

## 40 YEARS SINCE THE VISIT OF SAINT JOSEMARÍA TO IESE

# FAIRNESS AND AFFECTION IN THE BUSINESS WORLD



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For those who had the good fortune to attend the meeting, the lessons that Saint Josemaría offered are as fresh and relevant today as they were 40 years ago.

SAINT JOSEMARÍA • BUSINESS ETHICS •  
CHRISTIANITY • CHARITY • SOCIAL JUSTICE •

**N**ovember 27 marked the 40th anniversary of the visit by **Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer**, founder of the University of Navarra, to the IESE campus in Barcelona in 1972. He met with executives and others taking part in programs, professors and other staff in a meeting that took on a family atmosphere.

While those present were able to share their ideas directly with **Saint Josemaría**, what really stands out in the memory from that occasion were his teachings on the importance and transcendent nature of the business profession.

I have a clear recollection of the meeting, both of the event in itself and the context in which it occurred. Over time I have come to realize that what **Saint Josemaría** was offering business people when he talked about concrete ways of how to carry out their profession was in fact expressed in the encyclical “*Populorum Progressio*” published by **Pope Paul VI** a few years earlier in 1967.

The encyclical contained an excellent and interesting perspective on the aims and problems of the economic and social development of all the people on earth. **Saint Josemaría’s** teaching was also timely as, a few months later, the first global oil crisis broke out, a crisis that, as is well known, changed the world and had a significant social and economic impact.

At the meeting, **Saint Josemaría** talked about the importance of our profession as business people. He made it clear that the nobility of our profession comes from the fact that if both our day-to-day work and long-term plans for development are carried out on the basis of a Christian understanding of life.

Business people make a decisive contribution to the social and economic components of companies and, through them, to society as a whole, or at least to a significant part of society.

**Saint Josemaría**, with the Gospels in his hand, made us see that for business to contribute to social progress and transformation, it needs to embody a series of transcendent values and virtues such as loyalty, justice and charity. Forty



years later this remains as true and necessary as it was then.

I also recall that, in an era when there was a lot of talk about social justice, **Saint Josemaría** answered a question from the floor by making it clear that justice doesn't exist by itself but "must be accompanied and preceded by charity."

These are the fundamental principles in the social and economic world that are expressed in the social encyclicals of **John Paul II** and, more recently, **Benedict XVI** in "Caritas in veritate" and which had a profound effect on the personal and professional lives of many of those present at the meeting.

And after many years in the profession one realizes, sometimes too slowly, how fortunate it is to run an organization, with all its problems and conflicts, on the basis of a Christian approach to life (to use one of **Saint Josemaría's** expressions).

We should bear in mind that this Christian approach to life, as well as constituting a legitimate personal

option, continues to be recognized as a fundamental pillar of Western culture.

And what transcendent lessons do these teachings have for business today? In N° 10 in the book *Conversations*, published in 1968, **Saint Josemaría** says: "What I have taught for the past 40 years is that a Christian must choose to perform honest human endeavor, whether intellectual or manual, as perfectly as possible: with human perfection (professional competence) and Christian perfection (love for the will of God and in the service of others)."

Both dimensions – human perfection and Christian perfection – transcend the passage of time and embody a powerful sense of society. That, to me, is a summary of what we heard and saw at that meeting in 1972, a meeting that made an impression on all of us who were able to attend and which we recall with special gratitude on its 40th anniversary.

