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Letter of Saint Josemaria about some characteristics of the spirit of Opus Dei

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Letter 6 from The Collected
Letters, volume II, in which St.
Josemaria wrote about some
aspects of the vocation and
mission of the Work, speaking
particularly about secularity.

01/08/2024

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About the letter

The *Letter* deals with various aspects of the spirit of Opus Dei, which the founder wishes to present in its genuine simplicity. Hence the Latin *incipit Sincerus est*.

As happens in several of his *Letters*, St Josemaría moves from one topic to

another, without following a rigid outline and returning from time to time to something already treated, in *apparent disorder*, as he explains in another *Letter* in this volume.

There is, however, a common thread. He attempts to show the specificity of the spirit he preaches and its roots in the Gospel; its similarity to the life of the first Christians. And then to clarify, as a consequence, its differences from other vocations and paths in the Church. He stresses, above all, the secularity of dedication in Opus Dei and other features that are in part common to all forms of Christian dedication, and in part proper to it, due to the particular way in which they are lived in the Work he founded.

For example, although the awareness of one's own divine filiation is essential for all Christians, St Josemaría would stress it even more,

pointing it out as the foundation of the spiritual life in Opus Dei (no. 2). It can also be said that the mission of the Work is the same as that of the Church, for it seeks to restore the world in Christ (*ibid*), enlightening people with the light of God (no. 3). But in the case of Opus Dei, that mission is concentrated in a special way on secular occupations (no. 9). A member of Opus Dei is no different from other ordinary Christians (nos. 9-10), and is eager to place Christ at the summit of human activities (no. 12), paying special attention to work, which becomes a means of sanctification (no. 13). He or she practises a person-to-person apostolate, in a climate of friendship and understanding (nos. 14, 54-55, 64-69, 70-72). All this is sustained by a contemplative life, leading to a *unity of life* (nos. 14-16) – to coherence – and seasoned by a characteristic spirit of freedom (no. 37).

At various points, St Josemaría speaks of the conflicts and difficulties Opus Dei has encountered on its journey, raised by those who have not understood what seems to the founder to be a simple and clear spirit (nos. 17-20, 43-45). Above all, he rejects the accusation of secrecy (nos. 56-60).

The background to his exposition is within the context of identification with Christ (no. 11) and the call to bring the Gospel to all mankind. For him, this evangelising task is carried out by means of a friendship filled with understanding, by fostering unity with all people and by practising a tolerant compromise with people (nos. 54-55, 64-69, 70-71). All this is presided over by good example (nos. 51-53) and completed by an exposition of Christian doctrine that tries to accommodate the mentality of the listeners (nos. 47-48).

Other virtues or characteristics that St Josemaría mentions, as especially dear to Opus Dei, are humility (no. 4), unity in what is fundamental and diversity in what is open to different opinions (no. 27), poverty (no. 28), joy and gratitude to God (no. 29) and sincerity (no. 61).

There are also several references to the need, for the spirit he is describing, to be represented by a juridical formula that adequately reflects its singular nature (nos. 73-75).

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