



# Saint Josemaría Escrivá

Founder of Opus Dei

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## The Message of St. Josemaría: Particularly Relevant Ideas for Today's Society

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### I. Introduction

I would like to begin with an anecdote that I heard from a colleague. Not far from Rome, in the area surrounding the locality of Pereto, by the Abruzzo mountains one finds a Marian sanctuary venerating Our Lady under the advocacy *Madonna dei Bisognosi*, "Our Lady of the Needy." In the now-restored sanctuary, there is an impressive fresco of the Final Judgment. Completed by painters of the area around the end of the fifteenth century, it is a magnificent work of art, which speaks with clarity. On one side is paradise, populated exclusively by clerics, monks and religious. In purgatory one sees representatives of all the trades and professions of the day, ordinary Christian of all classes.

The message is unmistakable: the ideal of Christian life and perfection is separation from the world; a coherent and radical "imitation of Christ" is only possible by distancing oneself from normal earthly life. Whoever lives in the world, necessarily dirties his hands – that is, his soul – and after this life needs purification. Sanctity cannot be attained in the middle of the world.

Within the horizon of this perspective it is perhaps easier to understand why, in 1928, the young Josemaría Escrivá ran up against the mistrust, rejection and misunderstanding of not a few of his contemporaries. He affirmed, effectively, that all Christians without exception are called to sanctity, to the fullness of Christian life, to intimate friendship with God and identification with Christ; and they are

called in the middle of ordinary life, in the toil of professional work and daily preoccupations, in the intimacy of married love, in family life and in the various spheres that make up society, politics, and economics. God is found everywhere, even in daily work, in the apparent monotony of the ordinary.

There are many consequences of this message. In what follows I would like to highlight a few of them that seem especially relevant today. First, we will consider what I call the “first rediscovery of ordinary life” in the Protestant Reformation and the Protestant work ethic, which has profoundly marked the modern world. Next, I will briefly analyze what I call the “second rediscovery of ordinary life” by St. Josemaría Escrivá, its importance, its fundamental characteristics and its in a certain sense innovative character within the heart of the Catholic Church. Third, I will mention some ascetical and ecclesiological consequences of this rediscovery: love for freedom and a spirit of non-discrimination, important characteristics of what St. Josemaría called “lay mentality,” and the importance of this message for the activity of Catholics in a society marked by secularity and pluralism to open a path that is precisely non-fundamentalist and non-integralist for the evangelizing task of the Church and the realization of her mission to penetrate this world with the truth and spirit of Christ.

## **2. The First Rediscovery of Ordinary Life: The Protestant Reformation**

Sometimes one hears that the Christian affirmation of the world and ordinary life contained in the approach just outlined above – and, in particular, the positive valorization of professional work – is nothing more than a late assumption of that which had already been generally recognized in the non-Catholic sphere since the Reformation. It is said, in particular, that the Protestant work ethic and, above all, Calvinism (and within Calvinism, Puritanism) had discovered the value of Christian life and the importance of professional work a long time ago.

Is this true? I would affirm that it is true in part, but not entirely.

What was the basic intention of the reformers and their followers? We will understand it better if we recall the medieval Church’s self-understanding and approach to Christian life. To put it in a very simplified and schematic way, for the medievals the Christian world was divided into two parts. One was formed by clerics and religious, competent to deal with the spiritual realm, with the health of the souls of all men. Priests were the mediators between the world and God, and those who, like the religious, gave themselves completely to God through their rejection of the world and maintained the boat of the Church afloat with their spiritual life. The other part was composed of the laity, who were responsible for the temporal, likewise for the service of the whole: they worked in the fields or the

workshop and went to war. Through good works, alms and pious foundations they ensured that the priests could say Mass and that monks and nuns could pray and do penance, while they dedicated themselves to the necessities of this world. The Church was a boat in which the clergy and religious rowed, and the laity were passengers.

Now, at the time of the Reformation, Peter's boat had begun to leak; the rowers had gotten tired and become lazy or simply too weak to carry the boat forward.

In the second place, in one way or another the Reformers denied the idea that in the Church there are persons (those who belong to the priestly state) who have a special responsibility for the health of the whole and who are granted the faculties that permit them to represent Christ as head of the Church. For this reason they threw out the window all of the mediating elements: they rejected the priestly ministry in its traditional sense, the sacraments and above all the Mass. In other words, they abolished the boat in which all of the passengers traveled. After the Reformation, each individual relates to God directly; he doesn't need anyone to pray for him, to expiate for him and offer sacrifices, or to pardon his sins. Faith alone is enough to establish immediate contact with the Redeemer, and in this faith one finds salvation.

But now what comes to the fore is a preoccupation regarding the certainty of one's own salvation. Possessing this certainty becomes, so to speak, a result of the effort of one's own faith and should be preserved in daily life. In this way the circumstances of "ordinary life" – work, marriage, family or social life, civic duties – take on an eminently religious meaning. The ethical state of the inner-worldly is no longer surpassed by the asceticism of monks and nuns. Instead, one's own inner-worldly duties become a "calling," as expressed by Luther and after him by the Puritans. In other words, these duties are converted into an activity in which God's will for each person is manifested, and which should be sanctified by carrying it out for the glory of God and not as an end in itself.

In Puritanism, the Protestant work ethic acquires a particular orientation. The Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor has dealt with this topic, especially regarding the English and North American Puritans, in his book *Sources of the Self*. His analysis is worth rereading here. Taylor states: "Whereas in Catholic cultures, the term 'vocation' usually arises in connection with the priesthood or monastic life, the meanest employment was a calling for the Puritans, provided it was useful to mankind and imputed to us by God. In this sense, all callings were equal, whatever their place in the social hierarchy, or in what we think of as the hierarchy of human capacities." <sup>1</sup>

For the Puritan, man's existence in the world, especially married life and work, is a vital reality desired by God, from which no man should consider himself exempt. Everything depends on using these realities solely for love of God and not for love of the world. As a result – to cite the Puritan theologian Joseph Hall (1574-1656) – the goal of our life is “to serve God in the serving of men in the works of our callings”.<sup>2</sup> In effect, both Lutheranism and Puritanism – and later also Pietism and Methodism – rediscovered the religious and Christian value of ordinary life; for this reason they also fostered an active Christianity, characterized by the preservation of the faith through charitable social commitment.

### **3. Protestant Work Ethic, Religious Motivation and the Seal of Modernity**

Yet, in this rediscovery there was a weak point from the beginning. The Reformers maintained that the world and man are radically corrupted by sin, faith being the only way possible to escape corruption. Only in this way could life in this world be pleasing to God. However, the internal corruption of all earthly realities did not disappear. In reality, therefore, neither the Lutheran idea of work as “vocation” nor the Calvinist-Puritan idea of the sanctification of work led to a redemption of the world, to its internal healing and sanctification.

In effect, neither Luther nor the Calvinists were able to understand the Redemption as a re-establishment of creation, or as a “new creation in Christ.” The work ethic of the Puritans was nothing more than a means to transcend the world through a religious attitude, in order to direct oneself to God and increase his glory in the middle of the activities and limitations of this world and of ordinary life. In a certain sense, what we find is a secularized version of the ascetic ideal of the religious life. What is redeemed is not the world, but only the individual who, ultimately, separates himself from the world. What is lacking is an inner relationship between work and Redemption.

The final breach in the unity between the Puritan work ethic and religious motivation arose in a sphere that is highly relevant to the seal that marks the modern world. Worldliness and religious consciousness become concurrent realities, and in the end are distanced from one another. When the religious foundation and the original religious motives disappear, the way is paved for a process of secularization; when even the religious habit is suppressed, as a piece of clothing that has become too small, we find ourselves once again in a world of work imbued with economic rationality and the productive efficiency of progress, but closed to all transcendence. Re-establishing the connection between ordinary daily life (and particularly ordinary professional work) and a loving relationship between man and God together with man's task as a disciple of Christ becomes

impossible, or even superfluous.

#### **4. Human Work from a Christological Perspective – The “Second Rediscovery” of Ordinary Life: Josemaría Escrivá**

The Reformers wanted to turn the Church upside down. But wouldn't it have been better to bring it back to its lost foundations, to discover anew the universal vocation to sanctity and the sanctifying value of ordinary life in the middle of the world, based on the “Gospel of work”? This would have implied, in the first place, maintaining the decisive Catholic Tradition of the Church as a great boat in which we are all saved – naturally through faith, but not through the “achievement” of our faith: only and uniquely through the works and merits of Jesus Christ, with which the boat of the Church is constructed, and which always reach us through the Church's sacraments.

Ironically, in the Catholic Church the power of tradition was also so great that, in the realm of genuine Catholic faith, in trying to elaborate a theology of work and of ordinary life in general, almost no conclusions were drawn in relation to the fundamental goodness of the world. While the relation established by Protestantism between faith and the world and the resulting work ethic undoubtedly fostered the excesses of secularization and a separation – or even contraposition – between faith and existence in the world, the weight of medieval Catholic tradition led to a no less explosive conflict between faith and the modern world. Until the Second Vatican Council, this conflict was manifested through a religiously-based rejection of modernity in some of its most characteristic elements (like freedom of religion, of conscience and of the press), and also in a profound mistrust of the modern political ethos, the modern world of work, and the modern economy.

The identification between the religious ideal of ascetic perfection, the ideal Christian life, and the Catholic social and political order; the rejection of modernity and of the corresponding approach to the world; the deeply rooted mistrust of freedom and pluralism: these widely-extended attitudes constituted the typically Catholic variety of separation between faith and the modern world. This way of thinking led to a consideration of ordinary Christians – the lay people who occupy themselves with the things of this world due to the necessities of life – as second-class Christians with regard to the spiritual life and apostolic responsibility. On principle, life in the world, work, one's profession, as well as the obligations of marriage and family life, were considered an impediment to a genuine Christian life and to the effort to reach Christian perfection. The virtues united to ordinary professional work, such as industriousness, honesty, honor, and healthy competitiveness, were hardly placed in relation to the spiritual life and the

Christian commandment of love. All of the attempts to bridge the chasm between faith and the modern world, and to overcome the increased distancing of modernity from God was based on the resolution to act on this world “from outside,” in a certain sense, and “from above” – that is to, in a “clerical” way. In the best of cases, the laity were seen as collaborators in the apostolate of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The spiritual life of the lay person was reduced to the possibility of participating in some way in the spirituality of the various religious orders. It was not possible to conceive of the spiritual life and of the apostolic action of a Christian from and within ordinary life.

Precisely in this context appears the “Catholic rediscovery” of ordinary life, carried out by St. Josemaría Escrivá. Before an audience of students, professors and employees of the University of Navarre in 1967, in a much-cited homily published under the title “Passionately Loving the World,” St. Josemaría affirmed: “The world is not evil, because it has come from God's hands, because it is His creation, because 'Yahweh looked upon it and saw that it was good' (cf. Gen 1:7 ff). We ourselves, mankind, make it evil and ugly with our sins and infidelities. Have no doubt: any kind of evasion of the honest realities of daily life is for you, men and women of the world, something opposed to the will of God. On the contrary, you must understand now, more clearly, that God is calling you to serve Him in and from the ordinary, material and secular activities of human life. He waits for us every day, in the laboratory, in the operating theatre, in the army barracks, in the university chair, in the factory, in the workshop, in the fields, in the home and in all the immense panorama of work. Understand this well: there is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it.”<sup>3</sup>

On this approach, the question is not merely saving oneself from a world that has fallen into disorder through sin, by means of faith and perseverance in a life of useful industriousness. Escrivá calls each person to discover the holy, the divine and good that is hidden in the world, in ordinary work, in daily situations. In this sense, what is required is a genuine love of the world – a “correct love” – and an interest in the world’s affairs, its situation on the deepest level, and its salvation. For a Christian, God is not only present “beyond” the world: He is found also within it.

Escrivá discovers in work – as he wrote in the year 1954 – the “dignity of life” and “a duty imposed by the Creator”.<sup>4</sup> According to the Biblical creation narrative, God created man to work. Work is not a consequence of sin, but rather a task loved by God and a vocation that defines the fundamental identity of man in this world.

With this a first and fundamental point is brought to light. Christian love for the world, this basic and even passionate “affirmation of the world,” unites the love of God the Creator – “and God saw that it was good” – and the love of God the Redeemer, who wanted Creation to shine in its original goodness as “a new creation in Christ.”

Christian life does not consist only in saving oneself from the corruption of this world through faith and an appropriate attitude, but rather in an interior transformation in Christ brought about by the Spirit of God, that should also lead to an interior renovation and salvation of the world through the grace of God: that is, to its “sanctification”.

This brings us to a second point: the salvation of the world and the salvation of man cannot be separated from one another. The “sanctification of the world” – of work – presupposes and is intrinsically connected to the sanctification of the person and his Christian perfection. As a result, sanctity should not be sought in a separation from the world. Even less should one consider that the worldly condition of man, and especially work, is an obstacle on the path to union with God and to perfection in love; it is seen, rather, precisely as a way to achieve sanctity.

From this perspective “sanctity” is not reduced to worldliness, nor is it understood as a fruit of human effort, or as “salvation through work”. Instead, sanctity is seen as “salvation of work,” an elevation of ordinary life to the level of the life of grace, to the supernatural plane. For Josemaría Escrivá, what is decisive is not the fact that human beings bring the world to God through our work and our “achievements”; it is Christ, who “draws all things to Himself” when we make the effort to put the Cross of Christ at the summit of all our human activity, when we do what we do with the love of Christ. <sup>5</sup>

## **5. Ascetical and Ecclesiological Consequences: The Church as “Boat of the World”**

The “affirmation of the world” and “love for the world” seem to contradict that primordial experience that the Bible brings to light, that experience of the “world” as enemy of the soul, as tempter and adversary of God. Aren’t love of the world and love of God in irreconcilable combat? The Puritan ethic of the sanctification of work lived off this contraposition, and off the attempt to reorient love of the world through love of God: a right attitude aimed solely at the glory of God. Love for the world has always been a danger, while separation from the world and even its rejection were pre-requisites for the love of God.

Josemaría Escrivá does not posit an “inner-worldly asceticism” (as the German sociologist Max Weber famously characterized the Puritan work ethic). The love of God does not signify for Escrivá an “overcoming” or “rejection” of the world. It is a specific type of love for the world, a participation in the love of Christ that saves and overcomes sin. “To love the world” means to enter into it in a new way: in the way that Christ did.

Ordinary life, the multiple occupations in work, family, society, love between man and woman, between parents and children, are tasks of the person redeemed by Christ, and at the same time a means and a way of union with God. Work converted into prayer (service to neighbor and offering Christ, simultaneously) is a way of interior purification, of loving acceptance of the Cross of Christ; it is a way of properly mystical union with God, that is, a union that is work of the Holy Spirit.

The mission of the Church in this world reaches its goal through this path. Then the Church is not only the boat that leads men to eternal salvation. It is also the boat of the world, made newly navigable by the members of the Church through their ordinary life, with freedom and on their own responsibility (not as a “long arm” of the ecclesiastical hierarchy). The laity are in no way merely passengers; they are also sailors, on-board mechanics, rowers, captains and helmsmen (all of this also, naturally, includes women).

And they are these things in the freedom of the children of God; freedom and personal responsibility are an essential part of the normality of ordinary life. In their tasks, in their profession, family, political activities, and everywhere, the Christian stands on his own two feet and acts with autonomy and responsibility, in internal union with the Church and according to a Christian conscience. Escrivá does not offer a solution to the problems of this world, except for precisely this one: to conceive the solution of the problems of world as a Christian task, that each person needs to approach in his ordinary daily work with all the radicality of the following of Christ. Each person needs to find the concrete solutions for himself. “Ordinary life” also means personal freedom, exercising one’s rights as a citizen and the rights that correspond to one’s professional position with personal responsibility, as well as an effort to ensure that the rights of others are also respected. In short, this is what Escrivá called “lay mentality.”

Undoubtedly, decades before the Second Vatican Council, Josemaría Escrivá was a pioneer within the Catholic Church for his rediscovery of a spirit of profound respect for freedom, characterized by the rejection of all forms of coercion of consciences, and of the use of violence to drive men to religious truth. In one of the letters that he wrote for the formation of people in Opus Dei he insists on “the

Christian concern to make all forms of intolerance, coercion, and violence disappear in human relationships. Also in apostolic action – or rather, *principally* in apostolic action – we do not want there to be the slightest shadow of coercion”<sup>6</sup>. Since it is an element of the foundational charism, this spirit was an essential part of the preaching and action of Escrivá from the beginning.

## **6. Towards a Modern Christian Society: Unity of Life, Freedom and Personal Responsibility**

This brief sketch would remain incomplete if I failed to make reference to another aspect in which the spirit of love for freedom and personal responsibility, promoted by St. Josemaría, acquires great importance: the political action of the lay Christian faithful and their task of ordering the earthly city and temporal structures according to the spirit of Christ. It is a broad topic, in which we are confronted with classical questions regarding the relationship between temporal power and the spiritual authority of the Church, represented now in the heart of political society by the action of the laity who attempt to bring human society into conformity with the spirit of Christ, in fidelity to the teachings of the Church.<sup>7</sup>

Josemaría Escrivá spoke of “unity of life” from a strictly spiritual perspective. He invited people to “know how to *materialize* the spiritual life,” in order not to fall into the temptation “of living a kind of double life. On one side, an interior life, a life of relation with God; and on the other, a separate and distinct professional, social and family life, full of small earthly realities.”<sup>8</sup>

It is obvious that this teaching cannot be understood as a political-religious program at the service of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and of its specific pastoral mission. The founder of Opus Dei sees lay people – ordinary Christians, each in the particular circumstances of his or her life – acting with a Christian, catholic conscience, with full freedom and autonomy; in order to place the world, so to speak, not at the feet of the *ecclesiastical hierarchy*, but rather at the feet of Jesus Christ: to raise the Cross of Christ – his salvific love – at the summit of all human activities. For St. Josemaría, the apostolate of the laity is not principally a participation in the mission of the hierarchy; it is a participation in the priestly mission of Jesus Christ himself, conferred directly by Baptism, although always carried out in close union with the legitimate pastors of the Church (the Roman Pontiff and the bishops in union with him) and in fidelity to the Magisterium.

As a result, Escrivá does not conceive of the laity as a new secular arm of the Church; his apostolate is not the *longa manus* (long arm) of the hierarchy. That was, however, the vision that guided Pius XI in promoting Catholic Action and the

renovation of the “Christian State” which, as a *temporal power*, recognizes the Catholic Church as the only voice of divine truth. Pius XI proposed a society under the guide of a Church recognized by the State as the true and only teacher and guide of nations.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, he saw the laity, efficiently organized and guided by the hierarchy, as an instrument for reaching this goal in all spheres of society. Only in this way, affirmed the Roman Pontiff, would the Reign of Christ – *pax Christi in regno Christi*, “the peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ” – come about.<sup>10</sup> We find this motto of Pius XI cited in point 301 of *The Way* – but Escrivá understands it in a somewhat different way.

Escrivá does not claim to place the apostolate of the laity that he promotes in contraposition with other forms of apostolate. He loved diversity (above all, liberty) also with regard to the ways of carrying out the one mission of the Church. He had great esteem for the work carried out by so many Catholics – committed to Catholic Action – in the service of the Church, so rich and varied in accordance with each time and place; but he remained faithful to the specific charism of Opus Dei: “Our mission is different. The other work is very good; but to do that sort of work, there are organs already in existence. What God asks of us is different, the features of our apostolate are of another type; our way is lay, secular, with freedom and personal responsibility. *Spiritus ubi vult spirat* (Jn 3:8) – the Spirit of the Lord blows where he wills. And he willed to inspire the Work of God with its own specific aim and character, within the unity of the Church.”<sup>11</sup>

St. Josemaría Escrivá was convinced of the need for committed Christians in politics and public affairs to seek to impregnate all temporal structures with the spirit of Christ. He saw the laity acting with full freedom and with the corresponding personal responsibility, together with the rest of men who do not share their faith. He saw them as leaven, integrated into the mass of men, illuminating all human activities with the light of faith and spreading among men the salt of good doctrine and the charity of Christ. The idea of the Kingdom of Christ in society is not a political program for Escrivá: “I do not approve of committed Christians in the world forming a political-religious movement. That would be madness, even if it were motivated by a desire to spread the spirit of Christ in all the activities of men. What we have to do is put God in the heart of every single person, no matter who he is. Let us try to speak then in such a way that every Christian is able to bear witness to the faith he professes by example and word in his own circumstances, which are determined alike by his place in the Church and in civil life, as well as by ongoing events.”<sup>12</sup>

The Christian influence exercised by the Catholic faithful over social structures

and the formation of a society impregnated with the doctrine of Christ will be carried out in this way with a spirit of love for the “legitimate freedom of others, living together with peace and mutual respect.” Although Escrivá never theorized about the civil right to religious freedom – this wasn’t his mission – he seems to have anticipated what would later be the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. This spirit has brought the Church to recognize the secularity of the State on the juridical-political level: not a secularist State, but a lay, secular State that does not give preference to any religious belief even if it claims to be the only true faith. This is because “the truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth.”<sup>13</sup>

## **7. Secular State and Pluralism. The Ordinary Christian’s Historical Responsibility**

The vision of St. Josemaría Escrivá was undoubtedly a human society in which the redemptive truth of Christ would penetrate all the structures of the world not by the coercive force of the “temporal arm” of the Church – via State power – but through the unity of life of Christians who know how to live their ordinary lives in freedom and personal responsibility, as a participation in the priestly mission of Christ.

Freedom and personal responsibility, rooted in the full affirmation of the secularity of the modern world, as the “method” and way for a new evangelization and a Christian penetration of this world: is this a realistic perspective?

It is undeniable that in the course of the secularization process the Church has lost a large part of its influence over society and human beings; and there are those who ask themselves if there is still any future for Christianity. From a historical and sociological point of view it is true that, as the Catholic sociologist Franz Xaver Kaufmann states, the “disappearance of a State norm of ecclesial belonging” is perhaps the “most elementary and enduring cause of its retreat,” since “voluntariness can never be as area-wide as constraint”.<sup>14</sup> However, from the point of view of faith and from a theological perspective, it is necessary to say that freedom is always, ultimately, stronger than constraint, because faith opens the heart of man to the saving action of divine grace, which transforms, recreates and produces the “fruits of the Spirit”, whereas constraint, although in the short term it creates the appearance of religious penetration, yields a mere external conformity and ends in dissolution, as history has so often demonstrated. Ultimately, the Church today is called once again to believe in freedom, as St. Josemaría did; a freedom that opens itself to the transforming power of the Gospel and of the grace of God, but which is genuine freedom. To open the way for this “Christian secularity”, the message of St. Josemaría Escrivá will be of significant importance.

## **8. A Non-Integralist, Non-Fundamentalist Response to the Perennial Mission of the Church**

And so, in my judgment, thanks to its unique combination of lay mentality and a supernatural-apostolic character – St. Josemaría used to talk about the “priestly soul” which must imbue this lay mentality –, the spirit of Opus Dei allows us to give a non-integralist, non-fundamentalist response to the Church’s perennial mission of transforming and renewing this world with the faith and love of Christ.

The “fundamentalists” or “integralists” are those Christians who would claim that it is the competence of the state and of its coercive apparatus to establish the entirety of moral and religious doctrine by law, and not only that which is indispensable for men to live together with order and justice. In this sense, the “fundamentalists” are those who are not capable of distinguishing between the level of politics and that of the fullness of religious truth, and for this reason de-legitimize the democratic process and its institutions when it produces decisions that don’t correspond to the fullness of Catholic truth as the Church teaches it. But I think that today we have come to understand the fundamental idea of the secular state – lay, confessionally neutral and not aggressively secularist; and the Church herself today defends the secular and lay character of political power. Particularly in facing the challenge of Islamic culture, which at its roots and in its foundational orthodox self-understanding is a political-religious whole, we need to defend the Christian roots of modern secularity, roots which Christians themselves have sometimes failed to recognize as such. Reaching a full recognition of these roots has been a long and painful process.

I see the spirit of Opus Dei, just as it was transmitted by its Founder, as an essential and powerful impetus to this process. As a result, I opt for what could be called “Christian secularity”: a society in which the demands of freedom and truth are reconciled; in which the redemptive truth of Christ penetrates human society and all the structures of the world not by the force of coercion on the part of the “temporal arm” of the Church via State power, but rather through the unity of life of those Christians who know how to live their ordinary life with freedom and personal responsibility, as a participation in the priestly mission of Christ.

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In our time Christians are ever more conscious of the need to preserve the Christian faith in this world. Frequently, this consciousness leads to a superficial invitation to commit oneself in the world by covering oneself with Christian symbols, or even to attribute a political mandate in the strict sense of the word to the Church as an official institution, not recognizing the legitimate freedom of the faithful. The vision of Escrivá, by contrast, is one of a Church that opens herself to

the world, making herself present with redemptive efficacy in all spheres of society, through the ordinary life of the baptized, through their work and action, lived with the faith and charity of Christ, who in this way succeeds in renewing the world “from within.”

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## NOTES

1. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 1992), 223. (See especially Part III of the book: “The Affirmation of Ordinary Life”.) From Taylor’s book (page 217) I have also borrowed the metaphor of the church as a “boat”.
2. See Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 225.
3. Josemaría Escrivá, “Passionately Loving the World” in *Conversations with Monsignor Josemaria Escriva*, no. 114.
4. See *Letter May 31 1954*, quoted in: J. L. Illanes, *La santificación del trabajo*, Madrid 1980, p. 40.
5. See e.g. Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ Is Passing By*, n. 183.
6. Josemaría Escrivá, *Letter, January 9 1932*, no. 66. For the original Spanish wording of this quotation (and other similar texts) see M. Rhonheimer, *Transformación del mundo. La actualidad del Opus Dei*, Rialp, Madrid, 2006, p. 142.
7. I have treated this extensively in Chapters Three and Four of my book referred to in Note 6.
8. Josemaría Escrivá, “Passionately Loving the World” in *Conversations with Monsignor Josemaria Escriva*, n. 114.
9. See Pius XI, Encyclical *Ubi arcano*.
10. Pius XI, *Ubi arcano*; see also his Encyclical *Quas primas*.
11. Josemaría Escrivá, *Letter August 15 1953*, no. 18, 2. (For the original Spanish wording of the quotation, see my book *Transformación del mundo*, op. cit., p. 151.)
12. Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is Passing By*, n. 183.
13. Vatican II, *Declaration on Religious Freedom “Dignitatis Humanae”*, n. 1.
14. Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, *Wie überlebt das Christentum?* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2000), p. 111.