

eyes to see this and, above all, a generous heart to become the instruments of his work.”⁵

Put out into the deep! It’s a question of faith, of hope and of love. The Holy Father repeated this challenge a little more than a month ago, in St. Peter’s Square filled with people from all over the world, during the canonization for which we are now celebrating this Mass of thanksgiving. Recalling how Christ’s command always resounded in the soul of the founder of Opus Dei, the Pope concluded: “He transmitted it to his entire spiritual family so that they might

offer the Church a valid contribution of communion and apostolic service. Today this invitation is extended to all of us: ‘Put out into the deep,’ the divine Teacher says to us, ‘and let down your nets for a catch’ (Lk 5:4).”⁶

Let us go to St. Josemaría. The collect of the Mass in his honor urges us to ask God that “By his example and prayers, grant that in faithfully carrying out our daily work in the Spirit of Christ, we may be formed in the likeness of your Son, and together with the most Blessed Virgin Mary, serve the work of redemption with an ardent love.”⁷

Addresses

Barbastro August 31, 2002

At the ceremony honoring St. Josemaría in the city hall

Commissioner Callizo, Mayor and Assembly President Cosculluela, Your Excellency Bishop Omella, esteemed members of the Municipal Council, Barbastrans and friends:

I would like to express my sincere gratitude upon visiting the exposition on Blessed Josemaría Escrivá’s life and teachings, organized by the Government of Aragon with the assistance of the Municipal Council of Barbastro, the

Huesca. We are celebrating the centennial year of his birth, and now only a few weeks remain before the Holy Father canonizes him and the universal Church venerates him as one of her saints.

Although Blessed Josemaría had to leave Barbastro at the age of thirteen, he was always deeply united to his birthplace. He frequently expressed his love for this city to people he was in contact with here, a love that is reflected in many of his letters. He often called to mind the places where he grew up and where his personality first developed.

He would think of his beloved parents, José and Dolores, who instilled

5. John Paul II, Apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, January 6, 2001, no. 58.

6. John Paul II, Homily at the canonization of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, October 6, 2002.

7. Mass of Saint Josemaría, Entrance Prayer.

in him a vibrant faith and a great love for the Blessed Trinity. He never hid his gratitude to God for letting him be born, as he put it, "in a Christian home, as was customary in my country, with exemplary parents who practiced and lived their faith." He prayed for the people of Barbastro each day throughout his whole life, making reference to this expressly in his conversations.

He never forgot the Piarist school he attended, and he remembered with affection Fr. Manuel Laborda of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, who taught him a prayer for spiritual communions when preparing him for his first Holy Communion, and Fr. Enrique Labrador de Santa Lucia, to whom he made his first confession.

Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, in his book *Immersed in God*, noted the striking fact that Blessed Josemaría remembered these names, since not many people could do so. His successor asked many people if they remembered the name of the priest who baptized them or to whom they made their first confession, and the response was always negative. He saw in Blessed Josemaría's conduct a sign of his sincere affection for those who had helped him take his first steps as a Christian in his childhood and adolescence.

Msgr. Escrivá wrote the mayor of this city in 1971: "I am very Barbastrian, and try to be a good son of my parents. Let me assure you that my father and mother, although they had to leave this land, instilled in us, along with faith and piety, a great love for the banks of the Vero and the Cinca." In this noble and rugged land, where people sometimes hide their hearts, you realized that Msgr. Josemaría

Escrivá would be averse to receiving any form of public homage and expression of gratitude. So you were very astute in awarding him in 1947 the title of "Favorite Son" without even consulting him or saying anything in advance. It was another reason why this city was so dear to his heart, although, with his good Aragonese stubbornness, he managed to avoid attending the public ceremony.

His attitude was in accord with his motto: "Mine is to hide and disappear, so that only Jesus shines forth." The founder, who loved you so deeply, saw himself, in the eyes of God and of men, as a poor sinner, and felt that he should not accept any public recognition. But finally, as there is no need to remind you, you overcame his resistance and got what you wanted. In 1974 the full Assembly decided unanimously to present him with the city's Gold Medal "in recognition," as the text said, "of the merits of his universal example, and his unfailing attention and concern for the people of Barbastro."

You had the refinement and delicacy needed when dealing with saints, who reject any form of public acclamation. Many of you recall the last visit by the founder of Opus Dei to Barbastro, in May 1975. His health by then was very poor, having consumed his life in the service of God and all mankind.

During that 1975 ceremony, on top of the emotion occasioned by your sincere affection, his heart was also agitated by the news of the death of a member of Opus Dei. In his speech of thanks, he told you: "Excuse me. I am very moved, for a double reason: first by

your affection; and then, because late last night I received a message from Rome informing me that one of the first persons that I sent to Italy to do Opus Dei had died. A clean soul, a lofty intelligence....”

Now, from heaven, Blessed Josemaría is following your steps closely and offers you his constant help: in your work, in your suffering and sickness, in your joys and sorrows, in your difficulties. If you seek his intercession, this saint, who is your fellow citizen, will transmit to you his love for God, his enthusiasm and joy, and also his holy zeal, which is so necessary on the path of sanctity.

Entrust yourself to this universal Barbastran. Go to him in friendship, especially when you feel yourself weakening on the road towards heaven and in your love for Jesus. He will always sustain you, and encourage you to take hold of the gentle and powerful hand of Our Lady of Torreciudad. “To Jesus,” he wrote in *The Way*, “we always go, and to him we always return, through Mary.”

Rome

October 24, 2002

At the inauguration of the academic year of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

Your excellencies; my dear professors, students and staff of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross; Ladies and Gentlemen:

Allow me to begin by recalling once again the recent canonization of Saint Josemaría Escrivá. I have no need to emphasize the great joy of that day in St. Peter’s Square (because I am sure that many of you had the same experience as I did) when the Holy Father inscribed Blessed Josemaría among the number of the saints. To borrow an expression from my predecessor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, that day, so long and prayerfully awaited, was like “drowning in a sea of joy.”

But it is not my intention to describe my gratitude to God and to our Holy Father John Paul II, but rather to reflect with you on the significance that this event should have for us, as persons closely related to this university. I am certain that, just as for the Prelature of Opus Dei, the canonization of its founder will always remain a decisive moment in the history of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, born from the spirit of Saint Josemaría.

These recent days remind us once again that sanctity is the only worthwhile goal for our life, the only objective able to fill it with meaning. This was the untiring refrain of the preaching of Saint Josemaría, recognized by the Holy Father on the morning of October 7 as “the saint of the ordinary.”¹

The congress celebrated last January on the occasion of the centennial of Saint Josemaría’s birth, entitled

1. See John Paul II, Address at the audience for the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá, October 7, 2002.