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“The Way” among the classics: presentation of a new critical edition

Philologist Fidel Sebastián Mediavilla presented a new critical edition of Saint Josemaría’s “The Way” at a round table in Rome on 14 September 2023.

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“The Way Among the Classics” was the title of the round table held on 14 September 2023, at the Pontifical

University of the Holy Cross (Rome), an event dedicated to presenting a new critical edition of Saint Josemaría Escrivá's *The Way*.

The event was organized by the Istituto Storico San Josemaría Escrivá and the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. Moderated by Luis Cano, secretary of the *Istituto Storico*, the panel featured professors Vicente Bosch (Faculty of Theology) and Rafael Jiménez Cataño (Faculty of Institutional Social Communication). Fidel Sebastián Mediavilla, a specialist in Spain's Golden Age and the editor responsible for this new critical edition, also participated.

Since its first publication in 1939, *The Way* has seen more than 420 editions. According to research by the Cervantes Institute, it is the fourth most translated work originally written in Spanish, following *Don Quixote* by Miguel de

Cervantes and two novels by Nobel laureate Gabriel García Márquez.

The new edition of *The Way*, prepared by philologist Fidel Sebastián Mediavilla, is based on a meticulous critical examination, interpreting the subtle variations that exist among different editions of the book.

This critical edition is part of a collection dedicated to publishing Spanish literary classics, promoted by the *Centro para la Edición de Clásicos Españoles*, directed by Francisco Rico.

According to Luis Cano, “*The Way* has attained the status of a classic in spiritual literature due to its universal relevance, depth, lasting influence, ability to resonate across generations, and timeless character.”

The extensive annotations in this edition offer a deeper understanding

of the context of *The Way*, particularly in relation to Spanish mystical and spiritual traditions. As Vicente Bosch pointed out in his remarks, Saint Teresa of Jesus' influence is particularly evident in the book.

Some of the panelists noted that one of this edition's key contributions is the identification of both explicit and implicit references to various authors, from both spiritual and literary traditions, embedded in different passages of *The Way*. This effort provides greater insight into Escrivá's literary influences, his writing style, and stylistic nuances.

Rafael Jiménez Cataño focused on the rhetorical elements that characterize *The Way* and provided interpretative keys to understanding the profound impact the book has had (and continues to have) on readers of all ages and backgrounds.

In his remarks, Fidel Sebastián spoke about the genesis of this edition, which builds upon the work begun by Pedro Rodríguez in 2002, expanding the research into new areas. The extensive scholarly effort culminated in the book's inclusion in the *Centro para la Edición de Clásicos Castellanos* collection at the University of Valladolid.

Fidel Sebastián is a distinguished editor of spiritual classics. His body of work includes, among others, the critical edition of *The Book of Her Life* by Saint Teresa of Jesus (2014) and *Introduction to the Symbol of Faith* by Fray Luis de Granada (2021), both published in the *Biblioteca Clásica* of the Royal Spanish Academy. He has also produced critical editions of works by Juan de Palafox as well as Lorenzo and Jerónimo Gracián.

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