
THE VENERABLE JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA

On 9 April 1990, the Holy See published a decree of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints, in which Pope John Paul II declared that there is proof that the Servant of God, Josemaría Escrivá, the Founder of Opus Dei, lived all the Christian virtues to a heroic degree. Thus he was declared to be 'Venerable'. This title does not imply that public cult can be given him; such cult is given only to the Blessed and to the Saints.

The way is now open for beatification, a process which consists of an examination, from both the medical and theological points of view, of a miracle attributed to his intercession.

The cause of beatification of Monsignor Escrivá is one of the many responses of the Catholic Church to the wishes of the People of God to have put before them models of Christian life which confirm the relevance today of the life and teaching of Jesus.

After the death of the Founder of Opus Dei thousands of the faithful, from all over the world, wrote the Holy Father asking him to open the cause of Monsignor Escrivá. These petitions came from people in all walks of life, including many from ecclesiastics who had known the Servant of God, or had witnessed the apostolic work he had promoted. They included 69 cardinals, 241 archbishops, 987 bishops (that is, about one third of the Catholic episcopate) and 41 superior generals of religious orders and congregations.

Many noteworthy material and spiritual favours have been attributed to his intercession.

Five years after his death, the Vicar of the diocese of Rome, Cardinal Ugo Poletti requested the Holy See to open his cause. This was done by the Holy Father on February 19, 1981, after hearing the opinion of both the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Two processes were then begun to gather sworn testimonies and documentary proofs concerning the life, virtues and reputation for holiness of the Servant of God. One process was held in Madrid, Spain, for Spanish speaking witnesses, and the other in Rome. In all, 92 persons (4 cardinals, 4 archbishops, 7 bishops, a prelate, 27 priests, 5 religious and 44 lay persons) testified. The members of Opus Dei were in a minority among them.

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Once the processes had concluded, the Postulator of the cause began to prepare a complete and systematic exposition of the results, under the direction of Fr Ambrose Eszer, O.P., the *relator* named by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. This *Assessment on the life and virtues* of the Founder of Opus Dei was done in the usual historico-critical method. A more than 6,000 page long document was presented to the Holy See in June 1988.

After a detailed study of this document by consultant theologians, the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints judged in favour of the heroicity of the virtues of Monsignor Escrivá. Accordingly, the Holy Father ordered that a decree be prepared and published stating that henceforth the title 'Venerable' be granted to Monsignor Escrivá.