

civic responsibilities. In sharp contrast to the clerical one-party mentality that prevailed among Catholics at the time, however, he believed that it was up to individual Catholics to make their own choices about how to implement the Church's teaching in practice. Even in the intensely politicized atmosphere of the early years of the Second Republic, he scrupulously refrained from expressing his own political preferences, limiting himself to encouraging all those who sought his advice to take seriously their civic duties and to exercise their rights as citizens in ways that would make the society more Christian.

### Conclusion

On the personal level, the anticlericalism of the early Second Republic offered Escrivá many opportunities to grow in self control in the face of insults and attacks directed at him precisely because he was a priest. On the institutional level, it presented an occasion to affirm Opus Dei's determination to remain above the political fray and to concentrate on the spiritual and religious formation of its members and those involved in its apostolic activities, respecting the personal freedom of each of them to form his own political opinions and to act in consequence.

CARLOS CAVALLÉ

## TRANSFORMING BUSINESS AND THE COMMON GOOD

### Introduction

Business firms are undergoing spectacular changes. The development of new knowledge and the impact of new technologies, along with the globalization of



St. Josemaria at Jaltepec, Guadalajara, Mexico, June 14, 1970.

markets and of the economy, are among the leading factors of these changes. The recent accelerated growth of wealth and well-being, especially in the western world, should be attributed to the efficient and increasingly productive performance of well-organized business. However, society in general is not entirely pleased with some of the results of these changes. Scandals lately reported in the media have prompted strong reactions against malpractice in business, and the business firm itself is under suspicion. Reactions from governments usually take the form of new regulations designed to make it more difficult for business to deceive the market. And within the corporation, new voices speak loudly about the need to reconsider corporate governance. There is the feeling that the current conception of the business firm is not contributing to the common good at the expected and needed level.

New concepts of the business firm are being researched and considered by different parties with the aim of changing the current status quo. But, as modern economic theory recognizes, no changes will take place unless an appropriate set of motivations and incentives are in place. This paper will try to show

how, for many people, the message of St. Josemaria Escriva on the sanctification of ordinary life constitutes a real set of motivations for the transformation of businesses in particular and of work structures in general, to make them better contributors to the common good. By means of a number of examples of professionals who have tried to put such a message into practice, this paper will attempt to prove that transformation is possible, and therefore that there are reasons for hope.

### A Humanist Approach to the Business Firm and a Definition of the Common Good

The following three conceptions of the business firm are endorsed by current research and current business practice although, admittedly, to a lesser degree than is desirable. They are also consistent with the teachings of St. Josemaria Escriva.

1. The business firm is increasingly understood as a community of people who, in an organized fashion, pursue the fulfillment of established common objectives that are also compatible with their own legitimate personal objectives.
2. Business firms are also considered to be organizations that can help in the creation and distribution of wealth by providing a quality service, contributing either directly or indirectly to resolving problems of human and social development at an ever-increasing rate. The most developed countries are not those that have more natural resources but rather those that have the best organized businesses.
3. With all of the inherent defects that will need to be corrected over time, the business firm is also considered to be a place for acquiring new knowledge, exercising capabilities, and developing attitudes that contribute (or should contribute) to personal improvement as well as to social progress.

As we will see, these three conceptions are conducive to practicing the teachings of St. Josemaria Escriva in business firms, and can have a positive impact on people in particular and society in general. They can also help us to arrive at a new understanding of what constitutes the common good. The idea of the common good is not insignificant. For a simple definition we can refer to the Second Vatican Council. In point 26 of the constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, the common good is described as "the set of conditions in social life that make it possible for associations and for each one of their members to better achieve their own perfection."

*Gaudium et Spes* goes on to explain that, given the fact that socio-economic interdependency is ever greater and more universal, the common good is also increasingly universal. This implies rights and obligations in regard to all of mankind. In other words, the common good is becoming an increasingly universal question, and its causes and effects are understood to be increasingly

interconnected. Therefore, the positive contributions made through any activity, in any place and by any one person, noticeably affect the general common good, no matter how small these contributions may seem.

This paper tries to show how the message of St. Josemaria, which is received and put into practice in diverse ways and with responsible initiatives by people all over the world, *can* and *does* help the progress and advancement of the common good through professional activities within businesses. I would like to point out that, despite the simple formulation of the common good, the effort to contribute to it is neither an easy nor a trivial task. Quite often, in fact, the process is accompanied by difficulties and frustrations. But the stories of those who have succeeded in this pursuit are proof that it is worth the effort to try.

### St. Josemaria on Work and Sanctity

The part of St. Josemaria's message that can be most directly applied to the topic in question is his invitation to men and women of good will to "place Christ, by means of their work in the middle of the world, at the summit of all human activities." And in *Friends of God*, St. Josemaria calls on Christians to attain sanctity in the midst of their daily work:

It is we, men walking in the street, ordinary Christians immersed in the bloodstream of society, whom Our Lord wants to be Saints and apostles, in the very midst of our professional work; that is, sanctifying our job in life, sanctifying ourselves in it and, through it, helping others to sanctify themselves as well. Be convinced that it is there that God awaits you, with all the love of a Father and Friend.

Consider too that, by doing your daily work well and responsibly, not only will you be supporting yourselves financially but you will also be contributing in a very direct way to the development of society, relieving the burdens of others and maintaining countless welfare projects, both local and international, on behalf of less privileged individuals and countries.<sup>1</sup>

The message of St. Josemaria, expressed in this way, leads to what I call the "two transformations." The first is a personal transformation, whose roots lie in the compact, or covenant, with God the Father and Friend, and whose objective is a union with God by means of ordinary activity. The second is a transformation of the conditions of the working world. The objective of this transformation is to ensure that conditions in the workplace are in the spirit of the teachings of Jesus Christ, in order that they may facilitate and promote reconciliation with God for all of humanity.

### III. Personal Testimonies from Around the World

Several years ago, we issued a call for personal accounts of how Josemaria Escriva's message transformed peoples' lives along the lines of the "two transformations" just mentioned. In order to better explain what we were after, we

<sup>1</sup> *Friends of God*, 120.

used the parable of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel of St. Luke as an example. It is one of the best-known passages of the New Testament, showing how the generous behavior of one person (the Good Samaritan) transformed the very sad situation of a traveler who had been robbed and badly beaten, by coming to his aid.

The response to our call was also generous and abundant. And at this point we would like to reiterate our thanks to all who contributed their stories. Thanks to their generous response, we have more than 120 personal testimonies from professionals from more than 20 countries. Almost all of these personal accounts have been compiled in an interactive CD-Rom that offers rapid consultation and the possibility of further study.

An initial analysis of the testimonies (which should and surely will be analyzed in greater depth in the future) allows us to put forward some conclusions about how the message of St. Josemaria influenced the respondents as they faced key decision in their lives, and reveals an interesting confluence of professional and Christian meaning.

The testimonies originate from a wide array of professional responsibilities ranging from a California movie director to an owner of a gasoline station in Australia; from a pastry shop owner in Northern Spain to a vice-consul of the United States Embassy; from a television director in France to an automobile parts mogul in Germany.

In general, the personal accounts describe situations in the respondents' professional lives in which the teachings of St. Josemaria invited them to explore a new approach, a change, both in their personal lives and in their professional activities. Thus we can see how a Catalan textile entrepreneur, plagued by a grave crisis in his economic sector, decides not to close or sell his factories because of his desire for justice for his employees. Or how a construction giant eliminates longstanding practices that are considered habitual in the industry and can be described as corrupt, thereby clearly improving the working environment, and elevating the technical level of his company in the process. In other cases, we can see how labor rules are improved in organizations (for example in Kenya) to facilitate the professional careers of women by adopting favorable maternity leave measures that surpass the stipulations of current legislation. Or how ethical criteria are introduced into the processes of contract preparation (in a law firm in Chile), when this is not necessarily the standard practice. But we also find cases that show how to provide for the needs of the less fortunate, helping them to solve housing problems in a Brazilian city or to overcome professional training problems in a Peruvian institute.

The personal accounts found on the CD-Rom are grouped under nine titles in such a way as to facilitate their consultation and study. These titles give an idea of the variety of the personal accounts received:

1. Woman, work, and the common good: The important role that women can and do play in the working world can be made more compatible with their family responsibilities.

2. Attention to the less fortunate: Charity has primacy over justice in business management.
3. Confronting corruption: A Christian approach to life is incompatible with practices that can be qualified as corrupt.
4. Professional competency and the common good: Carrying out professional activities responsibly requires thorough and rigorous professional preparation.
5. Values and virtues in the workplace: The workplace presents a constant opportunity to practice all of the Christian virtues in a charitable way.
6. Work ethic: Ethical principles facilitate the overall development of individuals.
7. Personal and professional responsibilities: Equilibrium among one's family, one's profession, and one's relationship with God is needed in order to lead a coherent Christian life. This equilibrium is also feasible.
8. Social dimension of the businessperson: By assuming business risks one can help others by creating jobs and facilitating training opportunities.
9. Forging a more human enterprise: Human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, have dignity and rights that should be respected.

Upon analyzing these personal accounts, we see that they have points in common. We note in a positive vein that in all cases the message of St. Josemaria has helped people to improve at work and to improve work itself. However, we also note the emergence of a pattern of behavioral principles throughout the personal accounts that are worthy of in-depth study. In the following pages, I will attempt to describe the behavioral principles that are common to the various personal testimonies. Although much of this will be familiar to those who are acquainted with and have sought to put into practice the teachings of St. Josemaria, the personal accounts carry added weight in view of the fact that they describe real situations. Moreover the impact is heightened because the testimonies reveal the effort people put into transforming themselves and their workplaces in the hope and with the goal of more closely following our Lord, and thus better serving society in general and people in particular.

### Personal Transformation through Professional Work<sup>2</sup>

Although the personal transformations that can be seen in the testimonies follow different paths, they have in common points that St. Josemaria expresses with great clarity about the sanctification of ordinary life and the sanctification of one's work. We will highlight four such points by providing brief quotes from the personal accounts received, and passages from St. Josemaria.

<sup>2</sup> The personal accounts included in the text of this paper are excerpts from the complete accounts contained in the CD-Rom prepared for the occasion of the Centennial of the Blessed Josemaria Escrivá.



1. Professional work done with professional competence and with an attitude of service is a necessary condition for personal improvement and union with God.

For 23 years I have been working in the Workplace Accident Insurance Division of the Mutual de Seguridad in Chile, a company that currently employs 2300 workers.

When I discovered the message of St. Josemaria it made clear the meaning of my Christian vocation, the dignity of "being a son of God," and the calling to sanctify myself in my work. All of this changed my way of approaching my professional life.

Our "managers' table" was a jumble of diverse and conflicting currents of philosophical, political, and religious thinking that made the topics of conversation at our lunch hour a constant challenge for me. But the most significant part of it was that the ethical dimension of business decisions was not always taken into account. And this was an issue that I had to do something about.

In addition to emphasize respect for the law, I tried to introduce a "business ideology" based on respect for others and the importance, in all fields, of justice as well as ethical and human factors, in accordance with the Social Doctrine of the Church.

At the outset, my colleagues—in keeping with a Chilean custom—branded me a "road block" to the development of business due to my legal background and my emphasis on ethics.

As time went by, they realized in the company that my observations, always made in writing, maintained coherence between what is legal and what is ethical, between what is legal and what is fair, between what is legal and what is honest in business, between what is legal and the firmness of principles and values. I also managed to support these reports with oral presentations, conversing individually or collectively with the interested parties in order to give them a Christian focus on the matters at hand.

The managers began to notice that the former "road block" had become a friend who, over time, facilitated dialogue and the rapid processing of activities. For this reason, they convinced the executives and professionals from other contracting parties to request my presence in negotiations. In this way, it became natural to study the ethical dimensions of the decisions in our company. As we did it, it became part of the reputation of our company.

*"Professional work, whatever it is, becomes a lamp to enlighten your colleagues and friends. That is why I usually tell those who become members of*

The reference for the CD-Rom is as follows:

**The grandeur of ordinary life**

International Congress

Rome, January 8 – 11, 2002

Work session: **Business and the Common Good**

Text selection elaborated by Prof. Carlos Cavallé, IESE Business School. University of Navarra

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*Opus Dei, and the same applies to all of you now listening to me: 'What use is it telling me that so and so is a good son of mine — a good Christian — but a bad shoemaker?' If he doesn't try to learn his trade well, or doesn't give his full attention to it, he won't be able to sanctify it or offer it to Our Lord. The sanctification of ordinary work is, as it were, the hinge of true spirituality for people who, like us, have decided to come close to God while being at the same time fully involved in temporal affairs."*<sup>3</sup>

2. Perfection and attention to details in one's work, no matter how humble or insignificant it may seem, create the conditions for personal transformation.

Mathew runs a human resources company in Kenya. His attitude toward service allows him to place emphasis on small details, as St. Josemaria constantly preached. These small details include, among other things, not making people who come to his office wait unnecessarily. To do this, he set up a registry for the arrival time and the time he begins attending to each person, reviewing it periodically and thus helping improve his own service.

*"What I have always taught over the last forty years is that a Christian should do all honest human work, be it intellectual or manual, with the greatest perfection possible: with human perfection (professional competence) and with Christian perfection (for love of God's Will and as a service to mankind). Human work done in this manner, no matter how humble or insignificant it may seem, helps to shape the world in a Christian way."* (Conversations, 10)

3. Christians should realize the importance of solidarity (charity) above and beyond justice in the execution of professional responsibilities.

I am an entrepreneur and supplier of automotive parts in Germany. In the mid-90's, the price of raw materials began to undergo spectacular hikes, and many companies in our sector had serious problems. As a result, the production of automobiles dropped in all of Europe. Parts buyers pressured suppliers by imposing low prices via methods that, until then, were unheard of. During this period, many small and medium companies threw in the towel. The best sold themselves to large conglomerates, almost all of which were capitalized with U.S. money.

My company, like my competitors, was the object of a number of exploratory contacts and promising offers. At that time, this represented a gleam of hope, a relief for owners and managers, and also the temptation to follow the easiest path, which was surely not the best path for our employees. It was legal, it was accepted by the unions, but it was not what I felt I should do.

Moved by the duty of solidarity and charity, which is clearly expressed in the teachings of John Paul II and St. Josemaria, I decided not to sell the family business. I explained my reasons to the other members of the family and to my employees and, together with them, set a demanding cost-cutting and inno-

<sup>3</sup>Friends of God, 61. 08034 Barcelona

vation plan in motion. With the help of God, we began surmounting the crisis little by little.

Today, our business has grown in volume and in quality; we have increased our staff, we offer new and better products, and we have excellent long-term projects that are already under development.

*"Charity perfects and completes justice. It moves us to respond differently to different people, adapting ourselves to their specific circumstances ... Justice says that each person should receive his due, which does not mean giving the same to everyone. Utopian egalitarianism can give rise to the greatest injustice."*<sup>4</sup>

4. Charity facilitates the development of all other virtues, which are increasingly demanded in the fulfillment of the responsibilities of any business professional.

I am a vice consul of my country, and every day I have to deal with the numerous—at times enormous—personal problems of my compatriots. While I listen to them or read their letters, I cannot remain indifferent: I pray for them, as I learned from St. Josemaria, and I often succeed—in addition to attempting to solve their problems—in offering them a supernatural perspective.

The other day, I had to deal with the case of a young man facing criminal charges. I visited him, I promised myself that he would receive legal assistance and I helped, to the extent possible, with his poor family. I listened to them and took charge of their situation. They, in turn, began adopting a different attitude when they saw that they were understood and respected, to the point where the accused himself began to change, accepting his punishment as something deserved, and deciding to serve his time in prison and become another Christ, as St. Josemaria emphasized, thinking about the thousand different circumstances we humans can go through.

*"By living charity—Love—you live all the human and supernatural virtues demanded of a Christian. These virtues form a unity and cannot be reduced to a mere list. You cannot have charity without justice, solidarity, family and social responsibility, poverty, joy, friendship..."*<sup>5</sup>

### Transforming the Structures and Conditions of Work

If we focus now on what the personal accounts say about the sanctification of work, it is clear that the transformation of work structures is not a trivial effort. It usually constitutes a life-long project for a business professional. The variety of human circumstances, cultures, and economic and social developments only adds complexity to the search for better, more human, more Christian solutions. Despite this complexity, the personal accounts clearly lay out certain behavioral principles that ought to preside over any effort to transform the

<sup>4</sup>Friends of God, 173

<sup>5</sup>Conversations with Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer, 62.

structure of work. These principles are part of the message of St. Josemaria. The majority of personal accounts relate to these principles. I have selected seven, which I should now like to cite.

1. The first duty in transforming work structures is the recognition of the dignity of the individual and thus of any work that an individual carries out.

I am an electrical engineer and have been working for electric companies for almost thirty years now. Since January of 2001, I have been responsible for a new company that provides high-tension electrical transmission service to most of Wisconsin along with various zones in its neighboring states of Michigan and Illinois.

In retrospect, I have contemplated the extent to which the teachings of St. Josemaria have influenced my professional work in two important ways: in my attitude towards work itself and in my relationships with others, i.e. employees, colleagues, suppliers and even competitors.

St. Josemaria underscored the need for continuous study as a necessary base for an efficient professional work effort. Not long ago, an old partner of mine was asking me if I still studied on a daily basis. We had debated this topic when we began our careers, and the truth is that I have maintained this practice right up to now. By doing so, I have received two university degrees, along with the conviction of the necessity to promote and run training programs for mechanics and electricians as well as professional employees in my division. These programs have been crucial, as many of these employees have updated their knowledge, progressed in their careers, and improved their salaries.

Over the years, I have had the occasion to manage the work of employees across all levels and with various union representatives. Convinced of the dignity of all honest work and the respect that all individuals deserve regardless of their class or category, I have succeeded in establishing and maintaining excellent relationships with all of my employees and their union representatives. To do this, it was necessary to break down implicit class barriers between employees with union representation and employees with supervisory roles. I made consulting the employees about all matters affecting their work a habitual practice, and it was clear how much they appreciated it when their knowledge and experience was recognized.

*"It is time for us Christians to shout from the rooftops that work is a gift from God and that it makes no sense to classify men differently, according to their occupation, as if some jobs were nobler than others. Work, all work, bears witness to the dignity of man, to his dominion over creation. It is an opportunity to develop one's personality. It is a bond of union with others, the way to support one's family, a means of aiding in the improvement of the society in which we live and in the progress of all humanity."*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Christ Is Passing By, 47

2. It is very important that business be transformed in such a way as to offer dignified jobs and the corresponding education to all employees; these are basic rights for every individual.

Fritz is an entrepreneur from the Philippines who works in the agricultural sector. There he saw firsthand the low professional capacity demanded of workers. He witnessed how the children of farmers abandoned the countryside and fled to the cities without preparation or possibilities. Moved by his sense of social responsibility, enhanced by the teachings of St. Josemaria, he started Agrarian Family Schools in order to prepare farmers professionally and to provide more dignified jobs in the cities for those who wanted to leave their farms.

3. The social principles that derive from Christian thinking, a heritage of western civilization, should be applied in the design and execution of work.

Rosa, a pastry chef and grandmother from Pamplona, touches on this in her story: Although I studied journalism, I have been running this family business, Pastelerías Manterola, for many years now. When the Association of Women Entrepreneurs and Managers awarded me their 1<sup>st</sup> annual Prize for Navarra's outstanding female entrepreneur, I was overcome. It was a stimulus to continue working for the remainder of my career. The awarding of this prize has made me relive the tragic circumstances under which I took charge of the family business: first, a boat accident that took the lives of my two sisters and my two brothers-in-law, leaving six small children orphaned; then, the death of my husband and one of my daughters in a highway accident.

In this situation, I had to move forward with my eight children and take charge of the business that my husband had run up until then. When I came across the message of St. Josemaria as a young person, it provided me with the supernatural vision necessary to confront reality, as well as the strength not to fall into heartbreak and despair. How does one go forward without prayer?

The years following the accident were truly hard, above all because of the absence of my husband and my daughter. In addition, I had to give strength to the rest of the family. But thanks to God and St. Josemaria, my life and my family have progressed with hard work and effort, while never losing our sense of happiness. I accepted my new job with great professionalism, visiting foreign businesses that were similar to mine and learning from others how to manage and resolve practical issues that were presented to me. Things went well, and I succeeded in expanding the business.

In the means of formation of Opus Dei, it was recommended that I read the documents of the Church on the work of entrepreneurs. One of the documents that helped me most was the encyclical of John Paul II titled "Laborem Exercens," from which I extracted many ideas. One of the Pope's statements had a particularly strong impact on me: "At this time, creating jobs is the best social work that can be done." I understood that this was the path that God had chosen for me — to maintain the job positions in my company and, if possible, create new ones.

4. Work structures become dignified when they facilitate the attitude of service, stimulate the perfection of personal capacities, and lead to the necessary level of professional competence.

I got to know the message of St. Josemaria when I was fifteen. Later on, while I was studying at the University of São Paulo in the late 70's, I began to better understand the spirit of Opus Dei that has since marked my life.

After graduating with a degree in civil engineering, I returned to my city, Ribeirão Preto, and immediately created a construction company that I called Servisa in order to bear in mind at all times that we are here to serve and that it is in our jobs that we must sanctify ourselves by doing efficient work, paying dignified salaries, and offering quality products at fair prices and financed directly at interest rates that are adjusted to people's possibilities.

In fact, in Brazil it was common practice to employ a financing system that made it impossible in the long run to pay off a debt. This was a system that banks and construction companies took advantage of.

It was clear to me that I was not going to get rich by taking the path I had chosen, but this did not really bother me. Currently, I have already constructed apartments for four hundred families, I have provided work for many people and I have made my family successful.

My wife, who is an architect, has been the greatest help in my business. She is the one who plans the apartments and common spaces for the buildings so that family life can run smoothly and well. At the same time, she succeeds in dedicating an important percentage of the land to creating open spaces in which children can play and people can coexist.

Inspired by the teachings of St. Josemaria, both of us have furthermore endeavored to make our life's work compatible with dedication to family.

*"The 'miracle' which God asks of you is to persevere in your Christian and divine vocation, sanctifying each day's work: the miracle of turning the prose of each day into heroic verse by the love which you put into your ordinary work. God waits for you there. He expects you to be a responsible person, with the zeal of an apostle and the competence of a good worker.*

*And so, as the motto of your work, I can give you this one: If you want to be useful, serve. For, in the first place, in order to do things properly, you must know how to do them. I cannot see the integrity of a person who does not strive to attain professional skills and to carry out properly the task entrusted to his care. It's not enough to want to do good; we must know how to do it. And, if our desire is real, it will show itself in the effort we make to use the right methods, finishing things well, achieving human perfection."*<sup>7</sup>

5. The personal accounts confirm that business activity should not be limited to the simple reaping of profits or the survival of the business. Instead it

<sup>7</sup> Christ is Passing By, 50.



should seek to expand responsibilities in search of the common good. This is not limited to the best distribution of added value. This demands the transformation of circumstances that allow and facilitate the complete development of all individuals that make up the organization or are related to it.

My name is Serah Mwangi. I joined the publishing sector in 1991 when, along with my sister Rose and two friends, I established Focus Publications Ltd., of which I am general manager. We founded Focus Publications Ltd. with the hope of responding to one of St. Josemaria's great desires: to fill the world with "books of fire" in service of the truth.

Many of the authors that come to us have very little experience. When we discover potentially good writers, we spare no effort to help them fully develop their talents. We succeed in keeping our relationship alive with them in order to inculcate the habit of transmitting noble human values in their writing. This demands having long conversations with our authors, filling them with an optimistic and positive outlook on life, even when the tone of the arguments in their books is gray. Often times, it is an arduous task to make authors see that their books will sell without needing to resort to morbid interest. We have experienced great joys in this field: three novels published by us have won national and international awards, in addition to selling well.

Another front on which we must fight involves our printers. Offering quality books requires lots of time and patience. Some printers have a hard time understanding why we care so much about ensuring an equal registry in all the pages of a book or the same ink intensity or a good cut on the edges of the paper so that the spine of the book does not break. When we insist that they pay attention to these "minor" details, they categorize us as difficult clients. Nevertheless, little by little, it is possible to see certain improvements in the finished quality of the books, and even the printers themselves end up taking pride in the quality of their work.

6. The business firm should stay ahead of the knowledge and skills requirements of its employees, provide the proper training, and thus provide a greater level of employability.

I am a co-owner of DieselPro, a small Philippines-based business dedicated to the service and maintenance of diesel injection motors and the sale of component parts for these kinds of machines.

The company was about to shut down during the Asian financial crisis of 1997, the year in which debts doubled due to the change in currency values: our components were all imported. The teachings of St. Josemaria helped me in a decisive way to overcome the critical situation.

Today, after three years of tiring work, the company's debt is 80% paid and has ceased to be a major concern. Through honorable service and efficient work—guidelines that I succeeded in inculcating in my employees—our clientele has quadrupled since 1997.

Today, DieselPro is recognized as one of the country's best companies specializing in the calibration of diesel injection tanks and injectors. For the most part, my employees come from the provinces and are people who have received little or no formal education. But now they are recognized as experienced technicians in the diesel motor sector.

They are motivated to work well, a quality for which they receive recognition not only in their pay but also in a percentage on every job they complete. In 1993, they earned the minimum wage. Presently they earn three times that rate. One of the technicians who has been with the company for a long time wants to retire early and open a tricycle business in his home town of Marinduque. Another has begun to build himself a house in Ilocos, where he will be able to live permanently with his family. My personal goal is to have the workers become co-owners of the company in the near future.

7. The transformation of work structures entails the fostering of an environment conducive to the practice and development of Christian virtues, including respect for and fulfillment of the law, acting against corrupt behavior and encouraging ethical behavior of the part of all employees.

For many years I have been working as the manager of a gasoline station that belongs to an important chain in the sector. One day I met George, who was a member of Opus Dei. We became good friends, and with time I began to attend the means of formation that were being offered at a center of the Work, and began to understand and try to put to practice the message of St. Josemaria Escriva.

After some time had passed, George visited me at work. When he entered the gas station, he looked at the newspaper and magazine kiosk (it was hard not to notice since it occupied a prominent position in the station). On the shelves there were a good number of pornographic magazines. That time George did not say anything, but he prepared his arguments and spoke to me the next time he came by the station.

How could George suggest that I remove the most profitable magazines from my kiosk?

I adopted a defensive attitude, explaining that these magazines were the items that provided the highest margin for the store and that, from a commercial viewpoint, it would be crazy to remove them. George, however, would not back down easily and approached the topic with different lines of argumentation. From my standpoint, I admit that I was not feeling very much at ease. The words of Jesus concerning those who scandalize the young weighed heavily on me, and, and so, from that moment on, I promised George to study the matter seriously. His attitude helped me to understand something that I had heard in many conversations without thinking that it could affect me.

When George next came back to the gas station, he received a pleasant surprise. The magazines were gone, and I had decided to give a new focus to the business, orienting it toward the good of families. I knew that God would not abandon me.

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."*<sup>8</sup>

## 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.

<sup>8</sup> *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