

# **The saints are not heroes, but friends of God**

Cardinal Ratzinger, Vatican Prefect for Faith, Presents Book on Opus Dei Founder. Zenit.org reports.

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ROME, MARCH 17, 2002 (Zenit.org).- The secret of Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer's holiness was his conviction that he was only God's instrument, says Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.

The prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith made his comments last Thursday when presenting Giuseppe Romano's book "Opus Dei -- Il Messaggio, le Opere, le Persone" ("Opus Dei -- The Message, The Works, The People"; San Paolo, 2002).

Escrivá "intended to found something, but he was always conscious that it was not his work, that he had not invented anything; the Lord God simply used him," Cardinal Ratzinger said. "Therefore, it was not his work, but 'Opus Dei.' He was only the instrument for God's work."

Cardinal Ratzinger said he was impressed by Romano's interpretation of the name Opus Dei -- "a biographical interpretation that enables one to understand the spiritual physiognomy of Blessed Josemaría," the prelate said.

"The word that came to mind," the cardinal added, "was that of the Lord when he says, 'My Father is always at work.' He said it during a discussion with certain specialists of religion who did not wish to admit that God could work on the Sabbath."

This is "a debate that is still present among Christians of our time, who believe God withdrew after creation," he added. "According to this pattern of thought, God can no longer enter the fabric of our daily life."

And yet, Cardinal Ratzinger continued, "here we have the answer: The man who opens himself to the presence of God, realizes that God always acts. What is more, we must let him in, let him act; this is how things are born that renew humanity."

"From this point of view, one understands what holiness and the

common vocation to holiness mean," the cardinal said. "Heroic virtue means that the presence of God is revealed in man's life, namely, the fact is revealed that man on his own can do nothing."

"Holiness is that contact with God, making oneself a friend of God, allowing him to act, the only one who can really make the world good and fill it with light," he continued.

This truth makes the Christian fearless, "because whoever is in God's hands always falls into his arms and, therefore, has the courage to respond to today's world," the cardinal concluded.

The meeting ending with a talk by Romano, the author, who said that when anyone praised Escrivá during his life, he responded by comparing himself to an envelope.

On this envelope one sees the addresser, God, and the addressee, men, said Romano. He said Opus Dei can be understood thus: "Each one of us carries something within himself and, in the end, he is not the one who has written the address, or pasted the stamp, or sent the letter."

"The letter has arrived at its destiny, and the canonization of the first envelope might encourage others, ordinary users, to become holy envelopes," Romano concluded.

Blessed Escrivá is scheduled to be canonized a saint Oct. 6.

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