



Altar of the prelatial church of Our Lady of Peace in Rome with the casket containing the sacred body of Blessed Josemaria Escriva

BULLETIN ON THE LIFE OF MSGR. ESCRIVA

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Special Edition

*Commemorating the
Anniversary of his Beatification*



Blessed JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA
Founder of Opus Dei



A CELEBRATION FOR THE WHOLE CHURCH

On May 17, 1992, the Holy Father Pope John Paul II was chief celebrant at the solemn Mass for the beatification of Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, the Founder of Opus Dei, and of Josephine Bakhita, a Canossian nun. The people of Rome could not remember seeing Saint Peter's Square — with some 300,000 pilgrims — so packed to overflowing.

Every beatification sheds new light on the mystery of the Church. This is the mystery of holiness, of God's special relationship with every individual and with all mankind, which leads Christians to an ever deeper trust in the power of God's grace. Their hope is raised to new levels as they consider how God's infinite mercy elevates human nature to such a degree that men and women can share forever in the divine life in Christ, a dignity to which we are all called. The presence of evil in the world, the fact of our own weakness and shortcomings, the existence of suffering and sin, can never lead us to renounce our goal. The example of what God has achieved in the lives of the blessed in heaven, and our confidence in their intercession, encourage us to rekindle our faith, and to respond more decisively to our Christian vocation with commitment and perseverance.

Every beatification, therefore, is a truly ecclesial event. This was particularly evident on May 17th. Pope John Paul said so the following day in the audience he gave to the pilgrims who had come to Rome for the Founder of Opus Dei's raising to the altars. "You are filled with joy at the beatification of Josemaria Escriva, because you trust that his being raised to the altars, as the Prelate of Opus Dei has just said, will be of great benefit to the Church. I too share that confidence. In fact, I am convinced, as I wrote in the Apostolic Exhortation *The Vocation and Mission of the lay faithful in the Church and in the world*, that 'the entire people of God, and the lay faithful in particular, can find at this moment new models of holiness and new witnesses of heroic virtue lived in the ordinary everyday circumstances of human existence' (cf. *Christifideles laici*, 17). How could one fail to see in the example, teaching and work of Blessed Josemaria Escriva an eminent witness of Christian heroism in the carrying out of ordinary human activities?"

There are now millions of people throughout the world whose lives have been changed due to the joy of meeting Christ thanks to the personality and message of Blessed Josemaria. And with heartfelt gratitude to God we all feel the duty of being daily more faithful to his example and his teachings. This is what the Church asks of us. This is what the Holy Father asked for, and what was mentioned by all the Cardinals and Bishops who were the chief celebrants at the many thanksgiving Masses concelebrated in a number of Roman Basilicas in the days following the beatification.

In beatifying someone the Church is restating the fact that holiness is not something unreal, a marvellous but inaccessible ideal. Holiness is a goal everyone can reach. Our Lord picked out Blessed

Panoramic view of St. Peter's Square during the beatification ceremony—a meeting point for some 300,000 pilgrims.

Josemaria Escriva and blessed him with innumerable gifts so that he could proclaim this truth to today's world. His beatification, therefore, is one more stage in the ecclesial mission to which Our Lord called him when he entrusted him with the founding of Opus Dei. In his homily during the Mass of May 17, John Paul II said: "With supernatural intuition, Blessed Josemaria untiringly preached the universal call to holiness and apostolate. Christ calls everyone to become holy in the realities of everyday life: hence *work too is a means of personal holiness and apostolate*, when it is done in union with Jesus Christ ... The relevance and transcendence of this spiritual message, with its deep roots in the Gospel, are evident, as is also shown in the fruitfulness with which God has blessed the life and work of Josemaria Escriva."

Some days later, on May 21st, the Prelate of Opus Dei underlined these words of the Pope. "The elevation of Blessed Josemaria to the altars represents the beginning of a new expansion in the ecclesial mission for which Our Lord chose him. The universality of the task to which God called him — to announce that all earthly realities are paths of holiness — has been confirmed in a solemn and tangible way. His beatification is for all Christians a *new call to holiness*, a new reason for hope, an example of faithfulness and docility to God in the fulfilment of daily work." And he added: "There can be no doubt either that our Founder's beatification also marks the beginning of a new stage in the life of Opus Dei, and this must also happen in the lives of each one of its members. A stage of deeper love for God, of more constant apostolic endeavor, and of more generous service to the Church and all mankind. It must be a new stage, finally, of greater fidelity to the spirit of seeking holiness in the middle of the world, which our Founder left us as our inheritance."

This is the message of the following pages, which give but a brief picture of the unforgettable days of the beatification of Blessed Josemaria Escriva. First, May 17th itself, with the Holy Father's homily and greeting at the *Regina Caeli* to all the faithful present at the beatification Mass. Then, May 18th, when Mass was celebrated by the Prelate of Opus Dei in Saint Peter's Square, followed by an address of the Pope during an audience with those attending the Mass. We also include some excerpts from homilies of Cardinals of the Roman Curia given during some of the more than twenty thanksgiving Masses celebrated in Rome on the 19th and 20th for different language groups. And then the final concelebrations on May 21st, where the chief celebrants were Bishop Alvaro del Portillo and Monsignor Javier Echevarria, the Vicar General of Opus Dei. These took place in the Basilica of Saint Eugene, before a final ceremony in which the holy remains of Blessed Josemaria Escriva were moved to the prelatial church of Our Lady of Peace.

The purpose of this special anniversary bulletin, one year after the beatification, is not so much to try to give a graphic description of an historical and ecclesial event, but rather to encourage a renewal of our own love for the Church so as to respond more decisively, more trustingly and more humbly to God's will, inspired by the example of Blessed Josemaria, while confiding in his intercession before the Blessed Trinity.

APOSTOLIC BRIEF

Beatification of the Venerable Servant of God Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, Priest, Founder of Opus Dei

JOHN PAUL II

As an everlasting memorial. The Church, which is sent to establish the kingdom of Christ among all peoples (cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 5), is "the universal sacrament of salvation, at once manifesting and actualizing the mystery of God's love for men" (Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 45).

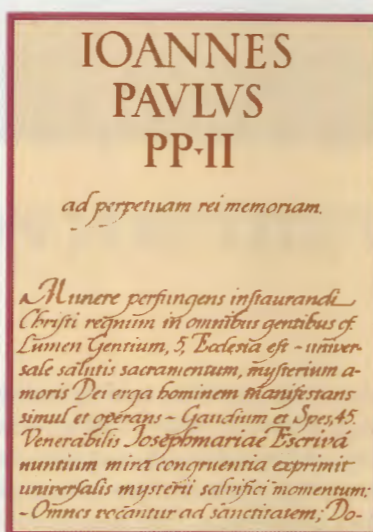
The message of Venerable Josemaria Escriva expresses, in an admirable and most fitting way, the universal nature of the mystery of salvation: "He calls each and every one to holiness; he asks each and every one to love him: young and old, single and married, healthy and sick, learned and unlearned, no matter where they work, or where they are" (*Friends of God*, 294). In proclaiming the radical nature of the baptismal vocation, he opened up new ways for a deeper Christianization of society. The Founder of Opus Dei pointed out that the universal nature of the call to full union with Christ means that one can find God in any human activity.

Work, therefore, takes on a central role in Christian sanctification and apostolate. The special connection between the dynamism of human actions and supernatural grace shows clearly how the supernatural life of union with Christ occupies a central place, while it also leads the faithful to make a determined effort to transform the world. In this context, Venerable Josemaria Escriva has highlighted all the redemptive power of the faith, and its capacity to transform both individuals and the social structures in which men and women work out their ideals and their ambitions.

The Founder of Opus Dei saw clearly the unlimited possibilities of the ordinary life of the faithful, when guided by the desire to sanctify their ordinary work and all human activities and situations. Hence his insistence on the need to blend together, in a harmonious unity of life, one's prayer, work and apostolate: "There is just one life, made of flesh and spirit. And it is this life which has to become, in both soul and body, holy and filled with God ... Our age needs to give back to matter and to the most trivial occurrences and situations their noble and original meaning. It needs to restore them to the service of the Kingdom of God" (*Conversations*, 114).

Venerable Josemaria Escriva was born in Barbastro (Spain) on January 9, 1902. He was ordained to the priesthood on March 28, 1925, and on October 2, 1928, he founded Opus Dei in Madrid. On February 14, 1930, he saw that he should extend his apostolate to include women also. In faithful fulfilment of the task entrusted to him, he brought priests and lay people, men and women, to discover that it is in their daily occupations that they can live out their co-responsibility in the Church's mission, with a full dedication to God in the ordinary circumstances of everyday life. "The divine paths of the world have been opened up," he exclaimed (*Christ is Passing By*, 21). He did not restrict himself simply to describing the pastoral opportunities that were opened up by this evangelizing effort, but rather went on to establish it as a stable and organic part of the Church.

Following an intense life dedicated entirely to the heroic fulfilment of that ecclesial service, which was marked by the



profound experience of the mystery of the Cross, in very close union with the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Venerable Servant of God gave up his soul to God on June 26, 1975, in Rome. He was an authentic master of Christian life and he reached the heights of contemplation through continuous prayer, constant mortification, and the daily effort to do his work with exemplary docility to the Holy Spirit, with the aim of "serving the Church as the Church wants to be served."

The considerable reputation for holiness that he enjoyed during his lifetime grew extraordinarily after his death. In 1981, the Vicar General of the diocese of Rome, Cardinal Ugo Poletti, started the Cause of Canonization of the Servant of God. When the two Investigative Processes in regard to his life and virtues, one in Rome and the other in Madrid, had completed their work, the consideration of the heroicity of his virtues was begun. The decree in regard to the heroic quality of his

virtues was issued on April 9, 1990.

Among the many miracles attributed to the Servant of God, the one chosen for his Cause was the miraculous cure of a nun, which took place in 1976, and the appropriate Investigative Process began in 1982. The stipulated enquiries and examinations were carried out, and the decree *super miro* was promulgated on July 6, 1991.

And so we established that the rite of Beatification should take place on May 17, 1992.

Today, therefore, in Rome, in Saint Peter's Square, during a solemn liturgical celebration, we pronounced the following words:

We, acceding to the wishes of our brothers Camillo Ruini, Our Vicar for the city of Rome, and Pietro Giacomo Nonis, Bishop of Vicenza, as well as those of many Brothers in the Episcopate, and of numerous faithful, having heard the opinion of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, by Our Apostolic Authority declare that the Venerable Servants of God Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, priest, Founder of Opus Dei, and Josephine Bakhita, virgin, Daughter of Charity, Canossian, can from now on be called Blessed, and their feasts can be celebrated, in the places and in the manner established by law, each year, on the day of their birth to heaven: June 26 for Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, and February 8 for Josephine Bakhita.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All that we have established by means of this letter, we wish to remain in place now and in the future, notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, and sealed with the Fisherman's ring, May 17, 1992, the fourteenth of Our Pontificate.

Angelo Card. Sodano, Secretary of State

Archives of the Secretary of State, no. 304,722



The Holy Father during the homily of May 17, 1992.

THE BEATIFICATION OF BLESSED JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA

Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims filled St. Peter's Square and the nearby streets on the sunlit morning of May 17, 1992. The universality of the Church was evident as people of all races, ages, and social backgrounds gathered in Rome for the beatification.

Tens of millions of viewers in some thirty countries followed the live coverage of the beatification Mass on television. The news media from all over the world sent correspondents to report on this expression of the Church's vitality.

The mystery of the unity of the Church, the People of God united in one faith, was seen by all in the devotion of the pilgrims, the cheerfulness in their faces, and in the air of recollection evident throughout this great mass of people. So many hearts raised the same prayer to heaven, but each with a different story of successes and failures, with different "crosses" and different hopes. In a united prayer of praise for God were thousands of different shades and colors of thanksgiving and petition.

When the Holy Father John Paul II proclaimed Josemaria Escriva and Josephine Bakhita blessed, large tapestries with their pictures on the façade of the Basilica were unveiled. Blessed Josemaria Escriva's smile, his kindly glance, seemed to be gazing at each individual present. The applause that burst forth in the Square, with the singing of the *Christus vincit*, expressed in an unforgettable manner the Church's delight at the triumph of Christ in his saints and the hope of reaching with them, through this earthly pilgrimage, "the crown of glory which does not fade" (Preface of Saints 1). Now raised to the altars of the Church, Blessed Josemaria Escriva reminds us, more forcefully than ever, that the divine paths of the earth have been opened up for everyone.



Portrait of Blessed Josemaria Escriva, displayed on the facade of St. Peter's Basilica, immediately following the beatification on May 17 and on May 18

Homily of Pope John Paul II

ALL ARE CALLED TO HOLINESS

1. "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

To the two disciples walking along the road to Emmaus Jesus said, "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26).

Moreover, the first reading has enabled us to hear the Apostles — Paul and Barnabas — "strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22). They announce the same truth about which Jesus had spoken on the road to Emmaus, a truth confirmed by his life and death: "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

The disciples of the crucified and risen Christ — through the succession of generations down the centuries — choose the same path which he had indicated to them.

"For I have given you an example" (John 13:15).

2. Today we are given an opportunity to fix our gaze once more on this salvific path — the path to holiness — concentrating on the figures of two people

who from now on we will call "Blessed": Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, a priest and the founder of Opus Dei, and Josephine Bakhita, a Daughter of Charity of Canossa.

The Church desires to serve and profess the whole truth about Christ. She wishes to be the steward of the whole mystery of her Redeemer. Although the way to the kingdom of God passes through many tribulations, it ends in a sharing in glory — that glory which Christ revealed to us in his resurrection.

The measure of that glory is given by the *new Jerusalem*, announced by the inspired words of the Apocalypse of John: "Behold the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them" (Rev 21:3).

"Behold, I make all things new" (Rev 21:5) — says the Lord of glory. The path toward that definitive "newness" of all things passes, here on earth, through the *new commandment* "that you love one another, even as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

That commandment was at the center of the



His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, during the incensing of the relics of Blessed Josemaria and of Blessed Josephine Bakhita.

lives of two exemplary members of the Church who today, in the joy of Easter, are proclaimed "Blessed."

3. Born of a deeply Christian family, already in adolescence Josemaria perceived God's call to a life of greater commitment. A few years after his ordination to the priesthood he began his mission as founder, a mission to which he would devote 47 years of loving and unflinching care for the priests and laity of what is today the Prelature of Opus Dei.

The spiritual and apostolic life of the newly Blessed was based on knowing himself, through faith, to be a son of God in Christ. This faith nourished his love for the Lord, his evangelizing drive, his constant joy, even in the great trials and difficulties he had overcome. "To carry the cross is to find happiness and joy," he tells us in one of his *Meditations*: "to carry the cross is to identify oneself with Christ, to be Christ, and therefore to be a son of God."

With supernatural intuition, Blessed Josemaria untiringly preached the universal call to holiness and apostolate. Christ calls everyone to become holy in the realities of everyday life. Hence, *work too is a means of personal holiness and apostolate*, when it is done in union with Jesus Christ, for the Son of God, in the Incarnation, has united himself in a certain way with the whole reality of man and with the whole of creation (cf. *Dominum et vivificantem*, 50). In a society

in which an unbridled craving for material things turns them into idols and a cause of separation from God, the new *Beatus* reminds us that these same realities, creatures of God and of human industry, if used correctly for the glory of the Creator and the service of one's brothers and sisters, can be a way for men and women to meet Christ. "All things of the earth," he taught, "including the earthly and temporal activity of men and women, must be directed to God" (*Letter*, March 19, 1954).

"I will praise your name for ever, my God and my king." This acclamation that we sang in the responsorial Psalm is, as it were, a summing up of the spiritual life of Blessed Josemaria. His great love of Christ, by whom he is fascinated, impels him to consecrate himself forever to him and to share in the mystery of his passion and resurrection. He likewise has a filial love for the Virgin Mary that leads him to imitate her virtues. "I will praise your name for ever": this is the hymn that rose spontaneously in his soul and that led him to offer to God all that was his and all that surrounded him. In fact, his life is marked by Christian humanism, with the unmistakable seal of goodness, meekness of heart, the hidden suffering by which God purifies and sanctifies his chosen ones.

4. The relevance and transcendence of this spiritual message, with its deep roots in the Gospel, are

evident, as is also shown in the fruitfulness with which God has blessed the life and work of Josemaria Escriva. The land of his birth, Spain, is honored by this son of hers, an exemplary priest, who succeeded in opening up new apostolic horizons of missionary and evangelizing activity. May this joyful celebration be an auspicious occasion that will stimulate all the members of the Prelature of Opus Dei to greater commitment, in their response to the call to holiness and to a more generous participation in ecclesial life, being always witnesses of genuine evangelical values, and may this be expressed in an ardent apostolic dynamism, with particular attention to the poorest and most needy.

5. In Blessed Josephine Bakhita too we have an eminent witness of God's fatherly love and a luminous sign of the perennial modernness of the Beatitudes. Born in the Sudan, in 1869, kidnapped by slave traders when she was still a child and sold many times in African markets, she experienced the atrocities of a slavery which left on her body the deep marks of human cruelty. In spite of these experiences of suffering, her innocence remained intact, full of hope. "As a slave I never despaired," she used to say, "because I felt within me a mysterious power that sustained me." The name Bakhita — as she had been called by her kidnapers — means Fortunate, and such she became, thanks to the God of all consolations who ever held her by the hand and walked at her side.

Having arrived in Venice, through the mysterious workings of Divine Providence, Bakhita soon opened her heart to grace. Baptism, and some years later religious profession among the Canossian Sisters who had taken her in and educated her, were the logical consequences of the discovery of the treasure of the Gospel, for which she sacrificed everything, including her return in freedom to her native land. Like Maddalena of Canossa, she too wanted to live for God alone, and

Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy
President of the Pontifical Council for
the Promotion of Christian Unity

Basilica of St. Mary Major, May 19, 1992

It is obvious, then, that the world is going to react negatively, even violently, to the idea of men and women who seek "to bring Christ into the heart of human activities," who seek to sanctify themselves and others by the witness they give in their daily lives. We should not be surprised at such opposition, but seek to overcome it with the great Gospel remedy for all opposition: love. The world is very small, writes Blessed Josemaria, when love is great ...

He knew that it was through the Cross that salvation has come into the world, and he never failed to grasp that cross as being the instrument that would bring him to his place in that great multitude from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

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with heroic constancy she set out humbly and trustingly along the path of fidelity to a higher love. Her faith was strong, clear and ardent. "If only you knew what a great joy it is to know God!" she used to say.

6. The new Beata spent 51 years of religious life as a Canossian Sister, allowing herself to be guided by obedience in a daily commitment, humble and hidden yet abounding in genuine charity and prayer. The people of Schio, where she lived for almost all that time, soon discovered in their "Black Mother" — as they called her — human qualities rich in self-giving, an uncommon interior power that attracted people. Her life was lived in constant missionary prayer, in humble and heroic fidelity to charity, which enabled her to live the freedom of the children of God and to encourage it around her.

In our time, in which the unbridled race for power, money and pleasure is the cause of so much distrust, violence and loneliness, Sister Bakhita has been given to us once more by the Lord as a universal sister, so that she can reveal to us the secret of true happiness: the Beatitudes.

Hers is a message of heroic goodness modelled on the goodness of the heavenly Father. She has left us a witness of evangelical reconciliation and forgiveness, which will surely bring consolation to the Christians of her homeland, the Sudan, so sorely tried by a conflict that has lasted many years and reaped so many victims. Their fidelity and their hope are a source of pride and thanksgiving for the whole Church. At this time of great trials, Sister Bakhita goes before them on the path of the imitation of Christ, of the deepening of Christian life and of unshakable attachment to the Church. At this time I desire once more to address a heartfelt appeal to those who control the destiny of the Sudan, that they will put into practice the ideals of peace and harmony which they proclaim; that respect for fundamental human rights — and in the first place the right to religious freedom — will be ensured for everyone, without ethnic or religious discrimination.



Pope John Paul II
with the Prelate
of Opus Dei, Bishop
Alvaro del Portillo,
on May 17 after the
beatification ceremony

A source of grave concern is the situation of the hundreds of thousands of refugees from the South, forced by the war to abandon their homes and work. Recently they have also been compelled to leave the camps where they have found at least some form of assistance and have been transported to desert locations, while the free passage of relief convoys from the international agencies has even been prevented. Theirs is a tragic situation, and it cannot leave us unmoved.

I strongly urge the international welfare agencies to continue to send their timely and urgently needed assistance.

As I greet the delegations from the Church in the Sudan present at this celebration, my thoughts turn with affection accompanied by prayer to the whole Church in that nation: to the Bishops, the diocesan and missionary clergy, the laity involved in pastoral work, and also the catechists, generous and needed cooperators in the spreading of the truth, the word and the love of God.

The people of the Sudan are always present in my heart and my prayers: I entrust them to the intercession of the new Beata, Josephine Bakhita.

7. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one an-

other" (John 13:34-35). With these words of Jesus the Gospel of today's Mass ends. In this saying we find the summing up of all holiness; the holiness that Josemaria Escriva and Josephine Bakhita attained, by paths that were different and yet met in one and the same goal. They loved God with all the strength of their heart and gave proof of a charity taken to the point of heroism through their works of service to their brothers and sisters. For this reason the Church today raises them to the honor of the altars and holds them up as examples in the imitation of Christ, who loved us and gave himself for each one of us (cf. Gal 2:20).

8. "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and in him God glorified" (John 13:31): the Paschal Mystery of glory.

Through the Son of Man this glory extends to all that is seen and unseen:

"All your words shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your saints shall bless you!"

"They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom" (Ps 145 [144]:10-11).

Behold the Son of Man: "Was it not necessary that ... he should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"

Behold those who have followed Christ in every generation: "Through many trials they have entered into the kingdom of God."

"Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom" (Ps 145 [144]:13). □



The Holy Father greets the sick who attended the beatification ceremony near the foot of the altar.

John Paul II's Regina Caeli Address on May 17th

TODAY THE CHURCH REJOICES

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The time has come to recite the beautiful antiphon *Regina Caeli*. It magnificently expresses the joy of the Lord's Mother over the resurrection of her Son, and with her and in her, the Church's joy and ours as well.

Today the Church rejoices with Mary in a particular way, for she sees Blessed Josemaria Escriva and Blessed Josephine Bakhita raised to the honors of the altar.

The Church rejoices for the two of them, for the fact that they have been joined together in this beatification today in St Peter's Square. It is a meeting which speaks greatly to us and to the whole world.

This brother and sister of ours in Christ continuously nourished their spiritual life with a fervent and genuine devotion to the Mother of God.

Even in the final moments of his earthly life, Monsignor Escriva gazed intently at the picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe which hung in his room, in order to entrust

himself to her motherly intercession and to be accompanied by her as he went to meet God. Similarly, the last words of Sister Bakhita were an ecstatic invocation to the Blessed Virgin: "The Madonna! The Madonna!" she exclaimed as a smile illumined her face.

That is why their meeting today for this beatification in St. Peter's Square says a great deal to the Church.

In the light of their example, we too are invited to look to and call upon Mary especially in this month dedicated to her, in particular, by reciting the Rosary. In this prayer the Blessed Virgin guides our meditation on the principal mysteries of redemption. May Mary's faith, then, be ours as well; may her joy also be ours.

And as she was the *causa nostrae laetitiae*, cause of our joy, so may we in turn strive to be Mary's joy, so that we may join her, the Queen of Heaven, in our blessed homeland. □



Bishop Alvaro del Portillo during the offering of the gifts in the Mass of Thanksgiving held in St. Peter's Square on May 18, 1992

May 18th

MASS OF THANKSGIVING IN ST. PETER'S

After every beatification the Church gathers together in prayer to thank God for the wonders he has worked in the lives of his saints. It is traditional for Masses of thanksgiving to be celebrated on the following days, and for the Holy Father to grant an audience to the pilgrims.

On this occasion the faithful who had gone to Rome for the beatification of Josemaria Escriva were so numerous that it would have been absolutely impossible for them to fit into any church or basilica in Rome for the first Mass of thanksgiving in honor of the new Blessed. The same was true as regards the audience of the Holy Father, inasmuch as the capacity of the Paul VI Audience Hall would have been clearly insufficient. In these circumstances it was thought that both gatherings could be organised in the Olympic Stadium, and this plan was presented to the Holy See.

A few days later the Vatican replied that, as an absolutely extraordinary solution, on Monday, May 18, the Prelate of Opus Dei could make use of the papal altar prepared for the two beatifications on the 17th in St Peter's Square. At the same time a request was made for help to be given on Sunday afternoon to put back in place the seats that would be used that morning for the beatification of Josemaria Escriva and Josephine Bakhita. Following this plan, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei, concelebrated with the Vicar General and the Vicars of the various Regions of the Prelature prior to the audience with the Pope.

On the following pages, in chronological order, we present the homily given by the Prelate of Opus Dei, his words of welcome to the Holy Father and the Pope's address to the pilgrims.

Prelate's Homily

BLESSED JOSEMARIA IS MODEL FOR HOLINESS IN DAILY LIFE

1. With immense joy we attended yesterday the beatification of the Founder of Opus Dei, Josemaria Escriva, and Sister Josephine Bakhita, Daughter of Charity of Canossa. Today, thanks to the kindness of the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, I have the joy of presiding over this solemn concelebration in thanksgiving to the Blessed Trinity and in honor of Blessed Josemaria.

The words of Sacred Scripture which we have just heard in the First Reading speak to us of an immense multitude of saints who cry out in heaven: *Alleluia! Victory and glory and power to our God!* (Rev 19:1, first reading). It is the cry of praise which also bursts forth from our hearts in communion with the Church in heaven. It is a truly intimate union, because the supernatural life that the blessed have achieved in a definitive way is also our life. God has called us to be *true images of his Son* (Romans 8:29, second reading) and he has sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts to transform us into **another Christ, Christ himself**, as Blessed Josemaria liked to say (*Christ is Passing By*, 104).

We are already the children of God, St John writes, *but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed. All we know is that when it is revealed, we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is* (1 John 3:2). The awareness of our divine filiation in Christ, which filled the whole life and preaching of Blessed Josemaria Escriva, gave rise in his soul to an ardent desire to contemplate God. How often, above all in the last years of his life, I heard him exclaim: *vultum tuum, Domine, requiram!* (Psalm 27 [26]:8). Lord, I long to contemplate your face! This desire moved him to maintain a constant dialogue with God in all circumstances: in work and in rest, in the solitude of prayer and in priestly conversations with souls, in joy and in sorrow, which was always converted into joy because he knew how to see in suffering the Cross of Christ. Love for the Cross allowed him to understand deeply the inspired words of the Apostle St Paul: *By turning everything to their good, God cooperates with all those who love him* (Romans 8:28, second reading). In the face of any difficulty his reaction was always *omnia in bonum!* everything is for the good.

2. A few weeks before God called him to enjoy His presence in a definitive way, he told us: **We must always be in heaven and on earth. Not 'between' heaven and earth, because we belong in the world. In the world and in paradise at the same time ... immersed in God, but knowing that we belong in the world** (Meditation: *Gathered Together in Unity*, March 27, 1975). Along this pathway of contemplation, lived in the midst of earthly occupations, the Holy Spirit led Blessed Josemaria to the highest peaks of the mystical life, to union with the divine Trinity. His filial dialogue with God became so intimate then, that as he

*How often, above all
in the last years of his life,
I heard him exclaim:
Vultum tuum,
Domine requiram!
Lord, I long to contemplate
your face!*

himself explained: **Words are not needed, because the tongue cannot express itself. The intellect grows calm. One does not reason; one looks! And the soul breaks out once more into song, a new song, because it feels and knows it is under the loving gaze of God, all day long.**

I am not talking about extraordinary situations, he added. **These are, they may very well be, ordinary happenings within our soul: a loving craziness which, without any fuss or extravagance, teaches us how to suffer and how to live, because God grants us his wisdom** (*Friends of God*, 307).

My heart overflows with emotion when I testify, here today, with profound gratitude to Our Lord, that for forty years, day after day, I witnessed the heroic life of Blessed Josemaria, his love for God and for all souls, his heroic correspondence to the grace of Christ, which God grants abundantly to those who are humble (1 Peter 5:5, James 4:6). I have seen how he put into practice, with heroic self-denial, the program of John the Baptist: *He must grow greater, I must grow smaller* (John 3:30) until he reached the

Cardinal Ugo Poletti
Cardinal Priest of the Patriarchal
Liberian Basilica of St. Mary Major

Homily read by Archbishop Juan Larrea,
Archbishop of Guayaquil, Basilica of St. Mary Major,
May 20, 1992

Devotion to our Mother was rooted in the spirit of Blessed Josemaria with such theological depth and filial love, that in his life and teaching "to be a Christian" means "to be Marian," a son of Mary. We can say therefore, without fear of exaggerating, that the richness of his Marian piety is already a treasure for the Church.



Panoramic view of St. Peter's Square on May 18, 1992, during the solemn Mass of Thanksgiving for the Beatification of the founder of Opus Dei, celebrated by Bishop Alvaro del Portillo

peak that allows the soul to exclaim with St Paul: *Life to me is Christ* (Phil 1:21), *I live not now with my own life but rather with the life of Christ who lives in me* (Galatians 2:20).

The Second Vatican Council teaches us that *to look on the life of those who have faithfully followed Christ is to be inspired with a new reason for seeking the city which is to come* (cf. 13:14 and 11:10), *while at the same time we are taught to know a most safe path by which, despite the vicissitudes of the world, and in keeping with the state of life and condition proper to each of us, we will be able to arrive at perfect union with Christ* (Dogmatic Constitution: *Lumen Gentium*, 50). The sanctity reached by Blessed Josemaria does not represent an impossible ideal. It is an example which is proposed not only to a few chosen souls, but rather to innumerable Christians, called by God to sanctify themselves in the world: in the sphere of their daily work, of their family and social life. It is a shining example which shows how one's daily occupations are not a hindrance to the development of the spiritual life, but rather can and should be transformed into prayer. He himself writes in his personal notes, with a certain element of surprise, that he vibrated with love for God precisely **in the street, amidst the noise of traffic, of public transport, of people; even reading the newspaper** (*Intimate Notes*, March 26, 1932). It is an example which is particularly relevant for us, since Blessed Josemaria lived among us. Many of you here have met him personally. He shared intensely in the anxieties of our times, and he achieved holiness precisely in his daily activities, through the faithful fulfilment of his daily duties in the Spirit of Christ (*Opening Prayer*, Mass in honor of Blessed Josemaria Escriva).

3. We have just heard, in the Gospel of the Mass, the words which conclude the narration of the miraculous catch: the Apostles *left everything and followed him* (Luke

5:11, Gospel reading). The lesson is clear. In order to follow Christ it is necessary to leave all things behind. Blessed Josemaria responded without hesitation to this demand, and he taught that it is possible to live it fully in the middle of the world. Yes, it is possible to *belong* in the world without being worldly! It is possible for each person to remain in his own place, and at the same time to follow Christ and remain in Him. It is possible to live **in heaven and on earth, to be contemplatives in the middle of the world**, transforming the circumstances of ordinary life into an occasion for an encounter with God, into a means of leading other souls to God and of impregnating human society from within, with the spirit of Christ, offering all our works to God the Father in union with the Sacrifice of the Cross, renewed sacramentally in the Eucharist (*Prayer Over the Gifts*, Mass in honor of Blessed Josemaria Escriva).

This message of sanctification *in, from and through* human realities is providentially suited to the circumstances of our time (Congregation for the Causes of Saints, *Decree on the Heroic Virtues of Josemaria Escriva*, April 9, 1990). For it urgently needs to channel scientific and technical development not towards the mere inhuman 'culture of well-being,' but rather toward a culture, one might say, of 'integral well-being' of the whole man and of all men, in order to build up the kingdom of Christ on earth — *a kingdom of justice, love and peace* (Roman Missal, *Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, Preface). This kingdom, which is borne by the Church, begins in the heart of man and spreads from there to family, professional and social life. In the words of the Holy Father, John Paul II, in his first Encyclical, this world of ours *of conquests of science and technology ... is also the world 'groaning in travail' (Rom 8:22) that 'waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God' (Rom 8:19, in*

Redemptor Hominis, 8). Let there be no doubt: These world crises are crises of saints. God wants a handful of men 'of his own' in every human activity. And then ... *pax Christi in regno Christi* — the peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ (Josemaria Escriva, *The Way*, 301).

4. From a very early age Blessed Josemaria understood, with the lights God gave him, that the Creation, Redemption and the Sanctification of the world form the framework of a single eternal plan of the Blessed Trinity, who has ordered all things to the glory of the Father and leads them to that end by means of the Son, with the power of the Holy Spirit. As early as the 1930's he condensed, in brief strokes, the program of his life and the reason for his being in Opus Dei as follows. **We must give all the glory to God. He wills it: *gloriam meam alteri non dabo*, I will not give my glory to another (Is 42:8). And therefore we want Christ to reign, since *per ipsum, et cum ipso, et in ipso, est tibi Deo Patri Omnipotenti in unitate Spiritus Sancti omnis honor et gloria*: through Him, with Him, and in Him, all honor and glory is for you, God the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. And a requirement of his glory and of his kingship is that everyone, with Peter, should go to Jesus through Mary (Instruction, March 19, 1934, 36-37).**

Blessed Josemaria always wanted to live for the glory of God, and to direct all earthly realities to that end. For this reason with all his soul he sought union with Christ through Mary, and he achieved it because he loved the Church and the Pope with all his heart, and he served them with all his life. I cannot but recall the first time he came to Rome, and his emotion when he first caught sight of the dome of St Peter's and recited the Creed. He spent the whole night in a vigil of prayer, with his eyes fixed on the rooms of the Holy Father, visible a short distance away from the terrace of the house where we were staying in the nearby Piazza della Citta Leonina. That spirit of persevering and penitent prayer, that love for the Church and the Roman Pontiff, is what he inculcated in a multitude of souls and what, here today, we wish to manifest in a singular way.

***Blessed Josemaria
always wanted to live
for the glory of God,
and to direct all
earthly realities
to that end.***

Cardinal Johannes Willebrands

Emeritus President of the Pontifical Council
for the Promotion of Christian Unity

Basilica of Saint Clement, May 19, 1992

The person of the Founder of Opus Dei has a special significance for the whole Church. Monsignor Escriva has taught us, in the journey of our life, the Way which is Jesus Christ. He has shown us that way in our own times, he has described it and he has travelled along it with human enthusiasm and spiritual vigor. The description which the Apostle St. Paul gives us of his own difficulties, of his joys and of his life with God through Jesus Christ, with the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, finds a form and reality of its own in Josemaria.

Cardinal Sebastiano Baggio

Chamberlain of the Holy Roman Church

Basilica of Santa Maria in Vallicella, May 20, 1992

Blessed Josemaria Escriva carried out his foundational work with total rectitude of intention. He was only interested in the glory of God, and this explains his deep love of freedom, which was such a characteristic trait of his life and work...

For Blessed Josemaria Escriva, union with the Church is not something external but a constituent part of any true work of apostolate. New reasons come to mind for giving thanks to God for this unity of apostolate which, following the way marked out by Blessed Josemaria Escriva, Opus Dei has lived with such intensity from the beginning. A unity that is now adequately expressed institutionally with the erection of Opus Dei as a Personal Prelature and which is seen, by the ordination of the Prelate as a Bishop, to be rooted in the very source of apostolic unity: the Episcopal College which — cum Petro et sub Petro — is the successor of the College of Apostles.

With emotion and gratitude we call on the intercession of Blessed Josemaria, so that we too may reach sanctity following the sure path which is the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Mother. Pope Paul VI proclaimed Our Lady as *Mater Ecclesia*, Mother of the Church (Closing Address of the Second Vatican Council, Third Session, November 21, 1964), and the Holy Father Pope John Paul II has wanted to brighten up with her image this marvellous Square of St. Peter, which opens its arms to the whole of mankind. Through her maternal mediation we receive the grace of the Holy Spirit which makes us members of Christ in the Church.

Christ, Mary, the Pope: three names intimately united in the heart of Blessed Josemaria, who wished to sum up his apostolic zeal in that aspiration he so often repeated, and which we too, now, once again make our own: *Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam!* — all, with Peter, with the Pope and in the Church, to Jesus through Mary! Amen. □



Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei, greets the Holy Father at the beginning of the Audience of May 18, 1992

Audience for the Pilgrims

OPUS DEI PRELATE'S GREETING TO THE HOLY FATHER

Holy Father,

I am filled with deep joy as I begin to address Your Holiness. I do so in the name of thousands of faithful people, priests and laity, members of Opus Dei, Cooperators and friends of the Work who have gathered in Rome from all the Continents in order to attend the beatification of Josemaria Escriva, Founder of Opus Dei. I know I am also representing many others who, not having been able to come to the Eternal City, are nevertheless present in spirit in St Peter's Square, united to us in their faithful allegiance to and filial affection for the Roman Pontiff.

Allow me, Holy Father, in the name of all of them, and expressing the sentiments of the countless people who have recourse to the intercession of Blessed Josemaria Escriva, to thank you for the solemn ceremony of the beatification which your Holiness presided over in this very place.

The growing diffusion of the private devotion to the Founder of Opus Dei was defined, in the Decree on his heroic virtues, as "a true phenomenon of popular piety." From now on, after his elevation to the glory of the altars, the number of those receiving effective help through the public veneration, example and teaching of Blessed Josemaria, will increase even more. The principal reason

***Blessed Josemaria
encouraged us always
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in all its theological depth.***

for our joy and of our gratitude to God and to Your Holiness for the beatification of our most beloved Founder is rooted precisely in the good that this will bring not only to Opus Dei, but to the whole Church. This feeling is a direct consequence of what we have learned and heard repeatedly from the lips of Blessed Josemaria who used to say: **the only ambition, the only desire of Opus Dei and of each one of its members is to serve the Church as She wishes to be served** (Letter, May 31, 1954, 1).

This service, as any truly ecclesial service, demands communion with the Pastors whom *the Holy Spirit has made guardians to feed the Church of God, which he has bought with his own blood*, (Acts 20:28), and in particular with the



The Holy Father embraces Bishop Alvaro del Portillo moments before the Audience of May 18, 1992.

Successor of Peter, the principal and visible foundation of the Church (*Lumen Gentium*, 23). Blessed Josemaria Escriva encouraged us always to consider the union with the Roman Pontiff in all its theological depth and, at the same time, to practise this most lovable demand of union with the mind and heart. Expressing the feelings of all those for whom I am speaking today, I can say to Our Lord, making my own, once again, the exclamation of Blessed Josemaria: **Thank you, my God, for the love of the Pope which you have placed in my heart** (*The Way*, 573).

Holy Father, on this day when, through a happy coincidence, we are celebrating Your Holiness' seventy-second birthday, and renewing my full personal adhesion and that of all of the Prelature of Opus Dei to the Holy See, allow me to offer you our congratulations with the classical Latin expression, which I would like to be an invocation to Our Lord and His Most Blessed Mother: *ad multos annos!* Then, after thanking Your Holiness once again from the bottom of my heart, I ask, for me and for all those who are joyfully taking part in the beatification of Josemaria Escriva, to be strengthened by your Apostolic Blessing. □



Cardinal Angelo Sodano
Secretary of State to His Holiness

Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, May 20, 1992

It is Peter who guides the ship for the miraculous catch of fish. So it was yesterday and so it is today. The successor of Peter is the one who guides the ship of the Church through the seas of human history; it is the Pope who receives from the Holy Spirit the support of his ministry so as to confirm his brothers in the faith (cf. Luke 22:32). This feeling of adhesion to the Roman Pontiff was deeply rooted in the life of Blessed Josemaria... The Beatification of Monsignor Escriva, dear brothers and sisters, is a propitious moment that God is offering us to reaffirm our generous dedication to the apostolate of word and example...



Pope John Paul II before the audience of May 18, 1992, being acclaimed by the pilgrims.

Holy Father's Address to the Pilgrims

BLESSED JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA IS AN EMINENT WITNESS OF CHRISTIAN HEROISM

1. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the filial devotion expressed to me by Bishop Alvaro del Portillo in the name of those who fill St Peter's Square and the many faithful, cooperators and friends of Opus Dei. To him I express a special, affectionate greeting, which I extend to the other members of the Episcopate and to all here present.

You are filled with joy at the beatification of Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer because you trust that his being raised to the altars, as the Prelate of Opus Dei has just said, will be of great benefit to the Church. *I too share this confidence.* In fact, I am convinced, as I wrote in the Apostolic Exhortation *The Vocation and Mission of the lay faithful in the Church and in the world*, that 'the entire People of God, and the lay faithful in particular, can find at this moment new models of holiness and new witnesses of heroic virtue lived in the ordinary everyday circumstances of human existence' (cf. *Christifideles laici*, 17). How could one fail to see in the example, teaching and work of Blessed Josemaria Escriva an eminent witness of Christian heroism in the carrying out of ordinary human activities?

The universal call to holiness and the apostolate is, as you know, one of the points which the Magisterium of the Second Vatican Council insisted on most strongly (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 40-42; *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 1-4). Like others before him Blessed Josemaria, thanks to God's light, understood this universal call, not only as a doctrine to be taught and spread particularly among the lay faithful, but also, and above all, as the very center of an active commitment in his pastoral ministry. The young priest Josemaria Escriva with a generous response to divine grace found himself working in a field fraught with difficulty. His fidelity allowed the Holy Spirit to lead him to the heights of personal union with God, which resulted in an extraordinarily fruitful apostolate. Indeed, the Lord allowed him, already in his earthly life, to see the comforting fruit of his apostolate, which Josemaria attributed entirely to divine goodness, always considering himself an 'inept and deaf instrument,' evidence of an extraordinary humility, to the extent that he saw himself, at the end of his life 'as a stammering child.'

A new call to holiness

2. The beatification of Josemaria Escriva has given me the joy of meeting all of you, dear priests and laity who have come on pilgrimage to Rome in such large numbers, to participate in this heartfelt manifestation of faith and ecclesial communion.

First of all, I want to offer my respectful greetings to the worthy authorities of Latin America and Spain who have participated in this solemn ceremony. The figure of a Blessed is a new call to holiness, and this call is neither a privilege nor is it addressed to only a few people; rather, it must be the common goal of all Christians. Indeed, in Baptism, by which we become God's children, we receive grace, that seed of holiness which grows and matures with the help of the other sacraments and the practice of piety; it must be shown in the fruits and witness of life which the Spirit fosters in those who love him. Thus one can reach that fulness which the Apostle Paul speaks of: 'This is the will of God, your sanctification' (1 *Thess* 4:3).

This call to holiness was repeatedly promoted by Blessed Josemaria. Present here today are many people who often heard from his lips the same exhortation of St Paul; others have received it through his writings or from eyewitnesses. Now, each one, immersed in the specific activity of his or her own life and occupation, can count on the help of the Holy Spirit in following this path toward Christian perfection. This is what the same Blessed reminds us of in one of his *Conversations*: "Christians, working in the midst of the world, must reconcile all things with God, speaking with Christ in the midst of all human activity" (no. 59).

The example of personal, family and social life

3. In this regard the Second Vatican Council urges all Christians, all according to their personal calling, "to perform their duties faithfully in the spirit of the Gospel" (*Gaudium et spes*, 43). When people fail in this obligation, they cease to fulfil the will of God who expects each person to cooperate in the work of creation: however, they also offend their neighbor, with whom we are united by an unbreakable bond of solidarity. Therefore, the Council notes that "one of the gravest errors of our time is the dichotomy between the faith which many profess and the practice of their daily lives" (*ibid*).

Particularly in our day, Christians are called to cooperate in a new evangelization which imbues the home, professional life, centers of culture and work, mass media, and public and private life with those Gospel values which are the source of peace, beauty, understanding and harmony among all people. This apostolic commitment is fulfilled not only by preaching the Chris-

Cardinal Camillo Ruini

Cardinal Vicar of Rome
President of the Italian Episcopal Conference
Basilica of St. John Lateran, May 19, 1992

Becoming a saint in the middle of the world: Blessed Josemaria personified this ideal perfectly. He taught others with his example to make it possible where the pressing concerns in our time, so sensitive to the value of work as a means of promoting the dignity of man and social progress, come together The message of Blessed Josemaria is profoundly Gospel-based and he is no doubt among those who have given a new dynamism and energy to the Church's mission. As the People of God approaches the third millenium of their earthly pilgrimage, they find a powerful source of light in the teaching of the Founder of Opus Dei.

tian message, but also by the example of personal, family and social life. At the same time, all evangelizing activity should be coordinated and integrated into the pastoral program of the dioceses, which in turn are enriched by the variety of charisms with which the saints and blessed have made the evangelizing mission of the universal Church fruitful throughout her two thousand years of history.

A new beginning

4. I now want to express a very cordial welcome to the French-speaking pilgrims. Your participation in the beatification of the Founder of Opus Dei will be for you, I hope, the occasion for a new beginning, in order to respond fully to your vocation as baptized persons: fulfill God's will each day, in all your tasks as men and women of our time; make progress on the path of holiness, that is, let yourselves be seized by the presence of Christ the Savior, he who calls his disciples to abide in his love (cf. *John* 15:9); take an active part in the life and mission of the Church, in communion with the diocesan Pastors and all

Particularly in our day, Christians are called to cooperate in a new evangelization which imbues the home, professional life, centers of culture and work, mass media, and public and private life with those Gospel values which are the source of peace.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger

Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith

Basilica of the Twelve Apostles, May 19, 1992

We tend to leave holiness to a few unspecified individuals, while we are happy to stay as we are. Josemaria Escriva has come to wake us up from this spiritual apathy. No! Holiness does not consist in extraordinary things, but in the ordinary things of every baptized person ... Holiness has a thousand forms and can be achieved in every place and in every walk of life. It is a normal everyday thing. It consists in living life face to face with God and filling it with the spirit of faith. In fulfilling this mission Blessed Josemaria became a great man of action, who lived for God's will and who invited his fellow men to love God's will.

your brothers and sisters, so that you may bear witness to the Good News of salvation in a world which needs light and reason to hope, in order to build a society in solidarity that is more worthy of man.

May the example and teachings of Blessed Josemaria Escriva enlighten you! May his intercession sustain you! With all my heart, I bless you in the name of the Lord.

Leaven in society

5. To those of you who are from English-speaking countries I extend a warm greeting. This visit to Rome, where the Founder of Opus Dei chose to spend a large part of his life, must strengthen even further your faith and your commitment to the life and mission of the Church. Rome is the place of the witness of the Princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul. It is the place from which the Successor of Saint Peter calls the entire Church to respond to the urgent need for "a new evangelization" at the approach of the third millennium. In many documents and on many occasions I have exhorted the laity to take a decisive part in bringing the word of God to the millions and millions of men and women who as yet do not know Christ the Redeemer of humanity (cf. *Christifideles laici*, 35; *Redemptoris missio*, 71).

Sustained by the holy zeal which you have learned from the newly Blessed founder, may you be fully committed to the cause of evangelization through your faithful witness to the Church's mission. As leaven in society, bring your talents to bear on public and private life at every level, proclaiming in word and deed the truth about man's transcendent destiny. Following your Founder's teaching, respond generously to the universal call to the fulness of Christian life and the perfection of charity, thus laying the foundation for a more just and equitable earthly society (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 40). May God abundantly fortify you for this task. □



Cardinal Edouard Gagnon

President of the Pontifical Commission
for Eucharistic Congresses

Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, May 19, 1992

Monsignor Escriva wasn't satisfied with becoming identified with Christ. He understood that he had to draw others toward God too... The presence here of so many faithful is something unbelievable, and is a tribute to the faith of the Founder of Opus Dei. The whole secret of the efficacy of Monsignor Escriva is rooted here: he knew how to believe in Jesus Christ with extraordinary depth. This faith came alive thanks to his personal conversation with Christ: for Our Lord spoke to him, sometimes in a visible and concrete fashion, and constantly through the Holy Spirit. His faith made him see things as Jesus sees them, and as the Father sees them.

Cardinal Andrzej Maria Deskur

President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council
for Social Communication

Crypt of the Vatican, May 19, 1992

We are here to give thanks to God in the name of the Church, and in a special way in the name of the Church in Poland and of all Slavic churches, where the work of Blessed Josemaria is well known and where it continues to carry out this new evangelization to which we are called... Here, at this burial place of the Popes who have lived through the recent history of the Church and who knew Blessed Josemaria well, we offer God our gratitude for raising him to the altars. We pray that the Work he started — Opus Dei, the Work of God, with its spirit which has been endorsed by the Holy Father, and which promotes the universal call to holiness through ordinary work — will develop and be welcomed by all the faithful as an undertaking supported by the Holy See and blessed by God.

May 19-21

MASSES OF THANKSGIVING IN ROME

In the solemn celebrations that took place to mark the beatification of Josemaria Escriva, there were many factors that highlighted the importance of this event in the life of the Church. One of the most significant was the participation of so many representatives of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. In addition to the 46 Cardinals and almost 300 Bishops who attended the beatification on May 17, an even greater number of members of the episcopate throughout the world had written to Bishop Alvaro del Portillo during the preceding months, expressing their gratitude to God for the Holy Father's decision to raise the Founder of Opus Dei to the veneration of the altars.

On May 19 and 20, in various Roman basilicas and churches, 21 Solemn Masses of Thanksgiving, presided by high-ranking dignitaries of the Church's hierarchy, were celebrated for different language groups.

English-speaking groups came together in the Basilica of St. Mary Major in order to take part in the Mass celebrated by Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity; in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Vallicella, where Cardinal Jose Sanchez, Prefect of the Congregation for Clergy, said Mass; and also in the Basilica of St. Andrea della Valle, with Cardinal Augustin Mayer. The French speaking groups attended the Masses of Cardinals Edouard Gagnon, President of the Pontifical Committee for Eucharistic Congresses, in the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, and of Cardinal Paul Poupard, President of the Pontifical Council for Dialogue with Non-Believers, in the Basilica of St. Appollinaris.

Cardinal Jose T. Sanchez
Prefect of the Congregation for Clergy

Basilica of Santa Maria in Vallicella, May 19, 1992

Blessed Josemaria Escriva was God's gift to today's world. The history of the Church points to an unending timely intervention of the Holy Spirit at given moments, sending charismatic leaders to meet special needs and situations ... The world desperately needs what Monsignor Escriva has taught, exemplified and died for: namely, for men and women to take seriously their Christian vocation to sanctify work wherever and whatever it is, together with those characteristic virtues of Blessed Escriva — his love for the Church as a guarantee of the purity of his doctrine.

Spanish-speaking pilgrims filled the Basilicas of St. Paul Outside the Walls and Santa Maria in Vallicella, so as to participate in the four concelebrations presided over by Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Secretary of State; Cardinal Sebastiano Baggio, Chamberlain of the Holy Roman Church; Cardinal Eduardo Martínez Somalo, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life; and Cardinal Nicolas J. Lopez Rodriguez, Archbishop of Santo Domingo and President of CELAM (the Latin American Episcopal Conference).

Twenty-three Solemn Masses of Thanksgiving, whose chief celebrants were high-ranking Church dignitaries

Cardinals Angelo Felici, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, in the Basilica of the Twelve Apostles, and Camillo Ruini, Vicar of His Holiness for the Diocese of Rome and President of the Italian Episcopal Conference, in the Basilica of St. John Lateran, celebrated Mass for the Italian groups. Cardinal Ugo Poletti who was to officiate in the Basilica of St. Mary Major had to be substituted for health reasons by Archbishop Juan Larrea, Archbishop of Guayaquil, who read the homily which Cardinal Poletti, Cardinal Priest of St. Mary Major, had prepared.

In the Basilica of the Twelve Apostles Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, presided over a concelebration for German-speaking faithful.

Cardinal Pietro Palazzini celebrated a Mass in Latin for groups from various countries in the Basilica of St. Andrea della Valle. Cardinal Angelo Rossi, Dean of the College of Cardinals, said Mass in the same church, in Portuguese. Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, former President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, did so in Dutch in the Basilica of St. Clement. Cardinal Andrzej Maria



The Prelate of Opus Dei, with a group of bishops and priests, during the solemn concelebration in thanksgiving in the Basilica of St. Eugene on May 21, 1992

Deskur celebrated Mass in the Crypt of the Vatican, by the tomb of St. Peter, for people coming from Poland. Japanese pilgrims were able to attend the Mass said by Bishop Peter Takaaki Hirayama, Bishop of Oita, in the Church of St. Jerome della Carità. Koreans went to the Mass of Bishop Angelo Kim, Bishop of Suwon and President of the Korean Episcopal Conference, in the Church of St. John the Baptist al Collatino; the Finns, to that of the Most Reverend Fr. Rudolf Larenz, in Santa Maria sopra Minerva; those coming from Sweden gathered in the Church of St. Bridget for the Mass of the Most Reverend Fr. Johannes L. Bernaldo, Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in that country.

Although space only allows us to reproduce extracts from some of the homilies given at these thanksgiving Masses, the wide range of churchmen taking part in these ceremonies reflects the universal standing of the personality and message of Blessed Josemaria Escriva, the hopes that the Church places on his intercession and on his example of holiness to illuminate the world with the light of the Gospel on the eve of the third millennium.

In Rome, the liturgical ceremonies related to the beatification of Josemaria Escriva came to a close on May 21. With the permission of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, on May 14 the coffin containing his mortal remains had been taken privately from the crypt of the prelate church of the Opus Dei Prelature — where it had been since the funeral — to the Basilica of St. Eugene. The number of pilgrims who wished to venerate the relics of the body of the Founder of Opus Dei had made it necessary to move the coffin to a venue large enough to allow this.

From the 14th onward, the Basilica of St. Eugene was packed throughout the day with people who came to pray

Cardinal Nicolas J. Lopez Rodriguez
Archbishop of Santo Domingo
President of CELAM

Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, May 19, 1992

By proclaiming the example of his life, of his apostolic zeal and — I would add — the holy daring with which he responded to the divine command to teach all nations the saving doctrine of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Church encourages us to launch out with generosity "into the deep" (Luke 5:4), so as to take the Gospel to all souls. It also offers us, in the teaching of Blessed Josemaria, a way which is providentially relevant to the circumstances of our lives today.

Cardinal Angelo Felici
Prefect, The Congregation for the Causes of Saints

Basilica of the Twelve Apostles, May 20, 1992

Josemaria Escriva's entire life was moved by the desire of exalting Jesus Christ on earth and of giving glory, with Him, to God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit... His preaching was a burning call, addressed to all Christians, to open wide the gates of their souls to Our Lord, so as to know how to understand and accept the vocational meaning of their Christian existence, and collaborate in the universal evangelizing mission of the Church... Thanks to his example and his drive, countless people in the Church have given their lives to Christ and have followed their vocation.

May 21, 1992:
Procession in the
prelatic church
of Our Lady of Peace,
where the holy remains of
Blessed Josemaria Escriva rest



before the glass case which was draped with a red cloth. The extension of the private devotion to the Founder of Opus Dei is universally accepted. The Pontifical Decree on the heroicity of his virtues defines it as "a true phenomenon of popular piety." This was made especially manifest at the beatification. People of all ages, from the most diverse countries and social backgrounds, gathered together in an orderly and silent fashion, so as to give thanks for favors obtained through his intercession, and to ask him for help with the spiritual and material needs that are always present in the lives of men and women.

On May 17th, after the beatification, the glass case was uncovered and the coffin could be seen by everyone. Hundreds of Masses, celebrated by priests who had come from all over the world, were said one after another. Outside the Basilica lines about a mile long began to form. Rather than seeing historic buildings, of which

there are so many in Rome, people wanted to venerate the mortal remains of the newly Blessed. No written record can ever reflect the faith that moved so many thousands of people to make sacrifices, often great sacrifices, in order to be in the Eternal City during those days of May. This is something deeply personal, expressed in hours of intense prayer, that only God knows. Between the Blessed Trinity and these souls alone will remain the decisions of conversion, of self-giving, of adherence to their Christian faith, of greater generosity in their struggle and in apostolic desires, which welled up in the hearts of those who prayed before the relics of Blessed Josemaria Escriva.

In the morning of May 21st, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei, was chief celebrant at a Mass of thanksgiving in St. Eugene, concelebrated with 18 other Bishops and 22 priests of the Prelature. In the afternoon the Vicar General of Opus Dei, Monsignor Javier Echevarria, was chief celebrant at another solemn concelebration. The coffin was then taken in public procession to the prelatic church, in Viale Bruno Buozzi 75, where — according to an ancient Christian custom — it has been placed in a glass case under the altar, as a symbol of his identification with Christ. □

Bishop Peter Takaaki Hirayama
Bishop of Oita, Japan

Church of Saint Jerome della Carità, May 19, 1992

It was Blessed Josemaria's desire that the lay faithful, without changing their state, and each one in his or her place in the world, should seek holiness. This gives us Catholics of Japan a great light. The first assembly of our National Council of Evangelization took place in Kioto five years ago. We asked ourselves at that time what could be done to correct the separation that exists in fact between the faith and the daily life of many Catholics... What answer can we give to this question? I was deeply impressed by what I read in the works of Monsignor Escriva: that each one of us, in his or her own place, in his or her mission within society, through his or her work done with serenity, as leaven among men and women, sanctifies themselves and sanctifies others, and we serve the Church.

Cardinal Augustin Meyer
Emeritus Prefect, Congregation for Divine Worship
and Discipline of the Sacraments
Basilica of St. Andrea della Valle, May 20, 1992

As one who has tried to serve the Church in the capacity of Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, I am pleased to reflect upon Blessed Josemaria's great love for the liturgy... With a deep piety and a faithful obedience to the Church's prescriptions in these matters, Blessed Josemaria Escriva has made a significant contribution to the correct implementation of the liturgical renewal mandated by the Second Vatican Council.

Cardinal Eduardo Martínez Somalo
Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes
of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life

Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, May 19, 1992

How could we fail to praise and thank our God for the gift he has just granted us? It is a gift for the whole Church, as John Paul II has told us. For the whole Church whose dazzling apparel has been decked with the life of Blessed Josemaria Escriva. A gift for which all of us who were privileged to have known him in this world are particularly grateful; all of us who in one way or another have experienced in our own lives the stimulus of his noble and generous soul.

Cardinal Angelo Rossi
Dean of the Sacred College of Cardinals

Basilica of St. Andrea della Valle, May 20, 1992

Blessed Josemaria Escriva was the apostle of our century... and founded Opus Dei, which has spread prodigiously all over the world, giving the Church devout and holy faithful in the most varied professions, promoting sanctity in all states of life.

Cardinal Pietro Palazzini
Emeritus Prefect of the Congregation
for the Causes of the Saints

Basilica of St. Andrea della Valle, May 19, 1992

God called Blessed Josemaria Escriva to found Opus Dei, that is to carry out on earth a mission that entailed removing a heap of "impossible" obstacles... And that young priest, who had no more than 26 years of age, the grace of God and good humor, corresponded heroically to this mission that, to human eyes could appear foolish, full of insurmountable difficulties. And, because he knew how to correspond heroically to grace, God has glorified him: since, for 47 years he was a Founder at the level of the Heart of Christ, a doer of impossible tasks, a personal and exemplary *opus Dei*, who made Opus Dei possible as an institution of the Church.

Cardinal Paul Poupard
President of the Pontifical Council for
Dialogue with Non-Believers
Basilica of St. Appolinarius, May 20, 1992

We find here a synthesis of the central nucleus of the spiritual message entrusted by God to the Founder of Opus Dei: to achieve the contemplation of God in all the realities of ordinary life. To build — to use another expression that he himself forged — that *unity of life* that permits us to deal with God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, at every moment of the day and night, and to raise everything to the glory of God, by means of Christ, with Him and in Him: in union with the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary, because the Mass is the *center and root* of Christian life, according to another expression of Blessed Josemaria that has been taken up in the conciliar teachings of Vatican II.

Blessed Josemaria Escriva
Founder of Opus Dei

PRAYER

O God, You granted your priest Blessed Josemaria countless graces, choosing him as a most faithful instrument to found Opus Dei, a way of sanctification in daily work and in the fulfillment of the Christian's ordinary duties. Grant that I too may learn to turn all the circumstances and events of my life into occasions of loving You and of serving the Church, the Pope and all souls with joy and simplicity, lighting up the pathways of this earth with faith and love. Deign to grant the canonization of Blessed Josemaria and, through his intercession, grant me the favor of . . . (here make your request). Amen.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Blessed Josemaria Escriva was born in Barbastro, Spain, on January 9, 1902. He was ordained to the priesthood in Saragossa on March 28, 1925.

On October 2, 1928, in Madrid, by divine inspiration he founded Opus Dei, which has opened up a new way for the faithful to sanctify themselves in the midst of the world, through the practice of their ordinary work and in the fulfillment of their personal, family and social duties. They thus become a leaven of intense Christian life in all environments. On February 14, 1930, Blessed Josemaria Escriva by God's grace understood that Opus Dei was meant to develop its apostolate among women as well. And on February 14, 1943, he founded the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, inseparably united to Opus Dei. Opus Dei received the definitive approval of the Holy See on June 16, 1950. On November 28, 1982, it was erected as a personal Prelature, a juridical form desired and foreseen by Blessed Josemaria Escriva.

He guided and inspired the growth of Opus Dei throughout the whole world with constant prayer and penance and by the heroic practice of all the virtues. In doing so, he showed loving dedication and untiring concern for all souls, and a continual and unconditional surrender to God's will. When he yielded up his soul to God, Opus Dei had spread to five continents with over 60,000 members of 80 nationalities, serving the Church with the same veneration for and complete union with the Pope and bishops that Blessed Josemaria Escriva always lived.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was the center and root of his interior life. His profound awareness of being a son of God, expressed in a constant presence of the Holy Trinity, moved him to seek complete identification with Christ in everything, to live a deep and tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, and to enjoy a continual and confident friendship with the holy guardian angels. This made him a sower of peace and joy along all the ways of the earth.

Msgr. Escriva had repeatedly offered his life for the Church and the Pope. Our Lord accepted this offering, and on June 26, 1975, in Rome in the room where he worked, he surrendered his soul to God with the same holy simplicity that characterized his entire life.

His body rests in the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace at Viale Bruno Buozzi 75, Rome. There it is accompanied by the constant prayer and gratitude of his sons and daughters and countless others who have come closer to God through his example and teaching. His cause of canonization was introduced in Rome on February 19, 1981. Pope John Paul II, on April 9, 1990, declared that he lived the Christian virtues to a heroic degree, and on July 6, 1991, decreed that a cure attributed to his intercession was miraculous. The Founder of Opus Dei was beatified by Pope John Paul II on May 17, 1992, in Rome.

With the ecclesiastical approval of the Vicariate of Rome.
Those who obtain favors through the intercession of Blessed Josemaria Escriva are asked to notify the Office of Vice Postulation of Opus Dei in the United States, 330 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10025.