needy.

This knack for organizing and networking helped him in 1964 to start a campaign to found the Central American University. He remembered those years with pleasure. It was one of the few subjects on which he was expansive. Starting with a national federation of parents, he organized from the high school a fund drive and popular support for the legal chartering of a private university, seen in those days as a non-Marxist alternative. He stayed on at the university for only a few years, since his talents lay elsewhere. But for many years he signed documents as secretary of the faculty. Father Ellacuria (the rector) was eager that Lolo form part of the university community when it was reorganized in 1988, precisely because of the part he played in its beginning and the bonds of affection that joined him to it. So it was no mere chance that the blow aimed at the Jesuits of Central American University struck him down, too.

Fe y Alegria, with its 13 schools, 12 workshops and 8,000 students, with its two clinics and their 50,000 clients, was for him an immediate response to one of El Salvador's most serious problems, the lack of education. He did not deny the importance of "structural change," but he thought the needs of the people needed looking after today. He could come across as caught up in the immediate, putting himself in debt during the school term,
placing his trust in God—and the big raffle at the end of the year. Before closing any schools, when income was down, again and again he would try his raffles, which came through for him despite the economic crisis.

Lolo was a man already condemned—not by any death squad, but by prostate cancer. He did not know how long he had. Meanwhile he kept working tirelessly, until, without his suspecting it would be this way, the enemies of his poor people did the Reaper’s business.

Elba and Celina Ramos

Mother and Daughter
d. Nov. 16, 1989

Elba was born in Santiago Maria. Her mother, Santos, sold fruit, and her father, whose name does not appear on the birth certificate, was a plantation boss. Around 1967 Elba met the man with whom she would live the rest of her life in a common-law marriage. He had been working as an overseer at a plantation in Santa Tecla. She had been working as a domestic in San Salvador, and when she asked permission to do some coffee-
picking, she ended up in her future husband's section.

She stopped working when they set up their home. At that time they were living on the land of Ernesto Liebes, who gave them economic help, but he died in one of the first of the violent kidnappings, so they left in 1970. They moved to Jayaque, where her husband looked after someone else's farm and also grew some corn and beans, with which Elba gave him a hand. It was there that Celina was born. She was the third child, really, for Elba had already had two babies, the first a little boy who was stillborn and the second another boy who died shortly after birth. After Celina, another boy arrived in 1976, and he is still alive.

Also in 1976, looking for a better life, they moved to Acajutla. They had to leave in 1979 because of violence that destroyed the husband's source of work. Then they moved back to Santa Tecla, where they rented a little house that was essentially a box with a dirt floor and a curtain down the middle. He got work as gardener for a rich gentleman who left the country in 1985 because of land reform, whereupon he got work as a neighborhood night watchman.

That same year Elba started working for the Jesuits at the new theologate, cooking and cleaning. She was there from the start, and it was through Elba that her husband later got work as a guard at the Jesuit university. Father Amando López (who was also murdered Nov. 16) knew Elba from the theologate and liked her. He had the idea that a small family was needed for the guardhouse and suggested Elba and her husband, who came to work at the university in July of 1989. The family of four did not move into the guardhouse till a few weeks later. Elba kept on working at the theologate, a 15-minute walk away, and in fact she never worked for the Jesuits at the university. Her husband was the guard at a main gate of the university, which opened onto the area where the Jesuit residence was located.

As for Celina, by 1989 she was in the first year of a high school commercial course. She had received a scholarship along with two companions from her primary school, and every so often she had to show her marks to the lawyer who had given them the scholarship. The need to concentrate on studies had led her to give up basketball and band, a sacrifice for someone so active. She also interrupted her work as a catechist. Even so, she seems to have been hard-pressed because she left two subjects incomplete. She had had a boyfriend since she was 14. He too liked basketball and was on his school team. They had thought they might get married soon, depending on what Elba said. Elba used to advise him and show him a lot of affection, and he planned to break the news to her in December.

At the theologate they remember Elba as an exceptional person: loyal, discreet, intuitive in spotting signs of distress in another's face. Then she would speak poetically, using metaphors, giving advice to the person she thought was down. She was sensitive to the needs of others, and on the day before she was killed she washed her best dress (a black one with a pink flower design) for a woman who had taken refuge in the theologate from the bombing. She was going to give it to her the next day.

That Wednesday, Nov. 15, when Elba walked up to the theologate, she brought a change of clothes in case she couldn't get back and had to sleep there. Since the preceding Sunday, the mother and daughter had not slept in the guardhouse, because on Saturday the guerrillas had set off a bomb at the gate. Amando López had told them they would be safer in the Jesuit residence. Then, that Wednesday, the two of them managed to get back in the evening from the theologate to the Jesuit residence. They even cooked supper for the Jesuits.

The theologians had told Elba to stay up there, but she did not want to be away from her husband. She wanted to make sure he got his supper. This loyalty called her to her death. Her husband, who spent the night in the guardhouse, was saved. Her little boy, who on Saturday had gone with cousins to Acajutla, was also saved.