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Some Features of the Spirit of Opus Dei

03/10/2014

Opus Dei exists in the Church to foster the struggle for holiness in the middle of the world. Below four features of its spirit are described that are closely united to one another: divine filiation, unity of life, the sanctification of work, and doctrinal piety. No distinction is made between the lay and ordained faithful because, as St. Josemaría explained, “in the Work there are not two classes of members, priests and lay people. All are, and feel

themselves to be, equal, and all live the same spirit—sanctification in one's own state in
life" (*Conversations*, no. 69).

Divine Filiation

“Divine filiation is the basis of the spirit of Opus Dei,” St. Josemaría stated (*Christ Is Passing By*, no. 64). Baptism makes us children of God in Christ and begins a relationship based on confidence in divine Providence, simplicity in our dealings with God and with other men and women, a deep sense of the dignity of each person and fraternity towards all, true Christian love for the world and all of God’s creatures, serenity and optimism.

The formation given in Opus Dei strengthens in the Christian faithful a lively sense of their condition as

children of God, which imbues each of their actions and helps them act in accord with the exalted vocation to which they have been called (cf. *Eph* 4:1).

St. Josemaría summarized the sense of divine filiation as an ardent and sincere desire, tender and deep, to imitate Jesus as his brothers and sisters, children of God the Father, and to live always in the presence of God. It fosters a life of faith in Providence and a serene and joyful abandonment to the divine Will.

Unity of Life

***One Lord, one faith, one baptism* (*Eph* 4:5), St. Paul says in describing the reality of the Christian life. The lives of Christ's followers are and have to be *one* life, unique and unitary. This is "an essential condition for those who are trying to sanctify themselves in the midst of the ordinary situations of their work and of their family and social relationships" (*Friends of God*, no. 165).**

Opposing the temptation that would separate our relationship to God from our behavior at work, at home, and in society—an error highlighted by the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (no. 43)—St. Josemaría proclaimed

strongly: “there is no clash, no opposition, between serving God and serving men, between the exercise of our civic rights and duties and our religious ones, between the effort to build up and improve the earthly city, and the conviction that we are passing through this world on the way to our heavenly homeland” (*Friends of God*, no. 165).

Formation in the Work leads its members to orient to God, through the fulfillment of their duties, the structure of society, striving always to maintain “a simple and strong unity of life that supports and penetrates all our actions” (St. Josemaría, cited in Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, II, p. 409).

Confidence in God and sincerity of life, aided by examinations of conscience and personal spiritual direction, are necessary means to grow in this unity of life. Thus it is

possible to overcome the discord between what God asks of us and our own will.

Sanctification of Work

Sanctification of work is the "hinge" to acquire sanctity in the middle of the world according to the spirit of Opus Dei. Moreover, as St. Josemaría said, it is the indispensable means for apostolate. We need to work a lot, with human and Christian perfection. God wants us to care for the world he created (cf. *Gen* 1:27, 2:15), to bring it to him (cf. *Jn* 12:32).

In the first place, working with human perfection—that is, caring for little things, working with order, intensity, constancy, competence, and

a spirit of service and concord with others. In a word, with professionalism.

Then, with Christian perfection—putting God in the first place, for the professional vocation is an essential part of each person's divine vocation (cf. *Friends of God*, no. 60). By working out of love for God and the desire to serve one's fellow men, a Christian exercises the human virtues and above all charity, sanctifying not only himself, but also his work, which becomes an authentic means of holiness.

Apostolate is the natural result of unity of life and sanctified work: "For a Christian, apostolate is something instinctive. It is not something added onto his daily activities and his professional work from the outside" (*Christ Is Passing By*, no. 122).

Doctrinal Piety

St. Josemaría taught that piety is the "remedy of remedies": a deep, "doctrinal" piety, for without doctrine a life of intimacy with Jesus runs the risk of superficiality—something merely external and sentimental.

Doctrine and piety cannot exist separately: doctrine is necessary to nourish piety, and piety vivifies doctrine. In this way, a Christian immersed in temporal activities has sufficient material to nourish his life of prayer and to respond to anyone who inquires about the reason for his hope (cf. *1 Pet* 3:15). "I ask you, even when you grow old, to be eager to acquire a deeper formation," writes St. Josemaría (*Furrow*, no. 538).

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