

The wise are ready to change their mind

There is a Spanish proverb which goes, “The wise are ready to change their mind; fools never do”. In this testimony the author relates how she came to change her initially critical attitude towards Opus Dei.

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Blows ...

Throughout the whole of my life I criticised the Work very much. Why? I don't know why. I did not know

anything about it, and going just by hearsay, I said terrible things. Even though my mother who was a co-operator lived with me, I didn't bother to find out. I allowed myself to be led by my prejudices, and I raised as many objections as I could, by word of mouth (and what an appalling tongue it had), and by deeds.

As an example: my husband, José Luis, may he rest in peace, used to go to confession with a priest of the Work, who recommended some spiritual books for him to read, and I would hide them whenever I saw them around the house.

And as I knew that my daughter in law and my son in law were in Opus Dei I would always bring it up, and in a very insulting way. Even my eldest son, who was not particularly keen on Opus Dei, said to me: 'Mother,

don't say these things to Manolo because they hurt him'.

I criticised everything and everybody, the priests and those who were not priests... Although there was no reason, since the Christian example my husband gave me was wonderful. When he came back tired at night from work, I would ask him: "Well, José Luis how have things gone today?" "Very well", he would reply, "I have had fourteen people come to my consulting room". "That's wonderful", I would say.

"Well... thirteen of them were people in need, one of them actually paid..."

... And a welcome

Then, one day, and I consider this as very special grace St Josemaría obtained for me, I went to the Church of San Juan, and I found it, most unusually, completely empty. I looked behind me, and I saw there

was a priest sitting in the confessional. I made my confession and... How grateful to God we should be for the Sacrament of Confession!

In 1994 I went to a retreat. José Luis had just asked for the admission in the Work as a Supernumerary. I did the same a year later, and my youngest daughter the year after that.

People would ask me. “But how can that be? Are you now in the Work after all those things you used to say?” And I would answer them: “It is the wise who are ready to acknowledge when they are wrong”.

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In 1996, when the Prelate of Opus Dei came to Granada, I told him all this.

“I am Menenes, and for a long time, because I did not really know what

Opus Dei was, I have been more critical than I should have been. Thanks be to God, I am now one of your daughters. I want to make use of the opportunity to ask for pardon again, and to put right all the wrongs I may have done. Please tell us how Christians should live charity and not speak badly about anyone.”

The Father told me good-humouredly : “My daughter, you have made a public confession, but I am not going to give you any penance”. And he talked, with great affection, about the need to be very understanding with others, to be prayerful and to practice charity by controlling our tongue... “To *criticise*”, he added with a smile referring to what I had said before, “is already to say more than one should.”

And here I am giving thanks to God. Thanks to God and to Saint Josemaría

and to the patient and silent prayers, for so many years, of my husband José Luis.

A saint by blows

I recently found out, after many decades, that the young priest who prepared us in the School of the Assumption in Madrid for our First Holy Communion in 1932 was... Saint Josemaría! I can remember very little about him except that every day at the end of the catechism classes he would say:

Now let us say a Hail Mary... for the ‘saint by blows’.

It was he himself who was the ‘saint by blows’. He really did suffer many contradictions, many insults and many blows throughout his life, which purified and sanctified him. And I gave him some of those blows.

And he, as all the saints have done, has interceded for me before God, and has answered my blows with a welcome, and the grace of conversion.

Mercedes Alexanco, a mother of five: "Throughout the whole of my life I criticised the Work very much."

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