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SANT JOSEPMARIA ESCRIVÀ A VIARÓ

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Saint Jose Maria Escrivá de Balaguer, founder of Opus Dei, in Viaró.

21st November, 1972

On the 21st of November of 1972, Saint José María Escrivá de Balaguer came to Viaró for a gathering with parents and teachers. With him were the soon-to-be blessed Alvaro del Portillo –his first successor– and the current Prelate of Opus Dei, Mgr Javier Echevarría. He wanted to be with them, especially with those families promoting the School, to encourage them to keep on working for this huge and unique task, the education of children. He reminded parents that *your main business is that your children turn out... At least as good, and if possible, better than you*, and teachers that *you need to meet the boys halfway, so that they will walk the other half willingly.*”

Those of us who were lucky enough to be with him that morning in November still remember with emotion the place of the meeting —the library, packed— and the firm and confident voice of Saint José María addressing the audience.

It was one of the many family gatherings that took place during his travels through Europe and America between the years 1972 and 1974, with the sole objective of conveying Christian doctrine and the Opus Dei spirit. He just intended to carry out a big Catechesis.

All these gatherings were recorded in filmed documents, which still today allow us to see Saint José María as if we were there with him.

This leaflet was edited in 1997, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the stay of the founder of Opus Dei in Viaró. It brings together questions and answers from his meetings with many people in this great catechesis on the family, the school and children's education, and many of them took place during the talk held in Viaró. Five years later, on the occasion of the centenary of his birth—9th January, 1902—, the leaflet was re-edited in order to continue offering a lasting reminder of the Christian doctrine and the Opus Dei spirit.

Now, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Viaró, we are producing yet another edition of it, forty-one years after his visit to the School.

Ignasi M^a Canals
Headmaster
Sant Cugat del Vallès
21st November, 2013

School and family

— I just wanted to say one thing to you. You are doing very well, it is only just that parents should care about their children, because bringing offspring into this world is something that beasts can also do, but you don't find that good enough: You want to pass your ideal on to them, your faith, your pure behavior and so many other great virtues that you bring to your family life. All this you are achieving, by promoting these type of schools all over the world. You are doing well! It is not me who says it but, the Lord through the mouth of Isaiah: Dicitur iusto quoniam bene...

Viaró (Barcelona), 21/09/1972

A parent's responsibility

— Father, we are disoriented when it comes to choosing a school for our children. We prefer a school where religion is not taught at all than one where the teachings are wrong. However, we are aware that it is a great responsibility of parents to give their children proper teachings at home. What advice can you give us?

—I will tell you that I do feel that I must travel the world a bit. Mea culpa! because I had never come to Brasil until now. I thank the Lord for this goodness of His, an extraordinary Goodness! For me, it is a great gift of God to be able to be here with you. And when I travel

around, I open my intelligence, my ears, my eyes in order to learn. And I have learned something which could serve as an answer to your question.

Everywhere in the world things are as you say. Since I've never lived here I can't really speak about Brasil. But you, who live here, tell me it is difficult to find a school. Well, the same is everywhere else in the world, where parents have that same concern. And you know how they sort it out?

Within each country's laws, you as parents can organise yourselves and prepare schools where the main role is played by the parents, secondly by the teaching staff, and finally by students. This is how children will learn about science and about human "politesse", and at the same time about Christian faith, as you desire. In this way, what I have learned I tell you, in case you would like to go for it together with some of your friends. I know that the laws in this country are broad enough for it, so it would be a feasible thing. So it will be up to you. I will limit myself to praying a lot for you if you are to undertake such an enterprise, so that God will bless it. In the meanwhile, may He bless you because you take such Christian and motherly care of your children.

Parque Anhembi (Sao Paulo), 1-06-1974.

Parents are most important

—At the school there are three important things: Firstly, the parents; secondly, the teachers; thirdly, the students. Your children —please don't be offended— come in third place. This is how things will go best for them.

Therefore, parents who don't come to the School to talk to the teachers are not complying with their duty. If you are not putting your shoulders to the wheel you are not fulfilling your duty.

Your most important business is that your children turn out to be as you would wish them to. At least as good, and if possible, better than you. Therefore, I insist! These kinds of schools, promoted by family parents, have firstly an interest for parents, and then for the students. You might ask: Is this work going to be useful? You are seeing it: Each of you have your own personal experience, through that of your children's. If the schools are not any better, it is your fault: Because you are not praying and coming around here enough.

Your task is very interesting, your business will not resent the dedication that the School is asking of you. With words of the Holy Ghost I tell you: electi mei non laborabunt frustra. The Lord has chosen you for this task that is done in benefit of your children, of their intelligence and their character. Because it is not only about teaching here but also about educating, and teachers participate in all rights and duties of a father and a mother. The same goes with many other schools similar to this one all over the world.

An extension of the home

—What should we tell Christian parents that the School should be to our children?

—The School should be an extension of your home (...) But you also need to be aware, don't be complacent, and try to read the Catechism. Your wife will also take a look at it, and then you can comment on it with you children, according to their age. You will see that this is quite an interesting task, because you can give them excellent formation. But don't imagine that your children should be perfect in the sense of those strange little saints that you see in old paintings...

Colegio Tajamar (Madrid), 21-10-1972.

Collaborating with the School

—How to get parents to cooperate in the formation given to their children by the School?

—You can smile just as you are doing right now, you should ask them to help, and give them these reasons that are in your head, which are quite clear. You will draw them to it! Besides, they all know that they should lend a hand. So each of you should try to find ten or twelve more parents who are not giving away from the things they don't really need. Whenever it is given to me, I accept second-hand clothes and old furniture. But I would like you to give up a little bit of what is necessary in your life. And in this way, you will be generously working for Christ.

Don't give little pieces of fabric, but the whole cloth!

Colegio Tabancura (Santiago de Chile), 2-07-1974.

Speak face to face

—What should we do when we don't like something that the School has planned, some detail, or something doesn't convince us?

—You should tell the headmaster in a natural way, knowing that it is not about complaining, which is easy, but about collaborating, because you are the most important part of the School. On the other hand, do not assume —being a reasonable man as you are— that whatever you say is sure and without challenge. It could be that at a certain point, and in that case they will really listen to you and you will be collaborating in the progress of the School. But it could also be the case that you were wrong, and that is when they will not listen to you. Never mind: I have been wrong many times myself... Okay?

So instead of whispering things you don't like in this one's or the other one's ear, just ask for an appointment with the headmaster and tell him clearly face to face: I'm coming to say this. After all, you are all friends and are looking for the same thing: Preparing your children so that they will be good Christians tomorrow, lovers of both freedom and personal responsibility.

Viaró (Barcelona), 21-11-1972.

The teacher's task

—Could you please give a piece of advice to those of us dedicated to teaching?

—I will remind you first that you are a Christian teacher. Part of your inner life should be to pray for your students, and for their parents, who are even more interesting than them, okay?

Second, prepare your lessons well, and be loyal to your students, so that they will slowly also become your friends.

Finally, do not distance yourself from the boys. Try to meet them halfway, so that they will willingly walk the other half themselves. The rest will be told to you by the mum, who comes around, or by dad, who will also be coming.

Viaró (Barcelona), 21-11-1972.

Honesty first

—Father, which is the first virtue that we need to teach the boys?

—Honesty. A child that has been accustomed to speak the truth to the teacher even when it is hard —just to the teacher alone, of course—, is a wonderful creature. We must instill honesty in them (...), and for that, you must be very honest yourselves. Teach the children to go to the confessor. But I would also advise them to talk with their tutor, who maintains professional silence and who can also help them in many ways: Spiritual, psychological, material...

Viaró (Barcelona), 21-11-1972.

—Loyalty —There is a lot of disloyalty around at the moment. Make them loyal, sincere, not afraid to tell the truth. To do so, you must be loyal with them yourself, treat them as adults, adapting yourself to their needs and circumstances according to their age and character. Be their friend, be good and noble with them, be honest and simple.

Pozoalbero (Jerez de la Frontera), 12-11-1972

True freedom

—At this time of crisis of values and authority, how should I teach my students about true freedom?

—I know that you teach the children that freedom has been won for us by Christ at the Cross; that He went up to the Cross because of His love for us, to win freedom for us;

(...) Read the Beatitudes: Blessed are the poor, blessed are those who mourn... (Matth. V, 3 ss): Liberation is the liberation of sin. When the heart feels that it is free from these miseries it rebels, but it rebels against the wretched ones who mean to poison the soul (...)

What you should try to do in the souls and hearts of these little things —who sometimes seem to be little rebels, but they are only being playful—, is to point with your fingers toward the Christian teachings and the culture that a person needs to be aware of nowadays. Keep calm! Apart from this, if you can, —as you are doing already— set a good example, and have a spirit of sacrifice... Because I'm sure it must have been freezing cold and stifling hot for you here.

Well, you know already yourself how things are to be done. And the parents know what they need to do, too. You will eventually have a School that will meet all due requirements, with a minimum of comfort, although not an excessive one, otherwise it would be the wrong sort of liberation.

Colegio Tabancura (Santiago de Chile), 2-07-1974.

Relationship with the parents

—I am a religion teacher. What would you say to the youth about how careful they should be when going to the cinema, watching TV or reading a book?

—In other places parents have organised themselves in order to deal with this task. I know an association that edits critiques of modern authors, and also of theatre plays and cinema. People subscribe to it at an affordable price, and this way they can give advice to their children. Because that's what you need to do with children when they grow up, you can't tie them up or hold them by the ear. If you are not able to persuade them, they will drift away. Do you understand?

—Yes, father.

—Pray for them. And speak with them in a noble way, face-to-face, and also with the children of others. Ask for the collaboration of the parents, because you teachers can't manage this by yourselves. You are giving your all, but after a whole month of a great deal of preparation comes a sarcastic word from dad, or a guffaw from mum, and all your hours of work have been ruined. Try to work with the mums and dads, who are most important; and after that, work with the children.

Colegio Miralba (Lima), 14-07-1974.

The virtues of a teacher

—Father, among the conditions which teachers must meet, which virtues do you think are most important, humanly and supernaturally?

—You will need all of them, but above all showing great loyalty to your students. They should see that you love them, that you sacrifice yourselves for them, that you have enough knowledge and you know how to pass it on gracefully, with light, with the gift of tongues, so that they will understand you. You cannot demand from them what you don't have yourself. Try to have it yourself, and after that you can ask for things.

Colegio Gaztelueta (Bilbao), 12-10-1972.

—Father, father... Here, up here... Which is the first virtue that a teacher must live?

—I will tell you something since you are high up there: The first virtue should be humility, and at the same time a clear sense that you, having prepared the class well, know more than anybody else. One thing is perfectly compatible with the other. After this, your frequency of the sacraments, your life as a Christian who prays, with a prayer that avoids anonymity because it is in direct search of God.

Viaró (Barcelona), 21-11-1972.

—Father, I am a teacher at Retamar and I am not much older than I look...

-More than me ...! Go on.

—... Sometimes, when I speak to parents about God, about the Christian life, maybe they don't listen to me because I am young. What can I do?

—**How old are you?**

—*I just turned twenty-seven, Father.*

—**A priest starts preaching at twenty-three or twenty-four. Surely, we priests have the grace of God and have carried out specific studies in order to talk about God. But you, who deeply care about Jesus Christ, who have a good formation and are older than these young priests, can talk about God in all confidence and do more good than a priest. Because they say: What is this priest going to tell me about, other than that? But with you they get a big surprise, because they were not expecting a spiritual conversation. Therefore, courage! It is not true that they don't listen to you. Of course they listen to you!**

Colegio Retamar (Madrid), 28-10-1972.

Communicating the Faith

—*Father, how can a teacher, through her school students, contribute to the moral training of families?*

—**Your profession is admirable. Jesus let Himself be called Teacher, and you are also a teacher to those kids. Can you see how great your profession is! You have souls in your hands that are like soft clay. You can work on it with your fingers by leaving the print of your faith on it, and those big wishes that you have to be an admirable Christian, a good server to others and to your country...You can teach**

such wonderful things!: *Loving Our Lady, in this land that is Her land, the land of the Holy Mary. And then, when you see that they are getting older and their passions start to spring up with impetus, little by little you can start talking to the mums, and you can say to them: It would be good if you could tell your son this and that... Understand? You can carry out an almost priestly task with your students, my daughter. God bless you!*

Club Xénon (Lisboa), 5-11-1972.

Peace in the family

—Father, how can peace be ensured in the family?

—I often say that in the homes where there is peace it is the women who are in charge, and more so even when the husband thinks that he is the one who is in charge. But do not become tyrants, trying to monopolise the children's love. You wouldn't be thinking rationally, and you would be unhappy, too. You must lavish your husbands with that love, and with that same love of yours, give them also the love of your children, so that they will hold on to their father's heart and make him collaborate with you in their education. Otherwise, children —when bad passions arrive— think that spirituality and clean behaviour in life is a woman's thing, and of course this is not the way it is: It is also a man thing, a thing for very solid men. This is why I always tell you that you should be the ones in charge at home, but with your husband's agreement: You know how to convince him quickly!

Enxomil (Portugal), 31-10-1972.

No stick nor vaseline

—Father, in the education of children, do you recommend a stick or vaseline?

—I don't recommend either. I recommend your serenity with your children, don't just spank them when you feel like it. If you do that the children will be furious, you will be annoyed, you will suffer because you love them, and besides, you will have to calm yourself afterwards, anyway. Have a little patience, tell them off when you are not angry anymore, and just the two of you. Don't humiliate them in front of their siblings. Speak to them by reasoning with them, so that they will become aware that they need to behave in a different way because this is how they will please God (...).

*So what we need to do is to avoid both extremes:
Too much tolerance and too much rigour.*

Col·legi Bell-lloc del Pla (Girona), 24-11-1972.

Affection and fortitude

—Father! When I talk with God about my six children...

—What a good conversation!

—...how can my affection for them be combined with the necessary fortitude? How far can I let myself be carried away by my affection for them?

—Affection has no limits. When there is fortitude, there is also affection, because fortitude is a part of love. Do you understand? Also, you can't treat all children in

the same way: Each of them is different, each of them a jewel that the Lord has put in your hands, because He has greatly trusted your wife and you. So you need to collaborate for this jewel to shine.

Colegio Retamar (Madrid), 28-10-1972.

The marriage program

—Father, what's your advice to a newly married couple?

—Firstly, to really love each other, according to the law of God. Second, don't be afraid of life. Love each other's faults, those that are not an offense to God. And then, you, try not to neglect yourself, because you don't own yourself. You have been told, and you know this very well, that you belong to your husband and he belongs to you. Don't let him be stolen away from you! He is a soul that needs to go to Heaven with you, who together with you should be giving a Chilean quality —that is, Christian—, and also human grace, to the children that God sends you. Pray a little together. Not much, but a little bit every day. When you forget, let him tell you, and when he forgets, you should tell him. Don't reproach him for anything, don't get at him with trifles, mortifying him.

Colegio Tabancura (Santiago de Chile), 7-07-1974.

The Best Strategy

—Tell us, Father, what is the best strategy to combine the short-term goal—to keep happiness and peace—, with the long-term goal, which is taking the family to Heaven.

—You set a good example for them. You are already setting it too, I can tell you just from hearing you speak. Then, be a man of prayer. This doesn't mean anything like becoming a monk. I greatly care for the religious, but I am not a religious person.

(...) You need to be with your wife and your kids ... And your mother-in-law! Do you understand? So you can sanctify yourself with that, set a good example for your loved ones, with that smile and that energy.

IESE (Barcelona), 27-11-1972.