

gift of knowing what is truly important in this life.

It was not possible for Rene to shut his eyes to situations of distress and of poverty which cry out to God, or to keep silent in the face of injustice. He was that kind of a man.

Rene was young, but he was wise beyond his years. He died in the prime of life, but the number of his years was not the true measure of his life. For this reason...regardless of the number of his days or the length of his years...he will find rest, for grace and mercy awaits the Chosen of the Creator, and protection awaits God's Holy Ones.

Rene was young, but he had already felt the call to social justice. His mother, Dolores, said that he came home one day with the stub of his union authorization card, showed it to her, and said, "Here is my first union card, now I am important, now I am a man."

But Rene's first union card was also his last...He will never enjoy the blessings of youth...He will fulfill all the promise others saw in him...He will never pass on his great love to his own sons and daughters.

Rene has been taken away from us in the prime of his life..., before he could share the full measure of his talents and goodness with the world about him.

Rene is gone because he dared to hope and because he dared to live out his hopes.

Rarely do men and women choose to die in the midst of their quest for freedom. They wish to be truly free and to live more fully in this life.

But death comes to all of us and we do not get to choose the time or the circumstances of our dying. The hardest thing of all is to die rightly. Rene Lopez died rightly; he is a martyr for justice.

Rene is at peace with God. He has given all that he can give.

But how many more farm workers must fall? How many more tears must be shed? How many more martyrs must there be before we can be free? When will the day come when the joy becomes great and the grief becomes small?

The answer, my brothers and sisters, is in our hands. The answer is in our hands.

We who live must now walk an extra mile because Rene has lived and died for his and our dreams. We who keep on struggling for justice for farm workers must carry in our hearts his sacrifice.