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This Newsletter is published with the ecclesiastical approval of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Imprimatur: +Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei.



Saint Josemaría Escrivá

6 October 2002

Newsletter No. 22, Dublin – May 2003



Lord God, through the mediation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, you granted countless graces to your priest Saint Josemaría, choosing him as a most faithful instrument to found Opus Dei, a way to holiness through daily work and the ordinary duties of a Christian. Grant that I also may learn to use all the circumstances and events of my life to love you and serve the Church, the Pope and all souls, with joy and simplicity, lighting up the paths of the earth with the brightness of faith and love. Through the intercession of Saint Josemaría please grant me the favour I request (*Here make your petition*). Amen.

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

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Days of prayer and thanksgiving

When this holy priest, Josemaría, first arrived in Rome on the evening of 23 June 1946, he took up lodgings in a little apartment at the very top of a building in the Piazza Città Leonina, just a short distance away from Saint Peter's Basilica. When night fell, he went out onto the covered balcony overlooking the Apostolic Palace where Pope Pius XII lived. From there he could see the windows of the Pope's apartment. Deeply moved, he began praying for the Holy Father. Perhaps as he prayed he felt the support of the prayers of all the Christians who have offered their lives for the Pope down through the ages; or he may have thought of all those people who, as he wrote in The Way, would wish to make their pilgrimage to Rome videre Petrum, to see Peter. The hours went quickly by, and dawn found Saint Josemaría still praying: he had spent his first night in Rome in a vigil of prayer.

• In Rome

From beneath those same windows of the Papal apartment, on 6 October 2002, from very early in the morning, prayers for the Pope and the Church rose up from the huge crowd that filled not only Saint Peter's Square, but also the Via della Conciliazione and many of the surrounding streets and squares as well. The authorities calculated that a total of between 450,000 and 500,000 people had come to celebrate Saint Josemaría's canonisation. For many of them it was their first visit to Rome; and for some, it was probably the only time they would be there in their whole lifetime.

From just one person in 1946, to several hundred thousand in 2002 – not a long time in terms of the whole history of the Church. The building in the Piazza Città Leonina hasn't changed, and doesn't even look particularly old. There is a certain continuity between the prayer which



Saint Josemaría offered all alone for the Pope on that first night in Rome, and the prayer of the huge, serene, multi-ethnic, joyous and at the same time committed crowd now assembled outside the Basilica. In either case what matters is the individual's union with God; and it is impossible to calculate the fruitfulness of such prayer, because it is always God who gives the increase.

People started arriving for the canonisation from around the end of September, having travelled to Rome by aeroplane, train, coach, car, or even by boat - in the space of just a few hours, eight ships docked in the port of Civitavecchia. As the visitors arrived, they were welcomed at many different reception points by young volunteers who were ready to help them with whatever they needed.

On Thursday 3 October, the sacred remains of the founder of Opus Dei were transferred from their usual resting place to the Basilica of Saint Eugene, a church large enough to cater relatively comfortably for all who wished to pray to the new Saint. On the evening of Friday 4 October, in the Auditorium of Saint Cecilia in the Via della Conciliazione, the official presentation took place of the

Harambee 2002 Project, one of the social aid projects organised to commemorate the centenary and canonisation of Saint Josemaría. Performers from every continent took part in a musical event, which also included testimonies concerning the new Saint and the importance of education for the future of Africa.

• Among the Saints

The canonisation ceremony took place on Sunday 6 October at 10 o'clock in the morning. "For the honour of the Blessed Trinity ... we declare and define that Blessed Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer is a Saint and we enrol him among the Saints, decreeing that he is to be venerated in the whole Church as one of the Saints," Pope John Paul II solemnly proclaimed. The formula of canonisation was closed by an "Amen" from the whole congregation, and enthusiastic applause broke out all the way down from Saint Peter's Square to the Castel Sant'Angelo. After the Mass was over, the Pope wanted to greet all those present, and in the "Popemobile" he went around the Square and along the whole length of the Via della Conciliazione, accompanied by the Prelate of Opus

Dei. Along the way, many babies and small children received a blessing and a kiss on the forehead from the Pope.

On the morning of 7 October, there was a Mass of Thanksgiving in Saint Peter's Square celebrated by the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, which was immediately followed by an audience with the Holy Father. The Pope spoke of how the new Saint had always displayed an attitude of unconditional service to all souls: an attitude "plain to see in his dedication to priestly ministry and in the magnanimity with which he pushed ahead so many works of evangelisation and of human development to help the poorest." At the end of the audience the Patriarch Teoctist, head of the Romanian Orthodox Church, arrived to present his official greetings to the Holy Father. The crowd applauded repeatedly, as a sign of the affection of so many Catholics from all over the world, and of their shared desire for unity.

• In Thanksgiving

On 8 and 9 October numerous Masses of Thanksgiving were celebrated in various different basilicas and churches in Rome, in a total of

seventeen languages. The official celebrations for Saint Josemaría's canonisation ended on 10 October with the solemn transferral of his body from the Basilica of Saint Eugene back to the prelatic church of Our Lady of Peace.

Now that they have returned to their respective countries, those who were in Rome for the canonisation have before them the example of Saint Josemaría, as the Holy Father pointed out: "Following in his footsteps, spread in society the awareness that we are called to holiness, without distinction of race, class, culture or age. In the first place, force yourselves to be saints, cultivating an evangelical style of humility and service, of abandonment to Providence and to constant listening to the voice of the Spirit. In this way, you will be 'salt of the earth' (Mt 5:13) and 'your light will shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven' (ibid., 5:16)." These words call to mind and give specific content to the "Duc in altum! - Launch out into deep water" - which the Pope himself had proposed to the whole Church shortly before, at the start of the new Millennium.





Raise the world to God and transform it from within

Homily of the Holy Father Pope John Paul II at the canonisation ceremony of Josemaría Escrivá

1. “All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (*Rom* 8:14). These words of the Apostle Paul, which we have just heard in our assembly, help us to understand better the significant message of today’s canonisation of Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer. He allowed himself to be led docilely by the Spirit, convinced that only in this way can the will of God be fulfilled. This fundamental Christian truth was a constant topic of his preaching. Indeed, he did not cease to invite his spiritual children to invoke the Holy Spirit so that the inner life, namely the life of relation with God, and family, professional and social life, totally made up of little earthly realities, would not be separated, but would constitute only one existence “holy and full of God.” He wrote, “We discover the invisible God in the most visible and material things” (*Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá*, 114).

This teaching of his is timely and urgent even today. The believer, in virtue of the baptism that incorporates him to Christ, is called to embrace an uninterrupted and

vital relationship with the Lord. He is called to be holy and to collaborate in the salvation of humanity.

2. “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (*Gen* 2:15). The Book of Genesis, as we heard in the first reading, reminds us that the Creator has entrusted the earth to man, to “till” it and “keep” it. Believers acting in the various realities of this world, contribute to realise this divine universal plan. Work and any other activity, carried out with the help of grace, become means of daily sanctification.

“The usual life of a Christian who has faith,” Josemaría Escrivá used to say, “when he works or rests, when he prays or sleeps, at all times, is a life in which God is always present” (*Meditation*, 3 March 1954). This supernatural view of existence opens an extraordinarily rich horizon of salvific perspectives because, even in the only apparently monotonous context of normal earthly events, God comes close to us and we can cooperate in his plan of salvation. Therefore, one can understand with

At 10.25 in the morning on a sunny 6 October 2002, John Paul II canonised Josemaría Escrivá in the presence of thousands of people from all over the world

Holy Communion was distributed by over a thousand priests, accompanied by volunteers carrying white umbrellas



greater ease what the Second Vatican Council affirmed, namely, that "the Christian message does not remove people from the construction of the world ... but obliges them even more to engage in this as a duty" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 34).

3. To raise the world to God and transform it from within: this is the ideal that the holy founder indicates to you, dear brothers and sisters, who rejoice today because of his elevation to the glory of the altars. He continues to remind us of the need not to allow ourselves to be frightened in face of a materialist culture, which threatens to dissolve the most genuine identity of the disciples of Christ. He liked to

reiterate with vigour that the Christian faith is opposed to conformism and interior inertia.

Following in his footsteps, spread in society the awareness that we are called to holiness, without distinction of race, class, culture or age. In the first place, force yourselves to be saints, cultivating an evangelical style of humility and service, of abandonment to Providence and to constant listening to the voice of the Spirit. In this way, you will be "salt of the earth" (*Mt* 5:13) and "your light will shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (*ibid.*, 5:16).

4. Of course there is no lack of

misunderstandings and difficulties for the one who tries to serve the cause of the Gospel with fidelity. The Lord purifies and moulds all those he calls to follow him with the mysterious force of the Cross; but in the Cross – the new Saint repeated – we find light, peace and joy: "*Lux in Cruce, requies in Cruce, gaudium in Cruce!*"

Ever since 7 August 1931, when, during the celebration of holy Mass, the words of Jesus echoed in his soul: "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (*Jn* 12:32), Josemaría Escrivá understood more clearly that the mission of the baptised consists in raising the Cross of Christ over all human reality, and felt arise in his soul the exciting call

to evangelise all environments. Then, without hesitation, he accepted the invitation made by Jesus to the Apostle Peter, which resounded in this Square a short time ago: *Duc in altum!* He transmitted it to all his spiritual family, so that they would offer the Church a valid contribution of communion and apostolic service. This invitation is extended to all of us today. "Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a catch," the divine Master says to us (*Lk* 5:4).

5. However, to fulfil such a demanding mission, there must be constant interior growth nourished by prayer. Saint Josemaría was a master in the exercise of prayer, which he considered an extra-



“ To raise the world to God and transform it from within: this is the ideal that the holy founder indicates to you. ”

ordinary “weapon” to redeem the world. He always recommended: “In the first place, prayer; then, atonement; in the third place, very much ‘in the third place’, action” (*The Way*, 82). It is not a paradox, but a perennial truth: the fruitfulness of the apostolate is above all in prayer and

in an intense and constant sacramental life. This is, in essence, the secret of the holiness and of the true success of the saints.

May the Lord help you, dear brothers and sisters, to accept this exacting ascetic and missionary legacy. May Mary sustain you, whom

“ The mission of the baptised consists in raising the Cross of Christ over all human reality. ”

the holy founder invoked as “*Spes Nostra, Sedes Sapientiae, Ancilla Domini!*”

May our Lady make every one an authentic witness of the Gospel, ready to make a generous contribution in every place to the building of the Kingdom of Christ. May the example

and teaching of Saint Josemaría be a stimulus to us so that, at the end of the earthly pilgrimage, we may also be able to participate in the blessed inheritance of heaven. There, together with the angels and all the saints, we will contemplate the face of God, and sing his glory for all eternity!

Take back with you the teachings of the new Saint

Homily during the Mass of Thanksgiving
for the canonisation of Josemaría Escrivá

Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei
Saint Peter's Square, Rome, 7 October 2002

1. *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes* (Ps 116 [117]:1). Praise the Lord, all you nations. The invitation of the Responsorial Psalm, which resounded a few moments ago, constitutes an excellent summary of the sentiments that overflow from our hearts today: *Deo omnis gloria!* To God be all the glory! We want to adore the Thrice-Holy God and give him thanks for the gift with which he has enriched the Church and the world: the canonisation of Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, priest, and founder of Opus Dei, carried out yesterday by our beloved Pope John Paul II.

Our gratitude is addressed also to the Holy Father himself, who has fulfilled the plans of the Blessed Trinity: while preparing ourselves to raise our prayers to heaven, we pray to the Lord for his person and intentions. We know that this prayer pleases Saint Josemaría, who loved the Vicar of Christ on earth with all his soul, to the point of never separating this love for the Pope from the love he professed for Jesus Christ

and his Blessed Mother. From the very moment that our Lord burst into his soul with the first intimations of Opus Dei, of which, at the time, he had no notion, he began to pray and to work in order to make a reality the prayer that sprang forth from his heart: *Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam!* All with Peter to Jesus through Mary.

All the participants in this Holy Mass, and the countless souls united with us in spirit throughout the world, recognise joyfully our debt to this new Saint whom God has granted the Church. Many of us have obtained graces and favours of all sorts through his intercession. Not a few of us strive to follow in his footsteps of fidelity to the Lord, trying to reproduce in our souls the spirit that he incarnated. Saint Josemaría has shown all of us – by his example and his teachings – a clear way of travelling the road of the Christian vocation, which has sanctity as its destination. For this reason, the canonisation of the founder of Opus Dei has the character of a feast – a feast



of this great family of God, which is the Church. For all of this, we wish to give thanks to the Lord in this Eucharistic celebration.

2. Nearly forty years have passed since the Second Vatican Council proclaimed the universal call to holiness and apostolate (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, chapter V),

but there is still a long road to travel before this truth can be said to illuminate and guide the steps of the men and women of this world. The Roman Pontiff has recalled this explicitly in his Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, in which he proposed this doctrine as "the foundation of the pastoral programme that concerns us at the beginning of the new millennium" (no. 31).

Everyone in the Church, every shepherd and all of the faithful, are called to commit themselves personally to the daily struggle for personal holiness, and to participate, personally as well, in the fulfilment of the mission which Christ has given us. If the twentieth century has been the witness of the "rediscovery" of this universal call to holiness - it was contained in the Gospel from the beginning, and Saint Josemaría was constituted its herald by the personal, divine vocation he received (cf. Mass of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *Collect*) -

“ If the twentieth century has been the witness of the ‘rediscovery’ of this universal call to holiness, the century in which we are now living should be characterised by a more effective and extensive practice of this teaching.”

the century in which we are now living should be characterised by a more effective and extensive practice of this teaching. This is one of the great challenges that the Holy Spirit has placed before the men and women of our time.

Saint Josemaría endeavoured to awaken this zeal for holiness in all souls. The

fact that his canonisation has taken place at the dawn of a new century is charged with meaning. His message resounds with special force in today's world: "We have come to say, with the humility of those who know themselves to be sinners and of little worth - *homo peccator sum* (Lk 5:8), we say with Peter - but with the faith of those who allow themselves to be guided by the hand of God, that sanctity is not something for a privileged few. The Lord calls all of us. He expects Love from all of us - from everyone, wherever they are; from everyone, whatever their state in life, their profession or job. For the daily life we live, apparently so ordinary, can be a path to sanctity: it is not necessary to abandon one's place in the world in order to search for God, if the Lord hasn't given a soul a vocation to the religious life, because all the paths of the earth can be the occasion for an encounter with Christ" (*Letter*, 24 March 1930, 2).

3. At every moment - as the new Saint was already saying in the 1930s (cf. *The Way*, 382) - one must look for Christ, find him and love him. Only if we strive daily to take these three steps will we arrive at full identification with Christ, becoming *alter Christus*, *ipse Christus*. "It may seem clear to you" - I address these words of Saint Josemaría to you now - "that you are only at the first stage. Seek him then, hungrily; seek him within yourselves with all your strength. If you act with determination, I am ready to guarantee that you have already found him, and have begun to get to know him and to love him, and to hold your conversation in heaven (cf. *Phil* 3:20)" (*Friends of God*, 300).

We meet Jesus in prayer, in the Eucharist and in the other sacraments of the Church; but also in the faithful fulfilment of our family, professional and social duties. This is an arduous goal, which we only fully achieve when our earthly pilgrimage has finished. "But please do not forget that people are not born holy. Holiness is forged through a constant interplay of God's grace and the correspondence of man," wrote Saint Josemaría in one of his homilies, adding, "So I say to you, if you want to become a thoroughgoing Christian, then you will have to be very attentive to the minutest of details, for the holiness that our Lord demands of you is to be achieved by carrying out with love of God your

work and your daily duties, and these will almost always consist of small realities" (*ibid.*, 7).

Sanctify your work. Sanctify yourself in your work. Sanctify others through your work. With these pithy phrases, the founder of Opus Dei summed up the nucleus of the message which God had entrusted to him, in order to remind Christians of it. The effort to reach sanctity is inseparably united to the sanctification of one's own work - carried out with human perfection and rectitude of intention, with a spirit of service - and to the sanctification of others. If one wants to follow the Lord, it is not possible to neglect one's brothers and sisters, with their spiritual and material needs. "Our vocation as children of God, in the middle of the world, demands that we not seek our own personal sanctity alone, but rather that we travel along the pathways of the world, converting them into roads which, while passing through obstacles, lead other souls to the Lord; that we take part as ordinary citizens in all temporal activities, in order to be leaven (cf. *Mt* 13:33) which must cause the whole mass to rise (cf. 1

Cor 5:6)" (*Christ is Passing By*, 120).

“ At every moment - as the new Saint was already saying in the 1930s - one must look for Christ, find him and love him.”

4. Divine providence arranged that the earthly life of Saint Josemaría should take place in the twentieth century, a time that has seen enormous developments in science and tech-

People from the five
continents gathered in Saint
Peter's Square



nology, which have not always, unfortunately, been used for mankind's benefit. It is necessary to recognise that, alongside admirable achievements of the human spirit, there abound in our times torrents of bitter water, which attempt in vain to quench the thirst for happiness in human hearts. Nevertheless, it is certain – as Bishop Alvaro del Portillo wrote – that, with the message of the new Saint, “all the professions, all the classes, all the honest social settings have been moved by the Angels of God, like those waters in the Probatic pool that the Gospel speaks of (cf. *Jn* 5:2 ff), and have acquired healing strength” (*Pastoral letter*, 30 September 1975, 20).

Recalling Don Alvaro, the first

successor of our Father, we feel his spiritual presence very keenly in these moments. With him, we can affirm, full of gratitude to God, that thanks to the teaching and spirit of the founder of Opus Dei, “even from the driest and most unlikely stones have gushed torrents of medicinal water. Human work well done has become a cleansing liquid for the eyes, allowing one to discover God in all the circumstances of life, in all things. And this has occurred precisely in our times, when materialism strives to transform work into a mud that blinds men, and prevents them from looking at God” (*ibid.*).

[Spoken in English:] I would like to greet all those who have come to Rome from English-speaking countries

Men and women, sick and
healthy, young and old ... a
universal message



to attend the Canonisation of Saint Josemaría Escrivá. When you return home, take back with you the teachings of the new Saint and try to put them into practice. Ask Saint Josemaría to teach you to *convert the prose of each day* – your most ordinary occupations – *into poetry, into heroic verse*: into desires and deeds of holiness and apostolate.

[Spoken in French:] I would remind those of you who come from French-speaking countries of the importance of collaborating in the apostolic mission of the Church, which is a duty of every Christian, endeavouring to impregnate arts and letters, science and technology, with the spirit of the Gospels. Seek the intercession of Saint Josemaría, putting into practice that

ideal which God Himself engraved in his soul: *placing Christ* – through our work, whatever it may be – *at the summit of all human activities*.

Today the Church venerates the Blessed Virgin with the title of Our Lady of the Rosary. It gives me great joy to think that the canonisation of our Father should have taken place on the eve of a feast of our Lady; this coincidence is one more sign of her affectionate motherly care. Let us have recourse to her maternal mediation, full of confidence, as we renew our thanksgiving to the Lord for this canonisation. As we ask that this desire for personal holiness and apostolate spread with ever great force among all Christians, I say once again: *Deo omnis gloria! Amen.*

The joy and gratitude of thousands of people



The Greeting to Pope John Paul II,
Audience after the canonisation of Josemaría Escrivá

Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, Rome, 7 October 2002

Holy Father,
Ten years ago, in this very Square, my predecessor as Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, addressed to Your Holiness heartfelt words of gratitude after the beatification of Josemaría Escrivá. Today, it is my turn and my unmerited honour to express the joy and gratitude of the thousands of faithful and cooperators of the Prelature, and of the countless souls devoted to Saint Josemaría Escrivá who, both in Rome and outside of Rome, have joyfully participated in the

canonisation ceremony. Thank you, Holy Father.

The solemn recognition of the sanctity of this good and faithful servant, whom God our Lord chose as a herald of the universal call to holiness and apostolate in the ordinary circumstances of life, is an invitation to all Catholics to meet God in the fulfilment of their own family, professional and social duties.

The canonisation of Josemaría Escrivá is, without doubt, a gift for the whole world, because we will always

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be in need of intercessors before the throne of God. It also provides a new reason for confidence among the lay faithful, who see reaffirmed once more their high calling as God's children in Jesus Christ, called to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect (cf. *Mt* 5:48) in the ordinary circumstances of life. As Your Holiness wrote in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*: “Now is the time to propose once again to all, with conviction, this ‘high standard’ of the ordinary Christian life” (no. 31). Saint Josemaría

Escrivá was ahead of his time, reminding us of the universal call to holiness and apostolate which the Second Vatican Council was to proclaim so forcefully. He not only spread this teaching throughout the world, reinforced by the example of his cheerful and persevering ascetical struggle, but also opened up within the Church, by God's will, a way of sanctification “as old and as new as the Gospel,” another eloquent sign of God's mercy toward us men and women, and an efficacious instrument in the service

Volunteers were a key part of the organisation: "The 6th of October was also my birthday," one of them recounts. "And although it was one of the most tiring days in my life, it was also the day when I felt happiest."

The faithful came from 84 countries: roughly one third were Italians, one third from the rest of Europe, and the remaining third from the other continents.



of the Church's salvific mission.

Millions of people, Holy Father, are rejoicing today all over the world, both within and without the visible walls of the Church. Indeed, many non-Catholics and non-Christians admire Josemaría Escrivá and have recourse to his teachings as a source of inspiration for their own conduct and for their professional and social activity. These people too have received encouragement in their efforts to improve our world, beset as it is by injustice and, at the same time, hungry for understanding and peace.

In the ten years that have passed since

the beatification of Josemaría Escrivá, the apostolic activity of the faithful and cooperators of the Prelature of Opus Dei has grown in intensity and extension in many countries. Sustained by the grace of God, their activities on behalf of all souls, especially the neediest, have multiplied. On the occasion of the first centenary of the birth of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, dozens of initiatives for personal and professional formation have begun in developing countries and in the poorer parts of large cities. These activities bear witness that the search for personal holiness – the union of

“ The lay faithful see reaffirmed once more their high calling as God's children. ”

the soul with God – is inseparable from the concern, shown with deeds, for the material and spiritual welfare of our brothers and sisters.

Before ending, I want to assure Your Holiness of the fervent prayers for the person and intentions of the Holy Father which the faithful and cooperators of Opus Dei throughout the world are continually raising to heaven. I entrust these prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom we honour especially today with the title of Our Lady of the Rosary. Enriched by her maternal intercession before Jesus, these

“ Many non-Catholics and non-Christians admire Josemaría Escrivá. ”

prayers will assist Your Holiness in the joyous fulfilment of the mission of Supreme Pastor.

Holy Father, permit me to thank you once again, with all my heart. As we prepare to receive and meditate upon your words, and to congratulate you, in the name of all, on the forthcoming anniversary of your election as Peter's Successor, I ask you – on behalf of the faithful and cooperators of the Prelature of Opus Dei, and of the countless souls devoted to Saint Josemaría, and of myself – for the strengthening grace of your Apostolic Blessing.



Saint Josemaría: the saint of the ordinary

After the Mass of Thanksgiving for the Canonisation of the founder of Opus Dei, Pope John Paul II gave an audience to those attending. *The following is the text of the Pope's address.*

Dear brothers and sisters!

1. With joy I extend to you my cordial greetings, on the day after Blessed Josemaría Escrivá's canonisation. I thank Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, for what he said on behalf of all of you here. I greet affectionately the many cardinals, bishops and priests who have decided to take part in this celebration.

This festive encounter brings together a wide variety of the faithful, proceeding from many countries and belonging to the most diverse social and cultural environments: priests and laity, men and women, young and old, intellectuals and manual workers. This is a sign of the apostolic zeal that burned in Saint Josemaría's soul.

2. In the founder of Opus Dei, love for the will of God was an outstanding characteristic. Here is a sure criterion of holiness: faithfulness to the fulfilment of the divine will, even to the last consequences. For each one of us the Lord has a plan, to each one he entrusts a mission on earth. The saint cannot even conceive of himself outside God's plan: he lives only to carry it out.

Saint Josemaría was chosen by the Lord to proclaim the universal call to holiness and to indicate that everyday life, its customary activities, are a path towards holiness. It could be said that he was the saint of the ordinary. He was really convinced that, for whoever lives with an outlook of faith, everything offers an opportunity for a meeting with God, everything becomes a stimulus for prayer.

Seen in that way, daily life reveals an unsuspected greatness. Holiness is really put on everyone's doorstep.

3. Escrivá de Balaguer was a saint of great humanity. All those who dealt with him, of whatever level of education or social condition, felt him to be a father, totally dedicated to the service of the others, because he was convinced that each soul is a marvellous treasure; in fact, each person is worth all the Blood of Christ. This attitude of service is plain to see in his dedication to priestly ministry and in the magnanimity with which he pushed ahead so many works of evangelisation and of human development to help the poorest.

The Lord made him understand deeply the gift of our divine filiation. Blessed

At the end of the audience with the participants, the Pope received Patriarch Teoctist in the Square.



"I see many children ... and even new-born babes," the Pope jokingly remarked

Josemaría taught how to contemplate the tender face of a Father in God, who speaks to us through the most varied vicissitudes of life. A Father who loves us, who follows us step by step and protects us, understands us and waits for a response of love from each one of us. The consideration of this paternal presence, which accompanies him everywhere, gives the Christian an unshakable confidence; at every moment he should confide in the heavenly Father. He never feels alone, nor is he afraid. In the Cross, when it appears, he does not see a punishment but rather a mission entrusted by the Lord himself. The Christian is necessarily optimistic, because he knows that he is a son of God in Christ.

4. Saint Josemaría was profoundly convinced that Christian life entails a

mission and an apostolate: we are in the world to save it with Christ. He loved the world passionately, with a "redemptive love" (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 604). It is precisely for this reason that his teachings have helped so many ordinary members of the faithful discover the redemptive power of faith, its capacity to transform the earth.

This is a message that has abundant and fruitful implications for the evangelising mission of the Church. It fosters the Christianisation of the world "from within," showing that there can be no conflict between the divine law and the demands of genuine human progress. This saintly priest taught that Christ must be the apex of all human activity (cf. *Jn* 12:32). His message impels the Christian to act in places where the future of society is being shaped. From the laity's active

presence in all the professions and at the most advanced frontiers of development, there can only come a positive contribution to the strengthening of that harmony between faith and culture which is one of the great needs of our time.

5. Saint Josemaría Escrivá spent his life in the service of the Church. In his writings, priests, lay persons who follow the most diverse ways, and men and women religious find a stimulating source of inspiration. Dear brothers and sisters, in imitating him with an openness of spirit and of heart, with availability to serve the local Churches, you contribute to giving force to the "spirituality of communion" which the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* identifies as one of the most important aims of our times (cf. nos. 42-45).

It is a joy for me to conclude with an appeal to the liturgical feast of this day, Our Lady of the Rosary. Saint Josemaría wrote a fine short work entitled *Holy Rosary*, which is inspired in spiritual childhood, a disposition of spirit proper to those who want to reach total abandonment to the divine will. I wholeheartedly entrust all of you to the maternal protection of Mary, along with your families and your apostolate, thanking you for your presence.

6. I thank once again all those present, especially those who have come from far away. I invite you, dear brothers and sisters, to give clear witness of faith everywhere, following your holy founder's example and teaching. I accompany you with my prayer and give you, your families and your activities my heartfelt blessing.

Recognise the hand of God working through all human actions



Homily preached at the Mass of Thanksgiving for the canonisation of Saint Josemaría Escrivá by Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, Vicar General of Opus Dei Basilica of Saint Eugene, Rome, 10 October 2002

1. The story of the first miraculous catch of fish, which we have read in the Gospel, culminates with the call to Peter and some of his companions to leave everything to follow Christ (cf. *Lk* 5:10). Saint Josemaría often contemplated this scene, considering, among other things, how our Lord comes to meet us in life's ordinary circumstances and, in particular, in our work. In a homily addressed to people with very different jobs and professions, he said, "Your human vocation is a part - and an important part - of your divine vocation. That is the reason why you

must strive for holiness, contributing at the same time to the sanctification of others, your fellow-men; sanctifying your work and your environment" (Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is Passing By*, 46).

This positive view of the reality of the world, and in particular of work, that the founder of Opus Dei spread everywhere, was rooted in his conviction of the original goodness of creation (cf. *Gen* 1:31). When meditating on this goodness, he concentrated especially on the statement from the book of Genesis which came in the first



reading of the Mass: God set man in the Garden of Eden *ut operaretur*, to work and cultivate it (*Gen* 2:15), to subject the earth and rule over material creation, thus in a certain sense completing the work of creation (cf. *Gen* 1:27-28).

That does not mean closing our eyes to reality, still less underestimating the presence of sin in the world. But, as Saint Josemaría explained, "Good and evil are mixed in human history, and therefore the Christian should be a man of judgement. But this judgement should never bring him to deny the goodness of God's works. On the contrary, it should bring him to recognise the hand of God working through all human actions, even those which betray our fallen nature" (*Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá*, 70).

2. Together with the goodness of creation, even though wounded by sin, we should contemplate, full of admiration and gratitude, the Incarnation of the Son of God: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (*Jn* 3:16-17). If we love God, how can we not love the world? Let us listen to some other words, familiar ones, of the new Saint: "This world of ours ... is good, for so it came from God's hands. It was Adam's offence, the sin of human pride, which broke the divine harmony of creation. But God the Father, in the fullness of time, sent his only-begotten Son to take

flesh in Mary ever-Virgin, through the Holy Spirit, and re-establish peace. In this way, by redeeming man from sin, 'we receive adoption as sons' (*Gal 4:5*). We

become capable of sharing the intimacy of God. In this way the new man, the new line of the children of God (cf. *Rom 6:4-5*), is enabled to free the whole universe from disorder, restoring all things in Christ (cf. *Eph 1:9-10*), as they have been reconciled with God (cf. *Col 1:20*)" (Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is Passing By*, 183).

Our divine filiation does not only consist in the fact that God wants us to treat him with the closeness and trust of a son towards his father – which would already be a lot. It consists in the fact that the Holy Spirit unites us with Christ, makes us one thing with God the Son, and in him, as members of his Body, we are truly sons and daughters of God the Father (cf. John Paul II, *Encyclical Dominum et Vivificantem*, 52). "We will never be able to go deeply enough into this immense wonder," wrote Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, "nor be sufficiently grateful to our God for having deigned to make us sharers in the divine life of the Most Holy Trinity by raising us to the position of becoming 'sons in the Son' ... While we are still here on earth the Lord wants us to see that we form part of his flock, of the Church 'gathered together in the unity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Saint Cyprian, *De Oratione Dominica*, 23). We must always regard the Church in this way,

“ We should feel impelled to work with Christ for the salvation of mankind.

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and work intensely at cultivating and improving that fraternity which unites all the members of the Mystical Body of Christ together; and we should feel that

everything relating to the Holy Church is very much our concern" (Alvaro del Portillo, *Pastoral Letter*, 1 August 1991).

3. We need to take seriously – even more seriously – our Christian vocation to a close relationship with God, to holiness; not in general but as it is in reality: the will of God for each of us individually, called by our name. How Saint Josemaría used to relish the words in Scripture, "I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, you are mine"! (*Is 43:1*; cf. Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is Passing By*, 59; *Friends of God*, 312; *The Forge*, 12). The Will of God: Saint Paul tells us that "this is the will of God, your sanctification" (*1 Thess 4:3*). God our Lord points to holiness not just as a goal that we must reach, but first and foremost as the goal which God himself aims to achieve for us. Thus there is no room for discouragement at our own weakness, because we will always have God's strength if we constantly have recourse to the sources of grace: the Eucharist, Penance, and prayer. And with that "borrowed strength" (cf. Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *The Way*, 728) we are enabled to sanctify our work and our rest, our family life and social relations, health and sickness. In other words, we can overcome our own limitations and wretchedness, and go

steadily forward along the road which, through the action of the Holy Spirit, leads to final and permanent identification with Jesus Christ in "the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (*Rom 8:21*).

Let's try and take in these teachings more and more fully. Let's try to make them the framework of our thoughts and the guidelines for our daily actions. Let's do all we can to spread them among our relations, friends and colleagues, with constant personal apostolate, because we should feel impelled to work with Christ for the salvation of mankind. How wonderful it is to be, as Saint Paul says, "collaborators with God"! (*1 Cor 3:9*).

4. What a high goal we are called to! To be saints, to arrive at the fullness of divine filiation! However, as Saint Josemaría showed us by his words and example, in order to reach that goal we don't have to do extraordinary things, but simply to love God and other people in the fulfilment of our ordinary duties, with the strength that our Lord himself gives us in the sacraments and in prayer.

The canonisation of Saint Josemaría has been a great joy for us, but it should also be the stimulus for a more decisive and generous response to our Christian vocation. May each of us learn how to find and love God – and to serve him in our

“ God our Lord points to holiness not just as a goal that we must reach, but first and foremost as the goal which God himself aims to achieve for us. ”

neighbour – in the midst of ordinary life: in the family, at work, and in all our social dealings. Let us ask the new Saint that we may respond ever more deeply – each day – to the Lord's call.

As we begin the third millennium, John Paul II invites us "to share the enthusiasm of the very first Christians." The Pope goes on, "We can count on the power of the same Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost and who impels us still today to start out anew, sustained by the hope 'which does not disappoint' (*Rom 5:5*)" (John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 58). Like that we will fulfil the aspiration in which Saint Josemaría expressed the goal of all his efforts, way back in the 1930s: "To know Christ, to bring others to know him, to take him everywhere."

May that be the summary of our lives too; we can ask our Lord for this through the intercession of our Lady and the new Saint. May all Christians fulfil those steps faithfully, and especially the faithful of Opus Dei, in spite of our personal weakness; closely united to our Prelate and Father, under the guidance of the Pope, and

consequently very united to the whole Church. How much our Father used to like repeating "*Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam!*" All with Peter to Jesus through Mary!" (Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is Passing By*, 139). Amen.



Ordinary life: the training ground for our struggle toward holiness

Homily preached at the last Mass of Thanksgiving for the canonisation of Josemaría Escrivá by Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei Basilica of Saint Eugene, Rome, 10 October 2002.

1. These unforgettable days of the canonisation of Saint Josemaría Escrivá are about to come to an end. In a few moments, his venerable remains will be placed once again in the prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, after

having been present for the veneration of the faithful for eight days in this Basilica of Saint Eugene. Immediately after that, the *diaspora* will begin – for many, it began right after the canonisation – and we will all return

to our usual activities: ordinary life, the training ground, as it were, for our struggle toward holiness.

Let us ask ourselves: What resolution can I draw from these days spent in Rome, in which I have experienced the marvellous universality of the Church and of this “little part” of the Church, Opus Dei? What should my life be like, from now on? What words of Saint Josemaría can I bring back to those who were not able to attend the canonisation, even though they have certainly been present spiritually during these days?

If I myself were speaking with them, I would remind them of

something that my beloved predecessor Don Alvaro said ten years ago at one of the last thanksgiving Masses for the beatification of our Father. He said – and I make his words my own – that there had begun “a new stage in the life of Opus Dei ... in the life of each of its members. A time of more profound love for God, of more constant apostolic effort, of more generous service to the Church and all mankind. A time, in short, of greater fidelity to the spirit of sanctification in the middle of the world which our founder left us as his testament” (Homily at the Thanksgiving Mass for the Beatification of Josemaría Escrivá,

21 May 1992). In other words: a time in which to seek daily personal conversion.

I would like to comment briefly on these three points.

May the Lord engrave them in our hearts and help us to put them into practice.

2. "A more profound love for God." For several months now, as a way of preparing for the canonisation, we have struggled to be converted on a daily basis. How many times we have prayed for God's grace through the intercession of Saint Josemaría Escrivá! We know well that the path of holiness consists of many steps and stages. Conversion consists not merely in embracing the true faith, nor in rejecting sin in order to allow grace to work in our souls. Certainly, dwelling in habitual friendship with God is indispensable if we are to become intimate with him. But this is not enough. We must grow - as our Father did - in this intimacy, progressively identifying ourselves with Christ, until the moment comes when each of us can exclaim with Saint Paul: "*vivo autem, iam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus*" (Gal 2:20), I live now not I, but Christ lives in me, because I try to follow faithfully, in every moment of the day, the footprints which the Lord left on this earth. "Never be content with what you are," Saint Augustine reminds us, "if you want to become what you, as yet, are not. For wherever

“ The resolution to love God more must be translated into a more constant apostolic effort ”

you feel satisfied, there you will stop. If you say, 'Enough', you have perished. Always grow, always go forward, always advance" (Sermon 169, 18).

In our pilgrimage toward heaven, struggle is necessary to go forward every day, collaborating with the Holy Spirit in the work of our sanctification. This is achieved by dint of one conversion after another, perhaps in very small points - conversions which are like the concrete and progressive steps of the soul in its journey toward God. It is fitting, then, that, as a consequence of these days, we should renew in the depths of our souls the desire to practise the teachings of the one whom the Lord constituted - by making him *see* Opus Dei - a herald and teacher of the universal call to holiness and apostolate in the circumstances of ordinary life. Let us ask God the Father, through the intercession of this holy priest, as the Church invites us in the Collect of the Mass, to grant that, "carrying out our daily work in the Spirit of Christ, we may be formed in the likeness of your Son" (Mass of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, Collect). We ask you, Lord, that all Christians may deepen their awareness of their divine filiation, with the same eagerness and efficacy with which Saint Josemaría did, responding faithfully to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

Although each one of us amounts to very little, our hope is sure: God our

Father is determined to lead us to the perfection of charity in Christ by means of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, "those who are guided by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you have not received a spirit of bondage to be once more in fear, but rather you have received a Spirit of sons by adoption, by which we cry out: 'Abba! Father!' For the Spirit himself bears witness along with our spirit that we are God's children. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, provided that we suffer with him, in order that we be glorified with him as well" (Rom 8:14-17).

3. The resolution to love God more, to identify ourselves more fully with Jesus Christ, to respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, must be translated into "a more constant apostolic effort", as the liturgy urges us, inviting us to ask that, "in union with the Blessed Virgin Mary, we might serve the work of Redemption with an ardent love" (Mass of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, Collect).

You are about to return to your countries, your homes, your jobs. Do so determined to be the instruments that the Lord wants to use to spread his word and his grace throughout the world. Take a glance around you. Look at the professional, social and familial circles in which you move, and you will discover

“ We count on the powerful help of our Lady and Saint Joseph, the Guardian Angels, Saint Josemaría and all of God's saints. ”

many people - sons and daughters of God - who do not fully appreciate the high dignity to which Baptism has raised them, or the great vocation by which the Lord calls them to share in his very Life. Perhaps nobody has spoken to them about God or communicated to them, in a convincing way, the news that they are destined to Happiness with a capital H, to the eternal happiness to which all human beings aspire and which the things of this world cannot provide.

We must awaken them from their slumber, opening their eyes with the eloquence of our lives and the enthusiasm of our words, and thus lead them toward Jesus. We can count on the powerful help of our Lady and Saint Joseph, the Guardian Angels, Saint Josemaría and all of God's saints. We are not better than the others, but the Lord, in his infinite Love, has sought us out and invites us go out to the highways and byways and crossroads of the world to meet our brothers and sisters, the men and women all around us.

We will witness once again the miracle which the Gospel recounts today, when the Apostles, faithful to the command of Christ, "caught a great draught of fishes, so many that the nets began to break" (Lk 5:6). As the founder of Opus Dei said, we too, "recalling our wretchedness, remembering countless

Between 8th and 10th October,
29 Masses of Thanksgiving
were said in Rome in 17
different languages



failures caused by our pride, before the majesty of God, before Christ the Fisherman, must confess with Saint Peter: Lord, I am a poor sinner (cf. *Lk* 5:8). And then, Christ will say to you and to me, as he did to Saint Peter: 'henceforth you will be a fisher of men' (*Lk* 5:10), by divine command, on a divine mission, with divine efficacy" (Notes taken in a meditation, 3 November 1955).

4. Our effort to be saints and apostles has only one end: the glory of God, the salvation of souls: "a more generous service to the Church and all humanity," as Don Alvaro said ten years ago. But let us not forget that we will not know how to serve all those who await us, if we are not striving every

day to take care of those we live with. During his earthly life, Saint Josemaría Escrivá had no other goal than to serve God, the Church, the Pope and all souls. He followed the example of the Master, who "came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (*Mt* 20:28). This holy priest truly loved souls, showing a refined charity for the people around him.

Being a servant of all, our Father rejoiced especially in offering filial service to the Church and the Pope. "Always consider," he wrote, "that after God and our Mother the Blessed Virgin, in the hierarchy of love and authority, comes the Pope. That's why I often say: 'Thank you, my God, for the love for the Pope that you have placed in my



After the last Mass of
Thanksgiving, the relics of Saint
Josemaría were taken back to their
usual location in the prelatie
Church of Our Lady of Peace, in
Viale Bruno Buozzi, 75, Rome

heart" (*Letter*, 9 January 1932, 20).

Let us try to imitate this love and veneration for the Pope. His dignity as Vicar of Christ, as "the sweet Christ on earth", is more than sufficient reason for us to feel wholeheartedly united to the Roman Pontiff, as a consequence of a genuine filial obligation. But, in addition, it is natural that we should want to show our gratitude to John Paul II, for having been God's instrument for the canonisation of our founder, and that we should offer for his person and intentions intense prayers, generous mortifications and our daily work carried out with human and supernatural perfection.

Keep the Pope in mind - I tell you now with words of our Father - especially "when the difficulties of your

work remind you that you are serving, because to serve for Love is a delight, which fills the soul with peace, even in the face of troubles" (*Letter*, 31 May 1943, 11). If we follow these suggestions, we will travel with confidence and with joy "the path of our vocation" (Mass of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *Prayer after Communion*).

Let us entrust these resolutions to the Blessed Virgin, Mother of the Church. She, along with her spouse, Saint Joseph, whom we venerate with such affection, the Guardian Angels, all the saints, and, especially, Saint Josemaría Escrivá, will present our hearts' desires before the Blessed Trinity, and God will receive them lovingly, confirm them and grant us the grace to fulfil them faithfully.