



Saint Josemaria Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

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Divine Filiation

Fr Roy Cimagala

I first met this expression, sounding Greek to me at that time, when I read a book of homilies by Opus Dei founder saint Josemaria Escriva. That was many years ago, when I was still in college.

I remember how deeply moved I was when I understood what it meant. I felt as if a whole new world was suddenly opened to me, and I luxuriated in savoring the million and one considerations that instantaneously came to mind.

It simply means that we are children of God. I know that to many, this expression, though sounding beautiful and worthy of brandishing around, can mean hardly anything and give no practical consequences. It's about time, I think, that some changes be made.

The basis is that first of all we have been created by God, we come from him and have been endowed by him with such richness that we rightfully can be called the masterpiece of his creation.

The heartwarming conclusion I derived was that God who is all goodness and all loving wants to share what he has with each one of us. We have been made in his image and likeness, and with his grace we also have been made to participate in his life and nature.

And even if we bungled all this divine goodness, God continues to be madly in love with us by saving us, going through the most complicated plan to reach us and to bring us back to him. His divine mercy completes his love for us, his patience is forever.

The reality of our divine filiation is at the root and center of our being. Sadly, though, we manage to ignore and misuse this happy truth. A real pity!

When we don't develop this spirit of divine filiation, we place ourselves at the

mercy of our human devices—some of them admittedly can be impressive—that can prop us, to be frank, only for a while at best. Our integrity would be compromised. We could not go the distance.

Have you seen a bear lying flat on the belly after a hearty meal? That's what can happen to people without this sense of divine filiation. It's as if life has gone away in spite of their impressive human qualities.

They can have brains and brawn, money, power, fame, etc., but if they don't have this spirit of divine filiation, their doom will just be a matter of time. They can't go beyond earthly dimensions, they can't fly to eternity, to life without end. Sin and temptation sooner or later will capture their heart.

We need to develop this spirit of divine filiation. While it's a result of divine grace, it's also something we have to work out. We need to load ourselves, to borrow a mobile-phone term, with a boosting awareness that we are God's children.

We can go to the extent of psychologizing ourselves into it, repeating the expression until it becomes our breath and heartbeat and drives our stream of consciousness, enabling us to go deeper into its meaning, to instill its character into our thoughts, will, feelings and deeds.

This certainly would not just be a psychological exercise, for it is based on something real, not invented, though it's a reality that can be accessed not so much by our senses and our reason alone as by our faith.

This point, I believe, is worth reiterating. It is what truly grounds us to the foundation of our life and nature, giving us the meaning and purpose of our existence. It's a source of joy, confidence and serenity. It tells us what our filial rights and duties are.

More importantly, it tells us who we are and gives us an abiding sense that we are never alone, or worse, just on our own. It fills us with the conviction that we are children of God, that no matter what happens God will always be with us unless we reject him.

It's heartbreaking to see that because they don't have this sense of divine filiation, many souls fall into what we may call as Dickensian Great-Expectations syndrome, where one feels he is succeeding and prospering in life when in reality he is being impoverished and corrupted inside.

But I must also confess that I've met a good number who, precisely because of their faith and simplicity, enjoy the true blessings of this spirit of divine filiation.

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