

The Grandeur of Ordinary Life

A good many of us are often interested only in highlighting the extraordinary things in our lives while ignoring the everyday events that shape and give meaning to our lives. These ordinary things, our work, our relationship with family and friends, are really the cornerstones of our existence. These small and ordinary things around you are opportunities to show your love for God. Each person is capable of becoming a saint by sanctifying the little things we

do, our work, our daily cares
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...anctifying others.

This is the essence of the teaching of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, whose 100th birthday we celebrate today.

Josemaría Escrivá was born in Spain on January 9, 1902 and became a priest in 1925. On October 2, 1928, the young priest founded Opus Dei, which is Latin for 'Work of God'.

Opus Dei reflects the marvellous reality that any honest and worthwhile work can be converted into a divine occupation. Blessed Escrivá's teaching is meant to be lived in the midst of our work, at home and in our relationship with others. Opus Dei promotes the search

for holiness and the sanctification of ordinary work among people of all social classes.

In order to love and serve God, as we should, Escrivá taught that we don't need to look for the strange or the extraordinary. Rather our ordinary events and duties are means of serving God, mankind and therefore reaching heaven. In practical terms, this means that our jobs, our relationship with family, friends, and others in society are the very thing that we have to offer to God. In his book Furrow, Escrivá says, "let me stress this point: it is in the simplicity of your ordinary work, in the monotonous details of each day, that you have to find the secret, which is hidden from so many, of something great and new: Love."

Since we are children of God, which we all are, no matter what religion we belong to, then we have gifts

whose significance we can hardly comprehend. As children of God we can fully participate with God in building a better world. The fact that we are children of God should be present throughout the course of our day. We have recourse to it especially in the face of economic hardship, traffic congestion, anxieties, and sickness. We have to also remember that others are also children of God. This reality makes it easier to offer assistance to others who are in need. Escrivá saw a clear alternative facing every human being: "slavery or divine sonship, this is the dilemma we face. Children of God or slaves to pride."

The idea of sanctity, which Escrivá had in his lifetime, has been spreading ever more widely since his death on June 26, 1975. There are about 84,000 faithful of Opus Dei worldwide and many more people have become deeply aware of the

universal call to holiness through their association with Opus Dei. In 1981, the Catholic Church gave approval to begin the process of declaring Escrivá a Saint.

Furthermore on December 20, 2001, Pope John Paul II approved a decree issued by the Vatican's department in charge of the Causes of Saints confirming the healing of Dr. Nevado of an incurable cancerous radiodermatitis. This miracle, which occurred in 1992 through the intercession of Escrivá, paves the way for his canonization.

The message of the grandeur of everyday life as taught by Escrivá can be lived by each one of us and passed on to our family and friends. This is the answer to transforming society and creating a more just and peaceful world.

Mary Agboli // The Guardian

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