

Sergei: Sanctifying Work in Russia

Sergei, a 28-year-old historian, is a Russian Orthodox cooperator of Opus Dei who found St. Josemaría on the Internet in his hometown of Ryazan.

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The immense gift of life that God has given us is just the beginning of our journey. On our way to the Kingdom of God we are all the same, whatever family we were born into. That's why

it's so important for us to ask, "Who am I?" and "Why am I here?"

One day a friend told me: "When I finished my degree I thought that soon I would be an important person, that before long a big car would drive up and the head of some major firm would greet me, 'We've been waiting for you; welcome to your new job!' But as the days went by, no car showed up and many months passed before I found work. And then it wasn't the job I had prepared for."

Something similar happened to me. When I finished my studies in history, I found some part-time work for several years while writing my doctoral thesis. A few months before defending the thesis, I discovered the Christian faith. Since then I've been lucky to find steady work and can say that life hasn't gone all that badly for me.

In any case, I realized that something was still missing. Rarely did I find any real satisfaction in my work. I thought to myself: “I can do greater and more interesting things than this, but my bosses don’t see it that way.” This dissatisfaction couldn’t last forever, so I started looking for something that could help me escape from this dead-end street and truly find myself.

One day, on the Internet, I came across some passages from a book by St. Josemaría. It was only a few lines, but it was enough to catch my attention and make me react. I had the impression that those words had been written especially for me: “That young fellow wrote to me: ‘My ideal is so great that only the sea could hold it.’ I answered: And what about the Tabernacle, which is so ‘small’? And the ‘lowly’ workshop in Nazareth? It is in the greatness of ordinary things that He awaits us!”

I've noticed with pictures of some people that the person's eyes seem to be looking directly at you, and that if you change your position the eyes seem to follow you. That's what happened to me. St. Josemaría didn't write his books "for everyone," but "for each one," "for me."

Finding meaning in any activity, even when boring or routine, could seem an obvious truth that's been known for a thousand years. But when you read words like: "Before God, no occupation is in itself great or small. Everything acquires the value of the Love with which it is carried out," then that truth becomes surprisingly relevant right here and now.

Once I changed my attitude to work, the quality of my work and the way I approached it started changing too. But most importantly, my understanding of "why" I was doing it changed. As I read more deeply in

St. Josemaría's books, it became impossible for me to work in a slipshod way or to do something just to get it done, since we are working for God. As Escrivá says, "It is no good offering to God something that is less perfect than our poor human limitations permit. The work that we offer must be without blemish, and it must be done as carefully as possible, even in its smallest details."

This is how St. Josemaría has helped me to "find myself" and discover the meaning of my activities, and to carry out my work with peace.
