

Saint Josemaria Escriva

The inspiration behind Redfield



Some key ideas in the teaching of Saint Josemaria Escriva

Universal calling to holiness.

This message, taught tirelessly by Saint Josemaria from the 1920s was at the core of the Second Vatican Council, and is in fact the name of the central chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church. Pope John Paul I called Saint Josemaria a *precursor to Vatican II*.

“Do you really want to be a saint? Carry out the little duty of each moment; do what you ought and put your heart into what you are doing.”

Saint Josemaria. The Way 815

“Great holiness consists in carrying out the little duties of each moment.”

Saint Josemaria. The Way 817

“All Christian faithful, of whatever state or rank, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity.... The laity, by their vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God.”

Vatican II Lumen Gentium

Sanctification of work.

Saint Josemaria taught that we sanctify our work when we do it as well as we can with rectitude of intention, make it compatible with other family and religious duties, and when we use the opportunities presented to us in our work to serve our fellow man.

“Sanctify yourself in your work, sanctify your work, and sanctify others in your work.”

Saint Josemaria

“You must understand ... God is calling you to serve him in and from the ordinary, material and secular activities of human life. He awaits us everyday, in the laboratory, in the operating theatre, in the army barracks, in the university, in the factory, in the workshop, in the fields, in the home, in all the immense panorama of work. 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... Either we learn to find Our Lord in ordinary everyday life, or else we shall never find him.”

Extract from Conversations with Monsignor Escriva

Secularity.

By secularity, St Josemaria meant taking full personal responsibility for one's actions; having the initiative to do good in society; he insisted *“Love is deeds not words.”*

Detachment in one's heart.

He taught that we must avoid becoming attached to possessions or to positions. He warned us that that in a consumer orientated society it is very easy for us to create artificial needs for ourselves and that such needs distract us from service to others, love of God and ultimately from happiness.

“Be men and women of the world but don't be worldly men and women.”

Saint Josemaria The Way

Divine Filiation

Through baptism we are taken into God's family; God is our father and sends only what is best for us.

Unity of life

We must not live a double life; try to do everything with love of God.

"The great holiness which God expects of us is to be found here and now in the little things of each day.... The supernatural value of our life does not depend on accomplishing great undertakings suggested to us by our overactive imagination. Rather it is to be found in the faithful acceptance of God's will, in welcoming generously the opportunities for small, daily sacrifice."

Saint Josemaria. Christ is Passing By

Plan of life

He taught a very practical approach to living one's faith, insisting on the importance of living a life nourished by sacraments, and of dedicating time daily to prayer and to showing love for the Eucharist and for Our Lady.

"A saint without prayer? I don't believe in such sanctity."

Saint Josemaria The Way 107

"This training for holiness calls for a Christian life distinguished above all in the art of prayer.... Prayer develops that conversation with Christ that makes us his intimate friends.... It would be wrong to think that ordinary Christians can be content with a shallow prayer that is unable to fill their whole life. Especially in the face of the many trials to which today's world subjects faith, they would not only be mediocre Christians, but 'Christians at risk'. They would run the insidious risk of seeing their faith progressively undermined..."

John Paul II Novo Millennio Ineunte

Universal call to apostolate.

As a consequence of our baptism, we are called to evangelise; Saint Josemaria stressed the priority we must give to prayer and sacrifice to help our friends and family.

"Apostolate is love for God that overflows and communicates itself to others.... A necessary outward manifestation of interior life."

Saint Josemaria Christ is Passing By 122

Saint Josemaria on Family and Education

The extracts below, taken from Saint Josemaria's homily Marriage, A Christian Vocation and from various meetings with parents capture something of his wisdom and personality.

Family life

"Every Christian home should be a place of peace and serenity. In spite of the small frustrations of daily life, an atmosphere of profound and sincere affection should reign there together with a deep rooted calm, which is the result of authentic faith that is put into practice."

Parents as the first educators

"The parents are the first persons responsible for the education of their children, in human as well as in spiritual matters. They should be conscious of the extent of their responsibility. To fulfill it, they need prudence, understanding, a capacity to love, and a concern for giving good example."

Being friends of one's children

"Imposing things by force in an authoritarian manner, is not the right way to teach. The ideal attitude of parents lies more in becoming their children's friends - friends who will be willing to share their anxieties, who will listen to their problems, who will help them in an effective and agreeable way."

Parental example

"From the very beginning children are relentless witnesses of their parents' lives. You don't realize it but they judge every thing, and at times they judge you in a bad light; the things at home influence your children for good or for bad. Try to give them good example.... You are like an open book for them."



The development of children's characters

"Help your children learn to evaluate their actions before Our Lord's eyes. Give them supernatural motives so that they can think about them, so that they feel responsible. Never show them a lack of confidence. It is better they deceive you once in a while than that you destroy the warmth and love they feel for you." "It is not a matter of imposing a line of conduct, but rather of showing the human and supernatural motives for it. In a word, parents have to respect their children's freedom, because there is no real education without personal responsibility, and there is no responsibility without freedom."

Treating children as individuals

"...you cannot treat each one of your children in the same way. Each one is different. Each one is a jewel that Our Lord has put in your hands because He has had a great deal of confidence in you and your wife. So you should collaborate with God so that this jewel may shine and give light."

Correcting children

"I recommend being calm with your children. Don't hit them because you feel like it. The children get mad, you become annoyed. You suffer because you love them so much and, besides, you have to calm down afterwards. Be patient. Scold them when you are no longer angry and when you are alone with them. Don't humiliate them in front of their brothers. Reason with them a little so that they realize they ought to act in another way because in that way they can please God."

Parents and school working together

"I wanted to tell you just one thing. It is only right that parents show concern for their children. Simply bringing children into this world is something even animals do. You should not be content to do just that; you should want to pass on to them your ideals, your faith, your example of clean living, as well as the many wonderful virtues that you live in the bosom of your family. You'll be able to carry out all these things by promoting this kind of high school in every part of the world."

School as an extension of the home

"The school ought to be an extension of the home. Therefore, the school shouldn't teach anything contrary to our faith."

The importance of parents in a school

"Three things are important in a school: first, the parents; second, the teaching staff; third, the students....If you mums and dads don't visit the school to talk to the teachers, you're not fulfilling your duty."

The virtues that a teacher should have

"...you should especially show the boys great loyalty. Let them see that you love them, that you sacrifice yourself for them, that you have enough knowledge, and that you know how to communicate it to them with good humour, with clarity, with the gift of tongues so that they understand you. You can't demand of them what you don't have yourself. Strive to possess this knowledge and then demand."

The tutorial system

The tutorial system, largely as it operates in Redfield today, commenced in the 1950s in a school called Gaztelueta in Bilbao, Spain, at the suggestion of Saint Josemaria. He recommended that the school be structured so that each boy could talk regularly with one of the teachers, and that the teacher should be a good friend of the parents of the boy.

"...I would also encourage them (the boys) to speak with their tutor, who keeps a professional silence, and can help them in many ways: spiritually, psychologically, materially..."