

The Beatification Process of Paquita and Tomas Alvira

The beatification process of the first married members of Opus Dei, Paquita and Tomas Alvira, opened early last year. Maria Isabel, one of their daughters who currently lives in France, talks about her parents in this interview.

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Your parents were members of Opus Dei. How did that affect family life?

Their being members of Opus Dei was a source of happiness which they radiated to those around them, starting with the family. Ever since I was a child, I saw that Opus Dei was first and foremost in the life of my parents; it made us desire to be like them. They transmitted to us a deep love for God, for the Church, for the Work and its founder in a very natural way and in an atmosphere of freedom, through their example and their everyday lives. I have always considered their vocation to Opus Dei as a great gift from God to the whole family.

How do you think the spirit of Opus Dei has helped them in their married life and their task as educators?

The spirit of Opus Dei led them to love each other more each day and to become "eternal lovers" as St. Josemaría used to put it. As their children, we were witnesses of this

love which was full of refinement and enthusiasm, and which didn't stop growing until the end of their life. This made a profound impression on us. This was evident in their behaviour, their speech, and in all their actions. Just to give an example of what my father wrote to my mother on a photo the day of his 80th birthday:

“80 years! Without you, without your silent help, I would not have reached this age and still be so “youthful”. Looking back in time, I see you, you and our nine children...What happiness God has given us! Paquita, thank you. A big hug, Tomas.”

They had a very positive and broad-minded vision of their parenting tasks. They gave great importance in creating a home to which we would want to return to, and taught us to think always of the needs of the others and how to serve them. They

created a climate of freedom and mutual trust which allowed each of us to develop according to our own personality.

I am certain that they must have prayed a lot for us. It was especially through their example that they taught us how to have a sense of responsibility. I don't remember having had a lot of restrictions! They did not nag at us, rather, we found ourselves talking a lot to them. Those moments of family life, where we had conversations on the most varied topics, are truly unforgettable.

They nurtured us until the end of their lives. And in a way, they continue to do so... We have always felt very much loved.

Do you have two or three specific memories that attest to their love of Christ?

I saw them pray with naturalness and joy in a way that made God present in our home, like the air that we breathed! I emphasize naturalness and joy because these aspects had a profound impact on me. There was nothing artificial or formal in their life of piety. They never obliged us to do anything, yet their example was so compelling!

That inspired peace and total trust in God. They discovered the hand of God behind all of life's events. Looking at them, one would think that everything was easy, because they never complained about anything and was grateful for everything, even when faced with difficulties, suffering and death.

I noticed, for example, that in addition to attending Mass every day (my father went to Mass very early in the morning before going to work), they would spend some time praying

or reciting the rosary. They went out of their way to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament every evening, in spite of having a lot of work and a big family. They organised things so well that it seemed to me that their life of piety was perfectly integrated in their ordinary lives. It was also clear that they drew all their strength from their intimate relationship with God. They did everything with total freedom.

I cherish in particular, my memory of the feast of the Holy Family. Every year we renew the consecration of our family to the Holy Family together. It was very moving to have us all on our knees and hearing my father read the text of the consecration. Since we held our father with great esteem, his piety, united to that of my mother's, had a great influence in our lives. We understood that the love of God was

not restricted only to children or women.

Do you think your parents, through their virtues and example, contributed to your vocation and those of your brothers and sisters?

They had undoubtedly contributed, but only God can give the vocation! My parents tried to prepare us to respond to whatever God was asking of us, but they never forced anything upon us. I do not know the history of the vocation of my brothers and sisters, as each of us have followed our own path with personal freedom. We've always had great trust amongst us, but we never considered the subject of our vocation as a matter of discussion amongst us, much less with my parents.

In my case, their example and their life played an essential role in the question of my vocation. Their prayers did all the rest!

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