



The Venerable Servant of God
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NEWSLETTER No. 10

The Servant of God proclaimed Venerable

Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer was born in Barbastro, Spain on 9 January 1902. He was ordained to the priesthood in Saragossa on 28 March 1925.

In Madrid, on 2 October 1928, by divine inspiration he founded Opus Dei, which has opened up to the faithful a new way of sanctification in the middle of the world, through exercising one's ordinary professional work and in the fulfilment of one's family, social and personal obligations. Thus it has been a leaven of fervent Christian life in every environment. On 14 February 1930 the Venerable Josemaría Escrivá understood, with the grace of God, that Opus Dei had also to develop its apostolate among women. On 14 February 1943 he founded the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, inseparably united to Opus Dei. Opus Dei received its definitive approval from the Holy See on 16 June 1950; and, on 28 November 1982 it was established as a personal Prelature. This legal framework had been desired and foreseen by the Venerable Josemaría Escrivá.

Through a life of constant prayer and penance, exercising heroically all the virtues, with loving dedication and untiring concern for all souls, and with a continuous and unconditional self-surrender to the will of God, Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá fostered and directed the expansion of Opus Dei throughout the world. When he rendered up his soul to God, 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. A deep sense of his divine filiation, maintained in the continuous presence of the One and Triune God, 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 Saint Joseph, 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 on 26 June 1975, in a truly saintly way, Monsignor Escrivá gave up his soul to God in Rome, in the room where he worked.

His body lies in the crypt of the prelatric 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 Canonisation of Monsignor Escrivá was presented in Rome on 19 February 1981. On 9 April 1990 the Holy Father Pope John Paul II declared the heroicity of the Christian virtues of the Venerable Servant of God.

At 11.30 a.m on Monday the 9th of April 1990, the public reading of the Decree on the heroic virtues of the Founder of Opus Dei took place at the Apostolic Palace, in the presence of the Holy Father, several Cardinals, and Superiors and Officials of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. The Prelate of Opus Dei, Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo, successor to Monsignor Escrivá as head of Opus Dei, was also present.

With this act, the Servant of God has been declared Venerable. Public cult cannot be given to him because, according to Church Law, this is only given to the Blessed and to the Saints.

The formal declaration of the heroic virtues brings to a close a lengthy stage in the process of canonisation of the Servant of God. Between 1981 and 1986 two processes were held, one in Madrid and the other in Rome, to gather the sworn testimonies and a large number of documents concerning the life, virtues and service to the Church of the Servant of God. In all there were 980 sessions, in which 92 people, all of them eye-witnesses, made declarations. Once the processes were finalised, the Postulator prepared a complete and systematic exposition of the results, under the direction of Fr Ambrosius Eszer O.P., the Relator designated by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. This *Positio super vita et virtutibus* (Assessment on the life and virtues) followed the usual historical-critical method. The *Positio* (Assessment) of Monsignor Escrivá, which was produced with the help of a team of theologians and historians, is more than 6,000 pages long.

Following the present procedure, the *Positio* was examined first by the Consultant Theologians in the Congress of the 19th of September 1989, presided over by Monsignor Antonio Petti, the Promoter-General of the Faith. They expressed a positive judgement about the heroicity of the virtues of the Founder of Opus Dei. The matter was then studied by the Congregation of Cardinals and Bishops which met on the 20th of March 1990, with Cardinal Edouard Gagnon acting as Presenter. They too unanimously came to the same conclusion.

Accepting these favourable decisions, the Holy Father ordered that a Decree on the heroic virtues of the Founder of Opus Dei be prepared. The text of this Decree is presented below.

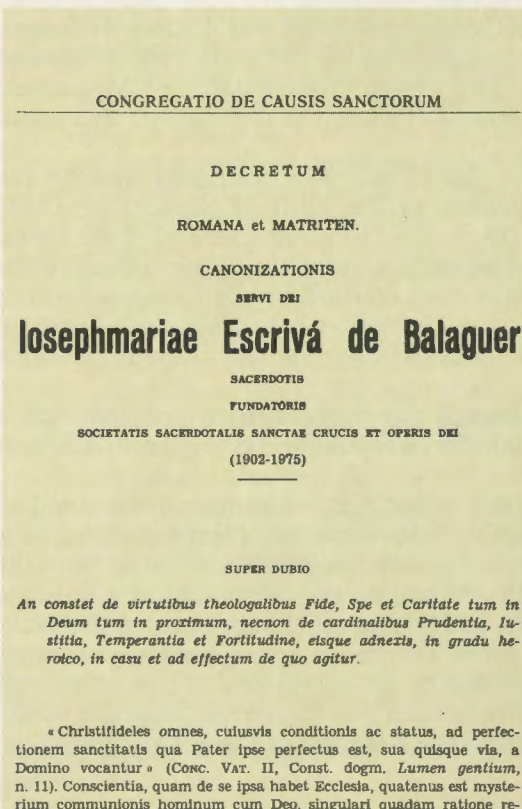
The information that reaches us daily about graces and favours received all over the world through the intercession of the Venerable Josemaría Escrivá is an eloquent proof of the immense good that is derived for the Church from the spreading of the knowledge of his life and works. His life is that of a loveable priest who is in love with Jesus Christ, and whose teachings concern the sanctification of the ordinary life of a Christian. Our thanksgiving for the proclamation of the heroicity of his virtues should be an expression of a humble and decided resolution to follow more closely each day the heroic example of the love of God and of service to souls which the Founder of Opus Dei has left us.

Cover: Monsignor Escrivá in Pozoalbero, a Conference Centre in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain (November 1972).

The Pontifical Decree

The Pontifical Decree on the heroic exercise of the virtues of the Servant of God Josemaría Escrivá

'All the faithful, whatever their condition or state — though each one in his own way — are called by the Lord to that perfection of sanctity by which the Father himself is perfect' (Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium*, 11). In this proclamation of the vocation to holiness of every baptised person, which Paul VI described as *'the most characteristic element of the entire Magisterium of the Council, and, as it were, its ultimate end'* (Motu Proprio *Sanctitas clarior*, 19 March 1969), the Church expresses her awareness of herself as a mystery of the communion of all mankind with God. In contemplating this mystery, the Bride of Christ also sees her heritage confirmed and hears the echo of the witness provided by the heralds of holiness which the lifegiving Spirit has inspired in every age to draw men and women to welcome God's plan of salvation.



The Servant of God Josemaría Escrivá is one such witness. Not only with the fruitful example of his own life, but also with the extraordinary vigour with which, in prophetic agreement with the Second Vatican Council, he sought right from the beginning of his ministry to address to all Christians the call of the Gospel: **“Your duty is to become a saint. Yes, even you ... To everyone without exception, Our Lord has said, ‘Be perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect’”** (*The Way*, 291). **“These world crises are crises of saints”** (*Ibid*, 301).

Of the many ways that lead to Christian holiness, the one followed by the Servant of God reveals with special clarity the radical nature of the baptismal vocation. His vivid perception of the mystery of the Incarnation made him realise that the entire fabric of human existence is intimately linked, in the hearts of those reborn in Christ, with the whole economy of the supernatural

life, and thus it becomes the very place and means to attain holiness. From the late 1920's onwards the Servant of God was a real pioneer of the intrinsic *unity of Christian life*, proclaiming the fulness of a contemplative life *'in the middle of the street'*, and calling all the faithful to take an active part in the apostolates of the Church from the place each one occupies in the world.

This message of sanctification *in and from* earthly realities appears to be providentially relevant to the spiritual circumstances of our time, characterised by its concern to exalt human values yet also tending to an immanentistic point of view which considers the world as independent from God. Furthermore, by inviting Christians to seek union with God through their daily work, which confers dignity on human beings and which is their lot as long as they exist on earth, his message is destined to endure as an inexhaustible source of spiritual light regardless of changing ages and situations.

‘Regnare Christum volumus!’ — *We want Christ to reign* — was Monsignor Escrivá's programme; to **place Christ at the summit of all human activities**. His service to the Church was such that he helped to initiate in all environments and professions an upward movement towards God of all the men and women immersed in temporal affairs, following that promise of the Saviour which the Servant of God regarded as central to the pastoral activity of Opus Dei: *Et ego si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad meipsum* — *Yes, if I am only lifted up from the earth, I will attract all men to myself* (John 12:32). The merit of his contribution to the promotion of the laity is to be found in this Christianisation of the world *from within*.

Josemaría Escrivá was born in Barbastro, Spain, on the 9th of January 1902, of devout and godfearing parents. At about the age of fifteen, he felt the first signs of a



9 April 1990. After the reading of the Decree on the heroic virtues of the Venerable Josemaría Escrivá.

vocation. Although he did not know exactly what God had in store for him, he decided to become a priest as a way of preparing himself as best he could to fulfil God's will. After his ordination in Saragossa on the 28th of March 1925, he went to Madrid where on the 2nd of October 1928 he *saw* that God wanted him to found and promote Opus Dei. After years of begging God for light with the words of the blind man of Jericho, '*Domine, ut videam! — Lord, that I may see*' (Luke 18:41), on that day the Servant of God understood fully the mission for which he had been destined, a mission that was to be **as old as the Gospel and like the Gospel new**. His task was to open to the faithful of all social conditions a sure way of sanctification in the midst of the world, through the practice of their professional work or job and the fulfilment of the ordinary duties of every day, without changing their state in life, and doing everything for the love of God. Not long afterwards, on the 14th of February 1930, by God's grace he understood that Opus Dei was meant to develop its apostolate among women as well. He devoted all his energies to the fulfilment of this mission, counting always on the encouragement and blessing of the Bishop of the diocese.

From the very beginning he carried out a wide-ranging apostolate in the most varied social environments. He was particularly active in caring for the poor and the sick who often languished neglected in the suburbs and hospitals of Madrid. During the Spanish Civil War he personally experienced the fury of the anti-religious persecution and gave daily proof of heroism in a constant priestly activity seasoned with abundant prayer and penance. It did not take long for his reputation for holiness to spread. When the war was over many bishops invited him to preach retreats to their clergy, thereby greatly contributing towards the renewal of Christian life in Spain. Many Religious Orders and Congregations also requested his pastoral services. At the same time, the Lord allowed him to suffer the weight of contradictions. He always forgave those involved, and indeed came to consider his detractors as benefactors.

This Cross turned out to be a source of heavenly blessings, so that the Servant of God's apostolate spread with astonishing speed. On the 14th of February 1943 he founded the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, inseparably united to Opus Dei. As well as allowing the priestly ordination of lay members of Opus Dei and their incardination for the service of the Work itself, the Society would also allow priests incardinated in their own dioceses to share the spirituality and ascetical life of Opus Dei, by seeking holiness in the exercise of their ministry, while remaining exclusively dependent on their own Ordinary. The work which the Servant of God carried out in this field, personally or through the Society, has made him a shining example of zeal for priestly formation.

In 1946 the Servant of God took up residence in Rome. In 1947 and 1950 he obtained approval for Opus Dei as an institution of pontifical right. With tireless charity and active hope he guided the development of Opus Dei throughout the world, promoting a vast mobilisation of lay people who became aware of their personal responsibility in the Church's mission. He inspired numerous initiatives in the work of evangelisation and social welfare. Everywhere he fostered vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life. He carried out exhausting journeys through Europe and America, proclaiming the Church's teaching with most vigorous faith. Above all he devoted himself tirelessly to the task of forming the members of Opus Dei — both priests and laity, men and women — so that they would acquire a solid spiritual life, an exemplary adherence to the Church's Magisterium and an ardent zeal for souls which would express itself in a personal commitment to carry out a far-reaching apostolate. '**Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam!**' — *All with Peter to Jesus through Mary!* was the aspiration tirelessly preached and practised by the Servant of God from the beginning of his priesthood.



The Holy Father with Cardinal Felici, the Prefect of the Congregation of Saints, and Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo, the Prelate of Opus Dei, after the declaration of the heroic virtues of the Venerable Josemaria Escrivá on 9 April 1990.

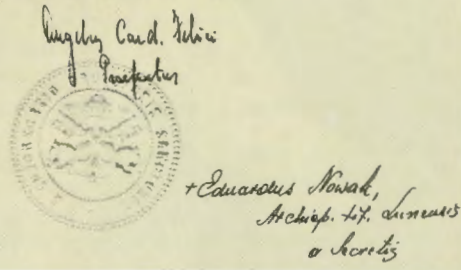
The salient features of his personality are to be found not only in his extraordinary talents as a man of action, but above all in his life of prayer and in the constant unitive experience which made him a travelling contemplative. Faithful to the gifts he had received, he gave an example of heroism in the most ordinary situations, in a life of constant prayer, in uninterrupted mortifications which were **like the beating of the heart**, in his assiduous presence of God, which could attain the heights of union even in the hustle and bustle of daily life, and in intense persevering work. Constantly immersed in contemplating the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, he placed a sense of divine filiation in Christ as the foundation of a spirituality in which the fortitude of faith and the apostolic daring of charity are harmoniously united with filial abandonment to the Father.

The Servant of God loved the Eucharist passionately. He regarded the sacrifice of the altar as **the centre and the root of Christian life**. He was an untiring apostle of the Sacrament of Penance. He had a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin, **Mother of God and our Mother**, to Saint Joseph and to the Guardian Angels. He loved the Church with all the strength of his priestly heart and offered himself as a holocaust of reparation and penance for the sins with which all human beings sully her face. The prodigious fruitfulness of his apostolate was there for all to see. Yet he considered himself as a **deaf and inept instrument, a founder without foundation, a sinner madly in love with Jesus Christ**.

The Servant of God died in Rome on the 26th of June 1975. At his death Opus Dei had more than 60,000 members of 80 nationalities. There were almost a thousand priests incardinated in the Work. The apostolic undertakings which included schools,

Facta de hisce omnibus Summo Pontifici Ioanni Paulo II fide-
 li relatione, Sanctitas Sua vota Congregationis accepit atque manda-
 vit ut Decretum super heroicis Servi Dei virtutibus appareretur.
 Quod cum rite factum esset, accitis hodierna die Cardinalibus
 infrascripto Praefecto, necnon Causae Ponente, meque Antistite a
 Secretis ceterisque de more convocandis hisque astantibus, Beatissimus
 Pater declaravit: *Constare de virtutibus theologalibus Fide, Spe et
 Caritate tum in Deum tum in proximum, necnon de cardinalibus Pru-
 dentia, Iustitia, Temperantia et Fortitudine, itaque adnexis, in gradu
 heroico, Servi Dei Iosephmariae Escrivá de Balaguer, Sacerdotis, Fun-
 datoris Societatis Sacerdotalis Sanctae Crucis et Operis Dei, in casu
 et ad effectum de quo agitur.*
 Hoc autem Decretum publici iuris fieri et in acta Congregationis
 de Causis Sanctorum referri iussit.

Datum Romae, die 9 Aprilis A. D. 1990.



processes of equal importance, which were held in Madrid and in Rome to examine the life and virtues of the Servant of God. These concluded on the 26th of June 1984 and on the 8th of November 1986 respectively. At their meeting held on the 19th of September 1989, the theological consultors, under the direction of the Promoter-General of the Faith, Monsignor Antonio Petti, responded affirmatively to the question whether the Servant of God had practised the virtues in a heroic manner. A like response was given by the Ordinary Congregation of Cardinals and Bishops in session on the 20th of March 1990, at which Cardinal Edouard Gagnon made the formal presentation.

Having received from the undersigned Cardinal Prefect an accurate and faithful account of all that is related above, and having accepted the vote of the Congregation, the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II ordered that the Decree on the heroic virtues of the Servant of God be drawn up.

That order having now been carried out, and the Cardinal Prefect, the Presenter of the Cause, the undersigned Secretary and others according to custom having been convoked today, the Holy Father has declared in their presence: ***Proofs exist that the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, both towards God and neighbour, and also the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude, with their concomitant virtues, have been lived in heroic degree by the Servant of God Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, Priest, Founder of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, in the case and to which effect this relates.***

The Holy Father has ordered that this decree be made public and be recorded in the acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Given at Rome, on the 9th of April of the year 1990.

L + S

Angelo Card. Felici, *Prefect*

+Edoardo Nowak, Tit. Arch. of Luni, *a Secretis*.

universities and social works, had spread to the five continents. The writings of the Servant of God, with millions of copies published, were already considered spiritual classics.

Even during his lifetime, the Servant of God already had a reputation for exceptional holiness. After his death, this reputation spread worldwide. In many countries it has become part of popular piety. The Cause of Canonisation was introduced in Rome on the 19th of February 1981. It involved two principal processes

Testimonials about the Venerable Josemaría Escrivá

For many of the faithful the life of Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá is a particularly attractive example of virtue, and a real encouragement to embrace their own Christian vocation in the middle of their daily duties.

The Postulator's Office has on file a large number of testimonials which show the good effect, on souls, of contact with the Venerable Servant of God. Some of these testimonials are from people who actually knew him and so could appreciate at first hand the extraordinarily rich action of grace in the Founder of Opus Dei, and the heroism with which he responded to God's call. Others are from theologians and bishops who have reflected deeply on some aspect of his spirituality, and stress his importance for the Church in today's world. In this and following issues we reproduce just some of the many testimonials.

Comments of His Holiness Pope Pius XII, as recalled by Most Rev Thomas Muldoon, Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney:

"I met him, personally, only twice, but for a long period on each occasion, in company with His Eminence, Cardinal Norman Gilroy. The sanctity of this man shone through his face. I felt myself in the presence of a saint to whom God was always present. He radiated such peace, calm, inner joy.

After one of these meetings the Cardinal and I had an audience with Pope Pius XII. I mentioned our visit to Monsignor Escrivá, and the deep impression he had made on me. The Cardinal made similar remarks. The Holy Father smiled with delight and said: *He is a real saint, a man sent by God for our times*" (General Archives of the Postulator (GAP), HRF T-04261, 21-10-1975).

His Holiness Pope Paul VI, in an article written by Most Rev Ambrosio Echebarria Arroita, Bishop of Barbastro, for the faithful of his diocese:

"It was an immense joy for your Bishop that in a public audience, in November 1976, before thousands of Christians, Pope Paul VI said to the faithful when introducing the Bishop of Barbastro, that this diocese, though small in the number of its inhabitants, was important in the Church because the Founder of Opus Dei Monsignor Escrivá had been born there" (*Regarding an anniversary, in El Cruzado Aragones, Barbastro, 30-9-1978*).

Cardinal Giovanni Benelli, Archbishop of Florence:

"The memory I have of the Founder is of a man of virtue, moved by a great love for the Church. I always saw him very committed to seeking the good of the Church

and of souls. He always showed himself most faithful in following the indications of the Holy See, to which he professed unconditional devotion.

One was immediately struck by his ability to draw others with him, a gift which has influenced so many souls looking for greater spiritual perfection" (GAP, HRF P-09015, Letter to the Holy Father, Florence, 3-5-1979).

Cardinal Alfred Bengsch, Archbishop of Berlin:

"With the death of Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá, the Church has lost a great priest, but has gained a *new intercessor before the throne of God*. This is the conviction I have come to from my personal dealings with him" (GAP, HRF P-00427, Letter to the Holy Father, Berlin, 18-8-1975).

Most Rev Pedro Cantero Cuadrado, Archbishop of Saragossa:

"I will never forget one of my first meetings with my beloved and dearly departed friend Josemaría Escrivá. As evening fell on the 14 August 1931, in a suffocating heat-wave, he unexpectedly turned up at my house in Madrid, when the sky seemed heavy with smoke from the burning of convents, even though that was three months earlier. That visit and conversation with Josemaría Escrivá changed the outlook of my life and pastoral ministry" (*He was above all a man of God*, in *El Noticiero*, Saragossa, 12-7-1975).

Cardinal John Patrick Cody, Archbishop of Chicago:

"I had the privilege of meeting him in Rome in the early fifties, on the occasion of the Episcopal ordination of my good friend, Cardinal Ferretto. At that time Monsignor Escrivá had the reputation of being a *saintly priest* with a great devotion to Our Lord and to His Blessed Mother and a great love for the Church, the Holy See and the Hierarchy ...

The love of Monsignor Escrivá for the priesthood will be a wonderful example for so many priests who are struggling to live a holy life in the midst of a confused world. And his love and deep interest in young people will be a great encouragement to young people all over the world who are the hope of the Church" (GAP, HRF P-08884, Letter to the Holy Father, Chicago, 15-12-1978).

Most Rev Alberto Cosme do Amaral, Bishop of Leiria-Fatima:

"I knew him for many years. I met him many times in Rome during the Council, and also in Portugal during his many trips to this land of Our Lady. And so I was able to discover and get to know in depth that extraordinary man and priest Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá.

I believe that *his life was an ineffable gift of God*, not only for the Holy Church, but also for all mankind. He lived his priesthood heroically, based on his extraordinary qualities as a person. He was a man, fully a man, and therefore, through the gifts received from our Lord, he was a priest, fully and exclusively a priest.

He was a man of God, a contemplative in the street, which was his interior cell. His prayer was not interrupted by his work, since work for him was genuine prayer. In a wonderful way, he was able to fuse contemplation and action ...

A man of ardent and strong faith, he loved the Holy Church passionately. He felt its sorrows in his soul and body. He always defended it courageously and with absolute loyalty ...

His love for others was universal, beginning with the poorest and the most needy in body and soul" (GAP, HRF P-00052, Letter to the Holy Father, Leiria, 1-7-1975).



Guatemala, 1975: In a training centre for women.

Most Rev Leopoldo Eijo y Garay, Bishop of Madrid:

"Dr. Escrivá is a model priest, chosen by God for the sanctification of many souls, humble, prudent, self-sacrificing, docile in the extreme to his Prelate, of gifted intelligence, of very reliable spiritual and doctrinal training, ardently zealous, an apostle of Christian formation for student youth" (GAP, HRF D-03545/2).

Most Rev Claude Flusin, retired Bishop of Saint Claude:

"I consider it one of the graces of my life to have known Monsignor Escrivá and to have counted him as a friend" (GAP, HRF T-01009, Rome 22-12-1975).

Cardinal Joseph Frings, retired Archbishop of Cologne:

"I frequently met the Founder of Opus Dei ... I fully realized that here was a pioneer of lay spirituality and that Opus Dei would be of a decisive importance for the future of the Church ...

The most extraordinary aspect of his priestly personality ... was his docility to the grace of God ...

Monsignor Escrivá saw clearly the dangers and needs of our time. In his concern for his own flock, he has given an example to all pastors in the Church how *opportune et importune* and with unflinching fortitude one must preach the Word of God and announce His Will, living the truth in charity ...

It is not possible to believe that one man's life could reach out to so many people around the world and get them to give themselves to God cheerfully and generously, unless it is through his *heroic virtues*, his ever present and increasing self denial and, in the first place, the grace of God that overflowed in him ...

After his death, his life has come to be an even brighter light. And so Christ will ever shine out more in the whole Church, through this man and his Work" (GAP, HRF P-00426, Letter to the Holy Father, Cologne 21-8-1975).

Cardinal Joseph Hoeffner, Archbishop of Cologne and President of the German Episcopal Conference:

"From the first time we met, I admired his manner, which was affectionate and spontaneous, human and cheerful, deeply rooted in the love of Christ. In talking with him, I was aware that I was with *a man who lived the faith totally* and who loved Christ and the Church with all his heart. Our conversations were about one thing only: Christ and his command to extend the Good News, embracing ever more souls in the Church ...

The fire that Christ brought to the earth to set it aflame burned in Monsignor Escrivá. He had the gift of discovering where there was something new and where the Spirit of God was acting. His only concern was to fulfil to the will of God ...

God will have certainly rewarded Monsignor Escrivá for all that he has done for the Church since 1928. I am convinced that the Founder of Opus Dei, now in the Glory of God, does even more for the Church than he was able to do here on earth" (GAP, HRF P-00432, Letter to the Holy Father, Cologne, 11-8-1975).

Cardinal François Marty, Archbishop of Paris:

"During the Second Vatican Council, I had occasion to meet Monsignor Escrivá quite often. Recalling those conversations, I remember *a man who spoke only of God*. A conversation with him seemed like a time of prayer. One felt that he lived that spirit of contemplation in the middle of the world, which he had ceaselessly preached since 1928 ...

If his message about the universal call to holiness, through the sanctification of ordinary activities of daily life and by doing apostolate, which happily has been taken up by the Second Vatican Council, were now proposed to everyone with an official declaration in which the Church recognised the sanctity of Monsignor Escrivá and proposed him as an example for all men of our time, it would be of great benefit to the whole world" (GAP, HRF P-08935, Letter to the Holy Father, Paris, 8-1-1979).

Cardinal Humberto Medeiros, Archbishop of Boston:

"I became more eager than ever to know the priest who had inspired this hunger for sanctity. A few months later I met the priest, Monsignor Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, at his residence in Rome ... He was so extraordinarily forthright, so humble and unassuming, so warm and cordial, so enthusiastic about the Church and its mission, that I felt I had always known him and that I too could call him 'Father' ...

I was able to recognise someone who was very close to God, a *veritable rock of faith*. "That is what we need", I remember telling myself after leaving him, 'a man of prayer, a man who gladly and unashamedly confesses his great devotion to Our Lady and his love for the Church and the Holy Father ...'

I have continued to 'see' him in Rome where I like to revisit the house where we first met. There, in a lovely crypt, a dark green marble slab bearing the inscription *El Padre* marks the place of burial. All around me there are young people who kiss the tomb with devotion. There are also housewives and workers in the crypt who silently confide to him their needs. But as I notice them, I too ask the Father to pray for me and for all the souls entrusted to my care, and that he continue to blaze those trails of sanctity in secular life that he opened up in 1928, fifty years ago this coming second of October" (*A tribute to Opus Dei Founder*, in *The National Catholic Register*, Los Angeles, 2-7-1978).

Cardinal Silvio Oddi, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Clergy:

"When in the history of the Church, the crisis has been most serious, and the enemies of God most active, Divine Providence in its unfailing assistance has raised up those specialised labourers we call saints. Among them I have no hesitation in placing Monsignor Josemaria Escrivá ...

This could only surprise those who had not the good fortune to know at close quarters the splendour of the priestly soul of Monsignor Escrivá. I, for my part, have had this unique privilege and can testify, from my own experience, the exemplary nature of his fidelity to the vocation and mission which Our Lord had entrusted to him. It is a fidelity that is only explained by an intense and deep love of God and neighbour, in whose service the Founder of Opus Dei spent himself with total self-giving, that was so characteristic of him. His activity, so varied and surprising, was the evident result of a most lively love of God, which overflowed his heart. This is the impression I have taken away from my meetings with the Servant of God and his conversations with me, which were always so full of loyalty to the Church and so imbued with respect for the Hierarchy and the Supreme Teaching Authority" (GAP, HRF P-09013, Letter to the Holy Father, Rome, 3-5-1979).

Cardinal Maurice Otunga, Archbishop of Nairobi:

"All who had the privilege of knowing him can testify that when he died in 1975, at the age of 73, he was so young! He had not grown old with the passage of time. On the contrary, his spirit had grown younger year by year, with an incredible vitality of youthfulness and cheerfulness: born in no easy fashion but over a lifetime of heroic struggle which brought him closer day by day to God" (*Opus Dei in Africa: a force for good*, in the *Sunday Nation*, Nairobi, 3-2-1980).



Sítio de Aroeira, Brazil, 1974.

Cardinal Paul Philippe, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches:

"I had several opportunities to meet Monsignor Escrivá, the Founder of Opus Dei. Our conversations left me with the conviction of having been close to a saint: a priest filled with God, who through the joys and sacrifices of each day, fired by the most authentic charity and limitless zeal for the salvation of all souls and a universal concern for extending the Kingdom of God, was able to enkindle in all those who came close to him his own thirst for God and his own apostolic zeal" (GAP, HRF P-08760, Letter to the Holy Father, Rome, 15-5-1978).

Cardinal Sergio Pignedoli, President of the Secretariat for Non-Christians:

"The life of the Founder of Opus Dei was but a full expression of a life of praying, loving, working, smiling. A simple and normal life ... a life of unceasing work, a shining example of that spirituality of work of which he was the tireless teacher and apostle ...

Monsignor Escrivá already belongs to history and to the treasury of the whole Church" (*Monsignor Escrivá: a spiritual example*, in *Il Velro*, XIX, Rome 1975).

Most Rev Oscar Arnulfo Romero, bishop of Santiago de Maria:

"I had the good fortune to know Monsignor Escrivá personally and to receive from him encouragement and strength ... Monsignor Escrivá was able to unite in his life a continual dialogue with our Lord and a great humanity: it was clear that he was a man of God" (GAP, HRF P-00114, Letter to the Holy Father, Santiago de Maria, 12-7-1975).

Cardinal Julio Rosales, Archbishop of Cebu:

"Monsignor Escrivá responded with great heroism to the special graces that God granted him" (*One hundred per cent a priest*, in *Diario de Sabadell*, 30-VI-1979).

Cardinal Angel Suquía Goicoechea, Archbishop of Santiago de Compostela:

"The life of this outstanding priest was Christian and Gospel-based to an exemplary degree ...

His passionate love for the priesthood, which he himself lived with a contagious joy, gave rise to many and excellent priestly vocations in men of all ages, races and backgrounds. Faithful to the sanctifying charism of the priesthood, he awakened in those around him a clear and real consciousness of the universal call to Christian holiness of all the people of God ... Only God knows and time will tell, but I am full convinced that in this respect *the priestly activity of Father Josemaría has been truly providential and decisive in the Church*" (GAP, HRF P-00550, Letter to the Holy Father, Santiago de Compostela, 4-8-1975).

Cardinal Paul Yoshigoro Taguchi, Archbishop of Osaka:

"I had the opportunity to chat with him, without hurry ... The greatness of his character and his supernatural faith shone through in the firmness of his convictions and in a deep charity towards God and men ...

Since founding Opus Dei, he gave the Church supreme service, full of love and constancy" (GAP, HRF P-00644, Letter to the Holy Father, Osaka, 27-7-1975).



São Paulo, Brazil, 1974.

Most Rev Adolfo Tortolo, Archbishop of Paraná and President of the Argentine Episcopal Conference:

"My contacts with him always left me with an impression of a person well above the average, a born and surefooted director of a great apostolic venture. But above all, what always struck me was his faith, the solidity of his faith, the brightness of his faith, the creative dynamism of his faith. It was a faith able to move mountains" (GAP, HRF P-02698, Letter to the Holy Father, Paraná, August 1975).

Cardinal John Joseph Wright, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Clergy:

"My personal conviction of the holiness of the life of Monsignor Escrivá is based on ... the direct experience I had of his virtues. He lived only for God and others, giving daily testimony of *virtue which was truly heroic*" (GAP, HRF P-08770, Letter to the Holy Father, Rome, 15-5-1978).

Letters received

FROM HATRED TO LOVE. A LIFE RECOVERED

For ten years now I have been living at peace. I work, I have a pleasant home, mix socially and I help in a parish giving catechism classes for those preparing to receive first Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Before this, things were very different. A frantic political activism had led me to violence and hatred towards everything and everybody. My work, together with all my other pursuits, was affected by sectarian fighting and revenge. I was dominated by a spirit of contradiction and subject to periods of euphoria punctuated by crises of anxiety.

When I heard the news of the death of the Servant of God Monsignor Josemaría, whom I had met many years ago, I followed a strong impulse of going to the Mass that was to be celebrated for the repose of his soul. For the two hours that the solemn ceremony lasted I could not stop crying and in fact I was sobbing without interruption, aware, as others were also, of a certain living and smiling presence of the Father. My conversion dates from that instant, thanks to the practice of regular confession, it has brought peace back to me, and filled my soul with joy.

The Servant of God's influence along this way of salvation has made me experience moments of deep spiritual intensity, both morally and affectively. The prayer invoking his intercession has been a most effective means for obtaining daily graces which I am still enjoying. The only problem amid so much happiness is whether I may live long enough to be grateful.

N.N., Rome (Italy)

HIS BODY AND HIS SOUL WERE RESTORED TO HEALTH

My brother was a healthy young man who had never suffered any illness except for the odd cold. He suddenly became very ill and had to be rushed to hospital. That was the beginning of his "way of the cross" which lasted for three months. The doctors made all the analyses and tests that they could to find a cure, but he continued the same. My brother was losing weight, felt acute pain and had a high temperature which made him have sporadic convulsions. Every day that passed was an agony for him and for us a horrible suffering for we could see we were going to lose him.

In my anguish I asked my friends from Opus Dei to pray for my brother's health and that they should commend him to Monsignor Escrivá. One day when I had found him very disheartened, I bought him a prayer book and took it to him. As soon as he started to read it he was very moved and began to weep like a child. The following morning he asked me to call for a priest so that he could go to confession, and eight days later he received Holy Communion and the Anointing of the Sick. It seemed as if there was nothing else to be done and the doctors could do nothing for him and admitted their failure. Against all expectations, however, he began to recover to such an extent that he was completely cured, much to the amazement of the doctors.

My brother had lapsed from the Church many years ago, having become a freemason, and violently anticlerical. He has now renounced his freemasonry and spends some of his time working in a clinic for the poor and needy and has joined a Church group that helps him to deepen in his faith, and which helps him with friendship and affection to grow in love.

X. X.

THE FAVOUR OF CONCEIVING A CHILD

I got married in 1978. Not having become pregnant during the first year, I began medical treatment (with my spouse) in Buenos Aires. From then until 1986 we followed different treatments without success. In the meantime our married life developed complications and at one point we even thought of separating. Naturally, I was very anxious and afflicted with all this.

In 1986 I got to know about Opus Dei and the holy life of its Founder. I had the prayer card for his private devotion and from then on I began to pray with faith, asking, at the same time as I continued with my medical treatment, for the favour of conceiving a child.

Towards the middle of 1988 my husband and I decided to stop the treatment I had been following for ten years without success. I did continue, however, to pray intensely to Monsignor Escrivá. Around that time, my husband also began to pray for this favour. Two months after this decision, around Christmas time, I had the great joy of confirming that I was pregnant after wishing it for so many years.

Since then, peace and joy have reigned in my home. I am convinced that this has been a favour obtained through the intercession of the Servant of God Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá. In my gratitude I try to spread devotion to him among my friends, relatives and acquaintances; at the same time I continue to ask for small and big favours, for every day I am confirmed in the efficacy of his intercession.

B. E. (Argentina)

TO LEAD A CHRISTIAN LIFE

My two married sisters have been leading a stormy life over a number of years due to some misunderstandings with their husbands. They had been staying with us for some months. Sometimes they would run away and leave their little ones with no one to look after them. And to make it worse they never saw the church during those hellish years.

My parents had no other way to unite them than to pray through Father Josemaría. We didn't even dare to send their husbands to court, because we knew that life without love is like trying to create heaven in hell.

It didn't take long before they all went back, received the sacrament of matrimony and, lastly, baptized their children. Nowadays they are full Christians who will never miss Mass on Sundays.

M. M., Bungoma (Kenya)

MORE THAN JUST MEDICINE

Everything began at the end of December 1980, when a niece of mine, who was married, with children, had to go into hospital because she kept having a slight temperature, which would not go down. After several tests, it was discovered that she had a cancerous growth in her stomach, and would need an operation. When she was operated on, it was discovered that the tumour could not be removed, because other vital organs were affected. The specialists gave her a maximum of three months to live, which might be longer if she responded well to chemotherapy treatment.

Then I started to pray to the Servant of God, Josemaría Escrivá, promising him that if she was cured completely, I would publish it.

Eight years have gone by, in spite of the fact that we were told that, with chemotherapy, she could live five years at the most. This is why I have not written before now. I think, as the doctor told us, it is a true miracle.

Z. F. A., Pontevedra (Spain)

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 3,530,000 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 546,000 copies have been published in eighteen languages. English edition 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 308,000 copies have been published in seven languages. English edition by Sinag-Tala (Manila).

Christ is passing by

This 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 foreword is by Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo, the present Prelate of Opus Dei.

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 283,000 copies have been published in seven languages. 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 ten languages with a total printing of 249,000 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. 281,000 copies in seven languages have been published to date. 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. 220,000 copies have been 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, and a third in 1988.

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

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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