

Saint Josemaría Today #5



Learn from Jesus

“The Christian must prove himself to be genuine, truthful and sincere in all that he undertakes. His conduct should reflect a spirit — the spirit of Christ. If anyone in this world has a duty to be consistent with his beliefs it is the Christian, for he has been entrusted with a gift that he must make fruitful, and that gift is the truth which liberates and saves. But Father, you might ask me, how I am to achieve this sincerity of life? Jesus Christ has given his Church all the means necessary. He has shown us how to pray, how to get to know his heavenly Father. He has sent us his Spirit, the Great Unknown, who acts within our souls. And he has left us those visible signs of his grace that we call the Sacraments. Use them. Intensify your life of piety. Pray every day. And never refuse to shoulder the sweet burden of Christ's Cross.” (St. Josemaría Escrivá, Homily *In the Footsteps of Christ*, Friends of God, no. 141b)

“I invite all Christians everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them. I ask all of you to do this unflinchingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since ‘no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord.’ The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms.” (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 3)





FOLLOW CHRIST -- THAT IS THE SECRET

"I have distinguished as it were four stages in our effort to identify ourselves with Christ: seeking him, finding him, getting to know him, loving him. It may seem clear to you 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.

"I beg Our Lord to help us make up our minds to nourish in our souls the one noble ambition that matters, the only one that is really worthwhile: to get close to Jesus, like his Blessed Mother and the Holy Patriarch St. Joseph did, with longing hearts and self denial, without neglect of any kind. We will share in the joy of being God's friends... and we will thank him for teaching us so clearly and tenderly how to fulfill the Will of Our Father who dwells in heaven.

"To follow Christ — that is the secret. We must accompany him so closely that we come to live with him, like the first Twelve did; so closely, that we become identified with him. Soon we will be able to say, provided we haven't put obstacles in the way of grace, that we have put on, have clothed ourselves with Our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 13:14). Our Lord is then reflected in our behavior, as in a mirror. If the mirror is as it ought to be it will capture Our Savior's most lovable face without distorting it or making a caricature of it; and then other people will have an opportunity of admiring him and following him." (St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Friends of God*, nos. 299-303)

"Let us ask our Lord then to make us souls devoted to the blessed Eucharist, so that our relationship with him brings forth joy and serenity and a desire for justice. In this way we will make it easier for others to recognize Christ; we will put Christ at the centre of all human activities. And Jesus' promise will be fulfilled: I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. (Jn 12:32)" (St Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 156)

PUT JESUS AT THE CENTER OF OUR LIFE

"Putting Jesus at the centre of our life means deepening in our contemplative prayer in the middle of the world, and helping others to travel along *paths of contemplation*... A well-known saying of Blessed Paul VI is: '*Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers.*' He continued, '*and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.*' In today's culture, we need faces that make a message credible. It is good then, to present attractive witnesses of a Christian life placed at the service of others." (Rev. Msgr. Fernando Ocariz, Prelate of Opus Dei, *Pastoral Letter*, Feb 14, 2017, 8 and 18).

"*"Paradox: sanctity is more attainable than learning, but it is easier to be learned than to be a saint."* (St. Josemaría Escrivá. *The Way*, no. 282). Instead of a spirituality that is complicated and intricate, with detailed practices that are difficult to remember, St. Josemaría offers a spirituality centered on living a personal relationship with Christ. 'May you seek Christ, may you find Christ, may you love Christ. Three perfectly clear stages.' (St. Josemaría Escrivá. *The Way*, no. 382). The call to authentic contemplation is for all, and St. Josemaría affirms that when your work is turned into prayer and service to others it is impossible not to be focused on Christ." (George Cardinal Pell, *St. Josemaría Escrivá's Christocentrism*, International Congress on *The Greatness of Ordinary Life*, Rome 2002).

1. Msgr. Fernando Ocariz, Prelate of Opus Dei
2. His Eminence George Cardinal Pell, Prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy

FOR FORGIVENESS, TRUST IN ST. JOSEMARÍA'S INTERCESSION

"Forgiving offenses is the most divine thing we can do. This is not just a work of mercy, but also a condition and petition for God to pardon our sins," Bishop Javier Echevarría, the late Prelate of Opus Dei, who passed away on December 12, 2016, reminded the faithful of the prelateure in a pastoral letter during the Jubilee of Mercy. However, the former prelate pointed out, "One of the great problems in today's society is the difficulty people have in forgiving."

"Individuals and entire nations dwell over and over again on the offenses they have received; they wallow around in these memories as in a muddy puddle, and don't want to strive to forgive and forget," Bishop Echevarría elaborated.

A good example

"Quite different, and also very clear, is our Lord's teaching. He sums up the history of divine mercy towards mankind with these words: blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," the prelate stressed.

"Saint Josemaría deeply assimilated these teachings of our Lord, and preached them by his example and word."

"What a good example for us!" the late bishop said as he invited the faithful to turn to St. Josemaría's intercession to "ask God to teach us to be big-hearted and to forgive right away those who have offended us, without any resentment."

Novena for forgiveness

For this, a novena has been composed in which, while meditating on quotes from St. Josemaría the faithful ask God through the Saint's intercession for the grace to learn how to forgive others.

The novena contains daily reflections from the writings of St. Josemaría, prayers for the particular intention of the day of the novena, and the prayer for the intercession of the saint.

There is a guide in each day of the novena that helps, through reflection and prayer, to petition for:

- Peace of heart
- Understanding people
- Overcoming pride
- Conquering anger
- Overcoming resentment
- Overcoming family quarrels
- Taking the first step to reconciliation
- Returning good for evil
- Asking Our Lady's help

The Novena for Forgiveness is available at the Opus Dei website www.opusdei.ph. It can be downloaded in pdf, epub and mobi format.

ST. JOSEMARIA, EFFECTIVE INTERCESSOR FOR FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

Forty years after his death, St. Josemaría Escrivá is proving to be a truly powerful intercessor for families, says the former Opus Dei prelate.

"Forty years have gone by since that 26th of June in 1975, when God called our Founder to the joy of heaven. How many gifts he has gained for us since then! And he has certainly fulfilled his promise," Bishop Javier Echevarría, the late Prelate of Opus Dei, wrote in his June 2015 pastoral letter.

All throughout these years, many persons who have benefitted from St. Josemaría's intercession attest that many favors received were for fostering the good of families.

Novenas for marriage, family

For this, two novenas, available at the Opus Dei website www.opusdei.ph, the Novena for a Happy and Faithful Marriage and the Novena for the Family, have been composed, inspired by St. Josemaría's desire to help all married couples and those preparing for marriage to find meaning and encouragement in their vocation through a commitment to daily prayer and friendship with God, especially when facing inevitable difficulties and times of trial.

The novenas contain daily reflections from the writings of St. Josemaría, prayers for the family, and the prayer for the intercession of the saint.

Through reflection and prayer, the novena is a guide that helps spouses bring to God the needs and challenges of daily life, while striving to attain virtues – especially purity, humility, generosity, and love – that lead to happy, faithful marriages.

Besides the Novena for a Happy and Faithful Marriage and the Novena for the Family, which have resulted in numerous favors, three other novenas are also available: the Novena for the Sick, the Novena for Work, and the Novena for Forgiveness.

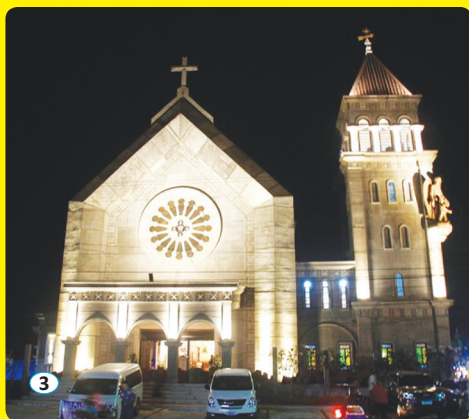
June 26 Masses

Bishop Echevarría, who for many years served as St. Josemaría's secretary, recalled that in the final years of his life, the holy priest would assure his spiritual sons and daughters, "From heaven, I will help you more."

Masses to commemorate the feast of St. Josemaría Escrivá are celebrated in many churches in various cities and dioceses all over the Philippines.

It is now a tradition in many places to celebrate the Holy Mass on June 26 in honor of St. Josemaría.

St. Josemaría believed that "those who are called to the married state will, with the grace of God, find within their state everything they need to be holy, to identify themselves each day more with Jesus Christ, and to lead those with whom they live to God."



3



4

DEDICATION OF THE “PAROKYA NI SAN JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA”

“Parokya ni San Josemaría Escrivá” is how Filipinos call the first ever church dedicated to St. Josemaría Escrivá in the Philippines and in the whole of Asia, located in Gerona, Tarlac, Philippines. On 14 February 2014, the Parish Church of St Josemaría Escrivá had its solemn dedication officiated by His Excellency Most Reverend Florentino Cinense, bishop of Tarlac. The concelebrants were the Vicar of Opus Dei in the Philippines and other bishops and priests. The Mass repertoire was courtesy of “Koro de San Josemaría”, composed mostly of young parishioners of Gerona.

The building of the church has helped a lot the people of the town in living the practices of piety. In the façade of the church is a big statue of the guardian angel. A light illuminating it is lit at night, serving as a guide especially for travelers. The profile of St. Josemaría is placed right at the main entrance. The altar-piece consists of the following images: the Holy Family at work; the scenes of the Annunciation and the flight to Egypt; the Nativity scene, flanked by images of angels – on the left, an angel carries a church signifying the people; on the right, an angel holds a papyrus bearing the names of districts in Gerona, Tarlac. On the left side of the tabernacle is a picture of St. Josemaría; on the opposite side is a picture of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo which was placed there after his beatification.

So many people attended the Mass for the church dedication – the parishioners of Gerona, Tarlac, their relatives and friends, and members of Opus Dei – that the church was completely full. In the homily, the priest mentioned first and foremost how the Blessed Virgin is Mother of Fair Love, which was the Mass celebrated that day. Also, the priest explained the image in the altar-piece which is of the Holy Family at work, testifying to St. Josemaría’s teaching on the sanctification of work. He

told the congregation that the Church of St. Josemaría is not a church of Opus Dei or a church for Opus Dei, but for everyone, primarily, for the residents of Tarlac. In fact, while the church was still being constructed, it was very remarkable how the residents of Tarlac who were helping out in the construction tried to explain the message of the universal call to sanctity, and to spread devotion to St. Josemaría by giving out prayer cards to all those who came and visited the Church. Many of the people of the town have even memorized the prayer to St. Josemaría in the Tagalog language.

The building of the church has helped a lot the people of the town in living the practices of piety. For example, with the pealing of the bells at midday and at six o’clock in the afternoon, the people are reminded to take a halt from whatever they are doing at the moment to say the Angelus. In the church there is a “drive-thru” at the back of the main altar so that the Blessed Sacrament chapel can be seen by people coming directly from the highway. Motorists can actually pray before the tabernacle without having to get off from their cars. With this the bishop exhorted everyone to visit the Blessed Sacrament frequently.

Before concluding the Mass, the bishop of Tarlac thanked all the people who generously helped in the construction of the Church of St. Josemaría, including the simple townfolk who could not afford to give donations in cash but who have contributed so much in actual manual labor.

Now with the presence of the “Parokya ni San Josemaría” in this part of the country, the spread of the teachings of St. Josemaría, and devotion to him as the patron saint of ordinary life, will flourish.

(This article appeared in www.stjosemaria.info)

3. Façade of the Diocesan Shrine of St. Josemaría in Gerona, Tarlac

4. Most Rev. Socrates Villegas, the archbishop of Lingayen-Dagupan, at the Diocesan Shrine of St. Josemaría Escrivá in Gerona on 6 October 2015



BASSAM AND RAGHAD: "WELCOME HOME"

Olivia and Thimothée have seven children and live in a small village in France. They have welcomed a family of Iraqi Christians into their home: Bassam and Raghad, with their three children aged 9, 7 and 3 years old, who were forced to flee Karakoch in August 2015.

Olivia recalls: "In mid-August, we received a call from a priest friend who informed us of the serious situation faced by hundreds of Iraqi Christians who had taken refuge in Erbil, the capital of Kurdistan. He was looking for host families in France. These Christians had been forced to flee during the night, leaving everything behind."

Bassam, Raghad and their three children had left the city of Karakoch, where most of the Iraqi Christian community gathered near Mosul. Islamic jihadists State had seized Karakoch. Tens of thousands of people in the region fled to escape the violence.

The Chaldean Patriarch, Louis Sako, said more than 100,000 Christians have fled the violence, and in cities held by the jihadists "churches are occupied and the crosses have been removed."

Karakoch was an entirely Christian town between Mosul, the main town held by the Islamic State in Iraq, and Erbil, the capital of the autonomous region of Kurdistan.

"The situation was tragic" Olivia continued, "and we were really moved by this call for help. We feel in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, baptised Christians like us and persecuted because of their faith. Overnight they had become destitute."

"However, I must admit, we were also a bit reluctant to host them: we have seven children, the house is not huge.... We weighed the pros and cons and it was clear that our comfort would be affected."

"Our priest friend was seeking places of welcome for nine families. While we were still thinking it over, my in-laws had already agreed to receive a group. Seeing this family, we decided that we couldn't hesitate any longer. Our older children, 15 and 14, encouraged us to accept. 'We can make room,' they said. 'We will organize the house differently and we can get help.'"

Given the urgency of the situation, France has facilitated the granting of asylum to Eastern Christians. Administrative procedures were easy. "So far it has been an extraordinary adventure. Bassam and Raghad and their three children arrived shortly after, thanks to our endorsement with the consulate."

"We prepared rooms for them in our house, and we planned out our time together. Of course, they do not speak French, but fortunately

Bassam's father was an English teacher in Iraq, and so we can communicate."

"They arrived on a Saturday, which I'll never forget. We were all very excited. We feel very close to them, we are united by baptism. I have often put myself in their situation, and I see that it is the obvious thing to receive help."

"In just a few days, the children started to go to school. They were well received and are now fully integrated there. The parents, Bassam and Raghad, are studying French and are gradually organizing their life. My husband and I often tell each other how happy we are to have been able to welcome them, and how proud we are to have taught our children so much by this gesture."

"Gradually, the friendship between our families is growing. We share many moments: meals, travelling to school, shopping. The children get along and play together."

"Raghad and Bassam are very keen to settle down in France and find work. Living with a welcoming French family will make it easier for them to assimilate our culture."

"Our life is going well thanks to their great refinement. There have been no complaints at all, and when little difficulties arise, the spirit of Opus Dei (to which my husband and I belong) helps us to find God's will in the small annoyances of daily life, and stay in good spirits. Thankfully, our two families share the same joy."

(This article appeared in www.opusdei.ph on Oct. 26, 2015 under the section Personal Testimonies)



For children up to 86

A few weeks ago I read an article on this website about a biography of Saint Josemaría called "Yes!" And I was surprised that it said it was for children up to 80. Not because it sounded like a joke, but because my grandmother is 86, she has just read the book, and she simply loved it. Now she wants to start reading it all over again. I thought I'd better write and tell you this so you can update the article and say "for children up to 86". Congratulations and thank you for all your good work!

V. B., Spain

(This letter appeared in www.josemariaescriva.info)

A Very Difficult Financial Situation

Three years ago I took out a mortgage on my house and I was on the point of losing it; the situation had become so bad that I was compelled to get loans from loan-sharks at 20 per cent. I was at the very limit of my repayments schedule. My mother always had great devotion to St. Josemaría. I found a little card with a prayer on it and began to pray it, and I lit a white candle that I still have alight today in gratitude. I was able to get out of that calamity. I can say with the faith I put into praying the novena that St. Josemaría heard and responded favorably to my cry for help.

Luz Marina U., Colombia



In Remission

I want to thank St. Josemaría for my father's health. He was diagnosed with cancer of the colon with metastasis in the liver on June 12, 2009. 8 months have gone by since this diagnosis and yesterday, February 22, 2010, after the latest test, he was told that the tumor level was negative and the organs are clear, so the cancer is in remission. A friend gave me the prayer of St. Josemaría and I am certain he interceded for us. A thousand thanks!!!

Gloria Gabriela Guizado, Panama



My Husband Found a Job

My husband worked as a salesman and everything was going well until one day he was made redundant. He spent the next three months trying to find another job. During that time we were very short of everything, we couldn't pay for our children's schooling or get the things we needed for the house; we didn't even have enough to eat. I began the novena for work. When I finished it I started over again, and on the second day, before I finished it, my husband was given work by a new agency. I give thanks to God and my Mother Mary for the favor received, and to St. Josemaría.

Janía J., Mexico

We Received Payment for our Work

I read about St. Josemaría and was drawn to his words. While browsing the internet I came across this website and read testimonies from people around the world. I was amazed at the stories of how St. Josemaría helped people with so many different issues. I opened up my work email and there completely out of the blue was an email from someone who had refused to pay my company money for a project that we completed. As this situation was going on for about a year we had just contacted an attorney to discuss our options. I was shocked that this happened and I remembered that many people mentioned a prayer card and Novena in their testimony. I began to pray the Novena every day during negotiations and today we received payment for our work. I will continue to pray to St. Josemaría to help me be successful in my business.

A.C., USA

Grace of Final Perseverance

Early 2016 my friend informed me about her father's serious medical condition. He was diagnosed with malignant cancer and was given only a few months to live. I started to pray to St. Josemaría for her father's conversion. And St. Josemaría, as always, fulfilled his promise that 'from heaven I can help you more'. My friend's father—who has not practiced his faith for decades—asked for a priest several times when he was in the hospital for the Sacraments of Confession and the Anointing of the Sick. He died peacefully in the arms of our heavenly Father.

S.M., Pasig City



possible causes and symptoms are pointing to that direction: nature of work, medical history, severe burning pain, mild numbness, etc. But when the results came, everything was normal.

The NeuroLab where I was examined/tested is situated opposite of the church inside the Medical City at Ortigas. There is a small prayer room that has this portrait of St. Josemaría Escrivá and other saints/apostles too. What really struck & inspired me was the 2nd to the last line of the prayer..."lighting up the paths of the earth with faith and love"...simply awesome..

It's been only twice that I have prayed the prayer of St. Josemaría and honestly, I have felt a deep connection with it instantly...Thank you Lord for healing and inspiring me all the time!!! Amen!!!

M.G.F., Philippines



In the Sea

This is a little favor that I attribute to St. Josemaría's intercession. Last August I was swimming in the sea, south of Beirut, at a beach with very few people around. At one point I realized that I had lost my glasses, which I had pushed up on my forehead. They weren't valuable, but I was really upset because they weren't mine. I tried to look for them, diving under the water, but the waves were a little rough and the water was very turbid, so I couldn't see a thing. I told the other people with me about it, and they helped me to look. We asked St. Josemaría to help us find them, but we almost gave up hope. We carried on with the day, played sports on the beach, had our lunch, and so on. Before leaving to go home, we went in for one last swim, and to my surprise I felt something under my foot. Unbelievable but true! It was the glasses. I am so grateful to St. Josemaría for this favor, so that I was able to return the borrowed glasses to their owner.

Fina Bosch, Lebanon

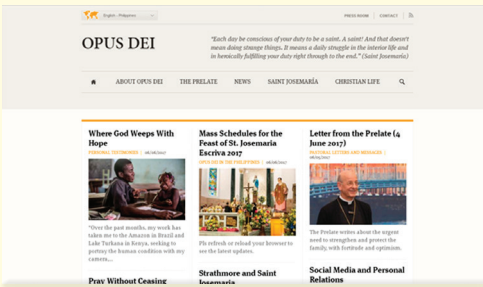


Negative Findings

Just got the result of my medical exam for a possible Metacarpal Tunnel Syndrome with my right arm. All



escrivaworks.org is a website which contains reflections on Christian life written by St. Josemaría Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei, and a search tool for quick access to the passages you are looking for.



opusdei.ph is the official Philippine website of Opus Dei (Latin for "Work of God"). an institution of the Roman Catholic Church, founded by St. Josemaría Escrivá, that teaches that everyone is called to holiness and that ordinary life is a path to sanctity. The majority of its membership are lay people, with secular priests under the governance of a Prelate.

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PRAYER

O God, through 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 of sanctification in daily work and in the fulfillment of the ordinary duties of a Christian. Grant that I 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. Through the intercession of St. Josemaría grant me the favor I request... (here make your request). Amen

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

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www.josemariaescriva.info is the address of the official website of St. Josemaría. It contains abundant information on his life and teachings; testimonies and interviews; social initiatives throughout the world which he promoted; official documents; an ample multi-media section; downloadable novenas and resources, and a news section. Further information about Opus Dei and St. Josemaría may also be obtained from opusdei.ph and escrivaworks.org.