

OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL VICAR OF THE OPUS DEI PRELATURE
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Congregation of the Causes of Saints



Blessed JOSEMARÍA ESCRIVÁ

Founder of Opus Dei

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 haven 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 Regional Vicar of the Opus Dei Prelature 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.

Front cover: Blessed Josemaría in Brafa, 25 November 1972

FATHER OF MERCIES

Many richly meaningful perspectives have been opened up for us by the Holy Father with his decision to dedicate to God the Father this "third and last year of preparation" for the Great Jubilee.¹ The Pope reminds us that "the whole of Christian life is like a great pilgrimage to the Father's house".² Our existence on this earth is due to an act of love on God's part, in creating us and giving us the means with which we can eternally rejoice in him in Heaven.

WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD

The greatest gift which we have received is sanctifying grace, which makes us children of God. As St Leo the Great writes: "This is the gift which outweighs all other gifts, that God should call man his son and that man should call God Father."³ For Christians the most familiar dimension of God's fatherhood is his infinite mercy. The redemptive mission of Christ can be summarised as follows: to give us knowledge of the "Father of mercies".⁴ A revelation that comes to completion on the Cross, where the Father accepts the sacrifice of his own Son for the salvation of mankind.⁵ Each day, John Paul II writes, we discover "his unconditional love for every human creature, and in particular for the 'prodigal son'".⁶

RETURNING TO THE FATHER

In this third year of preparation for the Jubilee, the Church invites us to have recourse to God's mercy, pursuing "a path of genuine conversion, which comprises both a 'negative' aspect of liberation from sin, and a 'positive' aspect of choosing the good": a struggle against our defects and a wholehearted willingness to direct our entire life to God, to love him with all our strength, to serve him unconditionally, discovering our personal vocation.

For human beings, who are prone to sin, love is manifested by our contrition for faults committed - "an intense celebration of the sacrament of Penance in its deepest sense"⁸ - and by an effort to communicate to those around us the joy of knowing we are forgiven and are beloved children of the Father.⁹ As John Paul II has written in the Bull of indiction for the great jubilee of the year 2000:

"The embrace which the Father gives to the one who, having repented, goes to meet him, will be the just reward for the humble recognition of his own faults and those of others, which is based on the deep bond which unites among them all those who are members of the Mystical Body of Christ".¹⁰

SPECIFIC GOALS

In proposing this goal to Christians, the Holy Father reminds us that we men, because we share in the divine life through grace, can and should turn our existence into an act of love: "Charity, in its double facet of love of God and of the brethren, is the synthesis of the moral life of the believer".¹¹ Among the channels to direct charity towards our neighbour, the Pope has pointed out the effort to promote peace, solidarity, justice, freedom. A goal in which we can all cooperate, living these demands in the ordinary circumstances of our daily life, since all of us, and not only the powerful in this world, have the duty to build "the civilisation of love".

Blessed Josemaría points to the prodigal son as a perennial model for our dealings with the Father: "Forward, no matter what happens! Cling tightly to Our Lord's hand and remember that God does not lose battles. If you should stray from him for any reason, react with the humility that will lead you to begin again and again; to play the role of the prodigal son every day, and even repeatedly during the twenty-four hours of the same day; to correct your contrite heart in Confession, which is a real miracle of God's Love. In this wonderful Sacrament Our Lord cleanses your soul and fills you with joy and strength to prevent you from giving up the fight, and to help you keep returning to God unwearied, when everything seems black."¹²

The Christian's life on earth can be seen as a path of continual conversion: beginning again and again. That way, going humbly to ask for God's mercy, we will attain the goal of the Jubilee: a deeper union with God. And, led by the Blessed Virgin, who is the Mother of God and our Mother, we will sow about us that peace which the world cannot give.

1 JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 49-54

2 *Ibid.*, 49.

3 ST LEO THE GREAT, *Sermo 6 in Nativitate*

4 2 Cor 1:3

5 Cf JOHN PAUL II, Enc. *Dives in misericordia*, 8

6 Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 49

7 *Ibid.*, 50

8 *Ibid.*

9 Cf Ephes 5:1

10 JOHN PAUL II, Bull *Incararnationis mysterium*, 29 November 1998, 11

11 JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 49

12 BLESSED JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA, *Friends of God*, 214

ABBA!, PATER!

On 2 October 1928, God made Blessed Josemaría Escrivá see Opus Dei. After that date, the Founder received many lights from the Holy Spirit, which clarified aspects of the task God had entrusted to him. For example, in order to impress vividly upon his soul that the foundation of the spirit of Opus Dei is the awareness of divine filiation - that Christians are children of God - the Paraclete acted with great force, as we can deduce from a reading of the notes which Blessed Josemaría made of his experiences.

AN INTERIOR MOTION

On 22 September 1931, he writes: **I was thinking about God's goodness to me and, filled with interior joy, I felt like shouting out loud in the street, so that everyone might know how grateful I was to be his son, Father!, Father! And - though not shouting it out loud - nevertheless, in a low voice, I went about calling him that way (Father!) many times, in the certain knowledge that I was pleasing him.**¹

A few days later, on 2 October 1931, came the third anniversary since he received the divine call to found Opus Dei. In the notes he writes that day, which are full of a deep gratitude to our Lord and a sincere resolution to be a good instrument in his hands, there is also a reference to divine filiation: **And there were sentiments of love for my Mother and Lady, and I feel myself at this moment very much a son of my Father-God.**²

A week later, again in his notes, the intensity of Blessed Josemaría's prayer shows through, in passages expressing the path of love along which he was being guided by the Holy



Blessed Josemaría in a family gathering in Peru, 29 July 1974

Spirit: "qui facit voluntatem Patris mei... ipse intrabit in regnum caelorum".³ Oh that I too may do your Will! I want to do it: I will ask for that, from now on, of those who pray for me.⁴

A NEW COMMUNICATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

His prayer was continuous, uninterrupted from morning till night. On 16 October 1931, a new communication of the Holy Spirit impressed even more deeply on his soul his consciousness of being a son of God. We read: Feast of St Hedwig, 1931: I wanted to pray, after Mass, in the quiet of my church. I wasn't able to. In Atocha⁵ I bought a newspaper (the ABC) and took a tram. As I write I haven't been able to read more than a paragraph of the paper. I felt an abundant and ardent prayer of affection come to me. I was like that in the tram and until I got home.⁶ Blessed Josemaría's later recollections of this experience can help us understand its importance in his life and in the spirit of Opus Dei: I felt the action of our Lord, who was bringing forth in my heart and on my lips, with the strength of something imperiously necessary, this tender invocation: *Abba! Pater!* (...)

And I was walking through the streets of Madrid, for an hour perhaps, or perhaps two, I cannot say, time passed without my realising it. People must have thought I was mad. I was contemplating with lights which were not mine this amazing truth, which became lit up like a burning ember in my soul, never to be extinguished (...) I understood that divine filiation was to be a fundamental characteristic of our spirituality: *Abba, Pater!* And that, in living divine filiation, my children would find themselves filled with joy and peace, protected by an unassailable wall; that they would be apostles of this joy, and would be able to communicate their peace, also in suffering, their own or others'. For this very reason: because we are persuaded that God is our Father.⁷

MEANING OF THE MESSAGE

The message which Blessed Josemaría received from Heaven that day was for Opus Dei as a whole. It became manifestly clear that the sense of being sons and daughters

En el mundo todos
somos iguales. No hay
+ q 2 razas: la raza
de los hijos de Dios.

"In the world we are all equal. There is no more than one race: the race of the children of God." Manuscript text of Blessed Josemaría.

of God in Christ was the foundation of the spirit of Opus Dei. "Divine filiation, the fact of being adopted children of God, ended up being central to the spirit of Opus Dei and to the piety of all its members. They try to live with the true spirit of freedom of the children of God; they work not as people on a salary but as heirs to the kingdom of heaven; they try to love God with the intimate love of a child that knows it is loved; in their apostolate they see themselves as co-redeemers with Christ to bring all souls back to God the Father; and they receive joy and suffering, sickness or death, as coming from the loving hands of our Father God."⁸

It would take a lot of space to illustrate the richness with which, in his preaching, the Founder of Opus Dei speaks of different aspects of Christian life in the light of divine filiation: the prayer of children of God, the work of children of God, the abandonment of children of God, the joy of children of God... Let us just quote a couple of paragraphs from a meditation given in 1963, in which the Founder, evoking the spiritual experience of 1931 which we have spoken about, relates it to the mystery of the Cross: *When Our Lord was hitting me, around the year 1931, with those blows, I couldn't understand it. Then suddenly, in the midst of that great bitterness, those words of his: You are my son (Ps 2:7), You are Christ. And all I could do was to keep saying: Abba, Pater! Abba, Pater! Abba! Abba! Abba! (Rom 8:15). And now I see it with new light, like a new discovery: as one sees, when the years have gone past, the hand of God, of divine Wisdom, of the Almighty. You have led me to understand, Lord, that finding the Cross is finding happiness, joy. And the reason – I see it more clearly now than ever – is this: to have the Cross is to identify oneself with Christ, to be Christ and, for that reason, to be a son of God (...)*

Lord, I ask your Mother, and St Joseph our Patron, and my ministerial Archangel, to pray for me and for my children to have this spirit always. *Ne respicias peccata mea, sed fidem (Ordo Missae).*⁹ That faith, that light, that love for the Cross, until death! That divine light, which will make us always understand clearly that it is worthwhile to be nailed to the Cross, because that is the way to enter into Life, to be drunk with the Life of Christ. The Cross! Christ is there, and you have to lose yourself in Him! There will be no more suffering, no more tiredness. You should not say: Lord, I can't

Benedicamus Patri, et
Filium, cum Sancto Spiritu!

Romae, 1972.

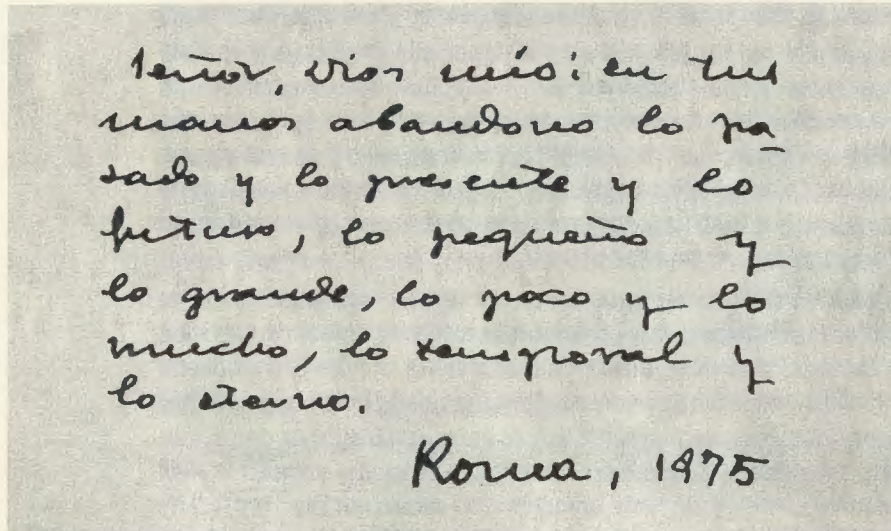
"Let us bless the Father, and the Son, with the Holy Spirit! Rome, 1972."

take any more, I who am a wretch... No! It isn't true! On the Cross, you will be Christ, and you will feel yourself to be a son of God, and you will exclaim: *Abba, Pater!* What joy it is to meet you, Lord!¹⁰

"Let us bless the Father, and the Son, with the Holy Spirit! Rome, 1972."

Speaking about the joy that marks Christians out, the Holy Father Pope John Paul II has written: "Therefore the cause of our joy is having the strength to defeat evil and to embrace the divine filiation which constitutes the essence of the Good News."¹¹

This "essence" of the Gospel message summarises what Jesus Christ has revealed to us about God and man. It is a consoling truth in the face of our experience of evil, the consequence of sin, which marks our days on earth. It is a truth which we can only discover fully when we learn to welcome the Cross; when we are not satisfied with being resigned to the Cross, but rather love it as coming from the hands of God the Father. "Lord, my God: into your hands I abandon what is past, what is present and what is future, what is small and what is big, what is little and what is much, what is temporal and what is eternal. Rome, 1975".



"Lord, my God: into your hands I abandon what is past, what is present and what is future, what is small and what is big, what is little and what is much, what is temporal and what is eternal. Rome, 1975".

- 1 *Apuntes íntimos*, no. 296, quoted in A. VAZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador del Opus Dei (I)*, Rialp, Madrid 1997, 388. The translation of these *Intimate notes* from the Spanish is ours.
- 2 *Ibid.* no. 307
- 3 "He who does the will of my Father... shall enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 7:21)
- 4 *Ibid.* no. 314
- 5 One of the railway stations in Madrid
- 6 *Ibid.* no. 334; quoted in A. VAZQUEZ DE PRADA, *cit.*, 389
- 7 *Letter*, 9 January 1959, no. 60 and *Letter*, 8 December 1949, no. 41; quoted in A. VAZQUEZ DE PRADA, *cit.*, 389-3918 A.
- 8 VAZQUEZ DE PRADA, *cit.*, 392
- 9 *Look not on my sins, but on our faith* (from the Ordinary of the Mass)
- 10 *Meditation* preached on 28 April 1963
- 11 JOHN PAUL II, *Crossing the threshold of hope*, London 1994, p. 21, answering the third question, "How does the Pope pray?"

FOLLOWING HIS INITIATIVE

CONDORAY – A TRAINING CENTRE FOR WOMEN IN CAÑETE, PERU

Condoray is situated in the Cañete Valley, some 90 miles south west of the Peruvian capital Lima. The main economic activity of the region is agriculture. Other activities include cattle farming, fishing, local crafts and mining. It is estimated that 71.6% of the housing has precarious sanitation provision. Life for the country women in Cañete is hard. From an early age they have to look after the home, see to the upbringing of the children and take care of the elderly.

Traditionally, only a small number of the women worked, on a casual basis, harvesting cotton, asparagus or fruit, and for wages that were utterly inadequate. Now, over twenty thousand country women from the Cañete Valley have taken part in various programmes of rural development run by Condoray and more than three thousand of them have gained technical qualifications and now work for local businesses or run their own.

We could say that the story of Condoray began back in 1956, when the Holy See informed Mgr Escrivá that the Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, wished to entrust to Opus Dei a Prelature nullius in Peru. In effect, in 1957, the Holy See established the Prelature of Yauyos-Huarochiri and appointed Mgr Ignacio María de Orbegozo, a priest of Opus Dei, as its Prelate. Cañete was added to the two provinces of Yauyos and Huarochiri in February 1962 and the town of San Vicente de Cañete became the seat of the Prelature nullius.

THE EARLY DAYS

A year later, in 1963, with the encouragement of the Founder of Opus Dei, Condoray began its activities. At the time it was just a small school offering classes in handicraft, sewing and cookery. Shortly afterwards, in 1965, it started to offer officially recognised technical courses. In 1981 the range of courses on offer was increased and Condoray became a Special Centre for Professional Qualifications running courses for Executive Secretaries, the Hospitality and Clothing Industry, Occupational Hygiene and Safety, and Food Sciences. As a result of their professional preparation and the insight into the Christian meaning of life that the Centre provides, many women from the Cañete Valley have been able to



Thanks to the literacy promotion programmes organised by Condoray, the number of women in the Cañete Valley who cannot read has been reduced significantly



Inside a family dwelling in the Cañete Valley

improve their skills and have been capacitated to find solutions to the problems of their own families and communities. Among other initiatives, they have created eighty-six pilot farms, which form the main source of food for hundreds of families. A family gardening project has encouraged the growing of vegetables which enrich the local diet. Other activities they have started include shoe making, literacy, hygiene and sanitation courses.

The keystone to all this development has been the rural organisers, women who

are trained in Condoray and who, in their turn, train others.

Condoray does not simply seek to find solutions to specific problems arising from drought, floods or economic crises, but it endeavours to prepare each person to confront such situations with skill and creativeness. The change can be clearly seen. People in the provincial towns now have a greater desire to better themselves and many have shaken off their previous passivity. Moreover, thanks to the people who work in Condoray, many families have discovered a deep meaning to life through the Christian faith.

BLESSED JOSEMARÍA ESCRIVÁ IN CAÑETE

In July 1974, the Founder of Opus Dei travelled to Peru and carried out an intensive catechesis. The Cañete Valley gave him a warm welcome. One of the meetings, which was held on 13 July, attracted a great number of country women from villages far and near. A veritable mosaic of races gathered there: angular faces burnt by the Andes sun, white people and people of mixed race, dark skinned people with beads in their hair, and others with Asian features. Blessed Josemaría's first words were: "I come to congratulate you on the great work of human progress that you carry out here. I have said human progress, and so, it is not only professional and material formation, it is also spiritual development."¹



One of the programmes carried out from Condoray is to improve the dwellings of the country women, over 70% of dwellings have no toilet, running water or drains

The meeting was a catechesis that went straight to the foundations of Christian life. "Do not be satisfied with only material things (...). I'm sure you want to live as Christians do, to come closer each day to Jesus Christ, just as I do. Do you know how we come closer to him? By using the means that He has given us: getting to know his teaching and receiving his Sacraments."²

Blessed Josemaría knew all about the hard lives these people lived, and he spoke to them in words that stimulated



Twice a week, some 1700 children in 22 villages are cared for. Here we see a meal being prepared

them to turn their tasks into an occasion for holiness. Answering a question, he said, "Opus Dei (you know the meaning of these words) is operatio Dei, the work of God. That is to say, it tries to lead people to sanctify themselves in the midst of the world (...). But if each one of us has to sanctify ourselves in our own place, through our own work, we have to do that work well. We cannot do a botched job. - I don't know what expression you use here. What do you call it here?" "Doing things shoddily, Father." "Shoddily, then, things not finished properly, without putting your heart and soul into them. We have to be keen to do things, be glad to work. You can work in such a way, also as a means of earning money and improving your family's position, but especially you must work in order to please God, because work is prayer, because it gives us dignity. Work makes you become a person of standing, that is to say, it makes you become each day a more perfect Christian, a saint."³

CONDORAY TODAY

The work of social and Christian advancement carried out by Condoray has reached out beyond the frontiers of Peru. Since 1985, women university students from Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Ireland, France, Belgium and Spain have gone to work in the villages of Cañete. This international help runs alongside social programmes that take place throughout the year. The students who join in these cooperative undertakings give the country women classes in nutrition, first aid, sewing and cookery. And they do not return home empty-handed. They have discovered the greatness of the Christian joy of these people and their optimism in the face of adversity. They have seen that the people of this valley live lives truly filled with virtue, and that riches are far more than simply material well-being. They have seen Christianity lived in a consistent way.



In the rural areas of the Cañete Valley, some two thirds of the dwellings are made of matting or adobe and have no running water

- 1 AGP P05 1974, II, p. 274
- 2 *ibidem*, p. 275
- 3 *ibidem*, pp. 279-281

TEXTS OF BLESSED JOSEMARÍA

GOD THE FATHER

Rest and repose in the fact of being children of God. God is a Father who is full of tenderness, of infinite love. Call him "Father" many times a day and tell him — alone, in your heart — that you love him, that you adore him, that you feel proud and strong because you are his son. All this implies a genuine programme of interior life, which needs to be channelled through your relationship of piety with God, through these acts (which should be few, I insist, but constant) which will enable you to develop the attitudes and manner of a good son (*Friends of God*, 150).

We've got to be convinced that God is always near us. We live as though he were far away, in the heavens high above, and we forget that he is also continually by our side. He is there like a loving Father. He loves each one of us more than all the mothers in the world can love their children—helping us, inspiring us, blessing... and forgiving. How often we have misbehaved and then cleared the frowns from our parents' brows, telling them: I won't do it any more!—That same day, perhaps, we fall again...—And our father, with feigned harshness in his voice and serious face, reprimands us, while in his heart he is moved, realising our weakness and thinking: poor child, how hard he tries to behave well! We've got to be filled, to be imbued with the idea that our Father, and very much our Father, is God who is both near us and in heaven (*The Way*, 267).

Once again you had gone back to your old follies! And afterwards, when you returned, you didn't feel very cheerful, because you lacked humility. It seems as if you obstinately refuse to learn from the second part of the parable of the prodigal son, and you still feel attached to the wretched happiness of the pigswill. With your pride wounded by your weakness, you have not made up your mind to ask for pardon, and you have not realised that, if you humble yourself, the joyful welcome of your Father God awaits you, with a feast to mark your return and your new beginning (*Furrow*, 65).

Jesus prays in the garden. *Pater mi* (Matt 26:39), *Abba Pater!* (Mark 14:36). God is my Father, even though he may send me suffering. He loves me tenderly, even while wounding me. Jesus suffers, to fulfil the Will of the Father... And I, who also wish to fulfil the most holy Will of God, following in the footsteps of the Master, can I complain if I too meet suffering as my travelling companion? It will be a sure sign of my sonship, because God is treating me as he treated his own Divine Son. Then I, just as He did, will be able to groan and weep alone in my Gethsemani: but, as I lie prostrate on the ground, acknowledging my nothingness, there will rise up to the Lord a cry from the depths of my soul: *Pater mi, Abba, Pater... fiat!* (*The Way of the Cross*, 1,1).

You are discouraged, why? Is it your sins and miseries? Is it your defeats, at times coming one after the other? A really big fall, which you didn't expect? Be simple. Open your heart. Look: as yet nothing has been lost. You can still go forward, and with more love, with more affection, with more strength. Take refuge in your divine sonship: God is your most loving Father. In this lies your security, a haven where you can drop anchor no matter what is happening on the surface of the sea of life. And you will find joy, strength, optimism: victory! (*The Way of the Cross*, 7,2).

It looks as if the whole world is coming down on top of you. Whichever way you turn you find no way out. This time, it is impossible to overcome the difficulties. But, have you again forgotten that God is your Father? — all-powerful, infinitely wise, full of mercy. He would never send you anything that is evil. That thing that is worrying you, it's good for you, even though those earthbound eyes of yours may not be able to see it now. *Omnia in bonum!* Lord, once again and always, may your most wise Will be done! (*The Way of the Cross*, 9, 4).

This divine filiation is the basis of the spirit of Opus Dei. All men are children of God. But a child can look upon his father in many ways. We must try to be children who realise that the Lord, by loving us as his children, has taken us into his house, in the middle of the world, to be members of his family, so that what is his is ours, and what is ours is his, and to develop that familiarity and confidence which prompts us to ask him, like children, for the moon! (*Christ is Passing By*, 64).

Draw strength from your divine filiation. God is a Father — your Father! — full of warmth and infinite love. Call him Father frequently and tell him, when you are alone, that you love him, that you love him very much, and that you feel proud and strong because you are his son (*The Forge*, 331).

A son of God fears neither life nor death, because his spiritual life is founded on a sense of divine filiation. So he says to himself: God is my Father and he is the Author of all good; he is all Goodness. But, you and I, do we really act as sons of God? (*The Forge*, 987).

Divine filiation is a joyful truth, a consoling mystery. It fills all our spiritual life, it shows us how to speak to God, to know and to love our Father in heaven. And it makes our interior struggle overflow with hope and gives us the trusting simplicity of little children. More than that: precisely because we are children of God, we can contemplate in love and wonder everything as coming from the hands of our Father, God the Creator. And so we become contemplatives in the middle of the world, loving the world (*Christ is Passing By*, 65).

THE SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

MASS ON FRIDAY 2ND OCTOBER 1998

Cardinal George Basil Hume, who died on 17th June 1999, celebrated Mass at St James's Church in London on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei by Blessed Josemaría. With him at the altar were the Regional Vicar of Opus Dei, Mgr Nicholas Morrish, and other priests of the Prelature and nearby dioceses. The Cardinal started his homily by saying:

"It was on this feast day in 1928, when the founder of Opus Dei understood that he was to urge men - and indeed, of course, women as well - in all walks of life to seek holiness, and carry out an apostolate in the midst of the world, through the exercise of their profession or trade, without change of life. No change of life; but surely



always a change of heart! But already those words, 70 years ago, anticipated the Vatican Council's Decree on the place and the rôle of the laity in the world: the laity to live out their lives and to grow in holiness. And that chapter five of the Church's Constitution, *Lumen Gentium*, on the call to be holy, was perhaps one of the most important statements of the Vatican Council - and maybe, unfortunately, the least known. The universal call

to holiness! In order to be equipped, to be able to carry out the mission of the Church, to live out that other great Constitution of the Council, the rôle of the Church in the world, *Gaudium et Spes*, giving us the principles of how to witness and how to engage in activity."

He concluded: "You members of Opus Dei have a grave responsibility to respond to the call to holiness, to use the help and assistance which you can get. But always, not for ourselves, but for *mission*, to carry the Gospel into the world in which we live. That's what the Decree on the Laity of the Second Vatican Council said. That I believe is what your founder saw."

LETTERS RECEIVED

EMPLOYMENT AS WANTED

My husband had been unemployed for fifteen years with no real hope of finding work. He applied to one firm in particular many, many times, only to receive the same stock answers. I had been praying as had all my family and friends over the years for work for my husband but to no avail. However in April this year I had an urgent desire to pray to Blessed Josemaría for John to have work. I said the novena everyday going to work. John got a phone call on the Tuesday of the last week to ask him for an interview. He obtained the position; on the same week he got another call for an interview with the firm he had been trying for years to get into. They called him on the Friday of the same week for him to start right away. I know in my heart Blessed Josemaría is responsible and would like to spread the word of hope never to give up no matter how long or how impossible the task.

(L. F., Cumbernauld, 15.6.1998)

A CONVERSION

My aunt had been baptised but had never practised her faith and she was far from the Church. That same month, my father - her brother - went to Prague to visit her because, a week earlier, she had been diagnosed as having lung cancer. His intention had been to speak to her about getting reconciled with our Lord; not being sure how things would turn out, he had asked us to pray. The very next day, I began to pray the prayer of the prayer card asking Blessed Josemaría for her conversion and that she might be able to find a priest. I said the prayer daily. Five days later, my father phoned to say that my aunt had already seen a priest. She had been to confession, had received the Sacrament of Anointing and Holy Communion. They were planning to go on a pilgrimage to Svata Hora u Pribram the following Sunday. All this was a real miracle. My father wrote to me later that he found his sister very well disposed spiritually. He mentioned that someone had recommended her to go to see a priest and that she had accepted. She was perfectly prepared for it. I firmly believe that it has all been possible thanks to the intercession of Blessed Josemaría. My aunt, for her part, is extremely grateful for the grace of her conversion at a very important time in her life.

(H.K., Ontario, Canada, 1998)

HEART ATTACK

In 1996 my wife was taken to hospital with a severe heart attack. There was little hope that she would recover. During the short suspense between life and death, I begged Blessed Josemaría to help the doctors to resuscitate her, and I promised him that I would propagate his name. My wife returned home and I have prayed to Blessed Josemaría ever since.

(W.F., London, 14.8.1998)

HE DID NOT DESERVE THE FAVOUR

I was going through a crisis due mainly to my dissatisfaction in my professional life. For nearly two years I had been dissatisfied with my work and this had affected my state of mind. I was in a mood of deep despair. Some six months ago I was in Rome for a professional interview and, as I had time before the appointment, I decided to go for a walk in the streets. By chance I found myself in front of the church where Blessed Josemaría is buried and I decided to go inside. After reading a Newsletter, I asked the Blessed to help me solve my problems and to show me a sign of his intercession. I have to say that I am not a believer nor do I know why I was praying. As a result of that professional interview my life has changed completely. I can now say that I am completely satisfied with my work and with my future prospects. I wish to thank Blessed Josemaría for what has happened to me and which I possibly did not deserve and ask that, if you consider it suitable, you will publish this little fact.

(X.X., Rome, 7.7.1997)

A DIFFICULT SITUATION RESOLVED

Prior to my leaving Delhi, you had posted to me your booklet on Blessed Josemaría Escrivá. I read all the letters from grateful readers whose problems he had solved and whose petitions he had answered. I was also impressed with the excellent work Opus Dei is conducting in different parts of the world and remote areas. Soon after, I received an urgent phone message from a member of my family to travel to Pune as a difficult situation had arisen. This would have been very difficult as my husband is 82 years old and cannot be left alone; so I prayed devoutly to Fr Josemaría to resolve the crisis. I prayed with absolute belief that he would help me. The message reached me in the morning – when I phoned at 8:30 p.m. the problem was resolved and all was well. It was amazing and since then I have recourse to prayer whenever any difficulties arise.

(O.M., Goa, India, 18.3.1999)

EACH TIME SHE LEARNED A BIT MORE

I have a daughter of six with several problems. Among them autism, hyperactivity, short retentiveness, speech difficulties, etc. She is at present in the first grade. When she started school, the teachers and ourselves got together several times to see what plan to follow with her, as she had difficulty in learning and retaining what she had learned. In one meeting, we agreed that, given the little progress she had made, it would be best for her to repeat the first grade as she couldn't repeat the vowels or numbers above ten, while her companions were already reading, adding and subtracting. I then decided to say the prayer of Blessed Josemaría asking him that my daughter should reach a level of learning appropriate to her age. Time went by and little by little we began to see that each time she was learning more and was developing at a rate more like that of the others. And so, after her teachers had said that she wouldn't learn to read, now she can do so like the others, she knows her numbers almost up to a hundred and is taking part in school work better each day, to the astonishment of her teachers.

(M.B.R., Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, 19.2.1997)

GOD PROVIDED A HOUSE

A very dear friend I met at Enugu introduced me to Opus Dei in 1994 when I was doing my first year law programme. Later he gave me a prayer card of Blessed Josemaría. One of the things I begged our Father God to grant me through the intercession of Blessed Josemaría was a house for my family. The idea of having a house was totally unrealistic at that time, for my father was a poorly paid civil servant, and my mother could not do much on her own. In spite of this I kept asking Blessed Josemaría to intercede hoping that perhaps the price of cement, zinc and other building materials would be affordable in this country. In 1997, the fruition of the intercession of Blessed Josemaría came manifestable when my uncle announced his intention to help us towards erecting a building. The outcome was that within six months a gigantic six room and a parlour house stood for us, built single handedly by my uncle. All the people who knew what happened said it was an unusual gesture of magnanimity in our modern times. My uncle himself said he did it for God.

(O.S.D., Enugu, Nigeria, 9.3.1999)

I REALISED I COULD USE THE PRAYER CARD

My friend Margaret gave me a prayer card of Blessed Josemaría one Thursday and I left it to one side, without bothering much about it, until on the following Monday I received a phone call from the family of a friend and fellow student. It was then I realised that I could use the prayer card I had been given, because the family in question was very worried, since my friend had left home on the Sunday and had not returned. They had no idea where she was. I immediately got the prayer card out and began to pray without stopping. On Tuesday, at midnight, my phone rang. The family were phoning to tell me my friend had just got back, in a wretched state. What had happened was that soon after she had gone out of her house three days earlier she lost her memory there in the street. She did not know who or where she was. She had spent the three days like that until a short time earlier, when she recovered her memory and returned home. They took her to hospital where she spent two weeks. There the doctors found she had a vessel burst in her brain, which had led to her temporary loss of memory. The doctors had been able to give her treatment before it was too late. My friend is now well and back at work.

(D.C., Hong Kong, 5.8.1997)

A LARGER HOUSE

I did a novena and obtained a favour through the intercession of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá. I prayed with all my heart: our children needed a larger house, as they are expecting their child in September. They nearly found one, last year, but at the last minute, when every thing was ready, after months of preparation, the sale fell through. Our daughter-in-law had a nervous breakdown. This year, they searched

again for a house according to their means, the proximity of the Catholic church, of the Catholic schools. I started a novena; at the end of the novena, they phoned me that they had seen a house, which would be perfect for them. It was so wonderful! They moved on the 3rd of July, after nearly 3 months of negotiations and "fear". But, I, I knew that it was the "right" house and that everything would work out.

(O.F., London, 7.7.1999)

IN A MATTER OF HOURS...

My story goes back two and a half years when I took a taxi. Once seated in the taxi, I noticed a little prayer card in a prominent place, next to the driving wheel: it was the smiling face of Blessed Josemaría presiding over the car. Underneath it, a posy of flowers. I began to talk to the driver. There were burns on his neck and on his hands. I tried to bring up the subject of the prayer card in different ways but, in a gentle way, he evaded the subject. As the journey was coming to an end, I tried again. He stutteringly told me the following: "All right, I'll tell you. Can you see the market place in front of us? Some years back I was in a restaurant there having lunch with my family, when a gas tanker exploded. My wife, my two children and I were badly burned. We were taken to hospital: the initial diagnosis was that we were all in a bad way; as for me, the doctors did not think I would survive. I heard them telling my mother that in a matter of hours I would be dead. Most likely I would not see the next day. I turned to God and very earnestly asked him to save my life, for who would look after my family if I died. The next morning, I woke up. I don't know who brought me the prayer card of this dear priest. I grabbed hold of it, and prayed to him very earnestly for many days... So much that at times I thought I could see him by my bedside. To the amazement of the doctors, I was recovering little by little. Even so, one doctor told me I had to expect to be left paralysed. I prayed even more to the priest. Who would look after my family. "Help me!" Then I was allowed home and began my rehabilitation. Finally I was able to start working again. Now we have more children and life is back to normal. I gave the prayer card to another person who was ill in hospital and I no longer had it, to my great regret. I began to drive a taxi and one day a lady gave me this one as a present. I speak to him a lot each day and at home we pray to him. And I know that my Father listens to us and smiles upon us."

(R.R.P., Mexico City, 10.8.1997)

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.

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 4,170,000 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. 430,000 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 440,000 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 680,000 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 381,000 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 330,000 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 465,000 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 380,000 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.