

# JOSEMARÍA ESCRIVÁ DE BALAGUER Founder of Opus Dei

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**NEWSLETTER No. 2**

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 de Balaguer founded the Women's Section of Opus Dei, and on 14 February 1943, within Opus Dei, the Sacerdotal Society of the Holy Cross. Opus Dei was definitively approved by the Holy See on 16 June 1950.

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 thousands of people throughout the world 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 more than 60,000 members, of 80 different nationalities.

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 de Balaguer 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 Oratory 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.

Cover: *Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer, after a get-together in the Centro de Estudos de Extensão Universitária, São Paulo, Brazil, 25 May 1974.*

## Talking to God

My children, Jesus Christ gives us example and teaches us how to pray. "Then, at very early dawn, he left them, and went away to a lonely place, and began praying there" (Mark 1:35). I am moved by this urgency of his –St. Mark stresses that it was "early dawn"– to speak to the Eternal Father . . .

Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer reflects on Jesus' prayer and then applies the example of it to his own life. The one aim in his daily struggle was this: to try to have an intimate and unbroken relationship with God Our Lord; to be a contemplative soul, a soul of prayer.

His stay on this earth is now over and when we look back on the story of his life we find that he was constantly retracing those steps he mentions in *The Way: When I made you a present of that Life of Jesus, I wrote as an inscription: "May you seek Christ: may you find Christ: may you love Christ."*(1)

The Founder of Opus Dei was a priest who was always talking about God or with God. Through his example, his words and his writings he led millions of souls along ways of prayer.

**You and I –he would say– want to reach holiness . . . . To do this we have to identify ourselves with Christ, we have to clothe ourselves with Christ: *induimini Dominum Iesum Christum!* (Rom 13:14). All of us, my children, have to become *ipse Christus*, Christ himself; but each one of us has to find his own way of putting on these clothes the Apostle is talking about; each one of us, in a personal way, has to enter into conversation with Our Lord.**

**This being the case, how are you and I to go about it? We must aim to get to know Our Lord very well, seeking him out, as Peter did, so as to have an intimate conversation with him. Notice, I say "conversation": that is, a dialogue between two people, face to face, not hiding behind a shield of anonymity. We need this personal prayer, this intimacy, this direct contact with God Our Lord.**

Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer never gave people a ready-made formula on how to talk with God. He taught that personal prayer cannot be reduced to any single type: every soul has its own specific ways of praying, depending on its own make-up and the needs of the moment: **I'm not going to show each one of you how to pray: prayer is something very personal . . . , all I'm giving you are a few general suggestions, and then it is for each one of you to follow his own way, which will be different from other people's.**



Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer praying at the shrine of Our Lady of Luján, Argentina, 12 June 1974. With him are the Very Rev. Alvaro del Portillo, his successor as President General of Opus Dei, and (on the left of the photograph) the Rev. Javier Echevarría, the Secretary General of the Work.

And yet, people often do ask: how does one pray? The Founder of Opus Dei gives us an answer to this question in a homily which dates from 4 April 1955:

How should we pray? I would go as far as to say, without fear of contradiction, that there are many, countless, ways of praying. But I would like all of us to pray genuinely, as God's children, shunning the wordy prayers of the hypocrites, who will hear from Jesus' lips: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 7:21). Souls tainted with hypocrisy can perhaps achieve "the sound of prayer", says St. Augustine, "but they cannot possess its voice, because there is no life in them."<sup>(2)</sup> They lack the desire to fulfil the Father's Will. When we cry "Lord!" we must do so with an effective desire to put into practice the inspirations that the Holy Spirit awakens in our souls.

We must strive to eliminate on our part any shadow of deceit. If we are to banish this evil, which is condemned so harshly by Our Lord, we must first try to develop, both in theory and in practice, a clear attitude of aversion to sin. Sincerely, in a manly way, we must feel, both with our heart and with our mind, a horror of mortal sin. We must also cultivate a deep-seated hatred of deliberate venial sin, of those negligences that don't deprive us of God's grace but do serve to obstruct the channels through which grace comes to us.

I have never tired of talking about prayer. With God's grace I never will. I remember back in 1930, when people of all kinds used to come to me, then a young priest, looking for ways of getting closer to Our Lord. To all of them, university students and workers, healthy and sick, rich and poor, priests and laymen, I gave the same advice: "Pray." If any of them complained, "I don't even know how to begin," I would advise him to put himself in God's presence and to tell Him of his desires and his anxiety, with that very same complaint: "Lord, I don't know how to pray!" Often, humble admissions like that were the beginning of an intimate relationship with Christ, a lasting friendship with him.

Many years have gone by, and I still don't know of a better recipe. If you think you're not quite ready to pray, go to Jesus as his disciples did and say to him: "Lord, teach us how to pray!" (Luke 11:1). You will discover how the Holy Spirit "comes to the aid of our weakness; when we do not know what prayer to offer, to pray as we ought, the Spirit himself intercedes for us, with groans beyond all utterance" (Rom 8:26), which will be impossible to describe, for we lack suitable words to express their depth.

What a great source of confidence the Word of God should be for us! When, throughout my priestly ministry, I have time and again counselled people to pray, I have not invented anything. It's all there in Holy Scripture. That's where I learned to say: "Lord, I don't know how to talk to you! Lord, teach us how to pray!" When we pray thus, we receive all the loving assistance of the Holy Spirit; that light, and fire and driving wind which sets the flame alight and makes it capable of enkindling a great fire of love.

To pray is to talk with God. But about what? About what? About him, about yourself: joys, sorrows, successes and failures, noble ambitions, daily worries . . . , weaknesses! And acts of thanksgiving and petitions: and love and reparation.

In a word: to get to know him and to get to know yourself: "to get acquainted!"<sup>(3)</sup>

(1) Cf. *The Way*, 382

(2) St. Augustine, *En. in Ps.*, 139, 10

(3) *The Way*, 91

## Among the sick and poor people of Madrid

On 2 October 1928, Mgr. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer received in his soul the seed of Opus Dei. From then on he gave himself, generously, to the task that was to fill the rest of his life: he spent almost fifty years opening up ways to serve Our Lord and his Church. Occasionally, in the course of conversation, he would speak about the foundations that had been used for the building God wanted him to raise up. On 19 March 1975, for example, speaking to a group of sons of his in Rome, he recalled:

**What means did I use? (. . .) I went to seek strength in the poorest districts of Madrid. Hours and hours going everywhere, day after day, on foot, from one place to another, among the shamefully and wretchedly poor, so poor that they had not a thing to their name; among dirty runny-nosed children, but children for all that, which means souls pleasing to God. What indignation I feel in my priestly soul when people say nowadays that children ought not to go to Confession when they are young! It isn't true. They have to make their personal, auricular, secret Confession, like everybody else. And what good it does them! How happy it makes them! I spent many hours at that work. I'm only sorry they weren't more. And in the hospitals and in houses where these sick people were, if those hovels could be called houses . . . . They were sick and forsaken people and some of them had tuberculosis which was then incurable.**

**So I went to all these places to find the means to do the Work of God.**

**Meanwhile I worked away and formed the first ones whom I had by me. There were people of almost every kind among them. There were university students, working-men, small tradesmen, artists . . .**

**Those were very intense years, in which Opus Dei was growing on the inside without our realising it. But I have wanted to tell you –some day they will explain this to you in more detail, with documents and papers—that the human strength of the Work has been the sick people in the hospitals of Madrid: the most forsaken ones; those who lived in their houses having lost the last vestige of human hope; the most ignorant, in the remotest corners of the city. Those are the ambitions of Opus Dei, those were the human resources we used: incurably sick people, outcasts, children with no family or education, homes without heat or human warmth or love. And, hand in hand with that, I was training the first people who came along, telling them with total confidence all the things we were going to do, as if they had already been done . . .**

**And then, God led us along the paths of our interior life . . . along specific ones. What was I seeking? *Cor Mariae Dulcissimum, iter para tutum!* I went to seek strength in the Mother of God, like a young son, following the paths of childhood. I turned to St. Joseph, my Father and my Lord. I liked to envisage him strong and powerful, very powerful, head of a great divine clan, whom God himself obeyed: *erat subditus illis!***

**I turned with simplicity to the saints for their intercession (. . .) I turned to the Holy Angels with confidence, like a little child, without realising that God was leading me along paths of spiritual childhood. But you don't have to imitate me. Long live freedom!**

**What can a poor creature do if he has to carry out a mission and has neither means, nor age, nor knowledge, nor virtues, nor anything? He goes to his mother and his father, he turns to those who can do something, he asks his friends for help . . . This is what I did in the spiritual life. And, of course, to the accompaniment of the strokes of the discipline, in penance and expiation.**

It isn't easy nowadays to imagine the abject poverty that used to exist in some areas on the outskirts of a city like Madrid which, like many other European capitals, had doubled its population in a short space of time. A great part of its 800,000

inhabitants then were newcomers, living in very deprived circumstances in outlying suburbs like Tetuán and Vallecas.

At that time, Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer, in addition to his work in founding Opus Dei, was Chaplain to the Patronato de Enfermos, an apostolic activity in Santa Engracia Street (now García Morato Street), near Alonso Martínez Square. This charitable work was run by the Damas Apostólicas, who had been founded some years previously by Doña Luz Rodríguez Casanova. Its purpose was to look after poor and sick people, providing them with both material and spiritual help, and religious instruction to enable them to receive the Sacraments. One of the first of these Damas Apostólicas has written about those years now long past:

“We were very fortunate to have Don Josemaría as Chaplain of the Patronato. I remember well our apostolic activities in the outlying suburbs of Madrid. The



Madrid. The Patronato de Enfermos.

hospitals were full to overflowing and sick people were just dying in their homes. We used to look for those who were most seriously ill and in greatest need of assistance, in order to help them spiritually and materially.

“In those circumstances we could not have done without Don Josemaría. He took care of all the acts of worship in the House: Mass, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Rosary. He was under no obligation to get involved in our charitable work. Yet Don Josemaría dedicated himself totally in a self-sacrificed and disinterested way to the huge numbers of poor and sick people whom he saw could be reached by his priestly heart. And so, when we came across a sick person who seemed likely to die away from the Sacraments, we would entrust him to Don Josemaría’s care and be absolutely sure he would be well looked after. I don’t recall a single case where we didn’t succeed in our efforts.

“He worked very hard and kept up a constant rhythm of work. Yet he dealt with each person unhurriedly, as if he had nothing else to do. He used to visit them, and bring them Communion and administer other Sacraments to them. Just to give some idea of the volume of this apostolic activity in which Don Josemaría played such an important part, I see from one of our quarterly Bulletins that, in 1927, we visited between four and five thousand sick people. More than three thousand confessions were heard and a similar number of Communion were given. Extreme unction was administered almost five hundred times, there were over one hundred baptisms and between seven and eight hundred marriages.

“In addition, Don Josemaría used to go to the schools we ran in the suburbs of Madrid. There were fifty-eight schools with twelve thousand children. There he used to give talks and chat to the children, using all his personal warmth and all his apostolic energy to help them to get to

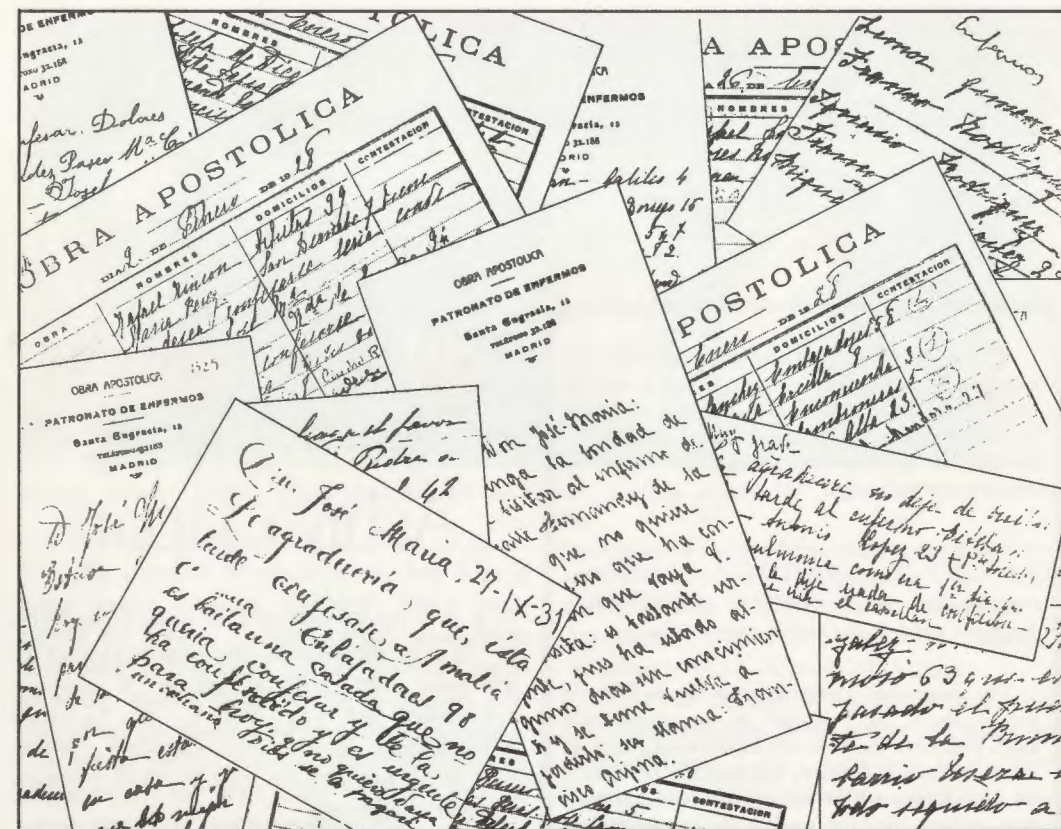
know and to love Jesus Christ. Don Josemaría also spoke to those in our Home in Santa Engracia; he had time for everyone: he taught them christian doctrine in simple terms and took an interest in their problems. He was a friend and a holy priest.”

There is no doubt that the Patronato de Enfermos did a lot of good, and the Father always remembered it with great affection.

One of the people who helped the Damas Apostólicas writes: “Don Josemaría took Communion to the sick everywhere, whether it was Tetuán de las Victorias, Paseo de Extremadura, Magin Calvo, Vallecas, Lavapiés, San Millán, the Lucero district or Ribera del Manzanares. He also heard confessions in the Patronato, for those who could get to Santa Engracia. On Sundays, boys from the various schools run by the Damas Apostólicas used to meet together in the Patronato. Don Josemaría heard their confessions and, a number of times every year, first Communion were organised. In some years, more than four thousand children made their first Communion.”

In May 1974, in a get-together in São Paulo, Brazil, during one of the catechetical journeys which were a feature of the last years of his life, the Father, in reply to a question from a doctor, recalled his work among the sick and the poor of Madrid:

**I’ll tell you a little anecdote, my son. There was once a young priest who had to fulfil a mission . . . a worldwide mission. He had no virtues then, and now he still has none: that’s almost fifty years ago, forty-seven . . . He had no virtues and no money. He had nothing but youthfulness, a good sense of humour and God’s grace. He liked visiting poor, sick people very much and one day there he was –as on many another occasion– at the bedside of a young man who was dying, one of those cases it hurts you to see. They**



There are hundreds of notes like these, addressed to Don Josemaría, telling him of people who needed his help. On some can still be seen the numbers he wrote to help him organise his route through the streets of Madrid.

hurt me too, but at that moment I envied him. I saw that his soul was going, purified, straight to God and I said to him: “How I envy you!” He died very consoled, very happy.

A few hours later, speaking about the need to work, he rounded off the story:

**To die is a very comfortable solution, it is a very easy way (. . .) The only time when, for a few moments, I desired death was at the bedside of that dying young man. I was just a young priest. I envied him. I said: “This fellow is going to Heaven!” I also thought that my words would console him, which indeed they did. Our Lord rewarded me for that, because I was praying all the way back**

from there –it was in the open country– right up to Atocha and then across Alonso Martínez Square to Santa Engracia.

In future issues of this Newsletter we will be dealing with Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer’s priestly activity in the hospitals of Madrid, where he also worked very intensely during the same period.

It is easy to feel that the Founder of Opus Dei was drawing on his own vivid personal experience when he wrote, in point 419 of *The Way*:

**Children. The Sick. – As you write these words, don’t you feel tempted to use capitals?**

The reason is that in children and in the sick a soul in love sees Him.

## Under his spiritual influence

*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*, n.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*, n.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.

## Seido Gaikokugo Kenkyusho Ashiya, Japan

A few hours before Our Lord called him to his side, Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer was with a group of women members of the Work, of various nationalities. In that get-together, which was to be his last, he told Michito, a young Japanese woman:

**God Our Lord has given you, with Baptism, a concern for the Church. Pray**



*Work in progress in a SEIDO language laboratory.*



*Rome, March 1970. Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer with a group of Japanese members of Opus Dei.*

**for the people of your land, for it is a very great nation, so that they may come to know Jesus Christ, and love him, and serve him. You will have heard already that your sisters in Japan are planning to start a school in Nagasaki. We must pray that the difficulties may disappear, so that they can begin to work there as soon as possible.**

Seventeen years previously, on the advice of a Cardinal in the Roman Curia, the Bishop of Osaka had asked the Founder to begin the work of Opus Dei in Japan. Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer responded by sending a priest of Opus Dei to Japan to prepare the way for Opus Dei to begin its apostolic work in that country. In the years that followed, other members of the Work arrived in Japan from the United States, Ireland and Spain. On 15 July 1960, the first women members of the Work disembarked at the Japanese port of Kobe.

The first aim of those small groups of people of the Work was to make contact with Japanese people, to get to know them and make friends with them. They found an opening in the great economic and cultural boom that had started in Japan after the war. Many Japanese felt a keen interest in learning foreign languages, especially English.

This led to the setting up of the SEIDO

LANGUAGE INSTITUTE or SEIDO GAIKOKUGO KENKYUSHO, as it is called in Japanese, the first corporate work of apostolate run by Opus Dei in Japan.

SEIDO is located in Ashiya, a small town between the two great cities of Osaka and Kobe. These cities, together with some fifteen satellite towns, have a total population of eight million people, with about twenty universities.

SEIDO's first premises were in a typical Japanese house, a wooden structure with *tatami* floors and sliding doors made of wood and decorated paper. It had an oratory in a small, dignified, quiet room. The tabernacle and some of the sacred vessels were a present from Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer. In sending them he was expressing both his love for the Blessed Eucharist and his affection for that great nation of the Far East.

Soon SEIDO outgrew that house and in 1962 the language institute was transferred to newly-built premises, which were more adequate to its requirements.

**I am following your progress with affection, the Father wrote to them, and I'm always praying for you. What a joy it is to hear about those conversions, and to look forward to the ones that are to come!**

God was rewarding their prayer and



*The Baptism of a student. The sacrament is being administered by Fr. Soichiro Nitta, one of the first Japanese members of Opus Dei to become a priest.*

sacrifice. People of all backgrounds were drawing nearer the christian faith, some of them from very far away. The first Japanese member of the Work –he was later to become a priest– was converted to the faith in Seido. What first attracted him were the human values he found there. Our Lord was later to give him the faith and to call him to Opus Dei. **I love my firstborn son very much, Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer told him, in Rome, in 1968; you have a special place in the Father's heart. It's not that the other Japanese aren't there too; but the firstborn is always the firstborn! God has poured his love into you, with his grace; Jesus is your brother, your God. The people who got to know you were foreigners... with a religion which seemed foreign; but the Grace of God!... How much you owe to God and how much you love him, and how much He loves you! God bless you!**

By 1973, the number of students at SEIDO was over the twelve hundred mark and SEIDO had to move to its present location, where, along with the Language Institute there is also the SEIDO CULTURAL CENTER, which runs directly apostolic activities: courses of introduction to Sacred Scripture (the Bible is a best-seller in Japan); retreats, which are attended also by non-Catholics; catechism classes; opportunities of seeking advice from a priest...

In the meantime, similar centres had been started in other cities and they gave rise to the SEIDO SYSTEM SCHOOLS, which also provide language teaching material that is used in over fifty universities and colleges of further education.

The YOSHIDA GAKUSEI SENTA was established in Kyoto and the Women's Section of Opus Dei opened the SHIMOGAMO ACADEMY in Kyoto and the OHARA BUNKA SENTA in Ashiya.

The Founder of Opus Dei always took a great interest in this work which had started *under his spiritual influence*. He often sent suggestions and ideas which, over the years, gave vigour and direction to this apostolic work. It had all begun when Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer had asked the first member of Opus Dei who travelled to Japan to do something for him in memory of the first christian communities in the Far East: **When you reach Nagasaki, I would like you on my behalf to kiss that soil which has seen so many martyrs.**

The desire which he expressed to that Japanese daughter of his in his last get-together is now becoming a reality. October 1975 saw the beginning of the NAGASAKI SEIDO and in April 1978 a school for girls is due to start in Nagasaki, the very school he was referring to on the morning of 26 June 1975. Another school, for boys, is being planned too in the Kyushu Island city of Nagasaki.

## Letters received

### SHE LEFT HER WHEEL CHAIR

In June 1974, M.L. was operated on for an abdominal melanoma. In December, the disease reappeared and she had to undergo another operation. Some months later, very early on the morning of 18 July 1975, she awoke and realised that she was paralysed. She reacted very calmly to this. She prayed and waited for daybreak.

The doctors who attended her diagnosed a tumour in the spinal column, and said she must be operated on within twenty-four hours. After the operation she was still unable to move her legs, and for five months underwent physiotherapy, but without positive results. M.L. was now confined permanently to a wheel chair.

Some time later, when she was in São Paulo, she was told about the saintly life of Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer and she was given one of the cards with the prayer for private devotion. She began to say the prayer, convinced that she would be heard.

About ten or twelve days afterwards, she was returning to Rio de Janeiro and when she arrived in her wheel chair at the foot of the aircraft steps, M.L. relates that she felt a kind of inner movement urging her to walk. So, very decidedly, she told the air steward who was about to help her up into the plane: "I'm going to go up on my own two feet." Then, getting up and holding on to the handrail, she managed to climb the steps and get into the aircraft. A week later she had fully recovered, and could move quite freely. She now walks normally.

The doctor who had operated on her spinal column was amazed when he met her one day by chance in the hospital. He could scarcely believe his eyes.

P.B., São Paulo, Brazil

### HER TEMPERATURE FELL

M.R. fell ill and after a few days was taken to hospital. One night the girl's temperature suddenly shot up and this was accompanied by a searing headache. The situation got so serious that everyone thought she was about to die. Her illness had not yet been diagnosed. At this critical moment her aunt remembered the card with the prayer for private devotion to Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer, which she had in her handbag. She took it out and put it into the child's hands, asking her to repeat with her the words of the Hail Mary. Three minutes later the temperature fell and her headache eased and then disappeared.

Later the illness was diagnosed as meningitis. M.R. left hospital a few days ago. During all this time the prayer card had been under her pillow.

I.M., London

### 25 TONS

My husband was washing down a nine-ton lorry, loaded with lard, just outside our house which is in the Buenos Aires suburb, east of Medellín, and stands on a fairly steep slope. As my husband was getting ready to drive the lorry to the garage, and after he had started the engine, the vehicle began to

run down the hill out of control. Owing to its weight –nine tons empty, with a sixteen ton load, making 25 in all– it was impossible to stop it at that moment, by mechanical means or otherwise. My husband tried to control the lorry with the gears, but it was no use.

When I saw all this, I got terribly afraid. But instead of going out into the street I rushed into my room looking for the Father's prayer card, and I said to him: "Father, save him, he is your son; it was you yourself who got him this job, after you heard our prayers to get work for him." I prayed to him, as I always do, with very great faith and fervour.

Some thirty seconds later all the neighbours had gathered round the door of my house telling me, with tremendous excitement and astonishment, that my husband was quite all right and nobody had been hurt, nor had any damage been done to vehicles or buildings. They kept on saying that they could not explain how the lorry had suddenly stopped its downhill run. They asked why I had not gone out to see the outcome. But I told them that I first went to pray to the Father, to ask him to take over the lorry at that moment, so that nothing would happen.

That evening I gave out quite a few of the Father's prayer cards, since my neighbours insisted that it was a miracle, because a vehicle of that weight could have caused a catastrophe.

Afterwards a mechanic checked the lorry and found that the universal joint had gone. When that happens, the air brakes don't work nor does the engine brake which these vehicles have.

E.M.A., Medellín, Colombia

#### THE PAIN WENT AWAY

My mother has for many years suffered intense pain due to a hernia in her spinal column. A little over a year ago she had an operation: two vertebrae in her lumbar region were joined by grafting on a piece of bone from her leg.

Everything was going fine after the operation, until a couple of months ago when she began getting the pain again, and it got progressively worse. She decided to stay in bed, without calling a doctor. But eventually she got so bad that she couldn't even turn in the bed or sit up even a little. It was then that I began to get very worried. I even thought that a malignant tumour might possibly be what was causing it. In the middle of all this anguish I was feeling, I hit on the idea of suggesting to her to have recourse to the Father and to offer up her pain to him for whatever intention he wished. I sent her a card with the prayer for private devotion.

The result was quite extraordinary. No sooner had she begun to pray to the Father, when that same day she was able to get up towards evening and help to make the dinner. The next day she got up early and from that time to this she has been leading an absolutely normal life.

E.B.M., Santiago de Chile

#### FROM THE FATHER'S TOMB

My father is a very good person but, although he was baptised, he never showed any interest in practising his religion. I had occasion to visit the crypt where Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer is buried. I prayed to him as hard as I could for my father's conversion. It was noon at the time. As we are seven hours

ahead of Europe in the Philippines, it would have been about seven in the evening when I asked for this grace. At about nine o'clock that night, my father surprised my mother by asking her whether there would be Mass next day, which was Maundy Thursday. They went to Mass together that day, and to the Good Friday services as well.

My father is now taking his religious duties seriously.

X.X., Manila, Philippines

#### AN UNEXPECTED RECOVERY

My brother broke one of the vertebrae in his neck. It soon became obvious that he could not move any of his limbs and that he had lost all feeling in his body. A complete cure seemed impossible. Many of my friends and acquaintances began to turn to the intercession of Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer. Some of them made a journey to Rome and prayed for my brother at the tomb of the Founder of Opus Dei. After a whole series of unexpected improvements, he has now recovered completely, both physically and mentally. To me it seems like a miracle.

M.D., Cologne, Germany

#### HE WENT BACK OF HIS OWN ACCORD

I was very worried about my son who had escaped from the mental hospital where he was confined. I prayed to Our Lady and I said with great fervour the prayer to Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer. It was three p.m. At ten past three a brother of mine, who knew nothing about all this, telephoned the hospital to enquire about my son and he was told that the boy had returned five minutes previously of his own accord. Now I am saying the Rosary in thanksgiving, and I will continue the novena to Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer.

X.X., Milan, Italy

In gratitude for a very special favour in my spiritual life, which I obtained through the intercession of Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer, I am sending a donation towards the costs of publishing your Newsletter.

R.C., Madrid, Spain

A prayer to Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer: "May the number of genuine religious vocations to my Congregation increase, so we can look after all the parishes which need us." Petition granted: "Thirty excellent young candidates have joined us and more are coming. Glory be to God!"

M.N., Arequipa, Peru

My father was about to sever his connections with the family. We were all of us, my mother and the six children, in a terrible state. My mother and I began to entrust the matter to Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer. Within a few days my father relented.

X.X., Maracaibo, Venezuela

I hadn't been to the Sacraments for seven years. After saying the prayer to Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer, I went to confession and since then I have been going regularly.

X.X., Ibadan, Nigeria



## Letters received

My husband had been out of work for a long time. I prayed about this to Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer and my husband got a job in a very providential way. I am very grateful and I enclose a contribution towards your work of apostolate.

M.S., Chicago

I did a novena to Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer, praying for one of my sons, a priest, who seemed to be going astray. On the fourth day of the novena, he rang me to say that he had changed completely and had decided to be very faithful. He has kept to this decision. Praised be the Monsignor.

X.X., Dublin

My husband had not been to Confession for 37 years, and my son for 18. With all my heart I asked Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer to intercede and both of them went gladly, and have received Our Lord devoutly.

X.X., Guatemala City

A married couple had a very serious disagreement and, after twenty-five years of marriage, were planning to get a legal separation. People prayed to the Father and, miraculously, the husband changed his mind and they were reconciled.

A.A., Oporto, Portugal

My aunt had not been going to the Sacraments, so I gave her a prayer card of Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer. Some time later she said to me: "Did you hear about the miracle the Father did? Last Saturday I went to Confession and received Holy Communion, after forty-eight years."

X.X., Montevideo, Uruguay

A close friend of mine was leading a life rather like that of St. Augustine before his conversion. I prayed to the Father for him. He has changed his life so completely that he has married in the Church and is doing apostolate.

J.P. de C., Paris, France

We were very worried, my family and I, over a problem. We couldn't even sleep. A relative of ours gave us a prayer card with the prayer to Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer. We made a novena, and another . . . and another. We had almost given up hope when this relative told us that on the ninth of January, Monsignor's birthday, we should ask him for a present. On the next day, the 10th, we received his present: our problem was solved. I am sending a donation, and I recommend everybody in need to seek his intercession.

A.G., Quito, Ecuador

One of my sisters had already undergone three operations on her spine. The doctor had warned us that she could not stand another operation and that, if she had a relapse, she might end her days in a wheel chair. A short time ago we noticed that her back pains had started again and that she could not even sit down on an ordinary chair. We all of us, the whole family, at once began a

novena to Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer. On the last day of the novena, my sister told us that she was no longer feeling any pain and that she felt she was cured. Since then we have been distributing many prayer cards, so that other people should also seek the intercession of Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer.

X.X., Montreal, Canada

A number of us girls were trying to help the Catholic children in a girl's school. But the headmistress, who was opposed to the Catholic Church, put many obstacles in our way: she would not give the girls time to go to Confession, and she fixed dinner to be a few minutes before Mass started, etc. I asked Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer to intervene. The headmistress has now consented to a change in timetable, so that they can get to Mass on Sundays, and she has also allowed them time to go to Confession.

U.O., Nairobi, Kenya

My husband had not been practising for many years. During all that time I kept on praying for him. Recently I began a novena to Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer. Last Sunday, my husband suddenly said to me: "I'm coming with you to Mass." It's like a miracle.

X.X., Zurich, Switzerland

In 1975 my husband lost his job and was out of work for several months and everything seemed very complicated and hopeless. Then I began a novena to Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer and on the day after I finished it he was offered a job.

This year my husband was out of work again and, with a lot of faith, I began another novena, because I knew that God, through the Most Holy Virgin and Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer, would hear my prayers. Just when things were beginning to look really bad, my husband was offered a good job, outside Mexico, which was what we wanted.

M.V. de R., Mexico City

Nearly all the faithful in Momoyama parish have received the Newsletter. One lady, who together with her family had not been coming to Church for some time, felt moved, by a series of coincidences, to read the whole Newsletter. On the following Sunday there she was in Church with her family, wanting to return to the Sacraments. The parish priest can't get over it.

L.L., Kyoto, Japan

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 de Balaguer. 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.

We also gratefully acknowledge (and apologise for not being able to write to everyone individually) the donations sent in towards the costs of publishing and distributing the Newsletter and to help further the apostolic activities stemming from Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer's love for souls.

### 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 which, like a string of pearls which is broken but yet complete, make up *The Way* . . . there is none of the formal rigidity of a code in the warm brotherly understanding of the author, in 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 February 1934 (Cuenca, Spain) entitled *Consideraciones Espirituales*. Ever since then, the number of editions has steadily increased; by April 1977, a total of 2,637,075 copies had been published in 138 editions in thirty four languages. English editions currently published by Four Courts Press (Dublin), Sinag-Tala (Manila) and Scepter (Chicago).

### Holy Rosary

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

The first edition also appeared in 1934. Since then 40 editions have been published in ten languages. English editions by Scepter (Chicago) and Sinag-Tala (Manila).

### Conversations with Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer

A number of magazines and newspapers put specific questions to Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer, dealing with the topics of greatest interest to their respective readers. Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer answered the questions fully in writing. The book brings together the complete text of those interviews.

The first edition was published in 1968. From that time 27 editions have been published in seven languages. New 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 de Balaguer 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 March 1973. By April 1977, 26 editions had appeared in six languages. Published in English by Veritas (Dublin) and Sinag-Tala (Manila).

### 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.

## 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 Vice Postulation, 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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