



The Servant of God
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This Newsletter is published with the ecclesiastical approval of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

NEWSLETTER No. 7

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 founded the Women's Section of Opus Dei, and on 14 February 1943, within Opus Dei, the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross. Opus Dei received the definitive approval of the Holy See on 16 June 1950; and on 28 November 1982 it was established as a personal Prelature. This legal framework, introduced into Church Law by the Second Vatican Council, had been desired and foreseen by Monsignor Escrivá.

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 other thousands of people 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 over 60,000 members, of 80 nationalities, serving the Church with the same spirit of complete union with, and deep veneration for, the Pope and the Bishops which Monsignor Escrivá had always practised and instilled in his sons and daughters.

The Holy Mass was the root and centre of the interior life of the Founder 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 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 prelatial Church of Our Lady of Peace, Viale Bruno Buozzi 75, Rome, continually accompanied by the prayer and gratitude of his sons and daughters, and of the countless people who have come closer to God, drawn by the example and teaching of the Founder of Opus Dei. The Cause of Beatification and Canonisation of Monsignor Escrivá was presented in Rome on 19 February 1981.

Cover: Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá (1972).

Completion of the first stage of the cause of Canonisation

On Saturday 8 November 1986, at the Tribunal of the Vicariate of Rome, the closing session of the Investigative Process on the life and virtues of Monsignor Escrivá took place. This ended the first stage of the Cause of Beatification and Canonisation of the Founder of Opus Dei.

More than six years had elapsed since 19 February 1981, when the Vicar of Rome, Cardinal Ugo Poletti, published the Decree of Introduction of the Cause for Beatification and Canonisation. During that time, in 374 sessions, the ecclesiastical judges heard and recorded the statements of witnesses. The Tribunal of the Archdiocese of Madrid, which heard a large number of Spanish-speaking witnesses, was completed on 26 June 1984. Also in Madrid, two Processes dealing with extraordinary cures were concluded. One concerned an instantaneous disappearance of tumours, and the other a cure of a malignant lymphoma.



The Pope's Vicar for the Diocese of Rome, Cardinal Poletti, President of the Tribunal, signing the official record at the closing session of the Process. Rome, 8 November 1986.

The closing session took place in the Lateran Palace. It was presided over by Cardinal Poletti, who as the Pope's Vicar for the Diocese of Rome was President of the Tribunal which took statements from the witnesses. Besides the members of the Tribunal, ecclesiastical and civil authorities also attended. These included several Cardinals and Bishops, and the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See. Also present was the Prelate of Opus Dei, Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo.

When the session began the Notary read the official record which formally concluded the investigative stage. The members of the Tribunal signed the Notary's record and ordered all the documents, contained in three sealed boxes, to be deposited with the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. After the sealing of the boxes, the Postulator of the Cause, Father Flavio Capucci, briefly expressed appreciation for the work carried out by the Tribunal in Rome. Referring to a comment of the Prelate of Opus Dei regarding the Cause of Beatification, he said: "Echoing Monsignor Escrivá's teaching, he reminded me that Opus Dei was not seeking any human glory in this Process, as its glory should always consist in doing God's will rather than in receiving praise or honour from men. The only purpose Opus Dei was seeking in promoting the Cause of Canonisation of our beloved Founder – he told me – is the good of the Church: his message about the sanctification of all human affairs has already given rise to a desire in countless souls to reach intimate union with Christ in the circumstances of daily life." Father Capucci also commented that Monsignor Escrivá's reputation for holiness had spread throughout the world, and that there was a constant inflow of reports about the numerous graces which the founder of Opus Dei is obtaining from Heaven.

Towards the end of the ceremony, Cardinal Poletti gave a short biographical profile of Monsignor Escrivá, and added: "At a time, so imbued with a secularism which seems to be drowning spiritual life in indifference, the message of the Servant of God has a providentially fruitful rôle to play: it is, in fact, a permanent indicator which shows how one can project the light of Christ over the whole of society and vivify all fields of human endeavour from within." He recalled that in the Decree of Introduction of the Cause, he had already said that "for having proclaimed the universal vocation to holiness from the moment that he founded Opus Dei in 1928, Monsignor Escrivá has been recognised by all as a precursor of the Council precisely in what constitutes the fundamental nucleus of its teaching". Cardinal Poletti went on: "By proclaiming the need to reach the fulness of contemplation in the middle of the world, Monsignor Escrivá has shown that all created things depend intrinsically on God and are ordered to Him: any possible split between human affairs and the life of grace has been made good. Everything then becomes a way to meet God, raw material for personal sanctification, and



The Prelate of Opus Dei, Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo, greeting Cardinal Poletti and Cardinals Poupard and Bafile at the closing session of the Process.

an opportunity for generous service to one's neighbour. And so all man's actions are taken up into the mystery of the Redemption."

"Love for freedom", Cardinal Poletti continued, "is a key point of his teaching, particularly in everything connected with the activity of lay people in temporal structures. He wished this freedom to be used with the corresponding sense of responsibility, in order to attain truth and goodness in a manner fully in accordance with the faith, and in loyal fidelity to the teaching of the Church."

He ended by pointing out that "everywhere there are very many faithful – of whom I am happy to be one – who have recourse with faith to the intercession of the Servant of God for their material and spiritual needs. We all hope to see him raised up soon to the honour of the altar and put forward as a model of Christian life for the whole Church. May our prayers rise up to obtain this grace from God."

He then declared concluded the session of the ordinary tribunal of the diocese of Rome for the closing of the Investigative Process of the Servant of God, Monsignor Escrivá.

Mother of God, our Mother

The Virgin is our Mother. This is something I have tried to incorporate into my life, something which I have preached continuously, and that every Catholic has heard and repeated a thousand times until it becomes fixed in the depths of his heart.¹ These were the words the founder of Opus Dei addressed to Our Lady in 1970.

His intimate union with Our Lady went from strength to strength throughout the life of the Servant of God. He had no hesitation in declaring: **The love which God has shown for us through Mary has all the depth of something divine; at the same time it has the familiarity and the warmth proper to anything human.**² From childhood this devotion took root in his soul, flowered and became inseparable from his radiant love for Jesus Christ, accompanying him through all the vicissitudes of the foundational journey up to the very moment of his death on 26 June 1975.

Our Lady came early and manifestly into his life on the occasion of an illness which took him to the very edge of death. The doctors had already given up hope for him and his mother made the promise to take him to Our Lady of Torreciudad if he got better. He was two years old when his parents, fulfilling the promise, went on a pilgrimage to Torreciudad in 1904. Later, referring to this cure, his mother would say to him: "My son, you were more dead than alive; as God has kept you here on earth, it must be for something great."³

In a deeply Christian home, as a young boy, Josemaría nourished his piety on the teachings and the example of his family. From them he learned children's prayers,

which he would never forget. Every morning and evening, he would later relate, I too repeat not just once but many times: **My Lady and my Mother, I offer myself entirely to you, and in proof of my filial affection I consecrate to you my eyes, my ears, my tongue, my heart . . .**⁴

From the age of sixteen, when he began to have the first inklings of a vocation which was to be made clear to him a decade later, the whole of his interior life and activities were closely bound to Our Lady's intention. This period of his youth was characterised by daily visits to Our Lady of the Pillar (Saragossa) and by the thousands of insistent, persevering and intense aspirations – **Domine ut videam!, Domine, ut sit!** "Let me see Lord, what you want of me; Lord may I do your will." **Domina, ut videam! Domina, ut sit!** "Blessed Lady, let me see what you want of me; may what God expects of me and what I feel so deeply come to be." With this submissive attitude of self-giving and expectation, the Servant of God was led by the hand of Our Lady to the second of October 1928, when he saw the Work God wanted him to found.

He placed Opus Dei and all its apostolates under the protection of the Virgin Mary. Of Her he was able to say, referring to the fourteenth of February 1930 (which was when the Women's Section of Opus Dei was founded): **You did not have a foundress; your foundress was Our Blessed Lady.**⁵ Monsignor Escrivá spent his life in the service of the Church, under Our Lady's guidance. **I never thought that to carry out the Work would bring with it so much sadness, so much physical and moral pain, especially**



The Servant of God kissing the feet of the statue of Our Lady, Mother of Fair Love, in the shrine on the campus of the University of Navarre, Spain, 23 April 1967.

moral suffering . . . Iter para tutum. Mother of mine! Mother! I had no one but you! Mother! Thank you!⁶

If all the events which show how the love of the Servant of God for Our Lady pervaded his whole life were written, they would fill many books. One of them took place in 1931, when he devoutly picked up a small page, torn out of a catechism, which he found lying on the ground by a tree in a district of Madrid called Los Pinos. It was a picture of Our Lady. With a spirit of reparation he framed it with good material so that it could preside over the little library of the DYA Academy, the first centre of Opus Dei. And what of the full rosaries, which he said as he went rapidly to and fro, through the centre of Madrid or its poor surrounding districts, searching for souls in need of physical and spiritual comfort? As he passed he discovered with joy, images of Our Lady which he greeted with burning aspirations. He found them in facades of houses, in a niche of a public building or in a city wall, like the statue of

Our Lady of Almudena, before which he would kneel and pray devoutly whenever he had to walk along the Cuesta de la Vega.

From the early days, accompanied by the boys to whom he tried to give Christian formation, he would visit "the poor of Our Lady", as he used to call them. It was in her honour that he came to their help in the inner city areas of the capital. He bore the life of Our Lady so deeply impressed on his heart and mind that one day in 1931, after saying Holy Mass, he wrote the book *Holy Rosary at one sitting*. It is a book which breathes, in its freshness and originality, the select quality of his Marian contemplation. **The beginning of the way, he tells us in its Preface, at the end of which you will find yourself completely carried away by love for Jesus, is a trusting love for Mary.**

Convinced that the Mother of the Redeemer is the most direct and safest road to God, and having experienced her maternal care on countless occasions, he declared with simplicity: **If I want you to imitate me in anything,**

it is in my love for Our Lady. "That", explained the Vicar-General of Opus Dei, who had lived at his side for many years, "was the only exception in which the Father put himself forward as an example. It was only necessary to speak for a few minutes to the founder of Opus Dei to understand that this remark sprang up as a natural consequence of his personal experience for getting really close to God."⁷

The Virgin Mary appeared in everything he did – in what he said, in his gestures and looks, in his writings and sentiments, and in every footstep of his journey here on earth. To her he had recourse in difficulty, as in 1946, when, in Barcelona, he entrusted to Our Lady of Ransom the dealings he was to have in Rome for the pontifical approval of Opus Dei. So great was the newness of this pastoral phenomenon, in its ascetical, apostolic and institutional aspects, that it did not seem possible to fit it into the existing juridical moulds of the times. However Our Lady's help became evident and when, after only a few months, a solution was found, the Servant of God stated that **every step in the juridical path of the Work has been taken with the protection of the Mother of God.**⁸

This path was often paved with obstacles. It was in 1951 when the Servant of God had the foreboding that one of these critical moments was approaching, and that a violent storm was threatening Opus Dei with intent to undo it. **Not knowing where to turn on earth, I addressed myself, as always, to heaven, he wrote. On 15 August 1951, after a journey (why not admit it?) of penance, in Loreto I consecrated the Work to the Most Sweet Heart of Mary.**⁹ On that occasion, too, the faith of the Servant of God was rewarded and the Most Blessed Virgin did not take long in making the obstacles melt away.

Then came the years of the expansion of Opus Dei throughout the five continents. The Father, whenever he sent the first people to a new nation, used to give them his blessing and a picture of Our Lady (he had no money to give them) with the certainty that she would not abandon her children. Even when the difficulties of the beginnings were

tough, they never lacked the good humour and the resilience which the founder inspired in them from Rome with his prayers and his deep Marian devotion. **Devotion to Our Lady is not something soft and sentimental. It fills the soul with consolation and joy to precisely the extent that it means a deep act of faith, making us go outside ourselves and put our hope in the Lord,**¹⁰ just as the Mother of Jesus Christ did.

I have filled the roads of Europe with Hail Mary's and songs.¹¹ Thus he described his journeys to begin apostolic activities in different countries or consolidate recent initiatives. He also renewed the consecration of the Work, made in Loreto, at other Marian shrines: in Lourdes, in Fatima, in Saragossa at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar, in Einsiedeln (Switzerland), in Willesden (London), etc.

He suffered terribly on account of the Church's crisis and the confusion which spread among many Christians during the last years of his life. In May 1970, with the intention of entrusting the salvation of souls to Our Lady, he made a novena to the Virgin of Guadalupe in her Basilica.

Surrounded by a small group of his sons, he said the mysteries of the Rosary interspaced with other prayers he would say aloud. Recalling the "flowers of May", offered as a child to Our Lady in Barbastro, he said to her: **Lady of ours, now I bring to You (I have nothing else) thorns, the ones I bear in my heart; but I am sure that through You they will be turned into roses (. . .) I have had to come to Mexico to tell You once more, my lips and my soul filled with confidence, that we trust You entirely . . .**

We do not have any ambition other than that of serving your Son and all souls, for his sake and with your help. Now I am really telling You with my heart aflame: Monstra te esse Matrem! And don't tell me: Monstra te esse filium! For although I am conscious of my littleness, I don't know what else I can do. If I can do anything else, tell me, tell me!, and I will fulfil it with your help, because alone I am not able . . . Pray for us sinners! for that is what we are. But we know that You are Refugium peccatorum!,



The Servant of God with several members of Opus Dei, saying the Rosary in the esplanade of the Shrine at Fatima, 2 November 1972.

*Auxilium christianorum!*¹² the refuge of sinners, comfort of the afflicted!

His apostolic journeys continued unflinching, and they always ended up at shrines of Our Lady. And his catechesis through America in 1974 and 1975 is marked by Marian milestones: Our Lady of Aparecida (Brazil), Our Lady of Lujan (Argentina), Our Lady of Lo Vazquez (Chile) . . .

Monsignor Escrivá was an extremely grateful man. He turned continuously to the Mother of God in thanksgiving for every favour. His heart beat with Marian devotion, which was from the beginning something inseparable from the spirit of the Work. And, for the members of Opus Dei he fixed, as devotions to Our Lady, certain norms of piety and customs, which were all very much part of Christian tradition. These included filial aspirations, greeting her images, the Angelus, saying the rosary daily and three Hail Mary's at night asking for Holy Purity, celebrating Saturdays and other Marian feasts of the calendar, visits to the poor, pilgrimages in May to shrines or churches dedicated to her etc.

With clear supernatural conviction he maintained that **we go to Jesus – and we always 'return' to him – through Mary.**¹³ **With this same conviction I affirm, he wrote towards the end of his life, that we should not be surprised that those who do not want Christians to go to Jesus – or to 'return' to Him if by any chance they have lost Him – should begin by keeping silent about union with Our Lady or stating, like ungrateful children, that traditional devotions are out of date . . . If in the soul of a Christian you weaken its relationship with Mary you begin a deviation which easily leads to the loss of the Love of God.**¹⁴

In 1970, when the Servant of God was in Mexico, looking at a picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who was giving a rose to the Indian Juan Diego, he prayed aloud: **This is how I would like to die: looking at the Blessed Virgin and for her to give me a flower.**¹⁵ That is how he died. It was midday on 26 June 1975. As he entered the room where he worked he directed his gaze, as usual, to the picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe which he had there, and collapsed on the floor: Our Lady had answered his prayer.

¹ *Memories of Pilar*, an article by the Servant of God published in *El Noticiero*, Saragossa 11 October 1970.

² *Ibid.*

³ cf A. Vázquez de Prada, *El Fundador del Opus Dei*, Rialp, Madrid 1983, note 35, pg. 495.

⁴ HRF (Historical Records of the Founder) 20589, pg. 18.

⁵ HRF 20168, pg. 109.

⁶ HRF 20589, pg. 124.

⁷ Javier Echevarría, *Love for Our Lady in the teachings of Monsignor Escrivá*, Palabra Magazine, nos. 156-157, Madrid 1978, pg. 30.

⁸ HRF 20754, pg. 8.

⁹ HRF 20755, pg. 128.

¹⁰ *Christ is passing by*, 143.

¹¹ HRF 20589, pg. 451.

¹² HRF 20166, pg. 788-791.

¹³ *The Way*, 495.

¹⁴ *La Virgen del Pilar*, article by the Servant of God published in *Libro de Aragon*, Saragossa 1976.

¹⁵ *Postulation for the Cause of Beatification and Canonisation of the Servant of God, Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, Priest, founder of Opus Dei, Articles of the Postulator*, Rome 1979, no. 402.

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, 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, 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.

IFES – Guatemala Instituto Femenino de Estudios Superiores

(Women's Institute for
Higher Studies)

In February 1975, a few months before his death, Monsignor Escrivá spent some days in Guatemala, at the end of his third catechetical trip to America. Like the previous ones, this trip was characterised by the abundance of the doctrine he sowed. Moved by his desire of serving the Church ever more generously, the Servant of God inspired his daughters and sons to carry out an ever wider and more fruitful apostolate which would lead them to set



The central building of IFES.



The work of IFES reaches a great many of the villages of Guatemala.

the whole of society alight with Christian ideals. During those days, with his heart filled with hope, he blessed a plot of land situated to the south of the capital of Guatemala, where the construction of the new IFES buildings was about to begin. The previous buildings, inaugurated in 1964, had become too small for the growing number of pupils and the greater variety of activities being carried out.

This meant a new phase in the life of the Centre, born, like so many others, out of the concern the founder of Opus Dei had for the training of women. From the early years of his priesthood, Monsignor Escrivá had reminded people of the fundamental rôle which Christian women play – in many cases with their direct participation in public life – in the improvement of social structures and especially in the strengthening of the family. **They will do this to the extent to which they are humanly and professionally equipped. Both family and society clearly need this special contribution, which is in no way**

secondary to that of men.¹

The activities of IFES are aimed at the education of women, so that they may be in a position to make this special contribution in vital sectors of society – the family, education, domestic arts and management, health services and farming – and work towards a well-balanced development. To this purpose the Women's Institute for Higher Studies has developed a range of training courses which have had a marked effect on the community.

It has two Faculties at University level: Interior Design and Institutional Management. If all that IFES does is due to the spiritual inspiration of the Servant of God, this is especially true of the Faculty of Institutional Management which runs a five year course to prepare students to look after the domestic management of hospitals or hotels and offers the technical training needed for the better organisation of the home and for women to fulfil their rôle as primary educators in the family. The Degree course of this Faculty was



A group of students in the project room.

granted official recognition in 1984, five years after the inauguration of the new IFES buildings.

Besides this, the Centre has a wide range of educational programmes and correspondence courses (also at University level) on home management, general culture and technical subjects as applied to the care of the home: architecture, medicine, psychology, dietetics, economics, etc... It organises other external courses in many towns and villages, thus spreading its influence throughout Guatemala. Besides its teaching activities, IFES is concerned with advising many other bodies in other Central American countries which offer similar courses for the education of women.

As well as taking care of the technical side of the subjects, IFES, following the lead of the Servant of God, aims at providing an all-round education for its pupils, helping them to incorporate into their work ideals and attitudes through which they will give a truly Christian solution to the problems of society and of the family.

The breadth of this work in the field of education has been publicly recognised on numerous occasions. The range of its academic activities has turned IFES into a most influential Centre in Guatemala itself and in other Central American countries. Its international prestige is largely due to the extra-curricular activities organised:

conferences, lectures, seminars, group discussions, presentation of theses, etc...

In response to the constant concern of the Servant of God for the less fortunate areas of society, IFES has also set up basic education projects in rural areas. Groups of teachers and pupils go out to distant villages, inhabited by the indigenous people, where they give courses on how to make the best use of the food they have, on hygiene, first aid, etc... and they teach the children the fundamentals of Christian doctrine. In this way IFES has extended its range of influence over thousands of peasant families, providing general and technical education, together with the teaching of the Christian faith, to the most alienated sectors of society.

What in 1975 was only a building site has become, just a few years on, a thriving training centre for the professional development and cultural advancement of women. A resolve to make Christ the firm foundation of all human activities inspired the life and teaching of Monsignor Escrivá from 1928 onwards. And from 1953, this is what inspired the work of the first members of Opus Dei in Central America. It is the common denominator of all the apostolic works, such as IFES, where the spirit of Opus Dei provides a service which extends to people from all walks of life.

¹ *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer*, 87.

Letters received

PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER

Just a little note to let you know I have changed my address.

I would like to add that I have Father Josemaría to thank for the fortuitous and miraculous events which led to our move.

I made the Novena virtually continuously over a year: the answer at first seemed to be a resounding and heart-breaking No. But my husband was so unhappy in his work that I just had to persist in my prayer. I kept re-reading the letters in the *Newsletters*, affirming people's faith in the power of God and in the intercession of Father Josemaría. Those letters gave me the strength to persevere in my prayers.

And the blessings now? "Pressed down and flowing over..." Its like a dream come true.

I enclose a small donation towards the work of Opus Dei. The *Newsletters* have boosted my faith, and I pray that many others may be helped, spiritually and physically, by your work.

Mrs M.B., Devon (England)

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

I met X at the beginning of the academic year at College. After a few months we became good friends, and I soon found out that she was a Catholic but she had not been to Confession for many years. I talked to her about it many times but she did not want to go. She continued with this attitude throughout the year.

In August I decided to start an intensive novena to Monsignor Escrivá, so that my friend would go to Confession before the end of September when she would be going to France for a year.

A week before she left we went on a visit to a hospital. On the bus she told me that in the morning she had been reconciled with a friend with whom she had not been on speaking terms for two years. She told me how it began and how ridiculous it was. But she also said that she felt too proud to go to that friend and ask her to forget it all. Finally she decided to write to her and be friends again.

Then I told her that this was the present situation between herself and God. It was up to her to be reconciled again. We talked for a while, and having been to the hospital we went to a Centre of Opus Dei. There she went to Confession after nine years without receiving this Sacrament.

I thank Monsignor Escrivá for granting this favour.

I.P., London (England)

CONVERSION AFTER HALF A CENTURY

We have been praying for my brother's conversion for fifty years when, by a miracle, the booklet of Monsignor Josemaría was put through the letter-box. We have been reciting the prayer to him for many weeks, and from then onwards, everything started to happen – and by no means through human design, and we alone realise this.

He has had the grace to return after all those years, and I still recite the prayer to Monsignor Josemaría, so that he will continue to receive the grace he has been given.

Enclosed is a small offering in thanksgiving.

M.D., Merseyside (England)

A REPENTANT ROBBER

On Sunday 21 April I was on my way to a centre of Opus Dei for a day of recollection. While crossing a street I saw someone who looked suspicious. I prayed to my Guardian Angel and kept going. Suddenly, I realised that he was following me and catching up on me. Taking hold of my arm, he told me to give him everything I had on me and that, if I did, nothing would happen to me. My first reaction was to pray to Monsignor Escrivá and I cried out "Father!" "What on earth are you saying?", said the youth. I gave him my earrings, my watch, a ring . . . , everything. "Now, the money", he added. As I had a copy of *The Way of the Cross* by Monsignor Escrivá in my hand, I asked him to hold it while I opened my handbag to show him that there was not a peseta in it – only some writings of the Founder of Opus Dei and my rosary beads. While I rummaged he was staring intently at a prayercard of Monsignor Escrivá which was sticking out of *The Way of the Cross*.

Having got all he wanted, he ran off, but not before giving me a push that threw me to the ground. I thought that the best thing to do was to pray to Monsignor Escrivá and to leave everything in his hands, which is what I did. I crossed the next street and was suddenly aware of someone coming up behind me, panting. I saw, to my horror, that it was my assailant. "Here!", he said. I put out my hand and he gave me everything he had taken. "It's all because of the priest in the picture", he said. Before he made off, I managed to give him the prayercard of Monsignor Escrivá, to whom I attribute this favour with all certainty.

P.N.V., Valencia (Spain)

THE PAIN WENT AWAY

One day last summer my little two-year-old daughter was playing about and suddenly began to cry. Her left hand was inflamed and began to go purple. I took her to the Casualty unit of a nearby hospital where a nurse examined her. To get her to hold out her hand the nurse offered her a toy, but the child was in severe pain and wouldn't make even the slightest movement.

The nurse ordered X-rays. While waiting, I said the prayer for private devotion to the Servant of God Josemaría Escrivá for half-an-hour, asking him for the cure of my little daughter.

I was again sent to Casualty where the nurse showed the same toy to the child who, without hesitating, put out her hand to take it. She no longer felt any pain. Surprised, the nurse began to move the hand and the child did not complain. Thinking that some doctor had seen her, the nurse asked me what medication had been given. I replied none. She looked at me in disbelief, unable to explain what had happened. But I knew: Monsignor Escrivá had cured my little daughter.

Since then, whenever the child sees me with the prayercard of the Servant of God in my hands she says to me "this father cured me".

E.O., Chicago (U.S.A.)

HE RECEIVED THE LAST SACRAMENT

A patient with stomach cancer was admitted to the hospital where I work. His condition deteriorated daily and he was given intravenous feeding. He was a Catholic, who was getting on in years, but did not practise. He was not aware that he was getting worse and that he would die shortly. He did not want to receive the last Sacrament in spite of having it offered to him by his next of kin.

I began to pray to Monsignor Escrivá for the patient, saying the prayercard. Meanwhile, the patient was getting worse and it was thought likely he would die within a few days. After praying about it very intensely to the Servant of God, I went to the man one night and spoke to him about the supernatural meaning of his illness and his approaching death. He reacted very well and agreed to receive the last Sacrament. That same night he called the hospital chaplain and was anointed. He died the following day.

M.H., Essen (W. Germany)

THREE OFFERS OF JOBS

For about one year and eight months I was unemployed and desperately in need of a job. I used to try here and there, but only got empty promises. Then somebody who was influential came to my help and at least there was some hope.

But I devoted my prayers to God's servant Josemaría, daily, hoping that soon something would come up. My aunt who is in Opus Dei continued praying for me and also encouraged me to be making nine novenas daily.

After some time I was so lucky, I got three jobs in line, and so I had to choose which one I preferred most. So right now I am working and I'm very grateful to Monsignor Escrivá. And I'll keep praying to him so that I can lead a good Christian life.

J.J.P., Nairobi (Kenya)

HE MANAGED TO SPEAK PROPERLY

This letter has a reason. I am a second year Mining Engineering student. Since I was a child, I have had difficulties in speaking properly. My parents were concerned about this from the time I was small and they had me doing exercises to improve it. Sometimes it seemed I was getting better as a result of the treatment, but that was a shortlived impression. My difficulty made me feel out of place everywhere. I was made to feel second-rate, especially by teachers in school. I went to a normal school but it was very difficult for me to articulate words in class because I became extremely nervous. Almost two years ago, my sister gave me the prayercard to Monsignor Escrivá. At first I did not think I was going to get any better. I said the prayer almost every day in the evening, with a small spark of hope that perhaps my prayer might be heard. Within a short time a great change took place in my life. Bit by bit I came to acquire a correct pronunciation and even to be able to speak quite well. This has been thanks to Monsignor Escrivá who has heard my prayer and helped me. I will thank him all the days of my life. I always carry the prayercard with me so that he may guide me in the difficulties and problems of everyday life.

S.Z., Cracow (Poland)

Letters received

For a long time we had a problem in the family. A niece of ours had a wild lifestyle which caused us years of worry and sleepless nights. One day some people I know gave me the *Newsletter* and a book about Monsignor Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei. I prayed to Monsignor Escrivá using the prayer for private devotion on the prayercard. It was not long before you could see the first sign of change in our niece's lifestyle. Greatly encouraged, we kept praying for her conversion, and that she would get help in her work. It is almost unbelievable: she has changed completely and now leads a normal life. I am sure that Monsignor Escrivá has helped her a lot. Our joy and our gratitude to Monsignor Escrivá, in whose intercession we trusted, are immense. In thanksgiving for the help received, I am sending you a donation for your apostolic undertakings.

B.M.K., (Germany)

I received a prayercard from one of my friends when I was going through a bad time. I had left my husband because of his drinking – he had been drinking heavily for 21 years. Since I started the novena I am back with him and he has been sober for three months. We have never known such peace in our home. Also, my daughter has got a new job.

All I can say is it's a miracle. I thank God for the day I received the prayercard. Can you send the *Newsletter* to these three addresses?

X.X., Glasgow (Scotland)

I have obtained from God, through the intercession of Monsignor Escrivá, the favour that my husband recovered his sight after many years of confirmed blindness.

M.A.N., Enugu (Nigeria)

Someone once told me about Monsignor Escrivá. After reading about some favours other people had received through his intercession I began to pray to him. One day not long afterwards, when I was working in the kitchen I spilt boiling oil on my hand. The pain was terrible. All I could do was pace up and down as I prayed to Monsignor Escrivá. After a while the pain eased. When I got up the following day, I felt no pain and there was almost no mark to show for the accident.

R.S., Villawood (Australia)

From the age of five, my sister suffered from epileptic fits. At fifteen, having been to many doctors over the ten years without finding any successful treatment, she still suffered from the epileptic attacks, which were also quite painful.

When I heard of the favours granted to many people through the intercession of Monsignor Escrivá I thought of my sister and gave her a prayercard with the prayer for private devotion. All my family began to pray for a cure for her. Two months later my sister was completely well. She had recovered in a surprising manner and has not had fits since then. My family and I attribute this cure to Monsignor Escrivá.

E.H.S., Mazatlan (Mexico)

I was ordained a deacon on 18 March 1984. During the period before that date we had some very heavy rain. This meant that the ceremony might be adversely affected because the parents and relatives of some of the candidates were coming long distances and the rains could make it impossible for them to get there. I was very concerned about this. I began to pray through the intercession of Monsignor Escrivá that we would have a sunny day and that everything would go off without a hitch. I got up early that day and to my great joy I saw only a few clouds, to give us some shade. There were no problems and everything went very well, and besides, many people attended.

A.L.N., Zomba (Malawi)

On the night of 6 January, the situation of one of my brothers, who is a drug addict, reached a climax. My mother tried to persuade him to go into hospital for a while for rehabilitation, but he flatly refused: he wanted to live his life without any regard for the family. Faced with this situation, I began to pray the prayer for private devotion with great faith, asking that my brother would change his mind.

The following morning he apologised for all the suffering he had caused us. He wanted to make a renewed effort and was ready to go into hospital.

Until he is ready to come home, we are all praying to the founder of Opus Dei to intercede so that he be cured completely.

X.X., Spain

I was suffering sharp pains in the abdomen for about a week. I am a doctor and I thought that I needed an operation on the bile duct. I had recourse to the intercession of Monsignor Escrivá on the morning of his birthday, January 9, using the prayer for private devotion. As soon as I finished praying, the pains disappeared and I have not had them again since that day.

I am convinced that this is due to the intercession of the Servant of God, Monsignor Escrivá.

W.C.B., New York (U.S.A.)

I am now 39 years of age. Since I left school after the primary certificate I found it very difficult to get suitable work. I used to be very depressed and once even tried to commit suicide by taking a bottle of dangerous cyanide pills. Thanks be to God I came through that period. One day, looking through the books on the bookstall of the Catholic Mission, I came across a copy of the first issue of the *Newsletter* of Monsignor Escrivá, as well as a prayercard. I "stormed" heaven through the intercession of the Monsignor. Even though I am only semi-employed now, I am very happy. All the depressive mental states and thoughts that made me feel like taking my life have disappeared completely. Many, many thanks to this truly saintly Servant of God.

X.X. (Fiji Islands)

I am writing this letter to let you know that any request I ask of Monsignor Escrivá I always get an answer. He never fails me in small or big requests and you can publish this as I think he is wonderful.

O.C., Co. Limerick (Ireland)

The original texts of these accounts, with the names and addresses of the writers, are in the archives of the Office of the Postulator of the Cause.

Published works of Mgr. Escrivá

The Way

"Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer has written something more than a masterpiece; he has written straight from the heart, and straight to the heart go the short paragraphs that make up *The Way*. In it appears the warm brotherly understanding of the author, the paternal concern with which he sees, understands and corrects, persuading, not threatening" (*L'Osservatore Romano*, 24 March 1950).

The first edition of this book was published in 1934 entitled *Consideraciones espirituales*. Since then it has been reprinted many times, with a total of 3,480,000 copies in thirty-eight languages. English editions currently published by Scepter (London and New York).

Holy Rosary

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

The first edition also appeared in 1934. A total of over 515,000 copies have been published in eighteen languages. English editions by Scepter.

Conversations with Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer

A number of magazines and newspapers put specific questions to Monsignor Escrivá, dealing with the topics of greatest interest to their respective readers. Monsignor Escrivá answered the questions fully in writing.

The first edition was published in 1968. From that time a total of 293,000 copies have been published in seven languages. 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 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 1973. It has since had a total printing of over 355,000 copies in nine languages. Published in English by Scepter.

Friends of God

A second collection of eighteen homilies in which the author's warm and filial conversation with God is centred on the theme of the Christian virtues. This book is in the same intimate and direct style as the earlier collection of homilies.

First published in 1977. From that time a total of 259,000 copies have been published in seven languages.

The foreword is by Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo, the present Prelate of Opus Dei. English editions published by Scepter.

The Way of the Cross

A posthumous work of Mgr. Escrivá, fruit of his meditation on the scenes of the Passion of Our Lord. It has been prepared to help us with prayer, and to increase our spirit of sorrow for our sins and of thanksgiving to Christ who has redeemed us with the price of his blood.

The first edition was published in February 1981; it is now available in nine languages with a total printing of 229,000 copies. Published in English by Scepter.

Furrow

A new posthumous work "like *The Way*, *Furrow* is the fruit of Monsignor Escrivá's interior life and experience with souls. It was written with the intention of encouraging personal prayer and making it easier. Because of its approach and style, then, it cannot be classified as a systematic theological treatise, though its rich and deep spirituality does contain profound theology" (*Foreword* by Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo). The first edition was published in October 1986. 265,000 copies in six languages have been published to date. It is being translated into five other languages. Published in English by Scepter.

The Forge

The Forge is the latest posthumous work to be published. It "is a book of fire. Reading it and meditating on it can bring many souls to the forge of divine Love and enkindle within them a zeal for holiness and apostolate because this was the desire of Monsignor Escrivá" (*Foreword* by Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo).

It was first published in October 1987, with 159,000 copies being printed in five languages. Published in English by Scepter.

La Abadesa de las Huelgas

A penetrating study of an extraordinary case of quasi-episcopal jurisdiction exercised by the abbess of a famous convent in Burgos, utilizing the original sources and documents.

First published in 1944; a second edition appeared in 1974.

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

Prayer

for private devotion

O God, you granted countless graces to your servant and priest Josemaría, choosing him as a most faithful instrument to found Opus Dei, a way of sanctification in daily work and in the fulfilment of the ordinary duties of a Christian. Grant that I also may learn to turn all the circumstances and events of my life into opportunities to love you and to serve the Church, the Pope, and all souls, with joy and simplicity, lighting up the paths of the earth with faith and love. Deign to glorify your servant Josemaría and, through his intercession, grant me the favour I request . . . (here make your petition).

Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

In conformity with the decrees of Pope Urban VIII, we declare that with this *Newsletter* there is no intention of anticipating in any way the judgement of the Church, and that this prayer is not intended for public use.

This *Newsletter* is issued free of charge. Those who wish to give alms to help its publication and the development of the apostolic activities stemming from the spiritual influence of the Founder of Opus Dei, may send donations by crossed cheque or postal order to the Office of the Vice-postulator of Opus Dei in Britain, 6 Orme Court, London W2 4RL.

We would be grateful if our readers would send us names and addresses of others who might be interested in receiving this *Newsletter* or the prayer card with the prayer for private devotion.

ISSN 0260-6569

1988