

# **Dream and your dreams will fall short**

An article published in L'Osservatore Romano on the occasion of the canonization of St. Josemaría. The author is the executive director of Centro Tepeyac, a crisis pregnancy center for Latino women. She lives near Washington, D.C., with her husband and 12 children.

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When people ask me how many children I have, I often tell them twelve, plus two non-profits: working with a non-profit is like having another child. It was largely through the inspiration of Josemaría Escrivá and the support of Opus Dei that I came to this.

I became familiar with Opus Dei and the teaching of its founder, as a teenager, through *The Way*. What I read resounded with what my parents had taught me about "unity of life": our sacramental life has to inform our everyday life, with the Mass as the center and root of our interior life. It is there, at the daily offering of Christ crucified, that I find my strength to continue to build up a culture of life.

As a mother with very little household help, many hours a day are spent providing for the physical needs of my family. It is precisely this

that I unite to Christ's offering. For the first eighteen years of my marriage I concentrated on creating a "bright and cheerful home," St. Josemaría's ideal for family life. When I had eleven children and my youngest was four I began to expand my sphere of influence and become involved with building a culture of life also outside my home.

People often ask me, "You went to Harvard and you have twelve children?" To this, I respond: "Well, they taught me that if you are going to do something, do it big." Actually, it is St. Josemaría, with his insight that "these world crises are the crises of saints" (*The Way*, 301), that inspires me and helps me to "cast out into the deep" (Lk 5:4) with respect to shaping culture.

I became involved with the National Institute of Womanhood (NIW), of which I was a founding board

member, and served as Vice-President of the Institute. It was becoming more and more apparent that the fight for women's advancement was being fought at the expense of woman's basic role as wife and mother. At NIW we worked to articulate what "authentic womanhood" is. Friends asked, "How can you find time for NIW?" And I responded, "It is precisely *because* I have many children, and seven of them are girls, that I have to fight for the rights of motherhood." In 1994 and 1995, the Cairo and Beijing UN conferences dealt with the issues of "gender" and "gender roles." Once again Opus Dei founder's insight, this time on the "genius of woman" served me as a guiding principle. In the mid 1990's I had to find paid work and took a position at Centro Tepeyac, a crisis pregnancy center serving the needs of Latino women, where I could continue to advance the cause of "authentic womanhood"

and fight the rising tide of sensuality with a "crusade of manliness and purity" (*The Way*, 121).

Centro Tepeyac helps women who are experiencing an unexpected pregnancy, most of them recent immigrants from Central and South America who are fleeing war, poverty, or both. I had learned from Josemaría Escrivá that there are "no souls for the trashcan": this applies especially to the unborn child of a poor woman. In my seven years at Centro Tepeyac, it has grown from one hundred to one thousand clients. I can say that this is due, in a large measure, to faithfulness to the plan of life mapped out by the founder of Opus Dei. His teaching on the "greatness of ordinary life" reminds me constantly that my "boat —your talents, your hopes, your achievements— is worth nothing whatsoever, unless you leave it in Christ's hands, allowing him freedom

to come aboard" (*Friends of God*, 21). Daily Mass, the Rosary, and spiritual reading feed my life of prayer and are like the "glue" that holds my family and home together, while allowing me to carry the message of the culture of life on the national and international scene.

I often recall that Josemaría Escrivá in his endless treks through Madrid sought and discovered images of Our Lady, as well as tabernacles. He encouraged us to visit Our Lord there, even if only with a glance and an aspiration. I too began to seek and find "nooks and crannies" on my way to Tepeyac where I could silently greet Our Lord and Our Lady in hidden places. I also taught my children to deal with Our Lord this way as we traveled around town, with carpools and sports practices.

In striving to fulfill the call to evangelize, I have learned from

Josemaría Escrivá about the "letter writing apostolate", which always helps me to do outreach, especially with our donors. His words on the apostolate of public opinion help me connect with journalists and wherever I go, I bring some useful printed material. He said, "Out of a hundred souls we are interested in a hundred" (*Furrow*, 183), and I try to live by this. I remember hearing that when he saw the astronauts land on the moon, he prayed for them; I too try to pray for the persons I see on TV. From him I have learned to try to love and pray for all people, whether of the left or of the right, just as he did.

With his canonization, Josemaría Escrivá will become an inspiration and a teacher to countless souls, who like me, live normal, every day lives, and who want to seek union with God in the midst of that very normality.

# L'Osservatore Romano // Mary Hamm

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