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February 14 in Opus Dei

February 14 commemorates the start of Opus Dei's apostolic work with women in 1930 and the beginning of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross in 1943.

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February 14 is a double anniversary in Opus Dei. It celebrates the start of Opus Dei's apostolic work with women in 1930 and the beginning of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross in 1943.

Opus Dei was born on October 2, 1928, when God gave young Fr. Josemaria Escriva a glimpse of the institution which he was to found within the Church. At that time, Fr. Escriva had not seen that Opus Dei would work with women as well as men.

More than a year later, while he was celebrating Mass on February 14, 1930, it became clear to him that Opus Dei's universality must be reflected not only by embracing people in every sort of profession, but also by including women in its apostolic work. The apostolic work with men and women would be done separately, however, in recognition of their different pastoral needs.

It was also clear to St. Josemaria that Opus Dei needed priests. However, it was not until 1943, again during Mass, that God let St. Josemaría see the juridical solution that would

enable priests to be ordained for Opus Dei: the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross. Laymen in Opus Dei would be ordained and incardinated in the Priestly Society, which is an intrinsic and inseparable part of Opus Dei. Later, diocesan priests could also form part of the Priestly Society; they would strive to fulfill Opus Dei's goals of holiness and apostolate by fulfilling their priestly duties, while remaining within their own dioceses.

Looking back on these anniversaries, St. Josemaría once said in 1974:

"I thought that Opus Dei would be just for men. It's not that I didn't want women. I have a great love for the Mother of God; I love my own mother and all of yours; I love all my daughters, who are a blessing of God throughout the whole world. But until February 14, 1930, I had no idea there would be women in Opus Dei,

although I had in my heart a great desire to fulfill God's Will in everything. When I finished celebrating Holy Mass that day, I knew that our Lord wanted the women's branch." Later, on February 14, 1943, he wished to crown his edifice with the Cross: the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross.

In February 1968, in an interview for a magazine, he was asked about the role that women have to play in society and in the life of the Church. By that time, there were already centres of Opus Dei in all 5 continents, including Japan and the Philippines in Asia.

He said, "Women are called to bring to the family, to society and to the Church, characteristics which are their own and which they alone can give: their gentle warmth and untiring generosity, their love for detail, their quick-wittedness and

intuition, their simple and deep piety, their constancy... A woman's femininity is genuine only if she is aware of the beauty of this contribution for which there is no substitute and if she incorporates it into her own life.”

“To fulfill this mission, a woman has to develop her own personality and not let herself be carried away by a naive desire to imitate, which, as a rule, would tend to put her in an inferior position and leave her unique qualities unfulfilled. If she is a mature person, with a character and mind of her own, she will indeed accomplish the mission to which she feels called, whatever it may be. Her life and work will be really constructive, fruitful and full of meaning, whether she spends the day dedicated to her husband and children or whether, having given up the idea of marriage for a noble

reason, she has given herself fully to other tasks.”

“Each woman in her own sphere of life, if she is faithful to her divine and human vocation can and, in fact, does achieve the fullness of her feminine personality. Let us remember that Mary, Mother of God and Mother of men, is not only a model but also a proof of the transcendental value of an apparently unimportant life.”

* * * * *We include links to some personal testimonies from women in Opus Dei.

Bridget Bagshaw: “My family is everything to me.”

<https://opusdei.org/article/my-family-is-everything-to-me/>

Leire Zalba: “Two daughters with Down’s syndrome”

<https://opusdei.org/article/two-daughters-with-down-syndrome/>

Grace Osezua: “Opus Dei taught me that God is counting on me.”

<https://opusdei.org/article/opus-dei-taught-me-that-god-is-counting-on-me/>

Wendy Fitzsimons : “Work in the home is a true profession.”

<https://opusdei.org/article/work-in-the-home-is-a-true-profession/>

Dr. Josephine Kunnacherry: “Are you happy?”

<https://opusdei.org/article/are-you-happy/>

Kay Kiernan: “You’re in great form, Granny.”

<https://opusdei.org/article/youre-in-great-form-granny/>

Jacqueline Loh: “Yearning for the truth.”

<https://www.opusdei.org.sg/art.php?p=24574>

Lin Li-Hsien: “My family treasures”

<https://opusdei.org/article/my-family-treasures/>

Kristina Boskova : “I love my work, I love caring for people”

<https://opusdei.org/article/i-love-my-work-i-love-caring-for-people/>

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