

Content with my decision, I tried to convince my colleagues to do the same and stop selling this type of material in their service stations. I spoke with those with whom I had the greatest confidence. This effort turned out to be much more arduous than remodeling my own business, and the reactions I received were by no means favorable: "Since when do you mix your religion with business?" they asked me. Bewildered,

I used commercial arguments – there were more honorable families than depraved truck drivers, as well as Christian arguments – it is illicit to cooperate with evil. After a long discussion, they went their separate ways, disagreeing with everything that I had said to them.

I did not abandon them. In fact, I prayed for them and entrusted them to St. Josemaria. A few days later, I received a phone call. One of my friends was calling to tell me that after our meeting, they had continued discussing the issue and had decided to implement a policy in the other gas stations in favor of families.

*"Being a Christian is not something incidental; it is a divine reality that takes root deep in our life. It gives us a clear vision and strengthens our will to act as God wants. So we learn that the Christian's pilgrimage in the world must express itself in a continuous service in all kinds of ways, varying with each person's circumstances, but always motivated by love of God and of our neighbour."*⁸

VI. Conclusion

The practical experiences offered in this paper, which are inspired by the original message of St. Josemaria concerning the sanctification of ordinary work, express the power and potential of his message when it is put into practice by professional men and women. The study of these experiences will plant the seeds for new and interesting reflections and open new lines of future thought to benefit businesses and their contribution to the common good.

⁸ *Christ is Passing By*, 98.

JENNY DRIVER

FROM TOXICITY TO TRANSCENDENCE: ST. JOSEMARIA AND CONTEMPLATION IN THE WORKPLACE

I am a physician, not an expert in theology or philosophy, and I never knew St. Josemaria personally. I do, however, consider myself an expert in one thing: stress. Like many of my colleagues, I am a connoisseur of stress. We have an ice-cream shop in the United States called Baskin-Robbins. It has forty-one flavors, and if stress came in forty-one flavors, I would have tasted each and every one of them. A recent poll listed medical internship as one of the top five most stressful jobs in the US.

On July 1, the first day of internship, the only people in teaching hospitals more nervous than the new interns are the patients who know that they are being cared for by green recruits, fresh out of medical school. My first night on call, I was awakened by a page from an anxious-sounding nurse who said, "Come quick. Mr. Jones's heart rate is in the 200's and I can't find his pulse." That was the beginning of a love-hate relationship with my pager. On busy days my pager would go off 40 to 50 times, calling me to emergencies or asking for sleeping pills or enemas. Occasionally we would receive a welcome message from a friend, like "let's eat." We called that "friendly fire." Eating, sleeping and other functions we had once considered vital became subject to the dictates of our pagers and the condition of our patients. During my internship year it was routine to work 30-hour shifts and 120-hour workweeks in the intensive care unit, caring for the city's sickest patients on a few hours of sleep, or none. We worked with little to no sleep, fueled by caffeine, adrenaline and the fear of making a mistake.

Within a few months of internship, the idealism with which we initially embraced our job gave way to a kind of cynicism. This is reflected in the slang commonly used in the hospital subculture. Patients who were very sick and not likely to leave the hospital soon became "rocks." One might ask an intern on the geriatrics service. How big is your rock garden?" Getting a new patient from the emergency room during a night on call was called "taking a hit." We began to use "torture" analogies to describe our work. "I really got flogged with pages last night..." Or, "I was hit hard."

We helped each other work through experiences like having to tell a young mother that she was full of cancer, or making an error that led to a patient's death. The emotional, physical and existential stress took its toll on us. The changes in personality produced by this stress were described as "becoming toxic." It was an accepted part of the job, and we learned to overlook our colleagues' depression and irritability as "toxicity." Each one of us ultimately

faced the questions, "Why am I doing this? What is the meaning of my patient's suffering? What is the value of my work?"

But there was no time to think about or answer these questions. Products of a contemplatively challenged society with few spiritual roots, the majority of us kept working and kept going, hoping that the angst brought on by our work would pass with time. My workplace was desperately in need of a soul. That need was met by St. Josemaria's teaching about the possibility of contemplation in the midst of a frenetic work life, which helped me to transform my work from an experience of sheer stress into a place where I can encounter God.

My experience of contemplation and an inner life began on a Himalayan peak in Northern India, surrounded by Tibetan prayer flags, thin bits of cloth whipping in the wind, as if echoing the prayers of pilgrims before me who had climbed the mountain in search of peace and spiritual help. I added my brightly colored flags to the faded and tattered ones. I had left my home, my culture and my religion behind and was spending my junior year abroad in India. A poster child for generation X, I had been baptized Catholic but fell away from the Church in childhood despite the example of a very devout mother and a Catholic education. I was turned off by what I considered to be the "corruption of organized religion" and the materialism of my society.

When I went off to college I had a deep spiritual longing. I majored in -isms and Indian Studies and longed to "escape" from the world and from the ordinary. In *Existentialism 101* I was intrigued by Martin Heidegger's concept of "authentic existence," a state of "mindfulness of being" in contrast to the "forgetfulness of being" in which one surrenders to the everyday world and becomes lost in its concerns. I lived a double life—my spiritual interests were my own, private quest and were not integrated with the reality of my social and school life.

I climbed the mountain because there, far away from the worries and stresses of the world, I felt peaceful. I was able to forget about the contradictions and inconsistencies of my own life. It was easy to have a spirituality that demanded nothing of me that I didn't want to give. I felt I had escaped the "world" and material things with all their negative influence on me. I had moments of light and inspiration. Once, when I was spending time in Darmsella, in Northern India, where the Dalai Lama lived in exile, I noticed that bells would ring at odd times. I wondered what they meant. I went up to an elderly Tibetan woman, and asked her what the bells were for. She smiled and laughed: "They are to remind you that it is now." At that time, I did not grasp the meaning of her words. It was only later, much later, through the words of St. Josemaria, that I came to understand them.

As soon as I returned from India, my Buddhist veneer wore off. Fighting with my brothers and full of complaints, I was really longing for my mountain. I had no way of integrating my "spirituality" with the reality of each day.

It was about that time that my mother introduced me to some women in Opus Dei. I was immediately fascinated by their ideal of being contemplatives in the middle of the world, something I thought to be a contradiction. I was moved by their obvious love for and intimacy with God, who was a person to

them, someone loving and understanding. These women were busy professionals, and threw themselves into their work, but somehow had a depth and peace that helped them absorb the bumps in the road that seemed to throw me off kilter. Through my friends in Opus Dei and the life and teaching of St. Josemaria, I came to a deeper understanding of the truths of the Catholic faith. I began to pray and came back to the Sacraments. I no longer needed a mountain-retreat to feel close to God. I had discovered Him in the center of my soul. And even when I was peeling potatoes—I sometimes do!

The quest to live with constant knowledge of God's presence and providence was the "authentic existence" I had been searching for. So much of my life had been spent living on a level of worry and stress, trying to be "in control" and railing against my limitations. Rarely living in or enjoying the present moment, I ruminated on the past or was concerned about the future, having unrealistic expectations like "saving" all of my patients, never making mistakes, or always "looking good" to others. I realize how little I listened to people, how my worries about work and the people I loved crowded my consciousness.

I began to understand the inner struggle that was needed in order to overcome the restlessness and anxiety which had characterized my life to that point, and the transforming power of the sense of being a child of God. God was no longer an impersonal spectator, or harsh critic, but rather a loving person, who was intimately involved in the happenings of each moment. St. Josemaria described this awareness of being a beloved child of God as divine filiation. It is the wellspring from which his whole spiritual life flowed.

So much of my "toxicity" stemmed from a lack of inner life and not knowing how to have balance in my life or expectations. Martha was toxic when she complained to Jesus that Mary wasn't helping. It wasn't because Martha was working and Mary was loving. It was because Martha didn't see that work could be love. She had forgotten that God himself was so close to her and that through her work she was serving Him. She was thinking only of herself and this is what led to her unhappiness.

As is described beautifully in Dr. Coverdale's book, in a moment of incredible stress, when everything seemed to be going against him, St. Josemaria sat on a streetcar, and was suffused with a deep, profound, and permanent knowledge of, and confidence in, God's love for him. That confidence, that experience, of knowing that he was a beloved child of God, was what allowed him to continue and become the person that we heard about this morning. This was a life-transforming moment for St. Josemaria. It enabled him to have an incredible optimism and resilience in the face of disappointments, disasters, and betrayals of all kinds. His whole life is a testament to the power of one who knows how to become a child.

This power is beautifully illustrated by a vignette I read many years ago. It occurred during the terrible earthquake in Armenia that I'm sure many of you remember. A grade school had been leveled, and large number of children were buried and presumed dead. There was no heavy machinery available to help remove the rubble. Long after the other parents had given up from exhaustion,

one man doggedly continued digging for over twenty-four hours, until finally he heard the voice of his child. He was saying, "Daddy, I knew you would come. I knew you would come." He just kept repeating that. It took a number of hours to actually extricate the child completely, and later relief workers marveled at that child's apparent lack of post-traumatic stress disorder, which many people can have after a horrible experience like that. For the child, the experience had only confirmed the love of his father for him. I remembered this story in the days following September 11, as I saw the toll that event had taken on my patients, who have cancer, and on their families. A young child is buried alive, but survives unscathed, while thousands of people are shaken to their core, and require anti-depressants or anti-anxiety medication, because of an event they witnessed on television. At its roots, anxiety is a fear of loss, a fear of rejection, a fear of meaninglessness. It comes from living without a sense of the providence of God, or from losing it.

St. Josemaria often repeated and meditated on the words "Omnia in bonum": All things work together for the good of those who love God. He said, "My children, see God behind every event and circumstance." It has always interested me that the Chinese character for "crisis" is the same as for "opportunity." For St. Josemaria, accepting the events of each day as the will of God gave them a new meaning. Each "crisis" was now an opportunity for union with God and growth in virtue.

He used to say, "Don't say, 'That person bothers me.' Think that person sanctifies me." This simple advice has helped me to see the difficult situations I encounter in my work as something positive, something God sends me so I can grow in some way. This point of view gives my work a sense of meaning. It has even helped me to be on better terms with my beeper. Instead of swearing every time it goes off, I have learned over time to think, "God is calling me."

In Christian terms, as I carry out my work for God, I am somehow participating in his plans to make the world, and myself, better. I begin to see the value of the mundane and the monotonous. I am able to have contemplative moments throughout my day. When I write prescriptions, I picture the face of the patient I am helping. When sit down to do dictations, I offer that hour as a prayer for the patients whose stories I am telling. When I go to visit a dying patient, I take their hand and comfort them in some way and I become Veronica, wiping the face of Christ. As St. Josemaria would say, the ordinary happenings of my working day can "sanctify" me. In other words, I become less centered on myself and more on God and others.

Here is another quote that I love: "I will never share the opinion- though I respect it- of those who separate prayer from active life, as if they were incompatible. We children of God have to be contemplatives: people who, in the midst of the din and the throng, know how to find silence of soul in a lasting conversation with our Lord, people who know how to look at him as they look at a Father, as they look at a Friend, as they look at someone with whom they are madly in love."¹

¹ *Forge*, 738.

I do battle with the things that separate me from God and lead me to anxiety and toxicity on many fronts. E-mail is an ever-present temptation, addiction and vortex. I realized that it had become a source of anxiety for me and led me to interrupt my work and not work well. So I only check it twice a day. What a conquest! The daily struggle to put my work down when it's time to go is another thing I have learned, based on the inspiration of St. Josemaria. In that way my work doesn't dominate me.

There are many beautiful stories of how the Spirit of Opus Dei has helped people to find meaning in their work and do it for the love of God and others. One that has stuck with me particularly is about a friend who is a member of Opus Dei who runs a very large hotel in Houston. As you may know, there is a huge medical center in Houston. People come from all over the world for treatment. My friend gives people who work in her hotel inspirational talks every week about their work, trying to inspire them to do their work well. One day, one of her employees, someone who made up the rooms, cleaned them and changed the sheets, said to her, "I just want to thank you, because ever since one of your talks when you told us about that priest and his work, every time I make a bed I think I'm helping the family of some small child who has leukemia and who is here for treatment. And I love my job now."

There is another story that has always stuck with me. When one works in a contemplative way, one has amazing effects on the people around you. This is a true story. It happened in a prison in mainland China. There was a political prisoner in solitary confinement, and he had only one little window he could look out of to try to connect with the outside world. And every day there was a man who came and swept the courtyard outside of the window. It was the same man every day, and the way that man did his job saved the life of the man in confinement. It saved his sanity. Every day he would look out at the man as he swept. The man didn't do just a cursory job. He swept beautifully; if he missed a spot he went back and got it. And he worked with such a sense of purpose. That little thing allowed the man in solitary confinement to think, "There has to be a meaning in what I am going through, and I can make it to the end." This is a man without any specific faith. After they were both released from the prison, the man who had been in solitary confinement found out that the other man had been a Catholic bishop who had been in prison for, I think, over twenty years. Every day, when he swept, he was offering his work to God.

But Christianity is not an inoculation against the daily struggle with our weaknesses, unexpected contradictions, friction with others, and fatigue. Christ himself faced and embraced the difficulties of being human. I have a lot of devotion to the stressed Jesus, the tired Jesus, the anxious Jesus. Jesus' public life was a lot like internship and residency. He was up all night and had no time to sleep or eat; he went from one patient to the next. Jesus showed his infinite wisdom by choosing to come to earth in the pre-beeper era, but people managed to find him even when he tried to hide. Jesus even got "toxic" to show us his humanity. There is a beautiful scene where he is with the apostles, and they are trying to cure someone, and they are just not making it—they can't cut it.

There is a big scene, and they pull him in and ask, "Why can't we sure this man?" And the first thing Jesus does is to look up to heaven and say, "O faithless and unbelieving generation. How long must I put up with you?" That has given me a lot of consolation, and a lot of devotion to the humanity of Christ, who chose to experience the frustration that we all experience every day.

How did he do it? Christ drew his strength from his rich inner life, nourished by prayer. He saw things with a supernatural vision and was spurred on by his mission, to redeem humanity out of love. He embraced every moment as full of meaning and saw it with the perspective of eternity.

Through my friends in Opus Dei, I discovered the joy and the adventure of developing an inner life. I began to dedicate time to prayer and draw strength from the sacraments. I began to see that my desk is my altar, the place I can sacrifice myself for others, the place I can encounter God. On a good day, I accept the double bookings, emergency calls at 5 p.m. on Friday, patients who arrive an hour late, and hours of disability forms as coming from God's hands; on my bad days, my job is a flog and I can get quite "toxic." Every day I start again.

In addition to bringing me closer to God, my work gives me the opportunity to reach out to others. I try to do this more by my example than my words. As most of my patients have cancer, there are many opportunities to affirm their dignity and speak with them about their spiritual concerns. I'm sure you are familiar with the old adage that there are no atheists in foxholes. Well, I can tell you that there are very few atheists among those who are struggling with cancer. As a devout Catholic in an agnostic academic environment, I try to open the minds of my colleagues to the concept of a loving God and the possibility of an inner life. Through my profession as an oncologist and teacher I try to help foster respect for the elderly and the dying. I sometimes find it hard to swim against the tide and have to ask for more courage.

There is a beautiful quote in an article by Cardinal Ratzinger written around the time of the canonization of St. Josemaria, in which he describes this sense of divine filiation, and the effects that it can have for the individual person and for the world. He says, "Those who have this link with God, those who have this uninterrupted conversation with him, can dare to respond to challenges and are no longer afraid because those who are in God's hands always fall into God's hands. This is how fear disappears and courage is born to respond to the contemporary world."

I'm eternally grateful to St. Josemaria for helping me to realize that I didn't need to go to the top of the mountain in order to find God, and that I could find Him in the center of my soul. I would like to end with these words of his: "My children, heaven and earth seem to merge on the horizon. But where they really meet is in your heart."²

² St. Josemaria Escriva, "Passionately Loving the World," paragraph 16.

CLIFFORD ORWIN

RESPONSE TO THE PAPERS OF JENNY DRIVER AND
CARLOS CAVALLÉ,
WITH REPLIES BY DRIVER AND CAVALLÉ

I am certainly the odd man out at this panel, being neither a devotee of St. Josemaria, nor a Catholic, nor even a Christian. I view only from the outside the life and example of the remarkable man whom you are able to view as your own. Of course that's why I was invited: I am to provide an outside perspective, and in that respect at least I can't possibly fail.

In fact, in my role of designated outsider I am going to give you double your money's worth. In commenting on these two powerful papers I will adopt perspectives external not just to those of the authors but to my own. In my remarks on Dr. Driver's paper, for instance, you will hear from Orwin the Conventional Liberal (even though the actual Orwin is at most an Unconventional Liberal.) I will play this role for fear that no one else at this gathering will do so, and because I'm eager to hear Dr. Driver's response to an objection couched in these terms. That may help me learn how to respond to it; Lord knows I've heard it often enough from critics of Opus Dei.

All right, then. As a liberal, I declaim as follows. The nerve of Dr. Driver in introducing Christianity into her medical practice. Doesn't she see that the same liberal tolerance that smiles on her practicing her religion in its proper place frowns on her introducing it into the workplace? For our liberal way of life excludes religion from the public sphere, and the workplace is increasingly (and properly) conceived as pertaining to the public sphere. That's why we must maintain it quite strictly as everything neutral. You know what I mean: race neutral, gender neutral, culture neutral, sexual preference neutral. All right, not smoking neutral, I'll grant you that, but certainly faith neutral. The workplace must be perfectly, indiscriminately inclusive, and so while adherents of all religions are welcome, they must park those religions at the door. This is why we liberals distrust you in Opus Dei; you may call yourselves God's Work, but God's Work has no place in the workplace. Certainly not in Dr. Driver's workplace, dedicated as it is to the Baconian project of the relief of man's estate.

This critique seems to me to pose a greater practical obstacle to Dr. Driver's Christian aspirations than she acknowledges in her statement. She does acknowledge it as a significant one. "As a devout Catholic in an agnostic academic environment, I try to open the minds of my colleagues to the concept of a loving God and the possibility of an inner life. ... I sometimes find it hard to swim against the tide and have to ask for more courage." What Dr. Driver