



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
IN PRAISE OF ST JOSEMARÍA ESCRIVÁ
FOUNDER OPUS DEI** Monday, 7 October 2002

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I am happy to greet you cordially, the day after the canonization of the Bl. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer. I thank Archbishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, for his expression of gratitude on your behalf. With affection I greet the many Cardinals, Bishops and priests who have wanted to take part in this celebration.

This festive gathering brings together a great variety of faithful from many countries who belong to very different social and cultural backgrounds: priests and lay people, men and women, young and old, intellectuals and blue collar workers. This is a sign of the apostolic zeal that burned in the soul of St Josemaría.

2. In the Founder of Opus Dei, there is an extraordinary love for the will of God. There exists a sure criterion of holiness: fidelity in accomplishing the divine will down to the last consequences. For each one of us the Lord has a plan, to each he entrusts a mission on earth. The saint could not even conceive of himself outside of God's plan. He lived only to achieve it.

St Josemaría was chosen by the Lord to announce the universal call to holiness and to point out that daily life and ordinary activities are a path to holiness. One could say that he was the saint of ordinary life. In fact, he was convinced that for those who live with a perspective of faith, everything is an opportunity to meet God, everything can be an incentive for prayer. Seen in this light, daily life reveals an unexpected greatness. Holiness is truly within everyone's reach.

3. Escrivá de Balaguer was a very human saint. All those who met him, whatever their culture or social status, felt he was a father, totally devoted to serving others, for he was convinced that every soul is a marvellous treasure; indeed, every person is worth all of Christ's Blood. This attitude of service is obvious in his dedication to his priestly ministry and in the magnanimity with which he launched so many works of evangelization and human advancement for the poorest persons.

The Lord gave him a profound understanding of the gift of our divine sonship. He taught him to contemplate the tender face of a Father in the God who speaks to us through the most varied events of life. A Father who loves us, who follows us step by step, who protects us, understands us and awaits from each of us a response of love. The consideration of this fatherly presence which accompanies the Christian everywhere gives him steadfast confidence; he must trust in the heavenly Father at every moment. He should never feel lonely or frightened. When the Cross is present, he should not see it as a punishment, but a mission entrusted by the Lord himself. The Christian is necessarily optimistic, because he knows he is a son of God in Christ.

4. St Josemaría was profoundly convinced that the Christian life entails a mission and an apostolate: we are in the world to save it with Christ. He loved the world passionately, with a "redemptive love" (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 604). Precisely for this reason his teachings have helped so many ordinary members of the faithful to discover the redemptive power of faith, its capacity to transform the earth.

This is a message that has abundant and fruitful implications for the evangelizing mission of the Church. It fosters the Christianization of the world "from within", showing that there can be no conflict between divine law and the demands of genuine human progress. This saintly priest taught that Christ must be the apex of all human activity (cf. Jn 12,32).

His message impels the Christian to act in places where the future of society is being shaped. From the laity's active presence in all the professions and at the most advanced frontiers of development, there can only come a positive contribution to the strengthening of that harmony between faith and culture which is one of the greatest needs of our time.

5. St Josemaría Escrivá spent his life for the service of the Church. In his writings, priests and lay people, men and women religious who follow the most varied paths, find a stimulating source of inspiration. Dear brothers and sisters, in imitating him with openness of spirit and heart, with a readiness to serve the local Churches, you contribute to strengthening the "spirituality of communion" which my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte* points out as one of the most important goals of our time (cf. nn. 42-45).

I welcome the chance to mention today's liturgical feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. St Josemaría wrote a beautiful small book called *The Holy Rosary*, which presents spiritual childhood, a real disposition of spirit of those who wish to attain total abandonment to the divine will. I heartily entrust all of you, with your families and your apostolate, to the motherly protection of Mary and I thank you for your presence.

6. I once again thank everyone present, especially those who have come from afar. Dear brothers and sisters, I invite you to take a visible witness of faith everywhere, in accord with the example and teaching of your holy Founder. I accompany you with my prayer and I warmly bless you, your

families and your activities.

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