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My brother Pedro

Tribute made at the funeral of Pedro Ballester, a numerary who died of cancer earlier this month aged 21, given by his younger brother Carlos.

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I remember Pedro would always dislike those awkward and embarrassing moments on TV when someone would get up and sing or do a speech. When asked to do this speech my instant reaction was the embarrassment I would cause him, but being the younger brother it is

my duty to do so, Pedro, let me embarrass you one last time.

How can you sum up 21 years in a brief speech? I could go on and on telling all my favourite memories of him but if I were asked to sum him up in two words it would be *faithful* and *persevering*. Once he said something he did his utmost best to complete it, even to his death. My grandma was coming on the 12th of January and the nurses and doctors said that he wouldn't see her.

Miraculously he waited till she came along with my uncles and died an hour later. He has always been very faithful to friends and making sure that even after moving about from place to place, he maintained friendships. He even kept in touch with some of his friends from St Catherine's, the first school we went to.

Pedro was very much the older brother, which sometimes we didn't like. He always had the front seat and called himself "king of the tv remote" but we appreciated it at the same time. He would always help me whenever it was needed. When I was doing my GCSE's and A-levels in Huddersfield, I would be stuck on some issues and I would call Pedro who was just next door, 'Pedro!', 'What? Come here' or I would go there and he would explain to me any maths or science problems I had. He would always later remind me to repeat the exercises to make sure I remembered them for the exam. He would always be interested in our day and in everyone's day. He would ask 'anything funny happen in Sheffield or at school?' When in hospital he would always avoid talking about his issues and would ask the other person about themselves.

His fidelity to Opus Dei was also very touching and strong. When he first told me about his vocation, I remember thinking that he had found a girl! I had noticed that he was a lot happier in recent months so when he said ‘Carlos I need to tell you something’, I presumed that he’d been dating someone. I found out that he *had* fallen in love, he had found Christ as a numerary of Opus Dei. He told me that he could not have any “mushu”. Mushu is a word from the film Mulan representing good looking girls.

Through his cancer I also saw what a family Opus Dei is. I was always amazed by the love and support that his brothers in Opus Dei gave him. As a concept I had always understood that Opus Dei was a family but it wasn’t till my brother was ill and going to see him, surrounded by his brothers that I actually saw Opus Dei as a family. This is meant to be a

tribute from the family but it is really a tribute from *both* families and I feel myself very much part of both.

Pedro was also a deep and clever person who was always welcoming to anyone that wanted to go and see him. When he was younger Pedro always brought friends round after school in Huddersfield as we were so close to school and to the tennis club where we played. Later on in the hospital and in Greycarth his room was always full! It reminded me of a scene from the Marx's brothers in the film 'A night in the opera', when loads of people were piling into a cabin in a ship. I'm surprised that the staff in the Christie didn't kick us out! I was always struck how in the midst of his own intense pain he was always interested in the problems of others and always willing to help.

I always felt that even before his cancer Pedro was a good man who

tried to do the right thing, but both Opus Dei and the cancer helped him to be even better. At the same time, however, he was always very down to earth and interested in ordinary things. Andy told me that when Pedro received the news of his cancer, a few days later he, Pedro, asked Andy if he could keep chickens in Greygarth! We tend to complain about any little setback that we have but Pedro taught us how to suffer greatly without complaining. Here I would like to briefly thank the staff at the Christies hospital who were so competent and caring.

We will miss Pedro but I am convinced that we can still talk to him and ask him for things as he is so close to God he can help us. His body remains here but I am sure his soul is in heaven and he will pray for us and be a good friend to anyone who calls on him.

We can end this tribute with a small prayer for Pedro that we can each say in our hearts.

Amen

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