

An Injection of Joy

Luis and Maria decided to adopt Josemaría, a child with Down Syndrome, when they already had seven children in their family. And then Luis was diagnosed with leukemia....

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Our names are Luis and Maria. We have been married for twenty-three years and have eight children. We have also been supernumeraries of Opus Dei for many years. Several years ago we began to think that our

now quite large family was not going to have any new members.

Then one day I received an e-mail from a friend of mine. She told me that the Community of Madrid had asked the Madrid Down Syndrome Foundation for help to find a family for a Down Syndrome child whom the parents had given up for adoption at birth.

Luis, who works as a gynecologist, has always tried to make his work a defense of life from the moment of conception. Both of us are deeply involved in all the questions related to abortion, prenatal diagnosis, and the situation of those with Down Syndrome in our country.

At home we talked about it over dinner. We were surprised to find that our children had quite varied opinions. Some were in favor of it, but several said: have you gone crazy? Aren't the seven of us enough

for you? Each child reacted in accord with his or her age and point of view. It was quite amusing to see.

The day Josemaría arrived was a special day in our family, and we had a small celebration. Next day one of our daughters brought photos of our family celebration to school and showed them to her friends. So everyone knew about it.

An event like this helps you to focus on what is truly important in life. In the days leading up to Josemaría's arrival, all kinds of worries kept going through my head. I imagine it's the same with parents who have been told that their child will be a Down Syndrome child: the fear of what the future will bring, what this child's life will be like, and what will happen if you're not there to look after him. But in the end you have to set all these worries aside and say: look, we've already helped seven

children get started in life. Why shouldn't we be able to do the same for Josemaría? Why can't we give him what we gave our other children: the possibility of being happy and being a child of God? And in the end you realize: we can certainly do that! And everything else we can leave in God's hands.

The same is true with my other children. What I truly want for them isn't merely that they do well at school or get ahead in life. Rather I want them to be happy and to be good children of God. When you simplify things in this way, which I think is quite a realistic way of looking at things, and also make it practical, all the complications disappear.

Soon after Josemaría's arrival, we went through some truly tough times. Luis was diagnosed with a serious illness, leukemia. Those were

hard days. He was in the hospital and lost all his hair—or the little he had left—due to the chemotherapy. But each time Josemaría came to see him, it was an injection of joy.

Back home, my other children told me: mama, can you imagine how bad this year would have been if we hadn't had Josemaría with us? For Josemaría has been a great blessing for our family during these difficult months. He has a special ability to draw out the best from each one of us at home. It's true. I've seen it time and again.