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Juan Juvančić

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Tomas and Paquita

Hand in hand to heaven



Le Laurier

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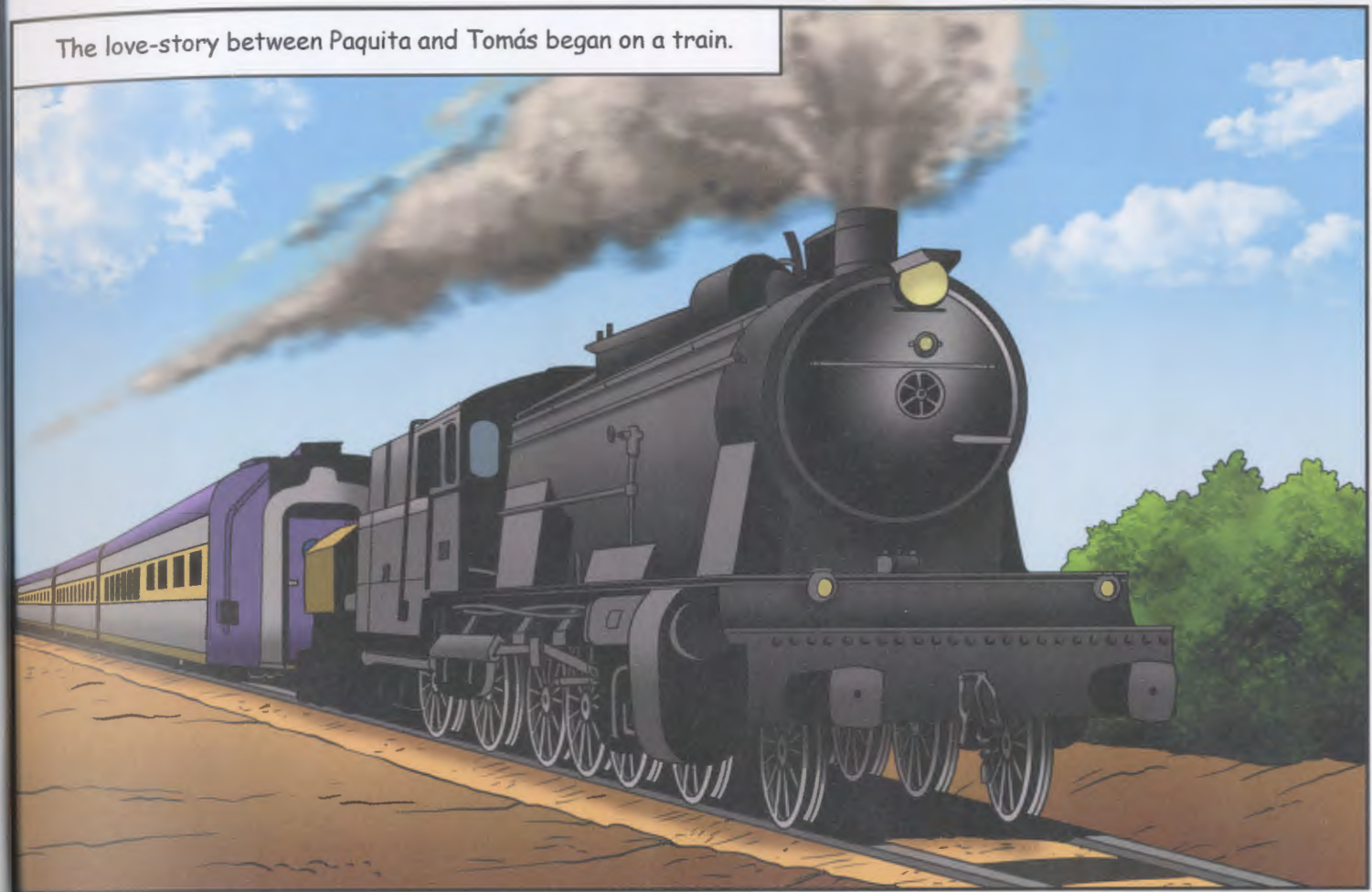
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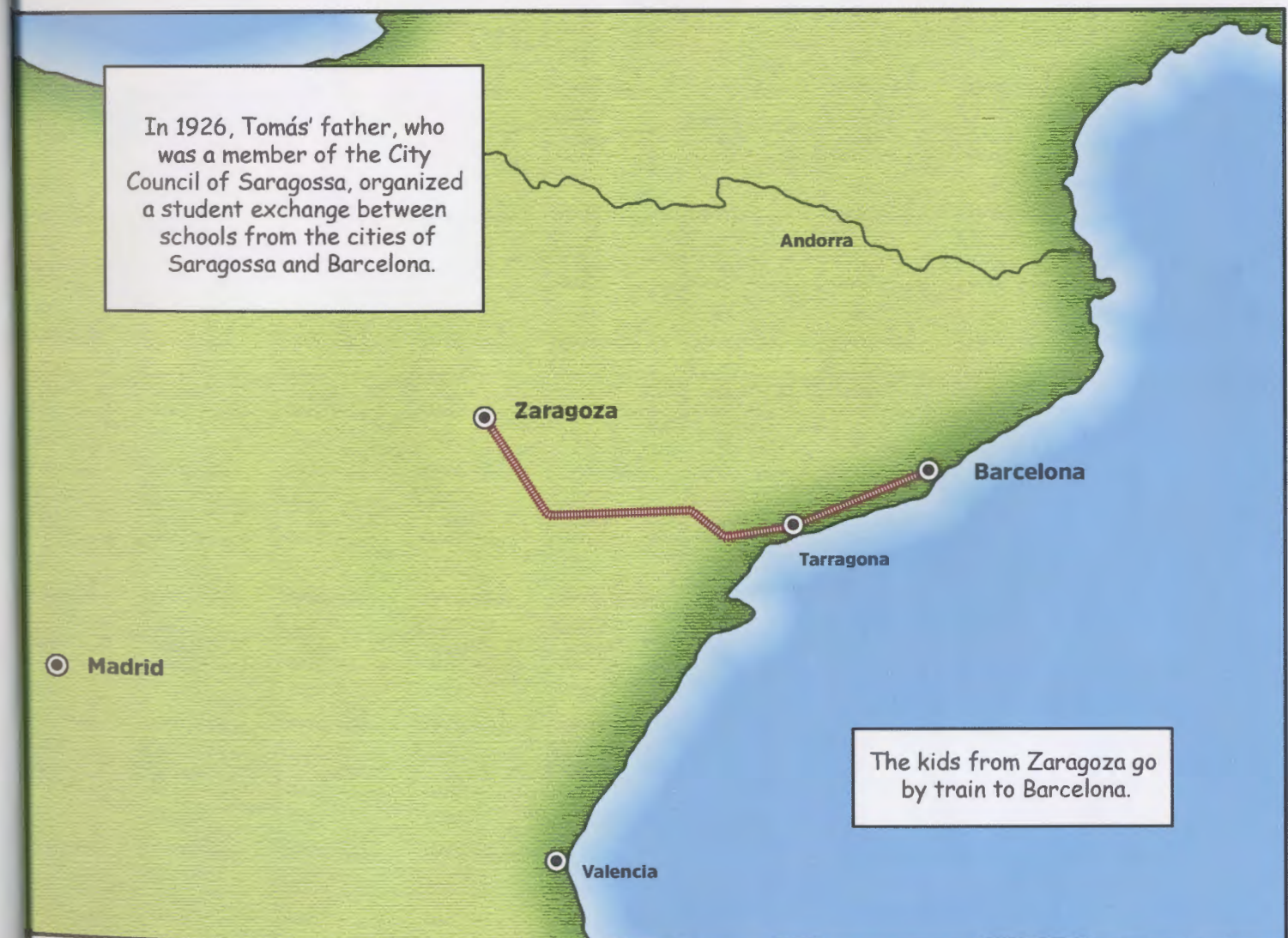
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The love-story between Paquita and Tomás began on a train.



In 1926, Tomás' father, who was a member of the City Council of Saragossa, organized a student exchange between schools from the cities of Saragossa and Barcelona.



The kids from Zaragoza go by train to Barcelona.

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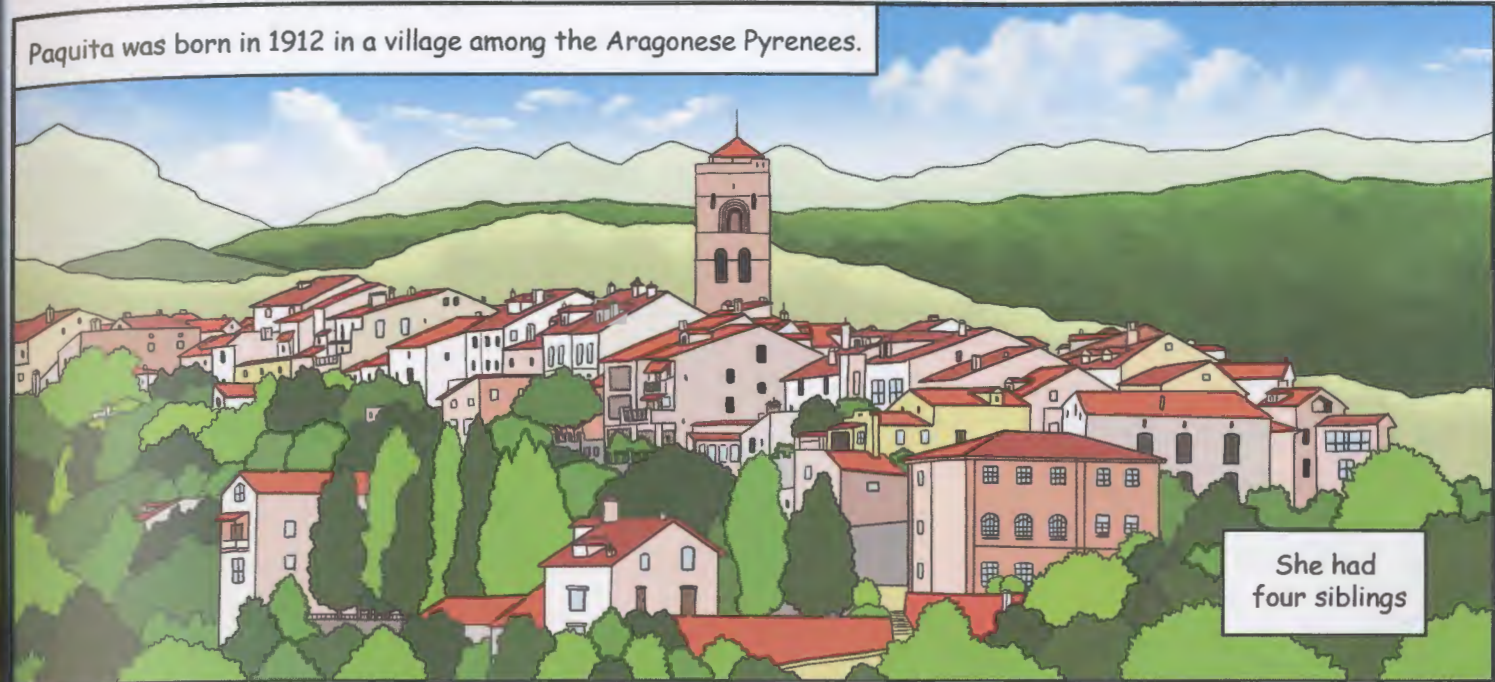
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Tomás, who was 20 years old, went with his father to help him with the organization of the trip.



Paquita was born in 1912 in a village among the Aragonese Pyrenees.



She had four siblings



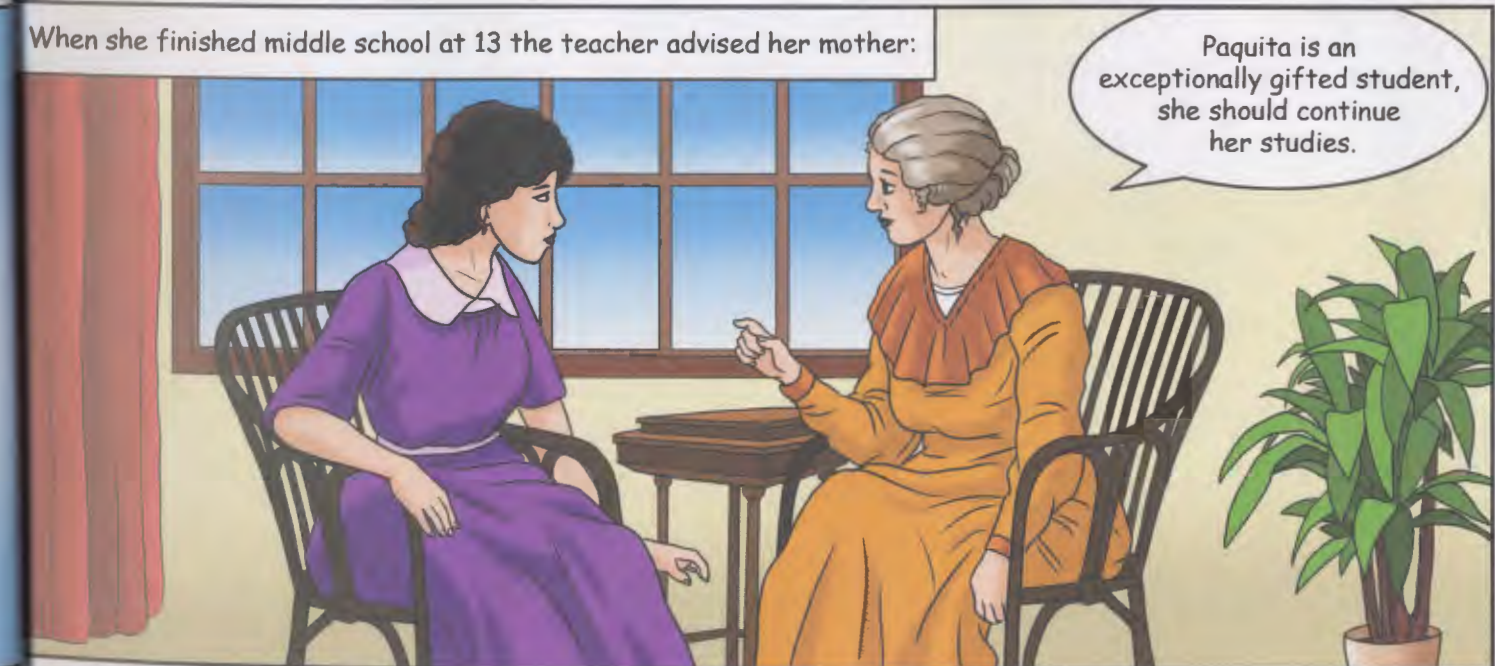
When her father died in 1914 her widowed mother went with her five children to live in Saragossa. They were badly off financially but did not lose their good humour.



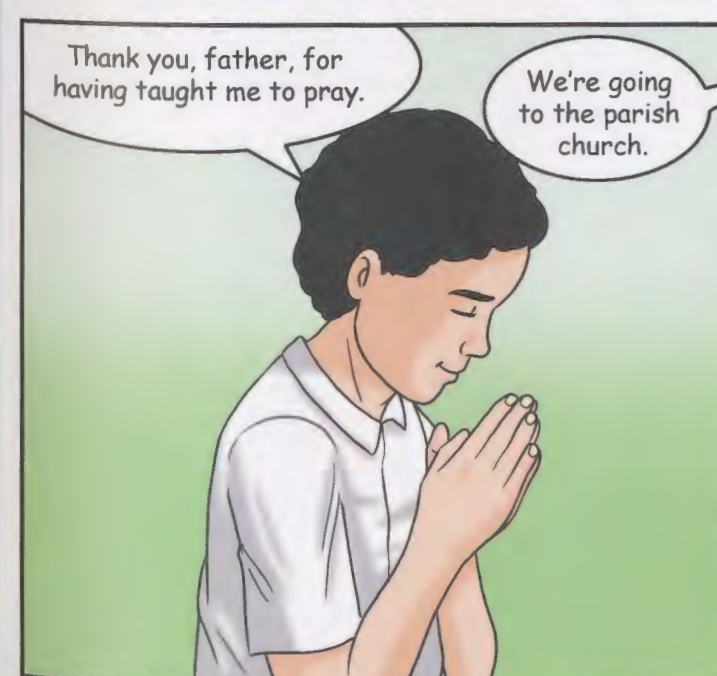
What a beautiful girl!



When she finished middle school at 13 the teacher advised her mother:

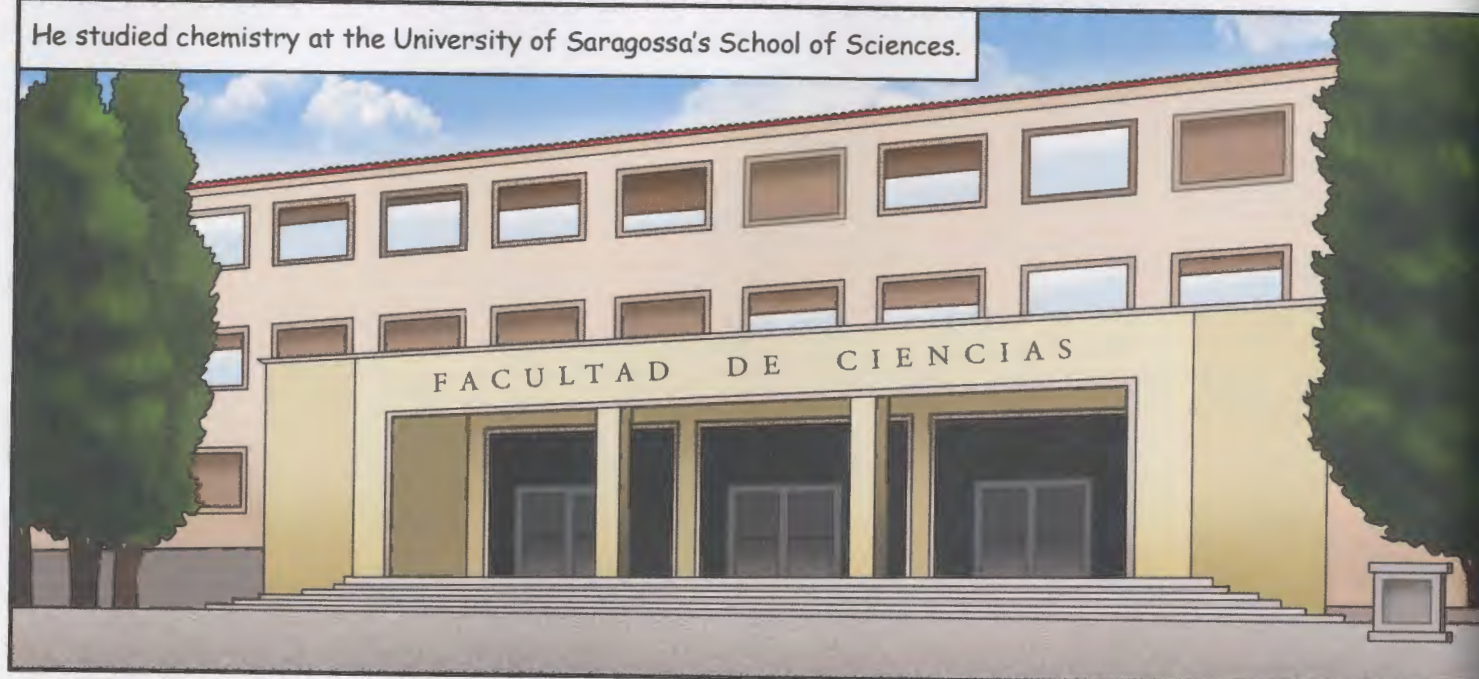


Paquita is an exceptionally gifted student, she should continue her studies.





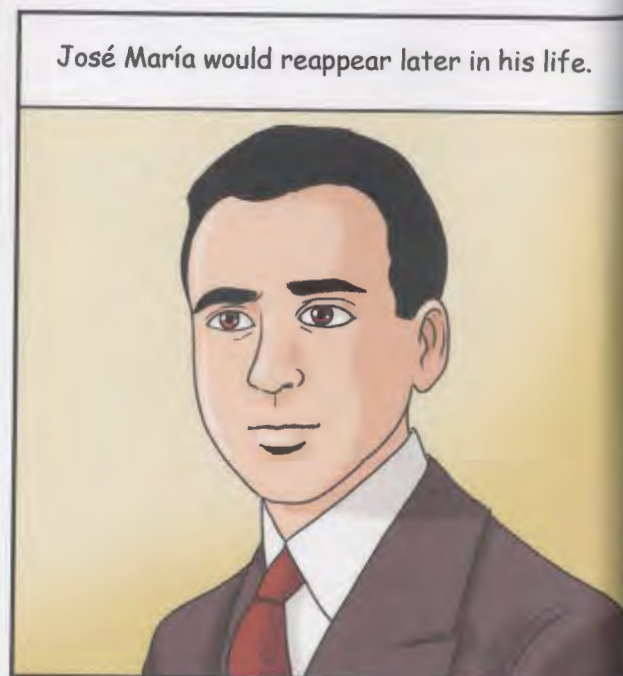
He studied chemistry at the University of Saragossa's School of Sciences.



Hi, I'm José María Albareda.

Hi, I'm Tomás.

José María would reappear later in his life.



Tomás strolled with Paquita along the avenues of Saragossa.



When Paquita turned 18, Tomás was 24.



I'm going to talk to your mother.



Madam María, I love your daughter and I want to marry her.



Tomás began to work in the Cervera del Rio Alhama Institute and due to his great prestige he was elected principal.

During those years there was revolution and confrontation in the air in Spain.



Mr. Principal, I heard that a group of men have gathered together and are planning to burn the church.



On finishing her studies at the age of 22, Paquita is a teacher in the village of Sástago. At 23 she is appointed principal of the school. She taught gently, without raising her voice.



We're going to defend the church.



Let one of you inform me, when those men arrive. I will go out and talk to them.



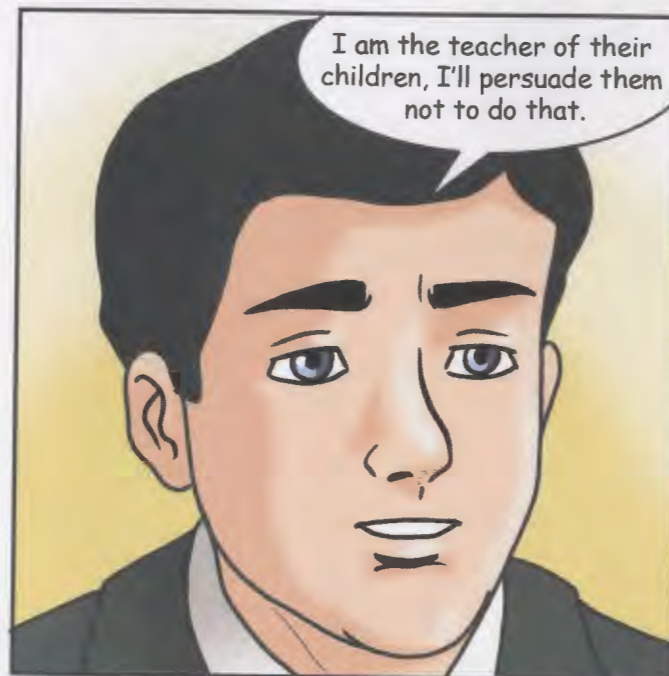
Today is Saturday and the teacher is going to read the Sunday Gospel to us.



Now think over what we have read and draw your conclusions.



I am the teacher of their children, I'll persuade them not to do that.

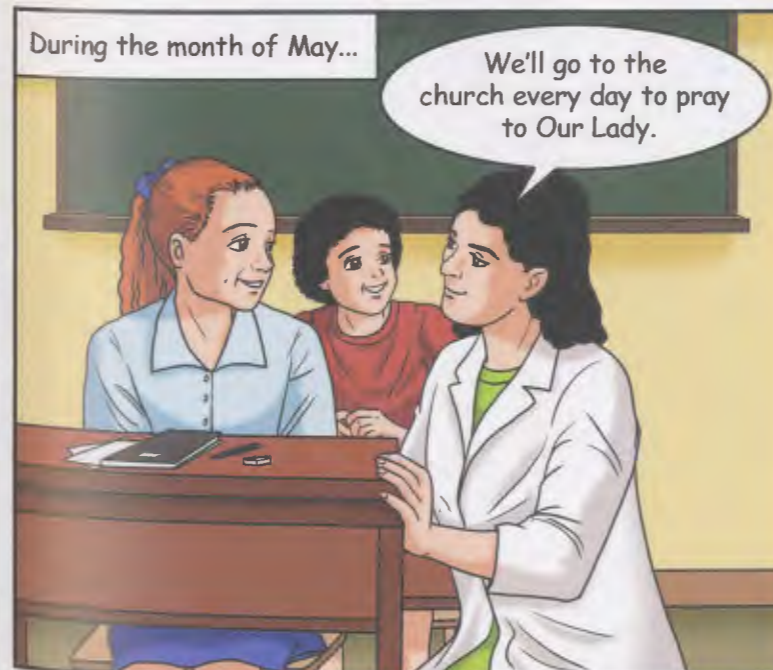


In the end no one rushed out to burn the church.



During the month of May...

We'll go to the church every day to pray to Our Lady.



From Cervera...

I should write to Paquita

All of my life must be an immense affection for you to make you very happy.

Paquita, we want to get married, but we need money to start a family. I have to go to Madrid to take the Professorship exams.



My Paquita, I think about you so much. You give me strength to study harder, because of you and for you. Ask God to help me. I love you with all my heart.



If I get through this last exam we can carry out what we yearn for. You can't imagine how I am longing to be beside you.



The atmosphere in Madrid is very violent: the civil war is approaching. On 18 July there is a military uprising against the government.

They have suspended the last exam on account of the war.



The hopes for our forthcoming marriage are ruined. I can't go to Saragossa, nor write to Paquita.



I am left alone in Madrid.

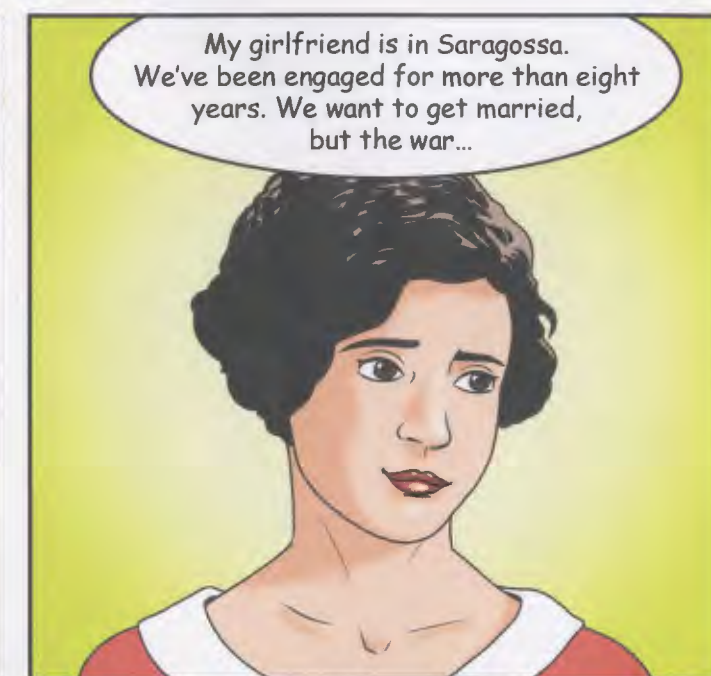
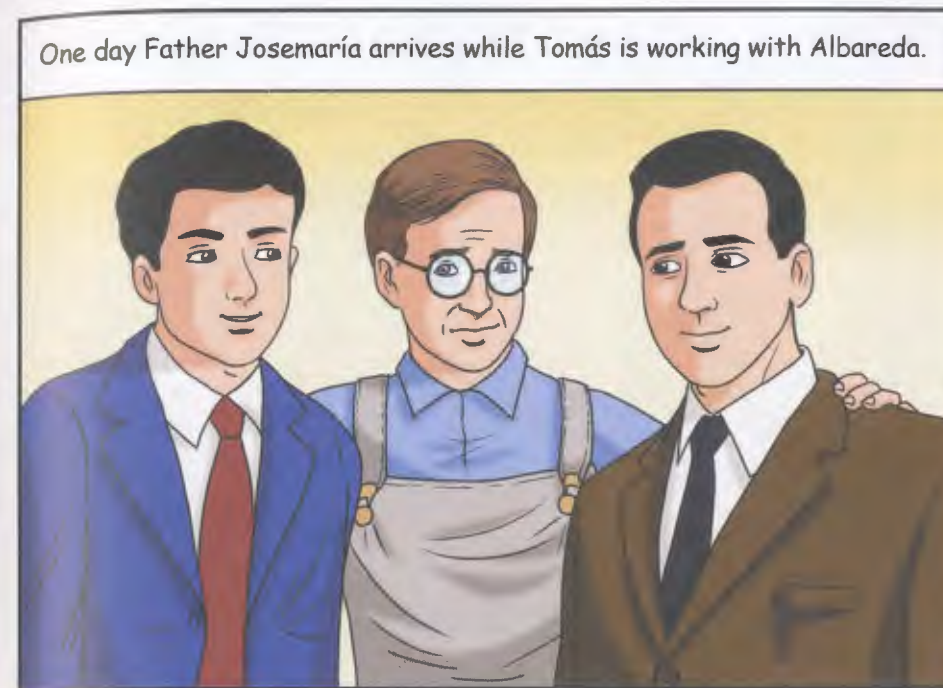


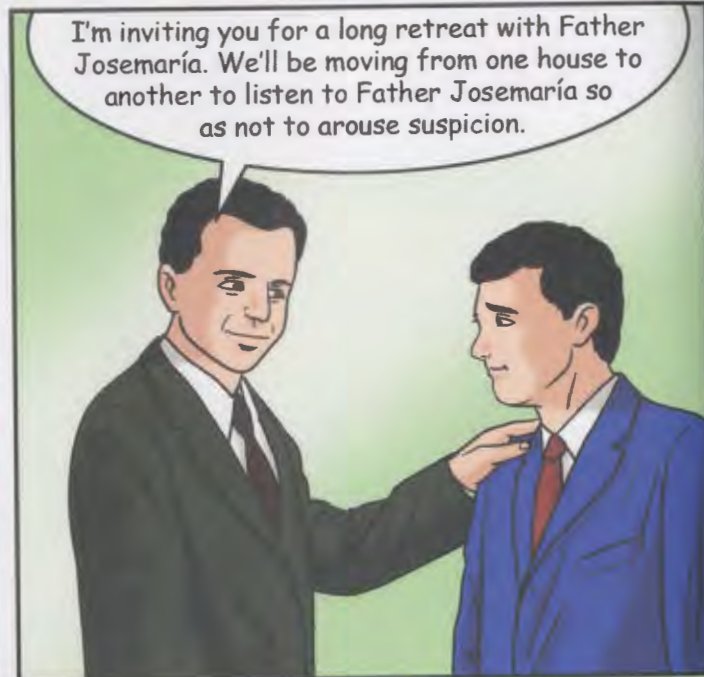
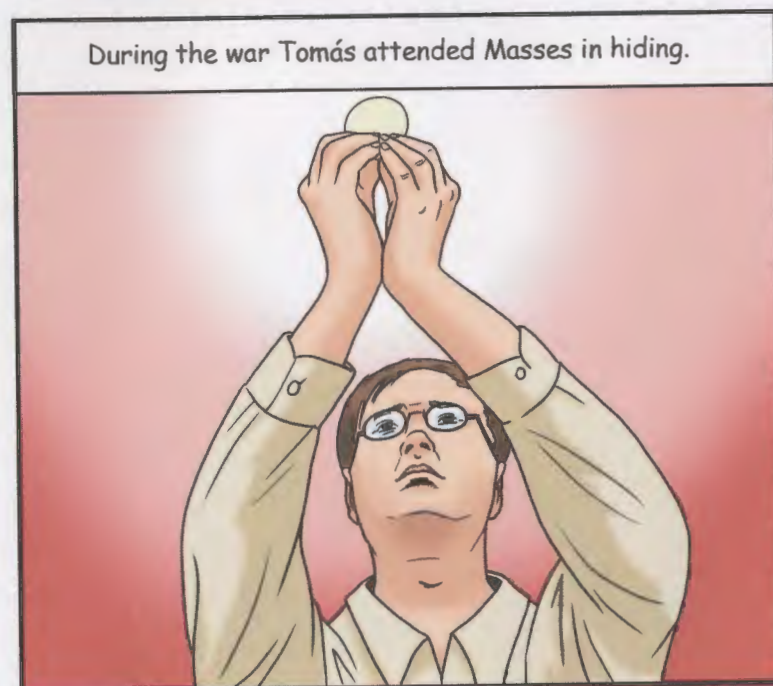
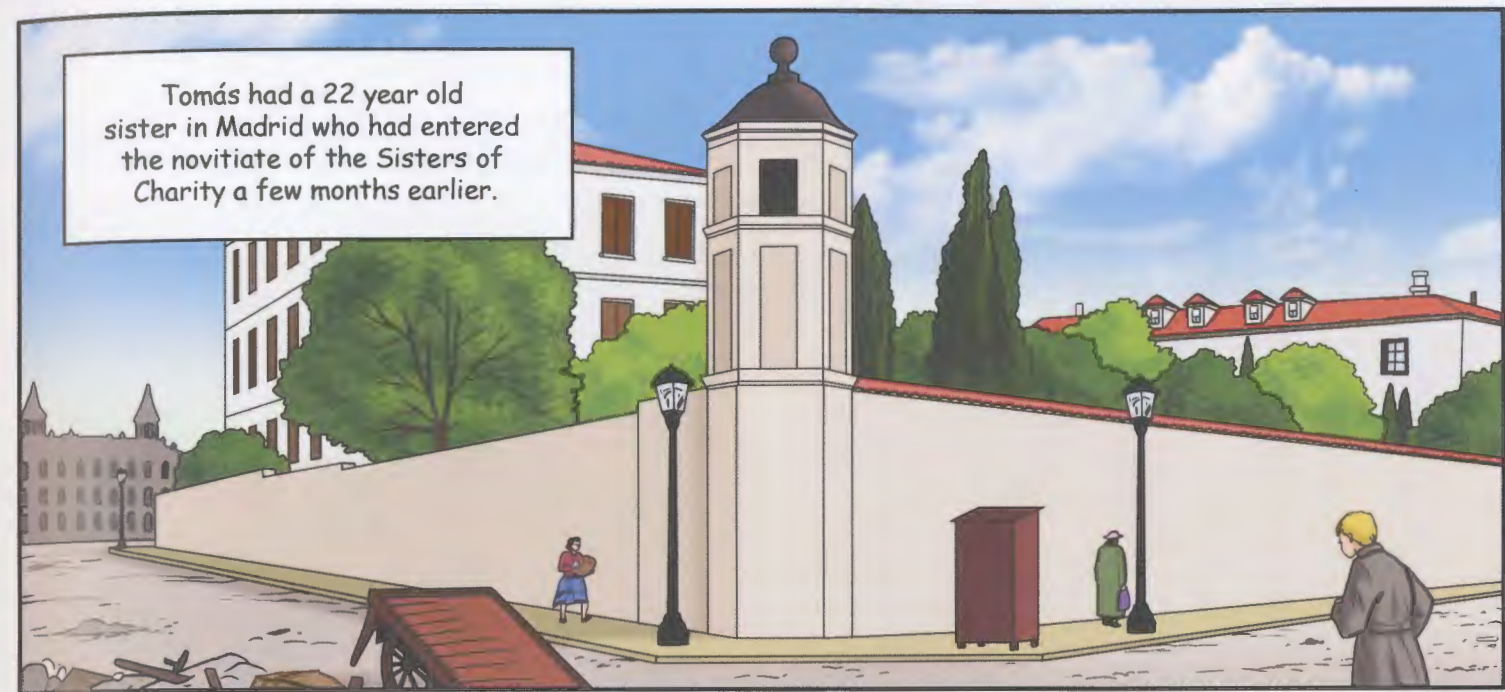
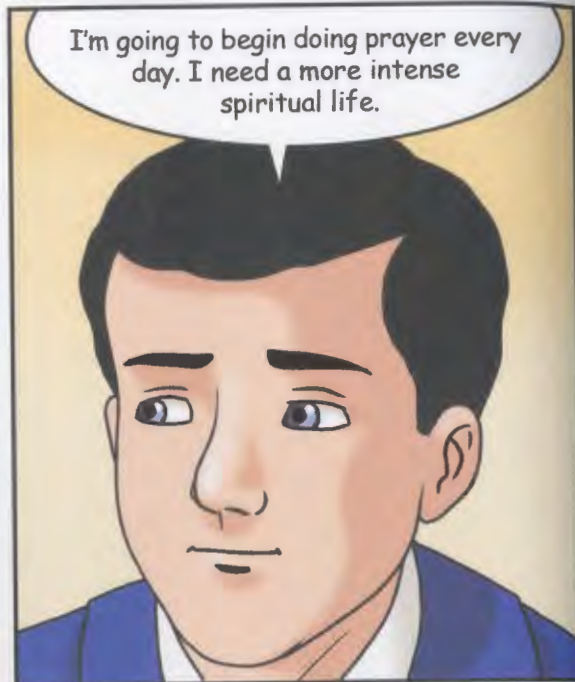
José María Albareda is also in Madrid.

Hi, José María.

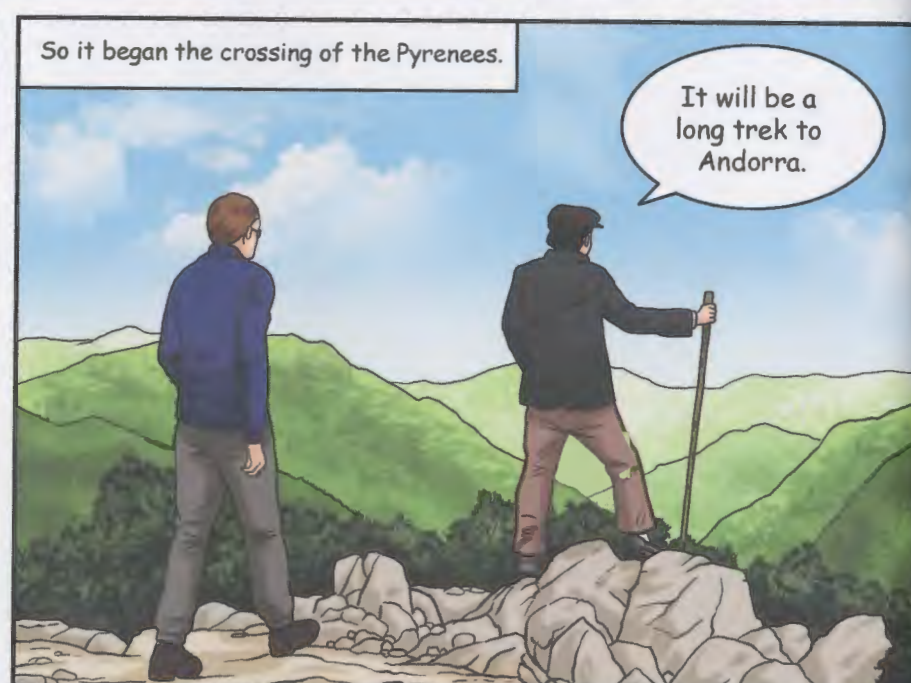
Tomás, how good to see you here.

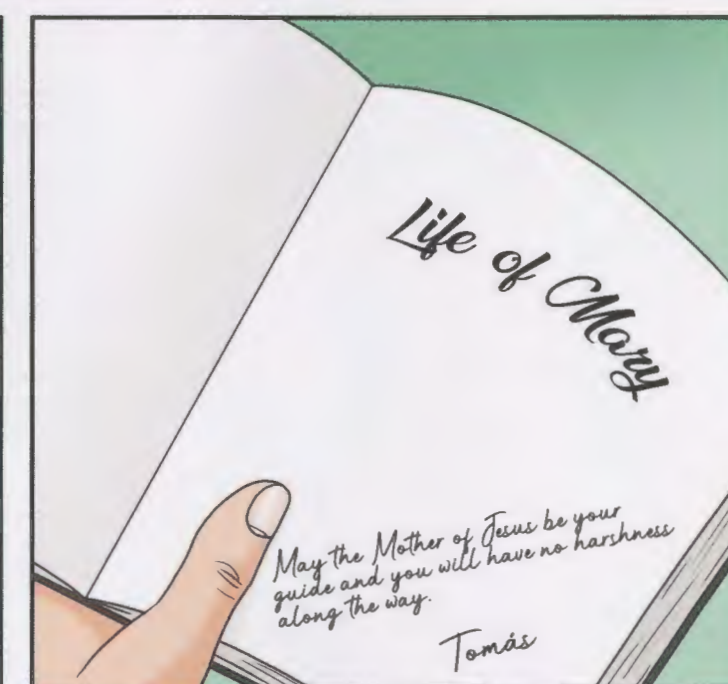
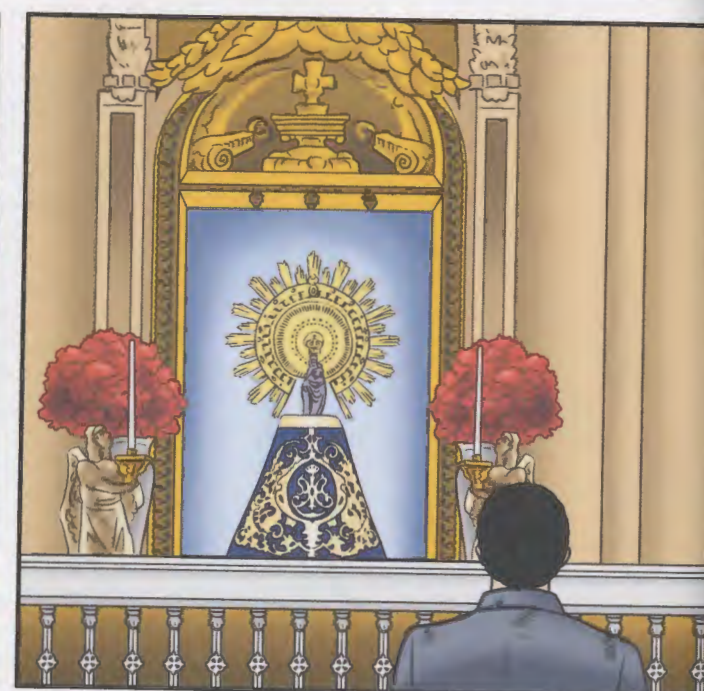














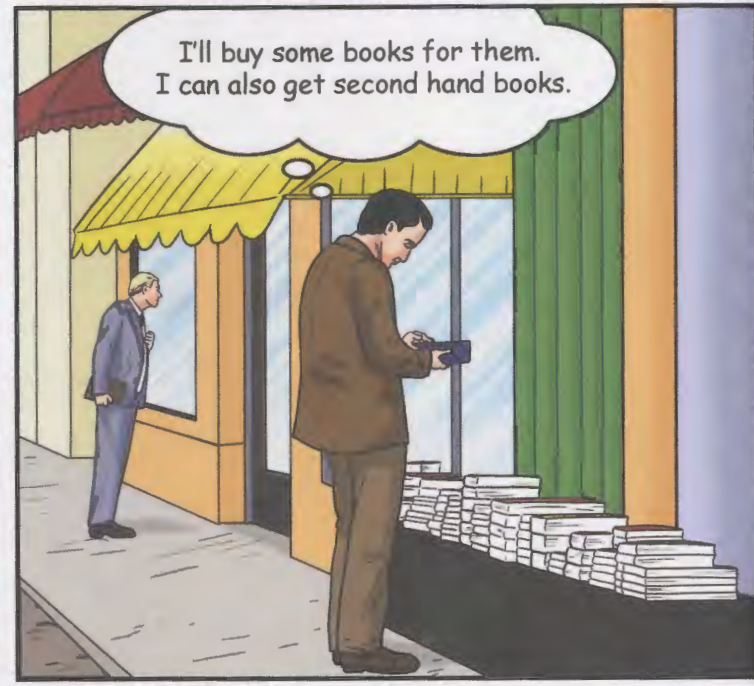
Tomás does a great work of teaching in this school.



Years later a past student reflected.



There are some poor students here...



I'll buy some books for them. I can also get second hand books.



Some students come to school hungry.

I'll buy food but I don't want it to look like charity.



The one who helps me clean the library will earn some super sandwiches.

I will!

Me!



In Madrid he meets Father Josemaría again.

Tomás, welcome to our students' residence.



This is my mother, Madam Dolores, and my sister, Carmen.

I'm not really a student but a teacher.



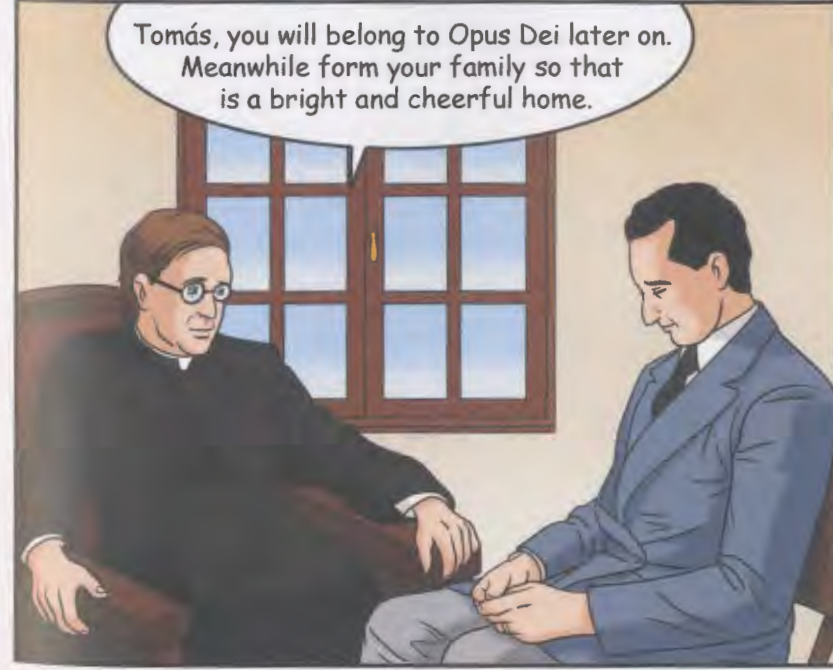
He found a family atmosphere there.

Yes?

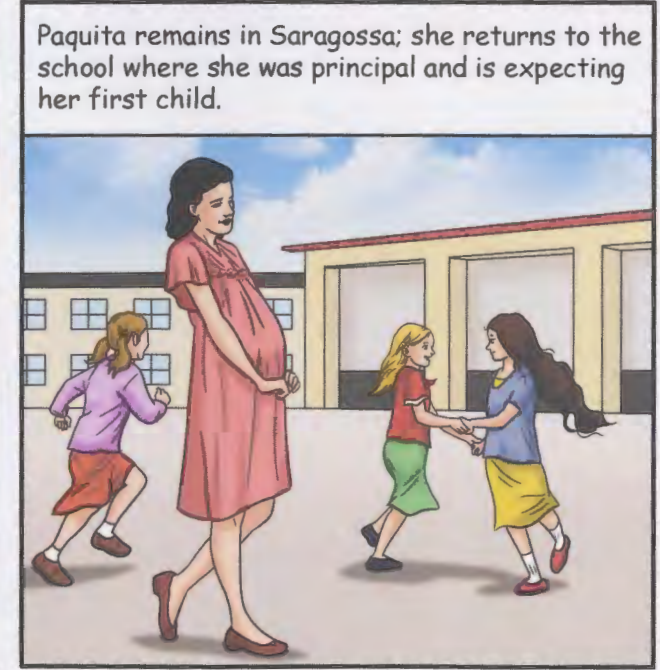
Father...



I see that God is calling me to join Opus Dei.



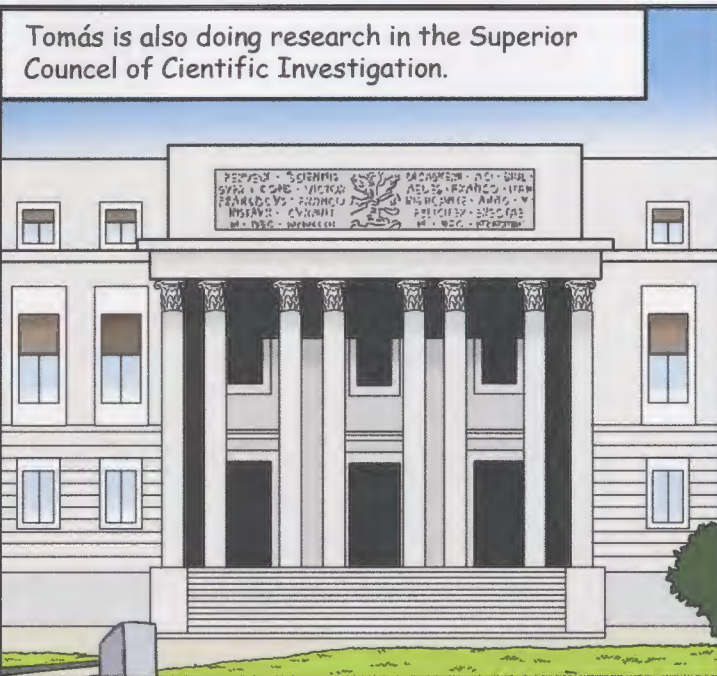
Tomás, you will belong to Opus Dei later on. Meanwhile form your family so that is a bright and cheerful home.



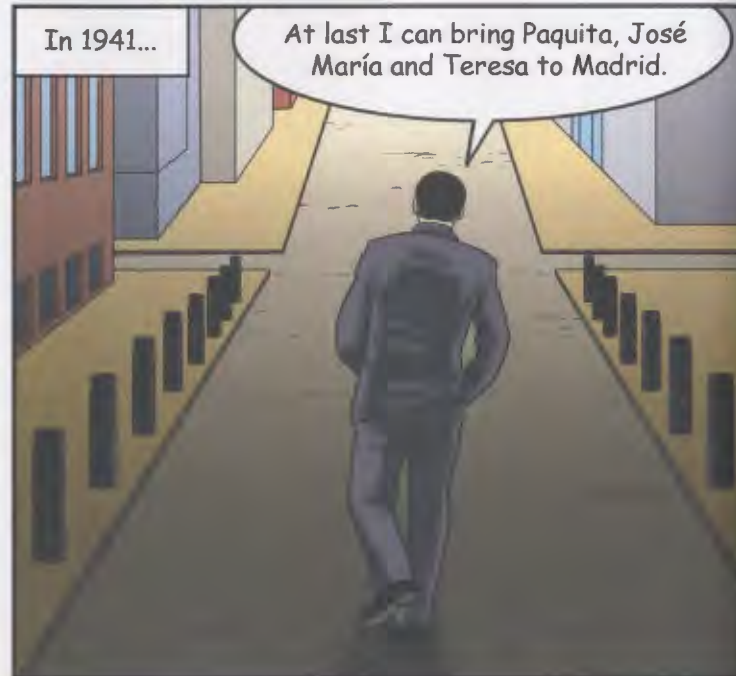
Paquita remains in Saragossa; she returns to the school where she was principal and is expecting her first child.



In March 1940 their first child, José María, is born.



Tomás is also doing research in the Superior Council of Cientific Investigation.



In 1941... At last I can bring Paquita, José María and Teresa to Madrid.



I'm leaving my job as school principal to go to Madrid and look after my family fulltime.



The family was growing: Raphael and Pilar came along...



Then in 1945 José María gets measles and dies at age five.



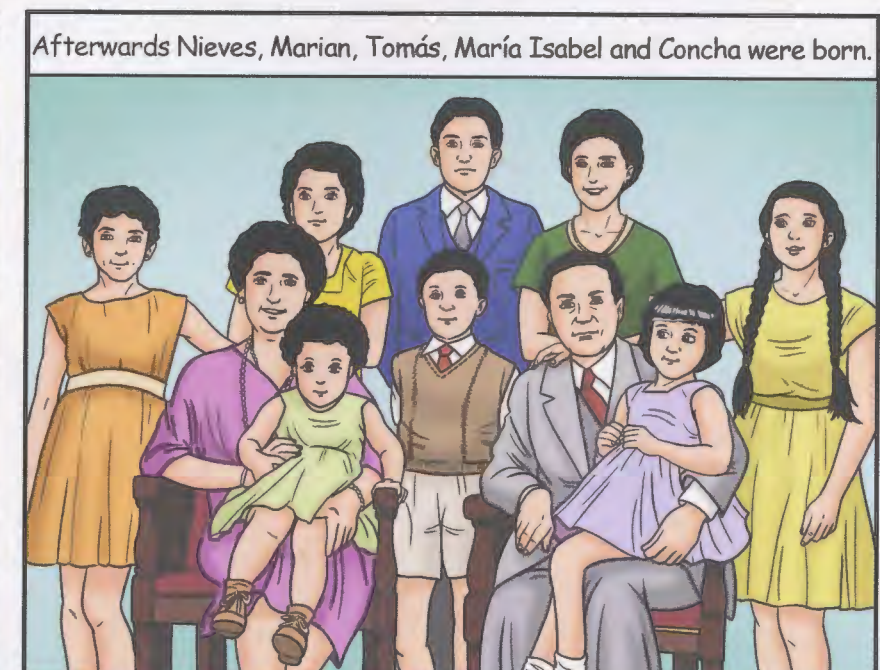
On 15 February 1947 Father, I ask to be admitted in Opus Dei.



You are the first married person to be admitted to the Work.



In 1952... Father, I ask to be admitted in Opus Dei.



Afterwards Nieves, Marian, Tomás, María Isabel and Concha were born.

Paquita didn't go back to her teaching profession, but she never stopped collaborating in different formative activities, always open to the needs and concerns of others.



If a child did something wrong:

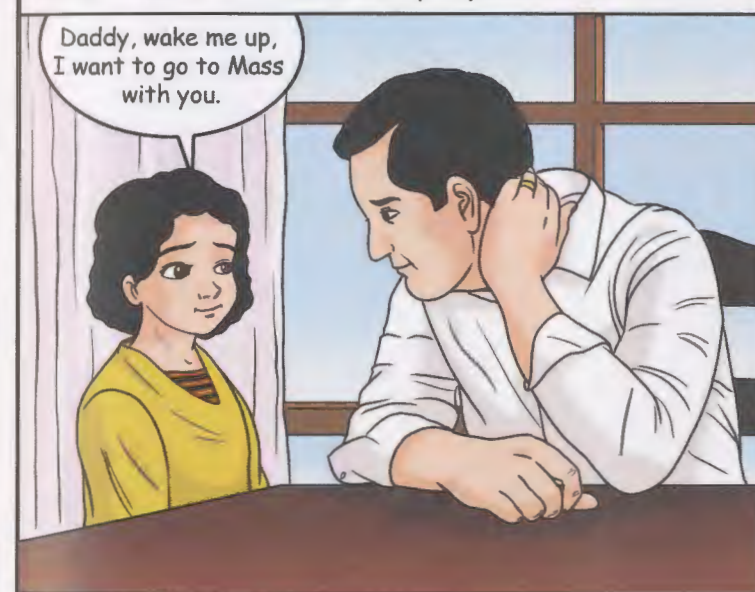
That was not done with love of God.



But she was also able to turn a blind eye.



Paquita and Tomás went to daily Mass. They wanted the Mass to be the centre of every day.



Children, we'll stay for some minutes after Mass to give thanks to God.

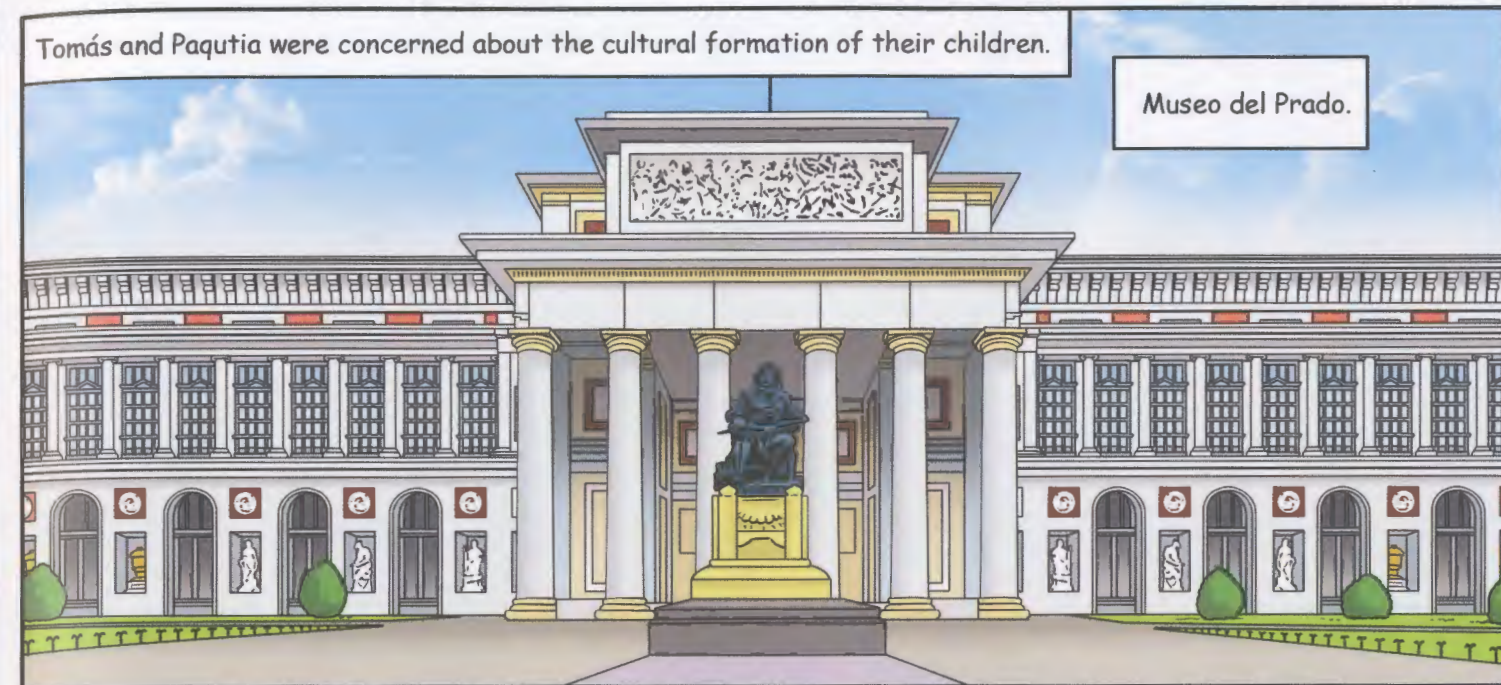
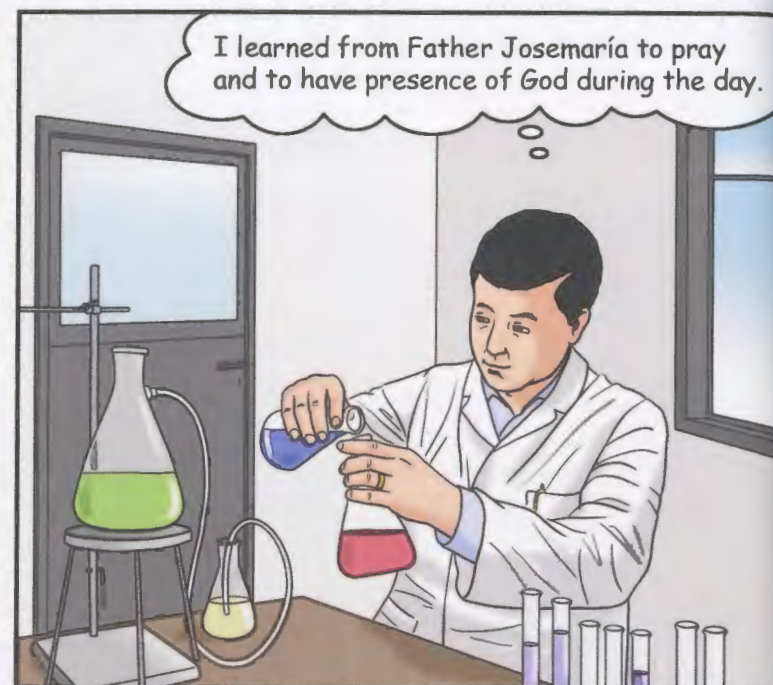


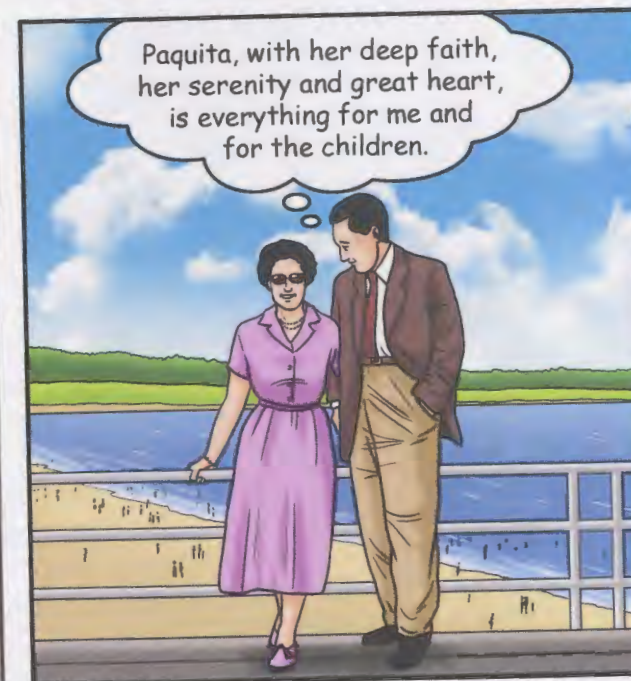
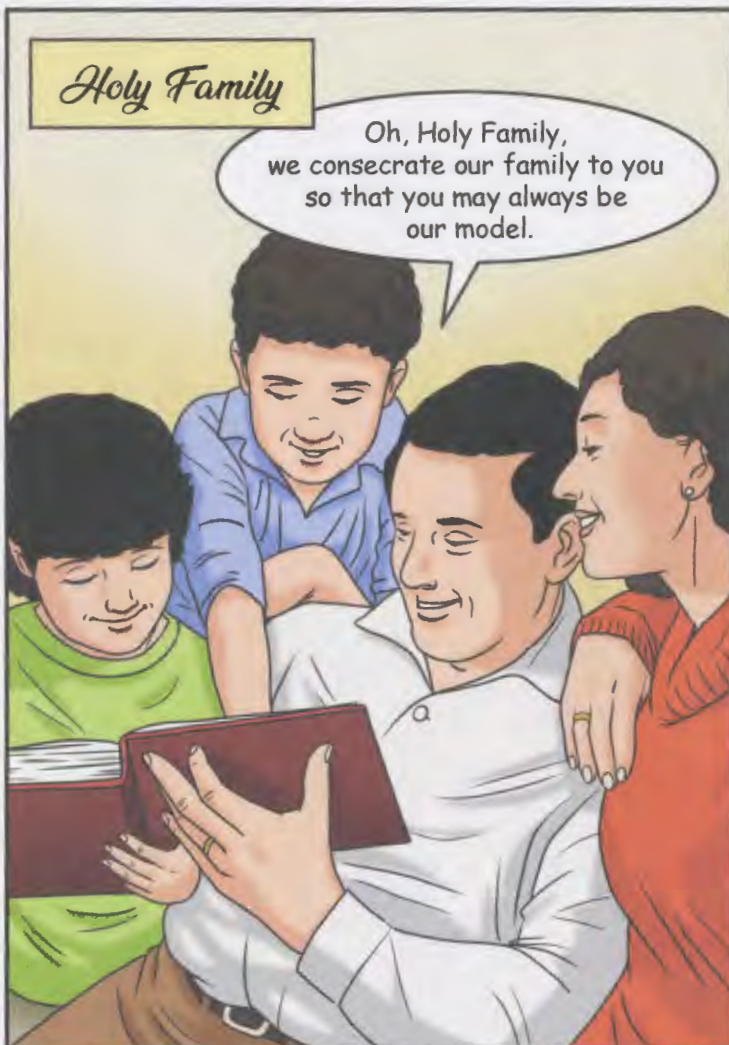
They said the rosary together.



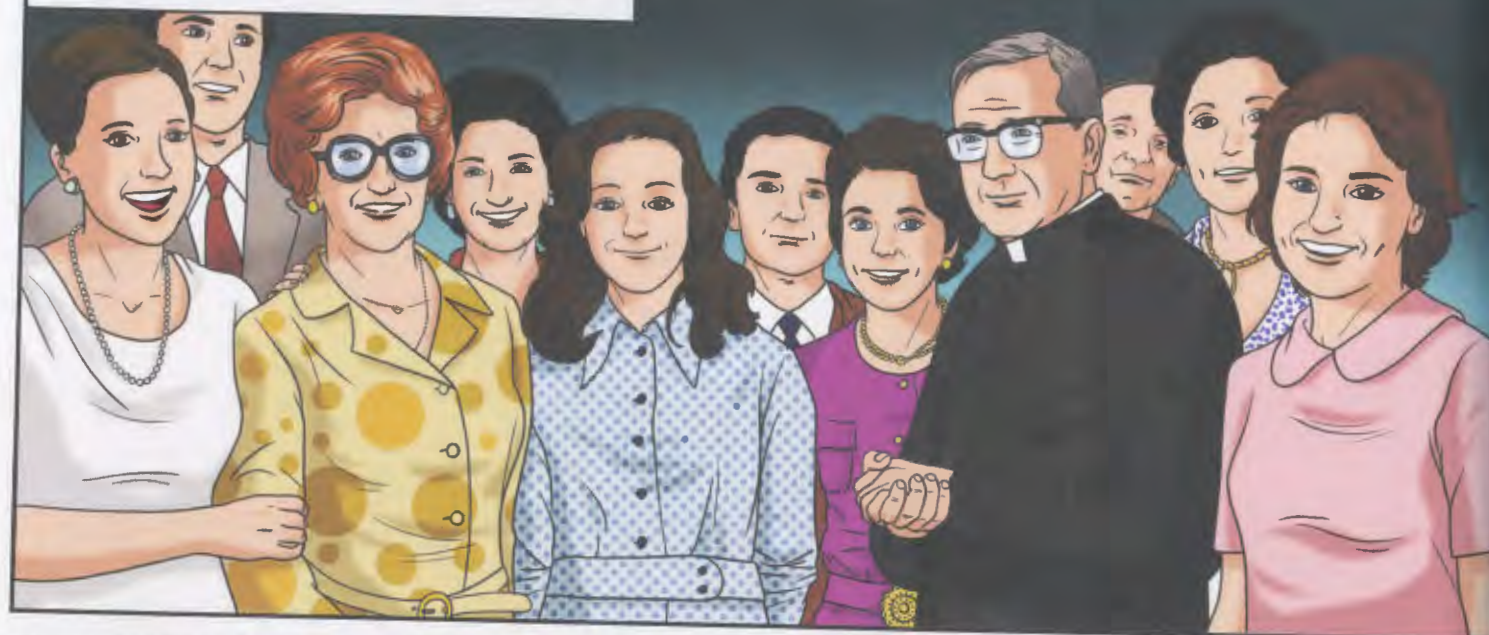
I don't want to pray today, I'm going out.







One by one all the children joined Opus Dei.



Tomás was ordained priest.

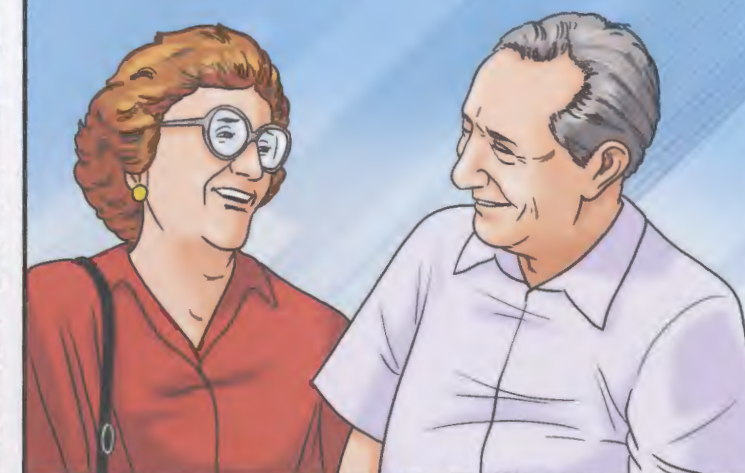


When Tomás turned 80 he wrote to Paquita:

Eighty years! Without you, without your silent support, I could never have reached this age in the fullness of youth. A quick look at the past, where I see you and our nine children... What happiness God has given us!

Thank you, Paquita.

I don't know if there can be people in the world as happy as we are. Happier seems to me impossible.



In 1990, when Tomás was 84, his diabetes grew worse.



I think a lot about Our Lady, who is the Gate of Heaven.



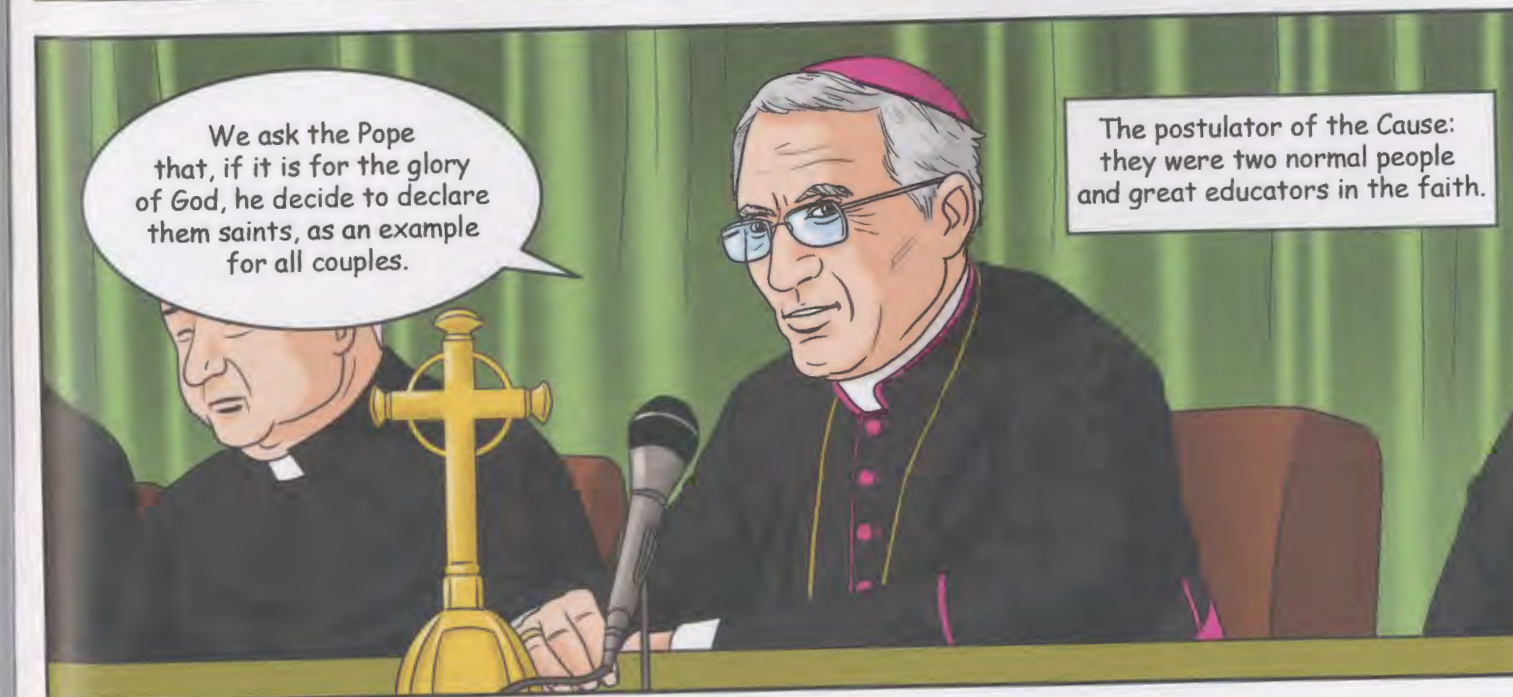
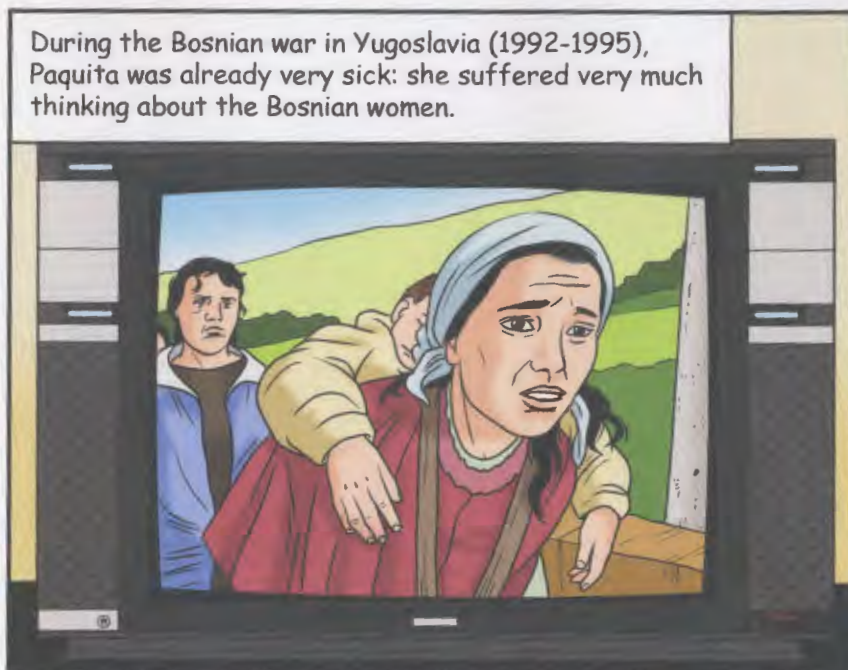
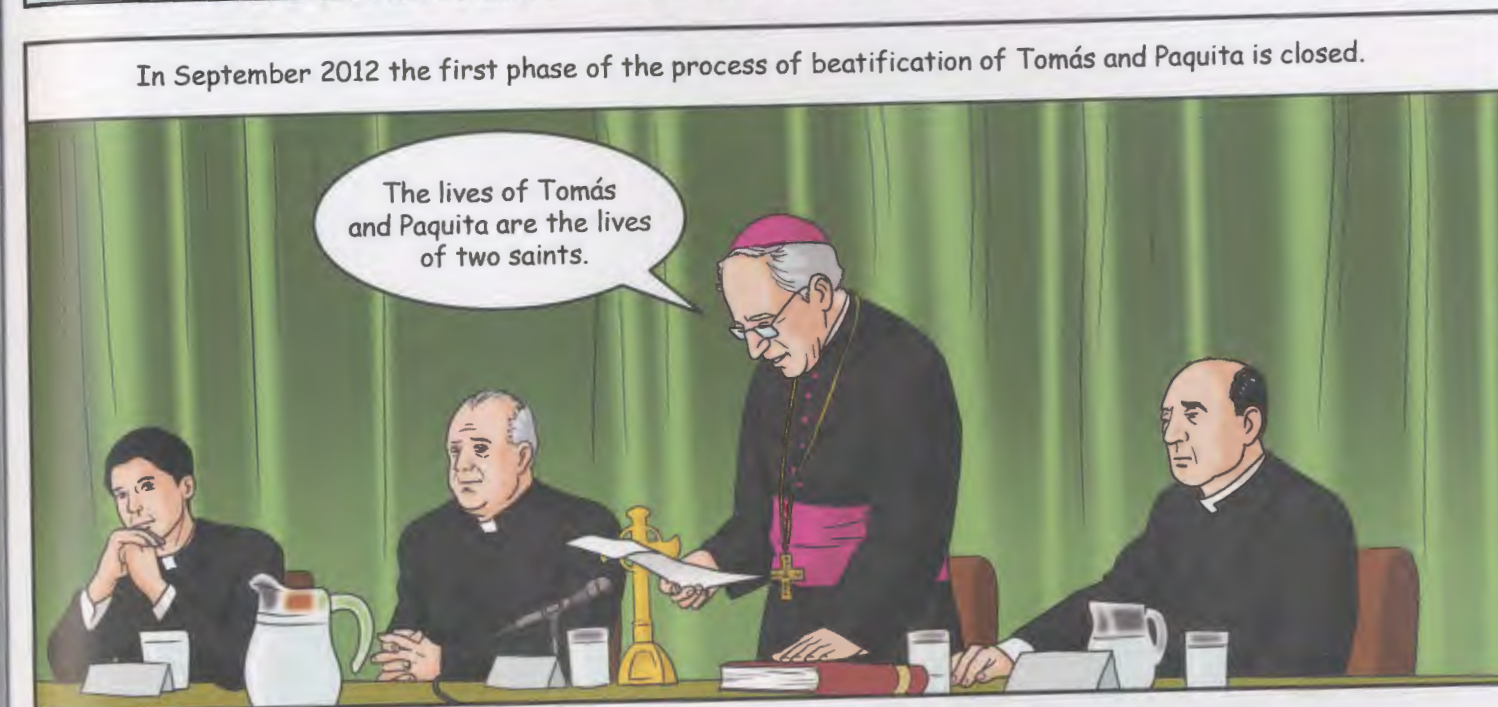
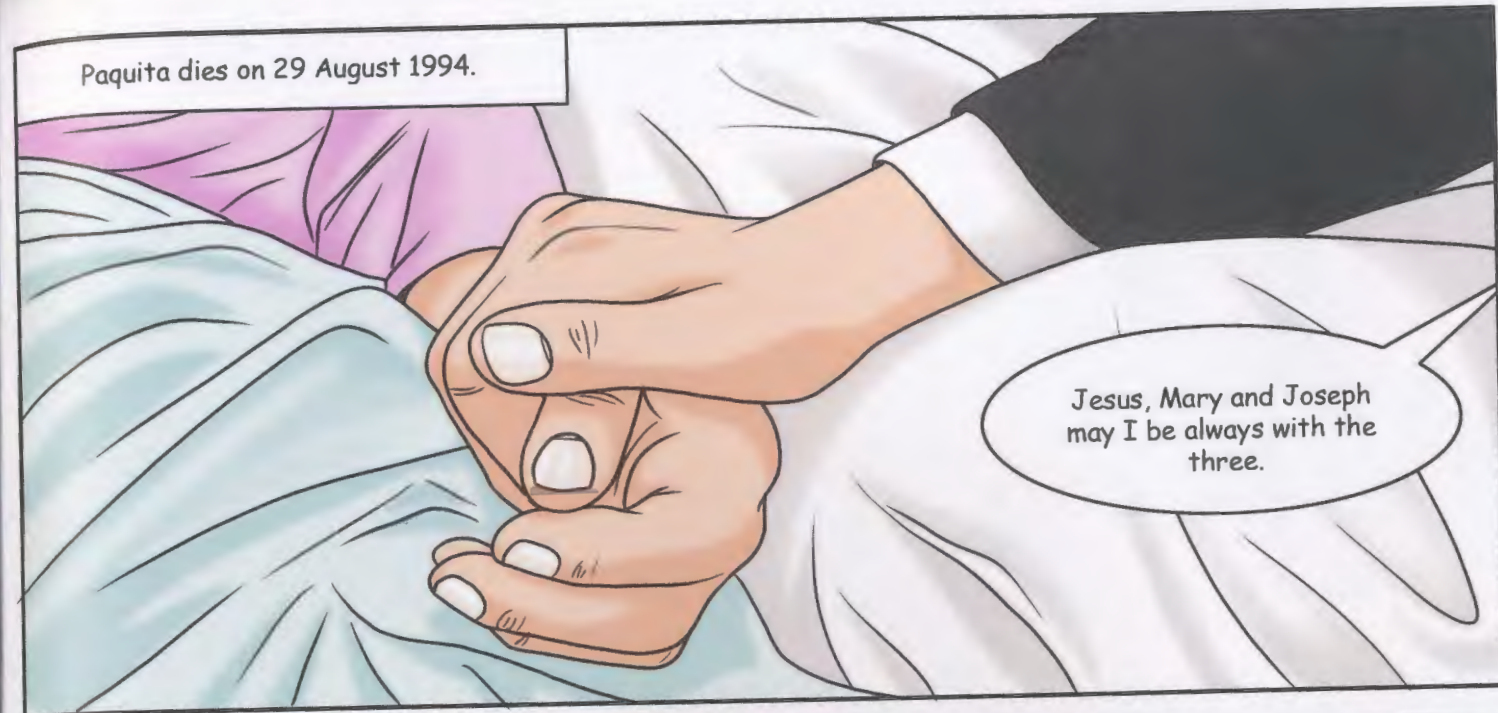
From the time they met until they died, they were always seen to be in love. They felt called to make other people happy.



The priest is coming to bring you Holy Communion.

Turn on the lights and perfume the house because the Lord is coming!







"They prayed to the Alviras for her daughter, because the pregnancy was complicated. The doctors said she wouldn't live."

M. and R. France

"A son of mine was going through a difficult financial situation. As it was impossible for me to help him financially, I asked Tomás and Paquita to give me a hand. I bought a lottery ticket and the following day, I won. So with the lottery money his situation was solved."

J. M. P. Spain



My husband was admitted to hospital very ill. He could not walk and the muscles of his hands and arms were very weak. I started to pray the prayer card of Tomás and Paquita. Six weeks later he was able to walk for the first time. The doctors said that such a quick recovery had no medical explanation.

C.S. USA

Pray to God through Tomás and Paquita who are in heaven.

God our Father who poured out your grace on your servants Paquita and Tomás, so that they would live their marriage and professional and social obligations with a Christian spirit, send us the strength of your Love in order to spread in the world the marvellous reality of fidelity and holiness in Marriage. Deign to glorify your servants and grant me through their intercession the favour that I ask... Amen

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be



A happy couple, a united family

After a long wait, which included the Spanish civil war, Tomas and Paquita were married in 1939. Together they formed a large family and with their faith and generosity they passed on to those around them an example of Christian life. Their lives teach us that one can search for and love God in ordinary life through family, professional and social duties. Their process of beatification was opened in 2009.

Rafael Arias Villalta is a journalist, lawyer and theologian. He was ordained to the priesthood when he was 52 and he practises his priestly ministry in Slovenia. He is the author of *En Chemin vers la saintete, l'histoire de saint Josemaria*.

Juan Juvančič is a graphic designer. His short film animations have been translated to several languages and his comics have been published in Spain, Slovenia and Croatia.

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