

Church Teachings and Personal Freedom

“In Opus Dei, we always strive to be in full agreement with Christ's Church in our opinions and sentiments; sentire cum Ecclesia.” (Conversations with Msgr. Escriva, 29)

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Opus Dei places great emphasis on the individual and the freedom of the individual to express his honestly-held convictions. But returning to my

previous question from another point of view, to what degree do you feel that Opus Dei is morally obliged as an association to express opinions on crucial secular and spiritual issues either publicly or privately? Are there situations in which Opus Dei will bring its own and its membership's influence to bear in defence of principles it holds sacred, for example in support of religious freedom legislation in Spain recently?

In Opus Dei, we always strive to be in full agreement with Christ's Church in our opinions and sentiments; sentire cum Ecclesia. Our doctrine is no more and no less than what the Church teaches all the faithful. The only thing which is proper to Opus Dei is its characteristic spirit, that is to say, its concrete way of living the Gospel, sanctifying oneself in the world and carrying out an apostolate through one's profession.

As an immediate consequence, a member of Opus Dei enjoys the same freedom as any other Catholic to form his own opinions and to act accordingly. Therefore Opus Dei as such neither should nor can express — nor even have — an opinion of its own. If on a given question the Church has defined a doctrine, the members of Opus Dei adhere to it. If on the other hand the official teaching of the Church — the Pope and the bishops — has not said anything on a question, each member of Opus Dei holds and defends the opinion he sees fit, and acts in consequence.

In other words, the principle which governs the activity of Opus Dei's directors in this area is respect for freedom of opinion in temporal matters. It is not a form of abstentionism. It is, rather, a question of making each individual aware of his own responsibilities and

of inviting him to accept them according to the dictates of his conscience, acting with full freedom. It would therefore be incongruous to mention Opus Dei in a context of parties, political groups and tendencies, or of human enterprises and undertakings. More than incongruous, it would be unjust and incipient libel, for it could easily lead someone to deduce falsely that the members of Opus Dei share the same ideology, outlook or temporal interest.

Undoubtedly they are Catholics, and Catholics who strive to be consistent with their faith, so one can classify them as such if he likes. But he should bear in mind that being Catholic does not imply belonging to a closed cultural or ideological group, and much less to a particular political party. From the very beginning of the Work, not only since the Council, we have striven to live

broad-minded Catholicism, a Catholicism that defends the legitimate liberty of every individual's conscience and leads us to treat all men (Catholics or not) as brothers and to collaborate with them, sharing their noble ideals. (Conversations with Msgr. Escriva, no. 29)

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