



Interview ▶ The Episcopal Palace regrets the «unfounded accusations»

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«Victims of abuse must be listened to and abusers removed»

EDUARD IBÁÑEZ Deputy of the representative of the episcopal co-prince

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Eduard Ibáñez took the oath of office as deputy representative of the episcopal co-prince a month ago. His professional career has been focused on Law and representation and work in different Christian organizations that have taken him to the Episcopal Palace of La Seu d'Urgell.

–From a lawyer with a doctorate in Criminal Law and a degree in Philosophy to deputy representative of the episcopal co-prince in Andorra. How did you get here?

–In addition to practicing as a lawyer, I served for 19 years as director of Justice and Peace in Barcelona and also as president of Justice and Peace in Spain. It is a Catholic institution dedicated to the defense of human rights, social justice and peace, which emerged from the Second Vatican Council. I have also had responsibilities in other Christian organizations. Surely Mr. Co-prince has considered that my experience and background were suitable for the task he has given me. I feel very honored to be able to do this service in the Church and in Andorra.

–What exactly does your job consist of?

–My task is to collaborate professionally with the personal representative, Josep M. Mauri and with the Co-prince Services.

–You are coming at a time when society is evolving very quickly and wants political and social changes. Is the Co-Principality guaranteed?

–The parliamentary Co-Principality is the political regime that the people of Andorra, in the exercise of their sovereignty, have decided and want democratically. It will last as long as Andorrans freely want it.

–What is the role of the episcopal co-prince?

–The Constitution considers the co-princes as the highest representation of the State, and grants them the mission of being the symbol and guarantee of the permanence and continuity of Andorra. At the same time, they arbitrate and moderate the functioning of public authorities, but without exercising any government function as in the past. The episcopal co-prince is fully committed to these functions, at the service of the Andorrans, with the firm will to maintain the independence of Andorra.



EL PERIÒDIC

▶ The deputy of the representative of the episcopal co-prince, Eduard Ibáñez.

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«It must be respected that the episcopal co-prince cannot act against his conscience in this matter [abortion]»

–What is your relationship with the French co-prince?

–I am still settling into my task, but as far as I know, relations are cordial, fluid and of maximum collaboration in their joint mission as Head of State and highest representatives of the State.

–Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Andorra has changed its historic neutrality. Was it a good decision?

–It is not up to me personally to assess the decisions of the Andorran Government. However, I know that the two co-princes consider, and have stated so, that Andorra, with the decisions it has taken, has correctly positioned itself in favor of peace, international law and aid to the civilian population affected.

–What do you think about the decriminalization of abortion?

–My opinion as a Catholic coincides with the position of the Church, as the episcopal co-prince has always stated. The law must protect human life from its conception. In this sense, it must be respected that

the episcopal co-prince cannot act against his conscience in this matter. In addition, the Andorran Constitution, in its article 8, recognizes the right to life and fully protects it in its different phases.

–In recent years, the Church has been losing adherents. What do you think it is due to?

–The Church does not aim to make followers, but to announce the Gospel. This means inviting everyone to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, who is a source of meaning and profound joy. It is true that in the current cultural context there are tendencies that make it difficult for people to open up to God and many interferences in the presentation of the Christian proposal, which often arrives distorted. This obliges us Christians, as requested by Pope Francis, to renew our language, styles and ecclesial structures to be able to convey this proposal to our contemporaries. But the church does not lose hope, because it believes that God continues to call and because it sees that there are still many who decide to live the Christian experience.

–How do you see the relationship between the Church and young people?

–A good part of the Catholics are young. The Gospel takes root in the heart of the person regardless of age. However, it is true that today the Church has, for various reasons, more difficulties in presenting its message to young people. It is a great challenge, but we are working on it with various initiatives.

–A few days ago, a statement from the Co-prince Services was made public about an alleged cover-up in matters of abuse. What do you think?

–The statement was very clear on this matter. When those events to which you refer occurred, in 1988, Mons. Vives was neither the rector of the seminary, which he was from 1991, nor the auxiliary bishop of Barcelona, he was from 1993. Therefore, he had no institutional responsibility neither for the people who complained nor for the people denounced.

As a result of the complaints presented, the ecclesiastical court of the archdiocese of Barcelona opened an investigation in June 1988, after which several sanctions were imposed on the people reported, and the institution where those events took place was dissolved. Therefore, Msgr. Vives could not cover it up, and it has also never been the subject of any canonical or civil investigation. Very serious accusations have been published, but they are absolutely unfounded.

–What is Vives' position on abuses in the Church?

–Archbishop Vives has always shown zero tolerance in relation to this issue and has acted consistently with this principle and with maximum transparency. We should have no doubts about this.

–What do you think of the statements of Pope Francis when he demands to ask forgiveness from the victims and remove the abusers?

–Victims of abuse must be listened to and welcomed as they deserve, because they have suffered a lot; abusers must be removed. We must persevere in the protection of minors and make the Church a safe environment for children and young people.

–In a couple of years, the episcopal co-prince will reach the retirement age of the bishops. Do you know who you would like to be your successor?

–You should ask him. ≡

START OF THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

Education will consolidate the skills model in the next two years

|| This month, implementation begins for six and seven-year-olds, the only outstanding group || Escola Andorrana maintains a stable number of students, this year with just over 4,300



SFGA/CESTEVE

►► A teacher accompanies a student at the beginning of the last year.

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The Ministry of Education will complete the process of implementing skills-based education during the next two years—the one starting now and the next one—in the case of six and seven-year-old children (first cycle of primary education), the only age range in which it is not yet fully established, as it operates at full capacity from eight to 18 years old, since the implementation process began in the first year of secondary education in 2013. However, «this first cycle already works a lot on skills, because it is an educational level where the children are young and everything is already done in a very procedural and manipulative way, with a lot of Montessori material», said the director of Escola Andorra-

na, Mayte Casals. Specifically, this year in the first cycle of first education, an authorship process will be carried out to review the programming units and the entire curriculum, while the following year the final implementation will take place. «We have waited until now because we have had two years of pandemic—Casals pointed out—but, despite being an educational level that already works by skills, it is true that they did it with other programs and now we will adapt our programming units to the new educational programs that we have in all compulsory education». From there, he added, «taking advantage of this, we have changed the curriculum, incorporating some elements that we think can be good for younger children». In second teaching, «rather than carrying out new projects, what is



Mayte Casals
PRINCIPAL OF ESCOLA ANDORRANA



«The first cycle already works by skills, because the children are little and everything is already done in a procedural and manipulative way»

«Taking advantage of this, we have incorporated some elements that can be good for younger children»

important is to be able to consolidate the ones we had started two or three years ago, such as metacognition (the student is aware of how best he learns and does it this way) or the revision of programming units and that these two years of covid have made us stop everything», said Casals. With teaching by competences, «what it wants is to put the student at the center of learning and, therefore, rather than being a receiver who listens to the information given by the teacher, we want him to be able to solve a complex situation». At this point, «rather than knowing a lot of content, which we want you to know, you need to be

In the second teaching, the aim is to consolidate the projects that had started two or three years ago

able to apply it in any learning, and thus work on it, prepare it and research it». In other words, «to link the process to what would be a scientific process, since the student makes a hypothesis, thinks that in order to solve it he will need a series of contents, he tries it and sees if it turns out well or not», explained.

As for the number of students that the Andorran school will have this year, they will be more or less the same as last year, with «about 10 or 20 children approximately», up to a total of just over 4,300. «We have remained strong in terms of students, neither down nor up», declared the director of the Escola Andorrana. «The luck we have in Andorra is that we have three educational systems and families choose the model they want. We have a ratio of about 11,000 pupils of school age in the Principality, and it is good that we divide them up and that we all have more or less the same number. It is important as a country to have these three educational systems and that the students are distributed equitably in the three systems, we are doing well», she assured. ≡

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