

here. . . . So, get moving! Multiply yourselves and do many good things in this land which is so fruitful.¹¹

That same exhortation could be delivered to every nation on earth. It is love which is fruitful, and only love. Indeed, the most pure of all human loves was so fruitful that it led to a Virgin conceiving life.

It is easy to become discouraged in our struggle for the dignity of the human person in our day. But our sense of divine filiation will give us the fortitude, patience, and cheerfulness that we need to carry on the struggle, not in a half-hearted way but with real enthusiasm and zeal.

In realizing that we are the children of God we take courage in the fact that we have Mary as our Mother. As Blessed Josemaria told us with great simplicity: "Here is a piece of advice I shall never tire of telling souls: Love the Mother of God madly, for she is our Mother too."¹² And she is the Mother who bore the Word of Life, He Who took our humanity of her flesh, Who joined Himself with all humanity, even embryonic humanity. She is a powerful intercessor on behalf of those who are weak and vulnerable and at the margins of society. Under the kingship of Christ and through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and our beloved Josemaria, we can each make our essential and unique contribution to a future civilization of love and life.

¹¹ Salvador Bernal, *A Profile of Msgr. Escriva, Founder of Opus Dei*, London, 1977, p. 231.

¹² *The Forge*, 77.

JOSÉ LUIS SORIA

SAINT JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA, A PORTRAIT

Introduction

It happens with literary portraits as it does with photographic, sculpted, or painted ones. A person can be described by words in many different manners, depending on the skills, the psychology, and the moods of the artist, but any good portrait demands a lot from the author: in fact not every painter or sculptor is necessarily a good portraitist. It is said that any outstanding painted portrait must take up the challenge to render life without aid of the spoken or the written word. One Dutch poet, commenting on the famous portrait of Cornelis Anso—a renowned preacher—by Rembrandt said: "That's right, Rembrandt paints Cornelis's voice! His visible self is a second choice. The invisible can only be known through the word. For Anso to be seen, he must be heard."

A portrait (not *the* portrait) of Saint Josemaria Escriva is my task today. My credentials as painter are non-existent, but my credentials for attempting a literary portrait of the founder of Opus Dei are the 22 years I spent very close to him, in Rome, from 1953 to the very day of his death in June 26, 1975. That day, as his family physician during the last years of his life, I tried to resuscitate him after he suffered a massive heart attack in the room where his two successive successors at the head of Opus Dei and myself were with him. After one hour and a half of vain efforts by a small group involved in the task, some of them also physicians, I closed his eyes with my fingers.

Painters make frequent use of sketches in their work. In a conventional sketch, the emphasis usually is laid on the general design and composition of the work and on its overall feeling, and there are three main types of functional sketches. The first—sometimes known as a *croquis*—is intended to remind the artist of some scene or event he has seen and wishes to record in a more permanent form. The second type is related to portraiture and notes the look on a face, the turn of a head, or other physical characteristics of a prospective sitter. The third—a *pochade*—is one in which he records, usually in color, the atmospheric effects and general impressions of a landscape. Today it is my task to present to you sketches of the first two types (the *croquis* and the notes I keep in my memory from the first time I met Saint Josemaria and the following few years), plus a more complete portrait based in the other twenty years I worked and lived close to him. John Coverdale will take care of the *pochade*, describing for us the times and the historical scenario of Saint Josemaria's life and work.

First sketch or the first impressions

When I met the now Saint Josemaria in the fall of 1953, the central point attracting my attention was that I was meeting the founder of Opus Dei. I knew, too, that the founders of most institutions in the Church had been beatified or canonized. Usually when the Lord places on the shoulders of a man or a woman the task of opening a new way in the following of Christ, He chooses the appropriate instrument. Whatever the difficulties such a foundation will meet (and the founding of Opus Dei implied incredible difficulties of all kinds) the founder or foundress is given the necessary graces to be faithful to the mission received. I knew very little more about the then Monsignor Escrivá and, even in connection with his physical aspect, my knowledge was extremely limited since previous to that day in 1953 I remembered having seen only one picture of him, taken probably 13 or 14 years earlier.

Of course, never before in my life had I been acquainted with a personality such as Saint Josemaria, but I was not overwhelmed. In the years to come I was going to have the opportunity of hearing the question he addressed sometimes to young members of Opus Dei when they arrived in Rome: "How did you imagine the Father? As a stern, solemn and serious character?" In fact he was for us (young professionals or university students at the time) the incarnation of a loving, cheerful, amusing and strong father. It was so easy to love him! The get-togethers we had with him were sheer pleasure: good humor, sometimes to the point of explosive laughter, and at the same time incredible occasions of learning about God, the characteristics of the spirit of Opus Dei, the history of the Church, funny or interesting anecdotes based on art and literature, news about the apostolic activities of Opus Dei in other countries, etc. Close to two hundred people were then crammed into the headquarters of Opus Dei, which were under construction, some parts already finished in a Roman traditional style, and some parts of the pre-existing buildings awaiting demolition. I remember Saint Josemaria teasing one young man from the United States about one of the parts recently finished, but giving the appearance of almost a venerable age, due to the skills of Roman painters and construction workers. The *patina* fooled the person who was questioned, who declared himself convinced that that part should not survive the demolition: it was "too old"!

His immense, enormous faith and, as a consequence, his unity of life, without independent compartments separating prayer and action, was another trait of his personality, immediately evident after meeting him. Saint Josemaria had suffered and would continue to suffer because some people (many of whom should have known better) interpreted his faith as fanaticism or madness. But for me, and also for many other people, this was an outstanding characteristic of the founder, quite different from the Sunday Catholics, including some "Sunday priests", I had known before.

I will always remember the impression I received when in the summer of 1950 I had the opportunity of hearing a tape, in which a meditation on Faith preached by Saint Josemaria in 1947 was recorded. Years later he was going to

rework it and publish it in *Friends of God*,¹ with the title "Living by Faith." But a similar impression was created every time I attended one of his preached meditations, and the occasions were many to say the least. His words were very powerful, simple and deep, attractive and challenging, moving from the most delicate moments of dialogue with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament or compassionate understanding of human weakness to instances of forceful and sometimes thunderous demands upon the listeners. It was mostly dialogue with the Lord, but certainly he knew how to teach us to share in the same dialogue.

Convinced of his sanctity and future canonization, from the very moment I had the opportunity I kept as souvenirs or relics everything I could obtain. I remember among those things an empty bottle of insulin—the strong diabetes suffered by Saint Josemaria until April 1954 forced him to receive large doses; a rosary he blessed and gave me; several small papers with some of his handwriting... But my stay in Rome was going to be much longer than I had initially planned. In fact my original idea was that, after three years of ecclesiastical studies and formation in the spirit of Opus Dei, I was going to return to my native Spain to pursue my career as a physician. The prayers, the example, and the preaching of Saint Josemaria changed all that, and led me to the priesthood. Once I was ordained in 1956, the founder wanted me to remain in Rome, working close to him, and there I stayed for twenty more years. Nineteen of those twenty years allow me today to attempt a passage from the sketch to a portrait of the founder of Opus Dei.

A full portrait

Fifteenth-century portraits, by Pisanello or Jan van Eyck, for example, may be considered completed pictorial works in their concentration, execution, and distribution of space. The clear, delicately delineated representation follows every detail of the surface, striving for realism. The profile, rich in detail, is preferred; resembling relief, it is akin to the medallion. More interested in the psychological aspects of portraiture, late 19th- and 20th-century draftsmen prefer the softer crayons that readily follow every artistic impulse. Mood elements, intellectual tension, and personal engagement are typical features of the modern portrait and thus also of modern portrait drawing. In my attempt as a portraitist I will be eclectic, even if incomplete, but I should start with a point that gives reason for all the other details of my sitter.

As the late Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, the first successor of Saint Josemaria at the head of Opus Dei, put it, "To understand the character of our founder, one must keep in view this basic quality which pervaded everything else: his dedication to God, and to all souls for God's sake; his constant readiness to correspond generously to the will of God. This was the aim of his whole life. He was a man in love, a man possessed of a secret he would later spell out

¹First published in English in 1981, *Friends of God* is a translation of *Amigos de Dios*, Madrid, 1977.

in point No. 1006 of *The Forge*: “With crystal clarity I see the formula, the secret of happiness, both earthly and eternal. It is not just a matter of accepting the will of God, but of embracing it, of identifying oneself with it—in a word, of loving the divine will with a positive act of our own will. This, I repeat, is the infallible secret of joy and peace.”²

Character strength was one of his outstanding dimensions. “He was endowed with a keen, agile intellect that was complemented by a lively interest in all branches of knowledge, by a remarkable juridical mentality, and by a most refined aesthetic sense. His personality was vibrant and vigorous; his temperament was courageous and impetuous, strong and energetic; and he managed to acquire a remarkable degree of self-mastery.”³ I must say that the strongest correction I have received during my adult life came from Saint Josemaria, as a consequence of my negligence in a particular set of circumstances. But not even then did I feel less loved. He had the gift of showing his authentic affection especially when he feared that his words or deeds could have hurt the feelings of some of us. He was an open and sometimes even blunt man who disliked ceremony and façade. He loved sincerity and personal freedom. His strong character and temper were softened by a keen sense of humor and a smile that would light up his face and make his penetrating eyes sparkle. Yes, as the Postulator of his Cause of Canonization put it recently, “he had an iron will and very great gentleness. He asked for high and demanding goals, but he was able to motivate with his charity He did not ask the impossible.”

He was obviously a man totally dedicated to serving the Church, despite all obstacles, according to the charism received (the founding of Opus Dei). Probably this was the reason why, referring to this love for the Church, he used to add that his goal was “to serve the Church as the Church wants to be served,” not—I would add—as the limitations of an inappropriate canonical frame would impose or as the opinion of some members of the clergy would prefer.

He was magnanimous, especially in everything related to the divine worship, but also in the care he took of the duties of friendship and hospitality. I remember that the first time I heard the name “Chateaufort-du-Pape” (the renowned brand of French wine) was on the occasion of Christmas gifts he was sending to some friends in the Vatican Curia, at a time of serious financial straits.

His artistic good taste was outstanding. His literary style was very good. I must say with deep gratitude that the greatest source of my education in those fields comes from his influence and example. His heart—maternal and paternal at the same time—and his immense love for God enriched him with leadership and energy, yes, but also with a tremendous warmth and humanity. When I first arrived in the Eternal City, he somehow found out that my father wasn’t entirely pleased with my decision to study in Rome for few years. Saint Josemaria urged me to write home often, to pray and be confident that things

would change. The strategy worked and my father eventually became a Cooperator of Opus Dei. When I was ordained in 1956, he donated a beautiful chalice that the late Alvaro del Portillo used at Mass for several years.

Some of my most touching memories of Saint Josemaria’s kindness involve the death of my parents. It is easy to understand that these painful strokes are noticeable in my portrait. Early in 1967, my mother underwent surgery... only to be sewn up again because the cancer was too far advanced. She was a member of Opus Dei and had had the opportunity of meeting Saint Josemaria during one of his trips to Spain. The founder often asked about her and he told me that he kept her in his prayers. I once mentioned to him that I hadn’t heard any news for several weeks and he told me to phone home right away. But other duties distracted me and the day slipped away.

The next morning, he asked me again about my mother. When he learned that I hadn’t called the hospital where she was staying, he reprimanded me in no uncertain terms and he told me to do so that very day. That afternoon I got through and was able to talk to both my mother and my father. It was the last time I heard her voice. She died suddenly on Good Friday, a few weeks later. When I was leaving for her funeral, the Father blessed me, hugged me, and whispered in my ear: “Son, I have gone through the same thing myself.” He was referring to the unexpected death of his mother in 1941, while he was away from Madrid preaching a retreat to priests of another diocese.

When I returned to Rome he asked first about my father. Then he told me that a letter from my mother had arrived during my absence. He was referring to a letter she had dictated to one of my sisters two days before she died. “Don’t read it today; you will only cry your eyes out,” he advised. “Wait a week; then read it and keep it. It will be a real treasure for you.”

Early in 1973, my father’s health began to fail. Several times the doctors predicted that the end was near and Saint Josemaria would send me home to Spain. But each time my father would recover and I would head back to Rome. Just before the summer, Saint Josemaria—as was customary of him—told his closest collaborators to take a few weeks to rest and lend a hand in the apostolic activities of Opus Dei in whatever European country they wished—with one exception. Turning to me, he said: “You’ll go to Spain. That way you can be with your father.” And while I was in Spain, my father’s health took a sudden turn for the worse. I was able to be with him at the end, prepare him for death, and administer the last rites of the Church.

Peter Berglar, one of his biographers, wrote that “to his very last day, [the founder’s] face retained a youthful, boyish expression. This was partly due to his soft features—the rounded chin, the full cheeks—and the simple parting of his short, slowly graying hair. Mostly, however, it was his smile.” In those pictures—I want to point out that Berglar’s comments referred obviously to the pictures he had seen—the same smile plays about his mouth and eyes: a smile full of warmth, amusement, and unaffected concern, yet without any shadow of anxiety. His was a face without any trace of bitterness or ennui; it was transparently guileless, candid, cheerfully interested.” The German historian adds:

²Alvaro del Portillo, in *Immersed in God*, Princeton, N.J., 1996, p. 31-32.

³*Ibid.* p. 33.

“[his face] was not a scarred battle field where elation and sorrow, God and the devil had waged war; it was not a dramatic stage.” “That is why his portraits are not as fascinating as Beethoven’s or Einstein’s”, he comments.⁴ And there I disagree with Berglar.



St. Josemaria at Fatima, Portugal, November 2, 1972.

It is true that most photographs of Saint Josemaria match the charming description made by the German biographer, but not all of them. There is a different group of photographs of the founder of Opus Dei, which Berglar has not seen or forgets. I am referring to the type of photographs I would dare call *transcendent* or *pictures on the way of the Cross*. All of them have as common background an intense and actual physical, spiritual, or moral suffering when the photograph was taken. As an example of these *transcendent* pictures I would mention the one taken during the Spanish Civil war for the documents from the Honduras embassy, where Josemaria Escriva appears in civil attire, documents that allowed him to continue carrying out his pastoral

ministry often in the street and at the risk of his life in the midst of a cruel religious persecution; or the photograph taken also in Madrid on March 28, 1939, at the end of the war, while he is inspecting the rubble of the first and only Student Residence that Opus Dei had promoted; or the ones taken in Fatima in 1972, in Lujan (Argentina) in 1974, and in Torreciudad in 1975 praying the Rosary during his Marian pilgrimages for the needs of the Church. The last picture taken during his life belongs to this group as well, where we see him in Villa delle Rose, Castelgandolfo, one hour and a half before his death.

All these pictures reflect a very deep and typical trait of Saint Josemaria: he was a man marked by the Cross, but not made unhappy or miserable by the sufferings he endured. A privileged way of knowing the intimate characteristics of his are the Personal Notes or *Apuntes íntimos* (a set of notes of a confidential nature written mostly in the 1930’s and that the founder specified were not to be read until after his death). The entry for September 14, 1931 reads:

⁴Peter Berglar, *Opus Dei. Life and Work of his Founder Josemaría Escrivá*, Princeton, N.J., 1993, p. 271.

“Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, 1931: How much today’s epistle cheered me up! In it the Holy Spirit, through Saint Paul, teaches the secret of immortality and glory... This is the sure path: through humiliation, to the cross; and from the cross, with Christ, to the immortal glory of the Father.”⁵ In a homily on October 2, 1968, the fortieth anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei, he said: “If at that moment [October 1928] I had seen what was awaiting me, I would have died, so great is the weight of what I have had to suffer and enjoy!” And he repeated many, many times another thought he recorded in *Furrow*, 257, as well: “The Lord, the Eternal Priest, always blesses with the Cross.”⁶

From early childhood to the last day of his life, the cross was his constant companion. In important issues related to the founding and development of Opus Dei, or to the situation of the Church in general, or in minute details of domestic daily life. I remember that, for many years, those of us living with him used to joke about the action of what we called the “plumber devil,” because by accident, coincidence or Providence many feast days or happy anniversaries that were supposed to be occasions for joy and relaxation were transformed into hectic, tense moments by the unexpected rupture of a drain, the leaking of a pipe, the bursting of a radiator in the most upsetting place or moment, literally as if somebody wanted to water down the serenity of the feast day. But it was in vain. In 1931 Saint Josemaria had learned the lesson very well: “Generally, Jesus gives me a cross with joy, *cum gaudio et pace* [with joy and peace]; and a cross with joy... is not a cross. Given my optimistic nature, I have habitually a joy that we might call physiological—that of a healthy animal. It is not to that joy that I am referring, but to another, a supernatural kind which comes from abandoning oneself and everything else into the loving arms of God our Father.”⁷

A supernatural episode during his Mass on February 14, 1943 was often defined by Saint Josemaria as the moment when God wanted “to crown his Work with the Holy Cross.” It was then that the founder received inspirational light to find a juridical path for the priestly ordination of the priests in the Work, and it was also the occasion for the inclusion of the name of the Cross in the title and seal of Opus Dei, up to the present day and always: *Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei*. Always the Cross!

In my office I keep two pictures of Saint Josemaria. One of them, in color, the one chosen for the tapestry in Saint Peter’s balcony the day of his Beatification, is the paradigm of the type of photographs described by Dr. Berglar. The other, in black and white and taken, I think, in 1970, is for me the model of the *transcendent* portraits of Saint Josemaria. In that picture the founder is serious, even if you can guess that at any moment he could insinu-

⁵*Apuntes íntimos*, no. 284 in Andrés Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei: The Life of Josemaría Escrivá*, vol. I: *The early Years*, Princeton, N.J., 2001, p. 293.

⁶*Furrow*, 257.

⁷*Apuntes íntimos*, no. 350, in *The Founder of Opus Dei...*, page 302.

ate a smile of love and sympathy. He looks very, very intently at the camera, and therefore at you when you study the picture. His eyes, underlined by dark rings, are deep behind the bifocals. The hair is a little bit in disarray and the wrinkles and flaccid skin in the neck talk of many years spent in dedication and service. To me—prompted by Berglar's remarks—this picture is much more inspiring and meaningful than any portrait of Beethoven or Einstein and it completes very well the image conveyed by the other type of photograph. I love them both—the one full of light and the other full of intensity—because they provide me with a complete set of the most striking memories of the years I spent close to Saint Josemaria: joy and good humor, as a consequence of his temperament but also as a result of his certainty of being a child of God. And intense and almost constant suffering, also as the proof of his identification with the crucified Christ, in a “co-redemption of Love” based in his own active and passive self-denial.⁸ Last September, on the feast day of the Triumph of the Cross, John Paul II said that “the cross is the supreme symbol of love.” Saint Josemaria was the greatest man I have ever known and worked with, but he was not superman. His soul was extremely sensitive to suffering, even if he knew how to love and to unite his sufferings with the redemptive sufferings of Christ. I heard him say many times that true joy has its roots in the shape of a cross. That is why his best portrait probably is the one he himself painted, when for many years he wrote in the first page of the liturgical calendar: “*In laetitia, nulla dies sine cruce*. In joy, no day without the cross.”

⁸Cf. *Furrow*, no. 255.

JOHN F. COVERDALE

SAINT JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA AND THE ANTICLERICALISM OF THE EARLY SECOND REPUBLIC¹

St. Josemaria Escriva, whom I will refer to in this paper as Escriva, often described himself as “anticlerical” because his exalted conception of the priesthood led him to reject its use for temporal ends, and because his appreciation for the autonomy of the lay members of the Church led him to reject efforts by the clergy to dictate to them in areas that properly belong to their free choice. During the Second Spanish Republic (1931-39), however, he faced an anticlericalism entirely different from his own. This paper will focus on Escriva's experience of that anticlericalism during the early years of the Second Republic rather than during the Civil War and the years immediately preceding it.

The anticlericalism Escriva faced during this period found expression in an atmosphere of hostility to the Church and particularly to priests and religious, in legislation designed to eliminate or at least lessen the Church's influence in the public life of the country, and in violent attacks on church property and on priests and religious.

The Roots of Anticlericalism in Spanish History

This type of anticlericalism had deep roots in Spanish history.² From the early 1800s, middle class liberals, whose political ideology was rooted in the French Enlightenment, struggled to reduce the influence and power of the Church in Spain. In the period between 1830 and 1860, liberal governments confiscated large amounts of Church-owned land that had been used to support the clergy and the members of religious orders. The confiscation of the Church's property made the clergy dependent on the inadequate stipends which the government agreed to pay in partial compensation for the confiscated property.

¹ Published with the permission of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.

² Extensive background in W. Callahan, *Church, Politics, and Society in Spain, 1750-1874*, Cambridge, Mass. 1984, and *The Catholic Church in Spain, 1875-1998*, Washington, D.C., 2000. Selected documents in M. Revuelta Gonzalez, *El Anticlericalismo español en sus documentos*, Barcelona, 1999.

Anticlericalism was tightly interwoven with political, economic, cultural and social developments. Cf. J. R. Montero Gibert, “La CEDA y la Iglesia en la Segunda República Española,” *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, Nueva Epoca, 31-32 (1983), pp. 103-104. Limitations of space, however, force me to treat it largely as if it were a free-standing phenomenon.