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“Dora holds special importance for Opus Dei”

Dora del Hoyo was the first numerary assistant. An interview with Javier Medina, who has written a brief biography entitled “A Lighted Lamp.”

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Why did you decide to write about Dora del Hoyo? Did you know her personally?

I didn't have the good fortune of meeting Dora. I have gotten to know her through the written accounts of her life from several women who lived with her during her years in Rome. Reading those accounts, I discovered a rich and attractive personality, and felt prompted to make her life known to others. So I started writing this book.

What was Dora's connection to the Founder of Opus Dei?

Dora was the first numerary assistant in Opus Dei. St. Josemaría found in this spiritual daughter of his a faithful and dedicated woman with great human gifts, who always knew how to say yes to God. That's why she holds special importance for Opus Dei.

The book refers to domestic work as a real profession. How does that apply to Dora?

In regard to work, the term “profession” designates occupations that require a high level of specific capabilities; and a “professional” is a person whose actions reflect a high degree of competence. All the testimonies about her life concur in affirming that Dora carried out her domestic work with the competence of a first-class professional. She mastered every aspect of that work and exercised it at the highest level.

Is this type of professional work still relevant today?

One often hears the complaint today that the world is becoming ever more de-humanized. At the same time, we would all like to see more agreement, more solidarity, more understanding among people. How can we achieve this? Certainly there is no single remedy. But in my opinion, if we want social relations to

improve, we have to begin with the most basic unit—the family.

Young people—and in fact everyone—need the warmth of a home. And if they fail to find it, it becomes very difficult to learn how to relate to others in a truly human way.

From that perspective, it is evident that homemakers like Dora play a very important role in the well-being of society. Those who govern need to be convinced of this reality and give a strong impetus to the work of those who exercise this profession—as a fundamental investment in society's future.

What is especially notable about Dora's personality?

If I were to mention just one characteristic, without a doubt it would be her love for God and neighbor. She was a woman with a great heart.

Some testimonies cited in the book recall Dora as a heroic woman in the midst of a very ordinary life. What sort of heroism was it?

Christian heroism does not mean doing what is “the most difficult” or “the greatest.” It takes place in ordinary life, the consequence of a love shown continually in apparently small details. That’s how Dora lived: taking care of others, out of love.

(The biography, "Una luz encendida," is available from Palabra publishers in Madrid.)

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