

Autobiography of a Numerary: Men's Branch, 2010.

A numerary working in a delegation has conscientious objections to the decision-making, on the basis of charity. He brings up his concerns to the regional and central government, including the prelate and his assistant. They refuse to discuss the questions and prescribe him epileptic and anti-depressive medications despite the fact that he does not have these ailments, in order to "calm him down."

Themes: Numerary vocation proposed by directors to 14-year-olds; total availability for internal governmental work; work in the central government of Rome; international expansion; "Defender" of the delegation; internal decision-making about numerary staffing; central government's use of psychiatric medications to silence consciences.

Note: These chapters are unofficial translations of articles originally published in June and July 2011 on © OpusLibros.

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Hello, everyone! I finally decide to write my story. It is recent and if I have not done it before it has been out of fear. However, I already feel strong and I think the time has come to tell it. It is only fair that it be known. I just hope it helps. I have decided to omit names and data because I just want to help. I am not the one to judge people who have hurt me. I forgive you and wish you the best, but since I don't want others to go through the same thing as me, I have decided to write it. If I see that, as a result of what I write here, there is some kind of "attack" or "pressure" towards me, I will have no problem in defending myself by adding the names and details that I consider appropriate (actually this is "the children's version "). But let's hope that nothing more needs to be done.

Chapter 1. *Whistling at age 14 as a numerary. Subordination of college studies to proselytism and family life. Entering internal work (internal governmental positions) at age 19.*

I am from Spain. I studied in a school of the Work and from the time I was little I went to a club. Some members of my family are or have been from the Work. I was always the typical club kid, nice, fit, in good shape, etc. Before I was 14 years old, my club preceptor (numerary) already raised my vocation as numerary. And I say: can decisions be made for life at that age? I leave it to your judgment.

After two conversations with that numerary (for more than an hour!) about why he was convinced that I had a vocation as a numerary, I went to pray and said: yes, I have a vocation. I give my life to God from now on. And that same day I told him: decided! I'm going to be a numerary. I remember that I was not even 14 years old, so I had to wait more than 7 months before I could write the letter asking to be an aspiring numerary.

I was assigned for 4 years following the normal training plan. I finished high school and went to

live at the study center. I finished the study center (two years) and they appointed me to a position at the study center, so I was there for two more years. At the same time they appointed me director of a stopover [not a center, but a house where formation happens]: I was only 19 years old, but I was a 100% Opus person, 100% faithful to what the Work needed. My major, honestly, I did not care too much about, only to the extent that it served the Work, so my grades were correct but little else. In fact, in my second year of university I started studying two majors at the same time, but since in the third year they gave me those positions, I left one of the two majors. There was no time for MY things. You had to give everything up and spend the day with the people from the Work and the possible future faithful of the Work at that stopover where I went every afternoon and on weekends. And I was delighted, for the record, I had been trained for that and that is what I did. I thought that this was God's plan for me and that my happiness depended only on its fulfillment.

I finished my course of studies without delay. I studied a major related to education, in part because I had always wanted to be a teacher in one of the colleges in the delegation work where I lived. But at the end of the degree they asked me if I would mind working in the delegation and helping the director in charge of the numeraries. I said sure. (By the way, it seemed curious to me that many who taught in these schools did not have a course of studies related to education, because in fact they were not interested in education: in reality many of them worked there to help with the Work, to seek numerary vocations- and I, who was interested in education, could not do it.) But anyway, I adapt to everything, so I said yes. And I said "yes", because in the Work I always said "yes" to everything they had asked of me. What's more, I offered myself for other things that surely others should do.

In this sense, I remember that the regional vicar attended a gathering in my annual course (I had just finished my degree that summer) and said in front of everyone that in the region they needed off-road numeraries, ready for anything ... like me, he said (I got like a tomato). Then I understood that they were ready for anything because that summer they told me:

- In June: you are going to work in the delegation and you are going to live in that city and you are going to be the director of an associates' center in another city (I was 21 years old)
- In July: you are going to live in another city, but you will continue with the other things we told you in June;
- In October: you are no longer the director of that associates center; you are the director of that other numerary's center and you will continue working in the delegation.

And I did not complain. Why? Because I saw in everything that came from the directors the will of God.

Well, I was a director for 3 years, as planned (local council appointments are for a triennium) and at the same time I worked those three years in that delegation. But a few months before completing my triennium, they asked me (because I myself volunteered a few months before, in that desire to help the Work in whatever way that is useful) if I would mind going to the Roman College. I said no, there was no problem.

For those who do not know, as soon as you say that you are willing to go to Cavabianca / Aralar,

they tell you that going to the Roman College does not mean that you get ordained but that it is good that you keep your availability to be ordained. That is, for those who do not know how the ordinations work: They ask you to be prepared to say "yes" when they need you as a priest, but at the same time you have to be prepared if they never call you because they don't need you as a priest or simply because they think you aren't useful for it ... even if you want to and you have spent several years in Rome training. They will tell you that it doesn't matter, because the vocation is the same and so on and so forth. But in reality what they do is simply what is best for them. Although they say that for one to be ordained, it is necessary that the three wills (God, the Father [prelate] and the interested party) coincide, your opinion will count only when they have already decided if you can be ordained or not. And what they think will be "God's will for you." Incredible but true! Why do they do it? Because it is they who are going to decide whether or not you have a vocation to be a priest in the Work, because it is they who know what God asks of each one. Then I will explain my case a little and perhaps you will understand me better.

I came to Cavabianca, to the Roman College.

Chapter 2. *Roman College, Cavabianca. Work in Villa Tevere, 2003-7. Leaving for international expansion.*

I arrived at the Roman College. I was two years in Cavabianca. Before the end of the two years, I asked not to be transferred to Villa Tevere. I said it explicitly because I saw it coming, I had the typical profile of a numerary from Villa Tevere: young (27 years old, that is, I could still work for a few years before ordaining me), Spanish (most of the officers -numeraries who help directors in their work- from Villa Tevere they are from Spain because it is the region that can contribute more people, I suppose), with experience working in a delegation, with experience as a director and, most importantly ... **READY TO DO EVERYTHING**. So, as I already saw myself on the list of candidates for Villa Tevere, and thinking about how much it had cost me to adapt to life and the peculiarities of Cavabianca (I can tell you another day why I say this)...

I'll get to the point: a month after I asked not to be transferred to Villa Tevere, they told me that the father (prelate) had appointed me as an officer of the general council to work in the department that is in charge of numeraries (Saint Michael) and that I would live in Villa Tevere. Just like that. Without a: "what if ...? Would you mind...? Would you have any inconvenience ...?" ... And I say: Is this how decisions are made in a normal family? I'm not even talking about "going out of your way for each other", "the strongest mandate is a 'please'", "being a carpet for others to tread softly", "the best place to live and die" .. I think that if only out of respect (I'm not saying charity anymore), things could be done differently.

And there I went, with the best of my smiles, convinced that this was the best place for me, because God would have made the father and the directors "see it". The really incredible thing is that I left happy, I mean it: imagine to what extent I had been preparing for years to accept what came from the directors as the best of plans for me.

I was living and working in that department of Villa Tevere for four years, so between the three years of the delegation and the four of Villa Tevere I dare to say that I know a lot about how the numeraries are dealt with, because I always worked in that department. But do not worry "director friends", I know how to live silence by trade. You are rightly concerned that all those who assume a position commit to living in silence for life and not being able to speak about what they read, see or hear ... because of the accountability it brings you ...

By the way: For those who think that my case is not recent, I take the opportunity to say that my stay in Villa Tevere was from the summer of 2003 to the summer of 2007. And I left the work last year, in 2010. Not long ago, the truth ...

Anyway, as I was saying, in Villa Tevere I had more and more assignments, so in addition to my work in the department that attends to the numeraries and my classes of the Degree in Moral Theology (with a view to the thesis and future ordination), I was appointed deputy director of one of the Villa Tevere groups (there are 4 groups in the vicolo's house, which is the name of the center for the numeraries who are officers of the General Council, at least for the most part), a position that would be equivalent to that of director of a center, because in reality each group is independent and functions like any other center. Also, as I like educational activities with young people, I was appointed director of a club with activities for children.

I was there when in the summer of 2006 I went to India for three weeks, for an annual course (summer vacation/formation for numeraries). I was excited to leave Rome, to see other things. And I had a great time. So on the way back I offered to go wherever it was necessary, India included, although India did not seem like my favorite destination either.

A few months later they asked me if I wanted to move to a very distant place. I said yes, I didn't know exactly where it was (I really do) but I would be delighted. I didn't have much idea what I was going to do there, but in my head, that didn't matter, because God knew better and the directors would convey to me what God wanted for me at all times. In my mind there was only the idea of serving the Work in the best possible way.

They told me: "you will have to spend a lot of time learning the language" (at first, practically the whole day). And I said, "Well I'll do it, I'll learn." They told me to think it over and write to the father [prelate] if I wanted to move there. I wrote that same night and delivered the letter the next morning. A few hours later, the father telephoned my room to tell me that he had read the letter and that he thanked me and commended me.

I started to study the language and organize everything related to my transfer. And when I got the visa, I left.

Chapter 3. *New country, working in regional government.*

I arrived in my new country in the summer of 2007. I went there with a lot of desire, with the desire to learn, to be one among them, to assimilate to a new culture, to love the people there as if I had been born and always lived in that land. To be another citizen.

The first months I "locked myself in" to study the language as best and as quickly as possible. It was hard, but my desire to learn could overcome everything. I had three hours of class in the morning and spent another three studying in the afternoon. I also worked as an officer in the regional commission and lived in that center. A few months after arriving, they appointed me director of a numerary center, so I moved to another house and stopped working as an officer, because as I was still fully involved in learning the language, I no longer had time ...

Some time later, a friend offered me to start teaching Spanish at a university, part-time (3-6 hours a week), and after consulting, I said yes. Finally, I was telling myself, ten years after finishing your degree, you start teaching (even if it was only a few hours a week). I who had given myself to work in the middle of the world, sanctifying myself there, like the others, it took me ten years to start working "a little bit" in the middle of the world.

Time passed and I finished my intensive course to learn the language. It was more than two years of classes, exams, and struggles. It was a very tough course. But I learned a lot because I wanted to integrate 100% and thus be a better Opus Dei. In my course, to give you an idea of how hard it was, there were 20 of us at the start and only 3 finished.

As soon as I finished my intensive schedule of dedication to the language, they informed me that I had been appointed defender of the regional commission (the defender of the regional commission, for those who do not know it, is like the deputy director of a delegation; in short, the lay member - not a priest - who holds the highest position in the government of the men of that region). On the other hand, in addition to that position, I was still the director of a numerary center and had to give some classes at the university. My center was more than 30 minutes by car from the commission, but I went there every day, since it is established that the defender, for those who do not know it, reads with the regional vicar all the writings (reports, notices, consultations, etc.) that arrive and leave the commission.

Chapter 4. *Crisis of conscience upon seeing internal documents and decision-making.*

With that position in the regional commission, I began to better understand how things really worked in the Work, since until then I had worked only as an officer (assistant to a director) and for a single department (that of numeraries). Until then I only saw what they wanted me to see, what happened to me. But now I read everything, I had to sign papers from all the departments. I was or should be up to date with everything that was happening in the region. And there the crisis began ...

It is difficult to summarize in a few words how and why a crisis can come and how mine came. I have to say, first of all, that in the almost twenty years that I had been in the Work, I had never had the slightest doubt of vocation (perhaps because of that and because of my, I believe, good dispositions, they always gave me government positions). And I had difficult moments, like everyone else. But the vocation was something fundamental and untouchable in my life. In fact, as I will try to explain later, I did not leave because I had a vocation doubt or a crisis, in the sense of not being clear if that was the path that God wanted for me. My crisis was not personal, it was not my own, it was institutional: I was willing to give my life to God ... but could I really still think that God was there?

As time went by, the things that I did not like and that my conscience said were wrong, were more and more. (In principle, my conscience was well formed: almost 20 years in the work, more than 10 years with positions, biennium in philosophy, quadrennium in theology, bachelor's degree almost finished in moral theology, 2 years in the Roman school, 4 years in Villa Tevere.) I saw them in my house and also in the other centers, I heard them when people spoke to me or consulted me. But I denied them, I was convinced that the Work was perfect and that is why I repeated to myself: you are young, you have no experience, you are in another region. Wait. Listen. Learn. The problem is yours, you must be wrong because the Work is of God and therefore perfect and your brother directors are holier than you and know more than you. The father [prelate] and the directors of Rome know all the regions well. Listen. Learn.

I was like that for several months. But things were getting worse and after a period of "humility", of continuing to silence my conscience and, deep down, deceiving myself, I decided that I could not continue denying the obvious. And I said to myself: you've already waited six months, more than enough time to assess the facts objectively.

And since I am a sincere person, or at least I try, I said to myself: you have to let it go, you have to say it, tell what you see, say what happens. Say what you think: say that sometimes you doubt that what we say the Work is, and what you see, are the same. Say that this place doesn't seem like the best place to live and die by far. Say that when you see the boys from Saint Raphael, you would like to tell them: "Go away, don't get involved in the Work, here we always smile at you but in reality in many cases we neither really love each other nor are we as happy as it seems." Say that you are already ashamed to continue saying that we are the best family in the world or the ones who love the most (with ties stronger than blood, they add). Say that here many times you do not find charity or not as you understand it, or that at least you do not see it.

And that was it, I wrote a letter to the father [prelate] saying what I saw and what I thought, with

the idea that someone would help me, that someone would explain to me what I did not understand, that someone would tell me this or that. I said everything very clearly but with a right intention (I think). I wanted to be only Opus Dei, to be better Opus Dei. I never thought that this would lead to a personal crisis, because as I said, the possibility of leaving the Work had never crossed my mind.

I wrote it and before sending it to Rome I gave it to the regional vicar. I didn't want to bypass him. I didn't want to go it alone, I wanted to be united with him, I wanted him to know that I was suffering, that I needed to talk about it and that I needed someone to tell me what was happening. My conscience rebelled and asked for an explanation.

I gave him the letter, told him I would like him to read it, and we talked for a while, but not much. The letter was faxed the same day.

No news came from Rome.

Chapter 5. *Two letters to Rome. No responses. Summoned to Rome.*

Before continuing my story, I would like to clarify a couple of things.

The first: I have made and do make mistakes, many, like everyone else. I do not desire to try to show that I act well and the others act badly (in this case the directors of the Work or some of its members). In the Work there are many, I repeat, many holy people. Great people that I admire and will always admire. And that is precisely what is most confusing. To realize that in the same reality, very very good people can coexist with other people who are also good or at least fight to be so, but that in their eagerness to defend the Work or what its founder said at all costs, they are capable of committing any type of outrage, thinking that they are doing what God asks of them. They have been trained to defend that at any cost, and unfortunately they do; and I was one of the many who suffered its consequences.

The second: precisely because I do err, it is possible that I make some mistakes when describing the events I narrate. The truth is, people have always told me that I have a very good memory. And there are things that remain etched in the memory for life. It is normal, the things that affect us the most are more difficult to forget. Anyway, if at any time I confuse any data or date, I will be happy to rectify. Now, let it be clear that the essence of the facts and most of the details that I collect (I dare say that at least 90%) were as I tell them. So I take the opportunity to apologize in advance if any date or data is not exact.

That said, I continue with my story.

The letter was sent and the response was delayed. I was surprised that they did not reply soon because my letter was a hard letter (although written with good manners, yes) because of the topics it dealt with and that coming from someone they knew well in Rome, who had never raised his voice in his life, who held the position of defender of the regional commission, etc. I sincerely expected them to say something in a short time (I know that when they want to hurry up to answer something, they do so ... e.g. the papers I worked on on weekends in Villa Tevere ;-)).

But it was not like that. Between ten days and two weeks passed (I could look at the exact dates because I keep those letters, but it doesn't matter for our story) and since no news came, I thought maybe it wasn't clear enough. So I wrote again, because I needed an answer. My life depended on this!

In this second letter I spoke very very clearly, in detail, with many more examples. I said, among other things, that my conscience could no longer carry the burden of signing some papers. Inside me, I saw that any day God could ask me to account for what with my signature I was approving. And I thought that the best thing was, until I clarified myself, not to occupy any government position. So in addition to what I was saying, I was explicitly asking for all the roles of government I had then to be dropped from me. I formally declared myself in crisis, but willing to fight to see where God's will was for me. In turn, I prayed and prayed that I could see what God was asking of me.

I gave the letter to the regional vicar again and we talked for a long time. He didn't say much to me. He only commented something like: "What you can't say is that we don't strive to do our best." And surely he was right, but it did not seem enough. I was expecting a: "We have to be better." Or a: "Sorry if we are doing some things wrong". Or a: "Maybe you are right in some points, we are going to talk more in depth about these issues" (here I am not going to comment on the questions and examples that I put when I chatted with him, out of respect for the 'secret of office'). Anyway, I was waiting for an answer or at least interest in talking. I acted with rectitude of intention, wanting to help and perhaps naively I thought that we could talk about how to face these issues, which for me, were very very important.

That same day they answered by fax from Rome, saying that I should go to Rome on the first flight he found, "today or tomorrow." I left the next day.

In fact, later I found out (someone told me by mistake - I prefer to omit his name / position) that from Rome they had said: "let him come and we'll see if he gives up." Yes, as you hear it. "We'll see if he gives up." Is this the way of a family? Is this charity? Trust in people? Love of freedom?

Although I had already guessed that for a long time, this type of performance only confirmed what I was already intuiting: there, important decisions about your life will often be made without you. They will not ask you, they will inform you. And possibly, what you will know, what you will be informed of, will always be a very small part of what there is. Anyway, I keep quiet, I prefer not to continue with this topic.

The next day I packed my suitcase and went to the airport.

Chapter 6. *Crying on the plane to Rome.*

I packed my suitcase and went to the airport the next day.

Before continuing, I would like to clarify something important. All of us who have gone through a crisis know that there are moments of light and darkness. And I had them too.

For example, after my second letter, declaring myself in crisis, I had a period when I thought I shouldn't have said what I was saying. That I should have rejected that as a temptation. That I should not raise any substantive issue related to the work. And somehow I said it, I said that I felt better, that the crisis passed (although somehow it was still inside me), that I was struggling to reject that temptation. So when I arrived in Rome, they already knew that, although I had written what I had written, I came with the desire to persevere no matter what happened. My vocation was still there, untouchable, as always ...

I think it is interesting to clarify this because when one is in crisis, there are moments of everything: sometimes you think you are moving forward but not, or vice versa. The crisis is usually a non-linear process. And that puzzles the interested party even more.

Anyway, I got on the plane. And something changed on that flight.

I was going to Rome with great enthusiasm. In part, of course, to clarify everything that was happening with my life. I needed an explanation. I needed to know if the problem, to put it in a nutshell, was from my region or from the Work (I don't think it was mine, personal, as I said earlier). That's what I was going there for, to talk and see how to figure out that puzzle. On the other hand, I was very excited, because I was going to see my father [prelate] and so many loved ones from Villa Tevere and Rome. They were going to be, had to be, great days.

Also, since my last few weeks had not been easy, I was also a bit tired. Normal. Anyway, I prayed and prayed but ... there were so many things that I didn't understand!

I was in those circumstances, crossing half the world, when listening to I don't know what song, I started crying (luckily I was wearing one of those sleep masks and nobody noticed :-)). And you will ask yourself: "What is important about that? It is normal." Well, no. That was very important to me. I really mean it, it was a before and after.

Those who know well the formation of the Work and especially the men's section, will know that what one feels is not important. The most important thing is to do what needs to be done. The little duty of each moment. What God expects each one to do: now do the spiritual reading, then put on the cilice, make a fraternal correction, etc. And I, who (like everyone, I suppose) had always tried to do God's will in everything, always fulfill what was established (out of love, but fulfill it after all) had changed my heart for the perfect fulfillment of what was established. And I had been fighting for years and years to love with my whole heart, to be a carpet for others to tread softly, to love God with all my soul.

Did I love people? Yes, of course I do (that is precisely why I suffered when I saw lack of

charity and that is why my crisis came). But my heart had rusted a lot, it had gotten used to putting up with whatever was necessary because that was God's will for me at that moment.

So, keep an eye on the fact, that day was the first time I cried in about 20 years (at least since I was on the job). In those years I had undergone two operations, my friends and very close relatives had died, my friends had been ordained, my brothers had gotten married, I had had problems and very, very hard moments ... but I never cried. Why? Because something inside me told me that a person with supernatural vision would know how to see everything with God's eyes and would have the necessary strength to endure what God sent him.

However, unexpectedly, on that flight I cried. I was crying because I was saying to God inside me: What happened to me? How have I failed you? In what? I have always done what you have asked me in prayer or what you have indicated through the directors. I have always kept away from any thing or person that could affect in the least my total surrender to You. Why am I going to Rome to talk about these issues? Why?

Those tears, somehow, broke a shell that was inside me. My heart was loose again, as it surely was before getting fully into the spirit of the Work.

And I jump in time so that you understand what I say. A few days after that flight (I'll tell about it later), I went to see my parents. At one point, my mother and I went into a cafeteria for a snack and she told me something that worried her. I remember that I put my arm around her shoulder, I shook her and said: don't worry, everything will be fine. Do you know what she told me? "You have given me the shivers. You haven't given me a hug like that in your life." "Yes," I said, "I'm changing I guess." My heart reawakened.

Do all the people in the Work behave like this towards their parents? No, obviously not. I simply explain what happened to me, because it was a very significant moment in my life.

Well, finally, my flight arrived in Rome.

Chapter 7. *Priests of Opus Dei's General Council (Rome) refuse to talk about the issues raised in his letters.*

I arrived in Rome. My plan was to live in Villa Tevere for about ten days and then spend a weekend in Spain to visit my parents, before returning to my region. If everything was going well ..., of course, because I already said that they replied to my letter with a: "Come as soon as possible and we'll see if you give up" (but they didn't tell me that last, I found out by mistake :-))

You already know my first day in Rome : running to go to Mass at the Vatican in the morning and ordinations in the afternoon. They treated me wonderfully: sit on the first bench, come in this car, hugs, cheers, great memories, etc. The external, as always, perfect. The internal ...

On the second day they asked me (when I say asked, suggested, told, etc. I usually mean the same person: a director of the general council with years of experience who was aware of what I wrote and knew me well for many years ; During those days I spoke almost daily with him and sometimes for more than an hour): "Have you brought the football boots?" "Yes of course." I replied. And he said to me: "Good! Why don't you go play football at Cavabianca? Would you like it? They have a new artificial grass field." "Of course I would," I replied. And there I went.

In the afternoon, he encouraged me to take a walk in Rome: "Have you seen what a beautiful "tramonto" (sunset) we have now? You don't have this in your country! Why don't you go for a walk around the city with someone from Villa Tevere?" (for those who don't know, these types of walks are always with someone from the center, because of "tying up" that the subject in question "breathes" Opus Dei 24 hours a day and thus "remakes" himself; and incidentally, it avoids the risk that one, being alone, "begins to think more than necessary"; and he added: "So you walk around for a while, let it give you air, that jet lag, you know ...". "Yes, sure," I replied, "delighted."

On the third day, I began to realize that there was not much interest in talking. Everything was related to football, walking, going out, resting, giving you the air ... And man, leaving everything you have on the other side of the world to come immediately to Rome and be told to go for a walk because the Roman sunset these days is beautiful, it seems very romantic to me, but also a joke. So after throwing several hints to see when we would have a little while to talk, and not much interest in answering me, I asked him directly: "Are we going to talk about the topics that I wrote in my letters?" And he said: "no; we are not going to talk about what you have written in those letters."

Man, my first reaction was surprise. First, because I thought that if they had summoned me, it would be to talk. From my point of view, I was not doing anything wrong, my attitude was not to attack. It was more about dialogue, wanting to learn and, deep down, knowing. Something totally normal. I had been appointed defender of the commission without them consulting me and I understood that if there was something that did not seem right or I could not understand, I had to say it or ask it: with discretion and to the people who were directly above me (the regional vicar and the directors of the council with the father [prelate]), but say it at the end of the day. The opposite would be to suppose that I had been appointed to sign (approve) everything that happened to me, whether I agreed or not.

On the other hand - I said to myself - in the Work, as in any normal family (at that time I thought the Work was a real family), when there are problems, you should be able to talk to try to solve them. Saying that there are topics that you can't talk about seems sooo sooo strange to me. Why can't you talk? Talking about these issues ... would it mean acknowledging that I am right on some points? Would it mean acknowledging that the Work does things wrong? Would it mean acknowledging that the Work is not what it says it is? I do not know. What I know is that I sat in front of that director and expected something like: "How are you? Are you having a bad time? We are here to help you. What can we do for you? Tell us, tell us, we are for what agree ... " But no, it was just the opposite: " We are not going to talk about these issues. "

I insist that I was in a good spirit: I complied with all the rules, lived unity, wore my cilice, did apostolate, prayed for the Father [prelate], lived the "chat" and confession with sincerity and punctuality, made fraternal corrections, wanted to persevere until day of my death, etc. And maybe because I had a good spirit, even though I was surprised that they didn't want to talk to me about these important issues, I listened to them, and I believed them. I kept thinking that God's will would come to me through the directors and that's why I continued to do what they asked me to do.

What did they ask me to do?

The first thing, as I have already said, was to not talk about those issues. So when later I made the move to go back to the issue, to raise some of those questions, do you know what that director told me LITERALLY? LITERALLY he told me: "You are obsessed". And he added that I thought about things a lot, that I was stubborn, that I was tired and that I would take advantage of those days to get a medical check-up in Villa Tevere. I told him very well, I would do it. He told me to speak with so and so, a priest from Cavabianca, a council officer and a doctor of the Roman school who, I add, possibly is in charge of "this type of medical check-up" (since "normal medical check-ups, for those from Villa Tevere" are done by another doctor, who is a lay person with an external work as a doctor and who is not an official of the council, but lives in Villa Tevere.

We agreed that he would call that priest to have the medical check-up the next day. And before our first long conversation ended, he said to me: "Well, the most important thing about this conversation today is: the topic of vocation is not touched. This has to be clear. The vocation is something that is not touched. Is it clear? " "Yes," I replied; and we went to dinner.

The next day I had the medical check-up.

Chapter 8. *Psychiatric drugs despite no psychiatric problems.*

Before telling about my medical check-up in Villa Tevere I would like to narrate something that seemed very important to me.

A few hours before I left my country to fly to Rome, someone told me (surely he shouldn't have told me, but ... you can't control everything :-)) that a priest from Rome was going to visit our region in the next few days. He told me the name - because I knew him very well: we lived four years together in Villa Tevere, on the same floor - and also that I would not meet him there, because he would arrive when I would already be in Rome and would return to Rome before I would return. What a coincidence! Really?

Actually, from my naivety, I was glad that he visited our region. I thought: Great! It is logical. They want to hear the two versions, the two bells: mine and the rest (especially the regional vicar, I suppose). It seemed like a very fair approach. Also, because I already said that I was open to speak and rectify whatever was necessary, so the more objective the study, the better ...

However, there was something that caught my attention. When I got to Villa Tevere, I ran into that priest a couple of times and he didn't tell me that the next day he was going to visit my region. I found it strange. We knew each other very well and the logical thing would have been to say to me: "Well, I'm going there tomorrow, do you need anything? Any advice on how to get to the commission headquarters?" I don't know, something. Even if it was just a comment.

So, neither short nor lazy, I decided to go ask him. I went to his room and said directly: "Well, I found out that you are going to my region tomorrow." He was a bit surprised and replied: "Well, the truth is that I didn't tell you anything because I didn't know if you knew; I didn't know if that director (the one who was talking to me) had told you". I told him: "No, that director didn't tell me, but I already knew" ;-). (Sometimes the information management in that club is light years away from the kgb movies ... simple as doves come on ...). So, since he didn't seem very willing to give up information, I asked him again: "So what are you going to do there?" He replied: "I'm going to liven up the atmosphere a bit."

That answer killed me. I thought he was going there to talk about the issues I wrote, to listen to the other version of events, and yet he was just going to "cheer up." There I understood better what was happening.

I said: "I don't think it's as simple as 'go cheer them up.' Have you read my letters?" He replied: "I have read a letter." Obviously he only read the first one (later I will add another piece of information that confirms this), which was the most "light". I know that some of you, reader friends, will find it wrong that he read my letter (if it was addressed to the father [prelate]), but I honestly did not care. First, because I know how things work in there, so it is better to deliver it open and give it to the regional vicar to read directly (as I did) and second, because I do not regret anything I wrote, that's why I saw with good eyes for those who had to read it. However, I have to say that I find it very bad that they give you only half the information, because that is unfair: if you read about it, you read everything [both letters]. If not, don't read it [i.e. part of the

communication only].

Anyway, I told him that it was not as simple as "go cheer them up." And he answered pointing to the clouds that could be seen from his window "e pure li dietro c"è il sole" (and even there behind -the gray clouds- is also the sun). He was telling me, logically, that I was too pessimistic and that he did not see things from their proper perspective.

Overall, I encouraged him to read my second letter, which I am sure he did not do, I wished him a very good trip and went back to my room.

At that moment, I realized that his mission was simply to encourage, calm the regional vicar and the rest of the directors. Go there to tell everyone that things were being done well, that vocations would come, that the father [prelate] relied on them a lot and that I was a little tired, that I would leave the positions I had, that it would be better, that they should not worry. Let them forget what I had said ... Anyway, make sure that neither the regional vicar nor the others were affected (perhaps they had begun to think more than necessary) by what I had written.

That said, I continue with the medical examination.

The doctor, as I said, is a priest. He is the doctor of the Roman College and also an officer of the general council. Before being ordained he worked as a doctor. I know him very very well and I consider him a good person.

I got there and before starting the usual scan, he asked me quite a few questions. Interestingly, of the type: "Are you tired? Do you sleep well? Do you think about things a lot?"

Of course, you have to be very very naive, even more naive than me (which is already a lot) not to realize that PERHAPS the director who told me to go see him gave him a POSSIBLE diagnosis (it so happens that the direct boss of that priest-doctor is the director who asked me to come and see him ;-)). So after several questions along the same lines, I told him directly: "So and so (who you work for) says I'm obsessed." He replied: "Well, then, we have to deal with this."

And he started a very nice little speech about "You have to learn to distance yourself from problems", "You have to know how to rest", "Give things a relative importance". He told me: it is normal for things to affect us, especially those of the Work and of our brothers because they are our life, but we must also know how to distance ourselves. I said yes, don't worry, I had already said that I did not want any more positions of government and we had agreed that they would take them away from me.

So, after his little speech, he told me that it would be good for me to have something to help me. "Take these pills, one in the morning and one at night." "Start taking them today and so we will see how it is, so that when you return to your region we make sure they go well." "Don't pay much attention to what it says on the leaflet, just take one in the morning and one at night, and that's it."

He did several more tests and I went to my room. I put the pills on the table and before going to the dining room, I opened the first box and swallowed the first pill without reading the leaflet ("He who obeys is never wrong," I told myself, repeating something I had heard hundreds of times).

Chapter 9. *Sedation; more medication. Threats and pressure to abandon his questions.*

Within two days of starting the pills, I told the doctor that I was having nausea in the morning. He replied: no problem, I'll give you others. And he changed the ones in the morning.

In those days I had many conversations with the director that I already mentioned. We talked about many topics, but in 90% of the conversations the topic was me, not my region, much less the Work. We talked about the topics of my letter superficially and only once; it was a way of accomplishing the "we have discussed this matter" and that's it. There was no alternative. I went from "we have a problem" (me and the Work, identified as the same thing) to "I have a problem" (I am obsessed, sick) ...

However, as the days went by, I didn't care so much about those underlying issues. Why? Because I was also changing: the pills were logically having their effect (with good reason the doctor and that director were asking me if I was taking them, to make sure they were doing their job) and also, so many conversations along the lines of "not being stubborn", "listening", "distancing oneself from problems", "making rest plans", they were convincing me that the problem was me, not the Work or some people in the Work.

On the other hand, the details of affection that they had with me would only be comparable to those that you have with a great guy who is about to ask for admission to [the Work in] a very difficult country: smiles, kind gestures, the best places, eating with the directors of the council, be in the gathering with the father [prelate], go to the oratory of the council center, go on a hike, go for a walk, have an ice cream, etc. The directors of the council, who know Latin and Greek [i.e. know the euphemisms used in the Work], were aware that I had gone to Rome for a few days "to rest" and that in their language meant "pour yourself into a thousand details of affection". And that's what they did.

So in those ten days the plan was very clear:

1. Do not talk about anything related to the Work (or as little as possible if there is no alternative).
2. Convey to those in his region that the problem is his, nothing to do with the region or the Work.
3. Convince him that he is the one who has to change. As it seems that he struggles [i.e. is successfully ascetically engaged] and fulfills the norms and customs of the Work and is faithful, then it will be that he has to rest, take distance from government affairs, THINK LESS. To help him, he will need medication, so we can ensure that he really "rests" and "thinks less."
4. You have to give him affection: so he feels that the Work is really his family, so that he never again considers the possibility of leaving if things are not as they should be. You have to convert him these days.

For me, this approach which now seems very evident to me, I could not see then for what it was. I had too many mixed feelings. With how well they take care of me ... how can I think that we really don't love each other? With so many people I know who have fallen ill, why should I think that I am okay? A doctor and a board director with many years of experience tell me!

Anyway, this is not all. An important part of the plan were the conversations that director was going to have with me. He had a lot of experience dealing with those kinds of conversations; I do not. But he didn't need it either. My conscience was my best weapon :-). If my conscience was well formed (or so it seemed) and I wanted to do God's will, I had nothing to fear. Without fear of life and without fear of death, right? ;-)

I am going to give some examples of things that were said to me in those conversations. Obviously, the speaker let a few days go by, waiting for the pills and external affection to take effect, before entering with all the heavy artillery. He was taking me as if on an inclined plane. And sometimes, from my point of view, it happened. I think that, willing to do whatever it took not to lose me, he sometimes "played dirty."

Well, here are some examples of what he told me, to give you an idea.

A few days after arriving, in the middle of a conversation, he blurts out: "Have you accused yourself of these things in your confession?" I put on a total poker face. "Of these things ???," said my eyes, which were wide open. "Yes," he continued: "Having touched the vocation" (remember that the first day we finished with his lapidary phrase: "the most important thing in this conversation is that the subject of the vocation is not touched"). I was still silent. I was still quiet because my conscience never told me that I was doing something wrong. I wanted to do God's will and I thought that God was asking me to say that there were things that were wrong and if there was no interest in changing them, because they were important enough, I had to ask myself if I could continue to find God there, if I could continue to think that God was there.

As there was no response from me (I was still puzzled), he concluded that it would be good for me to confess to that. Logically, confessing to that would mean, in the future, associating any doubt - however logical - about the Work with a sin. And he would make sure I wouldn't do it again.

I believed him, once again (how naive of me, by God) and I went to Confession. I looked for a priest who could understand me. He was from my land, which would make things easier. He had been working in spiritual direction for years (he would have read hundreds of reports of conscience, I say) and he knew me very well for having confessed to him many times. I went to his room, asked him if I could go to confession and I said: "Well, speaking with so and so, he told me that I should confess to having touched my vocation, but the truth is, I don't think I have done anything wrong. I do not know what to say. Ask what you want. I can tell you a little about why I am in Rome." Do you know what the priest asked me? Ha ha ha ... When I think about it, it makes me laugh and pity at the same time, but I know he did it with all the good intentions in the world, so I prefer to laugh. He told me: "Is there a girl?" I was about to say: (sorry) "Damn, what was missing!" (I have to say that the director who spoke to me never asked me about any girl, because he knew me well: He knew that if one day I started to fall in love with someone, I would immediately ask to be transferred to another country). Total, I answered the priest: "No, there is no girl." And I added: "I don't think there are any."

Why did I say "I think" when I knew there were none? Because at that moment, I no longer knew if things were really how I saw them or how others saw them. I heard so many times about listening and not being stubborn, etc. that already questioned the most obvious. Anyway, I confessed, we talked for a while and a little more.

Another example: suddenly, talking about different things related to fidelity to one's vocation, with a humiliating and contemptuous tone, he blurted out to me: "What are you going to do out there?" He was telling me that without "them" I was nobody. With them, I was someone important. And he took advantage of that. He knew that I had only worked on internal tasks, that my training had been all "in the Work and for the Work", that I was no longer twenty years old (although I am young ;-), that I was in another country, that my family and almost all my friends had connections with the Work and that leaving would mean leaving as a traitor, starting from scratch and, surely, having a very, very bad time. So he played with it, and to me it seemed very dirty. If I was in the Work, it was not because of what the Work could "provide" for me (image, power, prestige, friends, position, etc.). That, thank God, it was very clear to me. The "external" mattered very little to me. And on the other hand: did that director really have confidence in me? In my abilities, in my talent? How could he trust me if deep down he thought "what could I do out there" if I wasn't with the Work?

Another: I said something he didn't like and he said: "Well, if you're like this, you'd better not go back to your region." The message was very clear: if you want to return, do what we tell you. If not, you will either stay in Rome or we will send you back to Spain. Always in line with freedom and trust in people, of course. I kept quiet. And I still didn't understand what my crisis had to do with being in Rome or somewhere else. I suppose that in their mind, being in Rome would mean having me much more controlled, they would know how to handle me.

The last example. At another moment he told me: "Your second letter has only been read by the Father [prelate] and I." And he added a gesture like "You have spent [risked] a lot with what you say." But the most important thing is the context in which he said it. The context was that of letting him help me, of going to see the director of my thesis (it was a nod towards my possible future ordination, because to be ordained I had to advance in my studies and those days he wanted me to go see him and dedicate more time to the thesis when I returned to my country). The message, again, was very clear to me (maybe some of you don't guess because I have omitted some things): you forget what you said, you take the pills, you do what we tell you and we forget your letter. Your record will not be "tainted" by this episode. Only the Father [prelate] and I know. You trust me and I will trust you. You return to being the obedient child who does not ask, you study the dissertation and then you get ordained and surely, later, you will be on the commission again.

Yes, that's what I understood and to me, honestly, the positions in government mattered very little. I never asked for them and in fact I was the one who insisted that they be taken away. I had not come to the Work to get medals, so for me, the letter could be shown to him or given to whoever he wanted. And the medals and awards too. I entered there for supernatural reasons and if I left, I would leave for the same reasons.

But anyway, let's be positive, there was something we both agreed on: we were wrong (he once said, referring to having appointed me to that position on the commission). Yes, I thought, if you thought I would close my eyes to things that are wrong, you have the wrong person.

Those days I was also able to talk a little with the Father [prelate, Don Javier Echevarria].

Chapter 10. *Conversations with Prelate Javier Echevarria.*

Those days I spoke three times alone with the Father.

The first, I already recounted: it was brief, just after arriving, in the room next to the room where he normally works.

The second was in the same place, after a few days. We spoke little. He told me, among other things, that it was okay for me to go visit my parents in Spain before returning to my country. He did not mention my letters, the themes were ascetic ... pray, deeply.

The third was special. It was at the end of my trip. I think it was the afternoon before I returned to my country. I had already been to Spain and was returning with renewed energy. Eager to learn, to listen, to start over. To take the pills, to rest, to do what they told me. To serve the work as it wants to be served, now more in the shadows surely, but just as or more effective than before. And that's what I passed on to him ...

That conversation was special because the father was in a room of "his". Those who know Villa Tevere know that there are different rooms: some for everyone, others for those who live there, others for the directors, others for the Father, etc. And that was one of those "top secret" rooms, which you don't normally access. I think that in the 4 years that I spent in that house, I entered only once and for 60 seconds. And I dare say that at least 70% of those who live there have never entered.

Anyway, I tell this just to show that they and I knew that that was one more detail of trust with me, one more way to "win me over".

The father was very kind and loving, as always. I told him what I just wrote and surprisingly he basically spoke to me about two topics: the first, patience. It was in line with the same thing they had told me those days, but from another point of view: the idea was that sometimes you have to let some things go by, not trying to solve them or change them in a short time, everything has its meaning, etc. Come on, the same, but with other words: don't get into trouble.

And the second thing he told me shocked me even more, because it seemed to me that it didn't have much to do with me: he told me that I was living in a very different culture that was not even Christian and that surely meant understanding that the historical-cultural coordinates were very different and the approaches should also be different, according to that new culture ... and so on and so forth. Honestly, the whole thing sounded more like something to someone who was about to go to that country and who had to have an open, flexible mind. But that was not my case: I loved that land, most of my friends were from there, I had learned their language, I was already one of them! In fact, with all due respect for his words (and advice) and his person, after two years studying the language, eating its food, making friends from there and getting fully into their mentality, and loving those people (I didn't want to go back to Rome or Spain) I think I could say that I knew them a little better than he did, who had never been more than a couple of weeks there. And I repeat, I say it with all due respect.

In the end, I thanked him very much for his words, I wrote them down in my agenda and went back to my room.

A few days before that conversation, as I already said, I spent a weekend with my parents in Spain. All my siblings, as always, came to be with me. Some had to travel several hundred kilometers, but they were delighted. However, the first day they were very surprised because just before we started our first meal all together (we were going to have only two), I told them that I was very tired and wanted to sleep. "Now?!" I was told. "It's two o'clock. What's wrong? Are you ok?" "Yes," I told them, "I just feel very tired and need to sleep." And there I stayed, fried, sleeping in bed almost until 6 in the afternoon. Later I understood what had happened to me: the "dear" pills had left me completely flattened.

They asked me about my sudden trip to Rome and, without going into details, I told them: well, look, there are things that I think are wrong and should be done differently. So I wrote down what I thought and they told me to go talk to them. I didn't say much more, I just said that the Work had to change in some things. And there some said yes, that it had to change in this or in that. I didn't talk about my governmental positions or my pills or anything.

One of my brothers, who knows the Work well, simply told me: really, to go to Rome to tell them that kind of thing you have to have h To which I replied: I just do what I believe that I have to do in conscience.

The weekend passed, I returned to Rome and spoke with the Father, as I said, and that last day they called me to go to the evening gathering with the Father and the directors of the council. It was the icing on the cake. A detail. The locknut. They and I knew that only those who live in the center of the council attend the evening gathering with the father (at noon they usually invite some people, I myself went two or three times on those days; but the night, no). There were jokes, some comments and at the end I was invited to take the exam with the father and with the directors of the council in the Pentecost oratory, the center of the council. Always in the same line of love. I thanked him and said goodbye, as it was late and the next day I had to leave early. Big hugs. I went back to my room

The next morning I went to the airport.

Chapter 11. *He realizes he has been deceived. He talks to family and an external priest.*

I got on the plane.

Many times I have thanked God for living in such a distant country. Because many hours of flight, almost a whole day in total, go a long way. And if the outbound flight was important, the return flight even more so.

I do not know exactly how it was or when, but at one point, my consciousness woke up and a ray of light appeared in my mind. A light bulb lit up. Something there, inside me, told me: they have deceived you ...

On the plane, far from the harassment of details and affection of Villa Tevere, once again alone with God, I could not deny something that would be evident to anyone's eyes: they have not let you speak, you have not discussed the issues that concerned you and also they have told you that you are obsessed and they have even medicated you for that.

Why can't you talk about those issues? Why? Why? (as a well-known soccer coach would say). Didn't they appoint you [to be the delegate]? So if they gave you that position, why don't they even listen to what you ask? Isn't it your family? Isn't obedience in the Work supposed to be "intelligent"? You are not refusing to obey what they answer you. The problem is that they don't even answer you.

On the other hand ... are you really sick? Do you really need medication? Ok, very well, you are tired and sometimes you have not slept well, but it is normal: who could go to sleep easily knowing that he is giving his life for something that is not what he thought? Losing sleep over important things is not only normal, but it shows that you really love. But does that mean you are sick? Of course not. You have a very normal life. You have many friends, you do sports two days a week, you go out, meet people, study, work, fulfill your plan of life without any problem ... you're fine!

At that moment I made my decision: I'm leaving. I don't know when, or how, or where ... but I have a why, and that's enough for me.

Leaving was going to be very difficult, I knew that. First, because leaving meant starting a life from scratch and I said to God: why are you doing this to me? Why are you asking me to leave now? You asked me to give you everything for the Work and now that I have accomplished it, you take that away from me, my fidelity, the only thing I had. Anyway, you know, I guess your plans are the best. At least give me a hand so that everything goes well. And everything went well, although it was not easy.

It had to be quick and clever. And I had to be prepared for the worst. In the Work they say that the doors are always open to leave but ... I had enough reasons to think that nothing was open. So I was prepared to push, because now, I saw more clearly than ever, that I had to leave, no matter what happened.

I do not like or know how to lie. I knew that at the latest, a week later, I would have to do the chat with the regional vicar, like every week. And I wasn't about to tell him face to face why I was leaving. I knew it would be talking to a wall: whatever I said, he wouldn't understand me. And besides, I no longer had anything to talk about: I spoke with him several times before going to Rome and I spoke many times in Rome, also with the Father. Who else did I have to talk to? I had nothing more to say or hear. So I gave myself a week of time to write the letter to the Father asking for the dispensation from the commitments that I acquired with the fidelity.

What I am going to say now will surprise you, but it can serve those who are in crisis. Crises, I have already said, are non-linear processes. And I, for example, even though I had made my decision to leave, I continued to fulfill my entire plan of life [norms of the Work] and what is more incredible: I kept taking my pills! Why? Because I was not totally liberated yet ... a part of me, a small part, kept thinking that maybe they were right.

So, I told myself, even though you have made your decision, you have to talk it over with someone who is impartial and who can advise you well. That will help you see things from a more objective point of view.

So I started talking. I spoke with my brothers and my parents, asking them not to comment on it. I told them what had happened in Rome and ... of course, with the pills they were stunned, it was no wonder. I told them that in conscience I thought I had to go and they understood it very well. They were very helpful because they supported me from the first moment. I told them the truth: that I did not know what I would do, where I would live or anything, but that I was fine and that I would be leaving in a few days.

I spoke with a very, very good friend. I owe him so much, I have told him many times. He listened to what I was saying and if I asked him his opinion, he answered me: I think you know. Take your time, think about it, but I think you know what you have to do. And so, listening and supporting, he helped me a lot. Thanks again. My parents and siblings were fundamental, but they were thousands of miles away. I needed someone close and he was like another brother to me.

Besides talking to all of them, I decided that I had to speak to a priest. I thought it would help me. He would have more experience and would know how to tell me if I was doing the things that God asked me or not. I went to see him. Obviously he was not a priest of the Work, because a priest of the Work would never have been impartial. He was a good friend of mine and also knew a little about the Work.

I told him a little about what had happened and my trip to Rome and asked him what he thought. He told me that in all the institutions of the Church there are problems, that it is normal for there to be misunderstandings, that sometimes things are done badly but not with bad intentions, that you always have to forgive. I said: yes, I know that and I would have said the same as you, but the problem is that I have not explained myself very well, let me tell you better what I mean. And after talking for a long time, I told him: "... that's why I've come to talk to you, because despite the fact that in the Work it is a bad spirit to address a priest who is not from the Work (his eyes are wide open ... 'Is it in a bad spirit? Why can't you talk about interior life

with a Catholic priest who is not from the work? I'm also a Catholic priest' ... he told me) I need your advice. What you think?" I received the following answer:

"1. Never take those pills again. Those pills, what are they for?" "I don't know," I replied, "they told me not to pay much attention to the label." He replied: "Read it, but don't take them anymore. Did you take them today?" "Yes," I said. "No wonder you felt strange, he answered. Don't take them anymore. You are healthy."

"2. Leave."

"3. Don't lose the faith."

"Yes," I told him, "if I go, it is precisely because if I am still there either I will really go crazy (I spend my life denying what is evident and I have to seriously medicate to be able to bear such a lie) or I lose the faith (after what has happened to me ... am I going to be able to continue thinking that God is in the Church or in any human institution?)."

I thanked him for his advice and asked him to pray for me. He told me that God would help me. I said yes, I know, but I have to start a life totally from scratch. I do not have a visa to be in this country (my visa depended on them), I do not have a job, I have almost no professional experience (part-time Spanish teacher for just over a year), I do not have a home or a place to stay, I have no money, almost all my friends are related to the Work ...

"Why do you say you have no money? After all those years there, they are going to help you, right?" "No," I said, "when you leave, you leave with nothing. Everything you earned is no longer yours and if you worked for them, no matter for how many years, you don't get anything either." And he said: "How is that possible? In my congregation, if a priest leaves for any reason, he is assigned a salary, he is given an amount every month. It is normal, it is a way of thanking them for their work for so many years." "Forget it," I said, "things are not like that there."

We said goodbye with a loving hug and I left with great peace.

Chapter 12. *He finds out what the pills are that he was given in the General Council. He stops taking them. He decides to leave the Work. What kinds of dispensation letters are accepted, and what kinds aren't.*

I went back to the center and after saying hello I went directly to my room, to read what it said in the leaflet of those pills, which is the following (I keep them, by the way, in case someday someone claims that I have invented it ;-)).

Morning pills (I translate from Italian): therapeutic indications: treatment of depression, obsessive compulsive disorder and bulimia nervosa.

Night pills: indications: most of the clinical forms of epilepsy in the baby or in the child. It is also indicated for epilepsy in adults ...

My God, what I was taking! Depression? I've never had - thank God - any kind of depression. Obsessive compulsive disorder? Bulimia nervosa? Seizures of epilepsy? I have not had any of this in my life. What are we doing? This is something very very serious, ladies and gentlemen. These pills are not candy. How can they go to these extremes?

I remember that a few days later, outside, I spoke with a good nun friend and she was shocked saying: "How could they give you those pills? And why did you take them?" I said: "I trusted them." "How long did you take them?" "I don't know, a couple of weeks." "My God," she said to me, "do you know the damage this does? Do you know the effects it can and could have had?" Yes, I told her, but always remember that "he who obeys is never wrong ..."

And here comes a logical question: wouldn't everything be easier if one went to any doctor on the street? Why do members of the Work have to go to the internal doctors for medical check-ups? Why do they have to go to see psychiatrists from the Work? Is it that there is fear that normal doctors, those in the street, will say something that they do not want to hear? I leave it to your opinion ... and I continue with my story.

I started looking for a job. It had to be full time, to allow me to get a visa. And I needed a place to live, something not easy, because I had no money. My siblings had already volunteered to put a little money together to help me. But before that, I had to write my letter of resignation.

I knew how the cards worked, so I played with an advantage. I knew what to say and what not to say if I wanted everything to end as quickly as possible. And of course, I knew I had to push, hard too, if I wanted to be left alone. And I did it.

The first thing I had to do was write two different letters. If I put everything I thought into the same resignation letter, I knew that several weeks later they would ask me to redo it again. And that would mean talking to them again, more pressure, more attempts to reconsider and more beating up again. And I, after everything that had happened, had already had enough. So I decided to be practical. I didn't mind writing two separate letters, I wanted to leave because I couldn't take it anymore and I wanted to end up in the least bad way possible.

Why couldn't I write everything in one letter? Because they wouldn't accept it. They take great care that the letters of those who leave are "clean" (there are numerous examples on this website). Why? I do not know. Perhaps because if one day they are asked about those who are leaving, they can say that people are simply leaving, freely and some of them (they do exist) even grateful. Once again, it is about making up or even changing the story so that in the future another version of the events is known.

Anyway, I am in favor of everyone writing what they think in a single letter, but honestly, I couldn't take it anymore and I just wanted to leave. Start a new life and get over that trauma as soon as possible.

So I started writing my two letters. A super formal one, of the type: I, so and so, in full use of my freedom, request the dispensation from such and such. Date, place and signature.

The second, it helped me to say everything I wanted to say. I know that this letter would be read by the director who spoke with me and the Father (with Don Fernando, of course). (By the way: are there still people who think that the Father is not informed? Do you remember what that director told me? He said: your second letter has only been read by the Father and me ;-)). Surely, this third letter would not be shown to anyone else, but I didn't care. With two / three of them reading it, it was enough. So I went for it. I said the way they had treated me "not being able to speak, the pills, you are obsessed, etc." it was like a [secret] police trial. And I said that my earlier complaints about how badly people were treated and how charity was lived were confirmed during my trip to Rome.

I gave examples of things that in my opinion showed how badly people were treated, and I also talked about myself (here I feel more comfortable to tell you what I want, since I don't have to keep any silence about myself): I told them they took advantage of the good dispositions of people like me. And I said: one thing is for one to be willing to do whatever it takes to serve the Work, and another, quite different, is to take advantage of that - of those good dispositions - to always do only what interests you. You have played with me as with a chess piece, never caring about my life. Examples? Here they go:

1. I explicitly ask not to go live in Villa Tevere and ... you send me to Villa Tevere without even a "Would you mind?" Or a "We know you don't feel like it, but ..."

2. You told me before I went to my new region that my plan was to go there to learn the language with the idea of getting to the place and, 3 or 4 years later, to return to Rome to be ordained. And you repeated to me (the director who told me this is curiously the same one who said I was obsessed) that the plan was for him to ordain me; so that a few years later I would not change my mind. You even told me that you had thought that I would be ordained that same year, but that (thank God) it seemed better that I go there to learn the language before being ordained. And what happened? Well, two years later, you decide to change that plan and you name me defender of the commission, a position that is for a lay person and that is not easy at all, nor obviously for the short term. And I ask: do you really care about my life? Because I think if you only cared a little bit, before placing that charge on me, you would you say to me: "Is that okay? We have planned to delay your ordination." Or "Maybe you will be ordained later." Or

“Maybe you will never be ordained.” But at least say ... SOMETHING! Is this a family? Is this the way to treat those who leave their skin for the Work? Is this Opus Dei?

I open a parenthesis: I did not leave the Work for not having been ordained. I want this to be clear and that there be no misunderstandings. I never made a final decision about my possible ordination, which was just that, a possibility. What I complain about is that they don't care if a person is ordained or not. In fact, if I had wanted to be ordained, I could have waited a few more years and I would have ended up being ordained and I could even have been ordained later, already outside the Work, and yet I have not done it and I will not. As an anecdote, I will say that, outside of the Work, the first two times that I confessed with priests of the diocese whom I did not know at all, the two concluded the Confession with the same question: Have you thought about becoming a priest? We need priests. I told them no, I'm sorry.

3. More examples. You ask me to learn the language and to learn it well (it was actually two languages, but that no longer matters). I kill myself studying six hours a day so that, after almost three years trying to accommodate myself to the country and the people, when I say that there are things that are wrong, the regional vicar tells me: since the most important thing is the vocation, why not go to Rome for awhile? To which I replied: my problem is with me, if I go to another country, I am the same person, don't you see? And I added: you see, deep down, my effort of these three years does not matter to you at all, because if it did, you would never have said something of this kind. You don't care about my problems or my happiness. The only thing that matters to you is that I don't leave. And you told me the same in Rome: if you're like this, you'd better not go back to your region. Do you realize that my life - as surely that of many others - does not matter to you? You only care that we are on site.

Anyway, I conclude. I also said that I was asking for the family life exemption because I wanted to stop living in the center as soon as possible. I told them that I did not know what I would do, where I would live or anything, but that I did not care, that I had God and that was enough for me. The vocation was the most important thing, but after the faith, so I left because if I continued there I would lose the faith or end up mentally ill. Would God want me to end up mentally ill for continuing in the Work? Obviously not. The Work was or had to be a way to reach God and I was very clear that, at the moment when that way, instead of approaching Him, turned away, I had to abandon it.

And I said that the Work had to change in many things, but that no longer mattered to me, I left it to them. And I told them (because to leave you have to push): if you delay my dispensation of family life and you tell me to continue living in a center, I will obey, until the last day. Now, yes, when the people from the Work or from San Rafael ask me why I am sad, I will say: I went to Rome because they called me to talk about things that I think are wrong in conscience and they would not let me speak there. They said I was obsessed and gave me pills for compulsive obsession and epileptic seizures.

I signed the letters and the next morning, I went to the headquarters of the commission and left them in a cabinet with the rest of the mail, so that it would reach the regional vicar. And I returned to my center.

The next day I had the dispensation from living in a center.

Chapter 13. *Leaving the center. A friend outside.*

As I said, I left the two letters at the commission headquarters and went back to the center.

In the afternoon, the new director of my center (until a few days earlier it had been me) came to see me. He was tense, like me. He said: "Can we talk?" "Yeah, sure."

"It's to talk about the letter you left at the commission," he told me. He was tense and I think angry, but we were going to understand each other well because he came from my own land, he was young like me and a practical man. In addition, he worked many years in the aop [apostolate of public opinion], so he knew how to deal with these types of cases. I was even more tense and angry than he was, I was burned out, so he realized that it was best to speak clearly and little ...

I reminded him that I was leaving because if I continued there I would go crazy or lose my faith. He told me that in the end the most important thing was that I go to heaven (not to lose faith). And also that the people, all of them, also in Rome, could be wrong, but not the Work, which was from God. I told him that I had already seen enough to think that God was not there and that what they did to me in Rome was the best example. He asked me about my letters and if I cared if he read them. No, of course not, I said, read them, surely you will understand me.

After that, he was very nice to me. He wanted to help. He said: I will do what I can to get you the family life dispensation as soon as possible (in fact they gave it to me the next day, as I said) and I will call you as soon as I know something. Do you know what you are going to do? No, I replied, I just know that I want to leave.

Then he said to me: what do you need? money? a visa? Nothing, I said, I'll manage alone. He insisted that he would help me in any way he could, he even added: even if the directors tell me not to do it, know that I will help you in whatever way I can. I appreciated it.

Not happy with that, he insisted again: how much money do you need? Ask me whatever you want. I don't want money, thank you, I replied. You will need to rent an apartment, it will be good for you to have money. No thanks, but no.

I really appreciated what he was doing with me because I finally saw that someone wanted to help selflessly. And I needed the money of course, I knew it too. However, I didn't feel like taking it. First, because they give money to everyone who leaves or they don't give it to anyone. Giving it to me because I had this or that position does not seem fair to me, although I can understand it. Second, because taking that money could mean that in the future I was in some way in their debt and I didn't want to be. I wanted to be free to say what I wanted, in that moment and later: always.

I have to say that more than one friend encouraged me to ask for some money, but at no time, as I say, did I consider it.

Everything was going very well in the conversation and I know he did not mean it, but there was one comment that deeply disappointed me. He was insisting that I ask for money or whatever I needed and he said to me: "Don't tell me later that we haven't helped you." My God, I thought, I hope you haven't been offering me things just so I can't say that later. But no, I know he didn't mean it, it was just a wrong comment.

We finished talking and I started packing my bags. I still didn't know where I would live. I just knew that I wanted to leave the next day. And I left. Thank God, a friend who had two apartments, one of them not in very good condition, offered to move me there until I found something. For a few days, it wasn't bad. And I deeply appreciated it.

Meanwhile, I kept talking to my parents and siblings who supported and encouraged me from a distance. One of my brothers surprised me with what he told me when I told him that I was leaving: it is the best news you could have given me in your life.

My great friend also went into a thousand details. We talked and talked and he always told me: everything will be fine, don't worry.

Finally the day of my departure arrived. The director offered to drive me, but I said no (they just needed to know where I lived!). He also told me that I could take a car and use it until I needed it, but I told him I didn't need it. Do you want help with your bags or something? No thanks. And, at that moment, I no longer trusted them at all.

I told him I would be leaving at night. I didn't want to explain myself to the others in the center. I know I was not doing anything wrong, but they did not know anything about what had happened and I did not want to have new confrontations. I had enough problems already. So, around midnight, in the dark, trying not to make noise so that no one would come out to see what was happening, like a thief in the night, I sneaked away, like many of those who have written here. What a pathetic ending, right? Well, it is what it is. That many of us have to go alone and at night tells you something about how things are in there.

I finally managed to load all my bags into the taxi that was waiting for me and left. I remember the thrill of closing the door to the center after leaving the keys on the management table and giving a sigh saying: finally, it's over.

Despite the fact that it was past midnight, my friend was waiting for me on the street. What a great guy. I had a hard time communicating with him, because the languages we spoke were not the same, but he is such a good person that there was no problem. He helped me with all the luggage and since it was almost one o'clock, he fell asleep in that same apartment. The next morning he left, with a "Call me for anything you need and stay until it suits you, there is no rush." There are good people in the world!

The regional vicar wrote me an e-mail in line with what was planned. It would have been enough

for me if he had said something like: "Sorry." Or, "Sorry if we've done something wrong." Or, "I pray for you." Or, "If I can do something for you, tell me." Logically something like, "I know you're having a hard time, cheer up" would be even better, but that was asking too much. What he told me, once again, was not to completely close the door on the issue of vocation. You see, I replied to the director of the center, only the vocation, the vocation and the vocation are of interest. Where am I going to sleep tomorrow, what am I going to eat and why after twenty years I have to go like this, it doesn't matter at all.

Legally, I was still part of the Work, until Rome approved my request for dispensation from the commitments of the fidelity.

Chapter 14. *The directors delay giving the dispensation from fidelity. He knows what to say to make them hurry up.*

My first days in that small apartment were spent sleeping and resting. It had been several weeks of great stress and not sleeping very well and eating poorly. But now, I slept like never before. I felt finally unloaded, liberated. My nightmare was over.

On the other hand, I started to move and little by little I got a job, a visa, a little money from my siblings, etc.

A few days later I received a call on my mobile: it was the regional delegate. Do not answer. I had nothing to talk about. If they wanted to tell me something, they could write me an SMS or an e-mail. The delegate left me a voice message: he would like to meet me to go have a beer and chat for a while and apologize for what had happened ...

I appreciated it. I replied to the director of the center, who is the one I was in contact with, "Thank you, but I had nothing to talk about." It always seemed like a nice gesture, but why do they send the delegate, a 70-year-old man, who has done nothing wrong and who in this story - with all due respect - does not play any role? If anyone has to ask for forgiveness, it would be those of Rome or the vicar, but ... the delegate? But of course, let's not be naïve, please; how are those in Rome going to apologize?

I was still waiting for news from Rome: legally I was still a numerary. I was playing with a little advantage: I knew how the procedures worked and also that they had no alternative but to grant me the exemption from the fidelity commitments. I also knew that they would do their best to change my mind. For now, they would keep me waiting. I was sure that the same day that I wrote requesting the dispensation, a fax would have been sent to Rome and they would be perfectly informed. I could even imagine Rome's response: make amends, etc. The premise is always the same: the Work is never wrong. And I knew that sending me the delegate was one more excuse to try to reconnect (although I appreciate that he apologized, as I already said). I was very clear that the best and fastest way to go was, precisely, "not to dialogue [= a phrase used in the Work to describe dealing with temptation]" And that's what I did.

During those weeks of waiting, some of the friends who went to the center told me that they told them that I no longer lived there, that I needed to rest and I don't know what else. That I was resting somewhere. I needed to rest? I did not leave for that reason. "I'm fine," I told them. "I left because I wanted to and I did it in perfect health." And I wrote to the director of that center asking for an explanation of why they gave that version of events. He told me that in no case were they trying to say that I was in poor health, ill or anything like that and that he apologized if there was a misunderstanding with someone.

In those weeks, I also wrote to a good friend. I told him what had happened and he said: look, I mentioned it to my grandfather (supernumerary) who knows you well and he asked me to convey just one word: fidelity. Thank you, I said, that's why I'm leaving: out of fidelity to God. If not, I would still be there.

But the weeks passed and the answer did not arrive. I set myself a deadline. I knew very well that they are always in a hurry for what interests them. So I said to myself: I give them two months, which is a long time, to answer me. If they don't answer in two months, I'll push again (because there's no other way out of there).

After two months, nothing. So I wrote an e-mail to the director of that center and said more or less: well, two months have passed and there is no news. I know how long it takes to respond and I also know that there are papers that need to be answered and others that need to be stopped. I find it shameful that after everything I've had to go through, now you don't deign to answer me. So I'm not going to let you guys play with me again. From now on I'm going to be very busy: don't look for me because I won't have time for you. I wish you the best, bye.

Yes, it's sad, but I knew that was the only way to get them to react. They were obliged to answer me and if they didn't they were in serious trouble. For example, I could go on saying or doing outrageous things while still being part of the Work. Or, I could write telling what they had done to me and that they did not deign to grant me an exit to which I was entitled. Anyway, I knew how to defend myself.

Curiously, a few hours after writing that e-mail, that same day, I received the answer. They told me that they had just received the reply from Rome and that the following Monday they were going to write to me to transmit it to me. How curious, right? Pure chance ;-). He told me that it was not worth ending badly and that it was better to end up as good friends, that we could see each other that day if he had time. Or the next day.

At that point in the game they gave me so much pain that I told him: yes, man, yes, let's meet today and close this at once. For those who do not know, these kinds of dispensations are transmitted by word of mouth. I suppose for fear that later on people could claim or demonstrate with a paper that they had been in the Work.

The date was at a McDonald's. As soon as we saw each other, he made a gesture of ... where do you want us to talk? "We can have dinner, if you want," I said (here I have to say that I shocked him, because he expected to meet someone very angry wanting to close the matter quickly and leave; and yet, I invited him to dinner ;-)). "Yes, yes, of course," he answered me. And no big deal, we had dinner, he told me that I was no longer in the work and asked me if I was thinking of staying or returning to Spain, etc. I told him that I didn't know, but that I would try to stay. Surprisingly, he did not ask me if I wanted to be a cooperator -it is said that you have to ask- so I deduced that they had finally understood that I was already a bit burned ;-). We said goodbye, he asked me if he could write to me from time to time, I said yes and I finally started my new life.

When you leave, when you are outside, you realize that you are really beginning to be in the middle of the world. And you gradually understand that you lived on another planet.

Since then I have led a very normal life, with a lot of work, with many friends and many reasons to be happy and to give thanks to God. Luckily, I've had a lot of people - especially my family, of course - who have always supported me. And I have also been fortunate to leave young and

with the strength to overcome it without too many problems. Everyone, and I the first, say that I am visibly much happier. Bye, thank you.

And I end up with a couple of things.

The first, an e-mail that I received last Christmas. It was from the "famous" director of Rome. It was a long e-mail where he spoke to me of the affection he had for me - adding that what he said was not just beautiful words - but the truth (sic!). That he entrusted me to have a year full of joys. He mentioned my parents, my land, my soccer team ... My God, I told myself. After all the damage you have done to me ... how can you write me an email pretending that nothing has happened? How is it possible? Are they so blind? Was I like this before ?? !! I wanted to tell him that it seemed pathetic to pretend to ignore what had happened, but I thought it wasn't worth it. I replied with a simple: thank you, Merry Christmas and 2011. And in the end ... they are pitiful.

The second, a brief reflection aloud for all of you who have been reading my story.

Do you have to go to those extremes - run over the lives of so many people - to defend your own ideas? To what extent do you have to continue denying what is wrong and obvious to everyone?

After knowing a little about how things are done in there ... do you think that God is there? A God who is really a Father, who wants the best for his children and above all, WANTS THEM HAPPY?

I leave it to your judgment. I only know that although I surely did a lot of good things being there, in the end, it was a life that, like many others, was not worth it. But don't worry, because now the best begins ;-)

END