

BULLETIN ON THE LIFE OF MSGR. ESCRIVA

330 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10025

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**The Venerable Servant of God
JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA
Founder of Opus Dei**

BULLETIN No. 8, NEW YORK

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

In Madrid, on October 2, 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 the exercise of one's ordinary work and in the fulfillment of one's family, social and personal obligations. Thus it has been a leaven of fervent Christian life in every environment. On February 14, 1930, the Venerable Josemaria Escriva understood, with the grace of God, that Opus Dei had also to develop its apostolate among women. On February 14, 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 June 16, 1950; and, on November 28, 1982, it was established as a personal Prelature. This legal framework had been desired and foreseen by the Venerable Josemaria Escriva.

Through a life of constant prayer and penance, exercising all the virtues to a heroic degree, with loving dedication and untiring concern for all souls, and with a continuous and unconditional self-surrender to the will of God, Monsignor Josemaria Escriva 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 that Monsignor Escriva had always practiced and instilled in his sons and daughters.

The Holy Mass was the root and center of the interior life of the Founder. A deep sense of his divine filiation, maintained in the continuous presence of the One and Triune God, moved him to seek in all things the most complete identification with Jesus Christ, to have a tender and strong devotion to Our Lady and Saint Joseph, a continual and confident friendship with the Holy Guardian Angels, and to be a sower of peace and joy along all the paths of the earth.

On repeated occasions Monsignor Escriva had offered his life for the Church and for the Roman Pontiff. Our Lord accepted that offering, and on June 26, 1975, in a truly saintly way, Monsignor Escriva gave up his soul to God in Rome in the room where he worked.

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

Cover Photo: Monsignor Josemaria Escriva in Pozoalbero, a Conference Center in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain (November 1972).

The Servant of God Proclaimed Venerable

At 11:30 a.m. on Monday, April 9, 1990, the public reading of the Decree on the heroic virtues of the Founder of Opus Dei took place at the Apostolic Palace in the presence of the Holy Father, several Cardinals, and superiors and officials of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. The Prelate of Opus Dei, Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo, successor to Monsignor Escriva as head of Opus Dei, was also present.

With this act the Servant of God has been declared Venerable. Public cult cannot be given to him because, according to Church Law, this is only given to the Blessed and to the Saints.

The formal declaration of the heroic virtues brings to a close a lengthy stage in the process of canonization of the Servant of God. Between 1981 and 1986 two processes were held, one in Madrid and the other in Rome, to gather the sworn testimonies and a large number of documents concerning the life, virtues, and service to the Church of the Servant of God. In all there were 980 sessions, in which 92 people, all of them eye-witnesses, made declarations. Once the processes were finalized, the Postulator prepared a complete and systematic exposition of the results under the direction of Fr. Ambrosius Eszer O.P., the Relator designated by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. This *Positio super vita et virtutibus* (Assessment on the life and virtues) followed the usual historical-critical method. The *Positio* (Assessment) of Monsignor Escriva, which was produced with the help of a team of theologians and historians, is more than 6,000 pages long.

Following the proper procedure, the *Positio* was first examined by the Theological Consultants in a Congress on September 19, 1989, presided over by Monsignor Antonio Petti, the Promoter-General of the Faith. They expressed a positive judgement about the heroicity of the virtues of the Founder of Opus Dei. The matter was then studied by the Congregation of Cardinals and Bishops which met on March 20, 1990, with Cardinal Edouard Gagnon acting as Presenter. They too unanimously came to the same conclusion.

Accepting these favorable decisions, the Holy Father ordered that a Decree on the heroic virtues of the Founder of Opus Dei be prepared. The text of this Decree is presented below.

The information that reaches us daily from all over the world regarding graces and favors received through the intercession of the Venerable Josemaria Escriva is an eloquent proof of the immense good that is derived for the Church by spreading knowledge of his life and works. His life is that of a priest who is in love with Jesus Christ, and whose teachings concern the sanctification of the ordinary life of a Christian. Our thanksgiving for the proclamation of the heroicity of his virtues should be an expression of a humble and decided resolution to follow more closely each day the heroic example of the love of God and of service to souls that the Founder of Opus Dei has left us.

Pontifical Decree on Heroic Virtues

The Pontifical Decree on the heroic exercise of the virtues of the Servant of God Josemaria Escriva

All the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father himself is perfect (Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium*, 11). In proclaiming the vocation to holiness of every baptized person, Paul VI discerned the most characteristic element of the entire teaching of the Council and, as it were, its ultimate purpose (Motu Proprio, *Sanctitas clarior*, March 19, 1969). In making this call resound, the Church expresses her awareness of herself as a mystery of mankind's communion with God. In contemplating this mystery, the Bride of Christ also sees her historical patrimony confirmed and hears the voice of witnesses to holiness whom the life-giving Spirit has inspired in every age to lead men and women to welcome God's plan of salvation.

The Servant of God Josemaria Escriva is rightly one such witness: not only in the fruitful example of his own life, but also — prophetically anticipating the Second Vatican Council — in the extraordinary vigor with which he sought from the very start of his ministry to address to all Christians the Gospel's call. *Your duty is to become a saint. Yes, even you... To everyone, without exception, our Lord has said, "Be perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect" (The Way, 291). These world crises are crises of saints (Ibid., 301).*

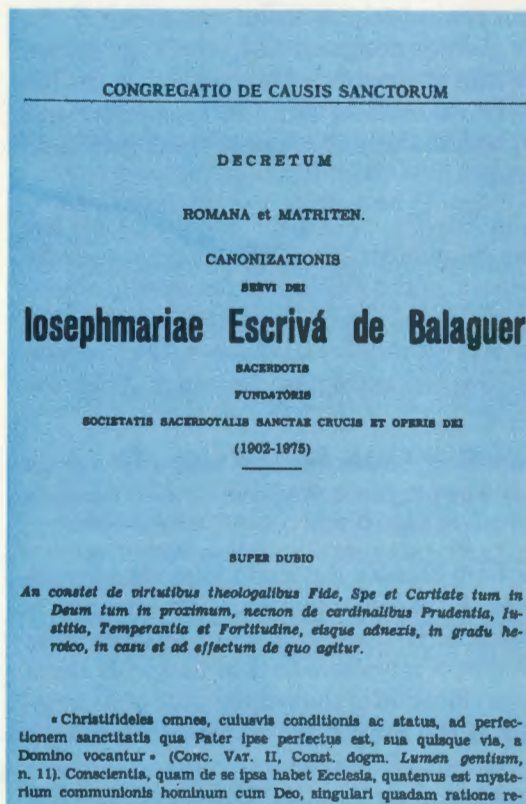
Many are the paths to Christian holiness. The path marked out and followed by the Servant of God reveals with special clarity the radical nature of the baptismal vocation. His vivid perception of the mystery of the Incarnation made him see how supernatural life penetrates all human realities in the heart of a person reborn in Christ. These realities thus become the setting for holiness and the means

to that goal. From the late 1920s onward the Servant of God was a true pioneer of the "intrinsic unity of Christian life," proclaiming the fullness of a contemplative life "in the middle of the street," and calling all the faithful to take an active part in the apostolates of the Church from the place each one occupies in the world.

This message of sanctification *in* and *of* earthly realities appears to be providentially relevant to the spiritual circumstances of our time, characterized by its concern to exalt human values yet also tending to an autonomy that divorces the world from God. Furthermore, by inviting Christians to seek union with God through their daily work — which confers dignity on human beings and is their lot as long as they exist on earth — his message is destined to endure as an inexhaustible source of spiritual light regardless of changing epochs and situations.

Regnare Christum volumus! "We want Christ to reign!" Here was Monsignor Escriva's program: "to place Christ at the summit of all human activities." His service to the Church helped initiate an upward movement toward God of men and women engaged in temporal affairs in all life's sectors and professions. By so doing he was following that promise of the Savior which the Servant of God regarded as central to Opus Dei's pastoral activity: *Et ego si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad meipsum*; "And I, when I am lifted up on the earth, will draw all things to myself" (Jn 12:32). The merit of his contribution to the furtherance of the laity's role is to be found in this Christianization of the world *from within*.

The Servant of God was born in Barbastro, Spain, on January 9, 1902, of devout and God-fearing parents. At about the age of fifteen he began to notice signs of his vocation. Although he did not know exactly what God had in store for him, he decided



Title page of the original Decretum



After the reading of the Decree of the heroic virtues of the Venerable Josemaria Escriva.

to become a priest as a way of preparing himself as best he could to fulfill God's will. After his ordination in Saragossa on March 28, 1925, he went to Madrid where on October 2, 1928, he saw that God wanted him to found and extend Opus Dei. For years he had begged God for light, using the words of the blind man of Jericho: *Domine, ut videam!* "Lord, that I may see" (Lk 18:41). On that day the Servant of God understood fully the mission to which he had been called, a mission that was to be "as old as the Gospel and like the Gospel new." His task was to open to the faithful of all walks of life a sure way of sanctification in the midst of the world, through the practice of one's professional work or job and the fulfillment of the ordinary duties of every day, without changing one's state in life, doing everything out of love for God. Not long afterward, on February 14, 1930, by God's grace he understood that Opus Dei was meant to develop its apostolate among women as well. He devoted all his energies to the fulfillment of this mission, counting always on the encouragement and blessing of the bishop of the diocese.

From the very beginning he carried out a vast apostolate in every sector of society. He was particularly active in caring for the poor and the sick who often languished neglected in the poor neighborhoods and hospitals of Madrid. During the Spanish Civil War he personally experienced the fury of anti-religious persecution and gave daily proof of heroism in a constant priestly activity seasoned with abundant prayer and penance. It did not take long before many came to consider him a saint. When the war was over many bishops invited him to preach retreats to their clergy, thereby greatly contributing to the renewal of Christian life in Spain. Many religious orders and congregations also requested his pastoral services. At the same time, God allowed him to suffer public attacks. He responded invariably with pardon, to the point of considering his detractors as benefactors.

But this Cross was such a source of blessings from heaven that the Servant of God's apostolate spread with astonishing speed. On February 14, 1943, he founded the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, inseparably united to Opus Dei. This made possible the priestly ordination of lay members of Opus Dei and their incardination for the service of the Work. It also allowed priests incardinated in their own dioceses to share the spirituality and ascetical life of Opus Dei, by seeking holiness in the exercise of their ministry while remaining exclusively dependent on their own bishop. The work the Servant of God carried out in this field, personally or through the Priestly Society, has made him a shining example of zeal for priestly formation.

In 1946 the Servant of God took up residence in Rome. In 1947 and 1950 he obtained Opus Dei's approval as an institution of pontifical right. With tireless charity and active hope he guided the development of Opus Dei throughout the world, promoting a vast mobilization of lay people who became aware of their personal responsibility in the Church's mission. He gave life to numerous initiatives in the work of evangelization and human welfare. Everywhere he fostered vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life. He carried out exhausting journeys through Europe and America, proclaiming the Church's teaching with most vigorous faith. Above all he devoted himself tirelessly to the task of forming the members of Opus Dei — priests and laity, men and women — so that they would acquire a solid spiritual life, an exemplary adherence to the Church's magisterium, and an ardent zeal for souls expressed in a personal commitment to carry out a far-reaching apostolate. *Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam!* "All with Peter to Jesus through Mary!" was the aspiration tirelessly preached and practiced by the Servant of God from the beginning of his priesthood.



The Holy Father Pope John Paul II with Angelus Cardinal Felici, the Prefect of the Congregation of Saints, and Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo, the Prelate of Opus Dei, after the declaration of the heroic virtues of the Venerable Josemaria Escriva on April 9, 1990.

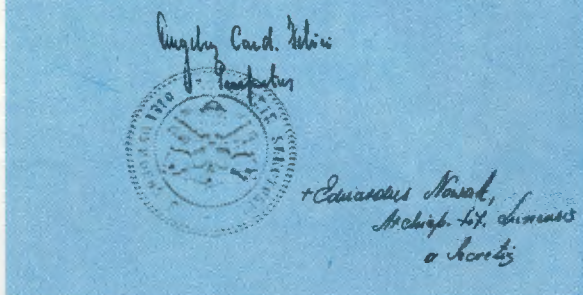
The salient features of his personality are to be found not only in his extraordinary talents as a man of action, but above all in the life of prayer and constant union with God that made him a "traveling contemplative." Faithful to the gifts he had received, he gave an example of heroism in the most ordinary situations, in a life of constant prayer, in uninterrupted mortifications which were "like the beating of the heart," in assiduous presence of God that could attain to the heights of union amid the hustle and bustle of daily life, and in intense persevering work. Immersed in contemplating the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, he set a sense of divine filiation in Christ as the foundation of a spirituality wherein the fortitude of faith and the apostolic daring of charity are harmoniously united with filial abandonment to the Father.

The Servant of God loved the Eucharist passionately. He regarded the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass as "the center and the root of Christian life." He was an untiring apostle of the sacrament of penance. He practiced a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin, "Mother of God and our Mother," to Saint Joseph, and to the Guardian Angels. He loved the Church with all the strength of his priestly heart and offered himself as a holocaust of reparation and penance for the sins with which all human beings sully her face. The prodigious fruitfulness of his apostolate was there for all to see. Yet he considered himself a "deaf and inept instrument," "a founder without foundation," "a sinner madly in love with Jesus Christ."

The Servant of God died in Rome on June 26, 1975. At his death Opus Dei had more than 60,000 members of 80 nationalities. There were almost a thousand priests incardinated in the Work. Its apostolic undertakings, including schools, universities and social works, had spread the world over. The writings of the Servant of God, with millions of copies published, were already considered spiritual classics.

Facta de hisce omnibus Summo Pontifici Ioanni Paulo II fide-
 li relatione, Sanctitas Sua vota Congregationis accepit atque manda-
 vit ut Decretum super heroicis Servi Dei virtutibus appareretur.
 Quod cum rite factum esset, accitis hodierna die Cardinalibus
 Infrascripto Praefecto, necnon Causas Ponente, meque Antistite a
 Secretis ceterisque de more convocandis itaque astantibus, Beatissimus
 Pater declaravit: *Constare de virtutibus theologalibus Fide, Spe et
 Caritate tum in Deum tum in proximum, necnon de cardinalibus Pru-
 dentia, Iustitia, Temperantia et Fortitudine, itaque adnexis, in gradu
 heroico, Servi Dei Iosephmariae Escrivae de Balaguer, Sacerdotis, Fun-
 datoris Societatis Sacerdotalis Sanctae Crucis et Operis Dei, in casu
 et ad effectum de quo agitur.*
 Hoc autem Decretum publici iuris fieri et in acta Congregationis
 de Causis Sanctorum referri iussit.

Datum Romae, die 9 Aprilis A. D. 1990.



Concluding page of the original Decretum

the Promoter General of the Faith, Monsignor Antonio Petti, responded affirmatively to the question whether the Servant of God had practiced the virtues in a heroic manner. A like response was given by the Ordinary Congregation of Cardinals and Bishops in session on March 20, 1990, at which Cardinal Edouard Gagnon made the formal presentation.

Having received from the undersigned Cardinal Prefect an accurate and faithful account of all that is related above, and having accepted the vote of the Congregation, the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II ordered that the Decree on the heroic virtues of the Servant of God be drawn up.

That order having now been carried out, and the Cardinal Prefect, the Presenter of the Cause, the undersigned Secretary and others according to custom having been convoked today, the Holy Father has declared in their presence: *The theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, toward both God and neighbor, and also the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude, with their associated virtues, have been lived to a heroic degree by the Servant of God Josemaria Escriva, Priest, Founder of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei; this is established in this case and for purposes attendant thereon.*

The Holy Father has ordered that this decree be made public and be recorded in the acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Given at Rome, on April 9 of the year 1990, A.D.

L+ S

Angelus Card. Felici, *Prefect*

+ Eduardus Nowak, Titular Archbishop of Luna, *Secretary*

Testimonials about the Venerable Msgr. Josemaria Escriva

For many of the faithful the life of Monsignor Josemaria Escriva is a particularly attractive example of virtue and a real encouragement to embrace their own Christian vocation in the middle of their daily duties.

The Postulator's Office has on file a large number of testimonials that show the good effect, on souls, of contact with the Venerable Servant of God. Some of these testimonials are from people who actually knew him and so could appreciate at first hand the extraordinarily rich action of grace in the Founder of Opus Dei, and the heroism with which he responded to God's call. Others are from theologians and bishops who have reflected deeply on some aspect of his spirituality, and stress his importance for the Church in today's world. In this and following issues we reproduce just some of the many testimonials.

Comments of His Holiness Pope Pius XII, as recalled by Most Rev. Thomas Muldoon, Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney, Australia:

"I met him, personally, only twice, but for a long period on each occasion in company with His Eminence, Cardinal Norman Gilroy. The sanctity of this man shone through his face. I felt myself in the presence of a saint to whom God was always present. He radiated such peace, calm, inner joy.

After one of these meetings the Cardinal and I had an audience with Pope Pius XII. I mentioned our visit to Monsignor Escriva, and the deep impression he had made on me. The Cardinal made similar remarks. The Holy Father smiled with delight and said: *He is a real saint, a man sent by God for our times*" (General Archives of the Postulator (GAP), HRF T-04261, 10/21/75).

His Holiness Pope Paul VI, in an article written by Most Rev. Ambrosio Echebarria Arroita, Bishop of Barbastro, Spain, for the faithful of his diocese:

"It was an immense joy for your Bishop that in a public audience, in November 1976, before thousands of Christians, Pope Paul VI said to the faithful when introducing the Bishop of Barbastro that this diocese, though small in the number of its inhabitants, was important in the Church because the Founder of Opus Dei Monsignor Escriva had been born there" (*Regarding an Anniversary*, in *El Cruzado Aragones*, Barbastro, 9/30/78).

Cardinal Giovanni Benelli, Archbishop of Florence, Italy:

"The memory I have of the Founder is of a man of virtue, moved by a great love for the Church. I always saw him very committed to seeking the good of the Church and of souls. He always showed himself most faithful in following the indications of the Holy See, to which he professed unconditional devotion.

One was immediately struck by his ability to draw others with him, a gift which has influenced so many souls looking for greater spiritual perfection" (GAP, HRF P-09015, Letter to the Holy Father, Florence, 5/8/79).

Cardinal Alfred Bengsch, Archbishop of Berlin, West Germany:

"With the death of Monsignor Josemaria Escriva, the Church has lost a great priest, but has gained a *new intercessor before the throne of God*. This is the conviction I have come to from my personal dealings with him" (GAP, HRF P-00427, Letter to the Holy Father, Berlin, 7/18/75).

Most Rev. Pedro Cantero Cuadrado, Archbishop of Saragossa, Spain:

"I will never forget one of my first meetings with my beloved and dearly departed friend, Josemaria Escriva. As evening fell on August 14, 1931, in a suffocating heatwave, he unexpectedly turned up at my house in Madrid, when the sky seemed heavy with smoke from the burning of convents, even though that was three months earlier. That visit and conversation with Josemaria Escriva changed the outlook of my life and pastoral ministry" (*He Was Above All a Man of God*, in *El Noticiero*, Saragossa, 7/12/75).

Cardinal John Patrick Cody, Archbishop of Chicago, Illinois :

"I had the privilege of meeting him in Rome in the early fifties, on the occasion of the Episcopal ordination of my good friend, Cardinal Ferretto. At that time Monsignor Escriva had the reputation of being a *saintly priest* with a great devotion to Our Lord and to His Blessed Mother and a great love for the Church, the Holy See and the Hierarchy....

The love of Monsignor Escriva for the priesthood will be a wonderful example for so many priests who are struggling to live a holy life in the midst of a confused world. And his love and deep interest in young people will be a great encouragement to young people all over the world who are the hope of the Church" (GAP, HRF P-08884, Letter to the Holy Father, Chicago, 12/15/78).

Most Rev. Alberto Cosme do Amaral, Bishop of Leiria-Fatima, Portugal:

"I knew him for many years. I met him many times in Rome during the Council, and also in Portugal during his many trips to this land of Our Lady. And so I was able to discover and get to know in depth that extraordinary man and priest, Monsignor Josemaria Escriva.

I believe that *his life was an ineffable gift of God*, not only for the Holy Church, but also for all mankind. He lived his priesthood heroically, based on his extraordinary qualities as a person. He was a man, fully a man, and therefore, through the gifts received from our Lord, he was a priest, fully and exclusively a priest.

He was a man of God, a contemplative in the street, which was his interior cell. His prayer was not interrupted by his work, since work for him was genuine prayer. In a wonderful way, he was able to fuse contemplation and action....



Msgr. Escriva with members in a training center for women in Guatemala in 1975.

A man of ardent and strong faith, he loved the Holy Church passionately. He felt its sorrows in his soul and body. He always defended it courageously and with absolute loyalty....

His love for others was universal, beginning with the poorest and the most needy in body and soul" (GAP, HRF P-00052, Letter to the Holy Father, Leiria, 7/1/75).

Most Rev. Leopoldo Eijo y Garay, Bishop of Madrid, Spain:

"[Msgr.] Escriva is a model priest, chosen by God for the sanctification of many souls, humble, prudent, self-sacrificing, docile in the extreme to his Prelate, of gifted intelligence, of very reliable spiritual and doctrinal training, ardently zealous, an apostle of Christian formation for student youth" (GAP, HRF D-03545/2).

Most Rev. Claude Flusin, retired Bishop of Saint Claude, France:

"I consider it one of the graces of my life to have known Monsignor Escriva and to have counted him as a friend" (GAP, HRF T-01009, Rome, 12/22/75).

Cardinal Joseph Frings, retired Archbishop of Cologne, West Germany:

"I frequently met the Founder of Opus Dei. I fully realized that here was a pioneer of lay spirituality and that Opus Dei would be of decisive importance for the future of the Church....

The most extraordinary aspect of his priestly personality was his docility to the grace of God....

Monsignor Escriva saw clearly the dangers and needs of our time. In his concern for his own flock, he has given an example to all pastors in the Church how *opportune et importune*, and with unfaltering fortitude one must preach the Word of God and announce His Will, living the truth in charity.

It is not possible to believe that one man's life could reach out to so many people around the world and get them to give themselves to God cheerfully and generously, unless it is through his *heroic virtues*, his ever present and increasing self denial and, in the first place, the grace of God that overflowed in him....

After his death, his life has come to be an even brighter light. And so Christ will ever shine out more in the whole Church, through this man and his Work" (GAP, HRF P-00426, Letter to the Holy Father, Cologne, 8/21/75).

Cardinal Joseph Hoeffner, Archbishop of Cologne and President of the German Episcopal Conference:

"From the first time we met, I admired his manner, which was affectionate and spontaneous, human and cheerful, deeply rooted in the love of Christ. In talking with him, I was aware that I was with a *man who lived the faith totally* and who loved Christ and the Church with all his heart. Our conversations were about one thing only: Christ and his command to extend the Good News, embracing ever more souls in the Church....

The fire that Christ brought to the earth to set it aflame burned in Msgr. Escriva. He had the gift of discovering where there was something new and where the Spirit of God was acting. His only concern was to fulfill the will of God....

God will certainly reward Monsignor Escriva for all that he has done for the Church since 1928. I am convinced that the Founder of Opus Dei, now in the Glory of God, does even more for the Church than he was able to do here on earth" (GAP, HRF P-00432, Letter to the Holy Father, Cologne, 8/11/75).

Cardinal Francois Marty, Archbishop of Paris, France:

"During the Second Vatican Council, I had occasion to meet Monsignor Escriva quite often. Recalling those conversations, I remember a *man who spoke only of God*. A conversation with him seemed like a time of prayer. One felt that he lived that spirit of contemplation in the middle of the world, which he had ceaselessly preached since 1928....

If his message about the universal call to holiness, through the sanctification of ordinary activities of daily life and by doing apostolate, which happily has been taken up by the Second Vatican Council, were now proposed to everyone with an official declaration in which the Church recognized the sanctity of Monsignor Escriva and proposed him as an example for all men of our time, it would be of great benefit to the whole world" (GAP, HRF P-08935, Letter to the Holy Father, Paris, 1/8/79).

Cardinal Humberto Medeiros, Archbishop of Boston, Massachusetts :

"I became more eager than ever to know the priest who had inspired this hunger for sanctity. A few months later I met the priest, Monsignor Escriva, the founder of Opus Dei, at his residence in Rome. He was so extraordinarily forthright, so humble and unassuming, so warm and cordial, so enthusiastic about the Church and its mission, that I felt I had always known him and that I too could call him 'Father'....

I was able to recognize someone who was very close to God, a *veritable rock of faith*. 'That is what we need' I remember telling myself after leaving him, 'a man of prayer, a man who gladly and unashamedly confesses his great devotion to Our Lady and his love for the Church and the Holy Father....'

I have continued to 'see' him in Rome where I like to revisit the house where we first met. There, in a lovely crypt, a dark green marble slab bearing the inscription *El Padre* marks the place of burial. All around me there are young people who kiss the tomb with devotion. There are also housewives and workers in the crypt who silently confide to him their needs. But as I notice them, I too ask the Father to pray for me and for all the souls entrusted to my care, and that he continue to blaze those trails of sanctity in secular life that he opened up in 1928, fifty years ago this

coming second of October" (*A Tribute to Opus Dei Founder in The National Catholic Register*, Los Angeles, 7/2/78).

Cardinal Silvio Oddi, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Clergy:

"When in the history of the Church, the crisis has been most serious, and the enemies of God most active, Divine Providence in its unfailing assistance has raised up those specialized laborers we call saints. Among them I have no hesitation in placing Monsignor Josemaria Escriva....

This could only surprise those who had not the good fortune to know at close quarters the splendor of the priestly soul of Monsignor Escriva. I, for my part, have had this unique privilege and can testify, from my own experience, the exemplary nature of his fidelity to the vocation and mission which Our Lord had entrusted to him. It is a fidelity that is only explained by an intense and deep love of God and neighbor, in whose service the Founder of Opus Dei spent himself with total self-giving, that was so characteristic of him. His activity, so varied and surprising, was the evident result of a most lively love of God, which overflowed his heart. This is the impression I have taken away from my meetings with the Servant of God and his conversations with me, which were always so full of loyalty to the Church and so imbued with respect for the Hierarchy and the Supreme Teaching Authority" (GAP, HRF P-09013, Letter to the Holy Father, Rome, 5/3/79).

Cardinal Maurice Otunga, Archbishop of Nairobi, Kenya:

"All who had the privilege of knowing him can testify that when he died in 1975, at the age of 73, he was so young! He had not grown old with the passage of time. On the contrary, his spirit had grown younger year by year, with an incredible vitality of youthfulness and cheerfulness: born in no easy fashion but over a lifetime of heroic struggle which brought him closer to God day by day" (*Opus Dei in Africa: a Force for Good*, in the *Sunday Nation*, Nairobi, 2/3/80).



Monsignor Josemaria Escriva in Sitio de Aroeira, a center of Opus Dei in Brazil, 1974.

Cardinal Paul Philippe, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches:

"I had several opportunities to meet Monsignor Escriva, the Founder of Opus Dei. Our conversations left me with the conviction of having been close to a saint: a priest filled with God, who through the joys and sacrifices of each day, fired by the most authentic charity and limitless zeal for the salvation of all souls and a universal concern for the extending of the Kingdom of God, was able to enkindle in all those who came close to him his own thirst for God and his own apostolic zeal" (HRF P-08760, Letter to the Holy Father, Rome, 5/15/78).

Cardinal Sergio Pignedoli, President of the Secretariat for Non-Christians:

"The life of the Founder of Opus Dei was but a full expression of a life of praying, loving, working, smiling. A simple and normal life ... a life of unceasing work, a shining example of that spirituality of work of which he was the tireless teacher and apostle.

Monsignor Escriva already belongs to history and to the treasury of the whole Church" (*Monsignor Escriva: a Spiritual Example*, in *Il Veltro*, XIX, Rome 1975).

Most Rev. Oscar Arnulfo Romero, Bishop of Santiago de Maria, San Salvador:

"I had the good fortune to know Monsignor Escriva personally and to receive from him encouragement and strength.... Monsignor Escriva was able to unite in his life a continual dialogue with our Lord and a great humanity: it was clear that he was a man of God" (GAP, HRF P-00114, Letter to the Holy Father, Santiago de Maria, 7/12/75).

Cardinal Julio Rosales, Archbishop of Cebu, the Philippines:

"Monsignor Escriva responded with great heroism to the special graces that God granted him" (*One Hundred Per Cent a Priest*, in *Diario de Sabadell*, 6/30/79).

Cardinal Angel Suquia Goicoechea, Archbishop of Santiago de Compostela, Spain:

"The life of this outstanding priest was Christian and Gospel-based to an exemplary degree.... His passionate love for the priesthood, which he himself lived with a contagious joy, gave rise to many and excellent priestly vocations in men of all ages, races and backgrounds. Faithful to the sanctifying charism of the priesthood, he awakened in those around him a clear and real consciousness of the universal call to Christian holiness of all the people of God. Only God knows and time will tell, but I am fully convinced that in this respect *the priestly activity of Father Josemaria has been truly providential and decisive in the Church*" (GAP, HRF P-00550, Letter to the Holy Father, Santiago de Compostela, 8/4/75).

Cardinal Paul Yoshigoro Taguchi, Archbishop of Osaka, Japan:

"I had the opportunity to chat with him, without hurry. The greatness of his character and his supernatural faith shone through in the firmness of his convictions and in a deep charity toward God and men....



Monsignor Josemaria Escriva after an informal gathering in Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1974.

Since founding Opus Dei, he gave the Church supreme service, full of love and constancy" (GAP, HRF P-00644, Letter to the Holy Father, Osaka, 7/27/75).

Most Rev. Adolfo Tortolo, Archbishop of Parana and President of the Argentine Episcopal Conference:

"My contacts with him always left me with an impression of a person well above the average, a born and surefooted director of a great apostolic venture. But above all, what always struck me was his faith, the solidity of his faith, the brightness of his faith, the creative dynamism of his faith. It was a faith able to move mountains" (GAP, HRF P-02698, Letter to the Holy Father, Parana, August 1975).

Cardinal John Joseph Wright, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Clergy:

"My personal conviction of the holiness of the life of Monsignor Escriva is based on the direct experience I had of his virtues. He lived only for God and others, giving daily testimony of *virtue which was truly heroic*" (GAP, HRF P-098770, Letter to the Holy Father, Rome, 5/15/78).

Letters of Favors Obtained

A NEWBORN LIFE SAVED

Our daughter Emily was born at William Beaumont Army Medical Center in El Paso, Texas. I had a normal, healthy full term pregnancy with Emily (our 4th daughter). At delivery her birth was normal and she had an APCAR rating of 9 which is considered great. However, after the first eleven hours of life, I noticed Emily wasn't doing very well. She had upper respiratory distress, difficult breathing and a "clicking sound" in her chest cavity. I immediately notified the newborn nursery staff and they called in a team of staff pediatricians and neonatologists to examine Emily.

Upon examination they transferred our Emily to the NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for Newborns). For several hours she underwent numerous tests to find out what was happening to her. Her health was deteriorating rapidly and after an insertion of a chest tube to her right lung the lung collapsed. They were able to inflate the lung. However, a total of 90 cc's of fluid was extracted from the tube. The doctors were very surprised because they had never seen a newborn have this before. The laboratory examined the fluid and under microscope found 3 deadly bacteria.

Emily at this point was on the "critical list" and the pediatrician told my husband and I she was gravely ill and they weren't sure what they were really dealing with, but her chances for survival were not good.

X-Ray examinations to the chest and Emmy Scans showed a right upper mass in her right lung. To this day they can not explain how it got there or what caused it to develop. (Remember I explained my pre-natal care was perfect, no complications in 9 months and Emily's birth delivery was excellent).

Anyway, I feel this is the most significant part of her story which I'll tell you about now. Emily spent a total of 17 days in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. The first day of her crisis we requested the Catholic Chaplain at the hospital to come to the Unit and administer an emergency Baptism. He performed the Baptism quickly and then returned to my hospital room to share prayers with my husband and myself.

Emily's condition from the Baptism rite slightly improved a nurse later told me. However, she was still deathly ill. The second day of her life while I was in the Neonatal Unit visiting Emily, a friend of ours who was a Pediatrician came walking into the Unit. He had heard about Emily's condition and wanted to talk to me. He gave me Monsignor Josemaria's prayer card. He told me about the Monsignor and asked me to read the card and pray to him on behalf of Emily. For the next 15 days I prayed to him requesting his intercession to Christ for Emily.

I placed his prayer card on Emily's chest on the right upper lung. That same afternoon the portable chest X-Ray technician came to take another chest X-Ray of Emily. When the technician came back with the radiographs (AP. Lateral films) there was no more lesion in her right lung field.

My main neonatologist came to me to show me the perfect X-Rays of her lung. He was amazed as were all the other doctors. The doctors all said the same thing to me: "Emily is a miracle baby". Each doctor was of different faith, but all, had treated her medically throughout 17 days of tough going, and they all admitted her lung lesion had vanished by a miracle rather than by solely medical means.

I attribute her cure to the intercession of Monsignor Josemaria Escriva to our dear Lord.

Emily has now just celebrated her 2nd Birthday with us. She has not been sick since those first 17 days of life. She is a beautifully healthy and mentally sound child. Every day I look upon her with thanksgiving and love.

To all of you please know this story is true, and if need be, I can provide medical records and testimony from those professional physicians who cared for Emily. Our family now lives in Leavenworth Kansas. Thank you for your time and we pray for Josemaria Escriva's canonization. God's blessings to your staff.

L. J. C., Leavenworth, Kansas

FROM HATRED TO LOVE, A LIFE RECOVERED

For ten years now I have been living at peace. I work, have a pleasant home, mix socially and I help in a parish giving catechism classes for those preparing to receive first Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Before this, things were very different. A frantic political activism had led me to violence and hatred toward everything and everybody. My work, together with all my other pursuits, was affected by sectarian fighting and revenge. I was dominated by a spirit of contradiction and subject to periods of euphoria punctuated by crises of anxiety.

When I heard the news of the death of the Servant of God Monsignor Josemaria, whom I had met many years ago, I followed a strong impulse of going to the Mass that was to be celebrated for the repose of his soul. For the two hours that the solemn ceremony lasted I could not stop crying and in fact I was sobbing without interruption, aware, as others were also, of a certain living and smiling presence of the Father. My conversion dates from that instant, thanks to the practice of regular confession, it has brought peace back to me, and filled my soul with joy.

The Servant of God's influence along this way of salvation has made me experience moments of deep spiritual intensity, both morally and affectively. The prayer invoking his intercession has been a most effective means for obtaining daily graces which I am still enjoying. The only problem amid so much happiness is whether I may live long enough to be grateful.

N. N., Rome (Italy)

HIS BODY AND SOUL WERE RESTORED TO HEALTH

My brother was a healthy young man who had never suffered any illness except for the common cold. He suddenly became very ill and had to be rushed to a hospital. That was the beginning of his "way of the cross" which lasted for three months. The doctors made all the analyses and tests that they could to find a cure, but he continued the same. My brother was losing weight, felt acute pain and had a high temperature which made him have sporadic convulsions. Every day that passed was an agony for him and for us a horrible suffering for we could see we were going to lose him.

In my anguish I asked my friends from Opus Dei to pray for my brother's health and that they should commend him to Monsignor Escriva. One day when I had found him very disheartened, I bought him a prayer book and took it to him. As soon as he started to read it he was very moved and began to weep like a child. The following morning he asked me to call for a priest so that he could go to confession, and eight days later he received Holy Communion and the Anointing of the Sick. It seemed as if there was nothing else to be done and the doctors could do nothing for him and admitted their failure. Against all expectations, however, he began to recover to such an extent that he was completely cured, much to the amazement of the doctors.

My brother had lapsed from the Church many years ago, having become a Freemason, and violently anticlerical. He has now renounced his freemasonry and spends some of his time working in a clinic for the poor and needy and has joined a Church group that helps him to deepen in his faith, and which helps him with friendship and affection to grow in love.

X. X., (May 2, 1989)

TO LEAD A CHRISTIAN LIFE

My two married sisters have been leading a stormy life over a number of years due to some misunderstandings with their husbands. They had been staying with us for some months. Sometimes they would run away and leave their little ones with no one to look after them. And to make it worse they never went to church during those hellish years.

My parents had no other way to unite them than to pray through Father Josemaria. We didn't even dare to send their husbands to court, because we knew that life without love is like trying to create heaven in hell.

It didn't take long before they all went back, received the sacrament of matrimony and, lastly, baptized their children. Nowadays they are full Christians who will never miss Mass on Sundays.

M. M., Bungoma (Kenya)

The originals of these letters with the writers' names and addresses are kept in the files of the Postulation of the Cause in Rome.

Published Works of Msgr. Josemaria Escriva

- The Way** "Monsignor Escriva has written something more than a masterpiece; he has written straight from the heart, and straight to the heart go the short paragraphs that make up *The Way*. In it appears the warm brotherly understanding of the author, the paternal concern with which he sees, understands and corrects, persuading, not threatening" (*L'Osservatore Romano*, March 24, 1950). The first edition of this book was published in 1934 entitled *Consideraciones Espirituales*. Since then it has been reprinted many times, with a total of 3,591,000 copies in 39 languages. English editions currently published by Scepter Press (New York and London).
- Holy Rosary** A book of meditations on each of the fifteen mysteries of the life of Christ and the Blessed Virgin, which one contemplates when saying the Holy Rosary. The first edition also appeared in 1934. A total of over 573,000 copies have been published in 18 languages. English editions by Scepter.
- Conversations with Msgr. Escriva** A number of magazines and newspapers asked Msgr. Escriva questions about Opus Dei, dealing with the topics of greatest interest to their respective readers. The first edition was published in 1968. Since then more than 300,000 copies have been published in seven languages. English edition by Sinag-Tala (Manila).
- Christ is Passing By** This book is a collection of some of the many homilies given by Msgr. Escriva throughout his life. They constitute a profound and attractive exposition of Christian doctrine and life. His style combines theological depth with clarity of exposition. The first edition was published in 1973. It has since had a total printing of nearly 400,000 copies in eleven languages. Published in English by Scepter.
- Friends of God** A second collection of 18 homilies in which the author's warm and filial conversation with God is centered on the theme of the Christian virtues. This book is in the same intimate and direct style as the earlier collection of homilies. It was first published in 1977. Since then a total of 291,000 copies have been published in eight languages. The foreword is by Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo, the present Prelate of Opus Dei. English editions published by Scepter.
- The Way of the Cross** A posthumous work of Msgr. Escriva that is the fruit of his meditation on the scenes of the Passion of Our Lord. It has been prepared to aid prayer and to increase our sense of sorrow for our sins and of thanksgiving to Christ who has redeemed us with the price of his blood. Since its appearance in 1981, 306,000 copies have been printed in ten languages. Published in English by Scepter.
- Furrow** A new posthumous work. "Like *The Way*, *Furrow* is born of Msgr. Escriva's interior life and experience with souls. It was written with the intention of fostering and facilitating personal prayer. Its character and style are not those of a treatise in systematic theology, although its rich and profound spirituality encaptures a soaring theology" (from the foreword by Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo). The first edition was published in October 1986. 276,000 copies in seven languages have been published to date. Published in English by Scepter.
- The Forge** *The Forge* is the latest posthumous work to be published. "*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 Msgr. Escriva" (from the foreword by Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo). It was first published in October 1987. There are now 256,000 copies printed in six languages. Published in English by Scepter.
- Love for the Church** Homilies on the Church which help deepen the reader's love for and service to the Church. Published in 1990, over 18,000 copies have been printed in three languages.
- La Abadesa de las Huelgas** A penetrating study of an extraordinary case of quasi-episcopal jurisdiction exercised by the abbess of a famous convent in Burgos, using the original sources and documents. First published in 1944; a third edition appeared in 1988. (Only available in Spanish).

(All the above are available from Scepter Press, 481 Main Street, New Rochelle, NY 10801.)

PRAYER

for private devotion

O, God, You granted your servant and priest Josemaria countless graces, choosing him as a most faithful instrument to found Opus Dei, a way of sanctification in daily work and in the fulfillment of the Christian's ordinary duties. Grant that I too may learn to turn all the circumstances and events of my life into occasions of loving You and of serving the Church, the Pope and all souls with joy and simplicity, lighting up the pathways of this earth with faith and love. Deign to glorify your servant, Josemaria, and through his intercession, grant me the favor of . . . (here make your request). Amen.

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

In accordance with the decrees of Pope Urban VIII, we declare that there is no intention of anticipating in any way the judgment of the Church, and that this prayer is not intended for public use.

We are grateful for the many letters we receive. They are a testimony of a private devotion with which so many persons the world over pray to God through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God, Msgr. Escriva. We are able to include in the *Bulletin* only a small selection from among them. They describe events of vital importance as well as simple anecdotes.

We also wish to express our appreciation to all those who send contributions. These contributions are used to defray printing and distribution costs of the *Bulletin*, which is free of charge. They also help further those apostolates that stem from Msgr. Escriva's love for souls. Tax deductible contributions should be sent to the *Bulletin on the Life of Msgr. Escriva*, 330 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10025.

Please use the enclosed envelope and make checks payable to *Woodlawn Foundation*.

Our readers are invited to send us the names and addresses of others who they think would like to receive the *Bulletin* or prayer cards with the prayer for private devotion.

BULLETIN ON THE LIFE OF MSGR. ESCRIVA

330 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10025

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