
THE WORK OF GOD

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‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent’ (Jn 6:29). Thus does Christ respond to those who sought him on the other side of the lake, in Capharnaum, after the miraculous meal in the desert and asked him: ‘What must we do, to be doing the works of God?’ (Jn 6: 28).

Is not the beatification of Josemaría Escrivá a response as well of Christ to so many people who question him throughout the world? Are not the life, work and teachings of the Servant of God a compendium of those words of Jesus: ‘This is the work of God’. Just as Mgr Escrivá lived and ‘acted’ *in the world* and had a spirit which is for men and women living in the world, so too priests and laity carry out the Work of God *in the world*. This is what the Founder of Opus Dei wanted and what he preached so openly, fully conscious of the specifics of his message: the life of Christians *in the world*. It is the Lord himself who responds: ‘Believe in him whom God has sent.’

That is the starting point. In those words are to be found the explanation for all —an extraordinary *all*— which this priest did. The same can be said of the repercussion of his work, the fruit of his labour, that is, the ‘living monument’ of Opus Dei, the Work of God. Opus Dei is open to all who in the depths of their souls have ‘a hunger and thirst for justice’, for the Love of God which is promised to all and awaits all. The Love of God has been made manifest in the incarnate Christ, who came ‘for us men and for our salvation’.

The ‘work of God’, believing in him whom God has sent, his own Son, Jesus Christ, is much more than merely assenting with one’s intellect and will to Revelation. It means living, in obedience and love, from and on the Word of God become flesh. This is the faith which justified Abraham and made him ‘our father in faith’. This is the faith which Elizabeth, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, recognized and admired in Mary: ‘Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord’ (Lk 1:45). This is the faith which the Lord expects and demands from his disciples in a variety of ways: ‘Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe’ (Jn 20:29). Thus does

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the seed sown by the sower grow. All this is the 'way' of following Christ along the 'furrow' opened by the sower. This loving mystery of faith is a gift which God makes in the 'forge' of Christ's love, a gift which, in the teaching of Mgr Escrivá, touches not only religious but all those who live and work 'in the world'.

What Josemaría Escrivá taught and promoted is nothing else than normal Christianity. Not infrequently, under the power of God's grace, it can seem exaggerated and exceptional, something beyond the ordinary. Because of its exquisiteness and surprising character, at times it creates distrust, gives rise to suspicions of one type or another and provokes scandal.

This is what has always happened in the Church with its true Christianity, when men and women have lived 'in the midst of the world' but without being 'of the world'. Did not the Master promise this to his disciples with all clarity and in an exacting way? Do not his words 'blessed are you when you are reviled and persecuted' (Mt 6:11) allude to a heavenly reward?

'By their fruits you shall know them'. This can be said of the heroic life and commitment of Mgr Escrivá. Being at times 'a sign of contradiction', the Founder of Opus Dei will be also 'a sign of salvation'. Long before his beatification many, many people have discovered that the 'way' and the 'furrow' he marked out are a straight way and a straight furrow, crowned with joy in the midst of difficulty, that they do not lead to the 'narrow gate' but to a place of peace and rest in the heart of our Father God.

One has only to see the members of Opus Dei kneeling in Rome beside the tomb of their Founder. With what joy will they give thanks to God as they venerate their 'Father' and Founder numbered among the blessed in heaven.