



# Saint Josemaria Escriva

## Founder of Opus Dei

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### **What are the main features of Opus Dei's spirit?**

“This is God's will: your sanctification,” as Saint Paul said to the first Christians. This message is “as old as the Gospel and as new as the Gospel.” God calls all baptized people to the fullness of holiness.

### **“Divine filiation” – knowing that we are God's children**

“Rest in the fact of being children of God. God is a Father who is full of tenderness, full of infinite love. Call him 'Father' many times a day and tell him — alone, in your heart — that you love him, that you adore him, that you feel proud and strong because you are his child.”

Christians are made into children of God by their baptism. God's fatherhood is a truth revealed by Christ in the gospel, and it is an important part of Christian teaching. God wanted this truth — being God's child in Christ — to be impressed on St Josemaría's soul with special intensity at a particular moment in time. He explained: “I learned to call God 'Father' as a child, in the Our Father. But feeling, and seeing, and being astonished by God's wanting us to be his children..., that happened in the street, in a streetcar, for an hour or an hour and a half, I'm not sure. 'Abba, Pater!' I had to shout out.”

Knowing that we are God's children gives rise to trust in God's providence, simplicity in our conversation with God, a deeper awareness of the dignity of each human being and the need for fraternity among all people, a truly Christian love for the world and all human realities created by God, and a sense of calm and optimism.

### **Unity of life**

“There is just one life, made of flesh and spirit. And it is this life which has to become, in both soul and body, holy and filled with God,” said St Josemaria.

Christians, men and women who live in the middle of the world, should not live “a kind of double life. On the one hand, an interior life, a life of union with God; and on the other, a separate and distinct professional, social and family life.”

A consequence of unifying one’s life is that little things take on great importance. “Great holiness lies in carrying out the little duties of each moment.” They are apparently insignificant things, such as small acts of service, good manners, respect for others, tidiness, punctuality, etc. “Do everything for Love. Thus there will be no little things: everything will be big. Perseverance in little things for Love is heroism.”

## **Sanctifying work**

“A Christian should do all honest human work, be it intellectual or manual, with the greatest perfection possible: with human perfection (professional competence) and with Christian perfection (for love of God's Will and as a service to mankind). Human work done like that, no matter how humble or insignificant it may seem, helps to shape the world in a Christian way. The world's divine dimension is made more visible and our human labour is thus incorporated into the marvellous work of Creation and Redemption. It is raised to the order of grace. It is sanctified and becomes God's work, operatio Dei, Opus Dei.”

And “at our job, side by side with our colleagues, friends and relatives and sharing their interests, we can help them come closer to Christ.” First of all with our personal example, and then with a word and with an effective willingness to help solve the material needs and the social problems of the environment.

## **Finding God in ordinary life**

“Ordinary life can be holy and full of God.” And in everyday life, Christians can practice all the virtues: faith, hope and charity, and the human virtues – generosity, industriousness, justice, loyalty, cheerfulness, sincerity, and so on. In practicing these virtues, Christians imitate Jesus Christ. “The supernatural value of our life does not depend on accomplishing the great undertakings sometimes suggested to us by our overactive imagination. Rather it is to be found in the faithful acceptance of God's will, in welcoming generously the opportunities for

small, daily sacrifice.”

## **Marriage, a divine vocation**

For the majority of Christians, marriage and the family are among the things upon which sanctity should be built, and which should thus be given a Christian dimension. “For a Christian, marriage is not just a social institution, much less a mere remedy for human weakness. It is a genuine supernatural calling.”

## **Love for personal freedom**

"We have a duty to defend everyone's personal freedom, in the knowledge that Jesus Christ is the one who obtained that freedom for us. If we don't, what right have we to claim our own freedom? We must also spread the truth, because *veritas liberabit vos*, the truth makes us free, while ignorance enslaves."

Christians are ordinary citizens who have exactly the same rights and obligations as any other citizen. In their political, financial or cultural activity, they act with freedom and personal responsibility, not attempting to involve the Church or Opus Dei in their decisions, nor to present their decisions as the only Catholic solution. “As Christians, you enjoy the fullest freedom, with the consequent personal responsibility, to take part as you see fit in political, social or cultural affairs, with no restrictions other than those set by the Church's Magisterium.”

This implies respecting the freedom and the opinions of others. “I defend the freedom of consciences with all my strength,” explains Saint Josemaría. “The legitimate hunger for truth must be respected. Everyone has a grave obligation to seek God, to know him and worship him, but no one on earth is permitted to impose on others the practice of a faith they lack; just as no one can claim the right to harm those who have received the faith from God.”