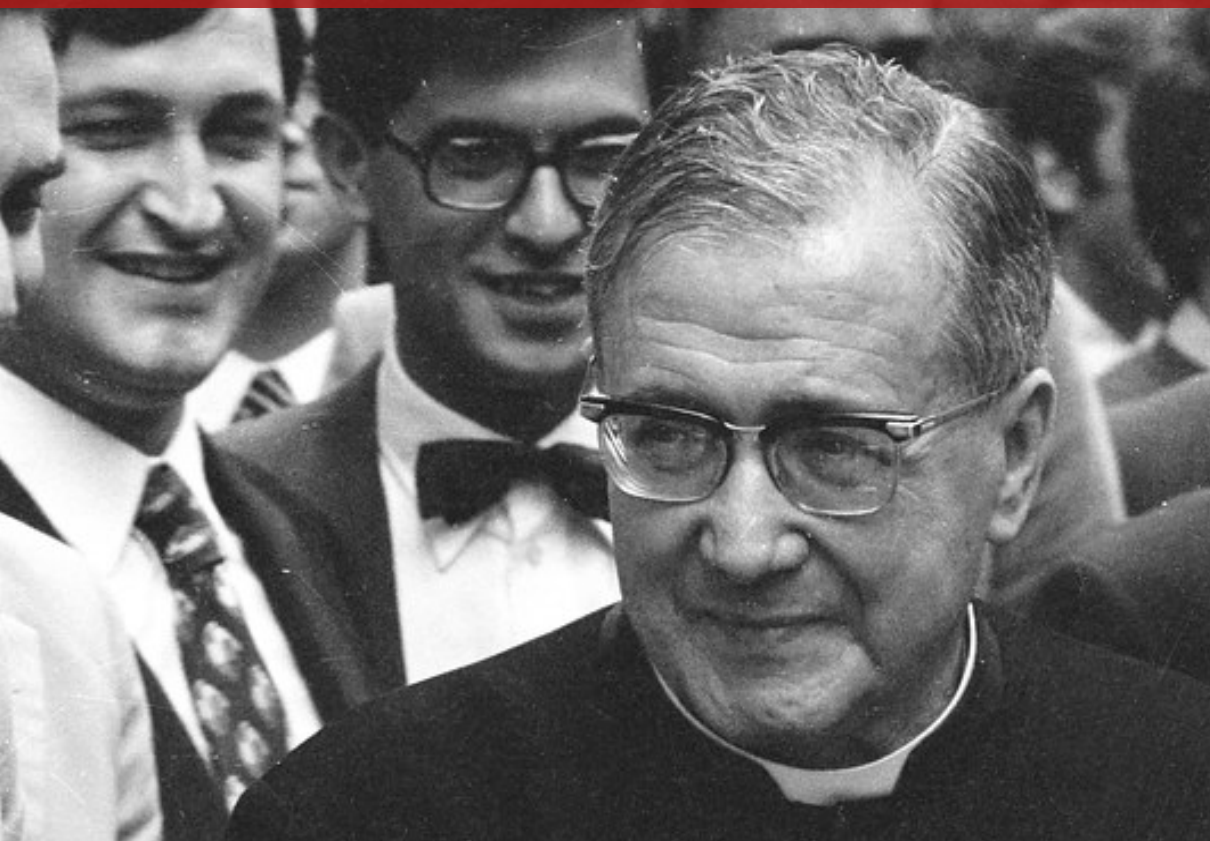


ST JOSEMARÍA, *Today*



A HEART THAT ONLY KNEW HOW TO LOVE

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Newsletter

Prelature of Opus Dei in Britain | No. 25 | 2021

01 | CHARITY IN ST JOSEMARIA

"We Christians are in love with Love: Our Lord does not want us to be dry and rigid, like inert matter. He wants us to be saturated with his love!"¹ St Josemaría would often freely render St John's words "God is Love" as "God is affection", to emphasise the human dimension of Christian charity.

Holy Scripture often uses the word heart to refer to the whole person – affections, thoughts, desires, hopes and decisions. "The heart is the centre of a person, from which all their thoughts and actions spring. It is the place of feelings and, still more, of love, as St Josemaría explained clearly: 'When we speak of a person's heart, we refer not just to his sentiments, but to the whole person who cares, loves and relates to others. In order to help us understand divine things, the Holy Scriptures use our human way of saying things and speak of the heart as the summary and source, the expression and ultimate foundation of man's thoughts, words and actions. Hence, in our language we can say that a man is worth what his heart is worth. (...) When Holy Scripture speaks of the heart, it does not mean some fleeting sentiment, bringing joy or tears. It speaks of the heart to refer to the person,

which, as Jesus himself indicated, directs its whole being, soul and body, to what it considers its good: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Mt 6:21)'. "²

St Josemaría "exemplified in his own life what having a heart means. Endowed with friendliness, cheerfulness, deep intuition and strong passions, he not only loved people but showed his affection in deeds and generous attentiveness to others. (...) And he attributed his capacity for loving others to a fundamental cause: his love for God (...). He said: 'To love is to have a big heart, to feel the concerns of those around us, to know how to forgive and understand: to sacrifice ourselves, with Jesus Christ, for all souls. If we love with Christ's heart, we shall learn to serve, and we shall defend the truth clearly and lovingly.'"³

¹ St Josemaría Escrivá, *Friends of God*, 183, Scepter, London.

² Ugo Borghello, "Corazón", in *Diccionario de san Josemaría*, Monte Carmelo, 2013, p. 280; quoting St Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is Passing By*, 164, Scepter, London.

³ Ugo Borghello, *ibid.*, quoting *Christ is Passing By*, 158.

BIOGRAPHY

St Josemaría Escrivá was born in Barbastro, Spain, on 9 January 1902. He was ordained to the priesthood in Saragossa on 28 March 1925. On 2 October 1928 he was inspired by God to found Opus Dei. On 26 June 1975 he died suddenly in Rome, after a last, very loving glance at the picture of Our Lady in his office. At that point Opus Dei had spread to all five continents with 60,000 members of 80 nationalities, serving the Church in St Josemaría's own spirit of full unity with the Pope and the Bishops. Josemaría Escrivá was canonised by Pope St John Paul II in Rome on 6 October 2002. His feast day is 26 June. His mortal remains rest in the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, Viale Bruno Buozzi 75, Rome.

02 | CHARITY IN EVERYDAY LIFE



Pope Francis, as part of his catechesis on the Year of Faith, said that “Our smallest gesture of love benefits everyone! To live out unity in the Church and communion in charity means not seeking one’s own interests but sharing the suffering and the joy of one’s brothers, ready to carry the weight of the others.”⁴

On the fifth anniversary of St Josemaría’s canonisation, Bishop Javier Echevarría published an article entitled “The Splendour of Charity”, talking about how St Josemaría, the “patron saint of everyday life”, practised charity every single day. Bishop Javier said that “Christian charity can never be ‘instrumentalised’; it never has an ulterior motive: love is given freely.”⁵ For St Josemaría, practising charity in ordinary life meant having “a big heart, to feel the concerns of those around us, to know how to forgive and understand: to sacrifice ourselves, with Jesus Christ, for all souls.”⁶

As he wrote in *Furrow*, charity must be adapted and tailored to the needs of others, not to one’s own.⁷ And so he urged us, “Love and practise charity without setting any limits or discriminating between people, for it is the virtue which marks us out as disciples of the Master. Nevertheless, this charity cannot lead you to dampen your faith – for it would then cease to be a virtue. Nor should it blur the clear outlines that define the faith, nor soften it to the point of changing it, as some people try to do, into something amorphous and lacking the strength and power of God.”⁸

St Josemaría’s teachings on charity are based on the love of Christ. “The love of Jesus for men is an unfathomable aspect of the divine mystery, of the love of the Son for the Father and the Holy Spirit.”⁹ As a virtue, charity is called to progress, to increase, to grow. “This is why St Josemaría maintains that it would be naive to think that the demands of charity are easily fulfilled. Personal effort is always required.”¹⁰

⁴ Pope Francis, General Audience, Rome, 6 November 2013.

⁵ ABC, Madrid, 6 October 2007.

⁶ *Christ is Passing By*, 158.

⁷ Cf. St Josemaría Escrivá, *Furrow*, 749, Scepter, London.

⁸ St Josemaría Escrivá, *The Forge*, 456. Scepter, London.

⁹ *Christ is Passing By*, 169.

¹⁰ “Charity”, in *Virtues in St Josemaría Escrivá*, ch. 2, Scepter, London, 2020.



03 | FREEDOM TO LOVE

“We do not have one heart to love God with,” St Josemaría explained, “and another with which to love men. This poor heart of ours, made of flesh, loves with an affection which is human and which, if it is united to Christ’s love, is also supernatural. This, and no other, is the charity we have to cultivate in our souls.”¹¹

In the first biography of St Josemaría, published the year after his death, Salvador Bernal wrote: “As Don Alvaro del Portillo put it in September 1975, one of the fundamental features of the spirit of the Founder of Opus Dei ‘was the marvellous fusion, in so great a heart, between a soul that flew so high and the love for little things, for things which are only noticed by eyes whose pupils have been dilated by love.’”¹²

“His great impassioned heart, which identified so easily with the sufferings of others, suffered indescribably in the forties because he saw that the tremendous injustices he was undergoing offended God, confused many people and poisoned the souls of those who committed them. The Founder of Opus Dei, who knew how to love, said nothing, forgave and prayed, giving no importance to his heroism.”¹³

“The heart of the Founder of Opus Dei was really fatherly. That is why he could understand so well the sentiments of all parents; and that is why he always kept in mind the families of the members of the Work. When their work required the children to go far away, he always encouraged them to write frequently to their parents, to give them good news and help them share in their happiness, for the greatest

source of joy to parents’ hearts is the happiness of their children.”¹⁴

The connection between charity and the other virtues was something St Josemaría often spoke and wrote about. “You can be sure that a Christian who really wants to do everything honestly in the eyes of God and of his neighbour, needs to possess all the virtues, at least potentially. But Father, you will ask me, what about my weaknesses? And I will answer: Can’t a doctor who is sick cure others, even if his illness is chronic? Will his illness prevent him from prescribing proper treatment for other patients? Obviously not. In order to cure others, all he needs is to have the necessary knowledge and to apply it with the same concern as he would in his own case.”¹⁵

Many other examples of how St Josemaría understood and practised charity are given in the recent biography *Wanting Jesus Alone to Shine*.¹⁶ It contains over 300 photographs, maps, infographics and items in St Josemaría’s own handwriting, and these lively illustrations help bring the narrative to life.

¹¹ St Josemaría Escrivá, *Friends of God*, 229.

¹² Salvador Bernal, *Mgr. Josemaría Escrivá. A Profile of the Founder of Opus Dei*, p.124, Scepter, London, 1977.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁵ *Friends of God*, 161.

¹⁶ Jesús Gil & Enrique Muñiz, *Wanting Jesus Alone to Shine. An illustrated biography of St Josemaría Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei*, Midwest Theological Forum, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2020.



04 | PRACTISING UNLIMITED CHARITY

“There is no human heart (...) which does not conceal, like embers among the ashes, a flicker of nobility. Whenever I have sounded out such hearts, talking to them individually with the words of Christ, they have always responded.”¹⁷ St Josemaría taught that the supernatural virtues have to be based on the human virtues, which develop the dispositions needed for the supernatural virtues – especially charity – to be acted upon.

The above quotation comes from a homily St Josemaría gave in 1941, afterwards published with the title “Human virtues”. It covers, among others, the human virtues of strength of character, calmness, patience, magnanimity, hard work, diligence, truthfulness, simplicity and naturalness. Speaking of prudence, he says that this “wisdom of the heart guides and governs many other virtues”. On putting them into practice, “Christians are ordinary people, but their hearts overflow with the joy that comes when we set out to fulfil, with the constant help of grace, the will of the Father. Christians don’t see themselves as victims, underrated, or restricted in their behaviour. They walk head on high, because they are men and children of God. Our faith brings out the full meaning of these human virtues (...). Those who follow Christ are able (not by their own merit but by the grace of God) to communicate to those around them what they at times suspect but cannot quite grasp: that true happiness, a genuine spirit of serving our neighbour, can only come by passing through the Heart of

our Redeemer, *perfectus Deus, perfectus homo* – perfect God and perfect Man.”¹⁸

“It gives me deep joy to consider that Christ wanted to be fully a man, with flesh like our own. I am moved when I contemplate how wonderful it is to have a God who loves with a man’s heart.”¹⁹

**“Jesus: Give us hearts to
measure up to Yours!”**

The ardent prayer that St Josemaría addressed to Jesus: “Give us hearts to measure up to Yours!” comes at the end of point no. 813 in *Furrow*, which is about Our Lord’s sacred Humanity. It reads in full: “I give you thanks, my Jesus, for your decision to become perfect Man, with a Heart which loved and is most lovable; which loved unto death and suffered; which was filled with joy and sorrow; which delighted in the things of men and showed us the way to Heaven; which subjected itself heroically to duty and acted with mercy; which watched over the poor and the rich and cared for sinners and the just... I give you thanks, my Jesus. Give us hearts to measure up to Yours!”²⁰

¹⁷ *Friends of God*, 74.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 93.

¹⁹ *Christ is Passing By*, 107.

²⁰ *Furrow*, 813.

05 | FAVOURS OF ST JOSEMARÍA

Grateful to St Josemaría

I would like to state how infinitely grateful I am for the intercession of this beautiful Saint! I began to have severe pain in my joints and was diagnosed with Raynaud's syndrome. It left me unable to work. A year later, after praying hard through his intercession, I was able to lead a normal life once again. I heard about him through a friend who had a stroke and also recovered through St Josemaría's intercession.

All for the glory of God!

A.M.



The fever disappeared

Recently I went to Congo to oversee some projects there. When I was in Ngandajika I developed a fever of unknown origin that made me feel very unwell. The problem was that the next day I was due to take an internal flight from Mbuji-Mayi to Kinshasa, and before boarding the flight, passengers have to have their temperature taken. If my temperature was above normal I would not be able to fly, which would be a serious complication as I would have to change my other airline tickets and stay longer in Congo. Faced with this situation I prayed through St Josemaría's intercession, asking him that my temperature might go down in time for me to get my flight. After a feverish night between sleeping and waking, I got up to find that the fever had completely disappeared. I was able to catch the flight without any problem, and then caught my onward flight from Kinshasa.

J.P.P.

Finding a house

My husband and I needed to find a house within 2 weeks. We knew it would be hard to find somewhere we could afford, especially in England... We began praying the novena to St Josemaría and spent the weekend searching through pages of places to let. Two days later we went to see two possible ones, and found that the second was affordable and right next to where we work. Today we went to speak finally with the letting agency and deal with the paperwork, and we will move in next week. We're delighted. God never lets you down.

A.B.

He saved my work

I'm a photographer and last weekend I covered two weddings, one on Saturday and one on Sunday. On Monday I went to my studio to download the images. I always work with two cameras with different lenses. That day I downloaded all the images from the first camera, no problem. But when I put in the card from the second camera, the computer did not read it. I took it out and put it in again, but nothing happened. I began to get agitated, and took out the card and put it into three different computers, without success. Fearing the worst, I tried re-starting my computer, but it still couldn't read the card. In desperation I begged St Josemaría to help me. Then I put the card in again, and right away the computer read it. I just couldn't believe what was happening. St Josemaría had answered my prayer and his intercession saved my work. I was happy to have recovered the images, but still happier that our Father heard my prayer.

N.S.



PRAYER

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

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

The money she was owed

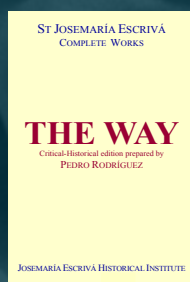
A friend of mine had a job in a firm that collapsed, leaving many employees in the street and with several months' pay owing to them. Her finances were in a bad way and she could not pay the rent, as her husband's pay was not enough. The landlord was threatening to evict them. She called me and asked if I could let her have some money, but I had none. I told her to pray to St Josemaría, because he granted many favours, and I said I would pray too. A few days later she called and said that the firm had sent her all the back pay she was owed, she had paid the rent, and the situation was sorted. Both she and her husband are very grateful to St Josemaría and continue to pray through his intercession.

J.D.

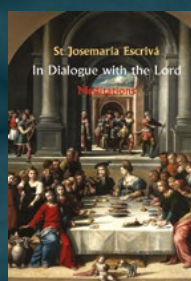
St Josemaría Escrivá Historical Institute

The aim of the St Josemaría Escrivá Historical Institute (<https://www.isje.org/en/>), set up in Rome in 2001, is to encourage historical studies on St Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer. Accordingly the ISJE has undertaken to prepare the complete works of St Josemaría for publication.

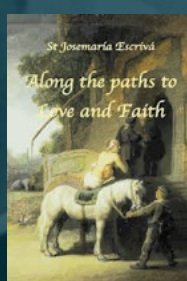
This collection has been divided into five series. Series I, Published works, with seven out of the projected eleven volumes already in print; Series II, Unpublished works, consisting of his Instructions and pastoral letters; Series III, Collected letters; Series IV, Manuscripts or hand-written documents; and Series V, Oral preaching – the first volume of which appeared in 2017, with the English version, *In Dialogue with the Lord*, published by Scepter in 2018. The quantity and diversity of the texts, which may be seen from the above lists, means that editing them and preparing them for publication takes a considerable time. So far a number of critical-historical editions have appeared in Spanish, with some already available in English; for further details, see <https://www.isje.org/en/historical-institute/publications/collection-of-the-complete-works-of-st-josemaria/>



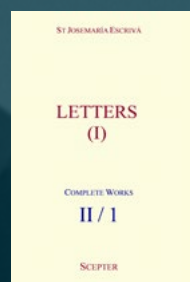
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Talks given to Opus Dei faithful in Rome between 1954 and 1975.



Insights on love for God and for our Lady, on faith and Christian living.



First four letters written by St Josemaría to Opus Dei members.

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