



Ordinary Work, Extraordinary Grace: My Spiritual Journey in Opus Dei

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To conspiracy theorists, Opus Dei is a highly secretive and powerful international organization. To its members, however, Opus Dei is a spiritual path, a way of incorporating the teachings of Jesus into everyday life. In *Ordinary Work, Extraordinary Grace*, Scott Hahn, a member of Opus Dei, describes the organization's founding, its mission, and its profound influence on his life.

Hahn recounts the invaluable part Opus Dei played in his conversion from Evangelical Christianity to Catholicism and explains why its teachings remain at the center of his life. Through stories about his job, his marriage, his role as a parent, and his community activities, Hahn shows how Opus Dei's spirituality enriches the meaning of daily tasks and transforms ordinary relationships. He offers inspiring insights for reconciling spiritual and material goals, discussing topics ranging from ambition, workaholism, friendship, and sex, to the place of prayer and sacrifice in Christianity today.

Engaging and enlightening, *Ordinary Work, Extraordinary Grace* is at once a moving personal story and an inspiring work of contemporary spirituality.

Ordinary Work, Extraordinary Grace: My Spiritual Journey in Opus Dei Details

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Paul says

Interesting learning about how beautiful and practical Opus Dei is. How do you be a joyous and loving Christian in the secular world? Divine filiation... simplicity... humility... work... sacrifice... service... prayer.

Jeff Miller says

This book is partly an introduction to the spirituality of Opus Dei and also how Opus Dei was a influence in Scott Hahn's conversion and daily spiritual life. This book is not meant as a in depth introduction to Opus Dei and it's founder St. Josemaría Escrivá, but it does cover the basics. I was a loosely familiar with the charism of Opus Dei and some of the writings of St. Escrivá via the excellent commentary in the Navarre Bible, and through Scott Hahn's book I found that my understanding of Opus Dei was loose indeed. After reading this I found myself wanting to read deeper into St. Josemaría Escrivá writings. The spirituality of Opus Dei was much richer than I had suspected and that divine filiation was a cornerstone of it.

Scott Hahn's books are always easy to read and he is able to explain complex theological ideas in an easy to grasp way. In this book he refrains from the massive punning that is characteristic of some of his other books. I generally love his puns, but I know some are turned off from his use of them and there feel they mar an otherwise serious work. I found it very interesting his description of the founding of Opus Dei and how its founding was many years in genesis. That St. Escrivá vision of this order had no expression until the Second Vatican Council and the creation of personal prelature of which Opus Dei is still the only one. We now mostly take for granted that ordinary life is a path to sanctity, something that was not much emphasized before Vatican II and that it was really St. Josemaría Escrivá who really lead the groundwork for the The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church in Lumen Gentium.

Scott Hahn also details parts of his personal journey and how Opus Dei helped him in both incorporating devotions into his life, but in the times when his wife Kimberly was still not Catholic. Considering that Opus Dei has become such a boogeyman for some and that there are so many media distortions about it, it is rather surprising that Scott Hahn did not mention any of this or answer any of the common misconceptions. I realize he didn't write this as an apologetically work defending Opus Dei, but with such outright confusion considering The Da Vinci Code it is a rather odd oversight.

Overall I really enjoyed this book and it gave me much to think on in how work is incorporated into your life and how it can really be a work of God.

Yolanda says

Opus Dei is divine filiation, it is a spiritual journey that betters the lives it touches. It is part of the author's life and this was his journey, of how he became a better husband, father, son and friend. Anyone can follow Opus Dei man or woman. The basic criteria have changed little since St. Josemaria founded Opus Dei. Scott Hahn's books are informative and usually detailed. I enjoyed this one as well.

Liù says

I marked this at more than three because it focused less on the author's personal journey and more on the heart of Opus Dei and its founder. The spirit of Opus Dei came through in this easy enough to follow book and I now have a good understanding of its charism and spirituality, which is uncomplicated and loving. I skipped the first appendix, an article on St. Josemaría's use of Scripture in his writings, as it was not of much interest to me, and written in a less engaging way, but the second appendix, containing a handful of prayers written by St. Josemaría, is something I will return to again and again.

Fer de Uña says

(2,5) Si uno busca un libro sobre el Opus Dei, los hay mejores. Claro que si uno se interesa en el desarrollo de Scott en él, el libro cumple. Pero la historia de conversión de Scott es mucho más interesante en *Roma, dulce hogar*. Los diferentes aspectos de la espiritualidad del Opus Dei se describen de forma correcta y amena, pero esperaba más del libro.

Rebeca says

This is a short book that gives a good description of the spirituality of Opus Dei. Scott Hahn takes us with him into a his personal story, his conversion and what he came to understand and to believe. This is not a book about Opus Dei. It is a personal story, but a story in which we can come to see the spirituality of Opus Dei and learn about it.

It is a great book! I would recommend it to any person who wants to grow in spiritual life.

Sara J. (kefuwa) says

Very accessible reading - part primer on Opus Dei entwined with how finding members of this prelature helped Scott Hahn bridge himself over during/after his conversion to the Catholic Church. "Turn up the romance" indeed! Very readable. For all those secular contemplatives out there.

Carmen says

This is a very clear and informative book about Opus Dei. Anyone who may have any misconceptions about the Work would walk away with something closer to the truth. No crazy albino monks lol. Scott Hahn will continue to be one of my favorite writers on the Catholic faith.

Anthony says

Invaluable. Excellent in tandem with St. Therese of Lisieux's "The Story of a Soul."

While Hahn acknowledges his book is a mere stepping stone, a primer, for learning about Opus Dei and St. Josemaria Escriva, the insights and inspirations packed within cannot be unfolded in a single reading. Every page makes one ponder the importance of the seemingly ordinary and inconsequential details of life. But it is within the mundane that we can seize our greatest treasures. Every moment is an opportunity to say yes to God. In every patient smile, every resolution to work diligently though unwatched, every movement made to help another, we can find something to offer to God. The romance of life is in the love we show to others; not in grandiose gestures rehearsed many times over or replicated from novels and dramas but in the tiny acts that prove our self-giving. To always give our best, even if the best we can give seems so unheroic, is a path worth knowing, and a path worth following.

Megan says

It's been a good week for catching up on my reading challenge.

Now, every time I stopped to read this book, I seemed to be in a state of exhaustion--mentally, physically; I read the last third with a splitting headache--and STILL it was vastly inspiring and enjoyable. Maybe it was because of these states that I got more out of the book. It was a comfort in times when I felt overworked, and the ultimate point of the writings in the book is to inspire one to offer all work and suffering for God. POINT TAKEN.

Scott Hahn has again opened my mind to a new world of Catholic knowledge. My mother has always loved St. Josemaria, and over the years I often found her reading The Way. But, I never developed much of an interest myself--until now. Scott Hahn has helped me realize that my mom is a smart lady--actually, no; I already knew that. He just helped me realize that my mom was right all along, and I should have taken note.

Scott Hahn is, as always, funny and well-spoken. While sometimes authors need to dumb things down to reach the readers' level, Hahn somehow manages to lift the reader up to understand what he's written. With his relevant pop culture similes, personal stories, and simply worded explanations, I never feel lost reading his work--and this was true with reading Ordinary Work, Extraordinary Grace.

This book was a comfort in a few ways. One, that every meaningless task throughout the day can take on infinite value if done well and offered for God. Two, God doesn't ask that we live a life of COMPLETE suffering to reach Heaven. So many times throughout my life I've been told, "to be a saint is to suffer." Now, this is absolutely true and I completely believe it--but it is not the full story; saints love, laugh, and enjoy the company of their friends. It's just when faced with suffering in daily life, saints embrace it and offer up their life everyday. I dunno.

After years of trying to talk myself into accepting a future of stress and personal suffering, this book has given me hope that maybe God's plan for me won't be so bad ahahahahaha.

This book--10/10, would read again and recommend.

Curmudgeon66 says

I've read other books by Scott Hahn, and sometimes on Monday evenings I listen to him on EWTN. An interesting guy, with an interesting story about his conversion from Protestantism to the Catholic faith. But what about this book? I had trouble reading it, and I can't put my finger on why. I bought this and started it over a year ago, but just couldn't get through it. I recently decided to try again, and this time I made it through. I learned a bit, but I found it a bit too much of his faith journey, which I had already read, and not quite as much about understanding Opus Dei itself.

I heard Scott say on a tv show or radio somewhere, that because he does so many lectures and from his college teaching he has so many class lecture notes, that when it is time to write a book, he just puts his notes together and has a book. I think that is what he did here, and while it is an interesting recap of how Opus Dei influenced him, and how he came to understand the organization from his personal perspective, it is not a book about Opus Dei, and for that I was disappointed.

Angela9600 says

Hahn's insights are good but it wasn't as gripping as I anticipated.

Jill says

Over the years, when I've been aware of something of Opus Dei, a glancing blow, I have been drawn to what I became aware of. This book was on the Used Book table at our local bookstore. Scott Hahn. Very good. Opus Dei. Very good again. What a combination! And so, after reading this book which explains Opus Dei with more clarity, I am very drawn to its spirituality because, among other things, it is so real, so natural. Live life as it is, but live it for the glory of God in everything we do. I finished the book and am immediately beginning to reread it.

Dante says

This is such a wonderful book! It is so rich with insights into Catholic spirituality and theology that I hardly know where to begin. Within these pages, Scott Hahn recounts his first encounter and experience with Opus Dei. It's partly a spiritual memoir, and partly an exposition of what Opus Dei, as an institution and a family, is all about.

I would've filled the pages of this book with markings and notations if it belonged to me. A friend lent it to me a few weeks ago. He invited me to attend Opus Dei recollections and "circle" meetings early this year, and since then I got hooked. I looked forward to attending the recollections every month. It is a source of spiritual strength for me.

The book explains that at the heart of Opus Dei is this truth of "divine filiation" -- we are all God's children. As I've said, this book is packed with so much insights that I'm at a loss where to start. But among all the

things that Scott Hahn discussed, this appealed to me the most -- that we can do God's work (opus Dei) here on earth. With our hands, efforts, energies, and activities, we can continue God's work here on earth; we can work hard, we can work well, we can strive for excellence in every area of our lives (in our professional life, in our family life, in our day to day routines, and so on), and we can offer them to God so that He may bless, sanctify, or consecrate our work and our efforts and make them holy, and in the process making us and the people who will be served or touched by our work or service holy. Isn't that an indescribably wonderful and beautiful thing? To think that we can extend God's work here on earth using our own hands! To think that we can save or redeem the world with our ordinary day to day tasks! To think that we have this ability to spread holiness and transformation all around us! So work, no matter how ordinary, tedious, difficult, or seemingly insignificant it may be, is actually a gift, because we can use it as an instrument to sanctify ourselves, other people, and the world. It is similar to the gift possessed by King Midas -- we have the privilege of turning things and people into "gold", but in a supremely good sense.

Because God is perfect, He deserves nothing but the best from us, so we should strive to give excellent work and offer it to Him so that He may bless it.

We can also offer the struggles and the pain we experience in our work to God during the Holy Mass so that they may be united with God's sacrifice of Himself in the Holy Eucharist. Hence, work is not a necessary evil. It is not a punishment from God. It is, rather, a gift that gives us the opportunity to share in Jesus' suffering and sacrifice.

Of course, Opus Dei is founded on Scripture, too, as well as the teachings of the Church Fathers. Thus, it takes seriously this challenge from Scripture of a "universal call to holiness." Its founder, St. Josemaria Escriva, was steeped in Scripture and the writings of the Fathers. He often reminded the faithful that we are all called to become saints, but that we don't have to remove ourselves from the world. We can still become saints wherever we are placed by God. In the midst of the world, at the heart of the "hustle and bustle" of daily life, we can be "contemplatives in action" -- we can be holy and transform the world from within.

I also find this idea of an "apostolate of friendship" very beautiful and appealing. It is a call for discipleship that is based on "handshakes and heart-to-hearts."

And all that is just the tip of the ice berg. There is still much in this book that I cannot now explain. I may have to read it again someday. I highly recommend it!

Wangui says

As with all of Scott Hahn's books: a lovely and insightful read- don't I just love how he puns his titles: A Way With The World...(no others come to mind at the moment)and his wonderful use of Bible texts! And I think the best part of the whole book was when he says he 'got' The Work: that he had to tone down on the apologetics and turn up the romance with his wife Kimberly- and eventually he won her over to the Catholic Faith: and for me who is still in the process of 'getting' The Work it helped me further understand...well not quite...go deeper into the elements of The Work. So I would recommend it both to members of The Work as it helps you appreciate all you have and also to people interested in knowing more about The Work.
