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Blessed JOSEMARÍA ESCRIVÁ

Founder of Opus Dei

NEWSLETTER No. 17

Blessed 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, Blessed 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 Blessed 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, he 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 Blessed Josemaría Escrivá had always practised and instilled in his sons and daughters.

The Holy Sacrifice of the 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 Blessed Josemaría had offered his life for the Church and the Roman Pontiff. Our Lord accepted that offering, and on 26 June 1975, in a truly saintly way, Blessed Josemaría gave up his soul to God in Rome, in the room where he worked.

His body rests in the Prelatic 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. His Cause of Canonisation was presented on 19 February 1981. On 9 April 1990 Pope John Paul II declared the heroic nature of the Christian virtues, and on 6 July 1991 decreed the miraculous character of a cure attributed to his intercession. The Founder of Opus Dei was beatified by His Holiness John Paul II in Rome on 17 May 1992.

PRAYER

O God, you granted countless graces to your priest, Blessed 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 grant the canonisation of Blessed 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.

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 of Blessed Josemaría.

Cover: Blessed Josemaría with Fr. Alvaro del Portillo in Villa Tevere, Rome.

THE JUBILEE OF THE YEAR 2000

The Church is preparing to celebrate the second millennium of the birth of Christ, the centre of history, by means of a Jubilee announced by the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II. This anniversary, which commemorates the coming of the Son of God to the world, places us face to face with the central mystery of our salvation. *"Overcoming evil: this is the meaning of the Redemption.* This is brought about in the sacrifice of Christ ... The Son of God became man, taking a body and soul in the womb of the Virgin, precisely for this reason: to become the perfect redeeming sacrifice".¹

THE JOY OF CONVERSION

The Holy Father points out to us that the word "jubilee" speaks of jubilation, of joy, the joy of conversion.² Jesus Christ, uniting us to himself, raises us up from sin, makes us children of God, and restores us to intimacy with God the Father. All Christians see in their own lives how the divine pardon, received in the sacrament of reconciliation, constitutes a new beginning, which encourages them to look ahead. Conversion begins with sorrow and penance for sins committed. It is filled with the hope of living, from now on, as God's children, and attaining the inheritance and happiness of heaven. That is why Blessed Josemaría used to describe the sacrament of penance as "the sacrament of joy".

The joy that Christ gives us is part of the legacy of those who know they are children of God, and wish to live as such. St Augustine, in one of his sermons, says that in baptism the iniquity is wiped out, but the weakness remains.³ Man always needs the divine physician. In one of Blessed Josemaría's homilies we read: "But living with God is indeed a risky business, for he will not share things: he wants everything. And if we move toward him, it means we must be ready for a new conversion, to take new bearings, to listen more attentively to his inspirations - those holy desires



Jubilee of the Year of the Redemption, 1983.



With Fr. Javier Echevarria in Marseille, outside Notre-Dame de la Garde, 1958.

that he provokes in every soul - and to put them into practice".⁴

In these years of immediate preparation for the Jubilee, the Holy Father encourages us to draw closer to Jesus Christ and, with him, to the Holy Spirit and the Father, to be reborn with his grace. Blessed Josemaría, commenting on the newness of life offered to every Christian, wrote: "Renew your holy joy, for opposite the man who is decomposing without Christ, there is another who has risen with him".⁵ His words echo the exhortation of St Paul to the Ephesians, urging them to conversion: "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light".⁶

God expects us to be firmly resolved to lead a life imbued with faith, and to make genuine efforts to improve. We should not forget that the principal object of the Jubilee, as indicated by Pope John Paul II, is "the strengthening of faith and of the witness of Christians".⁷

SHARING OUR JOY

One of the first signs of our witness as Christians should be our efforts to bring the treasure of the joy of the children of God to all those who work with us. Blessed Josemaría summarized the task of Christians who really want to respond to the apostolic calling they have received: "To know Jesus Christ, to make him known and to bring him into every environment".⁸ Bringing people to the sources of divine mercy opens up to them horizons of unfailing happiness, which the world cannot give.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, cause of our joy, will help us to carry out these desires of personal holiness and apostolate: "Many conversions, many decisions to give oneself to the service of God have been preceded by an encounter with Mary".⁹

1 Apostolic Letter, *Tertio millennio adveniente*, 10 November, 1994, 7

2 Cf *ibid.*, 16

3 Cf *Sermo 77*; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1254 and 1426

4 *Christ Is passing by*, 58

5 *The Forge*, 476

6 *Eph 5:14*

7 Apostolic letter, *Tertio millennio adveniente*, 42

8 *Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, Founder of Opus Dei*, published on the occasion of the beatification, Rome 1992, p.127

9 *Christ Is passing by*, 149

FIRST JOURNEY TO ROME

A DIFFICULT JOURNEY

Fr. Alvaro del Portillo, who succeeded the Founder in 1975, went to Rome at the end of February 1946 to obtain Papal approval for Opus Dei. Over the months that followed he went about this task with great faith and untiring commitment. However the presence of the Founder himself was needed. It was not just a matter of getting legal recognition for a human undertaking, but for a project which God had entrusted to Blessed Josemaría directly.

A telegram from Fr. Alvaro put it to Blessed Josemaría that it was very desirable for him to go to Rome. In a reply, dated 13 June, 1946, Blessed Josemaría, who was very ill at the time, wrote: **My dear Alvaro: We received your telegram ... I don't find the prospect of making the journey you advise in any way appealing, as I have never felt so bad physically in all my life. However, I am determined not to let anything obstruct God's will. This morning I asked for my travel papers to be got ready, in case I can go. If I do go I will arrive deadbeat, like a battered suitcase. Fiat!**¹ He added at the end: **If in spite of everything, you think it advisable, send me an urgent telegram: Mariano will go as soon as possible. Pray for him.**²

On the evening of 21 June Blessed Josemaría, accompanied by José Orlandis, sailed from Barcelona on the *J.J. Sister*. Later José wrote from Rome saying:



With Fr. Pedro Casciaro and Alberto Martínez Fausset.



On the terrace of the apartment in Piazza della Città Leonina.

The following morning at 7.30 Blessed Josemaría celebrated Mass in a local church. The four then went on to Rome. It was Sunday 23 June, 1946.

FIRST DAYS IN ROME

José Orlandis wrote in a diary: "It was 9.30 in the evening when we got our first glimpse of the cupola of St Peter's. The Father began to say the Creed. The party then arrived at the apartment in Piazza della Città Leonina where some members of the Work were living. When we retired for the night the Father stayed out on the balcony which overlooks St Peter's Square, directly in front of the Basilica and the Vatican Palace. I understand that he spent almost the whole night there close to St Peter's tomb and to the Holy Father." In fact, despite an exhausting journey and his physical ailments, Blessed Josemaría's first night in Rome was a vigil of heartfelt prayer full of love for the Pope and the Church.



The J.J. Sister, photographed in 1974.

"The journey began quite well, but our joy was short-lived. After dinner the ship began to roll and toss in an alarming fashion. We retired to our bunks. The Father said that 'the devil was stirring up the Gulf of Lyon with his tail.' It was the most frightening storm I have ever been in, and that despite the fact that I am well acquainted with the Mediterranean as I was born and reared on one of its islands. We spent ten or twelve hours going through sheer hell".³ They finally reached Genoa on the night of 22 June. Fr. Alvaro and Salvador Canals were there to meet them.

The following day, 24 June, Blessed Josemaría celebrated his first Roman Mass in the apartment in Piazza della Città Leonina. A Croatian student, Vladimir Vince, served the Mass. He was the first person to receive a vocation to Opus Dei in Rome, and some years later was ordained to the priesthood. On his very first day in Rome the Founder began to work on the matter of Papal approval for Opus Dei. It was also a day to which he added the flavour of a costly sacrifice. He arrived in Rome in the spirit of a pilgrim

who had come *videre Petrum*, to see Peter, as he wrote many years before.⁴ He had a burning desire the minute he arrived in Rome to go to St Peter's and pray at the Apostle's tomb. However, he decided to postpone things for a day and offered God this act of self-denial.

He left his residence in the company of José Orlandis on the morning of 25 June. He crossed St Peter's Square lost in thought. On entering the Basilica he made for the transept where St Peter's tomb is venerated. He remained there a long time in prayer. It was only when he had finished and was leaving that he looked at the rest of the Basilica.

That same day he obtained permission to have the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the apartment where they were living. Finally, the diary for Wednesday, 3 July, records: "Today we have our Lord at home. Yesterday we finished off the last small preparations and the Father reserved the Blessed Sacrament this morning: Rome's first tabernacle, our first true house in Rome!"⁵

Rome is the city that has most mementoes of the early Christians, to whom Blessed Josemaría had special devotion. **We want to live, and do live, the life of the early Christians,**⁶ he wrote in 1954. Years later he said: **The easiest way to understand Opus Dei is to look at the life the early Christians led. They were fully committed to their Christian vocation. They sought that moral perfection to which they were called by the sublime yet simple fact of their Baptism.**⁷ On 4 July Blessed Josemaría and Fr. Alvaro celebrated Mass in the catacombs of St Callistus and also visited those dedicated to St Sebastian.



Cardinal Manuel Gonçalves Cerejeira, Patriarch of Lisbon, Blessed Josemaría, Fr. Alvaro del Portillo and Fr. José Luis Múzquiz, on the terrace of the apartment in Piazza della Città Leonina.

TWO HISTORIC AUDIENCES

An important event in Blessed Josemaría's first stay in Rome was a meeting with Monsignor Montini, Substitute Secretary of State who, years later, was to become Pope Paul VI. It took place on 8 July. Blessed Josemaría was accompanied by Fr. Alvaro, who later wrote in the diary: "Our conversation went on for nearly three-quarters of an hour. There were moments when Monsignor Montini was deeply moved and his eyes were moist. He understands everything. He offers to help in any way he can... He says it is a very happy day for him because, in his position, most of the time he hears only about the sufferings of the Church: persecutions, scandals, enormous areas where it is not permitted to celebrate Mass. That is why he is so happy today when he hears such good news, and he sees such great desires of service and love for the Church ... He is going to ask for an audience with the Holy Father".⁸ Blessed Josemaría used often to recall that **the first friendly gesture I received here in Rome was from Monsignor Montini. The first affectionate word for the Work that was heard in Rome came from him.**⁹

Soon after, on 16 July, the feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel, he was received in audience by Pope Pius XII. Anyone aware of the Founder of Opus Dei's love for the Pope can imagine the emotion and joy produced by that audience. In 1934 he wrote: **Christ, Mary, the Pope. Don't these three words sum up for us all the loves of the Catholic faith?**¹⁰

With the firm trust that the affectionate support of the Holy Father produced in him, Blessed Josemaría kept working away until he obtained, a few months later, on 24 February, 1947, the Papal approval of the Work. Remembering that moment he wrote, many years later: **It was a time for patience, for working without rest, with our eyes fixed on God, and inspired by a great desire to serve the Holy Church.**¹¹



June 1947: Blessed Josemaría with Fr. Alvaro del Portillo and Fr. José Luis Múzquiz.

- 1 AGP, RHF EF-460613-1. The Founder frequently used the Latin word *fiat* (be it done), to express his wish to see the will of God being done, recalling the Blessed Virgin Mary's reply at the Annunciation: "*Fiat mihi...*" (Let it be done unto me according to your word).
- 2 Mariano was one of the names given to Blessed Josemaría at his baptism. He began to use it during the Spanish civil war to avoid problems due to the censorship of correspondence.
- 3 AGP, RHF D-15441/6
- 4 Cf *The Way*, 520
- 5 AGP, Diary kept at the apartment in Piazza della Città Leonina
- 6 AGP, RHF D-215201, no. 21
- 7 *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá*, 24
- 8 AGP, *Diary*, op. cit.
- 9 AGP, PO1 VII-1953, p. 47
- 10 AGP, RHF D-21500, no. 31
- 11 *Letter*, 25 January 1961, 20

UNDER HIS SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE

MONKOLE MEDICAL CENTRE KINSHASA

AN URGENT NEED

In recent years the population of Kinshasa has topped five million. Huge numbers of immigrants have settled on the outskirts of the capital and place an impossible strain on the city's infrastructure. These immigrant settlements lack essential services, particularly healthcare and medical assistance.

To help relieve the situation, in 1987 some faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei drew up a scheme for a medical centre in Mont Ngafula, one of the outlying districts of Kinshasa. Monkole was opened in 1991. It began as a small dispensary, but with immense scope for its work: to supply medical care, hygiene training and primary health care in a rapidly-growing district, and to form the basis for a much larger centre in the future.

From the start, Monkole's activity has been aimed at helping those most in need. The history of the Monkole Medical Centre bears the imprint of Blessed Josemaría's teachings, which showed how to translate Christian love into deeds of service. He had a very special love for the sick, the poor, and children, as he always said when recalling Opus Dei's own early years. **Opus Dei was born among the poor of Madrid, in the hospitals and the poorest**



Monkole contributes to relieving healthcare needs in Mont Ngafula, an outlying district of Kinshasa.

districts; and we still take care of the poor, children and the sick. This is a tradition which will never be broken in Opus Dei.¹ The faithful of the Prelature who went to Congo to begin their apostolate are also very conscious of the fact that, as Blessed Josemaría said, a man or a society that does not react to suffering and injustice and makes no effort to alleviate them, is still distant from the love of Christ's Heart.²

HEALTHCARE FOR ALL

In order to look after more patients, in 1995 an "annexe" was added to Monkole Medical Centre: Eliba, located in Kindele, another of Kinshasa's outlying districts. Its aims are both medical and social: to supply the urgent healthcare needs of the inhabitants and to provide patients and their families with basic education. A team of nurses is in charge of Eliba and a doctor from Monkole goes once a week. The "annexe" also runs classes in hygiene, basic literacy, and other family-orientated subjects. At the end of 1996 a similar "annexe" was opened in Kimbondo, a rural district which has no regular medical services. Prior to its opening some medical students, supervised by staff from Monkole, organized a project there to help the local residents understand the need for health care and education.

Monkole also organizes programmes of preventative care for illnesses in school-age children. The Centre's medical staff cover about twenty school units, which means looking after around 13,000 children and giving healthcare training to nearly 500 teachers.

In June 1997 an ante-natal and maternity clinic was opened. This extension



Eliba's objectives are both medical and social.

has doubled the size of the Centre. The new building includes the ante-natal clinic and a hospital ward with about twenty beds.

All these projects are included in the regional healthcare programme known as *Healthcare for All - Kinshasa*. During the recent war in the Republic of Congo, the Medical Centre was one of a network of emergency medical centres on standby to care for those wounded in the fighting.



In Eliba, an annexe to Monkole at Kindele, another of Kinshasa's outlying districts.

NURSING SCHOOL

Blessed Josemaría laid great stress on the importance of the role of nurses in the life of every health centre, not only because their job is to relieve their neighbours' suffering but also because nurses can help patients spiritually. In 1972, in Portugal, he said to a nurse, I advise you to smile, when you are so tired you feel you can't stand it for a moment longer; smile, and serve those people out of love for God, as if they were Christ himself. If you do that, you will find that when you come to judgement the Lord will say to you, 'Everything you did to those people, you did to me'. How wonderful that will be! So conquer yourself, so that you don't get into a bad mood and can give all your work a supernatural sense ... Make sure that none of your patients leaves this world without having received the Sacraments: that is the greatest good you can do them.³

In October 1997 Monkole also opened the Higher Institute of Nursing Sciences (ISSI) where about fifty students will graduate each year: another project which will contribute to solving the country's urgent healthcare needs.



Christian love should be shown by deeds of service.

¹ AGP, RHF D-21502, no. 57

² *Christ is passing by*, 167

³ AGP, PO4 1972, I, pp. 245-246

WRITINGS OF BLESSED JOSEMARÍA

JESUS CHRIST AND CONVERSION

Through his incarnation, through his work at Nazareth and his preaching and miracles in the land of Judea and Galilee, through his death on the cross, and through his resurrection, Christ is the centre of the universe, the firstborn and Lord of all creation.

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 involvement in the world, so that they 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 earthly occupations in which they work: the factory, the laboratory, the farm, the trades, the streets of the big cities and the trails of the mountains ...

Every Christian should make Christ present among men. He ought to act in such a way that those who know him sense "the fragrance of Christ". Men should be able to recognize the Master in his disciples. (*Christ is passing by*, 105).

The Christian must prove himself to be genuine, truthful and sincere in all that he undertakes. His conduct should reflect a spirit - the spirit of Christ. If anyone in this world has a duty to be consistent with his beliefs it is the Christian, for he has been entrusted with a gift that he must make fruitful, and that gift is the truth which liberates and saves. But Father, you might ask me, how I am to achieve this sincerity of life? Jesus Christ has given his Church all the means necessary. He has shown us how to pray, how to get to know his heavenly Father. He has sent us his spirit, the Great Unknown, who acts within our souls. And he has left us those visible signs of his grace that we call the Sacraments. Use them. Intensify your life of piety. Pray every day. And never refuse to shoulder the sweet burden of Christ's Cross. (*Friends of God*, 141).

A Christian knows that he is grafted onto Christ through baptism. He is empowered to fight for Christ through confirmation, called to act in the world sharing the royal, prophetic and priestly role of Christ. He has become one and the same thing with Christ through the Eucharist, the sacrament of unity and love. And so, like Christ, he has to live for other men, loving each and every one around him and indeed all humanity.

Faith helps us recognize that Christ is God; it shows that he is our saviour; it brings us to identify ourselves with him and to act as he acted ... You cannot separate the fact that Christ is God from his role as redeemer. The Word became flesh and came into the world "to save all men". With all our personal defects and limitations, we are other Christs, Christ himself, and we too are called to serve all men. (*Christ is passing by*, 106).

Christianity is not an easy way of life. It is not enough just to be in the Church, letting the years roll by. In our life, in the life of Christians, our first conversion - that unique moment which each of us remembers, when we clearly understood everything the Lord was asking of us - is certainly very significant. But the later conversions are even more important, and they are increasingly demanding. To facilitate the work of grace in these conversions, we need to keep our soul young; we have to call upon our Lord, know how to listen to him and, having found out what has gone wrong, know how to ask his pardon

The Lord listens to us. He wants to intervene and enter our lives to free us from evil and fill us with good. "I will rescue him and honour him", he says of man. So we must hope for glory. Here again we have the beginning of the interior movement that makes up our spiritual life. Hope of glory increases our faith and fosters our charity. (*Christ is passing by*, 57).

Living with God is indeed a risky business, for he will not share things: he wants everything. And if we move toward him, it means we must be ready for a new conversion, to take new bearings, to listen more attentively to his inspirations - those holy desires that he provokes in every soul - and to put them into practice.

Since our first conscious decision really to follow the teaching of Christ, we have no doubt made good progress along the way of faithfulness to his word. And yet isn't it true that there is still much to be done? Isn't it true, particularly, that there is still so much pride in us? We need, most probably, to change again, to be more loyal and humble, so that we become less selfish and let Christ grow in us, for "He must become more and more, I must become less and less". We cannot stay still ...

Conversion is the task of a moment; sanctification is the work of a lifetime. The divine seed of charity, which God has sown in our souls, wants to grow, to express itself in action, to yield results which continually coincide with what God wants. Therefore, we must be ready to begin again, to find again - in new situations - the light and the stimulus of our first conversion. And that is why we must prepare with a deep examination of conscience, asking our Lord for his help, so that we'll know him and ourselves better. If we want to be converted again, there's no other way. (*Christ is passing by*, 58).

Jesus is the way. Behind him on this earth of ours he has left the clear outlines of his footprints. They are indelible signs which neither the erosion of time nor the treachery of the evil one have been able to erase. *Jesus Christus heri, et hodie; ipse et in saecula*. How I love to recall these words. Jesus Christ, the very Jesus who was alive yesterday for his Apostles and the people who sought him out; this same Jesus lives today for us, and will live forever. (*Friends of God*, 127).

LETTERS RECEIVED

A GREAT GIFT

I want to write to let you know that I received a great gift through Blessed Josemaría.

My eight-year old son suffers from leukaemia. He was four years old when he was diagnosed. He has been doing well but he took sore legs and his blood count went down. The doctors told us that it could be the leukaemia back again. We were devastated. I am expecting my eighth baby and I found the whole thing a terrible worry. I prayed hard to Blessed Josemaría Escrivá. They did the tests and to our amazement his tests were all clear. I am so relieved and thankful to Blessed Josemaría. They think he had a virus.

I want to enclose a gift in thanksgiving for this wonderful favour, and I promised to tell about his great miracles and to spread his name in thanksgiving. Could you please forward me 20 or so little prayers of Blessed Josemaría so that I can pass them on to my family and friends.

Just a big thank-you from someone in need.

(M.M., Co. Tyrone 20.5.1997)

A PARTNER FOR WORK

Earlier this year my father who is a lawyer was left with no alternative but to set up his own firm at very short notice. This was due to a disagreement within the partnership to which he belonged.

He had to find a partner to work with him in the new firm very quickly. It would have been impossible for his business to survive as many of his clients are banks and building societies who do not give business to lawyers who practise alone.

My father started advertising but this met with little success. His other partners insisted this should be done anonymously so that the affair would be kept a secret until the demerger took place. No suitable candidates were found. Partnerships are usually offered to those who have worked within a firm for many years and are therefore well known.

My family were all very worried and so I began to say a prayer asking for the canonization of Blessed Josemaría and for his intercession. I started this prayer about six weeks before the demerger was due to happen. I was very precise. I asked that my father would be able to find a good hardworking partner by 1st May 1997 (the date of the demerger) who would be able to practise general litigation. With such a short time left to go, and given the fact that by the time I started to pray my father had given up advertising, and that no one apart from my father's former partners knew of the situation, I thought I was asking for the impossible.

Soon after I had started praying someone, however, contacted my father who was very interested in the position. He had seen the advertisement about six weeks before and wondered if the position was still unfilled. He was the best of all the applicants my father had had and an expert in litigation. He was offered and accepted a partnership just before 1st May.

My father now has a good and hardworking partner and his new business is thriving. I believe Mgr Escrivá's intercession helped to save my father's livelihood and that of his eighteen employees.

(M.J., Nottinghamshire, 25.8.1997)

A FAVOUR DURING DELIVERY

We were in the maternity ward of the Spanish Clinic in Mexico City waiting for our sixth child to be born. We had decided to call him Salvador, if he was a boy, as a sign of respect for my father-in-law.

The doctor was a well-known gynaecologist, who had known my wife all her life, since he had been in charge of the delivery when she was born. At a certain point the doctor came out from the labour ward and, without going into detail, told me that things were not going well. I told him I would go to the chapel to pray for my wife and the baby.

Our second and fourth children had had to be delivered by caesarean section. This fact made the situation worse, because as the doctor explained later, the delivery had become complicated just as labour was under way, which put both the baby and my wife in serious danger.

Shortly afterwards, the doctor came out again, this time very calm, and went to look for me in the chapel. He told me that things had gone very well and that it was a boy. He gave me a big hug and asked: "What saint did you pray to? Suddenly everything started working." I said: "To Blessed Josemaría, the Founder of Opus Dei."

Talking it over later with my wife, I realized that at the moment when I was asking for the intercession of the now Blessed Josemaría, my wife felt that everything was sorting itself out, and the baby was born in just a few minutes.

The following day, during the baptism ceremony in the same chapel, the chaplain asked us the name of the child and, in the presence of my father-in-law, and with great joy in our hearts, we gave him the name of Josemaría Salvador.

(A.L.D., Tlalnepantla, Mexico, 17.8.1996)

A THESIS IN SHANGHAI

A short time ago I received a letter from China from a friend who studies medicine in Shanghai. He was thanking Blessed Josemaría for a favour he had received through his intercession: he had successfully defended his doctoral thesis without any problems. My friend was asking me for more information about the Founder of Opus Dei. I can see that Blessed Josemaría is being generous in China as well.

(M.P., Macau, 13.6.1996)

RECOVERY FROM ILLNESS

My son, a university undergraduate, took ill in 1996 with a mental problem. He was fairly violent and was taken into hospital.

I am a Hindu by faith but I also have some Christian sympathies. About the 23rd January, 1997, a friend of mine, a Nigerian, came to my shop to buy some wares. He often called at my shop to talk to me about Opus Dei and the prayer card. He gave me a prayer card and encouraged me to ask Blessed Escrivá for intercession. He said I should challenge him about my son's condition.

He came to see me again about the 28th January, 1997, just before my family and I went to the hospital to see my son.

At the time we got there, we were shocked at what we saw. My son was sitting up in his bed waiting for us. He had recovered completely. The doctors were also surprised. No one could explain.

Since January 1997, we have been looking for my friend to tell him what God has done for us. My son returns to the University in September 1997 for his studies. My family and I thank God.

(R.V.B., London, 31.7.1997)

SOMEONE INFLUENTIAL

Last year, having attended college for one year (taking a course in accounts) I decided to take a break and look for a job as I waited for the next event in my life. It was then said - and this is largely true - that to get a job in the majority of the places in the Kenyan job market, you had to know somebody influential in that sector, better known as a "godfather". In my case I did not know of anyone to help me. I, however, knew of one spiritual godfather and mother who could help me without anticipating any kickbacks whatsoever. These were Blessed Josemaría and our loving mother Mary. I prayed. I said the prayer in the card and my rosary. I went to look for a job.

Believe me or not (personally I could not believe it at first) I got a job in the very first place I stopped to check. The owner of the firm (an accounting firm) talks to job seekers without prejudice. He did talk to me and, although he did not know me before, offered me a job. I could not attribute this favour to anything else other than God and the intercession of the Virgin Mary and Blessed Josemaría.

(K.I.N., Nairobi, Kenya, 22.6.1996)

A TOTAL CHANGE

Last Tuesday, one of the people who work with me in a research group came to see me to say that he was going to be away for the next two days. He said he was going to have a sterilization. I tried to explain that this was nonsensical and I gave him some reasons why. He gave his own reasons: he had three children, and the prospects for the future were poor. The conversation was brief - he had remained all the time at the front door, and we were also interrupted by two telephone calls. Immediately after he had left, I said the prayer to Blessed Josemaría and asked for his intercession so that my friend did not carry out his intention. Half an hour later, he came back to tell me that he had changed his mind.

(A.D., Utrecht, Holland 17.3.1996)

TWO CONVERSIONS

My first encounter with the prayer card of Blessed Josemaría was ten years ago. I was not a Christian at that time and I didn't know anything about Christianity. One day I was introduced to someone who belonged to Opus Dei who gave me a prayer card. From that time on my life changed radically. I began to study the Catechism little by little, and I learned to pray and to ask Blessed Josemaría for things. Around that time my mother had to be rushed off to hospital suddenly. She was found to have cancer. I was very upset. I began to pray intensely asking God through Blessed Josemaría not to take away my mother. If he did want to take her, let her at least be baptized first. I gave my mother a prayer card and she kept it with great affection. Then I began to teach her the Catechism and she began to find God.

After being in hospital several times, she died last year. By the grace of God she received Baptism, and she left this world looking at a picture of Our Lady which she had in front of her.

I also received the grace of Baptism and I try to act as a daughter of God. I thank Blessed Josemaría that my life changed in this manner through an encounter with his card.

(M.M., Ashiya, Japan, 14.12.1996)

KIDNAPPING AND A NOVENA

The children and the teacher at a nursery school in San Salvador began a novena to Blessed Josemaría asking that a little boy who had been kidnapped a year before might reappear. On the eighth day, one of the children said: "today his mummy is still crying, but not tomorrow, because we end the novena and he will appear".

The teacher began to worry and to think what she would say to the children, since it was very unlikely that the boy would turn up. But in fact the child was set free on the very day they ended the novena. The teacher was in tears.

(X.X., Guatemala, 29.9.1996)

EXCELLENT GUIDANCE

I wish to inform you that I have received countless graces through the intercession of Blessed Josemaría. I have just completed three and a half years' general nurse training. During my training I have prayed to Blessed Josemaría for guidance in my exams and of obtaining the grace to be a kind and caring nurse that is a comfort to the dying, which I have become under excellent guidance of Blessed Josemaría. I feel Blessed Josemaría's cause for canonization should be granted. I have and always will have great faith in his intercession.

(C.K., Dublin 29.6.1997)

SIX STOLEN CARS

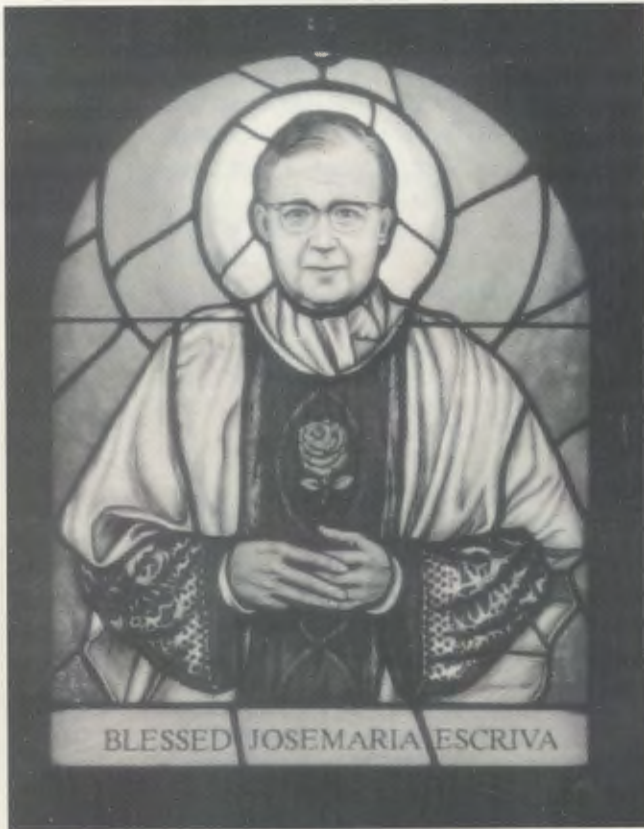
During the month of May there was a robbery in the security garage where we leave the car; they took six very expensive cars, as well as the radios of all the other cars and the keys of the more expensive cars which had been parked there. The previous evening, just a few minutes before closing time, a man had left his car in the garage, asking for permission to leave it there overnight. It was actually a car which had recently been stolen. Accomplices were hiding in the back of the car, and as soon as the watchman had left they got out and "set to work" without being disturbed. The owner of the garage, a 70 year-old man, a very good person who is always very kind to all his clients, was horrified, because the loss added up to an enormous amount, and his insurance did not even cover one half of it. Two of us began a novena to Blessed Josemaría asking for the stolen cars to be recovered, which seemed difficult and unlikely. Well, two or three weeks later the police did find the six stolen cars.

(M.B., Milan, Italy, 29.12.1996)

The originals of these letters, including names and addresses, are kept in the Archives of the Postulation of the Cause.

We are grateful for all the many letters we receive. They bear witness to the devotion with which so many people all over the world pray to God our Lord, invoking Blessed Josemaría as their intercessor. Owing to limits of space we have printed in this *Newsletter* only a few paragraphs from some that relate important events or simple anecdotes.

IN HONOUR OF BLESSED JOSEMARÍA



On 21 November 1996, the feast of the Presentation of our Lady, Archbishop John Aloysius Ward of Cardiff consecrated the new parish church of Our Lady, Queen of Martyrs, in Hereford. The first stone of the church had been blessed by His Holiness Pope John Paul II.

The new church has been built thanks to the effort and determination of the present parish priest, Father Thomas Regan OSB. At Father Regan's initiative a stained-glass window of Blessed Josemaría was included, in addition to a separate window dedicated to Blessed Dominic Barberi (the Passionist priest who received Cardinal Newman into the Catholic Church after his conversion from Anglicanism), and the central window dedicated to our Lady of Sorrows.

During the ceremony the names of St Romuald, Blessed Josemaría, and Blessed Dominic Barberi were included in the Litany of Saints. Relics of each of these are kept at the church.

Those attending the ceremony included, in addition to many of the faithful of the parish, the Mayor of Hereford and other civil authorities, a number of benefactors, Father Richard Stork, Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Britain, the Abbot and former Abbot of the Benedictine Monastery at Belmont, and other local clergy.

PUBLISHED WORKS OF BLESSED JOSEMARÍA ESCRIVÁ

THE WAY. "Monsignor Escrivá 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*..." (*L'Osservatore Romano*, 24 March 1950). The first edition of this book was published in 1934 entitled *Consideraciones espirituales*. Since then over 4,100,000 copies have appeared in 42 languages.

FURROW. "Like *The Way* (...), *Furrow* is fruit of Monsignor's Escrivá's interior life and experience with souls" (from the foreword by Bishop Alvaro del Portillo). The first edition was published in 1986. 419,000 copies in 18 languages have been printed to date.

THE FORGE. *The Forge* "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" (from the foreword by Bishop Alvaro del Portillo). It was first published in 1987. Over 360,000 copies have been printed in 10 languages.

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 670,000 copies have been published in 22 languages.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS. Fruit of Monsignor Escrivá's meditation on the scenes of the Passion of our Lord. The first edition was published in 1981. It is now available in 16 languages, with a total printing of 378,000 copies.

CONVERSATIONS. In *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá*, Opus Dei's Founder responds in writing to questions put by newspapers and magazines from various countries. The first edition appeared 1968. Since then 329,000 copies have been published in 9 languages.

CHRIST IS PASSING BY. This collection of 18 homilies constitutes a profound and attractive exposition of Christian doctrine and life. Foreword by Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. First published in 1973, over 463,000 copies have appeared in 13 languages.

FRIENDS OF GOD. A collection of another 18 homilies in which the author's warm and filial conversation with God is centred on the theme of the Christian virtues. Foreword by Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. First published in 1977; over 375,000 copies have appeared in 12 languages.

IN LOVE WITH THE CHURCH. A collection of homilies on the supernatural mission of the Church, the priesthood, and the Christian's fidelity to the Spouse of Christ. First published in 1986, it is available in 8 languages with a total printing of 41,000 copies.

LA ABADESA DE LAS HUELGAS. A penetrating theological-legal study, based on original sources and documents, of an unusual case of quasi-episcopal jurisdiction exercised by the abbess of a famous convent in Burgos. First published in 1944; a second edition appeared in 1974 and a third in 1988.

The above titles are available from booksellers or through Scepter, 14 Napier Court, The Science Park, Abingdon OX14 3NB.