



Saint Josemaria Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

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February 14, 1930 and 1943 in Saint Josemaria's words

Salvador Bernal

St Josemaria did not like to speak about those more intimate moments in which Our Lord had made him know His Will. However, sometimes, following the express indication of the Holy See, or due to the insistence of the members of Opus Dei, he did tell some details.

No fear!

"So that there could be no doubt that it was He who was carrying out his own Work, Our Lord added external things. I had written: 'There will never be women in [Opus Dei](#), no fear!' And a few days later... the 14th of February: so that it could be seen that this thing was not mine, but against my inclination and against my will."

As much God's as all the rest

"I used to go to the house of an old lady of eighty, who came to me for Confession, to celebrate Mass in the small oratory she had. And it was there, in the Mass, after Communion, that the Women's Section came to the world. When I had finished, I went straight to my confessor who told me: 'This is as much God's as all the rest.'"

During the Mass

"The foundation of the Work took place without me; the Women's Section, against my personal opinion; and the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, when I was seeking it and couldn't find it. It also took place during the Mass. It is not a question of miracles: just the ordinary providence of God. For me, that the sun should rise and set every day is as much a miracle as that it should stop. And it is even more of a miracle that it should rise and set every day according to a law imposed by God that we men already know."

"In spite of what I am"

“Thus, following such ordinary procedures, Jesus our Lord, God the Father and the Holy Spirit, with the most loving smile of the Mother, Daughter and Spouse of God, have made me go forward, in spite of what I am: a poor man, a little donkey that God has wished to take by the hand: ‘I was like a donkey in your presence, and with you I shall always be’ (cf. Ps. 73[72]:23).”

By being truly Christian where they are

In time, he would be able to say with full justification to a journalist: “I have spent my life defending the fullness of the Christian vocation of the laity, of ordinary men and women who live in the world, and therefore I have tried to obtain full theological and legal recognition of their mission in the Church and in the world (...) It is the task of the millions of Christian men and women who fill the earth to bring Christ into all human activities and to announce through their lives the fact that God loves and wants to save everyone. The best and most important way in which they can participate in the life of the Church, and indeed the way which all others presuppose, is by being truly Christian precisely where they are, in the place to which their human vocation has called them.”

"...I would have died"

St Josemaria sometimes gave a supernatural reason for the fact that God brought the Women's Section of Opus Dei into existence sixteen months and twelve days after October 2, 1928. He explained in 1961, full of gratitude:

"If I had known in 1928 what was in store for me, I would have died. But God our Lord treated me as a child. He did not lay the burden on me all at once, but led me onward little by little. A little child is not given four things to do at once. First it's given one and then another; and then another, when it has done the previous one. Have you seen a little boy playing with his father? The boy has some wooden blocks, of different shapes and colours... And his father tells him: 'Put this one here, and that one there, and the red one over there.' And he ends up with a castle!"

First a grace, then a task

“This is the divine way of doing things. First one thing and then another, guiding our steps, using secondary causes, human mediation. See what the *Acts of the Apostles* tells us when it describes the conversion of Saul. After the Lord has wounded him with his grace, Saul says: ‘Lord, what do you want me to do?’ And he hears God's answer: ‘Arise, go into the city, and there you will be told what you must do.’ Do you see? First a grace, then a task; with God selecting the times, ways and circumstances. That is how our Lord has been making his Work: first one Section, than another, and then – another gift – the priests. And in every aspect of our way, in each battle to be won in this beautiful war of peace, our Lord

has always treated me so: first this, then that. That is why I ask you again to join me in giving thanks for this continuous loving Providence that our Father God has shown."

One blow on the nail and a hundred on the horse-shoe

"When I consider our Lord's goodness, I am moved to contrition, for any failure on my part to respond to such great mercy. And because, along this road, I have made others suffer, through my errors (I know not how to bear injustice without protesting and shedding tears: no matter where it comes from, nor to whom it is done); through my errors, I say, and because God our Lord needed to prepare me: it seemed as if he was giving one blow on the nail and a hundred on the horse-shoe... perhaps because other people's pain hurt me more."

February 14, 1943: I was seeking it but unable to find it

While he was celebrating Mass in an Opus Dei women's center in Madrid, a light shone in his mind. "And when I finished celebrating, he recalled, I drew the seal of the Work, the Cross of Christ embracing the world, set in the heart of the world; and I could talk about the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross."

Both the inclusion of women and the incorporation of priests took him by surprise. 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."

Quoted in Salvador Bernal, *Msgr. Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer: a Profile of the Founder of Opus Dei*, Veritas, pp. 136-138.