

ESCOLANIA being recognized by the UNESCO

Escolania of Montserrat is a human and Christian formation center, with a musical projection to the service of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Montserrat. Rooted in the Catalonia's heart, it maintains alive the multiseccular tradition of a Benedictine school, founded in the XIII century and so being one of the most ancient institutions of this kind in Europe.

The Christian life irradiated by the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Montserrat, with the presence of a Benedictine Community, defines a particular and unique style in our land. In the Escolania of Montserrat becomes presents all the elements, which have contributed to forge the characteristics of Catalan culture and its opening up to the world.

Escolania has a double mission: to make a service to the Sanctuary of Montserrat and educate the boys' choir in an integral way. The boys choir's singing, with their white voices, is an universal language, which arrives directly to the heart of the people around the world who listen it; and for this reason, it is a valuable tool for helping all visitors of the Sanctuary, regardless of where come from. But this tool cannot exist like this, if the boys, who make part of it, don't follow a formation which let them not only learning a lot of music but also growing up positively in this important period of their lives, and understanding what are they doing.

This formation carries out with the properly academic activity (lessons and general and musical pedagogic activities), but also through the situations generated by the coexistence with the classmates, and the opportunities provided by the own Choir's activity. To sing daily in front of people coming around the world, to take part in concerts in Catalonia and abroad together with all the activities done by the boys' choir during their stay in the Escolania are excellent complements for their formation and at the same time a motivation, which gives to their effort a sense.

The education offered to the boys' choir has continuity with the rich historical tradition of Montserrat, but also open to the present times. We think that an education based on human and Christian values, and done with a combination of modern pedagogical guidelines without forgetting the tradition can help the boys to grow up and progress in the context of our current society.

The Choir is the most singular element of the Escolania. Its identity comes from here. Apart from doing its main activity, which is its participation in the liturgical services of the Sanctuary, it has other objectives: to make concerts in Catalonia and abroad, to take part in religious acts far from Montserrat if it is required, to record CDs, and to spread the vast musical repertoire of Montserrat School, which has been made by different composers along the history of our Choir.

The fact of being part of a Choir, which sings in a high-standard, means learning to work as a team and follow the guidance of the Choir's Director. We consider that the work done in this field goes beyond the service offered to the Sanctuary, and contributes to build a personal base, which will sustain the boys' growth as persons.

Many persons –and sometimes also the public administrations- observe the boys' choirs like a bastion of the past, something anachronistic, when in fact it is an element close linked to the European culture. The UNESCO's recognition would help us to introduce us to the world like valuable institutions and this would help us in many areas (not only in an economic or administrative way).

On the one hand, we think that it would be useful for the staffs, who day a day work in favor of the choirs, and also for the parents who decide to sign up their children in these schools. It would reaffirm that this project is a respected academic option also at the present.

And on the other, this recognition could increase the curiosity for discovering these institutions and their academic project which, thanks to its integral concept of education, contributing to prepare young people for developing their role in the society in the near future as professionals but also as compromised citizens.

Father Efrem de Montellà
Headmaster of the *Escolania* of Montserrat