



Saint Josemaría Escrivá

Founder of Opus Dei

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Historic dates for Opus Dei

A. Vazquez de Prada

On the morning of Tuesday, October 2, 1928, feast of the Guardian Angels, after celebrating Mass, Father Josemaría was in his room, reading the notes he had brought with him. Suddenly an extraordinary grace came over him, and he understood that our Lord was responding to those insistent petitions of “*Domine, ut videam! Domine, ut sit!* – Lord, that I may see! Lord, that it may be!”

Three years later he described the gist of this event like this: “I received an illumination *about the entire Work*, while I was reading those papers. Deeply moved, I knelt down – I was alone in my room, at a time between one talk and the next – and gave thanks to our Lord, and I remember with a heart full of emotion the ringing of the bells of the church of Our Lady of the Angels.”

He also said: “On that day, the Lord founded his Work; he started Opus Dei.”

February 14, 1930: Women in Opus Dei

Obviously, what Father Josemaría “saw” on October 2, 1928 was not events or historic details, but only the essential element of the divine message.

“A short time later, on February 14, 1930, I was celebrating Mass in the little chapel of the elderly Marchioness of Outeiro, Luz Casanova’s mother, whom I took care of spiritually while I was chaplain of the Foundation. During the Mass, right after Communion: the whole women’s branch of the Work! I cannot say that I saw it, but *intellectually*, in detail, I grasped what the women’s branch of Opus Dei was to be... I gave thanks and, at the usual time, I went to the confessional of Father Sanchez. He listened to me and then said, ‘This is just as much from God as the rest.’”

February 14, 1943: Priests in Opus Dei

On the morning of February 14, 1943, Father Josemaría left home early to say Mass for his daughters in the oratory of Jorge Manrique. As soon as Mass was over, he took out his notebook and wrote on the page for February 14, feast of Saint Valentine, “In the house of the women, during Holy Mass: ‘Societas

Sacerdotalis Sanctae Crucis' [the priestly society of the Holy Cross]." And then, on that same page, he made a little drawing of a circle with a cross inside it.

Next day Father Josemaría went to El Escorial, not far from Madrid, where Alvaro del Portillo, José María Hernández and José Luis Múzquiz were preparing for their theology exams. With a great sense of unworthiness, almost with shame, he told Alvaro of the grace he had received during Mass the day before. The necessary documents needed to be prepared quickly. Alvaro would be the one to go to Rome to seek approval for the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, which the Lord had shown him, in outline, on February 14, already a day of thanksgiving as the anniversary of that other memorable February 14 when the Lord had made him realize that he should extend Opus Dei's apostolate to women.

Both the inclusion of women and the incorporation of priests took him by surprise. Especially the founding of the women's branch, which happened when his mind had been lacking light and his will divided between wanting and not knowing how.

Speaking about the paradoxes of the founding, he would say one day: "The foundation of Opus Dei happened without me; the women's branch, against my personal opinion; and the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, when I was seeking it but unable to find it."

The Founder of Opus Dei: the Life of Josemaría Escrivá, A. Vazquez de Prada, Scepter. Vol. I: "The Early Years" (2001), pages 217-229; Vol. II: "God and Daring" (2003), pages 419-448.