



PRAYER

*O God, You granted your priest
Blessed 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 grant the canonization of Blessed
Josemaria and, through
his intercession, grant me the favor
of . . . (make your request). Amen.*

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

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Blessed
**JOSEMARÍA
ESCRIVÁ**

Founder
of Opus Dei

HIS LIFE

How Blessed Josemaría observed the Holy Years

ENCOUNTERS

In poor neighborhoods of Kinshasa

DOCUMENTARY

A video on devotion to Blessed Josemaria

BULLETIN

July 2000, New York



**Fear not,
open the doors to Christ**

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More information
about
Blessed Josemaría and
Opus Dei is available
on the internet at
www.opusdei.org.
You can also subscribe
to a free e-mail news
service.

The Cover: Opening
of the Holy Door at the
beginning of the
Jubilee Year 2000.

Who is Blessed Josemaría Escrivá

Blessed Josemaría Escrivá was born in Barbastro, Spain, on January 9, 1902. He was ordained to the priesthood in Saragossa on March 28, 1925.

On October 2, 1928, in Madrid, by divine inspiration he founded Opus Dei, which has opened up a new way for the faithful to sanctify themselves in the midst of the world, through the practice of their ordinary work and in the fulfillment of their personal, family and social duties. They thus become a leaven of intense Christian life in all environments. On February 14, 1930, Blessed Josemaría Escrivá by God's grace understood that Opus Dei was meant to develop its apostolate among women as well. And on February 14, 1943, he founded the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, inseparably united to Opus Dei. Opus Dei received the definitive approval of the Holy See on June 16, 1950. On November 28, 1982, it was erected as a personal Prelature, a juridical form desired and foreseen by Blessed Josemaría Escrivá.

He guided and inspired the growth of Opus Dei throughout the whole world with constant prayer and penance and by the heroic practice of all the virtues. In doing so, he showed loving dedication and untiring concern for all souls, and a continual and unconditional surrender to God's will. When he yielded up his soul to God, Opus Dei had spread to five continents with over 60,000 members of 80 nationalities, serving the Church with the same veneration for and complete union with the Pope and bishops that Blessed Josemaría Escrivá always lived.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was the root and center of his interior life. His profound awareness of being a son of God, expressed in a constant presence of the Holy Trinity, moved him to seek complete identification with Christ in everything, to live a deep and tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, and to enjoy a continual and confident friendship with the holy guardian angels. This made him a sower of peace and joy along all the ways of the earth.

Msgr. Escrivá had repeatedly offered his life for the Church and the Pope. Our Lord accepted this offering, and on June 26, 1975, in Rome in the room where he worked, he surrendered his soul to God with the same holy simplicity that characterized his entire life.

His body rests in the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace at Viale Bruno Buozzi 75, Rome. There it is accompanied by the constant prayer and gratitude of his sons and daughters and countless others who have come closer to God through his example and teaching. His cause of canonization was introduced in Rome on February 19, 1981. Pope John Paul II, on April 9, 1990, declared that he lived the Christian virtues to a heroic degree, and on July 6, 1991, decreed that a cure attributed to his intercession was miraculous. The Founder of Opus Dei was beatified by Pope John Paul II on May 17, 1992, in Rome.



How Blessed Josemaría Escrivá observed the Holy Years

Reminiscences by Bishop Javier Echevarría
On the Four Jubilee Years in Blessed Josemaría's Life

Four Jubilee Years fell within the lifetime of Blessed Josemaría: 1925, 1933, 1950, and 1975. 1925 was the year of his ordination to the priesthood, on March 28. He was in Madrid during the 1933 Holy Year, a period in his life when he lacked the economic resources needed to even consider a trip to Rome. Some notes in his personal journal reflect his thoughts at the time.

On January 5, 1933, the eve of the Epiphany, he wrote: "How much I expect from my God, in this Holy Year!" And later, on April 18, thinking about the paschal mystery the Jubilee was commemorating, he wrote: "I thank my Father for the contrition that he made me feel on the night of Holy Thursday at Santa Isabel. My God—mine!—I have no right to the joy you placed in my heart!"

A carving of St. Peter

Isidoro Zorzano, one of the first faithful of Opus Dei, had an opportunity to travel to Rome for the Holy Year, while working as an engineer in Malaga. Blessed Josemaría wrote in *The Way*: "Catholic, apostolic, Roman! I want you to be very Roman, ever anxious to make your 'pilgrimage' to Rome,



videre Petrum—"to see Peter." Father Josemaría asked Isidoro to do a few things on the trip. One of them was to buy a statue of the seated figure of St. Peter, as large as he could find. Isidoro found one and brought it back to Spain, after having had it blessed by the Pope.

I want you to be very Roman

Those of us who were at his side in 1950 and 1975 can testify to the veneration that Blessed Josemaría always felt for indulgences, a veneration that, if possible, intensified on those occasions. On the morning of the first day of the Jubilee years 1950 and 1975 he went to visit the Roman basilicas to obtain the indulgence, with some of his sons. He repeated those visits many times during the year, in a spirit of penance. His prayerful demeanor was striking during these visits, as was his way of living the communion of saints.

In the summer of 1950 I spent a few weeks in Castelgandolfo with some other members of Opus Dei. Blessed Josemaría often came from Rome to see us. I remember the affection with which he spoke to us about the Pope. He joined us enthusiastically when we stood by the

roadside to greet Pope Pius XII, with prayer and filial affection, on his return to Castelgandolfo from Rome after one of his Holy Year audiences.

On that occasion he suggested that, before going back to Spain, I might spend two days in Rome so as to visit the four Basilicas and gain the Jubilee indulgence. He asked me to pray with a lot of faith, especially in St. Peter's, for the holiness of all who form part of the Church and for an increase in conversions everywhere. He told me to be very united to the Pope. He wanted those visits to be a time of prayer and spiritual formation, not of tourism. That was his advice to everybody.

As a good shepherd, he urged the faithful of Opus Dei to redouble their efforts to encourage many people to avail themselves of the sacrament of Penance during the Holy Year. And he urged the priests to be generous in spending many hours daily, and their best energies, administering this sacrament, and to do so happily. His priestly zeal led him to personally encourage the priests of Opus Dei

to make themselves fully available for this service.

Joy and hope

We were impressed by his joy at the gift of the Jubilee indulgence, a sign of God's fatherly mercy, who purifies his children from stain and gives them a rebirth to a new life. His family chats, his conversations with those who came to Rome to seek his advice, and the correspondence he exchanged with many people, all reflected the firm conviction that the Holy Year is a special time of grace, and hence, a splendid opportunity to make a new beginning in our spiritual path.

Apart from joy, the virtue he spoke about most energetically was that of hope. In January 1950, writing to his children in various countries, he told them that if they intensified their struggle, as a reward for their efforts, "this Holy Year will be very fruitful." He asked them to put more effort into their struggle for holiness and their zeal to sow Christian seed along the divine

paths of the earth. "Every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit" (Mt 7: 17-18). No one gives what he does not have. A Christian is fruitful only if he is really fighting to attain holiness.

Indulgences are intimately related to the doctrine of the Mystical Body: the good of one healthy member in the Church redounds to the spiritual benefit of all the others. As Blessed Josemaría wrote in December 1931: "When a child's soul presents its desire to be forgiven by our Lord, he can be sure that he will see that desire soon fulfilled. Jesus will tear from that soul its unclean tail, which drags it down because of past miseries. He will take away the dead weight, the remains of all the impurities, which cause the soul to be stuck to the ground. He will throw far from the child all the earthly baggage of its heart, so that it can rise up to the majesty of God, to fuse with the living flame of Love, which He is." A few days later he prayed: "I ask Jesus to forgive me... for everything. May all the holy souls in purgatory, purified in less than a second, ascend to enjoy our God."

The founder of Opus Dei insisted time and again during the Holy Year that God, in that time of grace, was ready to pour out his mercy on every Christian, but that our response is needed. Thus, at the end of November 1974, with the Jubilee of the year 1975 approaching, he said at a family gathering in Rome: "The Holy Year is coming. It won't be holy if we don't pray a lot, more each day."

A few days later, he sent a letter to all his daughters and sons urging them to respond generously to the divine call of the

Jubilee: "In the Holy Year we are beginning, which demands more prayer and personal holiness from us, my desire is that our Lord will fill you with his grace, and that his most holy Mother Mary, our Mother, and St. Joseph our father and lord, may accompany you at every moment with their all-powerful intercession."

Beginning and beginning again

In 1975 Blessed Josemaría celebrated his jubilee as a priest. Fifty years had passed since his ordination on March 28, 1925, in Saragossa.

On March 27, the eve of that anniversary, he made his prayer out loud before a group of his sons. He said to us: "After fifty years, I am like a babbling child. I am beginning and beginning again every day. And till the end of the days that remain to me, I will always be beginning again. Our Lord wants it that way, so that none of us will have any motives for pride, nor for foolish vanity. We have to be attentive to Him, to his words, listening intently, eager to follow God's inspirations. Lord, thank you for everything. Thank you! I want to constantly give you thanks. Before repeating this liturgical cry—*gratias tibi, Deus, gratias tibi!*—I have been saying it to you in my heart."

Our Lord always received his prayers during these Jubilee years and made them very fruitful. In 1925, Blessed Josemaría was ordained a priest. In 1933 his apostolic work expanded considerably. On June 16, 1950, the Holy See granted Opus Dei its approval. And in 1975 God received his soul, forever, into the glory of Heaven.

✠ Javier Echevarría
Prelate of Opus Dei



Rome, April 1, 1933. Pope Pius XI, in the *sedia gestatoria*, in St. Peter's Basilica.



Rome, December 24, 1949. Pope Pius XII, after opening the Holy Door, kneels on the threshold before entering the Basilica of St. Peter.



Rome, December 26, 1974. Pope Paul VI in front of the Holy Door in the atrium of the Basilica.

A Matter of Faith

Devotion to Blessed Josemaría

Usually we watch a documentary video rather than read the dialogue. However, Alberto Michelini's latest video is perhaps an exception. It loses none of its extraordinary freshness on paper. In fact, reading the text enables one to grasp better the video's simple but profound accounts of personal meetings between Monsignor Escrivá and people from around the world who have learned and "obtained" a great deal from him and through his intercession. What is common to their testimonies and situations is a deep appreciation for Blessed Josemaría's teachings.

The program was broadcast for the first time on Italian television on June 27, 1999.* The following are some of the testimonies.

A physicist from Moscow

It is ironic that where atheistic materialism tried to eradicate God from men's hearts, "Christian materialism," as it was called by Monsignor Escrivá, has come to be understood in all its radicalness. Yuri Antonovich Simonov is a professor of theoretical physics and Director of the Nuclear Physics Laboratory of the ITEP Institute of Moscow. He was baptized in 1989, after having discovered the message of Monsignor Escrivá.

*A videotape of "A Matter of Faith" can be purchased from Scepter Publishers (800) 322-8773 or www.scepterpub.org.

"An important aspect of Josemaría Escrivá's teachings is the call to humility and to harmony. As opposed to some tendencies in Christianity, Josemaría Escrivá, who suffered personally in the Spanish Civil War and saw many people die, makes an appeal for peace. He tells us: 'We have to bring people together, we have to be understanding, we have to forgive. Never raise a cross just as a reminder that some people have killed others. It would be the banner of the devil.'

"We must all work for peace. This desire to unite people beneath the shelter of the Cross seems very important to me especially today, in our country. I have often thanked God that our country was spared the devastation that took place in Yugoslavia. Perhaps it was the consequence of a Christian attitude on the part of people who have suffered greatly; it might have been the fruit of the prayer of saints, of the prayer of Blessed Josemaría for us, and naturally of the prayer of the Mother of God. We have been spared terrible things."

Yuri Antonovich Simonov

A Russian poet

In Moscow, until the end of the 1980's the only religious literature available, at great risk to those possessing it, were carbon copies of type-written manuscripts (the first copy

being the most expensive). The Way was among these "samizdat" writings. Alexander Ivanovich Zorin, a Russian Orthodox poet, and a member of the Union of Writers since 1979, found in *The Way* (a book of which he obtained only a fourth copy) a valuable font of poetic

inspiration in those difficult years.

"Escrivá tells us that our life can be holy. To seek holiness might to some seem a lack of humility. But our Lord tells us that we are all called to be saints. And Escrivá confirms this with his experience. For me it was important to hear Escrivá say that one can encounter God in his professional work.

"In my country many people think that your job is a yoke, a chain from which you cannot break free. But Escrivá tells us that one's profession can be a sort of revelation of God to each one of us. This confirmed what I had felt for some time, but Escrivá formulated it more precisely. Later I noticed that I find God right here while I am seated at my desk. The poet prays with his poetry, he prays in verse.

"What I am going to say might seem like a blasphemy, but I am sure that priests will understand me, that my spiritual director will understand me: God is no less present at my work table, in my profession, than he is in church, although I go to visit him frequently in church also. I

have learned this from Escrivá."

Alexander Ivanovich Zorin

A young woman from Paris

Hundreds of thousands of young people filled the Champs-de-Mars on the morning of August 21, 1997. It was the Twelfth World Youth Day. A young French woman, Aude Mircovic, was chosen to greet Pope John Paul II, along with 69 others. She had a unique opportunity to express the love for the Pope she learned from Josemaría Escrivá in a very tangible way. As he spoke, she supported his hand for a time to stop its trembling.

"Blessed Josemaría's life is an example of a life dedicated fully to the service of the Church, from beginning to end. I think he once told his

children—I don't remember the exact words—'You can say one thing about the founder of Opus Dei: that he had a great love for the Pope.' I know

he taught all of us—and he practiced this himself—to pray for the Pope every day, trying to offer something up for him. All the members of Opus Dei do this throughout the whole world; we learned it from Blessed Josemaría.

Aude Mircovic

A pianist from Brazil

João Carlos Martin is a Brazilian pianist of international renown, who declared in a newspaper interview



Blessed Josemaría's Feast day, June 26, in Cañete, Peru

DOCUMENTARY

that he has great devotion to Blessed Josemaría Escrivá. He said that he owes the full recovery of his artistic ability to the Founder of Opus Dei. The pianist suffered a grave injury in 1995 when he was in Sophia, the capital of Bulgaria. He was able to play again, after lengthy rehabilitation, but still lacked needed strength, and he was scheduled to

give a concert at New York's Carnegie Hall. He prayed intensely to Blessed Josemaría. Two weeks before the concert, he asked God for a sign.

"I have a small dog in my house in Miami, a Maltese, that never paid the slightest attention to my piano practice. He never even came near the piano while I was practicing. But that day, as I was trying to find a position that would enable my hand to stand up to the stress of playing the piano (I would have to go to the hospital later to see if I had succeeded), the dog climbed up on the piano bench, which was quite long, and licked my hand. He never did it before, nor did he ever do it again.

"I saw this as truly a sign. Two weeks later, I gave the most important concert of my life at Carnegie Hall in New York. I still cannot do many things. I can't write and I can't eat with my right hand. But I can play the piano at a rate of up to twenty notes per second. I see this, although it is putting it rather

strongly, as a miracle in my life."

João Carlos Martin

A family from Germany

Petra and Rolf Herold, a couple with four children, live in Forchheim, near Nuremberg. They have degrees in physics and mathematics. Rolf was a Lutheran before he heard of the message of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá. They first read about it in a booklet they found in the back of a church.

"At that time I was still quite far from the Church. But when I read Berglar's biography of Blessed Josemaría, I grasped the founder of Opus Dei's great enthusiasm for the Church. He was very much in love with the Church, and he transmitted that love to me. I was able to say with my whole heart: yes to the Church, yes to the Pope.

"Thanks to him, I've learned how to sanctify my daily work, transforming it into prayer. The kind of work doesn't matter. It doesn't matter whether it's important or not, or even whether the outcome is successful. What matters is the love and effort I put into it."

Petra Herold

"I've been told that once the founder was showing a visitor the central offices in Rome. That person asked him which of the chapels there he liked best. In reply he opened a window that looks on Viale Bruno Buozzi, a very busy street, and said: "This is the chapel that I like the best, the street." I often think of that story when I am distracted in my prayer, or

when I am walking along the street, or waiting between one thing and another, and I try to think about God. We can do that in the street, any place, even when little annoyances arise and one accepts them—this is the example that Blessed Josemaría has given me. I see that these situations don't separate me from God but rather lead me to him."

Rolf Herold

A Chinese painter

Many cooperators of Opus Dei, especially in the Far East, are not Catholics, nor even Christians. But they appreciate the atmosphere of friendship and cheerfulness that they find in the centers of the Work. This is the case of Gary Chu, a painter. His father was a street sweeper with a large family. His family was poor, and Gary Chu was not able to study art. But at school, while his companions studied the Chinese characters, he practiced sketching on his own. Since then he has painted portraits of the Founder of Opus Dei and has met the present Prelate, Bishop Javier Echevarría.



"I am putting the final touches to this painting of our Lady with the Child Jesus and an angel playing with a comet. It is in the style of the Tang period."

"I am not yet a Catholic, but I think that some day I will be baptized. I love Jesus, the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, and I enjoy painting them. I have painted them more than a hundred times and the pictures are now in different parts of the world. When I am painting them, I speak to them, I pray to them."

"This is one of the first paintings that I did of Blessed Josemaría. Since they told me that here he is worshipping God in the Blessed Sacrament, I thought that I had to paint him attentive, happy and full of love."

Gary Chu

An American cardinal

The Archbishop of Washington has a special appreciation of divine filiation, one of the key aspects of the message of Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá. Cardinal James Hickey is very devoted to Blessed Josemaría from whom he says he obtained two important favors. During the Second Vatican Council, he was deeply impressed by the debate on the fifth chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, about the universal call to sanctity. But, he says, it was only later, as the Archbishop of Washington, that he understood what that call to holiness meant, as he noted the various ways in which those devoted to Blessed Josemaría put it into practice.

"That increased my appreciation of Blessed Josemaría, deepened my interest in him and everything



related to him. And so, because of his great reputation for holiness and the fact that he was being considered at the time for beatification, I gave him a few little chores to do. He helped me out in a couple of important decisions. There were things that I thought would never hap-

pen, and they did. It was not the kind of miracle that would be useful for his canonization, but rather a favor—two favors—that make me turn to him whenever the going gets rough and say, 'Hey, I've got something else for you to do!'

"I never had the opportunity to meet him when I was in Rome. That bothers me. I feel that I've come to know him very, very well through his children. This is second-hand knowledge. Let's hope that in heaven it will be first-hand knowledge."

Cardinal James Hickey

A Spanish mother

Maria Victoria Troncoso is a former university professor with two handicapped daughters. She now works with the Down Syndrome Foundation of Cantabria, Spain. Her personal experience moved her to give up teaching to take the training needed to work with Down Syndrome patients and their families. She is convinced that, as Blessed Josemaría taught, for those who love God, everything is for the best.

"My devotion to Blessed Josemaría expresses itself, above all, in gratitude for all I have received, and in petition that he continue to help me. His words and teachings frequently come to mind and help me find a solution when faced with problems. And now, whenever a difficult situation arises, I ask him to help me deal with it in the best way possible, from the supernatural as well as from the human and technical point of view. And I can assure you that I receive his help very often."

Maria Victoria Troncoso



Mt. Blessed Josemaría in Bolivia

A mountain peak of the Andes in Bolivia has been given the name of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá. Similarly, in many parts of Europe and the Americas, there are hospitals, streets, schools and other institutions that bear the name of Opus Dei's founder.

Since his beatification, devotion to Blessed Josemaría, which was already widespread in many countries, has spread even more widely around the world.

An In-depth Personal Biography

The Launching of the Book
The Founder of Opus Dei in Italy

"There were not many outstanding people in the fields of science and culture at the beginning of the twentieth century, and with the exception of Pope John Paul II there were fewer still at the end of the century." So said Leonardo Mondadori, as he explained why he decided to publish the Italian edition of the life of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá. "That is why a publishing company like ours, which does not ordinarily publish religious books, decided to publish a collection of books that will help people reflect on deeper, more lasting topics." The biography was written by Andrés Vázquez de Prada and published in Spanish in 1997. Agostino Donà translated it into Italian and it is now on sale in Italy.

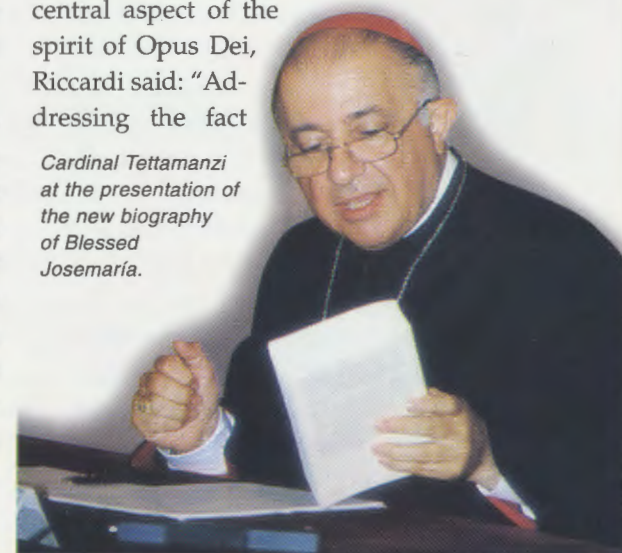
It was launched in Milan, Rome, Palermo, Turin, Láquila and Cortina d'Ampezzo during 1999 in conferences in which academics and specialists in various fields commented on the book and pointed out some of its special characteristics.

At the launching in Rome, Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, Archbishop of Genoa, spoke of the timeliness of this book in the context of the beginning of the third millennium. It fits in perfectly with the message of the Jubilee Year, which is, he said, "to awaken in people a true yearning for holiness. I think that reading a book that tells the story of a saint is a wonderful way to introduce us to his path in life, which was shaped by his interior life.

"The great challenge of the present-day world, particularly as regards our own continent, which the recent Synod of Bishops on Europe defined as deeply de-Christianized and paganized, is precisely the challenge of holiness."

Andrea Riccardi, professor of Christian history at the Terza University of Rome and founder of the Community of St. Egidio, also spoke at the book-launching in Rome. This is the first book that brings us close up to Blessed Josemaría, he said, noting the author's detailed historical research and his richness of documentary sources. "Those precious personal notes and other direct testimonies throw light on that second of October, 1928: 'Madrid was my Damascus, because here the scales fell from the eyes of my soul,'" commented Professor Riccardi, as he quoted Escrivá. And summing up a central aspect of the spirit of Opus Dei, Riccardi said: "Addressing the fact

Cardinal Tettamanzi
at the presentation of
the new biography
of Blessed
Josemaría.



that people in today's world tend to marginalize God, Blessed Josemaría responded by proposing that we learn to find God in the heart of ordinary life: "The extraordinary thing for us is the ordinary: the ordinary done with perfection."

Commenting on the style of the book, Professor Riccardi noted, "The author is conscious of the fact that he is presenting something that is not his own. Hence, we find modesty and simplicity in the style, and no rhetorical or sentimental embellishment. With this in mind the Catalinas ("Catherines") [as the author called his personal notes—referring to St. Catherine of Siena] are a mine of precious material".

At the launching of the book in Palermo, Marta Brancatisano, a writer, also focused on the style of the biography. "From an early age Josemaría Escrivá wrote a lot, though not with any professional ambition. His first

writings are the 'Catherines.' These are a series of short thoughts expressing an interior experience. There is no stylistic pretension or vanity. The style is that of a diary. The ideas flow spontaneously and simply. They are the ideas of a person who is searching for the thread which will lead

him to the truth about himself, about the purpose of his life. The genuineness of the search impacts powerfully on the reader. The 'Catherines' are not maxims or precepts that seek to dazzle anyone. They are rather the traces of the steps taken by the author—with his head lowered, like a



Joaquín Navarro-Valls,
director of the Holy See's press office.

donkey—in search of the truth. These are modest and deeply sincere sketches of the life of a soul with only one passion: love for holiness."

During the launching of the book at the Ambrosian Library in Milan, Professor Giorgio Rumi, lecturer in Contemporary History at the University of Milan, pointed out that Blessed Josemaría's view of work presents us with a "kind of Copernican revolution." "He saw that work, even the most modest task, has great dignity. Therefore, there is no need to rescue it from a servile condition. What one does is not servile; it can become servile or ennobling, depending on how it is done. This is an extraordinarily important change."

Msgr. Gianfranco Ravasi, Prefect of the Ambrosian Library, also focused on the subject of work in the life and teaching of Blessed Josemaría. In this book, he said, "We see how Escrivá emphasizes the possibility of turning even our daily work, our professional work, into Opus Dei (the work of God), doing it with the awareness that it forms part of the great project of creation."

Rev. Ennio Apeciti, the director of Milan's Diocesan Office for the Causes of the Saints, said "This book is the result of careful historical research that portrays well the social, political,

cultural, and even ecclesiastical and spiritual context of Josemaría Escrivá's life. It does this using abundant autobiographical material, and it can, therefore, be considered a new kind of hagiography, or 'writings of the saints,' or 'holy writing.' The book describes the first part of the life of a saint, and it presents abundant material to encourage any reader of good will to undertake the path to holiness. We can imitate the life of the saint, in the Augustinian sense of 'if these and others can do it, why can't I?' That is why we have offices for the causes of beatification and canonization. It is not a matter of giving someone a heavenly honor or title, but rather of offering living examples to the people of God, different ways of living out the Gospel, among the many possible ways."

Speakers at the launching ceremony at the University of L'Aquila drew attention to aspects of Blessed Josemaría's personality. Umberto Farri, President of the Institute for University Cooperation, alluding to the years he spent with the founder of Opus Dei, said:

"His ever-present smile was a genuine reflection of his serenity of soul, which in turn, reflected his trusting abandonment in the hands of God. That serenity of soul also helped him win the people he met, wherever they came from and whatever their social circumstances."

Joaquín Navarro-Valls, Director of the Vatican Press Office, said: "Blessed Josemaría was a true precursor of the Second Vatican Council. He said that lay holiness is a duty for all baptized Christians." Finally, the journalist Mario Narducci, noted that the life of Blessed Josemaría "leads one to see holiness as the most fascinating of adventures." Carmen Sofia Brenes



Note: The English translation of *The Founder of Opus Dei* will be available in November, 2000. For more information, or to order a copy, contact Scepter Publishers, 800-322-8773, or your local bookstore.

Vázquez de Prada, Andrés, *Il Fondatore dell'Opus Dei. La biografia del Beato Josemaría Escrivá*, Leonardo International, Milan 1999, pp. 687.



This book is the first of the three volumes which make up the complete biography. It covers the period extending from the birth of Blessed Josemaría in 1902 to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. The other two volumes, which are still being worked on, will cover the periods 1936–1945 and 1946–1975 respectively. A feature of the published book is its historic precision and its careful adherence to biographical sources, based on documents, testimonies, letters and other material from the archives of the Opus Dei Prelature. Of special interest is the fact that it contains previously unpublished selections from the personal notes of Josemaría Escrivá. These are found in handwritten notebooks. On the one hand they tell us about

the growth of the interior life of Blessed Josemaría from 1930 onwards, and on the other, they inform us about the circumstances surrounding the birth and early development of the Work that he founded, by divine inspiration, on October 2, 1928.

The author: Andrés Vázquez de Prada worked for many years as a historian in London and has published books on such important figures in the history of Christianity as Cardinal Newman (*The Dream of an Old Man*, 1954) and St. Thomas More (*Sir Thomas More*, 1962). He met the founder of Opus Dei for the first time in 1942, and met him many times subsequently. Blessed Josemaría was in England for the summer months of 1958 to 1962 and Vázquez de Prada spent considerable time with him during those months.

The writer Marta
Brancatisano.

The Conversion of the Children of God

Some words of Blessed Josemaría that can help us live the Jubilee Year Better

situations—the light and the stimulus of our first conversion. And that is why we must prepare with a deep examination of conscience, asking our Lord for his help, so that we'll know him and ourselves better. If we want to be converted again, there's no other way.

"Here is the time of pardon; the day of salvation has come already." Once again we hear the voice of the good shepherd calling us tenderly: "I have called you by your name." He calls each of us by our name, the familiar name used by those who love us.

Our Lord, who is asking us to change, is not a tyrannical master or a rigid and implacable judge: he is our Father. He speaks to us about our lack of generosity, our sins, our mistakes; but he does so in order to free us from them, to promise us his friendship and his love. Awareness that God is our Father brings joy to our conversion: it tells us that we are returning to our Father's house. Human life is in some way a constant returning to our Father's house. We return through contrition, through the conversion of

The books of Blessed Josemaría have been translated into more than 40 languages. At right, the covers of some of his works in various languages

which means a desire to change, a firm decision to improve our life and which, therefore, is expressed in sacrifice and self-giving. We return to our Father's house by means of that sacrament of pardon in which, by confessing our sins, we put on Jesus Christ again and become his brothers, members of God's family.

God is waiting for us, like the father in the parable, with open arms, even though we don't deserve it. It doesn't matter how great our debt is. Just like the prodigal son, all we have to do is open our heart, to be homesick for our Father's house, to wonder at and rejoice in the gift which God makes us of being able to call ourselves his children, of really being his children.

I want each of us to consider what God is asking of him, what resolution, what decisions grace wants to encourage in him. And as you note these supernatural and human demands of self-giving and continuing struggle, remember that Jesus Christ is our model. And that Jesus, being God, allowed himself to be tempted, so that we might be in better spirits and feel certain of victory. For God does not lose battles,

and if we are united to him, we will never be overcome. On the contrary, we can call ourselves victors and indeed be victors: good children of God.

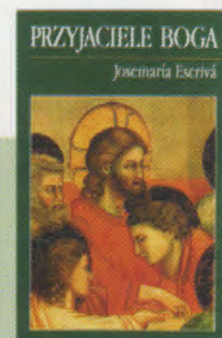
Let us be happy. I am happy. I shouldn't be, looking at my life, making that personal examination of conscience. But I do feel happy, for I see that the Lord is seeking me again, that the Lord is still my Father. I know that you and I will surely see, with the light and the help of grace, what things must be burned and we will burn them; what things must be uprooted and we will uproot them; what things have to be given up and we will give them up.

Mary, our Mother, "help of Christians, refuge of sinners": intercede with your Son to send us the Holy Spirit, to awaken in our hearts the decision to go ahead confidently, making us hear deep in our soul the call which filled with peace the martyrdom of one of the first Christians: "Come, return to your Father," he is waiting for you.

Text of a homily given on March 2, 1952, published in the book Christ Is Passing By (Scepter Publishers, New York, 1974).



FURROW
in Hungarian



FRIENDS OF GOD
in Polish



THE WAY
in Slovakian



HOLY ROSARY
in Chinese

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

Conversion is the task of a moment; sanctification is the work of a lifetime. The divine seed of charity, which God has sown in our souls, wants to grow, to express itself in action, to yield results which continually coincide with what God wants. Therefore, we must be ready to begin again, to find again—in new

"Tradition and Development are not Contradictory"

Nelly Tshela explains the Social Action Program at Kimbondo

Life in the interior of the Congo is difficult. So it is not strange that most of those living in Kimbondo, as in many other outlying districts of Kinshasa, are people from rural areas who have migrated to the capital in search of jobs or means to educate their children. Unfortunately the situation they encounter in the city is not as bright as they had imagined. The past decade has been especially unstable and unemployment has increased enormously, creating a situation of misery which the war has only made worse.

This is the environment in which, in November of 1995, the *Programme d'Action Sociale* came into being, an activity of social and human development in which people of various nationalities and professions in Kinshasa are taking part. The project, which began small, was focused from the beginning on efforts to improve the standard of living of the local population by providing them with a basic professional training, along with other help to improve their

human, cultural and religious formation. The stimulus for the undertaking came from the teachings of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá on the sanctification of temporal structures through ordinary work. "A man or a society that does not react to suffering and injustice and makes no effort to alleviate them," he said for example, "is still distant from the love of Christ's heart." (*Christ Is Passing By*, no. 167).

But let us allow Nelly Tshela, a young Congolese woman with a law degree who is now the director of the project, to explain in greater detail just how and why this initiative got underway.



Nelly Tshela, a Congolese lawyer, director of a program of social development inspired by the teachings of Blessed Josemaría.

There is a great contrast between the business center of Kinshasa and the outlying neighborhoods such as Kimbondo.

How did this program of social development originate?

We were especially moved by the situation of women here and saw an urgent need to help them. They live in extreme poverty and subject to ancestral customs

which put them in a position of inferiority. We also felt we had to do something to improve living conditions for the 12,000 people in the district. We had very little in the way of means but we did have some common sense and Christian spirit. The foundation of our program, aside from professional training, was the desire to transmit an optimistic and open view of life, based on the recognition that all of us, each with our own characteristics, is loved by God, and that God relies on the help that we are able to give each other.

What kind of reaction did you encounter?

The response on the part of the people has been very positive, although this was not immediately apparent. One has to take into account that three-fourths of the women in this area have received, at best, a very rudimentary education. Many of them cannot read and write. First they had to see the need and importance of learning and of investing time and effort into improving themselves. Accustomed to a life completely focused on farm work and the survival of their family, at the beginning it was hard for them to appreciate the training we were offering them. But once a first group began to see positive results, the way was opened up. As they acquired new knowledge that was truly helpful to them, they began to appreciate the idea of an improved quality of life.

The Prelature of Opus Dei is present in 8 countries of the African continent. Apostolic work began in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1980.



ENCOUNTERS

How will you reach all the women if there are 6000 in the community?

The objective is not to reach everyone but to continually reach more and more. During my first years in the university, I began to become familiar with the writings of the founder of Opus Dei, Blessed Josemaría Escrivá; and particularly his teachings about women and their role in society. This is our point

interested in taking part in the program. We tried to get a wide range of Congolese women involved, regardless of age or social group. We wanted them to realize that this type of activity, in addition to helping those living in poverty, is also personally enriching.

And your method?

Common sense; awakening it in everyone. Dialogue: by learning to converse one learns to work, horizons open up. Specifically we offered courses in tailoring and in handicrafts. We also provided help in improving agricultural methods. In addition, for those who wanted it, we included classes on Catholic doctrine and moral questions. The pastoral attention of priests of the Opus Dei Prelature was also made available.

Development is possible in Kimbondo, but women have to make a commitment to it. This has been our effort since the beginning. Development is not a matter of studying. It is a matter of giving oneself. At least that's how we see it.

Do you work with the young people?

Here the median age of the population is very low. Up till now our most important project for young girls has been a school of tailoring and dressmaking called the *Lycée Professionnel Kimbondo* that we started in September 1997.



The course in tailoring is one of the principal activities of the *Lycée Professionnel Kimbondo*.

The neighborhood women often don't see any need to learn new things. But when they do acquire useful knowledge, they quickly become interested in improving their quality of life.

The school was officially inaugurated in February 1998 by the National Minister of Education, with other dignitaries taking part. The school's purpose is to provide the girls with a profession that will help them improve their lives. While taking courses in tailoring, they are also preparing to be rural mentors or advisors, and in this way they can help in reaching more people, first of all by improving their own environment.

The school began its first year with only a few students, but in this third year of operation they have been able to accept several dozen girls. Many of the students are daughters of the women who take part in other activities of the Social Action Program.

Are there any other specific initiatives?

In 1999 we were able to include a new program, also along the lines of awakening desires to improve and to develop: a good group of rural advisors is being built up. The Congo's Minister of Social Affairs, who is a woman, took part in its inauguration on July 13. In the new program we discuss, in pleasant surroundings, ways to transmit a positive spirit to the people of the different communities in the area. We consider ways to teach these women to work, to work a lot and very well, with a Christian outlook. This sporting spirit is something that we also owe to Blessed Josemaría.

I don't know how to measure the effectiveness of this social work. But today more than 100 women are steadily engaged in the search for solutions. And this search is in itself a sign that things are beginning to improve. Isn't that true?

Omoy Mundala
Photos: M. Flavien Nzazi

Address: Parcelle 12945,
localité Kimbondo, quartier Telecom,
c/Mont-Ngafula, Kinshasa,
République Démocratique du Congo.
E-mail: virunga@raga.net



Blessed Josemaría said that a man or a society that does not react to suffering and injustice and makes no effort to alleviate them is still distant from the love of Christ's heart.

of reference in the work that we are doing. We have to learn to dream and to be daring. "More" was an adverb frequently used by Blessed Josemaría. From the beginning we saw the need of finding women in the area who, because of their human qualities, could act as "mentors." We started this activity with a small group of women, some with advanced studies in different fields. From the beginning we accepted the cooperation of university students and of anyone

A Return to the Faith

In 1986, a friend of mine began to attend services of a religious sect; one day she invited me to take part.

I began to go with her on a more and more regular basis. One day I met an old friend from grammar school. She advised me not to stay with the sect because it was incompatible with my Catholic faith. Instead she suggested that I take part in the activities of a club she went to. I began to study the Catholic religion and realized my mistake. But my other friend continued to take part and even began to take on some assignments in the sect.

Since then I prayed for her conversion through the intercession of Blessed Josemaría. A few years later, upon returning from a stay in Rome, I met her, and to my great surprise she told me that she had left the sect to return to the Catholic faith. In addition, she offered to help me convince my mother to take catechism classes. I attribute the return of this friend of mine to the Catholic faith to the intercession of Blessed Josemaría.

K.V., Abidjan, Ivory Coast

Alabaster statue of Blessed Josemaría, at the shrine of Torreciudad in Spain.



From among the many letters received we are publishing items from Oceania, Africa, Europe and the Americas.

A job in my home city

For the last few months I have been asking Blessed Josemaría Escrivá to help me find a new job. Although I enjoy my profession, with its duties and responsibilities, the environment at work was making me feel quite uncomfortable.

This was the first time that I sought his intercession, and I was surprised by the rapid reply. I received a call from a member of parliament to work for him in my home city. The offer was like a gift from heaven.

When I accepted the job, I asked Blessed Josemaría to help find another job for the person that I was replacing, and on the very next day he received a good offer from a government agency.

I give thanks to our Lady and to Blessed Josemaría for having interceded for my needs, helping me to find a good job and to be reunited with my family and friends.

S.R., Hobart, Tasmania

They didn't separate

In the spring of 1997 my daughter and her husband came to my house and told me that they had decided to get a divorce. I felt desperate, especially when I thought of the effect this would have on my two granddaughters.

At this point I met a lady who gave me a prayer card of Blessed Josemaría. I asked him to intercede so that these two persons whom God had united in marriage would not break up. A few weeks later, one of my granddaughters, who is twelve, called me and told me that her parents had planted an olive tree in the garden. They didn't separate, and since that day things have gotten better and better and I feel a great peace.

Since I realize that this is a grace received through the intervention of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, I consider it my duty to put it on record.

C.G., Coli, Italy

Calmer and wanting to draw closer

I met a distant relative, after a long time, at the funeral of her brother. She was greatly upset, and told me that she could not understand what caused her brother, who had been separated from the faith and the sacraments for many years, to go to confession and receive communion before he died.

I knew that she too had been away from the sacraments for more than thirty years. I began to pray to Blessed Josemaría every day that she would go to confession. About three weeks later we met again. She was much calmer and told me that she wanted to come back to the faith and to pray. She had gone to a priest of her parish to obtain his help. I gave her a prayer card of Blessed Josemaría and told her that since our last meeting I had prayed for her every day.

I continue giving thanks and pray to Blessed Josemaría for her. I am sure that her conversion is due to his intercession.

M.N., Milan, Italy

He made his confession before dying

I was very concerned about a neighbor who had been gravely ill for more than a year and didn't want to seek reconciliation with God. He had heart and kidney operations, and the incisions refused to heal because he suffered from diabetes. I said to a friend of mine: "Let's ask Blessed Josemaría Escrivá to see to it that he doesn't die without being reconciled with God." His situation became worse. When asked about confession, he wouldn't give in. We continued our novena. During this period his mother visited him and told him that he should go to confession because of the seriousness of his illness. He then lapsed into



Blessed Josemaría was the subject of a series of stamps issued in Venezuela in 1992.

a coma and we intensified our prayer. On the last day he became conscious, asked for a priest, made his confession, and died shortly afterwards. Father Josemaría had heard us.

E.L.R., Zapopan, Mexico

Diana recovered

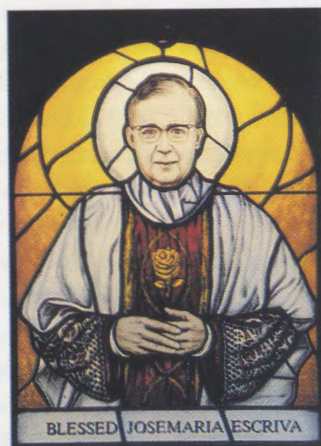
Since her birth, our daughter Diana suffered from a congenital heart problem. At the age of five she needed an urgent operation, but the cost was beyond our reach, so we asked for assistance from a foundation that provides help in these matters (the AFAC Foundation). There they put us in contact with some American specialists in open heart surgery, while also speaking to us about devotion to Blessed Josemaría Escrivá. I began to pray the prayer card so that the surgery would be successful. I asked for another prayer card for my husband, and from then on we both began to pray to Blessed Josemaría. On July 20th the operation took place. We said the prayer very intensely while my daughter was in surgery; six days later

she came home in very good condition. The doctors and nurses said they were surprised at her full and quick recuperation. Today we went to the AFAC Foundation for a routine check-up and the cardiologist found that Diana had no symptoms of her former condition. We have also decided to regularize our marriage situation and have fixed a date for a church marriage next month, on the feast of our Lady of Sorrows. We would like to thank God who, through the intercession of Msgr. Escrivá, has granted us the cure of our child and the regularization of our marriage.

V.L. and I.M., Quito, Ecuador

It happened on June 26

Our son told us he had decided to contract a civil marriage with his non-Catholic fiancée. Our concern and anguish led us to seek out the help and advice of a priest, who confirmed the gravity of the situation. From that moment we prayed the prayer for the intercession of Blessed Josemaría, and on the anniversary of his entrance into heaven, we commended ourselves to him with great faith during Mass.



Window in a church in Hereford, Cardiff, Wales.

That same evening, as we returned home, our son told us that he had just spoken with his fiancée and they had decided to be married in the Church. After fulfilling all the civil and religious requirements, they received the holy Sacrament of Matrimony.

We are grateful and give thanks to God, through the intercession of Blessed Josemaría, for having heard our request and for the blessings we have received.

D.V., Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico

A Cure More than Skin Deep

The husband of a friend of mine was suffering from psoriasis, a skin disease. Despite the treatment of various doctors, his illness persisted. There was no known cure, but my friend and I began to say the prayer to Blessed Josemaría every day asking him to help bring about an improvement in her husband's condition. A few weeks later, her husband went to another doctor who told him to stop eating certain foods. The results were surprising. He was soon cured.

Now that I think about it, I realize that other cures have taken place since I sent the prayer card to my friend. Her husband has begun attending Sunday Mass again. She and her husband are trying to regularize their marital situation. Her oldest son, who prays the rosary with her every day, wants to become a priest. And

finally her husband has helped his brother and his wife to return to the Church.

X.X., Greenwich, Connecticut

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

We also wish to express our appreciation to all those who send contributions to help defray printing and distribution costs of the *Bulletin*, which is free of charge. These contributions also help further those apostolates that stem from Blessed Josemaría's love for souls.

IN THE MEDIA

Giovanni Trapattoni, one of Europe's best known soccer coaches, in: *Il Giornale della Toscana*, January 19, 1999

"Josemaría Escrivá has taught many athletes that their efforts in training and in competition, their companionship with teammates, their esteem for their opponents, their humility in victory and good spirit in defeat, are a concrete path for reaching God and for serving all of mankind."

BLESSED JOSEMARIA AND SPORTS

"Tackling serious matters with a sporting spirit gives very good results. Perhaps I have lost several games? Very well, but—if I persevere—in the end I shall win."
(Furrow, 169)

"The ascetical struggle is not something negative and therefore hateful, but rather a joyful affirmation. It is a sport.

"A good sportsman doesn't fight to gain just one victory, and that at the first attempt. He has to build himself up for it, training over a long time, calmly and confidently. He keeps trying again and again, and if he doesn't succeed at the first attempt, he keeps on trying with determination until the obstacle is overcome."
(The Forge, 169)

