

Divine Filiation and Our Mission to continue Christ's Redemptive Work in the World

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Here I will reflect on the teaching of Blessed Josemaría on our divine filiation, which both commissions and enables us to continue Christ's redemptive work in the world. Many superb studies of Blessed Josemaría's teaching on divine filiation and our apostolate of sharing in Christ's redemptive work are already available¹. Since there is no need to do what has already been done well, I will seek to summarize the teaching of Blessed Josemaría, making use of existing studies, and then to show how the teaching of the Vatican Council II and of Pope John Paul II and the work of some contemporary theologians help deepen our understanding and appreciation of the wonderful truths proclaimed so passionately by the Founder of Opus Dei.

¹ One of the best and most comprehensive studies of Blessed Josemaría's teaching on divine filiation is that of F. OCÁRIZ, "La filiación divina: realidad central en la vida y en la enseñanza de Mons. Escrivá de Balaguer", in *Mons. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y el Opus Dei en el 50 aniversario de su fundación*, eds. P. RODRIGUEZ et al., Pamplona 1985², pp. 173-214. Another helpful study is that of J. BURGGRAF, "Awareness of Divine Filiation", in *Holiness and the World: Studies in the Teachings of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá*, eds. M. BELDA et al., Princeton 1997, pp.107-126. A fine study of Blessed Josemaría's teaching on the apostolic vocation of the Christian is L. ALONSO, "La vocación apostólica del cristiano en la enseñanza de Mons. Escrivá de Balaguer", in *Mons. Josemaría Escrivá y el Opus Dei...*, pp. 229-292.

1. THE TEACHING OF BLESSED JOSEMARÍA ON DIVINE FILIATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO OUR MISSION (APOSTOLATE) TO SHARE IN CHRIST'S REDEMPTIVE WORK

Blessed Josemaría's teaching can, I believe, be summarized succinctly as follows: God, in his wise and loving plan for human existence, calls us to be his very own children, redeemed by his only-begotten Son who became man, suffered, and died for our sake. He gives us the gift of divine filiation through the Holy Spirit. As his children we share in the life of the Holy Trinity and are called to be not only other Christs, but Christ himself. Because we are children of God we are children of Mary and Joseph and children of the Church and of the Roman Pontiff. As God's children we are also brothers and sisters of every human person, charged with the task of sanctifying ourselves and them in and through our work and the ordinary circumstances of every day and in this way share in Christ's redemptive work².

I will briefly expand on *some* of these elements in the teaching of Blessed Josemaría.

The truth that we are truly children of God — the truth of divine filiation — is at the core of everything the Founder of Opus Dei did and preached³. Time and time again, Blessed Josemaría underscored the paramount significance of our divine filiation. One representative passage declares:

“The great boldness of the Christian faith [...] is [...] to proclaim the value and dignity of human nature and to affirm that we have been created to achieve the dignity of the children of God, through the grace that raises us up to a supernatural level. An incredible boldness it would be, were it not founded on the promise of salvation given us by God the Father, confirmed by the blood of Christ, and reaffirmed and made possible by the constant action of the Holy Spirit”⁴.

The ultimate reason why we exist is that God has made us to be not only special creatures — made in his image — but his *children*, members of the divine family.

² These points are developed in depth by F. OCÁRIZ in ‘La filiación divina...’, cit.

³ BLESSED J. ESCRIVÁ, *Christ Is Passing By*, 64: “This divine filiation is the basis of the spirit of Opus Dei”. A. DEL PORTILLO, in his ‘Foreword’ to *Christ Is Passing By*, pp. 11-12, declared that the sense of divine filiation was “at the core of his preaching”. As OCÁRIZ has observed, the sense of divine filiation must be “understood not as just one among many theoretical truths» but «should be seen and practiced as something basic, as the foundation of all Christian living” (F. OCÁRIZ, ‘La filiación divina...’, cit. p. 174).

⁴ BLESSED J. ESCRIVÁ, *Christ Is Passing By*, 133.

“God the Father [...] sent to the world his only-begotten Son, to reestablish peace; so that by his redeeming men from sin, ‘we might become sons of God’ (Gal 4:5) [...] capable of sharing in the divine intimacy of the Trinity... It is God who has the last word — and it is a word of his saving and merciful love and, therefore, the word of our divine filiation. Therefore, I repeat [...] today, with St. John: ‘See how greatly the Father has loved us; that we should be counted as God’s children, should be indeed his children’ (1 Jn 3:1)”⁵.

We are God’s children because, in baptism, “our Father God has taken possession of our lives, has made us share in the life of Christ, and has given us the Holy Spirit”⁶. Through baptism we are literally divinized⁷, “made bearers of the word of Christ”⁸, and take upon ourselves the responsibility of shaping our lives according to its demands⁹, of which the most central is that we seek the holiness to which God calls us and to participate in the redemptive work of Christ¹⁰. Our divine filiation is both a divine gift and a task: to identify ourselves with God’s only-begotten Son and carry out his divine mission. Jesus’ work of salvation, Blessed Josemaría reminds us, “is still going on, and each one of us has a part in it. It is Christ’s will, St. Paul tells us in impressive words, that we should fulfill in our flesh, in our life, what is lacking in his passion, ‘for the good of his body, which is the Church’ (Col 1:24)”¹¹.

Because of our divine filiation we are called to be another Christ — *alter Christus* — indeed, to be Christ himself — *ipse Christus*. The psalmist’s words, “You are my son” (Ps 2:7) are addressed to Christ. But, Blessed Josemaría insisted, these words are addressed “to you and to me if we decide to become another Christ, Christ himself”¹². To follow Christ is the secret of life rooted in the mystery of the Triune God. Echoing St. Paul, Blessed Josemaría instructs us to ‘put on’ Christ. “We must accompany him so closely that we come to live with him, like the first Twelve did; so closely that we become identified with him.

⁵ *Ibidem*, 65, 66.

⁶ *Christ Is Passing By*, 128.

⁷ See *ibidem*, 103: “Our faith teaches us that man, in the state of grace, is divinized - filled with God”.

⁸ *Friends of God*, 210.

⁹ See *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá*, 22.

¹⁰ See *ibidem*, 24, 44; *Christ Is Passing By*, 110.

¹¹ *Christ Is Passing By*, 129. This shows us that our divine filiation and vocation to be saints has an *ecclesial* dimension, because the Church is, as Ocariz so well puts it, “the *place* of the Christian vocation”. F. OCÁRIZ, “Vocation to Opus Dei is a vocation in the Church, in *Opus Dei in the Church* (Princeton/Dublin 1993), p. 80. See all of pp. 77-116 for a development of this idea.

¹² *Christ Is Passing By*, 185.

Soon we will be able to say, provided we haven't put obstacles in the way of grace, that we have put on, have clothed ourselves with our Lord Jesus Christ"¹³.

To share in Christ's redemptive work is our mission, our apostolate. Our own divinization as God's children commits us to divinize the world, to lead all things back to God: this is the terminus of the Christian apostolate founded on the divine filiation, because it is the necessary consequence of our being *ipse Christus*. Blessed Josemaría put the matter as follows: "Each of us is to be *ipse Christus*: Christ himself. He is the one mediator between God and man. And we make ourselves one with him in order to offer all things, with him, to the Father. Our calling to be children of God, in the midst of the world, requires us not only to seek our own personal holiness but also to go out onto all the ways of the earth, to convert them into roads that will carry souls over all obstacles and lead them to the Lord"¹⁴.

Blessed Josemaría also proclaimed tirelessly that we are to live our lives as God's children and seek perfect holiness in the ordinary circumstances of our lives. He proclaimed this truth most vigorously in a homily entitled "Passionately Loving the World".

"Everyday life is the true setting [place, *lugar* in Spanish] for your lives as Christians. Your ordinary contact with God takes place where your fellow men, your yearnings, your work and your affections are. There you have your daily encounter with Christ. It is in the midst of the most material things of the earth that we must sanctify ourselves, serving God and all mankind [...] Either we learn to find our Lord in ordinary, everyday life, or else we shall never meet Him"¹⁵.

To summarize: through baptism we are divinized and become God's very own children, called to the fullness of holiness, which we are to work out in the ordinary circumstances of daily life by conforming ourselves ever more fully to Christ himself, so that we in truth become other Christs, *ipse Christus*, given the privilege of sharing in his redemptive work.

¹³ *Friends of God*, 299. On this, see A. ARANDA, "The Christian, *alter Christus, ipse Christus*, in the thought of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer", in *Holiness and the World*, pp. 127-190.

¹⁴ *Christ Is Passing By*, 120; Cfr. 98, 106; *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá*, 58: "Every single Christian can and should be 'another Christ', 'Christ himself'". See also *Friends of God*, 256. On this see Alonso, "La vocación apostólica...", *Mons. Josemaría Escrivá y el Opus Dei*, especially pp. 237-244.

¹⁵ "Passionately loving the world", in *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá*, 113-123, at 113, 114. See also *Christ Is Passing By*, 9, 105, 110, 198; *Friends of God*, 18, 60, 312. See also P. RODRIGUEZ, "Santità nella vita quotidiana", «Studi cattolici» 381, 717-729.

2. VATICAN COUNCIL II, THE CALL TO HOLINESS, LAYPEOPLE AND THE APOSTOLATE

One of the great truths proclaimed by Vatican Council II is that *all* Christians are called to be holy, to be saints. This teaching was the central subject-matter of Chapter 5 of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, where the Council Fathers declared: “It is [...] quite clear that all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love, and by this holiness a more human manner of life is fostered also in earthly society” (39). In Chapter 4 of this document and in its Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam actuositatem* the Council magnificently showed how the lay faithful are to fulfill their vocation to holiness. Pointing out that the lay faithful by reason of their baptism share in their own way the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ, the Council Fathers emphasized the ‘secular’ character of the laity. In a masterful and eloquent passage bringing to mind Blessed Josemaría’s teaching, they declared:

“By reason of their special vocation, it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will. They live in the world, that is, they are engaged in each and every work and business of the earth and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, constitute their very existence. There they are called by God that, being led by the Spirit to the Gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope, and charity, they must manifest Christ to others. It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are so closely associated that these may be effective and grow according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer”¹⁶.

The Council likewise developed in detail the responsibilities of laypeople to do apostolate or carry on Christ’s redemptive work, and here I want to summarize its teaching on this matter because it so beautifully develops the teaching of Blessed Josemaría.

The source of the apostolate is Jesus himself, sent by the Father to redeem all men, indeed, the whole of creation, and to send his Spirit to sanctify all men, to make them ‘new’ creatures¹⁷. It is rooted in the vocation of *all* Christians to holiness and flows from the identity given them and accepted by them in bap-

¹⁶ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Const. on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, 31. See also Decree on Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 7.

¹⁷ See *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 3-4.

tism¹⁸, as members of the divine family, children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus sharing in his threefold office of prophet, priest, and king¹⁹, called to participate in the “salvific mission of the Church”²⁰. It is nourished by the sacraments, in particular the Eucharist and the liturgy²¹. Its work “concerns essentially the salvation of men; it takes in also [...] the renewal of the whole temporal order [...] to permeate and improve the whole range of the temporal”²².

All members of the Church are called to share in the apostolate-hierarchy, priests, religious, and laity. The apostolate of the laity is in no way ‘delegated’ to them by the hierarchy, the clergy, or the religious. Rather, their apostolate, unique and utterly indispensable²³, is given them personally by Christ himself in and through their baptism and identity as God’s children who can, with Jesus, call God their ‘Father’.

The lay faithful carry on their apostolate both within the Church itself and in the world. Within the Church they do this in parishes, dioceses, and on the interdiocesan, national, and international levels²⁴ by engaging in catechetical instruction, liturgical worship (e.g., as lectors), and involvement in the pastoral structure of the Church (e.g., as canon lawyers), and so forth. However, the exercise of their apostolate must never lead to their ‘clericalization’. But the *proper* place for the lay faithful to exercise their apostolate is *in the world*, as the text from *Lumen gentium*, 31 cited above makes so clear. Moreover, it is a grave mistake to think that the lay apostolate is a ‘part-time’ job, as it were, unrelated to their daily activities. Carrying out their responsibilities as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, laborers, teachers, professionals of all sorts is an integral component of their apostolate. “It is a mistake”, the Council Fathers declared, to think that, because we have here no lasting city, but seek the city which is to come, we are entitled to shirk our earthly responsibilities; this is to forget that by our faith we are bound all the more to fulfill these responsibilities according to the vocation of each one (Cfr. 2 Thes 3:6-13; Eph 4:28). But it is no less mistaken to think that we may immerse ourselves in earthly activities as if these latter were utterly foreign to religion, and religion nothing more than the fulfillment of acts of worship and a few moral obligations. One of the gravest errors of our time is the dichotomy between the faith which many profess and the practice of their daily lives [...]. Let there be, then, no such pernicious opposition between pro-

¹⁸ See *Lumen gentium*, 31.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, 31.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 33.

²¹ *Ibidem*, 33, 35; *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10; *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 3, 4, 10.

²² *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 5.

²³ See especially *Lumen gentium*, 31.

²⁴ See *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 10.

fessional and social activity on the one hand and religious life on the other [...]. Let Christians be proud of the opportunity to carry out their earthly activity in such a way as to integrate human, domestic, professional, scientific, and technical enterprises with religious values, under whose supreme direction all things are ordered to the glory of God²⁵.

3. POPE JOHN PAUL II ON BAPTISM, THE BEATITUDES, AND APOSTOLATE

Since our divine filiation is rooted in baptism I believe that some truths articulated by Pope John Paul II will help us gain a greater understanding of Blessed Josemaría's teaching. In his Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, the Holy Father stressed the existential-religious significance of free choice. He affirmed that "freedom is not only the choice for one or another particular action; it is also, within that choice, a *decision about oneself* and a setting of one's own life for or against the Good, for or against the Truth, and ultimately for or against God" (no. 65). In short, in and through the choices we make we determine our very selves, making us *to be* the kind of persons we are. He then points out the "importance of certain choices which 'shape' a person's entire moral life and which serve as bounds within which other particular everyday choices can be situated and allowed to develop" (*ibidem*). Then, in an especially important text, he writes as follows:

"There is no doubt that Christian moral teaching, even in its biblical roots, acknowledges the specific importance of a fundamental choice which qualifies the moral life and engages freedom on a radical level before God. It is a question of the decision of faith, of the *obedience of faith* (cfr. Rom 16:26) 'by which man makes a total and free self-commitment to God, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God as he reveals'"²⁶. This faith, which works through love (cfr. Gal 5:6), comes from the core of man, from his 'heart' (cfr. Rom 10:10), whence it is called to bear fruit in works (cfr. Mt 12:33-35; Lk 6:43-45; Rom 8:5-10; Gal 5:22) (no. 66).

Here Pope John Paul II is telling us that our fundamental option or choice as Christians is our *baptismal commitment*. Through this free, self-determining choice, made possible only by God's grace and the pouring of the Holy Spirit

²⁵ *Gaudium et spes*, 43.

²⁶ Here Pope John Paul II cites the Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, 5, which itself cites First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, Chapter 3, DS 3008.

into our hearts, we freely commit ourselves to live as children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus, called to holiness and to share in his work of salvation. This is a choice that is to ‘shape’ a Christian’s entire life and is to serve “as bounds within which other particular everyday choices can be situated and allowed to develop”²⁷. Through this free, self-determining choice we commit ourselves to the task of integrating within it every choice we make every day of our lives. The difficulty is that we fail to do this. Some choices we make are completely incompatible with this fundamental choice — mortal sins — and from these only God can save us. Others — venial sins — while not completely incompatible with our baptismal commitment — are not fully compatible with it. We become saints, truly holy, only when, with God’s never-failing help, we are true to our baptismal commitment and make every choice of every day one fully compatible with it.

Baptism commits us, John Paul II insists, to holiness: “Since baptism is a true entry into the holiness of God through incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit, it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalistic ethic and a shallow religiosity”. Moreover, he continues in a passage echoing the teaching of Blessed Josemaría, “this ideal of perfection must not be misunderstood as if it involved some kind of extraordinary existence, possible only for a few ‘uncommon heroes’ of holiness”²⁸.

Like Blessed Josemaría, the Holy Father is at pains to show that the lay faithful, called to holiness, must find it in the ‘world’. Ceaselessly reminding us that Vatican Council II identifies the lay faithful by their ‘secular’ character, i.e., their live in the ordinary world of work and of everyday things (see above), declares that “the ‘world’ thus becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation”²⁹.

Also in *Veritatis splendor*, the Holy Father focused on the meaning of the *Beatitudes* in the Christian’s life. I believe that the Holy Father’s observations here help deepen greatly the teaching of Blessed Josemaría, who, somewhat surprisingly, refers rather infrequently to the significance of the Beatitudes for Christian life, for those who have, through baptism, received the gift and task of divine filiation, who have become truly God’s very own children and Jesus’ brothers and sisters.

John Paul II, following St. Augustine, calls our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount the “*magna carta* of Christian morality” (15). The Holy Father says that the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount “speak of those basic attitudes and

²⁷ See Ency. *Veritatis splendor*, 65.

²⁸ Apost. letter, *Novo millennio adveniente*, 31. On the baptismal commitment to holiness, see also Pope John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 10.

²⁹ *Christifideles laici*, 15.

dispositions of life and therefore they do not coincide exactly with the commandments. On the other hand, there is no separation or opposition between the Beatitudes and the commandments: both refer to the good, to eternal life” (16). They are above all “promises, from which there also indirectly flow normative indications for the moral life [...] they are a sort of self-portrait of Christ [...] invitations to discipleship and to communion of life with Christ” (16). In other words, the Beatitudes designate the characteristics that should characterize a ‘child of God’, one who, like Jesus, wills to do only what is pleasing to the Father.

With the Fathers of Vatican Council II (and like Blessed Josemaría also), our Holy Father forcefully makes the point that the laity’s exercise of their unique apostolate must never lead to their clericalization: “The various ministries, offices and roles that the lay faithful can legitimately fulfill in the liturgy, in the transmission of faith, and in the pastoral structures of the Church”, he says, “ought to be exercised *in conformity to their specific lay vocation*”³⁰. Above all, he insists, the proper place for the lay faithful to exercise their apostolate is *in the world*³¹. In fact, precisely because the lay faithful work out their existence in the world, “*the ‘world’ thus becomes the place and means for the lay faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation*”³². Consequently, their vocation to sanctify themselves and the world “ought to be called an essential and inseparable element of the new life of Baptism... [and be recognized as] intimately connected to mission and to the responsibility entrusted to the lay faithful in the Church”³³. It is to the lay faithful that the task of building a ‘culture of life’ and a ‘civilization of love’ in the midst of the world is given. This is their mission, their unique and indispensable role in carrying out Christ’s redemptive mission³⁴.

In summary, Pope John Paul II’s constant teaching on the role of the lay faithful not only shows how prophetic was Blessed Josemaría in his teaching but also advances and deepens the thought of this servant of God.

4. THE WORK OF CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGIANs

The work of several contemporary theologians helps, in my opinion, to come a deeper appreciation of the teaching of Blessed Josemaría on divine filiation and our mission to share in Christ’s redemptive work. I cannot here reflect

³⁰ Apost. Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 23.

³¹ See *ibidem*, 7, 10, 14, 17, 23.

³² *Ibidem*, 17.

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ See Ency. *Evangelium vitae*, ch. 4; *Letter to Families*.

on the work of many of these theologians, among them Servais Pinckaers, O.P., José Luis Illanes, Ramón García de Haro, and Livio Melina³⁵. Here I will consider briefly only the contributions I find in the work of E. Colom and A. Rodríguez Luño and Germain Grisez.

a) *E. Colom and A. Rodríguez Luño*

These two theologians, priests of the Prelature of Opus Dei and professors at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (Rome), deepen the teaching of Blessed Josemaría insofar as they in large measure base their book on the truth of our divine filiation and all that this entails. Thus they define Christian life as the “life of man in Christ, or, more exactly, the life of man as a child of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit”. Baptism confers on a person “the grace of divine filiation, *the foundation of the Christian life* (emphasis added), and with it, the gratuitous reception of the supernatural principles of the new life: sanctifying grace as the vital remote principle, theological virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit as immediate operative principles” which the Christian needs to develop and express the divine life given with the gift of divine filiation³⁶.

Divine filiation has its own intrinsic dynamism: it is summoned to grow and attain “the state of perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). The perfection toward which divine filiation is intrinsically and dynamically ordered “is a moral task which looks to an always greater identification with Christ” until, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, it reaches “its final eschatological fulfillment, the participation in the Trinitarian life to which we have been destined in Christ even before the foundation of the world”³⁷.

These texts show us the plan of this excellent new work in moral theology. It views as the object proper to moral theology “the understanding of the life of the faithful in Christ” which looks at “the strengthening of the life of the faithful and contributing to the apostolic activity of the Church”³⁸. Thus in their work the meaning of the Christian life as one based on the reality of divine filiation holds a central place in the way moral theology is presented. For them man’s thirst for

³⁵ See S. PINCKAERS, O.P., *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Sister Mary Noble, O.P., Washington, D.C. 1998, Part One; R. GARCÍA DE HARO, *La Vita Cristiana*, Rome 1994; J.L. ILLANES, *On the Theology of Work*, trans. Michael Adams, Dublin 1980; L. MELINA, *Sharing in Christ’s Virtues*, trans. William E. May, Washington, D.C., 2001.

³⁶ E. COLOM - A. RODRIGUEZ LUÑO, *Scelti in Cristo per essere santi: Elementi di Teologia morale fondamentale*, Roma 1999, p. 9.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 18-19.

the absolute good “is effectuated and lived by the Christian as an aspiration toward sanctity, *understood as the plenitude of divine filiation which is actualized in this earthly life in the sequela and imitation of Christ*”³⁹.

In short, these theologians have explicitly endeavored to develop a systematic moral theology rooted on the reality of our divine filiation and all that it entails. In doing so they have, I believe, provided a systematic theological exposition and deepening of the work of Blessed Josemaría⁴⁰.

b) Germain Grisez, Baptism and Christian Love Personal Vocation, and the Beatitudes of the Lord's Sermon on the Mount

Another contemporary theologian whose work helps deepen the teaching of Blessed Josemaría is Germain Grisez. Three features of his work are particularly significant.

First, writing some 10 years before Pope John Paul II's Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, Grisez emphasized the same truth that, we have just seen, was made by the Holy Father, namely, that the choice to be baptized, is the fundamental option of the Christian. “It is a commitment, Grisez says, to live in union with Christ and to share in his redemptive work”⁴¹. Through baptism, moreover, the love of Christ himself has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We are now the ones who must shape our lives by the *new* commandment which Jesus gave his disciples, namely, to love one another even as he has loved them (cfr. Jn 13:34). Grisez, interpreting and reflecting on the new ‘law’ of love, believes that it requires Christians —God's children and Jesus' brothers and sisters— to will and to choose freely “those and only those possibilities which contribute to the integral human fulfillment being realized in the fulfillment of all things in Jesus” through his redemptive work. Our task, our mission, is to see to it that every free choice we make every day is one that will carry on Christ's redemptive work and in this way lead us and others to holiness.

Moreover, not only do we as Christians have a common vocation to holiness, but each of us has a unique *personal vocation*. In insisting on this, Grisez develops an aspect of Blessed Josemaría's thought not noted earlier, for the

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 55.

⁴⁰ An excellent and comprehensive review of this work is given by R.B. ARJONILLO JR., “Sanctity, Divine Filiation, *Sequela Christi* and Virtue in Fundamental Moral Theology, Apropos of a Recent Book, *Scelti in Cristo per Essere Santi*”, «Annales Teologici» 14 (2000) 485-534.

⁴¹ See G. GRISEZ, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 1, *Christian Moral Principles*, Chicago 1983, p. 551.

Founder of Opus Dei emphasized that God calls each one of us personally and give to each one of us a unique and indispensable role in carrying out Christ's redemptive work⁴². Indeed, Grisez maintains that a specific Christian moral norm incumbent on us is to discern our own unique vocation in the Church and in the world (through prayer) and to carry it out, for Jesus calls us to.

Grisez likewise emphasizes that, in carrying out our common vocation to holiness and our own personal vocation, we must shape our choices and actions in light of the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. In doing this Grisez retrieves traditional Catholic thought — here we should recall that St. Augustine called the Lord's Sermon on the Mount with its Beatitudes the *magna carta* of the Christian life⁴³, and that St. Thomas Aquinas declared that this Sermon “contains completely the information needed for the Christian life”⁴⁴. Pope Paul VI reminded us of this ancient Christian tradition⁴⁵ and in *Veritatis splendor* John Paul II has a brief but magnificent section devoted to the Lord's Sermon and the Beatitudes.

As noted earlier, Pope John Paul II had observed that “normative indications for the Christian life” flow ‘indirectly’ from the Beatitudes (see *Veritatis splendor*, 16). I believe that Grisez helps us to understand what our Holy Father is teaching here and in doing so provides us with faith-filled insights into the central place that the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount should play in the Christian life. Grisez regards them as ‘modes of Christian response’, specifying ways of choosing for those who, as Christians, seek to choose only those possibilities that contribute to Christ's redemptive work, that participate in his self-giving love. The Beatitudes, as Grisez presents them, are internal dispositions characterizing the life of persons whose wills, enlivened by the love of God poured into their hearts, are inwardly disposed to act with the confidence born of Christian hope, that integral human fulfillment is indeed realizable in union with Jesus. They are modes characterizing the lives of persons who, by reason of their living faith, are called ‘blessed’ by the Lord. They are internal dispositions inclining the children to God *to be fully* God's children, and to be willing, like Jesus, to do only what is pleasing to the Father. It is in this way they serve as ‘norms’ of Christian life, for in the light of the Beatitudes we can come to know the truth meant to guide our choices in fulfilling our unique Christian vocation and in this way sanctify themselves and the world⁴⁶.

⁴² See, for example, *Christ Is Passing By*, 3, 32, 33, 34.

⁴³ St. AUGUSTINE, *The Lord's Sermon on the Mount* I, 1.

⁴⁴ St. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, q. 108, 3.

⁴⁵ POPE PAUL VI, *The Credo of the People of God*, 12.

⁴⁶ Cfr. G. GRISEZ, *Christian Moral...*, cit., pp. 627-655.