

THE PRIESTLY SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CROSS

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In this article a priest of the Dublin diocese, describes why the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross was founded, its membership and its spirituality.

The why is very straightforward. It was Blessed Josemaría's way of responding to God's will, that diocesan priests should be helped and encouraged in their priestly ministry.

The members of the Society are the priests incardinated in the Opus Dei Prelature and other diocesan priests who commit themselves to living its spirituality. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that Opus Dei leaves diocesan priests where they are: in their diocese, under their bishop, just as it leaves its lay members where they are: in their place in society, doing whatever job they happen to have, sanctifying family, social and professional life.

The spirituality of the Priestly Society is the same as Opus Dei's: sanctification of ordinary activity, ordering it to the glory of God and thus building up the kingdom of God.

Further information about the Priestly Society can be had from the editors of Position Papers. This article first appeared in Link-up, a Dublin diocesan publication.

On Sunday May 17, 1992, the Holy Father Pope John Paul II, formally declared in St Peter's Square that Mgr Josemaría Escrivá is *Beatus*. That means that he is among the Blessed in heaven. This gave me great joy for a number of reasons, but principally because since 1975 I have been a member of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, founded by Mgr Escrivá to help diocesan priests in their personal spiritual lives.

Mgr Escrivá's love for diocesan priests was only natural. He was one himself. He was prepared for the priesthood in the diocesan seminary of St Charles, in Saragossa and was ordained for that diocese in 1925. Later when he moved to Madrid to do post-graduate studies, he was incardinated in the diocese of Madrid. His

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receive from the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross leads them, among other things, to maintain an exemplary attitude of availability regarding the requests of their Ordinaries and the needs of their dioceses.

Spirituality

The spirituality of Opus Dei—shared by the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross—emphasizes the value of the everyday circumstances of life: they are the means God uses to make us holy. Love for God transforms them from merely human events into supernatural treasures. As the Founder of Opus Dei reiterated time and again:

Understand this well: there is something holy, something divine hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it. There is no other way. Either we learn to find the Lord in everyday life, or else we shall never find him. That is why I tell you that our age needs to give back to matter and to the apparently trivial events of life their noble, original meaning. It needs to place them at the service of the kingdom of God; it needs to spiritualize them.

It should be easy for a priest to turn all the circumstances and events of his life into occasions of meeting Christ, but experience teaches us that both priests and lay faithful need to be supported, encouraged and guided in their spiritual life, if this sanctification of daily life is to be more widely and deeply achieved. The Priestly Society provides this kind of support for diocesan priests, just as the Prelature of Opus Dei does for lay people.

At the heart of the Priestly Society is the personal spiritual guidance, so strongly recommended by Vatican Council II, which helps foster the priest's life of piety, his love of souls, his reverence and obedience to his own bishop, his concern for vocations to the local seminary, etc.

Activities

Activities organized by the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross include retreats, afternoons of recollection and residential seminars. They are widely publicized and the majority of those who attend are not members of the Society; in my experience they are greatly appreciated by the priests who avail of them, providing as they do, the spiritual and theological support to be well-equipped to deal with the challenges of priestly ministry in modern society.