



The Venerable Servant of God
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Regnare Christum volumus!

Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer was born in Barbastro, Spain on 9 January 1902. He was ordained to the priesthood in Saragossa on 28 March 1925.

In Madrid, on 2 October 1928, by divine inspiration he founded Opus Dei, which has opened up to the faithful a new way of sanctification in the middle of the world, through exercising one's ordinary professional work and in the fulfilment of one's family, social and personal obligations. Thus it has been a leaven of fervent Christian life in every environment. On 14 February 1930 the Venerable Josemaría Escrivá understood, with the grace of God, that Opus Dei had also to develop its apostolate among women. On 14 February 1943 he founded the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, inseparably united to Opus Dei. Opus Dei received its definitive approval from the Holy See on 16 June 1950; and, on 28 November 1982 it was established as a personal Prelature. This legal framework had been desired and foreseen by the Venerable Josemaría Escrivá.

Through a life of constant prayer and penance, exercising heroically all the virtues, with loving dedication and untiring concern for all souls, and with a continuous and unconditional self-surrender to the will of God, Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá fostered and directed the expansion of Opus Dei throughout the world. When he rendered up his soul to God, 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. A deep sense of his divine filiation, maintained in the continuous presence of the One and Triune God, 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 Saint Joseph, 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 on 26 June 1975, in a truly saintly way, Monsignor Escrivá gave up his soul to God in Rome, in the room where he worked.

His body lies in the crypt of the prelatric 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 Canonisation of Monsignor Escrivá was presented in Rome on 19 February 1981. On 9 April 1990 the Holy Father Pope John Paul II declared the heroicity of the Christian virtues of the Venerable Servant of God.

Cover: *Monsignor Escrivá in Madrid, on 17 October 1972.*

We want Christ to reign¹ is an aspiration, a cry from the heart, which the Servant of God constantly repeated from the beginnings of Opus Dei. He was in the habit of writing ejaculatory prayers in his personal notes; one of the commonest of these was **Regnare Christum volumus!** (we want Christ to reign). Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo spoke about this recently: 'I remember the longing which our Father felt so strongly in the early years of the Work, which he put in writing with those powerful words: *Regnare Christum volumus ...* So earnestly did our Founder feel the desire to put Christ at the summit of all human affairs that he sometimes interrupted what he was writing to jot down the abbreviation *R.Ch.v.*'²

Many centuries before the coming of Christ it had been foretold that he would have dominion over all creatures, and that his spiritual kingdom would extend to the whole universe; his sway would reach *from sea to sea, from the great river to the ends of the earth.*³ It was written that *all kings must needs bring their homage, all nations serve him*⁴ and *justice in his days shall thrive, and the blessings of peace abound.*⁵

This peace fills the hearts of those who behave as sons or daughters of God, and it reigns among men when they struggle against sin, the cause of all discord. Nevertheless, in spite of the benefits promised to those who welcome the Lord into their lives, the history of the human race shows that Christ's gentle rule has often been rejected and is still being rejected. His kingdom *is not of this world,*⁶ our Lord respects our freedom and wants us freely to allow him to reign in everything we do: not just in private or family matters, but also in our work and in social affairs, because a Christian cannot leave his faith on one side when it comes to his work and his life in society. That is why souls in love with God have always suffered when they see widespread coldness towards God, and why they feel a special longing to be able to change into love the indifference of so many. Inspired by feelings such as these, the Servant of God wrote: **Against those who reduce religion to a set of negative prohibitions, or are happy to settle for a watered-down Catholicism; against those who wish to see our Lord with his face against the wall, or to restrict him to a corner of their souls, we have to affirm, with our words and with our deeds, that we aspire to make Christ the King reign over all hearts, theirs included.**⁷

Christ wishes to reign in the souls of Christians and, through them, in all the environments in which they work. But this desire does not mean that we should be discouraged by our weaknesses and sins. What Christ asks of us is to struggle loyally against our warped tendencies and have recourse to prayer and the Sacraments: **We should ask ourselves: Where should Christ reign? He should reign first of all in our souls. He should reign in our lives because they should be a testimony of love. Faults included! Don't be upset about having faults; I have them too. And weaknesses as well! As long as we keep on struggling, they don't matter. Did the saints who have been raised to the altars not have their faults too? But faults which are part and parcel of life must surely cause our Lord to smile.**⁸

One day Monsignor Escrivá was thinking about a conversation he had had several years before with a friend of his, who had a good heart but no faith: **Pointing to a globe, my**

friend said, 'Look, from North to South, from East to West ... The failure of Christ. For twenty centuries people have been trying to bring his teaching to men's lives, and look at the result.' I was filled with sadness, the Servant of God explained. It is painful to think that many people still don't know our Lord, and that among those who do know him, many live as though they did not. But that feeling lasted only a moment. It was shortly overcome by love and thankfulness, because Jesus has wanted every one to cooperate freely in the work of redemption. He has not failed. His doctrine and life are effective in the world at all times. The redemption carried out by him is sufficient, and more than sufficient.⁹

God is entrusting a great mission to the Christians of our times — that of putting into practice and spreading the truth of the Gospel in the very heart of society¹⁰ while staying in the place appointed to one, to which he has been called, with a responsible attitude towards his divine vocation: **Our task as Christians is to proclaim this kingship of Christ, announcing it through what we say and do. Our Lord wants men and women of his own in all walks of life. Some he calls away from society, asking them to give up their involvement in the world, so that they may remind the rest of us by their example that God exists. To others he entrusts the priestly ministry. But he wants the vast majority to stay right where they are, in all the earthly occupations in which they work: in the factory, the laboratory, the farm, the trades, the streets of the big cities and the trails of the mountains.**¹¹

Although Christians know that the kingdom of Christ will only reach its fullness at the end of time, we should not forget that during this time of waiting we must not be inactive: we should use it as an opportunity to bring the light of faith to everyone: *The Lord has not created us to build a lasting city here*¹² because this world is a passage to the next, a dwelling place without sorrow.¹³ Nevertheless, we children of God ought not to remain aloof from earthly endeavours, for God has placed us here to sanctify them and make them fruitful with our blessed faith, which alone is capable of bringing true peace and joy to all men wherever they may be.¹⁴

And the Servant of God adds: **Since 1928 I have constantly preached that we urgently need to christianize society. We must imbue all mankind with a supernatural outlook, and each of us must strive to raise his daily duties, his job or profession, to the order of supernatural grace. In this way all human occupations will be lit up by a new hope that transcends time and the inherent transience of earthly realities.**¹⁵

Christian hope is founded on Jesus Christ, Eternal Priest and King of the universe, who through his offering on the Cross carries out the mystery of the redemption of man, so as to bring the whole of creation under the power of God the Father, and to hand over to him an eternal and universal kingdom, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, of love and of peace.¹⁶

¹ *The Forge*, 639; cf. *The Way*, 11

² HRF (Historical Records of the Founder) 20173, p.1187

³ Ps 71:8

⁴ *Ibid.*, 11

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7

⁶ John 18:36

⁷ *Furrow*, 608

⁸ HRF 20161, pp 824-825

⁹ Christ is passing by, 129

¹⁰ Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, ch. IV

¹¹ *Christ is passing by*, 105

¹² Cf. Heb 13:14

¹³ Jorge Manrique, *Coplas*, V

¹⁴ *Friends of God*, 210

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Preface for the Mass of Christ the King*

Passages from the writings of Monsignor Escrivá

Those who have met Christ cannot shut themselves in their own little world: how sad such a limitation would be. They must open out like a fan in order to reach all souls. Each one has to create – and widen – a circle of friends, whom he can influence with his professional prestige, with his behaviour, with his friendship, so that Christ may exercise his influence by means of that professional prestige, that behaviour, that friendship. (*Furrow*, 193)

Ask with me for a new Pentecost, which will once again set the world alight. (*Furrow*, 213)

Many years ago now, I saw most clearly a truth which will always be valid: the whole web of society needs to live anew and spread the eternal truths of the Gospel, since it has departed from Christian faith and morals. Children of God at the very heart of that society, of the world, have to let their virtues shine out like lamps in the darkness – *quasi lucernae lucentes in caliginoso loco*. (*Furrow*, 318)

If we Christians really lived in accordance with our faith, the greatest revolution of all times would take place. The effectiveness of our co-redemption depends on each one of us. You should meditate on this. (*Furrow*, 945)

Let us not forget that in all human activities there must be men and women who, in their lives and work, raise Christ's Cross aloft for all to see, as an act of reparation. It is a symbol of peace and of joy, a symbol of the Redemption and of the unity of the human race. It is a symbol of the love that the Most Holy Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit had, and continues to have, for mankind. (*Furrow*, 985)

It is we, men walking in the street, ordinary Christians immersed in the blood-stream of society, whom Our Lord wants to be saints and apostles, in the very midst of our professional work; that is, sanctifying our job in life, sanctifying ourselves in it and, through it, helping others to sanctify themselves as well. (*Friends of God*, 120)

'So you are a king?' . . . Yes, Christ is the King, the King who not only grants you an audience whenever you like, but even in the madness of his love "gives up" – you know what I mean – his magnificent palace in Heaven, which you cannot yet reach, and waits for you in the Tabernacle.

Don't you think it is absurd not to hurry to speak to him, and not to do so more assiduously? (*The Forge*, 1004)

Ordination to the Priesthood and First Mass

On 20 December 1924 Monsignor Miguel de los Santos Díaz Gómara, Bishop-designate of El Burgo de Osma,¹ conferred the diaconate on the Servant of God in the chapel of the Royal Seminary of San Carlos. Shortly afterwards in this same chapel, with deep emotion which he could not hide, the Servant of God administered Holy Communion for the first time to his mother; he recalled this many years later, on 22 October 1960, when he celebrated Mass in that chapel in the presence of a large congregation:²

In this seminary of San Carlos I received my training for the priesthood. I approached this altar with trembling hands to take the Sacred Host and give Communion for the first time to my mother.³

The Christmas of 1924 was the first which the Servant of God spent in Logroño with his mother and brother and sister after the sad loss of his father, who died on 27 November. Even though the older members of the family tried to ensure that the young child, Santiago, had a happy time during those days, the recent bereavement could not but affect the special atmosphere of that festive time in which joy and sorrow mingled. In this way God was moulding the soul of his Servant, teaching him to be joyful even in the midst of suffering, and to discover in the Cross the one source of both joy and suffering. Added to this were serious financial difficulties. Some days later Josemaría Escrivá returned to Saragossa to resume his normal life in the Seminary. At the beginning of 1925, his mother, Doña Dolores, also moved house with her two children to Saragossa, to a very modest apartment, first in Urrea Street and then in Rufas Street.

There wasn't much time left before his ordination, and in those remaining months

the Servant of God prepared himself with an ever-deepening commitment to God, in readiness for this fundamental stage in his life. In a family get-together with a group of Opus Dei members just two years before his death, he spoke about his vocation to the priesthood: **Why did I become a priest? Because I thought that in that way it would be easier to fulfil the Will of God, which at the time I still did not know. For about eight years before that** (from the winter of 1917-18, when he was fifteen or sixteen years old) **I had some inklings, but I didn't know what God wanted, and in fact I didn't find out until 1928. That's why I became a priest.⁴**

On the eve of Saint Joseph's day those due to be ordained began their special retreat,⁵ and on 28 March, the Saturday before Passion Sunday or Saturday of the fourth week of Lent, ten deacons — eight from Saragossa, one from another diocese and one religious — were ordained priests by Monsignor Miguel de los Santos, Bishop of El Burgo de Osma. A further twenty-one men received other Orders, some major and some minor. The ceremony took place in the chapel of the Royal Seminary of San Carlos.

This chapel has just one main aisle with a ribbed and vaulted ceiling, and ten side chapels, five on either side, above which there is a gallery and higher still plateresque windows. It was the gallery on the right hand side that the Servant of God was referring to in 1960 when he said: **Away up there, in that gallery, I used often come to talk to Jesus ... I didn't know then what it was that he wanted, I only found out later on.⁶**

Once ordained the new priests concelebrated Mass with the Bishop, as the liturgy prescribes. It is easy to imagine the feelings of the Servant of God when, acting in



The Servant of God in the Royal Seminary of San Carlos, shortly before his ordination to the priesthood.

persona Christi for the first time, he renewed the sacrifice of Calvary. For that young priest that 28th of March was a day of intimate and profound joy and at the same time, humanly speaking, of great sorrow. His father had just died, and the only members of his family present were his mother and his brother and sister. God allowed countless sufferings in the life of his Servant before he came to the priesthood; from the very first moment of his vocation He wanted him to be 'nailed to the Cross', and his constant response was to surrender himself cheerfully. There he identified himself with Christ, and so felt the lovable reality of his divine sonship, and centred the whole of his priestly life in an unselfish love, at the service of the redemption of souls.⁷

The Servant of God had the joy of celebrating his first Solemn Mass in the Holy Chapel of our Lady of Pilar, to whom he had an intense devotion from early childhood. Years later he wrote: **I have always had a devotion to our Lady of Pilar: my parents with their typical Aragonese piety instilled it into my soul from my**

childhood. Now, as I think of our Lady, I remember so many periods of time spent in prayer, and so many happenings, apparently small, yet big if looked at with loving eyes.⁸

It was Monday in Passion Week, 30 March, two days after his ordination to the priesthood. **In that Holy Chapel with a handful of people, and in a quiet way, I celebrated my first Mass.⁹**

Love for Christ, Priest and Victim, and for our Lady, Virgin and Co-redemptrix, formed in his priestly soul one single desire, which continued to develop right up to the last years of his life, when he wrote: **As far as I am concerned, the first of all Marian devotions — that's how I like to look at it — is the Holy Mass ... Every day, when Christ comes down into the hands of the priest, his Real Presence among us is renewed, with his Body and Blood, his Soul and Divinity: the same Body and the same Blood which he received from our Lady's womb. In the Sacrifice of the Altar our Lady's participation reminds us of the silent modesty with which she accompanied her Son when he was walking the roads of Palestine. The Holy Mass is an action of the Blessed Trinity: through the Will of the Father and with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, the Son offers himself as a redeeming oblation. In this unfathomable mystery, one notices, as if through a veil, the most pure countenance of Mary: Daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son, Spouse of God the Holy Spirit.¹⁰**

At that time there were no seats in the chapel: there was only a Communion rail and some kneelers for people who kept a vigil before our Lady. On some occasions, however, such as the first Mass of a newly ordained priest, a few benches covered in red velvet were put out, and some cushions of the same colour for kneeling on. On that day all the seats were probably not filled, because very few people attended: his mother (who was sick but had got up so as not to miss her son's first solemn Mass¹¹), his sister Carmen with two friends from

Barbastro, his brother Santiago, a cousin on his father's side and his wife, the Rector of the Seminary of Francis de Paul, Don José López Sierra, the Professor of Canon Law from the University of Saragossa, Don Juan Moneva y Puyol, who had a great regard for him, with his wife and daughter, the two assisting priests sponsoring him who were both friends of the family, and few others.

For his mother especially — and also one for his brother and sister — it was an occasion of great joy to see her son a priest, but also of sorrow for the death of her husband. The Rector of the Seminary wrote as follows: 'How could one leave on her own that mother who was in floods of tears and at times even seemed as if she might faint, and leave that brother and sister?'¹²

The vestments for the Mass were violet, as required in Passiontide; and, although it was what is usually referred to as the first solemn Mass, the Mass did not have any external solemnity. It was an ordinary Mass, which the Servant of God offered for his father's soul. In the small souvenir card for this Mass, under the initials JHS we find the



The Holy Chapel of Pilar is elliptical in form. The altarpiece above the central altar is sculpted in white marble; it recalls Our Lady's appearance to the Apostle James. She seems to be pointing to him and to his disciples — who are represented in the altarpiece to the left — where she wished the Column to be located.

following: *Father José María Escrivá y Albás will celebrate his first Mass in the Holy and Angelic Chapel of the Pilar in Saragossa, on the 30th of March 1925, at 10.30 in the morning, and offer it for the repose of the soul of his father Don José Escrivá Corzán who fell asleep in the Lord on the 27th of November 1924. A.M.D.G.*

It was God's will that the Servant of God would have a little personal sacrifice to offer Him that day during the Mass. He was hoping very much that his mother would be the first to receive Holy Communion from him after his ordination to the priesthood. Another woman, however, a friend of the family, was the first to come forward, and, not to upset her, he had to give her Holy Communion first.¹³

When Mass was over the Servant of God knelt before the shrine of our Lady of Pilar and spent some time there in thanksgiving while the rest accompanied him in silence.¹⁴

The sacrifice of the Mass was truly the centre and root of the life of the Founder of Opus Dei. The fervour he felt at his first

Mass never diminished, and in fact there was a constant increase in his love for Jesus Christ, Supreme and Eternal High Priest, which showed itself in new ways with the passage of time. For example, in October 1967 he made the following remarks to his sons and daughters in Opus Dei: **At sixty-five years of age I have made a marvellous discovery! I love to celebrate Mass, but yesterday I found it very hard work. What an effort! I realised that the Mass is really Opus Dei, work, as Jesus' first Mass, the Cross, really was work for him. I saw that the function of the priest, when celebrating the Holy Mass, to make the Eucharist, is real work; in it one experiences suffering and joy and tiredness. I felt in my own flesh the exhaustion of a divine work.**¹⁵

And he went on: **For Christ too it took an effort. His Sacred Humanity found it hard to stretch out his arms on the Cross with the gesture of an Eternal Priest. For me the celebration of the Mass was never so hard as on this day when I felt that the Mass too is Opus Dei. It gave me great joy, but I was left completely exhausted.**¹⁶

The following day, 31 March, the Servant of God was already working as assistant priest in Perdiguera, a small village of 870 inhabitants — the parish priest being away on sick leave. He would probably have preferred the diocese to have given him work in Saragossa, because then he would have been able to help support his family, by giving classes in his free time for example. But his superiors decided otherwise. And he obeyed promptly because he considered that *obedientia tutior*, that the safest thing is to obey, as he himself had written in a poem some years previously, as a contribution to a feast in honour of the President of the Seminary of San Carlos and auxiliary Bishop, who had this motto in his coat of arms.



The Royal Seminary of San Carlos. The altarpiece, a carving in gilt wood, is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. Above it is an interesting representation of the Blessed Trinity, which follows the tradition of ancient iconography by depicting the three Persons in three identical figures, with the words 'Deus trinus et unus.'

¹ He had been the auxiliary bishop of Cardinal Soldevila until the latter was assassinated on 4 June 1923. He continued to live in the Archdiocese as President of the Royal Seminary of San Carlos until 19 June 1925, when he took possession of his see in El Burgo de Osma (Soria).
² He had gone to Saragossa to receive an honorary doctorate, in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, 21 October 1960.
³ *Homily*, 22 October 1960; cf. HRF 20174, p. 398.
⁴ HRF 20162, p. 310.
⁵ *Boletín Eclesiástico del Arzobispado de Zaragoza*, 11 February 1925, p. 20.
⁶ *Homily*, 22 October 1960; cf. HRF 20174, p. 400.
⁷ cf. HRF 20168, p. 365.
⁸ 'Recuerdos del Pilar', *El Noticiero*, Saragossa, 11 October 1970.
⁹ *Ibid.*
¹¹ 'La Virgen del Pilar', *Libro de Aragón*, Saragossa, 1976, pp. 97-103.
¹¹ HRF T-159, ch. V, p. 69.
¹² HRF T-3306.
¹³ Cf. HRF 20165, p. 446; and HRF T-5837, p. 8.
¹⁴ Cf. HRF T-5057.
¹⁵ HRF 20164, p. 226; cf. *The Way of the Cross*, 11th Station, 4, where he wrote the autobiographical words: **After years, that priest made a marvellous discovery: he came to understand that the Holy Mass is real work: operatio Dei, God's work. That day when he celebrated Mass he experienced pain, joy and tiredness. He felt in his flesh the exhaustion of a divine task. For Christ too it cost a great effort to carry out the first Mass: the Cross.**
¹⁶ HRF 20164, p. 226.

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.

DOSNON CATERING SCHOOL

Soissons

Couvrelles is a small village with about 200 inhabitants. It grew up around the Château of the same name which houses the *Dosnon Catering School*. The village is not far from Soissons, which is about sixty miles from Paris. It is one of many villages in this agricultural region of France where the soil is highly fertile and rainfall plentiful. The region produces mainly sugar-beet and potatoes. The houses are of stone, with roofs of grey slate. Around it the country roads, scarcely wide enough for two cars to pass, link a number of almost identical villages, all of them four or five miles away from each other.

Couvrelles is, you might say, very much a ‘family’ village. There is one corner-shop which sells a great variety of goods: from fruit and vegetables to soap, eau de cologne, knitting needles and wool. The shopkeeper greets her customers with a welcoming smile. People in the area are used to working hard, but they have a good standard of living. As soon as the young people of the district have finished primary school they start to work on the land and give most of their free time to their family and their homes.

Twenty-five years ago a centre for retreats and conferences was started in the Château of Couvrelles. It is run by members of Opus Dei. In 1966, when the Servant of God visited the centre for the

first time, he suggested that a catering college be set up. This college, known as Dosnon, began to function as an educational centre four years later.

Since then many young women of the area have been trained here in the most up-to-date catering techniques. Dosnon has opened up a whole field of human and spiritual development for the women of the surrounding area. In an atmosphere of freedom and personal responsibility students are helped to place their efforts and abilities at the service of others. They learn the true meaning of their future work: a career providing a service to others.

The students study several languages and are offered the possibility of undertaking work experience in other countries. Dosnon endeavours to foster teamwork imbued with a spirit of warmth and good humour. The College receives help from the owners of several hotels, who co-operate by giving classes, and from businesses in the region who give financial support.

A teacher from Dosnon writes: ‘As well

as arranging the classes, I organise promotional journeys on behalf of the College. I would like to describe an ordinary day in my office this term. In front of me I have a map of France with some regions coloured blue. These are the districts we have already visited to explain the teaching — the formation — that we endeavour to give the students in Dosnon, as well as the entry requirements for prospective students. The areas coloured red are the ones we will visit next. This year the number of red sections on the map has increased, covering a far greater area than we had anticipated. People are constantly asking for more information about the College, as they hear about Dosnon in various ways. One day we will get a telephone call from the North of France, another from the outskirts of Paris ...’

The headmistress of a school asks for information to pass on to her pupils. ‘I already know’, she writes, ‘that the students at Dosnon will receive a certificate in catering, but what I am more interested in is the Christian formation they will



Rear view of Dosnon, the Catering School in Couvrelles, near Paris.



A practical class in pastry-making

receive. Please send me as much publicity material as you can and the address of a centre of Opus Dei in Paris, where some of my past pupils can go to receive formation.⁷

Dosnon has been a focal point for the the spirit of Christianity in the surrounding countryside, and has enabled a number of initiatives of social and human development to take root. The students pay frequent visits to elderly people in the neighbourhood, showing their affection for them and making sure they are not lonely, especially in their final moments. Daughters of farmworkers in the neighbouring villages attend youth clubs which have been set up, whilst their mothers can attend courses in housecraft.

The Founder of Opus Dei said that with undertakings such as this **a lot can be done. It can be a really effective help to society in an important task, and a Christian task in the heart of the home, bringing happiness, peace, and understanding to many households.** He considered, he added, **that work in**

home is specially important because through it so much good or harm can be done in the very midst of the family ...; there will be many able and upright people whose apostolic zeal will draw them to turn this profession into a happy and fruitful task in so many homes throughout the world.¹

Women are called to bring to the family, to society and to the Church, characteristics which are their own and which they alone can give: their gentle warmth and untiring generosity, their love for detail, their quick-wittedness and intuition, their simple and deep piety, their constancy ... If a woman is well prepared she will indeed accomplish her task and fulfil the mission to which she feels called, whatever it may be.²

¹ *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá*, 109

² *Ibid.*, 87

Letters received

A BAPTISM

My new partner in the practice had not enjoyed reading books I had given her, and it seemed that efforts to influence her away from being an atheist had failed. On 28 October I used the prayer-card to ask that she would become a Catholic. I repeated the prayer daily. On 18 December she was baptised.

X.X., Manchester (England)

MANY PEOPLE PRAYED FOR ME

In March 1988 I was taken ill and following some tests and X-rays I was told that I had a kidney tumour. The growth had spread to the cava vein and to the bottom of both lungs, as well as to various other organs in the region. The doctors said they would not operate as it would not be possible to eradicate such extensive cancer. It was the considered opinion of both the doctors involved that I had anything from three to twelve months to live.

I went to the chapel in the hospital and prayed before the Blessed Sacrament. I left the hospital the following day having commenced praying to Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá to obtain a cure for me if that was God's will.

I began putting my affairs in order. Within a few days of beginning the novena I heard about a new form of treatment abroad and was encouraged to investigate it. I made the journey and underwent the treatment, which involved major surgery to remove the growth, followed by a special cell treatment. There were complications which required more surgery. I lost a considerable amount of weight but made very good progress in the months of July and August, and began to put on weight. By September I was back at work again.

Very many people prayed for me through the intercession of Monsignor Escrivá, and I am convinced that these prayers have been answered and that I have been cured. As I write, at the end of 1989, tests have shown that there is no recurrence of the cancer, and I am carrying out my normal work.

S.G.T., Co. Dublin (Ireland)

THE TOOTH-ACHE DISAPPEARED

I developed a dreadful tooth-ache on Christmas Eve (I thought this would surely spoil my Christmas). I prayed to Father Josemaría. The tooth-ache disappeared; in its stead a large gum-boil developed which was totally painless. I enjoyed a pain-free Christmas Day and thankfully had the tooth extracted when the dentist re-opened after the Christmas break. This may seem trivial, but thanks to Fr Josemaría my tooth-ache disappeared. I wish to thank him.

M.R., Coatbridge (Scotland)

SOME LOST YEARS

The second of my brothers, A, asked our father for permission to work a long way from home; he was sixteen years old and the place he was going to was dangerous, as it was guerilla country. This caused the whole family a great deal of worry. For nearly two years my brother wrote regularly, but then we heard no more from him. For some time a friend of his came to visit my family, and told my parents that my brother A was in good health, but that he had asked him to tell us that he didn't want to come home again. This friend said he was getting involved with a strange group. J, the oldest of the men in the family gave up his job with the police to go and find him. Two years went by during which I prayed for them to Monsignor Escrivá, although we did not hear anything. Neither did we know where to write to them, etc. I spoke to my parents and my brothers and sisters and made them see that the only possibility was to pray to Monsignor Escrivá to bring them back; for my part I prayed doubly hard. I had been turning with greater intensity to his intercession for three or five months. While I was in Bogota they told me that one of my brothers wanted to speak to me on the phone. I took the phone and found it was A. He told me that it was a miracle that he was in my aunt's house. *I am happy to be back*, he told me. *About three months ago I felt desperate, longing to go home. I didn't want to come, but I didn't put up any more resistance, and here I am.*

My brother had never lived in Bogota, and had only gone to my aunt's when he was twelve and he did not remember the telephone number or the address. When he arrived in Bogota, he did not know where to go; he got onto a bus to go and look for a place to spend the night. When he had travelled a long way on the bus, he saw a little park that looked vaguely familiar. He walked about three blocks and decided to ring at the door of a house he felt he had seen before. Imagine his surprise when he recognised my aunt, although neither she nor our cousins recognised him, because they had only seen him when he was very young. They gave him my telephone number. My brother left my parents' house two weeks later, promising that he would return with J. The two of them did just this. They have now been home for two years and they work with our father on the farm. They told us they had really got into a lot of trouble. Since we were small we were taught to have great devotion to our Lady; one of them had turned to her to help them to get out of that situation. They said it was amazing they had been able to do that. I attribute all of this to Monsignor Escrivá.

M.B., Bogota (Colombia)

THE PROBLEMS ARE OVER

For four years my family and I went through some really difficult times, not only in financial matters but also emotionally. In fact my marriage was on the point of a total collapse.

A year ago, a neighbour gave me the prayer-card of Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer. I started to make a novena, and, since then, our problems have been overcome and my husband has also found a marvellous job. It is quite clear that this is the result of the intercession of Monsignor Escrivá and I thank him very much for it.

I now give prayer cards to all those who tell me they have some worry or other.

Because of my husband's present job, we have to move to another town, and I have asked for the address of a centre of Opus Dei as I want to get to know the Work Monsignor Escrivá founded and which has done so much good to my life and my family.

X. X. Malaga, (Spain)

MY PRAYER WAS HEARD

It is now about ten years since I stepped inside the Peterskirche in Vienna. There I found a *Newsletter* about Monsignor Escrivá the Founder of Opus Dei, and a prayer card. To be honest, the first time I read it, it did not mean much to me. I put the *Newsletter* and the prayer card away among my books and lost sight of them.

Some years later I was under great stress because of some examinations my daughter had to sit. It was not an easy situation. Although I was convinced she had worked hard and prepared herself very well, we were worried about the outcome. Just at that very time I came across the *Newsletter* again in an old church in Brussels. I said the prayer for private devotion several times. During those moments of anxiety my intellectual pride melted away like snow in the sun. I humbly asked for my daughter's success in her examinations. In the event she passed them. She, as well as us, her parents, was delighted. I said a prayer of thanksgiving. I put some money in the collection box, and then, little by little, I forgot all about the favour we had received. Life is so full and complicated, and there are so many things to do ...

About that time I had a number of other problems. I wanted to sell my house, and I imprudently entrusted the matter to an estate agent without knowing whether he was honest. Soon there was trouble which even affected my health. I didn't know what to do, and I was very worried about our future.

Once again I went into a church in Brussels. There I found Newsletter No. 7 about the Servant of God. I had a presentiment that at that very moment he was offering me his intercession. I started once again to say the private prayer that makes us aware, in spite of ourselves, that we belong to the Church. I started to read it and to reflect on my life and my work. I began to realise, as never before, how many faults I commit as a man and as a Christian. My state of anxiety did not vanish completely, but I recovered a little hope. I went to receive the sacrament of Confession after many years of not doing so. I discovered that I had to pray as Josemaria Escrivá asked me to, not only in order to obtain favours for myself, but also for others to be given grace, including the estate agent and whoever was going to purchase my house ... My prayer was heard. My health problem turned out to be less serious than had been thought, the sale of my house went through without a hitch. I am very grateful. I don't want to forget this favour. I want therefore to contribute spiritually and materially to making the Servant of God better known.

X.X., Brussels (Belgium)

HE ASKED TO GO TO CONFESSION

In my family we are all very grateful for the many favours we have received through the intercession of Monsignor Escrivá. The most recent favour has been the conversion of my father-in-law. He is now at the point of death. He had been separated from the Church for the greater part of his life.

A few months ago a priest went to see him, but my father-in-law declined to go to Confession. We started to say the prayer on the prayer card of Monsignor Escrivá. The next time the priest came, my father-in-law asked for Confession. Afterwards he received Holy Communion and he says many Hail Mary's.

We are very grateful to Monsignor Escrivá.

X.X., Park Ridge, Illinois (U.S.A.)

We are writing to send you a small contribution of twenty thousand cruzados and to say that, in our city, as families, we are receiving great graces that the Good God grants us through the intercession of his Servant Josemaria Escrivá.

We managed to get work for some people who had been sick for a long time, and had lost the heart to behave as they should, so that they were going hungry. We prayed and work came up for the couple; they picked up in health and even obtained the gift of another child in the family.

Overdue bills that were mounting up because of inflation – we managed to pay them off and even were given a reduction.

We successfully settled some business deals and have even moved to better land which seems like paradise.

Some young people found jobs which enabled them to enter an open competition and improve their standard of living. They were even able to find the fees to go to university.

We obtained the strength to give support to some families in need and to see them stand on their own feet.

Infidelity in marriage: through prayer and good advice the husband concerned repented and peace returned to the home, after the wife had prayed fervently to God through the mediation of Josemaria Escrivá.

Finally, as well as these many graces, we could tell of many more. We place all these graces in the hands of the Merciful Jesus so that He may make our faith still more fervent and enable us to follow the example of the saints. We pray that the Work of Josemaria may continue to grow for the good of souls.

J.A.M.P., Leme (Brazil)

I am letting you know that I have received graces through the intercession of Monsignor Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer in my desperate financial situation.

I have eight children. The handicraft company that I worked for went into liquidation. Today I work in a furniture business and only receive commission on completed sales.

Recently I had some very pressing financial needs. I invoked Monsignor and I clearly obtained graces through his intercession. I am extremely grateful for the graces received. I have recourse to Monsignor for my spiritual life and daily work. I am certain that Monsignor Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer will pour out his help on everyone who turns to him.

G. I., Chiclayo (Peru)

Next door to my house there is a stationery shop that I often go to because I am friendly with the owner.

The other day, as she knows I like reading, she gave me a *Newsletter* with the photograph of Monsignor Escrivá.

I read all the favours obtained through his intercession, and then I said the prayer for private devotion asking for a particular grace.

Two or three days after I had said that prayer, something happened to me. I experienced a great desire to make a general confession. I have to say that I had not been to Confession for thirty years. I went to Confession, and I owe it all to the intercession of Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer, who obtained the miracle. Many thanks to this holy servant of God.

X.X., Albacete (Spain)

I live in Paternó, in the province of Catania, and I am pleased to tell you that I have received the grace I was longing for through the Father.

A month after my husband had a stroke, I met a school friend of mine, and, I don't know why, we started talking about Monsignor Escrivá, whom I had never heard of until then. After talking my companion gave me the *Newsletter* about the Father, with the prayer-card, and advised me to pray. I went home by bus, feeling a great desire to pray, and I asked the Father for the grace of curing my husband from his stroke which was a real handicap to him and, amongst other things, made him unable to work as before. So I prayed with great faith, in the hope that the Father would hear me.

It was two days after my prayers that my husband went for an electrocardiogram, for a simple checkup. He was greatly surprised to hear the doctor say that the signs of the stroke of a month before had completely disappeared. When my husband told me, my heart almost burst with joy and from that day on I have not failed to pray to the Father, and have received many other graces. Above all I notice that there has been a radical change within myself. I am serene and happy.

C.T., Paternó (Italy)

In the month of June, D, one of my neighbours' daughters, had a serious accident as she was coming back from a party with some friends.

The vehicle she was in left the road, turned right over several times and finally crashed into a huge plane-tree. They were all injured to a different extent. D was discovered underneath the vehicle after several minutes of searching for her.

The doctor from the emergency service said she was dead. Another doctor who happened to be passing by suggested something should be tried and had her taken urgently to the hospital. She remained there seven weeks, to begin with in a deep coma without much hope. It was then that I prayed through the intercession of Josemaria, promising to give a donation to his Work if he listened to my prayers.

After some dangerous moments, D came out of the coma, and today, after it had been thought she would never write again, she is taking her school-leaving exam. Thank you to Josemaria Escrivá.

A.M.L., St Sauveur (France)

My father had been far away from the Church and the Sacraments since his wedding day. I prayed to Monsignor Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer for his conversion.

One Sunday, in December, my father arrived at the training centre where I study and the first thing he did — before greeting me — was to ask if he could go to Confession. Seeing my astonishment, he told me that the previous 19th November he had been driving a goods lorry and it had gone out of control as he was going downhill. He felt the lorry was going to turn over. At that moment he remembered the prayer-card with the prayer for private devotion to Monsignor Josemaria Escrivá that he had in his pocket. He prayed to him and promised him that the first time he came to see me he would go to Confession. At that moment he felt a great interior peace and a strength that somehow 'pulled' the lorry and helped him to control the vehicle until the danger was over.

I thank Monsignor Josemaria Escrivá for this double favour that he has obtained for me.

E.E.C., Tlaxcala (Mexico)

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.

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. 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.

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 3,530,000 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 546,000 copies have been published in eighteen languages. English edition 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 308,000 copies have been published in seven languages. English edition by Sinag-Tala (Manila).

Christ is passing by

This 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 foreword is by Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo, the present Prelate of Opus Dei.

The first edition was published in 1973. It has since had a total printing of over 360,000 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 283,000 copies have been published in seven languages. 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 ten languages with a total printing of 249,000 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. 281,000 copies in seven languages have been published to date. 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. 220,000 copies have been printed in six 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, and a third in 1988.

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

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.

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