



# Saint Josemaria Escriva

## Founder of Opus Dei

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## Why Opus Dei makes me a better mum

*Rosemary Keenan*

From *Times Online*.

Setting off on a six-hour round trip to Paris for an hour-long talk and straight back again to our then remote home in Normandy, will give you an idea of how impressed I am with what Opus Dei has to offer. Far greater tales of recklessness will no doubt be shared at our get-together in London on St Valentine's Day to celebrate the 80th year of the founding of the women's section. And the reason I feel we are so united to our founder St Josemaria's legacy is the genuine warmth exuded by its members and their relentless striving for sanctity without the slightest hint of hypocrisy.

I have known Opus Dei since, as a teenager, I used to go along to a local centre for help with history homework. The budding journalist in me made me naturally curious about every aspect of the Work as we fondly call it and I would ask all sorts of pertinent questions which were answered with great patience.

I observed the Work for a number of years and didn't make a commitment to join them on the path to holiness and become a supernumerary for another 20 years down the road when expecting our fourth child. My husband, as a non-believer, was concerned about my "God bothering" activities as he called them but respected my freedom. Now he encourages me to go to Mass every morning and appreciates the fact that it helps me to become a better person, wife and mother. He guides our six children from a human perspective pointing out for example why it's not good to be lazy or get addicted to tv soaps. I try and teach them the Christian message of good neighbourliness, forgiveness and giving generously to others.

What sets Opus Dei apart from the fickleness of the world is the 'unity of life' that members try to lead. "This is the real you, the person you are behind closed doors," I often say to my children, "not the public image you portray when you're outside with your friends."

Likewise, living 'unity of life' is the essence of being a member of Opus Dei and why I love it so much. "May your behaviour and your conversation be such that everyone who sees or hears you can say: This man reads the life of Jesus Christ," writes St Josemaria in "The Way" – which just about sums it up. Living unity of life means remembering to be thankful for every minute of each day whatever the set-backs, instead of partitioning the day into times to please God and reserving the rest for ourselves. It's about avoiding the stumbling block of becoming a "Sunday Catholic" who steps out of church feeling elated only to go weak with impatience at the sight of the car being blocked in or your husband blaming you for something that has gone wrong.

When we're close to God we say sorry to our husband - even if we're in the right—because we don't want to fall into the trap of thinking only of ourselves and the impact everything has on us. That's not to say that injustices go unchecked –far from it in a large family. It's impossible to get away with rude retorts in front of so many witnesses! But by imitating Jesus you get your message across with gentleness and patience.

There's no public persona in Opus Dei but rather what you see is what there is - although we're wise enough hopefully not to wash any dirty bits of linen in public. It may come across as egotistical but I know that I am a less selfish person because of the good example and guidance I have been given and continue to receive from priests and other members of the Work .

There's nothing extraordinary about belonging to it except the happiness you feel deep down in the knowledge you are a child of God. I don't know all the other 500 or so members living in this country although I've probably met a good many of them over the years. We respect other members' privacy but try and be as helpful and courteous as we are to our own family.

Without sounding proud to be humble we are simply sinners striving for sainthood.

[Times on line](#)