

Eduardo Ortiz: Professor of Medicine

Eduardo's knowledge and his clinical and diagnostic skills made him one of the leading physicians of his generation in Spain, but his outstanding characteristic was the personal interest he took in each of his patients, to whom he generously dedicated all the time they needed.

08/15/2025

This sketch of Eduardo Ortiz is from John Coverdale's book and podcast "Encounters: Finding God in All Walks of Life." *Encounters* presents profiles of people living Saint Josemaria's message of finding God in everyday life.

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Eduardo Ortiz de Landázuri, a nationally known Spanish physician and professor of internal medicine, was born in 1910. He applied to the naval academy but was not admitted. Faced with the need to choose some other career, he put in a bag slips of paper with the names of things he

could study and pulled out “Medicine.” Despite this haphazard way of becoming a doctor, Eduardo ended up deeply in love with medicine and completely dedicated to it.

He entered medical school in 1927 and became a disciple of Carlos Jiménez Díaz, the best-known Spanish professor of medicine in the first half of the twentieth century. While in medical school, he joined the Socialist party and served as vice president of the Professional Association of Medical Students, a left-wing group. He was very pleased to see Spain reject the monarchy and become a Republic in 1931.

He graduated from medical school in 1934 and began working in an infectious disease hospital in Madrid. At a time when there were no antibiotics, the hospital was a grim place, but there he met his future

wife Laura Busca. She had finished a degree in pharmacy and was doing research for her doctorate. As a condition for going on their first date, she insisted on splitting the bill.

At the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, Eduardo's father, a professional artillery officer, was condemned to death by the Republican authorities. Eduardo had some connections with important Republican politicians and managed to get the death sentence reversed, but on condition that his father serve in the Republican Army. That he refused to do. Eduardo, together with his mother and his sister Guadalupe, accompanied their father in his prison cell during his final hours.

His father's execution was a turning point for Eduardo, both religiously and politically. He had been religiously indifferent during his student years and his first years of

practice but now began to take his religion seriously. Politically, he decided that he could no longer be a member of the Marxist socialist party and even secretly joined the Falange, a party that took much of its inspiration from Italian Fascism and supported Franco. During the war, he harbored in the wards of the hospital several dozen people who were in danger of being arrested because of their political views and activities or simply because they were known as practicing Catholics. He also sheltered in his home people who were in danger, including two nuns. During the Civil War, he was mobilized by the Republican army as a medical officer but was able to continue working in a Madrid hospital.

When the civil war came to an end in 1939 with Franco's victory, Eduardo was tried by a military court because of his membership in the Socialist

party and because he had served as a medical lieutenant in the Republican Army. His having sheltered people during the war and having belonged, albeit secretly, to the Falange led to his being found innocent of political wrongdoing and eligible for employment. He got a position supervising medical care in prisons, and opened a small private office. In 1944 he defended his doctoral thesis on malnutrition.

A Decade in Granada

In 1948, Eduardo won a chair as Professor of Medicine in Granada, a medium-sized city 250 miles (425 km) south of Madrid in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada and renowned for its outstanding Moorish architectural monuments. The next 10 years went very well. At the medical school, he combined research, teaching, and clinical care of patients in innovative ways that

made him stand out among his contemporaries. He became Dean of the Medical School and built a team of some forty doctors and scientists associated with the department of Internal Medicine. He frequently attended medical conferences in Germany and England and was making a name for himself in the world of international academic medicine. In 1958, he was named Vice-Rector of the University and was well-positioned to become its next Rector. His private practice also flourished, and he gradually became the leading internist in Granada and the surrounding area.

Eduardo and his family were very content in Granada and looked forward to a fulfilling and happy future there. The family had many friends in the university and in the city, and Eduardo's private practice supplemented his salary handsomely and permitted the family to have a

chauffeur and a beautiful home on the outskirts of the city. It also made it possible for him to pay personally for medicines like penicillin for poor patients he treated in the University Hospital.

Move to Pamplona

In 1952, after making a retreat at Molinoviejo, the first Opus Dei conference center, Eduardo became a supernumerary member of the Work. That same year, a handful of members of Opus Dei started in Pamplona an institution of higher learning called at the time the Studium Generale of Navarra. It began with a law school and in 1954 it added a school of medicine. Its founders hoped it would become a full-fledged university. Given the Spanish government's tight control over higher education, it was not clear, however, how it would ever

achieve government recognition as an independent university.

In Spain, students enter the school of medicine directly out of high school. The first few years of medical school consist of classroom instruction with no clinical component. This made it possible for the medical school of the Studium Generale to make do in the first few years with classroom space in an old building on the grounds of the Provincial Hospital of Navarra. (At the time, Spanish hospitals were government-run institutions for caring for the poor. Patients with any money were seen in a doctor's private office. If they needed in-patient care they went to private clinics.)

In the fall of 1958, the Medical School had the original old leased building and a recently-built four-story building on the grounds of the Provincial Hospital on the outskirts

of Pamplona. The new facility had classrooms, a cafeteria, a library, some rudimentary laboratories, and an outpatient clinic but no beds and no space for clinical instruction. A university hospital with beds and operating theaters would be needed, but it was not clear where the money would come from.

At this juncture, the dean of the medical school approached Eduardo about joining the faculty. On its surface, the offer was unattractive, even crazy. The move would require abandoning a large number of friends and uprooting his family. Pamplona was a small town centered on providing services to the surrounding agricultural communities. In contrast with Granada, it was architecturally undistinguished and had little to offer in the way of culture or social life. The skies were often overcast

and most of the year it rained at least 10 days a month.

Professionally, Eduardo would be giving up a secure position in a stimulating environment to join a recently-established school with no official recognition, inadequate facilities, a tiny faculty, and a very uncertain future. On the other hand, there was something exciting about becoming part of a university project which, if it succeeded, might break out of the ossified molds of the official government-run universities. He would be able to shape the medical school in the light of the vision he had received from his mentor Dr. Jiménez Díaz, combining research, teaching, and clinical practice. Most importantly, he knew that the founder of Opus Dei was deeply interested in the project.

He consulted his wife, Laurita, who said she would be happy to do

whatever he thought best. He also went to visit his mentor, Dr. Jiménez Díaz, to ask his advice, perhaps with the thought that he would dissuade him from doing something so crazy. On the contrary, Jiménez Díaz encouraged him to accept. “In my opinion, the offer is very attractive, and knowing you as I do, I think it is very interesting.” Later in a letter, he wrote, “Come on, Eduardo. The three kings went further, and they were only following a star.” Naturally, his friends and colleagues in Granada attempted to dissuade him.

Eduardo also informed his friend Dr. Gregorio Marañón about his decision. Professor of endocrinology at the University of Madrid and a prolific author who published extensively in many fields including history, Marañón was one of the best-known and most respected physicians in Spain. Eduardo was very encouraged when he received

his response: “As soon as I heard about your decision, I felt strongly that it was the right one. ... The School in Navarra can have a beneficial and perhaps definitive influence on the transformation of the spiritual life and the efficacy of Spanish universities. ... Although I don’t think it will happen, if you should ever have a moment of doubt, know that you have in me a friend who will fortify you and your conviction.”

Eduardo and his family moved to Pamplona in September 1958, just in time for the beginning of 1958-59 academic year. He immediately began teaching and establishing a plan of research suitable to his new conditions. He also made an effort to meet people in Pamplona, including members of the provincial government who would be crucial to the school's development.

It would take time to establish a private practice. It was common at the time for Spanish medical school professors to have an office separate from the medical school for seeing private patients. In Granada, Eduardo had followed the normal practice except that at the suggestion of his mentor, Dr. Jiménez Díaz, he had set his fees five to ten times higher than what other doctors charged. He did so not to get rich, but because in that way he would be able to earn enough for his family without taking too much time away from the medical school. The strategy had worked well. People felt that if he could charge so much, he must be very good, and they soon discovered that he actually was. He became the doctor of choice for the well-to-do in Granada and the surrounding area and made a lot of money without taking much time away from the medical school. He also saw many patients for free or for very low fees

in the medical school clinic, so he was never only the doctor of the rich.

The Dean of the medical school in Pamplona assumed that Eduardo would open a private office somewhere in the center of the city. He was surprised when Eduardo said he would see private patients at the medical school. The location was inconvenient and some potential patients would consider it beneath them to see a doctor on the grounds of the hospital where the poor went for treatment. Eduardo, however, thought that in this way he could better carry out his mission in the medical school and contribute to its prestige, although he would undoubtedly earn less money. This generous decision contributed greatly to the establishment and development of the Clinic and later the Hospital of the University of Navarra which today is accredited by the Joint Commission International

and widely considered one of the best hospitals in Spain.

Shortly after arriving in Pamplona, Eduardo established Saturday morning teaching conferences modeled on those at the Massachusetts General Hospital. They consisted of a literature review followed by a discussion of a case. The teaching conferences, attended by many doctors from Pamplona and nearby towns, helped raise the level of medical practice in the area and contributed to the reputation of the fledgling medical school.

Eduardo was a prodigious worker. During his long career, he saw something like 500,000 patients. He published more than 200 articles and spoke at more than 100 conferences. He taught innumerable classes and directed 36 doctoral dissertations. In addition, he did a great deal of

administrative work for the medical school and the university.

He also prized friendship highly and made time for his many friends. In a letter to a former colleague he said: "If there is something in this world that reflects in the highest degree the gifts that God distributes to men, it is friendship. Everything great, like self-giving and with it love, begins with friendship." On one occasion he traveled from Pamplona to Madrid simply to tell a friend in person rather than by phone that his brother had cancer. One of his colleagues observed: "He was very disorderly in his work precisely because he was governed by criteria of a higher order, that of charity. If he saw that somebody needed him, he went to help wherever that person was."

To do so much, he cut back on sleep. He went to the clinic to see his patients on Sundays and holidays. At

times he spent the entire night at the bedside of a critically ill patient. He often visited his patients late at night. In part, this was to make sure they were receiving proper medical attention. He once said, "At three in the morning, you can save a life. At nine, all you can do is sign a death certificate." But he also simply wanted to visit them and reassure them.

Often he invited graduate students to join him at home at night to review the literature and discuss cases.

These sessions began at around 11 p.m. after Eduardo's late Spanish supper and went on well into the night. At times he would nod off but would wake up and continue as if nothing had happened.

A Master Clinician with a Great Heart

Eduardo once told a friend "there are two languages: the language of logic

and the language of affection. Logic has limits. Therefore when you reach the limit of logic, and there is no way of reaching an agreement, the only way is affection. Everything I have done in my life, in all areas of life, I have always done on the basis of affection." This was especially evident in his care of patients.

Eduardo's approach to medicine, formed in the school of Jiménez Díaz, relied heavily on compiling a detailed clinical history for each patient. It was governed by the principle that "the patient is always right." This meant that hidden in the patient's narrative of his illness lay the clues that permitted diagnosis. If you listen closely to the patient, he will guide you to a proper diagnosis. As the years went by, Eduardo incorporated into his practice the laboratory tests that were becoming available and other modern diagnostic tools. Still, he continued to

rely on clinical history as a key element in diagnosis. In his view, the fundamental thing in a doctor is his “ability to penetrate the personality of the patient. Only in this way,” he believed, “do doctor-patient relations, which are the crucial point in the practice of medicine, acquire their greatest authenticity.”

During Eduardo’s years in Pamplona, the medical profession’s structure was changing rapidly. Jiménez Díaz had viewed medicine as a unified whole, a pyramid with internal medicine at the top and specialties as subordinate parts of internal medicine. As the years went by, and as more and more complex diagnostic tools became available, the specialties became increasingly independent. Eduardo had a hard time accepting this because he viewed it as a loss of the patient-centered unity of medicine. He suffered as areas of the University

Clinic that had been parts of the Department of Internal Medicine broke off and became departments in their own right. Although he recognized that this had some advantages, it seemed to him to involve losing sight of the patient as a human being.

The principle that the patient is always right also meant to Eduardo that it was very important to give weight to the patient's view of his illness, to his subjective perception of his situation and his needs. He did not hesitate, for instance, to have wine served with dinner when a patient asked for it and he thought that it might alleviate to some degree the patient's sense of suffering. He believed there were "two possible states of mind both for the doctor and for the patient. As regards the doctor, he can consider the patient as a clinical case, subject to the scientific rules of diagnostics,

treatment, and prognosis. Or, without omitting the former, the doctor can consider him as someone who suffers from physical and mental pain. The patient can simply accept the doctor as a professional functionary who fulfills his duty. ... Or he can value him in his human aspect, as a friend in whom he confides.”

Eduardo was firmly convinced that “the patients need attention. The mission of the doctor,” he said, “is not only to cure them. He has to give them affection, confidence, and a desire to live, which some of them lack.” According to his daughter, he was “totally dedicated to his patients. He loved them as if they were members of the family.”

The key to his practice and his teaching, according to one of his colleagues, was the individual patient:

“When Eduardo spoke about patients in the classroom or in scientific gatherings, he did it with rigor and with rational and scientific analysis. Nonetheless, when he was in the hospital or at the bedside of a patient, even though he was talking with other doctors or medical students, he never spoke about clinical cases. They were his ‘little patients,’ [‘enfermitos’ as he used to call them in Spanish.] He took care of each person with special affection. He pampered them. He was concerned about the individual patient and his overall situation even more than about the illness. Of course, he was concerned about diagnosis and treatment, but he concentrated above all on how the person was dealing with illness. His greatest desire was to help each one to see that their sufferings had positive value and that they were an opportunity to improve as a person.

“When he made rounds in the Clinic, he often sat on the edge of the patients' beds and held their hands or gently stroked their heads. No matter how busy, when with a patient he always seemed to have all the time in the world. He knew how to incorporate into his conversation a gesture of affection, of true love for the sick person. Sometimes it was a question of holding their hand in his, others a light touch on the cheek, and always, an affable word.”

A nurse who worked with him for many years recalls: "I admired his cordial dealings with the patients. He never gave me the sensation of being in a hurry or under pressure. His dialogue with his “little patients,” as he often called them, was cordial. He listened. ... He always listened and took notes of what the patient said, even though it seemed trivial. He rarely interrupted. He took notes.

The patient was the only protagonist."

One patient wrote to him:

"With just the right words, you encouraged me, gave me consolation, and the resignation I needed to bear up under my ills. You are like a good fairy come to watch over the sleep of children, because a patient, when all is said and done, is not something different from a child. You cannot imagine how both I and my family appreciate all your kindness. What our mutual friend Dr. Lana says with his sharp intuition is true, 'Don Eduardo has cured more patients with his affection and amiability than with his medical treatments, although the treatments have cured innumerable people.'"

In 1966, Eduardo became St. Josemaría's physician. This allowed him to get to know personally the founder of Opus Dei. He said that he

emerged from his visits to Escrivá “feeling free and flying like a bird.” They gave him “the sensation of wanting to begin once again in my professional life.”

Although from the beginning of his career Eduardo had focused on getting to know his patients and on treating them as persons worthy of respect and affection, he said that his medical visits to the founder of Opus Dei helped him to get to know his “patient’s personality, his motivations and his concerns, his fears, his hopes, his joys and his short-term desires.”

Dedicated to the University

In Pamplona, Eduardo dedicated himself to developing the School of Medicine and the rest of the university. He cut back radically his efforts to make a name for himself in the world of international academic medicine and centered his attention

on the needs of the institution. In addition to teaching, research, and patient care, he focused on negotiating with local and provincial government authorities, getting to know people in the city, fundraising, and developing the University Clinic as a place where private patients would want to go for medical treatment.

He also took great interest in the School of Nursing and in the work of the nurses. He saw them as crucial in the struggle to transmit a Christian sense of life and overcome materialism. "Considering the whole range of professions for which the University prepares its students, it is hard to find any other which is so important in the struggle against materialism. The nurse, who lives at the side of the patient and his family in decisive moments should irradiate the light of the truth." He conveyed to the nurses a sense of the

importance of their work as collaborators of the doctors, not just assistants. He urged them to leave behind their personal problems when they entered the Clinic. When on duty, he told them, the patients should be the only thing that matters. He encouraged them to aspire to making the patients feel more comfortable and at home than they do in their own homes.

He constantly gave nurses, as well as other doctors, a clear example of this kind of dedication to the patients. A doctor who worked closely with him recalls a particularly dramatic incident. Eduardo's mother died in the University clinic. Eduardo was at her side when she died. He stayed a few minutes longer praying, but then went to complete his rounds. On his way back to his office he met the husband of one of his patients. The conversation dragged on and the doctor who was with him wanted to

cut it off by telling the man that Eduardo had just lost his mother. Eduardo stopped him by discreetly tugging at his white coat. When his colleague later commented that the husband could have been briefer, Eduardo responded, “We have to dedicate time to the patients and explain their situation to family members.”

Teacher and Dean

Eduardo was an outstanding teacher who enjoyed an easy, natural relationship with the students. One day a student came up to him in the hall and commented, “Professor, how little doctors know.” “Yes,” Eduardo responded, “but you have to know that 'little' to pass the exam.” He was willing to take the time to help students who were experiencing difficulties and treated them with great affection. For instance, he wrote to a first-year student that he

would like to give him “much peace and much strength, so that simply and with a smile on your lips, you can accept the difficulties which will arise, the mistakes of the people who surround you (which they will commit because they are human) and the other little hardships of someone studying first-year medicine, which is a difficult year.” Referring to an outdoor shrine of the Blessed Virgin near the entrance to the campus, he added, “ As you will recall, on the Campus you will find Our Lady of Fair Love.”

He did occasionally lose his temper with a student, but he reacted quickly and made amends. One day in a meeting, a student representative criticized a young faculty member in ways Eduardo thought inappropriate. He dressed him down severely and ended up saying, "You are no longer a student in the School of Medicine." That same

afternoon he looked for him and gave him a hug that practically lifted him off the floor. Nothing further was said about the matter.

Eduardo was Dean of the Medical School from 1962 to 1978, with a break from 1966 to 1969 when he served as Vice-Rector of the University. It is possible to get an idea of his schedule and way of life as Dean from a letter he wrote to a friend who had recently been named dean of another medical school. He insisted on the need to continue to do research, see patients and teach. Time spent on administrative duties, he urged, should be kept to a minimum. He suggested the following allocation of time: 2 hours a day of classes; one hour seeing students; two hours seeing Social Security patients; two hours seeing private patients; two hours doing research; one hour of work on the deanship; and two hours to pray. In

the evening, one hour to study. Without the two hours of prayer, this was an eleven hour work day.

When he relinquished the deanship in 1978, he became the President of the Association of Friends of the University. He would have preferred to leave fundraising and cultivation of supporters to others and to dedicate his time to teaching, research, and the care of patients, but he gave priority to the university's needs. His work in the Association of Friends taught him, he said, "to be patient, patient and persevering, above all looking for the friends the university needs so badly and doing apostolate with them."

Father of a Large Family

According to his son Carlos, his family was more important to Eduardo than his profession. One of his colleagues corroborates that "despite his extraordinary activity

and the way he put himself entirely into everything he did, whether research, teaching, or care of patients, his principal constant concern was for his family. He was not able to dedicate to the family as much time as he would have liked, but the time he was able to dedicate was very well employed, and he made it yield.

One of Eduardo's daughters recalls that he was:

very concerned about us, his children. Despite the intensity and amount of his professional activity, he was always concerned about our things, especially about things that concerned my mother. The two of them, my father and my mother, were very close to each other and understood each other. He kept a close eye on our things, even though they were unimportant, and he put his heart into them. He loved each of

us in a different way. ... He was affectionate, enthusiastic, enterprising, understanding and demanding, and very cheerful.

In Granada, although he had a chauffeur, he normally drove the children to school to spend more time with them. Throughout his life, he made a great effort to join his wife and seven children for the main meal at midday. He also had supper at home, although he was often late. His wife Laurita waited for him to arrive and after supper, they said the rosary together no matter how late the hour.

Eduardo did not preach to the family, but his example had a strong influence on them. One of his daughters recalls: "Although he never told us that we should get up early or go to Mass, the way he lived moved us. That is why I began to go to Mass before classes."

His wife recalls that

“At first in Pamplona, it seemed that he was going to have more time for the family. We went for excursions in the surrounding areas; we all went together to the movies; if he had to stop to see a patient, we waited for him. But soon he was completely absorbed. The twenty-four hours of the day were insufficient. He studied until late at night.”

She sometimes objected that he worked too much, but his son Carlos says that:

“she had made her choice with full knowledge of what she was getting into, knowing perfectly the deepest motivations that move my father in each case and fully sharing them. She used to comment that my father had not changed in this aspect since she first met him. She said that she had fallen in love with him knowing perfectly well what he was like and

that she liked him to be the way he was.”

Eduardo himself seems to have understood that he spent too much time at work. In a 1977 letter, he said: “Laurita is very happy, putting up with her health problems with simplicity and seeing with peace how little I accompany her. This university attracts me in such a way that in the end people are going to say 'he did everything badly.' It's a sort of half-humorous phrase we use when working very hard, perhaps we go too far.”

Their son Eduardo had a brain lesion and suffered epileptic attacks and outbursts of anger. His daughter recalls that her father had a special affection for “Eduardito” as he called him. He never shouted at him, no matter what he did. He saw him as a “God’s treasure, which we have to care for.” Living with and caring for

their sick brother, the other children learned how to live with understanding and charity in practical ways. Perhaps that is why Eduardo considered Eduardito “the salvation of the family.”

By the time Eduardito was 20 years old, his fits of anger had become so dangerous, especially to Laurita who had suffered for years from a bad back, that they had to commit him to a psychiatric hospital. For the rest of his life Eduardo visited him at least once a week, usually Sunday at the end of the morning.

Life of Piety

Eduardo's day-to-day life was profoundly affected by what he learned in Opus Dei. When he met the future Saint Josemaria Escriva for the first time in 1960, he commented, “Father, you asked me to come to Pamplona to help create a university, and we have done it.” “I

did not ask you to come to Pamplona to create a university,” Escriva responded, “but to become a saint creating a university.”

Eduardo said he learned from the Founder three virtues: “Affection for my neighbor, with his limitations and defects, so as in this way to love everyone; supernatural sense in the little activities of each day, which makes the way always a happy adventure; and enduring love for this university.” On another occasion, he summarized what he had learned in Opus Dei as follows: “first, that the cross carried gracefully is the only way to draw near to Christ and that with Him, everything is peace and joy; second that ordinary work can be the conduit for the sanctity that should project itself on the family and on all the people who surround us.”

Eduardo struggled to live well the plan of life of a member of Opus Dei. He had an especially marked devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Despite his numerous professional obligations, he stopped at noon every day to say the Angelus. He said the rosary with Laurita after supper in the evening, no matter how late and how tired he was. On Saturdays, the family sang the Salve to honor Our Lady and Eduardo often kissed a statue of Our Lady in their home. On the campus of the University of Navarra, there is an outdoor shrine with a life-sized statue of Our Lady of Fair Love given to the university by Saint Josemaria. From the time it was completed in 1966, Eduardo made a point of visiting our Lady there every day no matter what the weather or how bad conditions were underfoot. He was committed to receiving the sacrament of penance every week. Toward the end of his life, he was having a hard time getting around

even in good weather. On one occasion, the streets were treacherous with snow and ice on the day he usually went to confession. The director of the Opus Dei center was astounded to see him appear at the door. “Eduardo, what are you doing here on a day like this?” he asked. “I’ve come to go to confession,” Eduardo replied.

He was very anxious to help other people come closer to God. Toward the end of his life, for instance, he invited several people to accompany him on a retreat. Three did: a medical student, the owner of the store where his wife did her shopping, and a local businessman who was his friend. He often talked with terminally-ill patients about going to confession and receiving the sacraments.

Illness and Death

Throughout his life, Eduardo enjoyed remarkably good health. He had some falls and minor accidents, but never felt sick enough to stay in bed. One day he said to one of his colleagues, “Do you know why I’m never sick? Because I never go to the doctor.”

In 1980, however, he began to lose weight and suffer some other symptoms. He realized he should get a checkup, but put it off. Over the next few years, he continued to lose weight and experienced weakness in his feet and legs. Although he had officially retired, he continued working very hard as president of the Association of Friends of the University of Navarra. The previous President of the Association, who was in his eighties when he retired, told him one day the principles that guided his life: “first, to live as if I were going to die today; second, to work as if I were going to live

forever; and third, to try to do at least as much today as I did yesterday.” Eduardo fully accepted those principles, but as the months went by he found it harder and harder to put the third into practice.

During the summer of 1983, he finally went to see a doctor who diagnosed metastasized colon cancer. After surgery, he began to suffer nerve pain which forced him to abandon both teaching and patient care although he continued to work in the Association of Friends of the University. Unable to attend the annual meeting of the Association in October 1983, he recorded a brief message in which he said among other things, “Don’t think that I am sad. In fact, I am very serene. I think that the Lord always prepares the best for us. He will not leave Laurita or any of us abandoned. If we are faithful, he will bring us to his side where we will

meet the Father [St. Josemaría], the founder of this university which we love so much.”

When the news of his illness got out, the local newspaper interviewed him and published a two-page article entitled “Message to the Dying.” At one point during the interview, Eduardo said:

“There’s only one thing that I’m really concerned about. I want to go to heaven. Yes, I believe in heaven, the place where I will enjoy the presence of God. How? My mind is too limited to understand it or explain it. But I want to go there.

“People say that God gives conformity to his will and that is true. Now I have come to realize that I’m going to leave the world, and I’m not going to say that I’m not frightened. ... Nor am I going to deny that I would prefer to die without pain. I accept, nonetheless, whatever

God wants to give me. I have faith in him and what I most ask for is that this faith that has always accompanied me may not abandon me now, in my final hour, when I need it most.”

Many people contacted Eduardo after the article came out. One of his colleagues, Dr. Soto, wrote to him: “I owe you a great deal. Much more than what your humility will let you believe. You radiate fortitude, serenity, and especially a firm Faith united to Hope and Charity.”

The reaction that most moved Eduardo was a letter from a man whom he had seen in the clinic 20 years earlier. The man wrote:

“I was a municipal employee in a small city. Now I am nothing: someone forced by cancer to retire. Like you, I await death, but in my case with fear.

“There are many differences between us. You are 'religious and apolitical.' I am 'political and areligious.' You talk about death without sadness; I with fear. You say that you have tried to go through life doing the good that you could. I have tried to go through life forgetting that one can do good. You believe in heaven. Now I would like to believe. Before I thought that it was something that didn't affect me.

“After reading the interview, and thinking about your cancer and mine (that's something we have in common) I began to feel a great desire to also go to heaven, a heaven in which I do not believe.

“I went to confession for the first time in 20 years. The previous time was after visiting you in the clinic. Among the medicines you prescribed was that I go to confession. As someone who was sick and

frightened, I did it; but I recovered and I forgot all about it. ...

“You are 73 years old. I am 37. Our age is not important. Neither of us has much time left before we go to the other world. You were told this 'with clarity and charity.' I was told it 'in a confused way and without charity.'

“I’m writing you this letter because it seems to me that with it for the first time in my life I do good to a friend. If I were to receive this letter it would make me happy to know that I have 'done good to someone,' undoubtedly because unlike you I am vain.

“Doctor, if heaven exists and you go to heaven, don’t allow me not to go even though I may still not believe.

“Doctor, thank you for your message.”

For as long as possible, Eduardo continued to work for the Association of Friends of the University of Navarra. To the doctor who was taking care of him, he seemed “like a runner who was reaching the limits of heroism, who did the final sprint until he arrived exhausted at the goal. He was heroic in many aspects.”

During the years in which he served as St. Josemaría’s physician, he was impressed by how he put himself completely into his hands, without asking questions or making suggestions. He decided to imitate that, leaving decisions about his healthcare to the physicians who were taking care of him. After the initial diagnosis, he was initially inclined to reject chemotherapy, but thinking and praying about how St. Josemaria followed his suggestions unquestioningly, he decided to leave

the decision to the doctors who were taking care of him.

On one occasion, toward the end of his life, the doctors were debating between an aggressive surgical attempt to solve a problem and simply allowing it to run its course. When they told Eduardo that they thought it better not to intervene he exclaimed, “Blessed be God! I was praying for that.” But he had not attempted to influence their decision.

When a group of doctors came to see him during the final hours of his life, one of them looked very distressed. Eduardo told him “Andrés, let’s see a happy face. This life belongs to those who are happy.”

Eduardo did experience some periods of fear. He also felt there were things still left to be done and commented to one visitor, “How I would like to live another six or seven years.” Nonetheless, he found

peace in prayer. From his bed in the Clinic, he wrote to a friend: “I am content and happy. After all, we need to offer something to our Lord.” He commented to his son Carlos, “Now I see that my entire life has meaning, even the most humdrum things.”

Following the example of St.

Josemaria, he prayed insistently “Lord, increase my faith, increase my hope, increase my love, so that my heart may be like yours.” This is the aspiration he was praying when he died peacefully on May 20, 1985.

Eduardo’s cause of canonization was opened in 1998.

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