

Jose María Casciaro: “It’s worthwhile”

Father Jose María Casciaro, Associate Professor of Semitic Philology at the University of Madrid, died in Pamplona on March 8. He had lived in Madrid with the founder of Opus Dei during a considerable part of the years between 1939 and 1942. His recollections of those years crystallized in a book published in 1998, whose title “It’s worthwhile” is even more relevant today.

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Jose María Casciaro was born in Murcia, in the southeastern part of Spain, in 1923. He found out about Opus Dei through his brother Pedro, who had joined in 1935. During the Spanish civil war and immediately thereafter, Pedro had been encouraging his younger brother to live a good Christian life, and in April of 1939 he decided to introduce him to St. Josemaría. On the basis of the impression that this meeting produced in him, Jose María began to think about a vocation to Opus Dei. This call of God matured over a period of about a year, and he finally asked to join Opus Dei in 1940.

He moved to Madrid to continue his studies and was able to live near St. Josemaría and some of the other first members of Opus Dei, such as Isidoro

Zorzano, Alvaro del Portillo and Juan Jimenez Vargas. As one of the youngest, in those years of poverty and difficulty, he received special tokens of affection and attention from St. Josemaría's mother and sister. He dedicated his book *It's Worthwhile* to them with gratitude and affection.

When it was published, in 1998, almost fifty years after he joined Opus Dei, this was the way he summed up his life:

“In various places of the central headquarters of the Prelature in Rome, we read the inscription ‘Vale la peña [It's worthwhile],’ a motto that we often heard from the founder of Opus Dei, and which expressed the value of dedication to God, with a stress on eternal happiness.

“In effect, when one looks back at those first years of the divine call, and then looks over the following

ones as well, one feels most deeply the truth of these words. It was worthwhile following St. Josemaría.

“In a way that grew day by day, I was sustained by the enthusiasm of teaming up with others, in the marvelous adventure of doing Opus Dei on earth. Taking a look back, it is indeed evident that it was worthwhile taking that path. Yes, it was worth it once and a thousand times: *Vale la pena.*”