

VICE POSTULATION OF OPUS DEI IN NIGERIA. Plot 7, Jalupon Estate Extension,
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The Servant of God **JOSEMARÍA**
ESCRIVÁ de **BALAGUER**
Founder of Opus Dei

NEWSLETTER No. 3

Seeking God Through Everyday Work

The example of Mgr. Josemaría Escrivá
in an article by Cardinal Luciani

*One month before he was raised
to the Chair of St. Peter
taking the name of John Paul I,
the Patriarch of Venice published an article
in Il Gazzettino (Venice, 25 July 1978)
on the spirit and example of
the Servant of God Josemaría Escrivá.
We are pleased to publish some extracts
from the article in grateful memory of
the late Roman Pontiff.*

In 1941, a Spaniard by the name of Víctor García Hoz was told after Confession one day, **God is calling you to be a contemplative.** He was amazed. He had always understood that "contemplation" was a thing for holy people well on the way to the mystical life, a height to be attained only by a chosen few, most of whom, besides, were withdrawn from the world. "But I", he writes, "was a married man, with two or three children already and hoping to have more (which was indeed what happened) and who had to work to raise a family."

Who, then, was this revolutionary confessor, who was vaulting over traditional barriers, offering mystical goals even to married folk? It was Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, a Spanish priest who died in Rome in 1975 at the age of seventy-three. He is best known as the Founder of Opus Dei.(...) What in fact the members of Opus Dei are, and what they do, has been explained by the Founder himself. As he said in 1967:

We are made up of a small percentage of priests, who have previously exercised a secular profession or trade; a large number of secular priests from many dioceses throughout the world (...); and a great multitude made up of men and women of different nations and tongues and races, who earn their living with their professional work. The majority of them are married, many others single. They share with their fellow citizens in

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: *Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer speaking of God in the Coliseo Theatre, Buenos Aires, 23 June 1974, during his catechetical journey to Argentina.*

the important task of making temporal society more human and more just. And they work, let me repeat, with personal responsibility, shoulder to shoulder with their fellow men and experiencing with them successes and failures in their noble struggle of daily endeavour, as they strive to fulfil their duties and to exercise their social and civil rights. And all this with naturalness, like any other conscientious Christians, without considering themselves special. Blended into the mass of their companions, they try at the same time to detect the flashes of divine splendour which shine through the most common everyday realities.

In poorer words, the common realities are the work we have to do each day; the flashes of divine splendour are the saintly lives we should lead. Escrivá de Balaguer, with Gospel in hand, constantly taught that Christ does not want us just to be goodish; he wants us to be very good indeed. But he wants us to attain this goodness not by doing extraordinary things, but through ordinary everyday activities. What should be out of the ordinary is the way we do them. Here, where we are, right in the middle of the street, in the office, in the factory, we can become saints, on condition that we carry out our duties competently, for love of God, and cheerfully, in such a way that our daily work becomes, not a “daily tragedy”, but, one can almost say, “a daily smile”.



My children, your ordinary contact with God takes place where your fellow men, your yearnings, your work and your affections are. There you have your daily encounter with Christ. It is in the midst of the most material things of the earth that we must sanctify ourselves, serving God and all mankind.

(*Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer*, n.113).

Something similar had been taught more than three hundred years earlier by St. Francis of Sales. (...) Escrivá de Balaguer however goes further than Francis of Sales in many respects. The latter also advocates sanctity for all, but it would seem he teaches only a “spirituality for the laity”, whereas Escrivá proposes a “lay spirituality”. Francis, in other words, almost always offers the laity the same means that the religious use, though with suitable adaptations. Escrivá is more radical. He even goes so far as to speak of “materialising” – in a good sense – the quest for sanctification. For him, material work itself must be turned into prayer and holiness.

The legendary Baron Munchausen tells a fable of a monstrous hare that had a double set of legs: four under its belly and four more on its back. Pursued by the hounds and sensing itself almost caught, it would turn upside down and carry on running with its fresh set of legs. For the Founder of Opus Dei, similarly monstrous are the lives of those Christians who seek to have a double set of activities: one consisting of prayers, for God; the other of work, relaxation and family life, for themselves. No, says Escrivá, life is one and it must be sanctified en bloc. That is why he speaks of a “materialised” spirituality. (...)

How, he would ask, can work be “God’s work” if it is done badly, hurriedly and incompetently? How can a bricklayer, an architect, a doctor, a teacher, be a saint, if he is not also trying as best he can to be a good bricklayer, a good architect, a good doctor, a good teacher? Gilson wrote something along the same lines in 1949: “We are told that it was faith which built the cathedrals in the middle ages. Agreed... but geometry also played its part.” Faith and geometry, faith and work done well go together for Escrivá; they are the two wings of sanctity.

Do everything for Love. Thus there will be no little things: everything will be big. Perseverance in little things for Love is heroism.

(*The Way*, 813).

Persevere in the exact fulfilment of the obligations of the moment. That work – humble, monotonous, small – is prayer expressed in action that prepares you to receive the grace of the other work – great and wide and deep – of which you dream.

(*The Way*, 825).

A priest in the hospitals of Madrid

In 1931, Don Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer was a priest who was not yet thirty years old. Three years earlier, Our Lord had placed in his heart the seed of a worldwide mission.

In September that year he was asked to act as chaplain to the Augustinian Recollect nuns of the Royal Patronato of Santa Isabel, of which he was to become Rector not long afterwards. This new pastoral appointment meant he would now have more time to devote himself in earnest to his own particular vocation, to fulfilling the will of God which Mgr. Escrivá was to define for his children as the call each of them has to **carry out Opus Dei on earth, by being yourself Opus Dei.**

In the previous five years several groups of people from all the social backgrounds then existing in Madrid had gathered about him. Their numbers may not have been great, but they were the beginnings which Don Josemaría was to refer to in *The Way*: **Don't judge by the smallness of the beginnings. My attention was once drawn to the fact that there is no difference in size between seeds that give annual plants and those that will grow into ageless trees** (*The Way*, 820).

Little by little those university students, clerks and workers became more aware of

what it meant to be a Christian: that they had a duty to be *salt and light* in the very place where God had put them, there where they lived their lives and did their work.

One day Don Josemaría heard about the state things were in at the General Hospital of Madrid. It was an enormous building on the same street as the church of Santa Isabel. The Servant of God already had ample experience of caring for the sick and the lonely. He saw immediately that there was an opportunity here to give a helping hand, and he also thought that such service in the General Hospital would be an excellent way of forming the young men around him. His ideal was that all those who came in contact with him should go deeper into the fundamental truths of the faith. He was not content to let them be Christians just in theory. He wanted them to see the supernatural meaning of their practical everyday living, with all its sorrows and joys. Long years of experience had taught him that close contact with illness and pain is a great way to help people discover the real meaning of facts and events. Contact with suffering can help people to forget themselves, to open their eyes and see how great the Christian ideal is, and how it can stimulate them to give themselves generously to others.



The façade of the General Hospital of Madrid as it was in the 1930s. In the background can be seen the church of the Patronato of Santa Isabel, where the Servant of God served as Rector.

For a long time he spent many of his afternoons visiting the General Hospital with groups of young men, or priests or workers. This was a job calling for tact and a great deal of self-denial. The wards and even the corridors were packed with patients, and the sanitary conditions left a lot to be desired. On top of this, there was a hard, hostile atmosphere about the place. Ignorance coupled with a constant anti-Catholic propaganda had influenced most patients, so that they looked upon a priest, and even an ordinary Christian, as their enemy. Distrust had to be overcome with affection and kindness, so as to dispel prejudice and be able to offer encouragement and comfort to the patients.

In those early years of Opus Dei I would go with brothers of yours to the hospitals of Madrid and we would chat with the patients: we used to make

their beds, wash their feet, cut their nails for them – sorry for all these details –, comb their hair, say a few kind words to them. . .

Slowly, as if savouring the memory, he once recalled: **I remember someone – and I can talk about him because he has been in Heaven for many years now. He was from a well known family and was one of the first in that period, in the very early years of Opus Dei. One day he collected a chamber pot from a patient with tuberculosis and it was. . .! I told him, “That’s the spirit, go and clean it!” Then I felt a bit sorry for him, because I could see in his face that it had turned his stomach. I went after him (. . .) and I saw him with a look of heavenly joy on his face, cleaning it with his bare hand.**

With this story in mind, Mgr. Escrivá wrote a point for meditation, which many people know: **Isn't it true, Lord, that you were greatly consoled by the childlike remark of that man who, when he felt the disconcerting effect of obedience in something unpleasant, whispered to you, “Jesus, keep me smiling!”** (*The Way*, 626).

Another day he was in the same General Hospital and a patient was pointed out to him with the words: “This one’s dying. There’s nothing we can do for him.” The dying man had the typical features and olive complexion of a gipsy. He had been stabbed in a fight: **I asked if we could be left alone (. . .). I spoke a few words to the gipsy and he was moved. I also pointed out to him that he was dying and he asked for Confession. Then, when I gave him the crucifix to kiss, he cried out, and I couldn't stop him:**

“I cannot kiss my Lord with this rotten mouth of mine.”

“Why not?” I said. “In a few moments he’ll be holding you close in his arms in Heaven, and you’ll be giving him a really loving kiss!”

Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer never forgot the words of that gypsy: **Don't you think it's a most beautiful way of showing one's contrition? Since then, there have been times when I too have said the same, alone, without crying out loud: "with this rotten mouth of mine, I cannot kiss thee, Lord". I learned from a dying gypsy how to make an act of contrition.**

After those visits to the General Hospital, Don Josemaría would sometimes take his young companions for a walk along the boulevards of the Prado or Recoletos. There they could talk things over calmly and the Founder of Opus Dei helped them reflect on the hours they had spent in the hospital wards and so draw conclusions and make resolutions which would have a real influence on their own lives and on those of the people they knew. The way he explained it, Christianity had to go hand in hand with a living, operative charity, its followers had to get close to the Cross, heroically close.

Don Josemaría's caring for the sick was not confined to a few hours each week or to visits to one or two set places. Whenever he was told of someone suffering, he would be there straight away, with words of encouragement, ready to offer his priestly services.

In later years he sometimes called to mind the hours he had spent with the sick and how it was among them that he had found the strength he needed in difficult times when a lot was at stake. One day, when asked why he had written in *The Way* that suffering is the touchstone of love, he replied: **you have spoken to me of *The Way*. I don't know it by heart, but there is a point which says: *Let us bless pain. Love pain. Sanctify pain. Glorify pain.* Do you remember it? I wrote that in a hospital at the bedside of a dying woman to whom I had just administered the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. How I envied her! That woman had had a very good**

social and economic position in life, and there she was in that wretched hospital bed, alone and dying, with no more company than what I could give, until she died. And there she was repeating, joyously, savouring the words: *Let us bless pain* – and she had every sort of moral and physical pain – *love pain, sanctify pain, glorify pain!*

The Princesa Hospital was another health and welfare centre that existed at that time. It was in San Bernardo Square. One of the doctors who worked there recalls, "From the day I was introduced to the Father, I often saw him in the Hospital, around the years 1933–34. He'd be there in the mornings, going from ward to ward, speaking to the patients, hearing Confessions and giving Holy Communion, with an affection and kindness that really won over both the staff and the patients (. . .). He wasn't afraid of infection, even though in every ward he entered there were patients with infectious diseases. More than once he was warned of the danger he was in by being with the patients. He would always reply, with his kindly smile, that he'd been immunised against all diseases."

Another hospital he went to was the King's Hospital, which during those years of the Second Spanish Republic had been renamed the National Hospital. It was arguably the most modern hospital in Madrid and it specialised in treating infectious diseases. Many of its patients had tuberculosis, for which at the time there was no known cure. A nun who belongs to the Daughters of Charity has the following recollections of Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer, "I still remember very clearly how Don Josemaría spoke to us about God, taking his cue from anything that might have happened (. . .) and he would say the same things to the patients (. . .). I remember how young consumptive girls even recovered their natural good spirits, although they knew they were going to die (. . .). I can well understand



The King's Hospital, Madrid, shortly after it was opened in 1925.

how with the passage of time many people should have understood his spirit and followed his teaching in Opus Dei."

Sister Engracia Echeverría, who was at that time the Superior of the community of nuns at the King's Hospital wrote many years later in her old age before Our Lord called her to his presence: "Don Josemaría was the soul of the group of priests who helped at that time. You could see he was tremendously apostolic. In my opinion, a real saint (. . .). Very courageous, at a time when courage and prudence were necessary to overcome so much opposition (. . .). He was very, very hard working (. . .). It was also obvious to me that his only concern was for the good of the patients' souls; he wanted to ensure that someone was with each patient caring for his soul right to the end."

On 13 September 1933 María Ignacia García Escobar died in the King's Hospital. She was the first member of the Women's Section of Opus Dei whom Our Lord called to himself. She had some little notebooks, in which she kept a diary of her thoughts. Writing in the style of the time, she witnesses to the prayer of the sick and dying women who were with her. One day, it would be an operation on the

throat, at other times, a cough or just simply their lack of appetite: all this they would offer up for the intention of that priest who went **a-begging for prayers**, because his intention, as we read in María Ignacia's diary, "requires prayers and sacrifice now, tomorrow and always".

Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer referred many times to the strength he found in the early years of Opus Dei: **There was once a priest who was twenty-six years of age and had the grace of God, a good sense of humour and nothing else. He had no virtues, no money. And he had to do Opus Dei. . . And do you know how he managed? Through the hospitals. That General Hospital of Madrid, packed with sick and destitute people lying there in the corridors, because there just weren't enough beds. That King's Hospital, full of consumptives at a time when consumption was incurable. . . Those were the weapons with which to fight and win! That was the treasure with which to pay! (. . .). And Our Lord has taken us all over the world, and we are now in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in America and in Oceania, thanks to the sick, who are a treasure. . .**

Under his spiritual influence

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

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

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

Montefalco Mexico

“It is quite a number of years now since I first went to visit Montefalco. My task then, as an architect, was to see what possibilities there were of turning the old estate to apostolic and social use on behalf of the local farm workers and their families.

After travelling some sixty miles along a tarmacked road from Mexico City, we



Mgr. Escrivá speaking to a group of country women at the farm school of Montefalco in June 1970.



A view of Montefalco (Jonatepec, Morelos State, Mexico) in 1967.

turned off on to an unpaved road and crossed the Amilpas valley which is in the State of Morelos. I was accompanied by some members of Opus Dei who spoke enthusiastically during the journey about an offer made by the owners of the property, the *Campo y Deporte* Association, to Opus Dei to take charge of this apostolic initiative, and of Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer's interest in accepting the offer.

On arrival at Montefalco, I was staggered by what I saw: walls in ruins, charred stonework and all on a massive scale. The site was dominated by a church which looked big enough to be a cathedral.

“You must be mad to want to take this place on. It's nothing but ruins!” was the first thing I said.

The only reply the others gave was to remind me of one of the things the Founder of Opus Dei used to say: **Dream and your dreams will fall short.** It was something which at the time I did not fully understand.”

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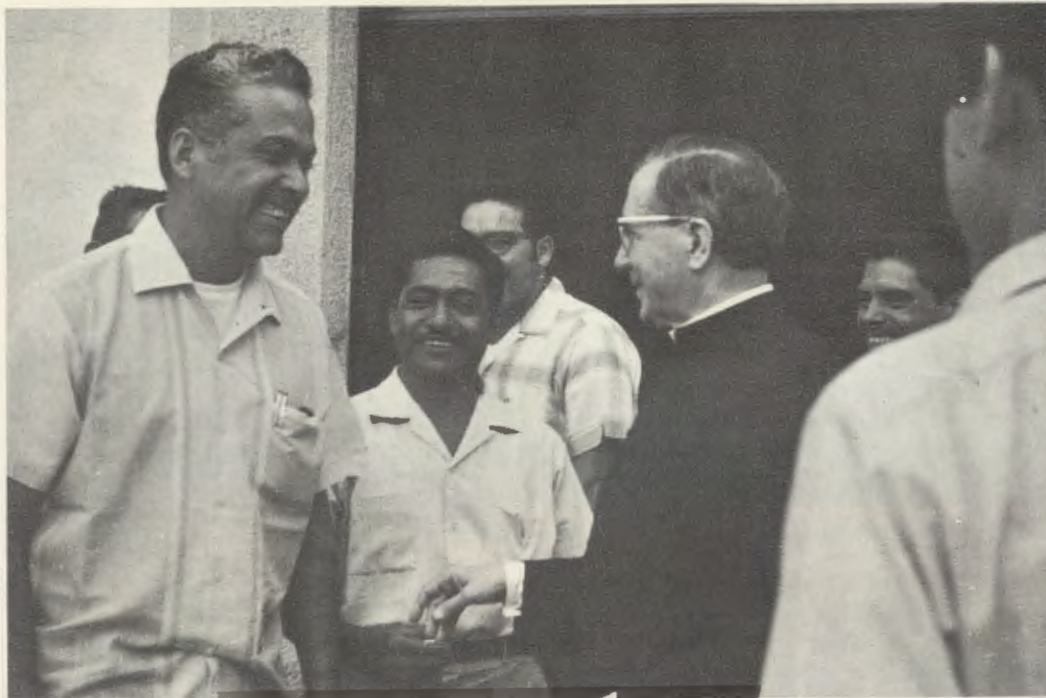
The Mexican architect who wrote these lines (he is now a member of Opus Dei) never forgot that phrase, nor the faith with which it was uttered. Now he can see with his own eyes how their dreams have fallen short.

Work on the reconstruction of the estate was begun in 1958 and it was to continue for many years. It was started, to quote Mgr. Escrivá, **without a penny, with the work of so many children of mine who have had to struggle and suffer, and with the affection and the generosity of many people.** The “Centro Agropecuario Experimental El Peñón” was set up straight away to give agricultural training to farm workers. Classes got under way in 1959.

At about the same time, in a separate and independent part of the estate, members of the Women's Section of Opus Dei set up the “Granja Escuela Montefalco”, a farm school for the womenfolk of the land.

Time has passed and the work has grown. The Agricultural Centre offers a three year farm training course and also a two year secondary education course. They are attended by hundreds of boys and young men from the surrounding districts. With the help of the teachers, former pupils have organised poultry and pig farming co-operatives, as well as one for animal foodstuffs. The marketing organisation for these products is also flourishing.

Concurrently, an extensive programme of cultural and Christian formation is organised from Montefalco through study groups and youth clubs for people in fifteen villages in the Amilpas valley.



4 June 1970. Mgr. Escrivá at the El Peñón agricultural training centre.

The "Granja Escuela" (farm school) offers young girls of the neighbourhood training in housecraft and domestic science. Most of the girls from the surrounding area as well as others from further afield have attended the farm school courses. By means of a school television series, apart from acquiring a broad general education, they learn the basic principles of home and farm economics and are also offered the opportunity of receiving sound Christian formation.

On top of this, activities are run throughout the year for people of all ages and social backgrounds who come to Montefalco from many parts of the country to attend study courses and retreats organised in a part of the estate set aside for the purpose.

In June 1970, Mgr. Escrivá spent three days in Montefalco. He spoke with the members of Opus Dei there and had long conversations with the farm workers of the neighbourhood. He also received many people who had travelled long distances to be able to be with him. The things he said to

them are a constant encouragement both for the work being done in Montefalco and for other similar activities all over the world.

During his stay, Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer went round the estate, including those parts which had still not been rebuilt and, with a nice sense of humour and affection, he made a reproach which was at the same time high praise for those who had begun Montefalco:

Montefalco is a work of madness done for the love of God. I often say that the teaching of Opus Dei can be summed up in two statements: to work with common sense, and to work with supernatural sense. Here in this place, Don Pedro (the first Counsellor of Opus Dei in Mexico) and my Mexican daughters and sons have worked only with supernatural sense. To take on cheerfully a pile of ruins, bigger than the palace of Versailles, from a human point of view is ridiculous . . . But you had the good of souls in mind, and you have made a marvellous dream of love come true. May God bless you.

Letters received

SHE DIDN'T SEEM INTERESTED

I took a Newsletter to a lady who had not been practising for many years and who was now suffering from cancer. When she saw the photograph of the priest on the front cover, she didn't seem interested. One day when the pain was particularly intense, she sat up in bed hoping to ease it a little by a change of posture. As she did so, she caught sight of the photograph on the cover of the Newsletter on her bedside table. She looked at it and said, "I'm sure you can help me". That was how she began to pray and, after a short while, the pain disappeared. From that moment she became interested in the priest and began to read some of his writings.

Since she had not been to the Sacraments for years, I asked her if she wanted to go to Confession, but she said that she didn't see the need for it. Knowing how gravely ill she was, I continued to entrust this petition to Mgr. Escrivá so that she would go to Confession before she died.

A few days later, she was taken into hospital. When I went to visit her I found her much happier and more serene. She told me she had wonderful news for me. That morning a priest had called into her ward and the first thing she did when he came to her was to ask who had sent him. The priest said that nobody had; he was just passing by. She asked for Confession straight away; and then she also received Holy Communion and the Anointing of the sick.

A few days after that she died.

X.X., Sydney, Australia

HE WOULDN'T DIE WITHOUT GOING TO CONFESSION

My uncle had not been to Confession in over twenty years. He had a lot of serious family troubles which finally drove him to despair and he tried to take his own life by poisoning himself.

As soon as I heard the news, I began to pray to Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer that my uncle would go to Confession. The poison had caused irreparable internal damage and the doctors couldn't understand how he was still alive. But I did. I was sure he wouldn't die until he had been to Confession.

He held out for four days before asking me to call a priest. We arranged for one to go to him immediately. My uncle went to Confession, was anointed and died two hours later.

F.L.R., Guadalajara, Mexico

HE WANTED TO BE BAPTISED

My husband, who was not a Catholic, had a stroke which paralysed the left side of his body. At about that time I received the Newsletter and, encouraged by the favours reported in it, I began to seek the intercession of Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer.

My husband learned to say the Hail Mary, which he said many times, especially during sleepless nights. He also learned other aspirations which we would say together. All this surprised me very much as up till then he had not believed in God. Years ago different priests had tried to bring him to the faith, but without success.

After a while my husband's health took a turn for the better and, once he had

recovered and was on his feet again, he still continued to pray and could often be seen with the prayer card to Mgr. Escrivá in his hand. I told the whole story to my parish priest and he advised me to ask my husband if he would be willing to be baptised. For two days I couldn't bring myself to ask him for fear that he might say no. I prayed hard. Finally I asked him and his immediate answer was, "Yes. I want to be baptised". It was a very moving experience for me.

S.K., Kyoto, Japan

LESS THAN 1½ HOURS AWAY FROM DEATH

On 23rd December my brother was admitted to hospital seriously ill with what was later found to be a very severe kind of malaria. He had just come back from Africa. My mother rang me later that evening and told me what had happened. Immediately I began to entrust my brother to the care of Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer.

On Christmas Eve I visited him in hospital. He looked in very poor shape. Both my parents were anxious to get a priest to him and my mother was saying the prayer of private devotion to the Father. I kept him in mind a lot at Midnight Mass.

I didn't see my brother again until the 27th, by which time he was looking a lot better, but was still very weak. When I saw him on the 30th, his incoherence had gone and he was able to sit up and talk normally. I was amazed at his swift recovery.

My mother told me how worried they had been on Christmas Day. The doctors said afterwards that my brother had been "less than 1½ hours away from death" that night.

S.M., London, England

HE WAS SAVED!

I am happy to inform you that once again my prayers to Mgr. Josemaría, the Founder of Opus Dei, have not been made in vain; as on so many other occasions, my prayers for help have been answered. In my work as a midwife I sometimes come up against difficult cases. A short while ago I was attending a very complicated birth. When the child was eventually delivered it seemed to be dead. We immediately tried every means of resuscitation we could, but unsuccessfully. I baptised the child while the mother was crying her heart out over the death of her child. I began to invoke the help of the Servant of God, Mgr. Josemaría, and I continued to apply artificial respiration. Suddenly I saw that the lungs were beginning to move a little and after a short time the child began to breathe. He was saved! Our black midwife was mystified. I said to her, "I asked the help of a holy priest who died recently. It was he who helped us." Her spontaneous reaction was, "Give me a prayer card too, Mother, so that I can have it in my house to protect my five children." Our people in Zaire certainly do have a lot of faith in the supernatural, in God.

Many, many thanks to the good Mgr. Josemaría for helping us so wonderfully.

Sister B.V., Ubandaka, Zaire

WORKING AGAIN

For two years now I have had a lot of trouble with my spinal column. Recently things got worse and I started to have severe pains, especially in my left leg. I underwent some treatment, but this didn't help. Being a taxi driver I need to use this leg a lot, but eventually a time came when I could hardly change gear. The pains were

so strong that my wife and son thought I should give up my job, even though it was our only source of income.

On 25th April, at two o'clock in the afternoon, I felt so bad I had to stop the taxi and rest a while. Then I read the Newsletter on Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer which somebody had given me. When I read of the many favours reported I decided to ask Mgr. Escrivá to cure me. I raised my eyes to heaven and, with great devotion, I said, "Father Escrivá, from what I've read here I can see that your prayers are always heard by Almighty God. Why don't you ask him to take away this pain in my leg so that I can start working again?"

Then I felt a kind of spasm, like a mild electric current moving all the way down my back. I moved my leg and found that it didn't hurt any more. I got out of the taxi and did all sorts of exercises with my leg, but I still felt no pain. I took a number of fares in the taxi to find out if my leg was still OK. It was, so I went to the doctor, but he advised me to wait a few days to make sure that I was really better. I did so and as I still have no pain the doctor said I could write this account – as I have done.

M.C., Madrid, Spain

MY THIRD FAVOUR

The following is the third favour I have received through the intercession of Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer.

My father had to leave his job because of frequent attacks of dizziness. The doctor told us he would have to go into hospital as he had a brain tumour. After some days in hospital, he was taken to a neurological institute where they examined him and took a biopsy of the top part of his spine where they thought the source of the tumour would be.

During all this time we were praying to the Founder of Opus Dei. My father also prayed and put himself in God's hands.

After all the tests the neurologist gave us the findings, saying, "We can find no tumour, and there is no sign of cancer."

We have already done a novena in thanksgiving for having been granted such a great favour. My mother has given out many prayer cards. Everyone tells her what a beautiful prayer it is and how much it encourages them. My two younger sisters wouldn't dream of going to bed without saying the prayer.

D.D., Montreal, Canada

AGAINST EVERYTHING ONE COULD EXPECT

On Maundy Thursday last year somebody told me that a friend of hers had not been to Confession for two years because she didn't think she needed to. It was enough, she said, to ask pardon from God in one's heart. Apparently she also went to Communion with this attitude and there was no way of convincing her otherwise.

I advised this person to continue to pray and, meanwhile, I entrusted the matter to the intercession of Mgr. Escrivá. I simply said to him that since he had loved the Holy Eucharist so much, he could not allow that offence against God, and also that Maundy Thursday would be an ideal day to teach her to treat God well in the Blessed Sacrament.

Against everything one could expect, I saw that very same person going to the confessional box, obviously having had a change of heart.

A.R., Paris, France

I had a phone call from my sister who sounded in a terrible state. She was in tears over a serious family row. I got her to agree to turn to Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer, asking him to restore peace to her family. Three days later the whole problem was solved and they now live in perfect harmony.

X.X., Rome, Italy

I prayed a lot to Mgr. Escrivá, asking for the conversion of a friend who had lost his faith through reading unsound books. Within a few days, this friend did a retreat, was converted and began to practise again.

J.M.G., Washington, U.S.A.

My father-in-law had been away from the Church for sixty years, during which time he had not received the Sacraments. Through the intercession of Mgr. Escrivá he was converted and received Holy Communion every week for the period just before he died.

The news that he had received the Sacraments came to us on the 9th of January, the birthday of Mgr. Escrivá. The letter had been lost in the post for three months before reaching La Paz from California.

V.de W., La Paz, Bolivia

I have twin nephews who are five years old and who had not yet been baptised because their father mistakenly thought that they should only be baptised when they asked for it themselves. Nobody was able to make him change his mind.

I began to say the prayer of private devotion to Mgr. Escrivá, asking for this favour. Not long after, I received a telephone call and was told that the twins were being baptised that week.

L.D., Quito, Ecuador

I am writing this letter in recognition of the many favours I have received through the intercession of Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer, in accordance with the request at the bottom of the prayer card.

The first and principal favour was that, after being seven years away from the Sacraments, I said the prayer on the card and found that I suddenly felt able to go to Confession. Since then I have been going regularly.

W.O., Ibadan, Nigeria

I had been quite a while seeking employment as a secondary school teacher. Then I received a card with the prayer for private devotion to Mgr. Escrivá and I began a novena.

Despite the difficulties, I obtained steady employment in a school, and in my best subject, with the prospect of advancing to a high position in my profession.

M.M., Dublin, Ireland

A friend of mine had kidney trouble and was about to have a very risky operation. I gave her a prayer card for private devotion to Mgr. Escrivá and advised her to ask God through his intercession to remove the need for the operation. When I went to visit her the following day I found her in very good spirits. She had spontaneously ejected the stone in the kidney that very morning, after having said the prayer for private devotion with great faith.

M.H.S.L.R., São José dos Campos, Brazil

One of our sons had been drifting away from the faith and from us, and we only realised it one day when the damage had already been done. He had been led unwittingly by some of his friends to follow the teachings of a certain religious sect. My husband and I were shocked and felt deeply sorry that something so vitally important had been so neglected in our relationship with the boy.

This being the case, we decided to make a novena to Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer and Our Lord deigned to hear a mother's prayers. Just two weeks after finishing the novena, my son went to see a priest. He went to Confession and received Holy Communion for the first time in three years.

G.T.C., Manila, Philippines

My son, who is ten years old, woke up one day with fever and began to have fits. We took him to the local doctor and afterwards he was taken to a hospital in Lima. He was three days in the intensive care unit and we were told that his condition was serious. I was asked for written permission to allow the doctor to make an examination of his bone marrow. Encephalitis was diagnosed. The doctors were unsure when he would recover consciousness or whether he would ever be normal again.

I prayed to God through the intercession of Mgr. Escrivá and I asked for a miracle. I prayed that my son would recover and be able to speak normally. And that is exactly what happened. I am very grateful to Mgr. Escrivá. Our Lord has worked the miracle I asked for, because my son has recovered. He is still under treatment, of course, since the doctor says he must be kept under observation for three years. Still, to all intents and purposes, you can say that he has been cured.

E.M. de S., San Mateo, Peru

My second son got an infection of the lung at the same time as he was undergoing treatment for another sickness. He was at death's door. We entrusted him to Our Lady and fervently said the prayer for private devotion to Mgr. Escrivá. The results were miraculous. From that very moment his condition began to improve and the specialist who is treating him is astonished at his recovery.

E.M-G., Eiken, Switzerland

I spoke to a friend of mine whose husband was critically ill in hospital about Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer and we agreed to do a novena. After a few days I went to visit her and she was very happy since her husband's health had greatly improved.

By the last day of the novena he was well enough to leave the hospital and go home.

I.M. de S.A., Lisbon, Portugal

A very hasty decision to change jobs led me to resign my job and I found myself out of work. I then asked Mgr. Escrivá to help me and within a few weeks, despite the high rate of unemployment in the country, I have managed to find suitable work.

J.G., Essen, W. Germany

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 July 1979, a total of 2,850,000 copies had been published in 156 editions in thirty-four languages. English editions currently published by Four Courts Press (Dublin), Sinag-Tala (Manila) and Scepter (New York).

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. A total of 252,000 copies in 48 editions have been published in eleven languages. English editions by Four Courts Press (Dublin), Scepter (New York) 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 29 editions have been published in seven languages and a total of 242,000 copies. 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 July 1979, 33 editions had appeared in eight languages and a total of 235,000 copies. Published in English by Veritas (Dublin) and Sinag-Tala (Manila).

Friends of God

A new collection of eighteen homilies in which the author's warm and friendly conversation with God is centered 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, it has so far seen 7 editions in several languages. English edition available 1980.

The foreword is by the Very Rev. Alvaro del Portillo, who succeeded Mgr. Escrivá as President General of Opus Dei in September 1975.

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 and mail to *Vice Postulation of Opus Dei*, P.O. Box 994, Surulere, Lagos.

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.

JANUARY 1980