

BLESSED JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA

Pope John Paul II

On Thursday, 14 October 1993, in the Sala Clementina of the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father received in audience the Theological Study Convention on the teachings of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, the Founder of Opus Dei, who was beatified in May of 1992. In his address, the Pope invited men and women from the most varied social backgrounds to sanctify themselves and to cooperate in the sanctification of others by sanctifying ordinary life.

In this work of sanctification the task of a priest is to help 'each person to face up to all the demands of his life and to discover what God wants from him in particular' (Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, Christ is passing by, no. 99).

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I am pleased to welcome you on the occasion of the Theological Study Convention on the teachings of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, which has been taking place these past few days at the Roman Athenaeum of the Holy Cross, a little more than a year since his beatification.

I greet the Grand Chancellor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, and the Rector of the Roman Athenaeum, Mgr. Ignacio Carrasco de Paula; my greetings go also to the organizing committee, the speakers and all of you who took part in this important study congress.

2. The history of the Church and of the world unfolds through the action of the Holy Spirit who, with the free cooperation of men, directs all things toward the fulfilment of God the Father's saving plan. A clear manifestation of this divine Providence is the constant presence down the centuries of men and women faithful to Christ, who, with their life and their message, shed light on various periods of history. Among these illustrious figures, Blessed Josemaría Escrivá has an eminent place, for, as I had occasion to emphasize on the solemn day of his beatification, he reminded the contemporary world of the universal call to holiness and of the Christian value which work can have in the ordinary life of each person.

The work of renewal

In addition to the sanctification of souls, the action of the Holy Spirit has as its goal the constant renewal of the Church, so that she may effectively carry out the task entrusted to her by Christ. In the recent history of the Church's life, this process of renewal has a fundamental reference point: the Second Vatican Council, during which the Church, assembled together in the person of her Bishops, reflected anew on the essence of her mystery, so as to be able to proclaim the Gospel to the world in a way that would have a decisive influence on the life of individuals, on cultures and on peoples. The conciliar texts and the documents that followed them had as a common characteristic the full awareness of the salvation accomplished for us by Christ. From this awareness stems the sense of mission which the texts of the Ecumenical Council and the whole subsequent Magisterium emphasize: that sense of mission to which I recently referred in the Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*.

To further the work of Redemption

3. The deep awareness with which the Church today is conscious of serving a redemption that concerns every aspect of human existence was prepared, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, by a process of gradual intellectual and spiritual development. The message of Blessed Josemaría, to which you devoted the work of your convention, is one of the most significant charismatic impulses in this direction, stemming from a unique grasp of the radiant, universal force of the Redeemer's grace. In one of his homilies, the Founder of Opus Dei observed:

Nothing can be foreign to Christ's concern. Speaking with theological precision . . . one cannot say that there are realities—good, noble, or even indifferent—which are exclusively profane: because the Word of God has made his dwelling among the sons of men; he was hungry and thirsty, worked with his hands, knew friendship and obedience, experienced sorrow and death. (Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is passing by*, Four Courts Press, Dublin 1982, no. 112).

On the basis of this deep conviction Blessed Josemaría invited men and women from the most varied social conditions to sanctify themselves and to cooperate in the sanctification of others by sanctifying ordinary life. In his priestly activity, he was deeply aware of every soul's value and of the power the Gospel has to enlighten consciences and to awaken a serious and active Christian

commitment to defending the person and his dignity. In *The Way*, Blessed Josemaría wrote:

These world crises are sanctity crises.

God wants a handful of men 'of his own' in every human activity. Then . . . 'pax Christi in regno Christi—the peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ' (Josemaría Escrivá, *The Way*, Four Courts Press, Dublin 1985, no. 301).

Encouragement to all members of Opus Dei

4. How much power this doctrine has in terms of the arduous and at the same time appealing work of the new evangelization, to which the entire Church is called! In your convention you have had the opportunity to reflect on various aspects of this spiritual teaching. I invite you to continue in this work, because Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, like other great figures in modern Church history, can also be a source of inspiration for theological thought. In fact theological research, which has an irreplaceable role of mediation in the relationship between faith and culture, progresses and is enriched by drawing on the Gospel source, under the impulse of the experience of Christianity's great witnesses. Blessed Josemaría, without a doubt, should be included among them.

We cannot forget, however, that the importance of the figure of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá derives not only from his message but also from the apostolic reality which he brought into being. In the 65 years since its foundation, the Prelature of Opus Dei, an indissoluble unity of priests and lay people, has contributed to making Christ's saving message resound in many walks of life. As Pastor of the universal Church, echoes of this apostolate reach me. I encourage all the members of the Prelature of Opus Dei to persevere in this work, in faithful continuity with the spirit of service to the Church which always inspired the life of your Founder.

With these sentiments, I invoke on all an abundance of heavenly gifts, in pledge of which I most cordially impart my Blessing to you and to all who are inspired by the teachings and example of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer.

This translation of the Holy Father's address is taken from L'Osservatore Romano.