

challenges faced by the founder during this period, and his unwavering determination to carry out God's will for Opus Dei's expansion.

Finally, the last chapter covers the life of the members of Opus Dei who continued to reside in the Republican zone until the end of the war.

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## *The Last of the Romantics: Reflections on the Founder of Opus Dei*, by Mariano Fazio

The Vicar General of Opus Dei, Msgr. Mariano Fazio, has published *El Último Romántico*,

Ediciones Rialp, 2018 [*The Last of the Romantics*, Scepter Publishers]. The book seeks to “present in an orderly way some of the consequences of the light received by St. Josemaría ninety years ago, and which are especially relevant for our times,” the author said. We reproduce below an interview with Roberto Bosca for the Argentinean Catholic website AICA in which Msgr. Mariano Fazio talks about his new book.



After taking part in the recent Synod on Youth in Rome, where he resides, the vicar general of Opus Dei, Msgr. Mariano Fazio, traveled to Argentina to present his book *The Last of the Romantics: Saint Josemaría in the 21st Century*. In it he sets forth some key features of the founder of Opus Dei's personality, including his passionate love for the world as the setting for Christian life, and explains why he calls him the “last romantic,” because of his great love for freedom.

—*What led you to write this book? Were you trying to highlight something special about Saint Josemaría's personality?*

The immediate occasion was the 90th anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei. With that anniversary on the horizon I wanted to reread letters and texts of Saint Josemaría to go more deeply into

his message and meditate on his founding charism. In this more systematic reading I was struck by how easy it is to appreciate his spirit, because it is a message closely tied to the Gospel, while also being so well suited to the circumstances of the ordinary life of a person in the 21st century, with the work, family and social commitments this life involves.

In a special way, I was emphasizing some aspects of his message that seemed especially illuminating to me for the contemporary world, such as the centrality of charity, the joy of knowing oneself to be a child of God, work as a place for seeking holiness, the value of pluralism, and the social repercussions of a Christian's life.

*—Haven't enough biographies already been written about the founder of Opus Dei? Why write one more? Or maybe it is not properly speaking a biography?*

As you rightly say, it is not a biography about the founder of Opus Dei, nor a theological study, nor a compilation of texts. I have tried to collect essential points of a message that has changed the lives of many people throughout these decades and that, in my opinion, is destined to expand in influence.

I also tried to relate that message to the writings of other authors, especially to some classics of literature that can help illuminate some of the important issues that

affect us all. For example, Gogol and Tolkien thanked God for having made the human being a sharer in his creative power. Kafka and Kierkegaard were very concerned about the relationship of each person with their father. Chesterton reflected on how we can truly love the world. Machado provokes us with his reflections on what true love is. As I try to show in the book, work, love, filiation, and the world are all topics about which St. Josemaría can offer us great light.

*—Why does the title of the book describe Saint Josemaría as the last romantic? The word "romanticism" can mean various things, and can sometimes even have a negative connotation, as though a romantic were a dreamer or an idealist. What do you mean by "The Last of the Romantics"?*

He had a very high regard for human freedom. He sometimes said that saw himself as a romantic, continuing the work of those nineteenth-century romantics who fought so hard to win their own and others' freedom. In the 1960s he spoke about the human and divine value of freedom in a homily: "I love the freedom of others, yours, that of the person passing by right now on the street, because if I didn't love it, I couldn't defend mine. But that's not the main reason. The main reason is this: Christ died on the Cross to give us freedom, so that we could live in the freedom and glory of the children of God."

*—A well-known philosopher described Josemaría as a man who loved freedom. Do you think this is true? Many people today, even Christians, view freedom with suspicion. How can we understand this?*

St. Josemaría's vision is far removed from those who demand freedom for themselves and then try to subject and control others. Hence he sometimes added the adjective "Christian" to "romantic": the Christian romantic is someone who does things out of love, and who loves the freedom of others. In St. Josemaría's mind, the greatest gift God gave to human beings, in the natural order, was to have created us free: to take the risk of our freedom, so that we could respond freely with our love to his infinite love. One could say that freedom is a necessary condition for love. It is impossible to love only on the basis of obligation, although certainly obligations can also help us to love rightly when our feelings don't respond.

*—Many people today are disheartened by recent sad events in the Church, and the scandal may be leading some to leave the Church. What would you say to those who feel discouraged or even spurred to leave?*

One's own sins and those of others always cause dejection and sadness. In this context, it is helpful to realize that the Church is not just the group of men and women who have joined her (from the most recently baptized to the pas-

tors). Above all, as Saint Josemaría said, the Church is "Christ present among us: God who comes to save mankind, calling us with his revelation, sanctifying us with his grace, sustaining us with his constant help, in the small and big battles of daily life."

As Saint Josemaría said, we believe "*a pesar de los pesares*," despite the sins or even crimes of each member. We believe because of Christ and in Christ, and not because of how well someone has done something, although certainly the exemplary behavior of pastors and faithful in the Church will be of great help in bringing people closer to Christ, and the opposite creates an obvious barrier.

The situation you describe should lead to the determination to do everything possible to ensure that these crimes do not happen again and, at the same time, it should lead us to make reparation for our own and others' sins, to pray for the holiness of the pastors in the Church, and to accept this moment of purification as a way of beginning a new personal conversion that draws us closer to God's grace, to the sacrament of forgiveness, to a renewed relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist, and to a selfless service towards others, starting with the people closest to us.

*—You say that St. Josemaría was labeled a heretic, and that something similar happened with other saints who opened new paths in the life of*

*the Church. But now the opposite occurs, since often in the press Opus Dei is viewed as a conservative institution and no friend of changes in the Church and in society. What do you think about this?*

You are right. In the 1960s, many people were saying that Opus Dei was a dangerous innovation. While today the opposite is the case.

Although it is something obvious, the people of Opus Dei, like everyone else, make mistakes and have shortcomings. Therefore, in the face of criticism, wherever it comes from, it is good to make an examination of conscience to see if the criticism is justified and, in that case, to change whatever needs to be changed

At the same time, I think it's good to know reality directly, without accepting clichés. My experience is that many people, after meeting some members or coming in contact with some apostolic initiatives of the Prelature, change their opinion.

These changes in people's perceptions also perhaps show the limits of political language when applied to realities of a spiritual nature. In the Church, faithfully conserving the faith we've received does not make someone an "ultra-conservative." At the same time, to make progress in the mission of spreading the light of Christ, while being attentive to the requirements

of each moment, does not mean someone should be labeled as a "progressive." I think this is the right way of focusing this question.

Most of the people in Opus Dei are fathers or mothers who have to change diapers several times a day, and make their work compatible with their family life, who live alongside people of all beliefs and ways of thinking and make use of the social media. So they live amid all the changes that society is undergoing today, in their family and workplace.

*—How is the "truth-mercy equation" solved? Some Christians say that Francis places too much emphasis on the second term and forgets the first, and they think the Pope is watering down the faith, which causes them to suffer. Are they right in this? Why do you think this happens? What advice would you give these people?*

I would advise them to personally read the writings of the Holy Father, to follow him directly and pay less attention to those who interpret his words or actions. They should read his homilies, his Wednesday catechesis, his words at the Angelus on Sunday, his exhortations. Today, thanks to God and the new technologies, it is very easy to have a direct connection with the Pope, with what he is saying, doing, and writing every day. When one goes to the direct sources one immediately sees the connection between truth and

mercy, because the truth without mercy would be fanaticism, and mercy without truth would be a false “goodness.”

## Other New Publications

### *Works of St. Josemaría*

*Camino*, Madrid, Rialp, 2018, 89th printing.

*Camino*, Bogota, Procodes, 2018, 14th Colombian printing.

*The Way*, Nairobi, Scepter Publishers Kenya, 2018, 3rd Kenyan printing.

*Dieve Draugi*, Riga, Kala Rak-

sti, 2018, 1st Latvian edition of *Friends of God*.

### *Works about St. Josemaría*

*La devoción a San José en san Josemaría*, De la Herrán, Laurentino María; Madrid, Palabra, 2018, 1st ed., 96 pages.

*San Josemaría y los burritos*, Jiménez, Enrique; Madrid, Palabra, 2018, 1st ed., 96 pages.

*Memoria de Roma, 1958-1976. San Josemaría y las tempestades de la Iglesia*, Gómez Pérez, Rafael; Madrid, Editorial Y, 2018, 1st ed., 228 pages.

*La liberté des enfants de Dieu: Dans les enseignements de Saint Josémaría*, Vidal, Alphonse; Paris, Le Laurier, 2018, 1st ed., 130 pages.