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God Doesn't Make Mistakes: Eduardito, the Child Who Transformed a Family

The story of Eduardito, son of Eduardo Ortíz de Landázuri and Laura Busca, shows how illness and fragility can transform a family from within, teaching them to live holiness in everyday life.

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Sanctity, rather than a state of ideal perfection, tends to be the simple response we give to the circumstances we are called to live in. Saint Josemaría, in one of his homilies from *Christ is Passing By*, suggested that his work as a priest was simply to place each person before the demands of their own life, helping them to discover what God asks of them in each moment (cf. no. 99).

This “blessed responsibility” has a very human meaning in the story of Eduardo Ortíz de Landázuri and Laura Busca, who learnt to manage a particularly complex family situation: the illness of their third child, Eduardito.

Eduardito was born in Granada^[1] on 29 November 1949 during a time of change for the family. From a very early age, after a complicated birth, they began to notice difficulties in his

speech and mobility. The diagnosis of idiopathic epilepsy with severe mental impairment^[2] marked a turning point in household dynamics.

However, rather than experiencing this as a paralysing tragedy, Eduardo and Laura tried to integrate it into the normal life of a large family. Realising that Eduardito could not keep up with the academic pace of other children, his mother sought alternatives to help him feel useful and entertained, discovering that he had a talent for painting and sewing, hobbies that he would practise for the rest of his life.

From the perspective of his religious formation, too, Eduardo and Laura never gave up. Carlos, another son, recalls how, “after receiving his first communion [in Granada] with great enthusiasm, Eduardito continued to go to confession and receive

Communion fairly frequently while living with my parents, with great spontaneity and naturalness.”^[3] —

Living together, of course, was not without friction and exhaustion. Eduardito's attacks were frequent and left him worn out, which disrupted the rest rhythm of the entire family. Guadalupe, who was eight years younger, recalls “that there were moments when it wasn't easy to live with Eduardito, although we all loved him very much.”^[4] —

From his time in Granada, and following the doctors' advice in Pamplona, they agreed that he should never sleep alone, so they could react to his crises in time. They had to be vigilant to prevent him from falling out of bed, hurting himself or biting his tongue, and to alert Eduardo immediately if the situation became complicated. The siblings learnt to take turns in this

night-time vigil, a task which, though naturally demanding, ended up becoming a natural way of loving and caring for one another.

Sometimes tensions at home would rise; Eduardito could have abrupt reactions or moments of frustration that were difficult to control. During these episodes, such as when he broke the crockery in the kitchen, Laura's reaction was not one of drama or reproach, but of silent patience and deep affection. She would accompany him to his room and wait for him to calm down, trying to ensure that the rest of the family saw these situations naturally and without bearing grudges.

As the years passed, the physical and emotional strain began to take its toll, especially on his mother. Eduardito required almost exclusive attention and sometimes his outbursts became more difficult to

manage, to the point of causing risky situations that seriously worried Eduardo.

It was not an ideal situation; there were moments of real anguish and doubt about how to act. At one point, Eduardo's mother, Eulogia, moved to live in the family home. A great deal of tension arose from having Eduardito and his grandmother under the same roof; they would get angry with each other and were jealous of one another, which was understandable given their respective circumstances, since both required a great deal of attention.^[5]

María Luisa recalls: “My father prayed a great deal for Eduardito and faced all the situations that his illness caused with a lot of trust in God and serenity.”

Finally, in 1969, Eduardo, after many conversations with experts and with his wife, made the difficult decision

to admit his son to the Psychiatric Centre of Pamplona, because the illness was manifesting with increasingly frequent epileptic attacks and reactions of greater violence.

María Luisa recalls a particularly complex episode that marked a turning point: in a moment of frustration, Eduardito had an abrupt reaction with a kitchen knife. When trying to calm him, Laura suffered an injury to her back. Although she tried to downplay the seriousness of the injury, Eduardo realised that the situation now exceeded the possibilities of home care, and that they needed to seek an external solution for everyone's good.^[6]

Eduardo spoke with his children and explained the situation honestly. Laura found it very difficult to accept, but they understood that the change was a necessary step for

everyone's wellbeing. It was a painful decision, made in prayer, from the conviction that it was the most responsible choice in their circumstances.

Carlos, another of the children, recalls that, “most of us, the siblings, went with him. We saw with great amazement how Eduardito offered not the slightest resistance, accepting his new situation with all its consequences [...], Afterwards my father wanted us all to go home to tell my mother that everything had gone well. My mother was happy with everything we told her, but naturally it was a very painful step for her.”^[7] —

Even after the admission, Laura showed great fortitude in accepting the medical recommendations to space out visits so as not to disturb the boy's stability. It was an exercise in strength, requiring them to accept

being away from their son more than they would have wished, because the doctors agreed that it was best for him.

Years later, on 29 August 1981, Blessed Álvaro del Portillo would tell them that “Eduardito has done you so much good, and although it may seem impossible, he has brought you closer together, and you have helped one another. Sometimes we cannot understand, but God does not make mistakes.”^[8] Eduardito died on 18 November 2019.^[9]

Fundamentally, sanctity consists in accepting what life brings us and living it as a call from God to love. This acceptance, full of love and hope, transforms difficulties and sorrows into the Cross of Jesus and a path of redemption.

Thus we recall the words of Saint Josemaría: “How lovingly Jesus embraces the wood which is to bring

him to death! Is it not true that as soon as you cease to be afraid of the Cross, of what people call the cross, when you set your will to accept the Will of God, then you find happiness, and all your worries, all your sufferings, physical or moral, pass away?” (Way of the Cross, 2nd Station)

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[1] Married in 1941, Laura and Eduardo lived in Madrid until 1949. Eduardo then obtained the chair in Granada in 1949 and they moved there. In 1958 they moved to Pamplona.

[2] MENDO, Hilario, *La fortaleza de una mujer fiel. Laura Busca Otaegui*, Ed. Palabra, Madrid 2009, pg. 29 [all citations from this text are unofficial translations].

[3] *La casa del médico: una semblanza de la familia Ortiz de Landázuri*
Busca, unpublished book by Eduardo and Laura's son Carlos.

[4] MENDO, Hilario, *Distintos y unidos*, Palabra, Madrid 2023, pg. 110. As previously mentioned, Eduardito had six siblings: Manolo and Laura, older than him by 4 and 2 years respectively; Carlos, José María, María Luisa and Guadalupe (called Upe), younger than him by 1, 4, 6 and 8 years respectively.

[5] MENDO, Hilario, *Distintos y unidos*, Palabra, Madrid 2023. pg. 184

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] MENDO, Hilario, *Distintos y unidos*, Palabra, Madrid 2023. pg. 186.

[8] MENDO, Hilario, *Distintos y unidos*, Palabra, Madrid 2023. pg. 235.

^[9] MENDO, Hilario, Distintos y
unidos, Palabra, Madrid 2023. pg.
189.

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