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Confusion about a court case in France

Press Release from Béatrice de la Coste, Opus Dei information office in France.

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On September 22 and 23, various media reports referred to Opus Dei in connection with a lawsuit in Paris in which Catherine Tissier, a former student and subsequently employee of the Dosnon catering school, accused ACUT, the association that runs Dosnon, and Dosnon itself, of passing off as a “work placement”

what should have been a paid job. Some of these reports gave the false impression that Opus Dei was on trial in the French courts. I want to state clearly, once again, that this is incorrect, and that on December 16, 2010, the judge trying the case firmly dismissed all the accusations brought by the plaintiff against Opus Dei.

The only parties involved in this lawsuit are Catherine Tissier on the one hand and Dosnon catering school and ACUT on the other. The plaintiff demanded a fine to be imposed on Dosnon and another one on ACUT. This is the question on which the judge will pronounce on November 24. However, the fact that Catherine Tissier was formerly a member of Opus Dei, and that the Christian formation offered by Dosnon to those students who wish for it is provided by priests and other members of Opus Dei, has caused

confusion about the exact subject of the lawsuit.

The origin of a misunderstanding

The origin of the misunderstanding lies in the first accusation brought by Catherine Tissier in September 2001 against Dosnon catering school and Opus Dei of “abuse of weakness” and “work conditions contrary to human dignity”.

The French courts took up the accusation and began a long and detailed investigation due to the accusations of the plaintiff, Catherine Tissier.

In 2010, after 9 years of investigations and after the study of numerous testimonies on both sides, the French courts declared Opus Dei innocent.

Nothing of what the plaintiff alleged against Opus Dei was considered

warranted by the French courts. This decision was subsequently upheld on appeal.

The Appeals Court in Paris confirmed that the accusations of the plaintiff were unfounded: that is, the medical and financial aspects, the alleged interference in her private life, and the accusation of pressure brought to bear on under-age individuals. The plaintiff was declared not to be credible, due to the contradictions in her allegations.

Specifically, the following are the responses of the French court to the accusations brought by Catherine Tissier.

- With regard to her health and the treatment she received in view of her medical situation: the French court stated that due to her health problems the plaintiff had received special consideration from her employer (ACUT), in her timetable

and the work she was given to do; that her state of health was carefully followed up by professional doctors because of her many relapses, and that she was able to – and did in fact – consult all the doctors she wished to.

- With regard to her pay: the plaintiff was paid normally for her work and her social security contributions were duly made.

- With regard to the connection between ACUT and Opus Dei: as ascertained by the police, it was confirmed that ACUT, the association that runs Dosnon catering school, is financially independent.

- It was confirmed that Catherine Tissier was not a member of Opus Dei until she was 18 years of age, and that she had complete freedom at all times.

- Still to be clarified was a question that emerged in the course of the investigation: whether the catering practicals and work placements carried out at the time by students at Dosnon catering school could be considered “dissimulated work”, which is condemned by French penal law.

The case that was tried by a penal tribunal in Paris on September 22 and 23 this year referred to a question of employment law. Doubt had been thrown on the legality of the practices of Dosnon catering school, and the accused were two directors of Dosnon and a board member of the ACUT Association. Opus Dei was not summonsed or accused. However, in spite of the clear statements of the courts with regard to Opus Dei, counsel for the plaintiff in the September trial continued to centre his arguments on

the responsibility of Opus Dei, which was widely echoed in the media.

At the end of the trial the plaintiff requested a fine to be imposed on the two people from Dosnon catering school and another on the Association that runs Dosnon. Detailed information on the essential questions of the status of Dosnon work placements can be found, in French, at <https://www.ecole-dosnon.com/Audience-devant-le-tribunal>.

The defence requested acquittal, on the grounds that a training school does not function like a business. Courses and practical work placements both form part of the plan of studies of every catering student. The court's final decision is expected on November 24.

As I have done every time I have discussed this case, I would again like to state my respect for Catherine

Tissier, my compassion for the suffering she has publicly expressed, and my desire to help. At the same time, I would like to underline particularly my support for and solidarity with the two directors of Dosnon, who from 2002 up to the present have been subjected to false accusations that have already been dismissed by the courts. The repetition by Catherine Tissier of accusations that have already been dismissed is the only reason why I now feel obliged to clarify things that refer to her personally, so as to avoid greater confusion in the media, and especially among the thousands of people who take part in the Christian formational activities offered by Opus Dei throughout the world.

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