

## events

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## 新聞摘要

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主業會是羅馬天主教會內的一個自治社團  
由聖若瑟瑪利亞施禮華創辦

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# 新 events

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新聞摘要

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**「行動才是愛，甜言蜜語不算愛」**

蔡浩偉主教重申引致道路中 933 的寫成的神聖啟迪

「據說，有一個人在祈禱中，向主說：『耶穌，我愛祢』，他聽到來自天上的回答：『行動才是愛，甜言蜜語不算愛』。」

「想一想，你是否也應得這種慈愛的斥責？」（道路，933）

我們在這月會紀念這神聖啟迪的七十五週年，聖施禮華常提及這發生於 1932 年 2 月 16 日的事件，但通常都隱而不宣那事件的主角是誰，我們在他離開我們返回天庭後，才得知事件的詳情。

當時我們創辦人患了嚴重感冒已有數天，他在個人筆記中說：「這是個表現出我對我的天主缺乏慷慨的際會，在一個孩子……每天可以奉獻給他的主的祈禱和許多上千的小事上我鬆懈了。我開始注意到這，而我在拖延去開履行關於多用時間和努力去做敬禮的實踐的一些定志，但我用這念頭來安撫自己，『遲些吧，當你康復，當你家庭的財政狀況好轉……然後！』（聖施禮華，1932 年 2 月 16 日的個人筆記，606：參閱 A Vazquez de Prada 所著的主業會的創辦人，第一冊，318 頁）

聖施禮華是何等具有人性！他如同我們一樣，也要在許多小事上奮鬥，他跟我們同樣受健康、經濟困難、時間和體力不足等考驗所影響。當我們要求他幫助我們去克服限制時，他怎會不明白我們？讓我們信任地請求他轉求，因為他很明白我們的需要，但讓我們經常準備好，在最變化多端的情況下去確認天主的旨意，也讓我們不要躲藏在我們很容易製造出來的藉口的背後，來構成我們缺乏慷慨的理由。

我繼續聖施禮華生命中的插曲，那 2 月 16 日，當他在聖依撒伯爾聖堂送聖體給修女們時，他在心中與耶穌談話，沒有外在的言語，他告訴耶穌他常常日夜所說的句子：「『我比這些人更愛祢。』我即時明白，不需言語：『愛是行動，不是甜言蜜語和藉口。』我在那時刻清楚看到我的慷慨何等細小，突然間憶起許多我沒有留意的細節，它們使我明確清晰地看到我的缺乏慷慨。耶穌啊，幫助我，好使祢的驢子會完全慷慨，行動，行動！」（同上）

歐華路神父告訴我們吾主這次的干預深深感動了聖施禮華，不是因為他懈怠了他的祈禱，而是因為天主要求他更多，並藉著那啟迪，吾主照亮了他的理智和強化了他的心靈，助他去發現許多「沒有留意的細節」好使他能更加精煉。我們創辦人以慷慨回應，耶穌的「輕柔責備」這記憶，推動他一生在侍奉天主和服務人靈上加自我付出。

請閱讀監督在2007年2月寫給主業會信眾的信：[www.opusdei.org](http://www.opusdei.org)

## 聖施禮華生平漫畫版本——“Through the Mountains” 中文譯本面世

這本漫畫書描述聖施禮華的一生，原文作者為Paule Fostroy。這畫冊在2005年同時以七種語言發行，分別為：英、法、德、荷蘭、西班牙、義大利及卡塔蘭文

2007/01/16

“Through the Mountains” 這本漫畫書描述聖施禮華的一生自1928年10月主業會創會時期開始直至2002年10月6日被宣聖的日子。這畫冊在2005年11月同時以七種語言發行，分別為：英、法、德、荷蘭、西班牙、義大利及卡塔蘭文。



此畫冊的用意在傳達聖施禮華的基本教導：工作及日常生活的聖化價值。原文作者為Paule Fostroy，插圖及美術由J. Gillissen 及E. Gabriel 負責。插圖結合了簡單的筆觸及鮮明的顏色，營造出攝影的效果。他們把西班牙各城市及羅馬的景色及情節一絲不苟、活生生地重現眼前。

此畫冊原版在比利時印製，比利時一向以出版高素質漫畫書籍馳名。現已被翻譯成中文版。漫畫文學在亞洲也甚為流行，種類範圍甚廣，包括中國的經典著作以至現代的一般通俗小說。以漫畫形式介紹聖施禮華聖德的生活，預期會引起亞洲讀者的興趣，老少皆宜。此中文譯版由清泉出版社發行，將於2006年12月發行，在港澳及台灣出售。

清泉出版社已出版了一系列聖施禮華著作的中文譯本。亦發行其他書籍，例如近期出版的一本有關主業會在非洲肯亞福傳工作實況的中譯本《夢向非洲》(To Africa with a Dream)，作者為Olga Martin 女士。

## 見證 — 聖施禮華

### 我們在少過兩周內得到了工作

謝謝你聖施禮華的標準關愛。您在聖主面前調解了我們，他同意了我們的祈禱。在一個失業率達到百分之二十，需要九個月來尋找工作的國家，您幫助了我的妻子和我，我們甚至已經沒有錢來為我們和我們的女兒買食物了。我們在進行了九天連續禱告即九日禱後，您幫助我們用了不到兩周時間就找到了工作。通過工作我們表達我們對主的敬意，也會把您的好意帶給那些需要的人。

H. M. Z., Colombia

二零零六年十二月三十日

### 沒有嚴重的後果

這些陳述來自於我先生的真實陳述。當他九歲時，1977年，聖施禮華去世兩年後，他患上了腦膜炎。他的母親直接送他去醫院。診斷結果很殘忍：一個醫生認為他會死，並告訴他母親，即使他能活下來，他也會留下嚴重的殘疾。那時，他是孤立的一個個體。當他入院後大約十天，他的一個阿姨給了他的父母一張祈禱卡“聖主的僕人聖施禮華”，那時他還是一個孤立的個體。他們把這張卡片交給了他的護士，讓護士把這張卡片放在他的枕頭下。全家用這張卡片熱情的祈禱，男孩一天天的開始慢慢有所好轉，直到九日禱的第四天他脫離了危險。醫生大吃一驚，他們不能相信這是真的。沒有任何的醫學可以解釋這樣的奇蹟康復。男孩沒有遭受嚴重的後果：所有他承受的只是皮膚上有一些痕跡，只有這些痕跡能證明他曾病過。通過這個陳述我想感謝聖施禮華給了我先生健康，雖然這個奇蹟已經過去很久很久了。我希望這件事能幫助那些求聖人代禱者去主業會尋求基督的訊息和行為。

P. Q. F., Chile

二零零六年十二月二十九日

### 我不知到原來他是這麼有效的

當我在網上搜尋一些祈禱經文，為讓我們一家人可以在慶祝聖誕時頌讚。巧恰看見聖施禮華的網頁。我曾聽過他的名字而且更擁有一張他的祈禱卡。12月22日當天我誠心禱告以及為一些意向希望他能為我轉禱。當時，我還不知到向他祈求協助會有這麼美好的效果。當天晚上8時我們接到電話通知，我家用作提供出租服務的汽車讓人偷走了。我的即時反應是說：「我的天呀！」接着便

哭泣起來。突然我想起了主業會的創辦人聖施禮華，並向他祈求早日尋回失車，因為它是我們一家的收入來源。我絕對不是誇張的，因為20分鐘後，我又接到電話通知，我的汽車已經被尋回了！他真是這麼偉大，信他吧。藉此機會我誠心感謝他賜予我的一切恩惠。

Carmen M., 秘魯

於2006年12月26日

### 父親，永別了

因患癌病多年，我父親於12月6日去世。去世前數個月，由於接受長期化療，他的腎功能已嚴重受損，而且更要入院治療。無一位醫生敢向他解釋病情的嚴重性。入院兩個月以來，他的病情每況愈下。雖然他活在痛苦中，但他有尊嚴地承受一切，和具有頑強的生命力。他的最大問題是，由於他全身腫脹，我們不能照顧他，更不能為他減輕痛楚。我於是為了這個意向向聖施禮華祈禱，祈求我們能好好地照顧父親。兩天後，父親的身體開始正常地排水，我感激聖施禮華賜予我的恩惠。父親去世前幾天，我們察覺到他又陷入極痛苦狀態，我隨即邀請了神父為他施傅油聖事。父親因而感到安慰。骨腫瘤使父親感到非常痛楚，特別在髖部。我想起我們有些露德聖母的聖水，於是用聖水在他的髖部劃上十字架，同時向聖母祈求減輕他的痛楚。三天後，他去了天國，他的痛苦被解脫，永別了，父親。

A.M. 意大利

於2006年12月22日

### 一張很長的等候名單

我想向您們講述一件聖施禮華賜予我家的恩惠——一件最近藉著而他得到的恩惠，也是許多恩惠中的一件。在此，我不打算為大家闡明每件事情的經過。

我長兄現年84歲，沒有養老金，單身，患有某一定程度的智障和身體殘缺，使他不便於行走，日常生活需要別人的照顧。為便於照顧他，他常常與不同的家庭成員居住。最近情況變得更困難，因為他的病情漸趨嚴重，因此，家人不單要照顧他的起居，還要照顧他的病情。通常照顧他的嫂嫂又有一名多病的兒子，所以再沒有能力或資源去照顧兩位病人。因此，我們決定為長兄找一所療

養院，讓他可以得到較好的照顧。

這不是一件容易的事情，因為我居住外地，由於其他家庭成員的經濟條件不允許，所以我必需回到長兄的居住地去打點一切。經過年半的時間，不停尋找合適的私人和公營的療養院，但徒勞無功。原因或是沒有空缺，或是我長兄的身體狀況複雜，又或是價錢昂貴。我開始擔心他將來或許要在街頭行乞。在絕望中，為此我的兒子和我们一起向聖施禮華連續九天祈禱，從不間斷。還未到九天時，一天，當我到醫院探望患有癌病的姊姊時，我看見一輛急救車把一名老婦人載到醫院。我上前並問他們從哪裡來的。他們回答他們屬於一所名為“Fundacion Las Rosas”的國營院社。我隨即與這院社聯絡，社工通知我可以帶長兄到他們那裡，讓他們評估長兄的健康及精神狀況。結果是他們可以接收長兄進院、但院方現時還沒有空缺，因為輪候進院的病人名單還很長呢！於是我們的祈禱意向是為有一個空缺。

一天我們接到通知，一處的“Fundacion Las Rosas”院社可能有一個空缺。於是我帶同長兄到訪那院社，果然得到所渴求的空缺。我確信這是藉著主業會聖施禮華施行的奇蹟，因為所有發生的事情，全都是口頭消息：我們找到解決長兄狀況的理想地方——健康及價錢兩方面。在我們面前儘管有長長的等候名單，但在這短短的時間……這是一件不能解釋的事實。

A.O.V.L, 阿根廷

於2006年11月26日

## 一件意想不到的改變

我14歲那年，脊椎出現了毛病，所以需要由支架隱固背部至頸部的位置。得悉要用支架數年後，心情非常沉重。於是姊姊和我一起向聖施禮華祈禱。最後我只需要穿著支架三個月，在一次正常體檢中，醫生告知我，由於病況發生了意想不到的好轉，我只需要穿著支架數個月，無需整天穿著它，只需在睡覺時穿著它便可。從此，當我遇到甚麼困難時，聖施禮華必定與我為伴，助我解決所有難題。（我的姊姊也是主業會的會員，她可以替我作見證。）

Angela, 西班牙

## 一件非常容易的事情

我現年17歲，嘗試通過日常事情聖化自己已超過一年多。這段時間我不斷遇到困難，而且當我藉著天主的協助解決問題後，更大的困難會相繼出現。此時聖施禮華會告訴我：「不要欺騙自己，你知道你能。」，而且他常常和我在一起，協助我和引領我到天主處。自我開始依賴他時，我的生命因此而產生了巨大的改變。聖施禮華常常引導我與天主共融，高舉我直致我能觸摸聖母瑪利亞和耶穌的手。有時我的信德與我朋友、同學和老師們的意見產生衝突。該時候我真的為教會、主耶穌基督、聖母瑪利亞、教宗及所有聖人感到自豪。我真想大聲為我對天主的愛和所有祂的創造物呼喊。當人們對教會產生誤解時，我嘗試讓他們明白作為教友是一件非常簡單的事情：只要每一刻活在天主的愛內——就如聖施禮華所教導的一樣。

Cristina, 阿根廷

於2006年11月10日

## 我那粗心大意的朋友的皈依

當我還在大學時，難以理解地被我的朋友遺失了我的澆水用的壺。我對他們斷言說天主會把那遺失的水壺歸還給我，他們其中的一位甚至承諾如我能重獲那水壺便會改變她那古怪的傾向。我向聖施禮華祈禱求助。有一天我寫信給我那位粗心大意的朋友告訴她我怎樣失掉了我的水壺。僥倖地管家看到那封信後打電話給我。她告訴我她收集到一個棄置在宿舍的水壺，那水壺現放在她家中的床底；當日我便取回我的水壺。使這件事更有趣的是，在宿舍梯間我第一個遇上的，竟就是那個承諾改變自己的朋友。當她看到我手拿著水壺時便立刻尖叫及逃走，她就是不相信。由那時開始，這位少女渴望瞭解天主教義多些。天主教在教導我們對祂更忠實，所以送給我們一位能幫助我們做「不可能辦到的事」的新聖人。我允諾把這事與所有人分享，使他們能堅決地持續作好榜樣，好使其他人能歸向基督。

P.R.N., 肯亞

2006年10月11日

## 比利時：我發現我必須祈禱

註：此見證寫於一九九二年施禮華列為真福品之前

大概十年前，我參觀維也納的Peterskirche。在那裡我取了一本關於主業會創辦人施禮華蒙席的《通訊》(Bulletin)及一張祈禱咭。說實在的，初次閱讀它們後對我並沒有甚麼影響。但我保留了它們，卻很快便把它們忘掉了。

幾年後，我十分關心我的一個女兒要面對的幾項測驗。這不是個容易面對的處境。我確信她已經努力溫習亦準備好，但仍不能肯定有甚麼結局。

就是在那時我在布魯塞爾的一所古老教堂重遇那《通訊》。我把那祈禱咭背誦數次作私人敬禮(private devotion)。我理智的傲慢立即像雪般在陽光下融化了。我謙遜地為我女兒能在那些考試中得到成功而懇求。她的考試全部合格，我們十分高興。為了表達我的感恩，我祈禱及把一些硬幣放入那捐獻箱，跟著又慢慢地忘卻了這個恩惠。生活是如此忙碌及複雜，加上有這麼多的事情要處理。

還有其他的問題使我憂慮。我需要賣掉我們的房子，卻錯誤地選了一個較不誠實的地產經紀。這許多壓力使我的健康變糟。我不知可以做些甚麼，我亦為我們的將來擔憂。

再一次，我走進布魯塞爾那所教堂。在那裡我找到了《通訊》第七期，那是介紹「天主的僕人」(Servant of God)的。在那個時刻我感到他表示願意為我代禱。我開始用那私人禱文(private prayer)祈禱，這使我們覺察到雖然我們有許多缺點，但我們是屬於教會的。我開始閱讀《通訊》及反省我的生活及工作。我與我作為一個人及基督徒的許多缺點對抗。我的焦慮並沒有完全消失但我卻重新找到希望。

過了許多年後，我再領受告解聖事。我發覺，就如聖施禮華在要求我，我不應只為自己得到恩惠而祈禱，我還要為其他人祈禱，包括那個地產經紀與及那購買我的房子的人。我的祈禱得到答允。我的健康問題證明並非當時看來那麼嚴重；我的房子出售亦令人滿意。我非常感激。我不想忘記這個恩惠。我希望在物質上及精神上作出貢獻，把「天主的僕人」傳揚開去。

## 洪都拉斯：不要讓他們傷害我

註：此見證寫於二〇〇二年施禮華列冊封為聖人之前

當三個男人突然來找我搭話時，我正走向街上。他們要求要我身上各種口袋內的

任何值錢的東西，包括一個筆記本錢夾，裏面有我的個人文檔和錢，我保存着真福施禮華的祈禱卡。當他們拿走每件東西時，我呼喊着真福施禮華“你也在皮夾子裏，不要讓他們傷害我和盜取任何東西”。當我走開時，一個賊隨後說到“拿去，你的紙。”但是我沒有停下腳步，我擔心他會攻擊我。當他們過去之後，我回到原來的地方。那裏，非常出乎我的意料之外的，是他們拿走的所有東西，包括那張真福施禮華的祈禱卡都還在那裏。

## 日本：尚未成為一個基督徒

註：此見證寫於二〇〇二年施禮華列冊封為聖人之前

我第一次接觸真福施禮華的祈禱咭是在十六年前，那時我不是(尚未成為?)一個基督徒，我對基督宗教毫不認識。有一天在我的堂區被介紹給一個隸屬主業會的人，而她給了我一張祈禱咭，由那時開始我的生命徹底地改變。

我開始逐漸地學習天主教道理，並學會祈禱和要求真福施禮華一些東西。然後我的單車被偷了，我發現我對這損失的反應並非像我往常的反應，我沒有對那不問自取者產生惡感，反之，我藉著真福施禮華的轉求而請求天主給我一個恩惠，「我願放棄我的單車換取那人的決定不再不問自取別人的東西。」

一個月後，我在我家的門前找著那單車，坐位被升高了一些，但它沒有損壞。我簡單地接受這物歸原主的舉動。從真福施禮華領受了如此明顯的第一個恩惠，我感到我的心靈為所有人擴張了瞭解和仁慈。這是個新的情操，從那時起我開始為任何的需要向真福施禮華請求代禱。

一年後，突然間我的母親必須被急切地送到醫院，她被發現有癌症，我非常沮喪，我開始深切地祈禱，懇求天主藉著真福施禮華不要取走我的母親。如果祂意願要取走她，至少讓她先領受洗禮，我給予我母親一張祈禱咭，她以宏大溫情去保存它，然後我開始教她天主教道理，她便開始尋找天主。在多次進出醫院後，她在去年辭世，因著天主的恩寵，她領受了洗禮，她在離世時眼望著放在她面前的一張聖母像。

我亦領受了洗禮的恩寵，我嘗試以行動來生活出我是天主的女兒，我感謝真福施禮華藉著與他的祈禱咭的一個接觸使我的生命如此改變了。

## 西班牙：誰會照顧你？

註：此見證寫於二〇〇二年施禮華列冊封為聖人之前

我是個助產士，我在一所自進的診所工作。不久前，一位病人由她的丈夫陪襯來找我，她是在懷孕初期，她有40歲，因此她認為她的嬰兒肯定會是不正常的，她要求墮胎，由社會保障支付費用，她剛見過的醫生告訴她，在沒有做過檢驗證明嬰兒的沒有能力，他不能安排她到醫療中心去墮胎，她絕對拒絕順從任何產前檢查的程序，這對夫婦開始抗議，在診所內造成了煩擾的場面。

我在靜默中懇求真福施禮華啟發我如何去幫助這病人克服她的盲目，我在她的醫療記錄中留意到她有兩個兒子，年齡為17和14歲，我直接地望著她，我注意到她有對美麗的藍眼睛。

真福施禮華收到我的請求，推動我去說：「你是否知道你可能懷著一個女兒，她將會有一對眼睛如同你的眼睛一般美麗呢？」她驚愕地望著我，我可能是第一個人正面地談及她的懷孕，然後我問：「你有否想過在你晚年時誰會照顧你？誰會給你帶來雞湯呢？」她即時反應並停止大聲喊叫。

## 露西亞·雲妮，烏拉圭

### 皈依的故事

露西亞·雲妮是我的名字，現時20歲，在烏拉圭共和國大學的科學部讀化學，我來自一個濃厚天主教的家庭，但我在初領聖體後，當進入少年時代，我開始逐漸地遠離天主。

這情況持續至我認識了些人，藉著他們的好榜樣和友情，帶我回向基督。他們刺透我的甲冑，經過一年的內在鬥爭，我終於明白他們有些特別東西使他們能擁有無上的快樂。我明白那「東西」完全充滿了他們至令他們為生命和他人散發平安和愛，而那「東西」毫無疑問是值得的……最後，那「東西」是天主！

我開始在星期日參與彌撒，然後開始去辦修和及領受聖體，並且參與主業會中心的基督徒培育活動。

那時開始了我對聖施禮華的敬禮，我愛慕他與天主的關係，這關係從他清晰地表達思想和感受中反映出來。我著迷於他的不斷努力去進步，以他最微小和最平凡行動去取悅天主。學習有關聖施禮華在我內覺醒了為成聖、為天主和使徒工作的渴求。雖然任何認識我的人，都知道我有許多挫敗，但我靠著天主的幫助和藉著聖施禮華的轉求，每天奮鬥去做一個良好的基督徒。

在個人方面，認識了主業會及其創辦人幫助了我，現在仍然如此，在緊迫或不如意的情況下保持喜悅(因為我從犧牲中找到意義)。它在我內創造了服務及使徒工作的精神(我真的快樂!)，它使我在工作和讀書中找到更深邃的意義——我可以藉著工作和讀書來聖化自己。它教導我欣賞我的餘閒、我所愛的人、我每天所做的事，明瞭這些都是天主的恩賜，它讓我看到我有比以前所想到的更多人性的缺點，但同時它給予我力量去懇求天主，當我做錯時(差不多許多時候都是如此!)不要讓我跌倒。還有許多其他的事難以盡言。

我知道天主為了祂在這地上的計劃，並不需要「超男人」或「超女人」，只需要那些準備好用大樁的愛去愛祂的人靈。

我自聖施禮華也學習到它是完全值得的！

節錄自2002年在蒙特維多出版的San Josemaria Y Los Uruguayos 中的露西亞·雲妮的見證，編輯是Maria Magdalena Pareja Silveira。

## 反思愛沙尼亞的基督宗教信仰

瑪莉·薇薇安與我們分享一個她在愛沙尼亞塔林市和主業會成員一起工作了一年的故事

2007/01/27

在愛沙尼亞的首都 - 塔林市，我在一個主業會中心裡的管理部工作了一年。對我而言，在工作專業與個人成長方面是相當豐富的經驗。並且也學習了很多有關天主教的信仰。

在一開始，我想我應該先指出，對於天主教，我有很深的偏見，特別是反對主業會。

當我在蘇維埃戰後期唸書的時候，我深受歷史和公民課的影響，譬如在宗教戰爭中，以火焰和刀劍強制信仰、販賣贖罪卷、教會和權力架構等等。而當時，我對於天主教幾乎沒有其他任何的知識。



自從開始在主業會的中心工作後，我從來沒有夢想過，竟然發現了這麼多美妙又令人驚奇的事。

工作夥伴們的耐心和友誼，是我對主業會的第一個印象。而使我印象更為深刻的是她們和天主間毫無間隙的愛和信任——一種很堅定的信賴。

而我並不是一下就完全發現了這些事情，而是一點一滴、漸漸地覺察出的。因為在一開始，我沒有辦法相信我的天主教同事們可以和天主那麼地接近；但是，隨著日子的過去，我發現到她們的行為與言談之間都充滿了耶穌。

在這幾個月的時間，我學習到如何工作，並在其中注入愛和奉獻的精神；也可以說，我可以看到每一件工作是如何美妙地完成。



而關於信仰這方面，我現在已經可以用一個更開放、有自信和尊敬的態度來感謝事物，所以在我的生活和對他人的關係上已經有了轉變。而這全是天主的工作，我也相信主業會在其中扮演著它的角色。

我很感激主業會，在我們的這個小國家裡，這個組織好像是一道光芒。

藉著這些看似不起眼的日常事務，主業會的成員給予人們一個鼓舞，充滿希望又了不起的模範。

瑪莉·薇薇安

## 贈予的一個唐氏綜合症孩子

住在西班牙利利達省的 Anna Oromi 說：「我感到很幸運而且我想盡力把握此機會做得更多。」

2007/02/01

三年前的一月九日，聖施禮華的誕生紀念日，你得到你的首名兒子。

其實，在馬克之前，我還有一次不順利的懷孕。由於這次流產，我們全家人很多時向聖施禮華祈求，希望有一個小嬰兒。我們敬禮這位具聖德的司鐸，而且想如他所說般把我們的家變得「明朗和愉快」。而我們為馬克的到來感謝天主，正是在一月九日的那天。





這不是你和你丈夫收到的唯一禮物。

確實不是。馬克之後，還有艾歷的到來，而他是我們真正的禮物。在我第三次懷孕的初期，醫生們已經告訴我們這個孩子很可能會有唐氏綜合症和心臟的病。

你們有何反應？

當時，我們還沒有準備好接受這消息。我們應該怎樣做才好？我的丈夫和我為此而祈禱。我們各自向天主訴說這件事乍看來是不幸的事。但在天主的臨在中，人往往能看得清晰。

我們從未考慮過放棄艾歷。我不斷地祈求天主的旨意得以承行及祂會幫助我有慷慨的精神。同時，我祈求助佑使我能就醫生們的建議作出正確的決定。而最重要的是艾歷將會出生。

你為甚麼會祈禱？反叛的情緒不是會來得更自然嗎？

祈禱幫助我平靜地去面對每一天，不去為將來的問題憂慮，而且去做每刻應做的事。這是我從主業會的創辦人那裏學到的：在面對困難的處境時，要走到天主前請教祂應怎樣做。

我也尋求歐華路主教的代禱，他是聖施禮華的第一位繼任人，我們對他有作特別的敬禮。我請求他們的幫助，而他們也時刻與我很接近。他確實地幫助我得到勇德去面對這些境遇。

那麼艾歷就在去年九月五日出生，從那時起我沒有停止過感謝天主。

是否每個人都能理解你們的決定？

不幸地，這決定在近年來並非普遍。要避免問題的簡單方法是進行墮胎 - 他們使墮胎變得很輕易。至於我們，當我們告訴我的婦產科醫生我們想生下這孩子，她很高興，因為她知道這孩子將會臨到一個會歡迎他的家中。

人們常常會向我們說：「你們把這唐氏綜合症的孩子帶來真勇敢。」然而，這並非是否有勇氣的問題：每個孩子的尊嚴比他的特徵更重要。你不能如照菜單點菜般選擇孩子！你只因他之所是去

接受和愛他。我的丈夫說艾歷將會有為他之所是而愛他的朋友，而我的想法與他一致。

我並非唯一一個認為艾歷是一份贈予給我們的禮物這想法的人。那位幫忙我處理家務工作的年輕女士向他的丈夫提到我有一本題名為「與天主交談」的書（我是在祈禱時閱讀它的）。他的丈夫便說：「這就是他們得到這孩子的原因，因為這孩子是天主的贈予。」

那麼你不是無奈地接受他？

不是！我真的認為生命是一件偉大的事。我有這想法並非如有些人告訴我般是因為我有某種宗教信仰。信仰會有幫助，這是基本的，但對生命的熱愛卻有著我們應該共享的普遍性。

我感到非常幸運而且我想盡力把握此機會做得更多。我從艾歷處學到很多。事實告訴我有唐氏綜合症的孩子是很特別的，充滿了生氣。他擁有特別的微笑。

我認為這是個與很多人交談的機會。

從唐氏綜合症小組中有人告訴我：「別人看到你有一個這樣的孩子往往不知應怎樣反應。所以最佳的策略是採取主動。」

這便是我所做的方法。當我遇到不知情的人時，我會介紹艾歷給他們，告訴他們他是個有唐氏綜合症的孩子，而且在他出生前我們便已知悉這情況。這樣能讓我跟很多人打開話題去反省這個與每個人的生命權利有關的重要課題。而且從唐氏綜合症家長小組中，我認識了很多很棒的人，他們的無私奉獻和喜樂令我非常感動。

在我的飯廳裏有一本美麗的書，是來自其中一個小組的，當中充滿了見證。其中一篇是有關一個唐氏綜合症的孩子怎樣感謝他的父母把他生下來，他告訴他們這樣做並非懲罰，及他會以許多的愛去回報他們。閱讀這些文字真的讓我非常感動。



## 信仰與愛戰勝一切

「有些日子當我早晨起來，一想到我丈夫的疾病，一陣哀傷自然地湧上心頭，」  
 茈娜·費南斯-羅莎(Pilar Fernandez-Loza)說，她來自西班牙的阿斯土利亞省份，「但我即時反應而請求天主的幫助。」

2006/12/16

### 金婚週年紀念

我們剛慶祝了我們結婚的金婚週年紀念，它是個特別的日子。我們曾慣常想當我們較年老時，會有典型的毛病，如高血壓等。現在，有些日子當我早晨起來，一想到我丈夫的疾病，一陣哀傷自然地湧上心頭，令我想起伊芙·茈亞(Edith Piaf)的一首歌：早晨，憂傷(Bonjour, Tristesse)，但我即時反應而請求天主幫我能夠讓自己與祂的旨意認同。



加爾丹奴已經病了十年，最初徵狀出現於1996年聖誕節當我們前往畢爾包兒兒子，回程時他駕駛車子而兩次迷途。這使我感到奇怪因為他熟悉這條路途如他的手背。(這使我感到奇怪，因為他非常熟悉這條路?)從那時開始他有猶豫和分心，他會下樓去買報紙，卻把它放在枱上而不打開來看。

「茈娜莉麗，」他對我說：「有些事正發生於我。」

1998年春天的某天，如每年一樣，他坐下來做(處理?)自己的報稅表。雖然他是一間銀行的核數師，他卻無法完成它。最後他說：「讓我們去看醫生吧。」

### 是老年癡呆症

自此他逐漸失去了他的記憶，這真辛苦，因為他在那裡--但他不在那裡。有天在一個聚會中，有些人提起他的表情、動作都改變了，失去了眼神的接觸。「也許是的，」我對他們說：「但我丈夫的眼睛仍然是蔚藍的。」

我嘗試給予他所有我能給的温情，我不需要勉強自己，因為，感謝天主，我們一直是非常幸運的一對，我們彼此相愛，現在依然，雖然他已不能表達出來。有時我將臉接近他的唇，雖然他需要些時間去反應，通常他終會給我一個吻。

### 一個聖召的恩寵

雖然苦痛不會缺席(苦惱不斷?)，然而我們的婚姻很是美麗，我們其中一個孩子去世時年紀只19歲，但我們常常都依靠著信仰的力量和安慰，錦上添花地我們還獲得了聖召的恩寵，自六十年代末期以來我們已是主業會的可結婚成員。

加爾丹奴決定後不久我才隨後決定。現在我很開心地回憶，當他要去參與數天的週年退省時，我從沒有給他任何阻礙，例如，我獨自與孩子們留在家中，那時我還未成為主業會成員，但我想：「這為他是好的；如果為他是好的，那為我也是好的。」



其後當我加入主業會，他也沒有給我任何阻礙：相反，他常常幫助我活出我的聖召，感謝它使我們在教育子女人性和精神關係方面均得到許多良好的建議。

當然，發生在我們身上最奇妙的是我們的聖召，如果加爾丹奴是健康的，他也会如此說。他常常都確知這點，但現在是顯而易見的，我們接收的温情洶湧而至。我們主業會內的朋友來看望我們，他們鼓勵我，逗我歡笑。有位司鐸經常來探訪加爾丹奴，雖然我不知道他能明白多少，司鐸的到臨為他和我是很好的。那天，為我的金婚週年紀念，他們帶給我一束菊花，而我開始哭泣，「但，茈娜，你為甚麼哭呢？」其中一位問我，我答說人也會因快樂而哭泣，這是感受到善待和温情的表示。

這就好像一個母親的溫柔。我在三歲時失去了自己的母親，兩位姨母將我養育成人，她們成了我的兩位母親(猶如親母一般?)，她們去世時年紀都過了一百歲，她們一直用電話來幫助和安慰我直至她們的最後時刻。我因為我的情況而

不能夠去探望她們感到非常難過，但她們告訴我：「不要焦慮，妳現今的首要任務是照顧妳的丈夫；其次是照顧自己。」

因此，無論何時我去參加主業會的活動，雖然他們給我建議要求很高的基本生活目標，我感謝他們，當他們問我為何如此做，我既是阿斯土利亞人而說話清晰，我於是答說：「因為你們在幫助我！」

自然地為我而言有些主業會聖召的層面是很難付之實踐，在初時我也有些不明白，我也為此感謝天主：我一直在溫順方面增長去承行天主的意旨，而天主亦一直為我現在的情況準備我。」

主業會幫助我在這疾病中看到天主的愛，助我去微笑和保持歡樂。我有流淚的時候，但它們是不含苦澀的，卻是寧靜的、平安的。這是現時我忠信於天主加爾丹奴的方式。

### 我的支援團體

我屬於一個有老年癡呆症的家庭的組織，我也是一個照顧患有這疾病的病者的團體中的一份子，我們嘗試互相幫助，因為我們的情況是很困難且難以忍受的。這組織運作得很好，它給予我們指引、它安慰我們、給予我們温情並為我們訂立目標。我們的團體還有一位心理學家給予我們意見，並鼓勵我們照顧自己，好使我們將自己的良好傳達給病者。

由於這疾病有自我孤立的傾向，而朋友也許為了自我保護而減少探訪的次數，看著一個人慢慢地關閉自己實屬可悲的事。

### 回憶

我對著加爾丹奴常多說話，雖然他不能回答我，我也不知道他能否完全明白我所說的，每當他從日間照顧中心由一位人士陪同回家來時，我總在大門口迎接他，就像以前我們訂婚後所做的一樣。

現在回想起那些年月，我很高興我們曾有過基督徒的訂婚，我為此多多感謝天主。現今的許多年青人似乎不知道真愛的意義。那天當我的孫女瑪利亞問我有關我的婚禮，我告訴她一些個人的事，甚而一些親蜜的，可反映出那時的加爾

丹奴是怎樣的。婚禮後的第一晚我們入住高華當卡(Covadonga)的一間十九世紀時代的酒店，從那房間的一個窗外望，可以看到高華當卡聖母像。我上床時，發現枕頭下有他寫給我的一封信。

我們訂婚四年，整個訂婚時期實際是以書信來聯繫，因為他那時在阿美里亞(Almeria)，而我卻在希洪(Gijon)，當時旅行與通訊均沒有如今天這樣容易。我們極少有機會見面，但在那四年內我們每天彼此寫信給對方；每天。在他放在我枕頭下的那封信中，他訴說他對我的愛，領受婚姻聖事所給予他的喜樂，和他渴望一生對我忠誠。

我記得多年前，當我們居住在畢爾包時，加爾丹奴因為他的工作需要，經常往外地公幹，他曾告訴我，有次做完了一天的查核工作——我不記得在那個城市——他與同隊的核數師到酒吧去飲杯啤酒，隊友中是已婚和單身的男人，在酒吧內他們遇上一些女孩子並開始交談，那些是正常的女孩子，完全正常。翌日，他們再到那酒吧，但當他看見昨晚的那些女孩子亦在那裡時，他就說再見。「你為何要離開呢？」他們問他。「因為我的妻子在畢爾包等待著我，」他告訴他們。沒有特別事情發生，但他說在那寂寞的情況下，人必須格外小心且知道如何在適當時候避開。

我記得他準備他的查核工作時的細心，他想做到可能的最好，然後奉獻給天主。在呈遞它們之前，他常會問我意見關於這或那表達的措辭。「但我對銀行沒有絲毫概念呀！」我會告訴他。「是的，但女士通常都是比男士更文雅，」他會說，「而你知道如何說得更動聽點。我想說出真相，但不想傷害任何人。來吧，讀讀這句子，看看我能否說得好些。」

這些是否只是些無聊事呀？我不認為如此，而是活出貫徹的基督徒信仰，而這些從何而來？由他所活出的祈禱和主業會的精神——那亦是他現時的生活，因為這疾病也是「主業會」，天主的一件工作。

## 文蒂尼西總主教：「自治社團：使教會的共融更為豐盛的一個架構」

主業會成為自治社團剛開始踏入了第二十五年，就這個週年紀念，主教部的秘書長法蘭斯高·文蒂尼西總主教接受了以下訪問，自治社團歸屬於主教部管轄。

2007/01/27

可敬的總主教，教宗若望保祿二世在1982年11月28日將主業會立為自治社團。您認為教區可以由此得到甚麼益處呢？

在進入了第二十五年初期，我們已經可以開始觀察到自治社團(Praelatura Personalis)成員至今所實踐的工作。若望保祿二世，天主之僕，在五年前的一次講話中，曾提到隸屬於他們自己的教區和亦屬主業會的平信徒「凝聚了自治社團的特殊使命與每個地方教會的福傳努力。」



甚麼使若望保祿二世將自治社團的會議形式應用於主業會？

要回答這問題必須首先描述當聖座給予主業會確認時，在教宗和教會的眼中，它是怎樣的。

主業會於1928年在聖施禮華的心和腦海中孕育時，它是個嶄新而有創意的使徒工作，當它在教會的法定架構即教會法典中被確認時，必須考慮到它的某些特徵。實際上，成千上萬的平信徒分佈於世界上的許多教區，他們採納了聖施禮華所建議的理想生活方式去生活 – 這理想就是在他們日常的現實生活中回應成聖和使徒工作的召喚。那些平信徒需要特別的牧靈幫助達到此目的，因此有好些平信徒依照主業會創辦人自己所獲得的啟迪，受到吾主的召喚成為俗世而非修會司鐸，為那些在日常現實中尋求成聖的平信徒從事牧職。同時，亦有需要將這嶄新的使徒工作付託於一個監督的領導，監督與他的合作者可以協調主業會在世界各地的生活和活動。這些是使主業會獲得自治社團特殊法定形式的因素。

主業會於1982年被設立為自治社團的宗座憲章Ut Sit，足以令人明白自治社團的形式對主業會是最合適的，也就是與聖施禮華在他深邃的屬靈光照下所構思的吻合 – 主業會能在教會中完成它的使命。

除了主業會，在教會中是否還有其他的自治社團？

到目前還沒有，但在將來不排除其他的可能性，只要它們合乎教會規章所規定此類法定機構的正式特徵，聖座會設立它們的。



也許你的問題是被某些新聞報導所引起的，以馬內尼·米連高總主教曾表示有意將他的「結婚司鐸」會創立為自治社團為例，從教會法典的觀點來看這計劃，它會是「法定的奇想」而非自治社團，因為它缺乏自治社團所必須的各種因素，例如特定的牧靈目標、它的信眾等等。不必談及這計劃中的

一些可悲的情景使米連高主教與教會的共融分裂：捨棄了司鐸的獨身身份 – 天主賦予教會的偉大禮物，有人自由地「為天主的國」而接受它；如果捨棄了它，就是嚴重地不服從教宗，並對信眾造成傷害。

有些人相信他們在自治社團的法定形式中看到一些「獨立」的情況，這是否屬實呢？

當若望保祿二世設立自治社團之後，主業會的信眾或它的培育活動並沒有在教會的聖統中「獨立」。相反的，聖統藉著教宗所委任的監督接管了照顧這機構的責任。監督有責任領導社團與所有主教共融，同時也有責任使主業會及其所有活動與教宗保持共融 cum et sub petro (與伯多祿及在伯多祿之下)。

從一些特定的責任可看到與聖座的共融，例如每五年遞交有關社團狀況的報告，或保持與教廷的中樞機構的經常交往，特別是管轄社團的主教部。

至於主業會的平信徒，並沒有因為成為社團的成員而改變了他們身為教區信眾的任何狀況。再者，他們更深體會到自己屬於教會，由他們生活和工作的地方教會開始。

主業會的使徒工作的果實使社團信眾所屬的教區獲益，例如，經常會發生的；主業會信眾的個人使徒工作使其朋友、同事或親戚皈依；主業會信眾對使徒工作和社交活動的承諾，他們的主動，均能激勵其他的信眾，意味著教區的屬靈方面的成長。

多年來在世界許多教區體驗到主業會的存在，肯定了與教區主教共融的深切使徒工作這事實，這共融雖然實現的方式各有千秋、形形色色，但與主業會監督希望社團信眾活動的教區主教和諧一致這意願總是雷同的。

如此，可以總括來說，自治社團為豐盛教會的共融很有貢獻。

### 主業會的法定形式如何強化了平信徒的角色？

主業會的存在幫助其成員在平常生活中的使徒工作。甚至在社團未設立之前，主業會已經容納了世界各處的平信徒，他們承諾將這理想在家庭生活、工作環境及生活中的其他的現實裡實踐出來。自治社團與教會的其他組織的形式同樣地允許(在第一條問題內提及若望保祿二世所說的)為了教會的益處和天國的進展，「司鐸和平信徒以有生氣的方式並肩工作」。



## DEEDS ARE LOVE, NOT SWEET WORDS

### Bishop Javier Echevarría recalls the divine locution that gave rise to no. 933 in *The Way*

"There is a story of a soul who, on saying to our Lord in prayer, 'Jesus, I love you,' heard this reply from heaven: 'Love means deeds, not sweet words.'

"Think if you also could deserve this gentle reproach" (Ibid., no. 933).

During this month we will mark the 75th anniversary of this divine locution. St. Josemaría often referred to this event, which took place on February 16, 1932, but always in a way that kept the protagonist hidden. Only after he left us for heaven did we come to know the details regarding this event.

Our Founder had been suffering from a bad cold for several days and, as he tells us in his personal notes, "it has been an occasion for my lack of generosity towards my God to show itself. I slacked off in my prayer and in the thousand little things that a child...can offer his Lord each day. I started noticing this, and that I was postponing the fulfillment of certain resolutions about putting more time and effort into devotional practices, but I calmed myself with the thought, 'Later, when you're well, when your family's financial situation is in better shape...then!'" (St. Josemaría, *Apuntes íntimos*, n. 606, February 16, 1932; cf. A. Vazquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. I, p. 318).

How human is the figure of St. Josemaría! He too had to fight, as do we, in so many small things. He too was affected, as we are, by trials in our health, economic difficulties, lack of time and energy. How can he fail to understand us, when we ask him to help us overcome our limitations? Let us go trustingly to his intercession, for he understands very well our needs. But let us strive at every moment to recognize God's will in the most varied circumstances, and let us accept it without hiding behind the excuses we so easily manufacture to justify our lack of generosity.

I continue with the episode from St. Josemaría's life. On that 16th of February, while giving Holy Communion to the nuns at Santa Isabel, he addressed Jesus in his heart and, without external words, told Jesus what he so often said to him, both day and night: "I love you more than these." And immediately I understood, without the need for words: 'Love is deeds, not sweet words and excuses.' I saw clearly at that moment how little generosity I have, and suddenly recalled many unnoticed details I hadn't been paying attention to, which brought home to me with crystal clarity my lack of

generosity. O Jesus, help me, so that your donkey will be fully generous. Deeds, deeds!" (*Ibid.*).

Don Alvaro told us that this intervention by our Lord deeply moved St. Josemaría, not because he was slacking off in his prayer, but because God was asking more of him. Through this locution, our Lord illumined his intellect and strengthened his heart to help him discover "many unnoticed details" in which he could be more refined. Our Founder reacted with generosity, and the memory of that "gentle reproach" by Jesus spurred him on throughout his life to a greater self-giving in serving God and souls.

Read more from the *Prelate - letter to the faithful of Opus Dei for February 2007*: [www.opusdei.org](http://www.opusdei.org).

## "Through the Mountains" in Chinese

A Chinese version of "Through the Mountains", a comic book about St Josemaría.

*Through the Mountains*, a cartoon-style book, tells the story of the life of St Josemaría from the foundation period of Opus Dei in October 1928 till his canonization on 6th October 2002. The book was released in November 2005 in seven languages simultaneously: English, Spanish, French, Dutch, Italian, German and Catalan. This version of St. Josemaría's life tries to convey the fundamental message of his preaching, which is the sanctifying value of work and ordinary life.



The text was written by Paule Fostroy, with artwork by J. Gillissen and E. Gabriel. The drawings combine simplicity of lines with vivid colors to create a quasi-photographic effect. The various scenes in Spanish cities and in Rome are recreated with meticulous care.

Originally printed in Belgium, a country known for a long tradition of high quality cartoon-type books, it has now been translated into Chinese. This form of literature is also popular in Asia and there is a wide range of comic books telling stories that range from the Chinese classics to modern-day pulp fiction. The story of the saintly life of St Josemaría told through comics is expected to appeal to many Asian readers, young and old alike.

It was made available for sale in Hong Kong and Taiwan in December 2006 by Spring Publishers. Spring Publishers has a range of books by and about St Josemaría translated and published in Chinese ([www.springbooks.com](http://www.springbooks.com)). Other related works include those about Opus Dei; the latest of which was the Chinese edition of the book *To Africa with a Dream* by Olga Marlin, about the apostolic work of Opus Dei in Kenya.

## **Favors granted through the intercession of Saint Josemaría Escrivá**

### **We got jobs in less than two weeks**

Thank you Saint Josemaría for favors received. You interceded for us before God, and He granted our prayer! In a country with a 20% unemployment rate in the professions, where it can take up to 9 months to find a job, you helped my wife and I, who could not even afford to buy food for ourselves and our daughters, to find jobs in less than two weeks after doing a novena with your prayer. Through those jobs we will give honor to God and will take the good news of your message to those in need.

*H. M. Z., Colombia*  
December 30, 2006

### **Without serious consequences**

This testimony is really my husband's. When he was about 9, in 1977, just two years after St Josemaría's death, he contracted meningitis. His mother took him straight to hospital. The diagnosis was poor: one of the doctors thought he would die, and told his mother that if he survived, he would be probably left with serious disabilities. He was in an isolation unit. When he had been in hospital about ten days one of his aunts gave his parents a prayer-card of "The Servant of God Josemaría Escrivá" as he then was. They gave it to the nurse to place under the child's pillow. The whole family prayed intensely using the prayer-card, and the boy began to improve a little every day, until on the fourth day of the novena he was out of danger. The doctors were astounded - they just couldn't believe it. There was no medical explanation for such a recovery. The boy suffered no serious consequences: all he had was some marks on his skin, which proved he had had the illness.

Through this testimony I want to thank St Josemaría for my husband's health, even though such a long time has gone by since this miracle. I hope it will help others to believe in the intercession of the saints and to go to the Christian formational activities offered by Opus Dei.

*P. Q. F., Chile*  
December 29, 2006

### **I didn't know how effective he is**

I was doing an internet search for prayers to read during our family Christmas celebrations, and I came across the page on St Josemaría. I'd heard about him

before and I actually have a prayer-card, but that day, December 22, I said the prayer fervently and commended myself to his intercession on various matters. I didn't know how effective he is when people invoke his help, because at eight o'clock that same evening we had a telephone call saying our automobile, which we use to work for a taxi service, had been stolen. My reaction was to say, "Oh my God!" and start crying, but I then remembered Josemaría – the Founder of Opus Dei – and I asked him that the automobile may reappear, because it's a great help for our house. I'm not exaggerating: just twenty minutes later I had another call to say that the automobile had been found. Isn't he great?! Trust him! I take this opportunity to thank him with all my heart for the favor he granted us.

*Carmen M., Peru*  
December 26, 2006

### **So long, Dad**

My dad died on December 6 after suffering from cancer for years. In his last months he had intensive chemo that weakened him so badly his kidneys failed and he had to go into hospital. None of the doctors explained to him how serious his condition really was. He got steadily worse for two months and suffered a great deal, but he always carried the cross with great dignity, and a real zest for life. The main problem was that he was swollen all over: this meant we couldn't look after him ourselves, and there was no way to reduce it. I prayed to Saint Josemaría for that specific intention, so that we could manage to care for him. Two days later he began to lose fluid properly, and I thanked Saint Josemaría for this favor. A few days before he died we could see he was suffering very much, and I called a priest to give him the Anointing of the Sick. Dad thanked me for it. The bone tumor he had caused him agony, especially in the hips. We had some Lourdes water and it occurred to me to make the sign of the Cross with it in his legs, praying to our Lady to alleviate the pain. Three days later he went to Heaven, his sufferings over. So long, Dad.

*A. M., Italy*  
December 22, 2006

### **A long waiting list**

I would like to tell you about this favor St Josemaría obtained for my family – the latest of many that we received through him, but that I'm not going to write about now.

My oldest brother is 84, with no pension, single, suffering from a certain degree of mental retardation and physical impairments that prevent him from even walking by

himself: he is dependent on others for the most basic needs. He always lived with different family members who cared for him, but lately this has been more difficult as he needed not just basic care but medical care, as his illnesses became progressively more complicated. My sister-in-law, who cared for him most of the time, also has a son with a number of illnesses and no longer had the strength or resources to look after two people. So we decided to try and find a care home where he could be properly looked after.

This was not an easy task, as I live in another country, and I had to leave my family and travel home to help solve the situation, since my other relatives couldn't afford to help. For over a year and a half, I checked out all sorts of private and public institutions without success. Either they had no places, or they considered that my brother's state of health was too complicated for them, or the price was too high. I began to get really concerned at the thought that he might end up begging on the street. That was when my son and I decided to do a novena to St Josemaría, praying intensely but constantly, and not missing a single day. Before we got to the end of the novena, one day I was at a hospital where one of my sisters was being treated for cancer, and I saw an ambulance come in with an old lady. I went over and asked them where they were from, and they told me they belonged to a state institution called Fundacion Las Rosas. I contacted them and the social worker there told me I could bring my brother along for them to evaluate his physical and psychological state. The outcome was that they could take him in, but we would have to wait for a vacancy, since there was a long list of people applying for entry before us. The intention of our novena was now to get a vacant place.

One day they called to tell us that there was a possible vacancy in one of the Fundacion Las Rosas houses. We took my brother there, and they confirmed that the hoped-for place was available. We consider this a great miracle granted through the founder of Opus Dei, St Josemaría, since everything happened by word of mouth: we found the ideal place that solved my brother's difficult situation, both as regards his health and the price, and in a short time in spite of the long waiting list of people before us... something that we still cannot explain.

*A. O. V. L., Argentina*  
November 26, 2006

### **A surprising change**

When I was 14, I had a problem with my spine (scoliosis) and had to have a brace made for my back that fitted right the way up to my neck. I was told I would have to wear it for several years, so I was really upset. My sister and I prayed to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer. In the end I only wore it for three months, because on one of

the routine checks, the doctor said that things had changed so surprisingly that I would only have to wear it a few months, and then only for sleeping, not during the day. From then on, when any problem comes up St Josemaría has always been there for me, and has sorted them out. (My sister is in Opus Dei and can witness to all this.)

*Angela, Spain*  
November 14, 2006

### **Something very simple**

I'm 17 and I've been trying to sanctify myself in all the situations of my life for over a year. I keep meeting difficulties, and if ever I manage to solve them with God's help, bigger difficulties come up. Then is when St Josemaría tells me: "Don't fool yourself, you know you can manage," and he is always there for me to help me and lead me to God. My life has changed so much since I began relying on him. St Josemaría always unites me to God, and raises me up until I can take the hands of Mary and Jesus. Sometimes my faith conflicts with the ideas of my friends, classmates and teachers. At such times I feel really proud of the Church, Jesus Christ, Mary, the Pope and the Saints; I feel like shouting aloud about the love I have for God and for everything He created. When people are prejudiced against the Church, I try and make them understand that being a Catholic is something very simple: it means living on God's love at every moment of our lives - exactly as St Josemaría taught.

*Cristian, Argentina*  
November 10, 2006

### **My careless friend's conversion**

When I was in college I lost my boiling kettle mysteriously through my friends. I promised my friends that God would return my lost kettle back and a certain one even promised to change her funny trends if I ever got it back. I turned to St. Josemaría in prayer. One day I wrote a letter to my careless friend informing her how I lost my kettle. Fortunately the house keeper read the letter and called me. She told me she collected a kettle that was laying in the hostel and it was under her bed at home and on that day I got the kettle back. To make things interesting my friend who promised to recollect herself was the first person I met on the stairs of the hostel. Immediately she saw me carrying the kettle she screamed and run away, she just couldn't believe it. From that time on the girl was yearning to know Catholicism more. God is teaching us to be more faithful to him and has given us St. Josemaría as a modern saint of impossibilities. I promised to share this to all to continue being strong all the time and good examples to others to get them to turn to Christ.



P. R. N., Kenya  
October 11, 2006

### **Belgium: I discovered I had to pray**

*Note: This testimony was written before the Beatification of Josemaría Escrivá in 1992*

Some ten years ago I visited Vienna's Peterskirche. There I picked up a *Bulletin* about Msgr. Escrivá, Opus Dei's founder, along with a prayer card. To be frank, the first reading didn't do much for me. But I kept both and promptly forgot about them.

Several years later, I was very concerned about some tests a daughter of mine had to face. It was not an easy situation. I was convinced she had worked hard and prepared herself well, but the outcome was still in doubt.

It was then that I came across another *Bulletin* in an old church in Brussels. I recited several times the prayer for private devotion. My intellectual pride melted like snow in the sunshine. I humbly begged for my daughter's success in those exams. She passed them all, and we were very happy. To express my gratitude, I prayed and put some coins in the box and little by little forgot about the favor. Life is so busy and complicated and there are so many things to do.

Other problems were weighing on me. I wanted to sell our house, but made a bad choice in choosing a less-than-honest real estate agent. I was under a lot of stress, and my health suffered. I didn't know what to do, and I worried about our future.

Once again, I entered the church in Brussels. There I found *Bulletin* no. 7 about the Servant of God. In that very moment I felt he was offering me his intercession. I began praying that private prayer, which makes us conscious of belonging to the Church, despite our shortcomings. I started to read the *Bulletin* and to reflect on my life and job. I confronted my many faults as a man and as a Christian. My anxiety didn't all disappear but I did recover some hope.

After many years, I received again the sacrament of Penance. I discovered that, as Josemaría Escrivá was asking of me, I had to pray for favors not only for me, but for others as well, including the real estate agent and whoever was to buy my house. My prayer was heard. My health problems turned out to be less serious than they seemed; the sale of my house turned out fine. I'm most thankful. This is a favor I don't want to forget. I wish to contribute both materially and spiritually to making the Servant of God known.

### **Honduras: Don't let them harm me**

*Note: This testimony was written before the Canonization of Josemaría Escrivá in 2002*

I was walking down the street, when suddenly three men accosted me. They

demanded anything of value in my various pockets, including a notebook-wallet where, along with my personal documents and money, I kept Blessed Josemaría's prayer card.

When they'd gotten everything, I called on Blessed Josemaría: "You were also in the billfold; don't let them harm me or steal anything." As I walked away, one of the thieves followed me and said, "Here, take your papers." But I didn't stop, afraid they might attack me.

When they'd departed, I returned to the spot. There, much to my surprise, was everything they'd taken, including Blessed Josemaría Escrivá's prayer card.

### **Japan: Not even a Christian yet**

*Note: This testimony was written before the Canonization of Josemaría Escrivá in 2002*

My first encounter with the prayer card of Blessed Josemaría was 16 years ago. I was not a Christian at the time, and I didn't know anything about Christianity. One day in my parish I was introduced to someone who belonged to Opus Dei who gave me a prayer card. From that time on my life changed radically.

I began to study the catechism little by little, and I learned to pray and to ask Blessed Josemaría for things. Then my bicycle was stolen. I realized that I didn't react to its loss as I usually would have. I didn't think badly of the person who took it. Instead, I asked God for a favor through the intercession of Blessed Josemaría. "I give up my bike in that person's decision not to take other peoples' things without permission."

A month later, I found the bicycle in front of my house. The seat had been raised a bit, but it wasn't damaged. I accepted this as restitution pure and simple. Receiving such an obvious first favor from Blessed Josemaría, I felt my heart expand with understanding and kindness for all people. This was a new sentiment. From then on I started to turn to the Blessed's intercession for any need.

A year later, my mother had to be rushed to the hospital suddenly. She was found to have cancer. I was very upset. I began to pray intensely, asking God through Blessed Josemaría not to take away my mother. If he did want to take her, let her at least be baptized first. I gave my mother a prayer card, and she kept it with great affection. Then I began to teach her the catechism and she began to find God.

After being in the hospital several times, she died last year. By the grace of God she received Baptism, and she left this world looking at a picture of our Lady, which she had in front of her.

I also received the grace of Baptism, and I try to act as a daughter of God. I thank

Blessed Josemaria that my life changed in this manner through an encounter with his card.

### Spain: *Who will take care of you?*

*Note: This testimony was written before the Canonization of Josemaría Escrivá in 2002*

I'm a midwife, and I work at a walk-in clinic. Some time ago, a patient came to me, accompanied by her husband. She was in the early stages of a pregnancy. She was forty years old, so she thought her baby would surely be abnormal. She demanded an abortion, to be covered by Social Security. The doctor she'd just seen had told her that, without tests proving the baby's disability, he couldn't send her to a medical center for the abortion. She absolutely refused to submit to any prenatal procedures. The couple began to protest, creating quite a scene in the clinic.

Silently I begged Blessed Josemaria to inspire me somehow to help the patient overcome her blindness. I noted in her medical history that she had two sons, ages seventeen and fourteen. Looking at her directly, I noticed she had the most beautiful blue eyes.

Blessed Josemaria heeded my request, moving me to say: "Do you realize that you might be carrying a daughter who'll have eyes as beautiful as yours?"

Surprised, she looked at me. I might have been the first person to speak positively of her pregnancy. Then I asked:

"Have you ever thought who might take care of you in your last years? Who will bring you chicken soup?"

She reacted immediately and stopped shouting.



### Lucia Vanrell, Uruguay

#### Conversion story

My name is Lucia Vanrell, I'm 20, and I study biochemistry in the Faculty of Sciences at the University of the Republic of Uruguay. I come from a strongly Catholic family, but after my first Communion, as I entered into adolescence, little by little I began to drift away from God.

This went on until I met some people who, through their good example and friendship, brought me back to Christ. They pierced my armor, and after a year

of inner conflict I realized that there was something special about them that made them supremely happy. I realized that this "something" fulfilled them so completely that they radiated peace and love for life and for other people. And that this "something" was unquestionably worth while... and, finally, that this "something" was God!

I began to go to Mass on Sundays, and then started going to Confession and receiving Holy Communion, and I went to Christian formational activities in Opus Dei centers.

That was when my devotion to St Josemaría began. I admired his relationship with God, which was reflected in his clarity in expressing ideas and feelings. I was fascinated by his constant efforts to improve, to please God with his tiniest and most ordinary actions. Learning about St Josemaría awoke in me a hunger for holiness, for God and for apostolate. And although anyone who knows me, knows that I have plenty of failures, I struggle every day to be a good Christian, with God's help and through St Josemaría's intercession.

On the personal side, knowing the Work and its founder helped me, and still does, to stay cheerful in tense or unpleasant situations (because I find meaning in sacrifice). It has created in me a spirit of service and apostolate (I really am happy!). It has made me find a much deeper meaning in my work and study – I can sanctify myself by doing them. It has taught me to appreciate my leisure, the people I love, and the things I do every day, as gifts from God. It has shown me that I have many more human failings than I thought before, and at the same time it gives me the strength to beg God not to let me fall when I get something wrong (which is nearly all the time!). And there are so many other things that it would be hard to put into words.

I know that God doesn't need "supermen" or "superwomen" for his plans on this earth, only souls who are ready to LOVE with capital letters.

And I've also learnt from St Josemaría that it's all worthwhile!

**- Extract from the testimony by Lucía Vanrell published in *San Josemaría y los Uruguayos*, ed. María Magdalena Pareja Silveira, Montevideo, 2002**

## Rethinking Christianity in Estonia

After working daily for a year with Opus Dei members in Tallinn, Estonia, Mari Vivian sent us the following account.

January 11, 2007

I have been working for a year in the administration of an Opus Dei center in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. For me this has been a very enriching experience, both professionally and personally. And I have also learned a lot about the Christian faith.

To begin, I should probably point out that I had serious prejudices against the Catholic Church and against Opus Dei in particular.

I was greatly influenced by what I learned at school in this post-Soviet period, both in history and civics courses: about religious wars where the faith was imposed by fire and the sword, about the sale of indulgences, and about the Church and its power structures. And I had almost no other knowledge about the Catholic Church.

Ever since I started working at the Opus Dei center, I've discovered so many beautiful and amazing things, which I had never dreamed of before.

I was first impressed by the patience and friendliness of my work companions who were in Opus Dei. I was even more impressed by their deep convictions, which showed a seamless love and trust in God.

I didn't discover this all at once, but little by little, gradually. In the beginning I could not believe that my Catholic companions could be so close to God. But one could see it day by day, by the way they worked and spoke about Jesus.

During these months I have learned to work and how to do it with love and dedication. Or at least I have seen how it can be done.

In regard to the faith I have been able to appreciate things with a more open perspective, with greater confidence and respect. My life and my relationship to the



*"I've discovered so many beautiful and amazing things, which I had never dreamed of before."*



*"During these months I have learned to work and how to do it with love and dedication."*

others has changed and this is above all a work of God. I also think that Opus Dei has played its part.

I appreciate Opus Dei. In our little country this institution is like a ray of light.

By quietly doing their everyday tasks, the members of Opus Dei give a marvelous example which is a support and hope for many people.

## The gift of a child with Down Syndrome

"I feel very lucky and I want to make the most of this opportunity," says Anna Oromi of Lerida, Spain.

2007/01/09

On January 9, three years ago, on the anniversary of the birth of St. Josemaría, you had your first son.

Actually, before Marc, I had a first pregnancy which unfortunately did not come to term. Because of that miscarriage, the whole family was praying a lot to St. Josemaría for a new baby to come. We have devotion to this saintly priest, and I wanted to create "a bright and cheerful home" as he used to say. And so, thank God, Marc arrived, precisely on January 9.



*Anna with Alex, Marc, and her husband, Juan Antonio Sancho.*

### **This wasn't the only gift you and your husband received.**

Indeed not. After Marc, Alex arrived and he is a real gift. At the beginning of my third pregnancy, the doctors told us it was very likely that the child would have Down Syndrome and heart problems.

### **How did you react?**

At the time, we were not ready for the news. What should we do? My husband and I prayed a lot. Each of us spoke with God about what seemed, at first, to be a misfortune. But in his presence one sees things clearly.

We never considered not having Alex. I prayed and prayed that whatever God wanted would happen, and that he would help me to be generous. At the same time, I asked for help to make the right decision about the doctors' suggestions. The most important thing was that Alex would be born.

### **Why did you pray? Wouldn't it have been more natural to rebel?**

Prayer helped me to face each day calmly, not to get anxious about future problems, and to do what had to be done at each moment. I learned this from the founder of Opus Dei: when facing a difficult situation, go to God and ask him how to act.

I also sought the intercession of Don Alvaro del Portillo, St. Josemaría's first successor, to whom I have a special devotion. I asked them to help me and they were close to me at every moment. He definitely helped me have fortitude to face these circumstances.

And so Alex was born last September 5, and since then I haven't stopped thanking God.

### **Does everyone understand your decision?**

Unfortunately, in recent years it's not a very common decision. The easy thing is to have an abortion – they make it easy for you – and thus avoid the problem. As for us, when we told my gynecologist that we wanted to have the baby, she was happy because she knew this child would arrive in a home where he would be welcomed.

People often say to us: "How brave you are to have a child with Down Syndrome." But it's not a question of courage: the dignity of each child is more important than its



*Saint Josemaría with a figure of the Child Jesus.*

characteristics. You can't choose a child "a la carte"! You simply accept it and love it as it is. My husband said that Alex will have friends who will love him for himself, and I have the same opinion.

And this idea that he is a gift, I'm not the only one who thinks so. The young lady who helps me with my housework mentioned to her husband that I have a book entitled "In Conversation with God" (I read it when I pray). He said: "That's why they have this child, because he's something sent by God."

### **You don't accept him then with resignation?**

No! I really believe that life is a very great thing. I don't feel that way just because I have certain religious beliefs, as some people tell me. The faith helps, it is fundamental, but love for life is something universal that we should all share.

I feel very lucky and I want to make the most of this opportunity. I can learn a lot from Alex. The truth is that children with Down Syndrome are special people, full of light. He has a special smile.

### **I imagine it's an opportunity to speak with many people.**



*(Photo: carlosluis, under creative commons).*

Someone from a Down Syndrome group told me: "People don't know how to react when they see you have a child like that. So the best thing is to take the initiative."

And this is what I do when I meet someone who doesn't know it already: I introduce them to Alex and say that he has Down Syndrome and that we knew it before he was born. This let's me speak with many people and opens a door to be able to reflect on something so important as everyone's right to life. And in Down Syndrome parents' groups, I have met marvelous people who move me by their dedication and joy.

In my dining room I have a very beautiful book by one of these groups, full of testimonials. In one a child with Down Syndrome thanks his parents for having him, and tells them that this is not a punishment and that he will repay them with a lot of love. I was very moved reading those words.

## Dealing with Alzheimer's

**"Some days when I get up, and think of my husband's sickness, I am flooded with a feeling of sadness," says Pilar Fernandez-Loza, from Asturias in Spain. "But I immediately react and ask God to help me."**

2006/12/03

### A golden anniversary

We've just celebrated the golden anniversary of our wedding, and it has been -- something special. We used to think that when we got older we would have the typical problems, high blood pressure and things like that. Now, some days when I get up, and think of my husband's sickness, I am flooded with a feeling of sadness that reminds me of the song of Edith Piaf: *Bonjour, tristesse*. But I immediately react and ask God to help me be able to identify myself with his will.



Cayetano has been sick for ten years. The first symptom appeared at Christmas of 1996 when we went to Bilbao to visit my son. Coming back he was driving and got lost twice. This seemed strange to me since he knew the route like the back of his hand. From then on he began to have hesitations and distractions. He would go downstairs, buy the paper and leave it on the table, without opening it.

"Pilarina," he said to me, "something is happening to me."

One day, in the spring of 1998, he sat down to do his income tax as he does every year. Although he was the auditor of a bank, he couldn't manage to do it. Finally he said: "Let's go to the doctor."

It was Alzheimer's.

Since then he has been progressively losing his memory, and this is very hard, because he is there -- but he isn't there. One day during a gathering, some people commented about how he was changing expression, gestures, losing eye contact. "Perhaps," I said to them, "but my husband's eyes are still blue."

I try to give him all the affection that I can and I don't have to force myself, because,

thank God, we have been a very fortunate couple, we loved each other very much and we still love each other, although now he can't express it. At times I bring my cheek close to his lips, and although it takes him a little time to react, he always ends up giving me a kiss.

### The grace of a vocation

We have been very happy in our marriage, though sufferings have not been absent. One of our children died at the age of 19. But we have always had the strength and consolation of our faith. In addition we have received the grace of a vocation. We have been supernumeraries of Opus Dei since the late Sixties.

Cayetano made the decision shortly before I did. Now I feel very happy to recall that I never put up any obstacles when he went on a retreat for a few days, for example, and I was left home alone with the children. I was not a member of Opus Dei, but I thought: "This is good for him; and if it's good for him, it's also good for me."

Later when I joined Opus Dei, he did not put up any obstacles to me either: on the contrary, he always helped me in my vocation, thanks to which we received so many good suggestions for the education of our children, for our human and spiritual relationship.

Of course, our vocations are the most wonderful thing that has happened to us, and if Cayetano were well, he would say so too. He always knew this, but now it is palpable. We are receiving affection in torrents. Our friends in Opus Dei come, they encourage me, they cheer me up. There is a priest who comes to see Cayetano often, and though I don't know how much he understands, his presence is very good for him and for me. The other day, for my golden anniversary, they brought me a bouquet of chrysanthemums and I began to cry. "But, Pilar, why are you crying?" one of them asked me. I said one also cries from happiness, on seeing kindness and tokens of affection.

It's like the tenderness of a mother. I lost mine at the age of three and I was brought up by two aunts who were mothers to me. They both died at over 100 and they were helping and comforting me by telephone until their final moments. I was very sorry that I was not able to go and see them because of my situation, but they told me: "Don't worry, your first obligation now is to take care of your husband; and the second is to take care of yourself."

And so, whenever I go to one of my Opus Dei activities, even though they propose very demanding goals of Christian life for me, I give thanks. When they ask me why

I am doing this, since I am Asturian and like to speak clearly, I answer: "Because you are helping me!"

Naturally there are aspects of the vocation to Opus Dei that have been hard for me to put into practice, and there were things that I did not understand in the beginning. I also thank God for that: I was growing in docility to God's will, and God was preparing me for this.

Opus Dei helped me to see God's love in this sickness, to smile and to be happy. I have my times of tears, but it's without bitterness, with tranquility, with peace. This is my way of being faithful to God and of being faithful to Cayetano in these moments.

### My support group

I belong to an Association of Families with Alzheimer's, and I form part of a group of those caring for people with this disease, who try to help one another, because our situation is very difficult and hard to bear. The Association functions very well. It gives us direction, it comforts us, it gives us affection and sets goals for us. And we have the advice of a psychologist for the group who encourages us to take care of ourselves, so that we transmit to the sick person our own well-being.

Because this infirmity tends to isolate one from others and friends come to see one less often, perhaps out of self-defense—it is so sad to see a person who is slowly shutting down.

### Memories

I speak to Cayetano a lot, although he can't answer me and I don't know if he fully understands me. And whenever he returns from the day care center, helped by another person, I go to meet him at the street door, as I did when we were engaged.

Now when I think of those years, I'm very happy that we had a Christian engagement. I thank God a lot for that. It seems that nowadays many young people don't know the meaning of true love. The other day, when my granddaughter Maria asked me about my wedding, I told her something personal, even



Church of Our Lady of Covadonga

intimate, that reflects how Cayetano was. We spent the first night after our wedding in a nineteenth century hotel in Covadonga, in a room with a window from which one could see the statue of Our Lady of Covadonga. And as I went to bed, I found a letter from him under the pillow.

We had been engaged for four years, and practically our whole engagement was by letter, because he was in Almería and I was in Gijón, and in those days travel and communications were not so easy as today. We rarely saw each other, but for four years we wrote each other every day: ev-er-y-day. In that letter, he told me of his love for me, his joy at having received the sacrament of matrimony, and his desire to be faithful to me all his life.

I remember how years ago, when we were living in Bilbao, Cayetano had to travel a lot because of his work, and he told me that, after doing an audit – I don't recall in what city – he had gone with the team of auditors to have a beer in a bar. It was a group of married and single men. In the bar they met some girls and began to chat. They were normal girls, completely normal. On the following day, they went back, and when he saw that the same girls were there, he said good-bye. "Why are you going," they asked him. "Because I have a wife waiting for me in Bilbao," he told them. Nothing in particular had happened. But he said that in those circumstances of loneliness one has to be especially careful and know how to leave at the right time.

I remember the care with which he prepared his audits. He wanted to do them as well as possible, to offer them to God. Before he handed them in, he would always ask my advice about this or that expression. "But I don't have the slightest idea about banking!" I'd tell him. "Yes, but women are always more refined than men," he would say, "and you know how to say things in a more pleasant way. I want to tell the truth, but without hurting anyone. Go on, read this sentence, to see if I could phrase it better."

Are these just silly things? I don't think so. It's living the Christian faith with consistency. And where did all this come from? From his prayer, from the spirit of Opus Dei that he was living – and that he is now living, because this sickness is also "Opus Dei," a work of God.

## Archbishop Monterisi: "The Personal Prelature: a Framework which Enriches the Communion of the Church"

The 25th year of Opus Dei's existence as a prelature has just begun. On the occasion of this anniversary, the following interview was given by Archbishop Francesco Monterisi, the Secretary of the Congregation for Bishops, the Vatican dicastery on which prelatures depend.

2006/12/11

**Your Excellency, Pope John Paul II made Opus Dei a Prelature on November 28, 1982. What in your opinion are the benefits that the dioceses can expect from this?**

A few months into this 25th anniversary year, one can already begin to get a perspective on the work that the members of the Prelature have carried out up till now. The Servant of God, John Paul II, in an address some five years ago, noted that lay faithful belonging to their own diocese as well as to Opus Dei "enables the special mission of the Prelature to converge with the evangelizing efforts of each particular Church."

**What led John Paul II to make use of the Conciliar form of the personal prelature for Opus Dei?**

To answer this question one has to begin by describing just how Opus Dei appeared in the eyes of the Holy Father and the Church at the time that its recognition by the Holy See appeared necessary.

Opus Dei, which originated in 1928 in the heart and mind of St. Josemaría Escrivá, was a new and original apostolic work, with certain characteristics that had to be taken into account when it was recognized in the juridical structure of the Church, that is, in canon law. In effect, one had thousands of faithful dispersed in dioceses throughout the world who had made their own the ideal of life proposed by St.



Archbishop Francesco Monterisi,  
Secretary of the Congregation for  
Bishops.

When John Paul II established the Prelature, neither the faithful nor the formational activities of Opus Dei became "independent" of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Josemaría—the ideal of responding to the call to sanctification and apostolate amidst the everyday realities of their lives. Those faithful needed special pastoral help to attain that objective, and therefore there were a good number of priests who, in accord with the inspiration of the founder of Opus Dei himself, had felt called by our Lord as secular priests, not as religious, to exercise their ministry among those lay persons who were seeking sanctity in ordinary realities. It was also necessary to entrust this new apostolic reality to the direction of a person, the Prelate, who with his collaborators could coordinate the life and action of Opus Dei throughout the world. These are the elements that led to giving Opus Dei the specific juridical form of a personal prelature.

It suffices to read the Apostolic Constitution *Ut Sit*, by which Opus Dei was established as a prelature in 1982, to realize that the form of personal prelature is the most appropriate way for Opus Dei, such as it was conceived by St. Josemaría Escrivá in the light of his deep spirituality, to be able to fulfill its mission in the Church.

**Are there any other personal prelatures in the Church, besides Opus Dei?**



John Paul II observed in an address given in 2002 that "the special mission of the Prelature [converges] with the evangelizing efforts of each particular church."

For now no, but nothing prevents others existing in the future. The Holy See will establish them if they have the formal characteristics proper to this juridical institution as it has been configured by the regulations of the Church.

Perhaps your question is motivated by certain press reports that Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo has expressed the intention of creating a personal prelature for his association of "married priests." A project such as this would be, from

the point of view of canon law, a "juridical freak" not a personal prelature, since various elements essential to a personal prelature are lacking, such as a specific pastoral goal, its faithful, etc. Not to speak of the more deplorable aspects of the project which have separated Bishop Milingo from the communion of the Church: the abandonment of priestly celibacy, a great gift of God to the Church, on the part of

someone who had freely assumed it "for the kingdom of God," his grave disobedience to the Holy Father, the scandal to the faithful.

**Some believe that they see in the canonical form of the personal prelature a certain status of "independence." What is the truth of that?**

When John Paul II established the Prelature, neither the faithful nor the formational activities of Opus Dei became "independent" of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. On the contrary, the hierarchy has taken over the care of this reality by means of a prelate appointed by the Pope. The Prelate has the duty of guiding the Prelature in communion with all of the bishops. At the same time, he is obliged to maintain Opus Dei and all of its activities in communion with the Holy Father *cum et sub Petro* (with and under Peter).

Communion with the Holy See is shown in certain very precise obligations, such as presenting a report on the state of the Prelature every five years, or maintaining regular contacts with the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia, in particular with the congregation which is competent for whatever relates to the Prelature itself, that is, the Congregation for the Bishops.

As for the laity of Opus Dei, being members of the Prelature does not in any way change their condition of being faithful of their dioceses. What is more, they are even more conscious of belonging to the Church, beginning with the particular Church in which they live and work.

The apostolic fruit of Opus Dei benefits the dioceses in which the faithful of the Prelature reside. It has often happened, for example, that the personal apostolate of a member of the faithful of Opus Dei has given rise to the conversion of a friend, a colleague or a relative. The commitment of the laity of Opus Dei, their work in apostolic and social activities, their initiatives, are a stimulus for other faithful: this means spiritual growth in the diocese.

These years of experiencing the presence of the Prelature of Opus Dei in so many dioceses around the world confirms the reality of an intense apostolic work in communion with the diocesan bishops. This communion is worked out in very different ways and forms, but the wish of the Prelature of Opus Dei, of being in harmony with



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all the bishops of the dioceses in which it is active, is always the same.

In this sense, one can say, by way of conclusion, that the personal prelature contributes to enriching communion in the Church.

**To what extent does the juridical form of the Prelature of Opus Dei strengthen the role of the laity?**

Opus Dei exists to help the apostolate of its lay members in ordinary life. Even before the establishment of the Prelature, Opus Dei included lay faithful all around the world committed to putting this ideal into practice in family life, in the world of work and in the other realities of everyday life. The form of the prelature, in the same way as the forms of other ecclesiastical circumscriptions, permits (as John Paul II said in the address that I mentioned in response to the first question) an "organic way that priests and laity work together" for the good of the Church and the progress of the Kingdom of God.