

All you need is to put love into your day

Vittorio Anniballi explains how he found true happiness thanks to his wife, Maria Rita and his seven children.

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Who said that having a big family would necessarily be a burden or limit one's freedom? Vittorio Anniballi goes against the current as he explains how he found true happiness thanks to his wife, Maria Rita and his seven children.

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Vittorio Anniballi got married in 1981. He is the owner of a number of apartments in the Boccea area of Rome. He got to know Opus Dei through “Montemario” and “Petranova”, two schools in which parents are very much involved in their children’s education. Vittorio explains, “In 1993, a friend of my wife told me about these two schools. Intrigued by the novel method of teaching, we decided to register one of our children there. While we didn’t know anything about Opus Dei, we decided to try it out. It was such a positive experience that we decided to bring our other two boys to the school as well.

Did this, then, encourage you to get to know more about the Work?

The “fruits” really showed us how good the “tree” was. We began to understand the value of the Work

more when we started to appreciate the work that is done in these schools. This is true for both children and parents alike.

As a husband and father, what is the message that you have received from Josemaría Escrivá?

The founder of the Work used to say the family is like an altar. My role basically consists in being there for them and in dedicating all that I can to my wife and children. To do this, I don't have to do anything special. It is enough to put love into my day. And that also goes for the simplest actions of the day. For example, to remember your wife lovingly during the day or to try to listen to your children.

Nowadays, it seems that big families are not in fashion. What does this mean for someone who has a lot of children?

Personally, I am overjoyed to know that my children are also children of God. The formation that we have received from Opus Dei, has helped my wife and I to realize that we are collaborating with Our Lord. We are collaborating by helping our children grow up and to face life. This is not a burden but rather a cause of great joy. This obviously entails dedication. Sometimes it is not easy to keep your patience and not to lose your cool, but the challenge of a Christian lies precisely in this: to try to be better parents everyday. To correct and help each one another. To begin and begin again, just like Josemaría Escrivá used to say.

Is this teaching also applicable to married life?

It is also necessary in a husband and wife relationship to begin and begin again. It's necessary to give a new meaning to those words, "I love you",

that we say everyday. Josemaría Escrivá encouraged people to transform the prose of their ordinary lives into poetry. I think this is what all people in love should try to do.

How has the formation that you have received from Opus Dei helped you in your married life?

My wife and I have always been very close and the Work has united us even more. Now we understand each other better. A glance is enough to communicate what the other one is thinking. This is possible because we are happy with what we are doing together. For example, we start the day by going to Mass. We pray along side one another. During this time, we are very closely united and we give each other the strength to face the challenges of the day. Then, when we see each other in the evening after a day's work, we try to leave aside our tiredness and show our

love for each other once again. Josemaría Escrivá gave great importance to that moment when you come home. He encouraged wives to try to look nice, to smile and to be welcoming. He told husbands to treat their wives with a renewed kindness each day.

Television often communicates a false image of the family. The commercials on television show good-looking model-parents having breakfast calmly, surrounded by bright-eyed children who don't give the impression that they are about to go to school. What do you think about these images?

What comes to mind is what the founder of the Work used to say about holiness. He never liked those old biographies of saints, which described them as if they were almost infallible and perfect human beings. Josemaría Escrivá taught us

that in the life of every person, there are moments when we fall. But the most important thing is to get up straightaway and find the strength to begin again. The same goes for family life. The model-parents in the commercials are as unreal as the saints described in certain biographies. Supermen don't exist. What exist are many individuals willing to lovingly sanctify the big and small events of daily life.

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