



The Servant of God
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The Holy Rosary

Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Albás was born in Barbastro (Spain) on 9 January 1902. He attended school in Barbastro and Logroño and did his ecclesiastical studies in the Pontifical University of Saragossa, where he was awarded a licenciante in Theology. He was later to obtain a doctorate in Theology in Rome.

He studied civil law at the University of Saragossa and subsequently gained a doctorate at the University of Madrid. In 1960 he received an honorary doctorate in Philosophy and Letters from the University of Saragossa. He was the first Chancellor of the Universities of Navarre, Spain and of Piura, Peru.

After being ordained on 28 March 1925, he began his work as a priest in country parishes and, from 1927 onwards, he worked among the poor and the sick of the outlying districts and hospitals of Madrid. Some years later he was appointed Rector of the Real Patronato de Santa Isabel in Madrid, a task which he carried out until 1946 when he moved to Rome.

He was a Consultor to various Pontifical Commissions and Congregations of the Holy See, a Domestic Prelate to the Holy Father and a member of the Pontifical Roman Theological Academy.

On 2 October 1928, in Madrid, he had founded Opus Dei, a way of sanctification in the middle of the world and a leaven of fervent Christian life in every environment. On 14 February 1930, Monsignor Escrivá founded the Women's Section of Opus Dei, and on 14 February 1943, within Opus Dei, the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross. Opus Dei received the definitive approval of the Holy See on 16 June 1950; and on 28 November 1982 it was established as a personal Prelature. This legal framework, introduced into Church Law by the Second Vatican Council, had been desired and foreseen by Monsignor Escrivá.

Through a life of constant prayer and penance, with a continuous and unconditional self-surrender to the will of God, the Father – as he is called by his sons and daughters in Opus Dei and by many other thousands of people from all walks of life – for forty seven years fostered and directed the expansion of Opus Dei throughout the world. At the time of the Founder's death, Opus Dei had spread to the five continents, with over 60,000 members, of 80 nationalities, serving the Church with the same spirit of complete union with, and deep veneration for, the Pope and the Bishops which Monsignor Escrivá had always practised and instilled in his sons and daughters.

The Holy Mass was the root and centre of the interior life of the Founder of Opus Dei. A deep sense of his divine filiation moved him to seek in all things the most complete identification with Jesus Christ, to have a tender and strong devotion to Our Lady and St Joseph and a continual and confident friendship with the Holy Guardian Angels, and to be a sower of peace and joy along all the paths of the earth.

On repeated occasions, Monsignor Escrivá had offered his life for the Church and for the Roman Pontiff. Our Lord accepted that offering and the Father, in a truly saintly way, gave up his soul to God in Rome, on 26 June 1975, in the room where he worked, with the same simplicity which characterized his entire life.

His body lies in the Crypt of the prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, Viale Bruno Buozzi 75, Rome, continually accompanied by the prayer and gratitude of his sons and daughters, and of the countless people who have come closer to God, drawn by the example and teaching of the Founder of Opus Dei. The Cause of Beatification and Canonisation of Monsignor Escrivá was presented in Rome on 19 February 1981.

The recital of the Rosary has been a pious practice handed down by the tradition of the Church for many centuries. It is a contemplative prayer, which arose as a result of the faith and love of believers pondering over the great treasures of the Incarnation of the Word, His redemptive work on the Cross and His glorious triumph.¹ In these mysteries, Christians can find an impulse and sure support for their prayer and union with God. It is also an effective remedy for the evils that can stifle the life of grace in a soul, evils such as: "A distaste for a humble working life, a horror of suffering, and forgetting about the eternal benefits which we are hoping for."²

Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá had a profound love for Our Lady. As a child in his parents' home he learnt to recite the Holy Rosary devoutly as one of the main Marian devotions, constantly recommended by the Popes. And throughout his life he continued to go deeper, through his piety and firm belief, into the spiritual value of this way of getting to know the Virgin Mary, of meditating on the mysteries of salvation, of imploring the powerful intercession of the Mother of God, of making reparation for the sins of mankind, and of spreading the faith. At the end of his life, he summed up his long experience of the marvellous fruits of this prayer in the following words:

To say the Holy Rosary, considering the mysteries, repeating the Our Father and Hail Mary, with the praises to the Blessed Trinity, and the constant invocation of the Mother of God, is a continuous act of faith, hope and love, of adoration and reparation.³

Firmly convinced that the Rosary cannot go out of date, the Founder of Opus Dei, ever faithful to the Church, encouraged people to say the Rosary by his example, his preaching and his writings: and he did so with all his strength, knowing that he was rendering an effective service for the holiness of the People of God.

From his youth he recited the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary each day, with a spirit of love and penance, and under the most varied circumstances, whether in his intense priestly work or in the midst of religious persecution; whether at home or on his journeys through different countries or visiting Marian shrines. In an appealing way he recommended all Christians to fulfil this practice of piety which is so available, and so beneficial for their spiritual lives.

The Rosary is a prayer within reach of all fortunes, because it is very easy to close your eyes a little, and picture to yourself the scene of the mystery, say some affectionate words, and then repeat the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be, and the litany, with so many invocations which are glowing expressions of praise for Our Lady, and ways of showing affection for her.⁴

One of the signs of the Servant of God's apostolic eagerness in spreading this Marian prayer is his book *Holy Rosary*. He wrote it in one go, one day in 1931, after having celebrated Mass. It was published for the first time in 1934. Since then it

Cover: *Monsignor Escrivá in Rome on 19 March 1969.*

has run to 83 printings, in 18 languages and over half a million copies, and has done an immense amount of good to souls:

Years ago, with God's help, I wrote a little book, to teach people how to pray the Rosary; not so that they would pray it as I do, but so that they would feel free to pray it as they wish . . . Read the booklet, and then pray the Rosary in your own way, just as you prefer. You will see how much good it does you, and how happy you will be, because this devotion is for men. Praying the Rosary is something for men! The thing that is not for men is to not pray: that is for animals. It's only animals that don't pray.⁵

The book shows one how to turn to Our Lady, in a way that is full of simplicity and completely genuine, and making it easy for whoever meditates silently on it to pray, to have a trusting conversation with Jesus, Mary and Joseph. And from the words of the book a fountain of spiritual energy pours out, leading one naturally to become united with God, through contemplating the mysteries of our redemption.

The Servant of God has opened up an accessible way for the main moments of Christ's life on earth to become alive and present in the lives of each one of us:

Become little. Come with me and – this is the essence of what I want to tell you – we shall live the life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Each day we shall do something new for them. We shall hear their family conversation. We shall see the Messiah grow up. We shall admire his thirty years of hidden life . . . We shall be present at his passion and death . . . We shall be amazed at the glory of his resurrection . . . In a word: carried away by Love (the only real love is Love), we shall contemplate each and every moment of the life of Christ.⁶

During the Marian Year, as in the rest of his pontificate, John Paul II has repeatedly urged us, by his words and example, to channel our Marian devotion through the Rosary beads. Monsignor Escrivá also used to apply this devotion to increasing his union with the Roman Pontiff and the needs of the universal Church.

The Founder of the Work, who was always a friend of freedom, used to recommend that every individual, and also the family gathered together, should practise this devotion spontaneously, but also trying to put in all their mental energy, imagination and affection:

The Holy Rosary is like a handshake, a greeting. The intensity of the handshake depends on the affection one has for that person. It's something personal.⁷

The Holy Rosary is a powerful weapon for praying for the needs of the Church and for obtaining from Our Lord, through His Mother's intercession, the graces which will enable us to behave always in accordance with our Christian vocation. This is why we do such a lot of good whenever we encourage our relatives and friends to say the Holy Rosary with faith, every day.

¹ Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*, 2 February 1974; Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 67 & 69

² Leo XIII, Encyclical *Laetitiae sanctae*, 8 September 1893

³ HRF (Historical Records of the Founder) 20162, p 5

⁴ HRF 20162, p 756

⁵ HRF 20771, p 421

⁶ *Holy Rosary*, Preface

⁷ HRF 20755, p 307

Passages from the writings of Monsignor Escrivá

What joy, to be able to say with all the fervour of my soul: I love my Mother the Holy Church! (*The Way*, 518)

There is no other possible attitude for a Catholic: we have to defend the authority of the Pope *always*, and to be ready *always* to correct our own views with docility, in line with the teaching authority of the Church. (*The Forge*, 581)

May the daily consideration of the heavy burden which weighs upon the Pope and the bishops move you to venerate and love them with real affection, and to help them with your prayers. (*The Forge*, 136)

Every day you must grow in loyalty towards the Church, the Pope and the Holy See . . . with a love that should be always more theological. (*Furrow*, 353)

Thank you, my God, for that love for the Pope you have placed in my heart. (*The Way*, 573)

Though you well know it, I shall remind you again that a Priest is 'another Christ.' And that the Holy Spirit has said: *nolite tangere Christos meos* – do not touch 'my Christs'. (*The Way*, 67)

If you have not the highest veneration for the Priesthood and for the religious state, it is not true that you love God's Church. (*The Way*, 526)

I have been thinking of all the priests throughout the world. Help me to pray for the fruitfulness of their apostolates.

'My brother in the priesthood, please speak always about God and, when you really do belong to him, your conversations will never be monotonous.' (*The Forge*, 965)

Mary continually builds the Church and keeps it together. It is difficult to have devotion to our Lady and not feel closer to the other members of the mystical body and more united to its visible head, the Pope. That's why I like to repeat: *Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam! All with Peter to Jesus through Mary!* (*Christ is passing by*, 139)

In the Seminary at Saragossa

Young Josemaría Escrivá arrived in Saragossa from Logroño on 28 September 1920, at the age of eighteen. He still did not know the eventual direction which his self-giving to Jesus Christ would take, but he was convinced that the priesthood was the best way for him to correspond to God's love, which he had felt so clearly in his soul. Faithful to the divine Will, he kept repeating the words of Sacred Scripture: "Here I am, because you have called me!" (1 Sam. 3:6)

In Saragossa, Josemaría placed himself under the protection of Our Lady, and visited her daily at the Basilica of Pilar, where there is great veneration for her. Ahead of him lay a time of sacrifice and effort, during which he would mature in virtue; but it was also to be a time of abundant grace from Heaven. Years later, seeing the hand of God even in those past hardships, he was able to sum up that stage of his life in these words:

They were axe blows struck at the tree by God our Lord. From that tree, He was shaping a beam that would be used, in spite of its weakness, to do His Work. Almost without realising it, I kept repeating: *Domine, ut videam! Domine, ut sit!* I did not know what it was He wanted, but I went on and on, without fully corresponding to God's goodness, waiting for what I was later to receive: a succession of graces, one after another, which I did not know how to describe and I called them operative, because they so dominated my will that I hardly needed to make any effort.¹

The city had two seminaries. Josemaría went to live in the one called *San Francisco de Paula*, also known as *San Carlos* because that was the name of a priests' residence in the same building. The environment was very different from that of his parents' home: he had to wear the uniform of a seminarian,

follow the communal timetable, and live with several dozen boys, some of whom had not been brought up in the same way as he had been, and came from a social background very different from his own.

In the morning, the pupils of the seminary went to Holy Mass, which was preceded by a meditation. After breakfast they walked in double file, accompanied by an Inspector, to the *Pontifical University of San Valero and San Braulio*, where they had classes in the morning and afternoon. In between, they went back to the seminary for lunch. Before supper, they had recreation and time for study, and they recited the Rosary. At the end of the day they listened to a short talk.

When Josemaría arrived at the seminary for the first time, in an act of detachment he handed in to the porter the pipes and tobacco which he had used until then. From that moment on, he began making the greatest possible effort into looking after his practices of piety, the other means of ascetical training, and his theology classes. At the same time, he continued improving his cultural knowledge, especially in history and literature. Later on, following his father's advice, he gained admission to the Faculty of Law at the University of Saragossa, and dedicated his summers to studying those subjects. He never forgot his family, nor the sacrifice it meant for them having their eldest son staying in Saragossa.

Josemaría spent many hours in the church at the seminary. Years later some of his fellow students recalled how they had seen him spending a long time there recollected in the evening dusk, his gaze fixed on the tabernacle, with the intimate sincerity of someone who has surrendered his whole life.

His companions at that time, both in the seminary and in the university, have written explicit testimonies on Josemaría's piety and human virtues. "He was very pious, with a



Statue of our Lady of Pilar in the Chapel of the Basilica of Pilar in Saragossa, where the Servant of God went to pray daily.

piety that immediately caught my attention. It was not a piety I would call sentimental, or in any way mournful. It was a pleasant, cheerful, attractive piety, that was not only compatible with, but in fact became the root of, his constant sense of humour and his positive vision of life."² One of the seminarians, who later became a parish priest in the diocese of Tarazona, observed of Josemaría that "during the meditation his attitude was one of intense prayer: for him the meditation really would be a loving conversation with God."³

Josemaría had a cordial manner, always open to making friends, and this was a natural feature of his character. His outstanding personality, full of energy and sincerity, created a natural ascendancy over his companions, even though there were some who made jokes in poor taste, about his piety and the normal care he took over personal cleanliness. He showed a habitually cheerful attitude and a lively sense of

humour. He used his literary gifts and talents of expression to make any celebrations or gatherings enjoyable. He had the gift of not upsetting his friends, and of encouraging those around him by his calm sincerity. He knew how to win their trust by his loyalty. He completed his theological studies without difficulty, and achieved outstanding results.

His fellow students began to realise that God was acting in his soul: "I have always had the impression that the ideal which filled his life was in some way already there, deep within him."⁴ They came to understand that beneath Josemaría's affability and human qualities lay the profound reality of his self-giving to God. "He looked for solitude, which he filled with study and prayer. When he was walking along by himself you couldn't say something to him like 'Josemaría, I can see you're alone, I'll come with you', because he would react by saying he never felt alone. I remember how in free moments he used to go down to the church of San Carlos, and stay there, kneeling, very near the Sacristy. I must say, he was the only one of the seminarians I knew who would go down to the church in his free time."⁵ Later on, with a sureness acquired through his ample priestly experience, the Servant of God would write: **People who say that priests are lonely are either lying or mistaken: we are far less lonely than anyone else, for we can count on the constant company of the Lord, with whom we should be conversing without interruption.**

We are in love with Love, with the Author of Love!⁶

The intensity of his apostolic zeal shone through the conversations he had with his companions, in a simple way: "From time to time he would confide in us, letting us discover the depth of his restless longings . . . I have always had the feeling that by then he was already experiencing those intimations of what was going to become the Work of God."⁷

Together with his study and spirit of prayer, Josemaría began to practise penance and corporal mortification: someone discovered his cilice, but Josemaría cut short the

inopportune jokes – that was a matter for his relationship with God and not for men to gossip about. A companion of his wrote: “His interior life was quite simply that: interior. Even at that time, he did not like any kind of showing off or ostentation. Instead, he tried to pass unnoticed. I think this is one of the most important features characterising both his life and the spirit he has left us: his absolute normality, the tremendous naturalness of his way of behaving.”⁸

Cardinal Soldevila, Archbishop of Saragossa, personally appreciated the moral standard of this young seminarian of blameless conduct and well-known piety. Very often, the Cardinal would call him so as to have a talk with him on his own. The Auxiliary Bishop, don Miguel de los Santos Díaz Gómara, also knew him and held him in great esteem.

At the age of twenty, in September 1922, after he had finished his third year of Theology, the Servant of God received the tonsure at the hands of the same Cardinal, which gave him the status of a cleric. Three

months later, the Cardinal conferred on him what were then called “Minor Orders”, and he was named Superior of the seminary. The Superiors were chosen from among the most outstanding seminarians, and put in charge of the discipline and academic guidance of the pupils, thus cooperating with the Rector in preparing the future priests. Josemaría carried out this task generously and prudently, full of zeal for his brothers.

The Rector, don José Lopéz Sierra, always praised the Servant of God’s apostolic zeal as director of seminarians: he wanted to win all of them for Christ and to lead them along the path of an authentic interior life. He was not fond of punishing. He used to train them with a “charming and simple gentleness”: “his sympathetic and attractive appearance was enough to contain the most rebellious; a simple, welcoming smile would come to his lips when he noticed some edifying detail in one of his seminarians; a discreet, penetrating look, at times sad, and very compassionate, was enough to quell the dissident.”⁹

At the end of his fifth year of Theology, in June 1924, the Servant of God received the



The Servant of God (second from left) with other seminarians.

subdiaconate at the hands of Bishop Díaz Gómara. In this way he took a decisive step towards the priesthood, freely embracing for the whole of his life a celibate commitment of love, a gift from God by which He reveals the special love He has for His ministers; throughout his life the Servant of God passionately defended this love, which is whole and entire:

How we should admire purity in the priesthood! It is its treasure. No tyrant will ever be able to wrest this crown from the Church.¹⁰

Many things happened during the following academic year, leading up to the day of his priestly ordination in March 1925. Josemaría was preparing for the diaconate, when his father died suddenly on 27 November 1924. He went to Logroño immediately, and there received this deeply painful news, which he accepted with exemplary fortitude. As head of the family, he took charge of the funeral arrangements and his family’s move to Saragossa. In December, Bishop Díaz Gómara ordained him as a deacon. The Servant of God felt a deep emotion when he was able to celebrate Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament and give his mother Holy Communion for the first time.

Josemaría kept on asking for light to find a way which, within the priesthood, he could not as yet see clearly defined. And he continued waiting for Our Lord’s reply. At that moment, he was urged on only by a passionate faithfulness to the divine plans. He used to repeat, again and again, with the faith of the blind man at Jericho: *Domine, ut videam!* . . . Lord, that I may see! . . .; and also *ut sit!* that it may be, let what You want be fulfilled! . . . These words became an aspiration in his soul and from then on, and for the rest of his life, he never abandoned them in his dialogue with God. An inscription has been kept from those years: the Servant of God had put it on the base of a statue of Our Lady of Pilar, with this very aspiration. It was to a simple statue of Our Lady of Pilar that I entrusted my prayer in those years, so the Lord would allow me to understand what it was that I already felt stirring within my soul.



The Seminary of San Carlos.

Domina, – I used to say to her in a Latin which was not exactly classical but made beautiful through my affection – *ut sit!*, let whatever God wants of me be done.¹¹

¹ S. Bernal, *Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer. A Profile of the Founder of Opus Dei*, Scepter, 1977, p 64.

² HRF T-2851

³ HRF T-2861

⁴ HRF T-2865

⁵ *Ibidem*

⁶ *The Forge*, 38

⁷ HRF T-2867

⁸ HRF T-2865

⁹ S. Bernal, *op cit.*, p 70

¹⁰ *The Way*, 71

¹¹ *La Virgen del Pilar*, published in *Libro de Aragón*, Saragossa 1976, pp 97-103

Under his spiritual influence

With heroic faithfulness to the Will of God, with constant prayer and penance, with the practice of the human and supernatural virtues and working full of hope, Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer inspired and guided the growth of Opus Dei throughout the world for forty seven years.

The principal task of the Work is the formation of its members so that each one, individually, may carry out his Christian apostolic work in the world and in society.

The essential apostolate of Opus Dei, in the words of its Founder, is the apostolate each member carries out in his own place of work, with his family, among his friends – an apostolate which does not attract attention, which cannot easily be expressed in statistics but which yields holiness in thousands of souls who keep on following Christ, quietly and effectively, during their ordinary everyday work. (*Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer, 71.*)

Nevertheless, as he himself replied when asked by a journalist: Opus Dei, as a corporation, with the help of very many people who do not belong to the Work and who often are not Christian, also fosters 'corporate' activities through which it seeks to contribute towards solving the many problems which face the world today: educational institutions, welfare centres, schools for professional development and advancement, and so forth. (*Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer, 84.*)

We shall be describing here, very briefly, some of the many apostolic works (each with its own characteristics, springing from the needs of a particular place and time) which have arisen through the inspiration of the Founder of Opus Dei.

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATION

Manila

A man or a society that does not react to suffering and injustice and makes no effort to alleviate them is still distant from the love of Christ's heart. While Christians enjoy the fullest freedom in finding and applying various solutions to these problems, they should be united in having one and the same desire to serve mankind. Otherwise their Christianity will not be the word and life of Jesus; it will be a fraud, a deception of God and man.¹

The concern felt by the Servant of God for social justice was one of the fundamental characteristics of his apostolate. The 'preferential love for the poor', which the Church has stressed as being an essential feature of the love of one's neighbour, led him to promote throughout the whole world a great variety of enterprises for the benefit of those most in need. Hundreds of educational and social centres have been established as a result of that priestly concern. Their aim is to promote human development and Christian formation among land labourers and factory workers, and among the women who provide home help.

Opus Dei was born among the poor of Madrid, in hospitals and in the most



A view of CRC.

wretched outlying districts. We continue to look after the poor, the children and the sick. This is a tradition that will never be interrupted in the Work.'

With his constant preaching, he proclaimed the unavoidable duty all the faithful have in conscience of helping – each one according to his or her own abilities – to find a Christian solution to the problems of society, prompting a generous mobilisation of resources for the benefit of all who are in need.

One of the many initiatives that have been set up as a direct result of this zeal is CRC (*Center for Research and Communication*) in Manila. It is an Institute of higher studies, for professionals, especially in business and economics. Its purpose is to improve the scientific and practical formation of those who attend courses in the areas of economic research and business management. By providing them at the same time with the basic principles of the social teaching of the Church, it seeks to imbue the human, economic and social development of the Philippines with a Christian spirit.

The story behind CRC goes back to the 1950's, when a number of Filipino students

who attended university in the United States got to know about Opus Dei. Some joined the Work there and returned to their country with the desire of putting into practice the great apostolic ideals they had learned from the Founder. They had understood that in order to solve the problems of a developing country, it is not enough to stimulate economic growth; it was also necessary to infuse the authentic spirit of Christ's Gospel into the professional and private lives of those involved in business and finance.

Encouraged by the Servant of God, they organised many courses of professional training which were inspired by such Christian concepts as the dignity of man and of work, justice and the common good, and the social meaning of property. It was thus that CRC began to take shape, and in 1967 it began officially to offer a series of courses which have expanded into a number of programmes of lectures and research, as well as disseminating development-orientated ideas. At present the ordinary courses lead to a Master's Degree in subjects such as Business Administration, Industrial Economics, and other specialised fields of Economic Research.



Businessmen and company directors at a conference at CRC.

The professional people attending the CRC courses come from the Philippines and from other – especially Asiatic – countries, attracted by the prestige the Center has acquired.

Monsignor Escrivá urged those who were responsible for setting up CRC to seek economic solutions with complete freedom, as long as they followed the Church's principles on social doctrine. He insisted particularly on the importance of the conversion of the heart as a necessary step towards authentic human progress. A Christian businessman or manager cannot be content to remain within the strict limits of justice. He must go much further, practising charity generously, with a spirit of service. **A job well done, which leads to one's own progress and that of others, and which makes use of the latest advances in technology and culture, is a most useful work. It will always be beneficial for the whole of mankind if it springs from generous motives and not selfish ones, if it is carried out for the welfare of all, not for one's own advantage, and if it is replete with a Christian view of life.**³

CRC carries out an intense apostolate among both the lecturers and the students. Its

influence also reaches its past students and all those who are interested in supporting the work being done by CRC. The Association of Friends of CRC is actively engaged in helping to support the initiatives that arise from this enterprise, such as publishing books and organising conferences.

These conferences, which are open to all who are engaged in the various professions, present moral and doctrinal aspects of social and economic development so that they are inspired by a Christian spirit. Among other themes dealt with, it is worth mentioning a course of lectures for parliamentarians on marriage and procreation, and another on the true meaning of "liberation" in the field of economics. CRC also helps out with its technical advice; it encourages many men and women to establish direct contact with the underprivileged, and promotes social programmes in working-class areas of industrial cities throughout the country.

¹ *Christ is passing by*, 167

² *Instruction*, 8 December 1941, HRF 21502, no. 57

³ *Ibid*, no. 166

Letters received

FROM A PRISON CELL

I am a young man of twenty-three years, and at present I find myself in prison. Not for a crime I did not commit. I did; in my youth and naivety, I erred, and got involved in cocaine. I was leading a fairly sinful life until the time of my arrest.

It was after this that I received my true gift from Mgr. Escrivá, a re-igniting of my faith. So strong now, I don't know how I "existed" beforehand. Even in jail I find peace and true happiness.

Josemaría has helped me overcome the immense guilt I feel. My girl-friend and I, though apart, pray every night at 11 p.m., we say the prayer for private devotion and ask for forgiveness, and my freedom – as soon as possible. This was a truly holy man, a man I cannot thank enough for what he has done for me. For you it may be hard to know what it is like to lose one's way, and to doubt one's faith. It is an indescribable horror. To regain one's faith is a feeling of such elation, it too is indescribable! I feel so close to God and to our beloved Virgin Mother that mere words are completely inadequate for the thanks I need to express. Thank you Josemaría, and thank you, reader, for allowing me to share this beauty with you.

X. X., HMP Reading (England)

WE OWE A LOT TO THE FATHER

Both my husband and I feel that we owe so much to the Father. Having prayed to God through the intercession of Josemaría we found the perfect school for our daughter and she will be starting in September. The Headmistress also knew of Josemaría and of Opus Dei.

Also, we have been trying to sell our house since July of last year, and not one person had been to view it. We even tried newspaper advertisements without success. We came across the Newsletter on 18 December, and we both started praying to God through Josemaría. And then on January 1st we had a call from some people who were interested in purchasing our house. Now it looks as if the sale is going through!

I am now praying to the Father for a place to buy, but mostly I would like to be a more committed Christian.

Mrs V. F., London (England)

WITHOUT ANY POSSIBLE EXPLANATION SHE BEGAN TO BREATHE AGAIN

When the youngest of our children was a year and a half old we left her at home one day playing with her brother – who was a year older – and under the supervision of a baby-sitter.

At the same time another daughter of ours, who was five years old, was in bed convalescing after a long illness and could only get up for two hours each day in the afternoon.

After the two little ones had been playing together in the garden for a long time, the boy went off on his own to show a toy to the girl who was in bed. They amused themselves playing for a good while until suddenly the older girl, for some reason that she has never been able to explain, jumped out of bed and went running out to the swimming pool. When she arrived she saw her little sister lying face down at the bottom of the pool, totally motionless. She tried to get her sister out by herself, pulling her by her feet, but the child slipped from her grasp several times and she had to run to the kitchen for help.

Once they got her out of the water they realized that the child was not breathing, she was stone cold and showed no signs of life. They immediately put her on her side and applied pressure to her chest and stomach and got out quite a lot of water.

My wife had gone to Mass, so the baby-sitter tried to get in touch with me by ringing my office but it was only after an hour or more that she eventually got through to me. In the meantime somebody had managed to contact my mother. During the journey to the hospital and in the Casualty Department, I kept praying to Monsignor Escrivá for her. I did so with great confidence while at the same time I was prepared to accept God's will.

I was able to see how they were warming her and how little by little she began to react and made some slight movements though her eyes were still firmly closed. By the time my wife arrived the baby had begun to breathe weakly but she was still very cold. At that point my wife placed on the baby's breast, beneath her blouse a prayer-card for private devotion to Monsignor Escrivá and the little girl recovered completely.

Once she was out of danger the doctor on duty assured us that, judging from her condition on her arrival at the hospital, she must have been under the water for 20 to 30 minutes, and yet by some unexplained miracle she had no water in her lungs, but only in her stomach.

She has suffered no ill-effects whatever from the incident and we are certain that God listened to the petitions addressed to Him by the Founder of Opus Dei.

J. P. R. & R. S., Santiago (Chile)

SHE RECOVERED HER SIGHT

A friend of mine who has devotion to Monsignor Escrivá had a home-help whose mother was in very bad health. One of the worst effects of her illness was that she had lost her sight almost completely and could not get around by herself, etc. So she gave the girl a prayer-card of Monsignor Escrivá and encouraged her to pray to him for her mother's cure.

When she got home she waited till her mother had gone to sleep and without anybody noticing passed the prayer-card across her eyes. When her mother awoke she gave a loud shout, because she found she could see. The two of them are very thankful to Monsignor Escrivá and have been very deeply affected by this favour.

M. C., Lisbon (Portugal)

A TENACIOUS COMPANION

About four years ago one of my colleagues at work kept pestering me. She insisted on giving me prayer cards of Josemaría Escrivá, she lent me books to read, etc. I did not want any of these but I did not throw them out, I kept them. Sometimes in my work I used to get very nervous and tense because of my character but she remained perfectly calm and would always smile and give me some good advice. There were times when I had some family problems and she would volunteer to pray for my problems. Eventually it reached the point where I could not stand the sight of her. I just could not put up with her.

Then a month ago my father became seriously ill. He had had an operation for cancer a year earlier and the doctor now told us that his condition had got much worse and that he would die soon – they would not operate on him again. That night they gave him a blood transfusion. I just sat and looked at him. I did not want him to die since I became a widow a year ago, with two children and he is both a grandfather and father to them.

I arrived home at eight o'clock in the morning very tired and sad and not feeling well. I opened the drawer of the bedside table to get the thermometer and out came the picture of Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer with his characteristic smile. Then, without praying and without further thought about anything I put the prayer-card under my pillow and I went to sleep. The next day my father got up and returned home to lead a normal life.

I publicly acknowledged at work what had happened and asked my colleague to forgive me and promised that I would publish this.

Things did not stop there however; many other things happened as a consequence of it. Another companion who had been suffering from cancer became ill again; this time she was found to have a tumour in her lung and they gave her only days to live. I prayed for her and sent her a prayer-card and now she is well again. The doctors cannot explain it, any more than they could explain the case of my father.

Since these things happened I pray to him every day. I ask him for things and he grants me them all. I have recourse to him for help in making decisions when I am angry, etc. It is as if he were enlightening me and I can then see everything clearly. I am now able to take decisions or to hold myself back when necessary. I am also able to help and encourage others, which is something I was not able to do before; I was quarrelsome, spiteful and rebellious. I thank my companion who was tenacious and patient with me for all this. It took her four years but the results of her mission have now come in triplicate.

X. X., La Coruña (Spain)

I am enclosing a picture of my son Josemaría born July 12 of this year, whom I never thought I would have.

I have been married for eleven years now; and for eight years I have consistently consulted several doctors. I was told that it is very remote for me to bear a child because of my ovarial defect. Hence, three years ago, I stopped all consulting and medications.

Through the prayer-card of Monsignor Escrivá I have received several favors, but I never asked him for a child since I believed it was an impossible one. However, in the Mass commemorating his death anniversary, I asked him nevertheless, and continued praying.

In November of the same year my doctor confirmed my conception.

I am very thankful to Monsignor Escrivá that I asked my husband to name our son after him.

C. T. Z., Manila (The Philippines)

I am enclosing a small donation in thanksgiving for a favour received through the intercession of Father Josemaría. I am a single parent with four children. I had an interview for a part-time job which I desperately needed to pay for Christmas.

Until the interview I had felt fairly confident, but on the day I awoke feeling depressed. About an hour later the postman delivered an envelope containing the Newsletter and prayer-card. I immediately knelt down and said the prayer and asked Father Josemaría to intercede for me for the sake of the children. The interview went quite well and in due course I was offered the job. I definitely attribute this favour to him and the small donation is as promised.

M., Liverpool (England)

I was in a desperate situation and it did not seem that there could be any possible solution to it. I am a widow with three dependent children. The eldest of the three, who is almost 30, wasn't able to finish his studies in Economics and Commerce due to his being sidetracked by his political ideas and to his difficult character.

Our life was sheer hell on account of the constant quarrels between us. My future looked very closed and threatening on account of his age and his character.

I heard about Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá and by reading his life and his books (*The Way and Friends of God*) I began to know the real face of God, and to rely on his intercession before the Almighty.

With the help of Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá I have learnt to suffer with hope. I know that God never abandons his creatures even though one has to pray a lot to receive a grace.

At this point in time my son has just been successful in 2 different examinations and so he will have a job from now on.

Every day I turn to the Father and on my bedside table I always have the book of his homilies *Friends of God* which I often read.

The help of Monsignor Escrivá has often been shown to me in small things too, but the greatest grace I have received through his intercession has been my son's. That is why I want to make it known publicly as I promised and also so that more people may get to know about him.

E. T. C., Naples (Italy)

I began praying to the Servant of God Josemaría Escrivá asking him for the conversion of a friend of mine. I did several novenas asking that at some moment in her life she would receive the gift of faith. She had been educated in a Catholic school and had often said to me that although she had no knowledge of any other religion, she did not see any need to commit herself to Catholicism. Some years later she booked her youngest daughter aged ten into a Catholic school. Immediately the girl expressed her desire of becoming a Catholic but my friend told her she was still too young and she would have to wait.

Some months later on my way to her house – we had not seen each other for a good while – I prayed very insistently to Monsignor Escrivá for her conversion and as well as that I asked that it should be very soon. As soon as I arrived she informed me that she was going to allow her daughter to become a Catholic. Then I asked her had she taken into account her responsibility to help her eleven year old daughter to live the faith. She replied that she had and she herself was going to become a Catholic too. She had come to see the matter perfectly clearly and she now wished to get in touch with a priest so that her daughter and herself could be received into the Catholic Church without delay. Within a few weeks they were both baptized.

A. W., Killara (Australia)

I am writing these few lines to tell you that some time ago, when I was very upset by the loss of a dear one and suffering from depression, I did a novena to Monsignor Escrivá and I obtained the peace that I needed.

As well as that, recently, I found myself with the problem of seeking a new flat because I was being thrown out of my present one as the house was due to be demolished. I did a novena to the Father and everything worked out, which was really a great piece of good fortune.

I am letting you know this as favours obtained through the intercession of Monsignor Escrivá.

With warmest greetings

M. M., Madrid (Spain)

I was suffering from a deep depression. I prayed to Monsignor Escrivá that someone would come into my life and would help me. Quite unexpectedly and from a quarter I'd never have expected, someone did come who is very sensitive, compassionate and who has done a great deal to build me up again and healing has well begun.

I entrust my work, in a deprived area of Belfast to Monsignor Escrivá. I would hope to set up groups where people with problems would give and receive support and healing.

My graces and favours may seem small, but they are important to me and I want to say "Thank you".

Sister D., Belfast, N. Ireland

The original texts of these accounts, with the names and addresses of the writers, are in the archives of the office of the Postulator of the Cause.

We are very grateful for the great number of letters we have received. They show the private devotion of so many people throughout the world who are praying to God Our Lord through the intercession of Mgr. Escrivá. Shortage of space prevents us from publishing here more than a few paragraphs from some letters which speak of important favours or tell simple anecdotes.

Published works of Mgr. Escrivá

The Way

“Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer has written something more than a masterpiece; he has written straight from the heart, and straight to the heart go the short paragraphs that make up *The Way*. In it appears the warm brotherly understanding of the author, the paternal concern with which he sees, understands and corrects, persuading, not threatening” (*L’Osservatore Romano*, 24 March 1950).

The first edition of this book was published in 1934 entitled *Consideraciones espirituales*. Since then it has been reprinted many times, with a total of 3,480,000 copies in thirty-eight languages. English editions currently published by Scepter (London and New York).

Holy Rosary

A book of meditations on each of the fifteen mysteries of the life of Christ which one contemplates when saying the Holy Rosary.

The first edition also appeared in 1934. A total of over 525,000 copies have been published in eighteen languages. English editions by Scepter.

Conversations with Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer

A number of magazines and newspapers put specific questions to Monsignor Escrivá, dealing with the topics of greatest interest to their respective readers. Monsignor Escrivá answered the questions fully in writing.

The first edition was published in 1968. From that time a total of 293,000 copies have been published in seven languages. English edition by Sinag-Tala (Manila).

Christ is passing by

The book is a collection of some of the many homilies given by Monsignor Escrivá throughout his life. They constitute a profound and attractive exposition of Christian doctrine and life. His style combines theological depth with clarity of exposition.

The first edition was published in 1973. It has since had a total printing of over 360,000 copies in nine languages. Published in English by Scepter.

Friends of God

A second collection of eighteen homilies in which the author’s warm and filial conversation with God is centred on the theme of the Christian virtues. This book is in the same intimate and direct style as the earlier collection of homilies.

First published in 1977. From that time a total of 267,000 copies have been published in seven languages.

The foreword is by Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo, the present Prelate of Opus Dei. English editions published by Scepter.

The Way of the Cross

A posthumous work of Mgr. Escrivá, fruit of his meditation on the scenes of the Passion of Our Lord. It has been prepared to help us with prayer, and to increase our spirit of sorrow for our sins and of thanksgiving to Christ who has redeemed us with the price of his blood.

The first edition was published in February 1981; it is now available in nine languages with a total printing of 231,000 copies. Published in English by Scepter.

Furrow

A new posthumous work “like *The Way*, *Furrow* is the fruit of Monsignor Escrivá’s interior life and experience with souls. It was written with the intention of encouraging personal prayer and making it easier. Because of its approach and style, then, it cannot be classified as a systematic theological treatise, though its rich and deep spirituality does contain profound theology” (*Foreword* by Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo). The first edition was published in October 1986. 265,000 copies in six languages have been published to date. It is being translated into five other languages. Published in English by Scepter.

The Forge

The Forge is the latest posthumous work to be published. It “is a book of fire. Reading it and meditating on it can bring many souls to the forge of divine Love and enkindle within them a zeal for holiness and apostolate because this was the desire of Monsignor Escrivá” (*Foreword* by Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo).

It was first published in October 1987, with 213,000 copies being printed in six languages. Published in English by Scepter.

La Abadesa de las Huelgas

A penetrating study of an extraordinary case of quasi-episcopal jurisdiction exercised by the abbess of a famous convent in Burgos, utilizing the original sources and documents.

First published in 1944; a second edition appeared in 1974.

(All the above are available from booksellers or through Scepter, 1 Leopold Road, London W5 3PB.)

Prayer

for private devotion

O God, you granted countless graces to your servant and priest Josemaría, choosing him as a most faithful instrument to found *Opus Dei*, a way of sanctification in daily work and in the fulfilment of the ordinary duties of a Christian. Grant that I also may learn to turn all the circumstances and events of my life into opportunities to love you and to serve the Church, the Pope, and all souls, with joy and simplicity, lighting up the paths of the earth with faith and love. Deign to glorify your servant Josemaría and, through his intercession, grant me the favour I request . . . (here make your petition).
Amen.

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

In conformity with the decrees of Pope Urban VIII, we declare that with this *Newsletter* there is no intention of anticipating in any way the judgement of the Church, and that this prayer is not intended for public use.

This *Newsletter* is issued free of charge. Those who wish to give alms to help its publication and the development of the apostolic activities stemming from the spiritual influence of the Founder of Opus Dei, may send donations by crossed cheque or postal order to the *Office of the Vice-postulator of Opus Dei in Britain*, 6 Orme Court, London W2 4RL.

We would be grateful if our readers would send us names and addresses of others who might be interested in receiving this *Newsletter* or the prayer card with the prayer for private devotion.

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