

# Esmerelda's Testimony--from living in a cave to LIFE in Christ!

On Tue, Oct 23, 2012

This is a POWERFUL testimony that strongly moves me when I read it, because:

- a. It glorifies God
- b. It speaks of how God continues to move from, and beyond, Athens
- c. It speaks of how God used Gregor and Gregor's parents to share God's life-changing love with Esmerelda
- d. I personally know Esmerelda, and she is a bright, beautiful, joyful, loving and humble servant of God

We are starting to support her, and we hope you pray about supporting her if you can. She is a WORTHY investment! You can give a tax-deductible investment online at: <https://give.cru.org/2880510> (then click "give a gift")

Scott and Vicki

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"I was born in Shkoder, Albania, a country devastated in many levels under the harshest Communist regime of Eastern Europe. I belonged to a race that even among a poor and devastated people was marginalized, despised and made fun of.

They call us Gypsies.

And among my own people I was an unlucky case.

As a kid I new nothing of my mother. She left us when I was two to go to Italy, thinking of finding a better life. I learned later her intentions were to come back and take us when she would have made some money, but this never happened. We were three children but I remember only my father with whom I stayed when mother left. I was little but was told latter because the house was so old and crumbling, my father and me moved to a cave in a hill nearby.

No doors, no windows, when it rained, water would drip in over our "bed". We had a dog and a cat. Once the cat got a snake in our bedding and killed it saving my life. Another time the dog saved me from criminals who pepper-sprayed my father and tried to kidnap me. That is the first "house" I remember.

We begged for daily bread from shop to shop, from coffee bar to coffee bar.

I did not know what family meant. I coveted other children when I saw them hugging their mothers, thinking in silence, I want to have a family.

The only person that loved me and I loved him was father. I loved him so much that I never wanted to be separated from him.

I did not want to know about God. I thought He does not care for me.

At around age seven, my grandmother took us in and we shared a room with her in my uncle's apartment. I never got to go to school. Daily survival was the theme of our lives

One day while playing in front of the apartment building, my cousin, the uncle's daughter, invited me to a place they called "fellowship place". Almost all kids from the neighborhood would go there. I went.

It was a dark red metallic door in front of which stood what seemed then to me to be an older lady. She welcomed children with hugs. They all called her mother Roza. That sounded strange.

Being a timid child I did not go to her, but as I waited my turn to go in through the door, she, with a big smile and a love I did not know how to describe, opened her arms towards me and said, "Come and give a hug to mother." It was the embrace I had longed for all my life. I did not want to be separated from it. I felt love, perfect love, unconditional love. Inside I was asking, "Where is this love coming from?" With time I was to discover that the love mother Roza had, was the love of Jesus Christ.

Soon that woman would become my mother for real.

My father passed away suddenly when I was eight years old. I did not know but mother Roza had promised my father to send me to school. She had a long hard battle with my grandmother who was in charge. She herself being uneducated, did not see a need for me to go to school.

Then mother Rosa and her husband father Zef and my brother Gregor (who was pastor of the church) took me in for good. This was another hard battle with my grandmother.

Everything changed. I had a family. My own room, a warm bed, food, clean clothes, and I went to school like the other kids. Father Zef would take me to the school and waited to pick me up when I finished.

But only at eleven years old I deeply understood my need to be born again by making the Lord Jesus Christ my Savior and my Lord. I did this with all my heart, on my knees, with tears in my eyes. It was something Gregor had said when he came to share once at the Children's Church: "God told Noah to make one door to the Ark through which he his family and the animals had to go to be saved. And in the same way Jesus is the Door to Salvation. He is the only way to the Father. No one goes to the Father except through Him." From that moment on I am holding His hand and never want to let go. I got a new life both ways, in this world and in eternity.

I still faced many difficulties and challenges. Father Zef passed away one year after I was adopted. So I lost my father again.

As Gregor got married to Kela and they moved to Kosovo to serve the Lord there in the city of Gjilan me and mother Roza moved also there. Mother Roza's health was deteriorating and in a few years she also went to be with the Lord.

I got to go to high school and university in Kosovo. God's faithful hand has been with me always and according to the promise He made that He will never leave me, He will never forsake me.

For many years growing up in the new family and the church I had a dream, one desire to serve the Lord all my life. I did this in the churches I have been helping in kids and youth ministries in Shkoder, Gjilan, Prishtina. Doing as much as I could, counting it a privilege.

During the university years I got also very active with Campus Crusade for Christ. And in the last year of my studies God put it in my heart to join them full time. I applied, and was accepted.

Another wonderful thing has happened about the same time. I got to know this wonderful young man, Hysen Kanani who also has been serving the Lord with CCC ( Campus Crusade for Christ) for the last six years. We are engaged and are getting married next summer (2013).

Together we want to serve the Lord. At this time through CCC we are reaching out to students, through evangelism, and discipleship, wanting to take this message of the Kingdom everywhere where God puts an open door in front of us.

In spite of circumstances we want to serve the Lord with the faith that Abraham had.

We can not do it on our own. We need Grace. We need prayers. We need friends. We need supporters. And maybe you might become one of these friends in the Gospel.

Be Blessed,

Esmerelda