



Saint Josemaria Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

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“I’m going away, but I’ll come back, and what’s more, I’ll stay.” Thirty-six years ago, on June 26, 1974, Saint Josemaria said in the Teatro Coliseo in Buenos Aires: “I’m going away, but I’ll come back, and what’s more, I’ll stay.” This year, St Michael’s cathedral in the center of San Miguel City, Buenos Aires Province, Argentina, has seen one way in which this promise has come true.

“Who would have thought, thirty-six years ago, when I was preparing for the arrival of the founder of Opus Dei in Argentina, that I would live to see this day!” said Beby, one of the first Supernumeraries of Opus Dei in Buenos Aires, on coming out of the Mass celebrated in St Michael’s Cathedral in honor of St Josemaria. This year St Michael’s was at the center of the celebrations of June 26, since Bishop Sergio Alfredo Fenoy had decided that a statue of St Josemaria would be blessed and set in its place during the Mass on that day. Bishop Fenoy treasures the fact that in 1974 St Josemaria stayed in his diocese for 21 days.

As he said in his homily, “It makes everyone in this district happy, because we feel he belongs to us in a special way.” And the fact that St Josemaria is a contemporary of ours “brings holiness close to us, makes us understand that it’s possible, not just in general, but possible for each individual, possible for me.”

On each of the three days leading up to St Josemaria’s feast-day on June 26, an evening Mass was celebrated during which the statue was exposed for the veneration of the faithful, to the left of the main altar. Each day, the homily centered on some key aspects of St Josemaria and the message of Opus Dei: love for Holy Mass; the priestly soul of all the faithful; God as our Father; daily work as a means of achieving holiness; the influence of the Christian spirit on society; joy; and devotion to our Blessed Lady.

Listening and attending to them

By common consent, the statue is an excellent likeness of St Josemaria. On June

23, for the first of the three Masses, the choir of the Austral University sang the Mass, and accompanied the veneration of the relic with polyphonic singing. That day was especially moving since it was the first time people had seen the statue. It is one meter sixty tall, made of patina'd resin, and shows St Josemaria vested in alb and chasuble, his head slightly bent forward to look at those who approach him, as though listening and attending to them, with a gentle smile on his lips.

On June 26, after the incensing of the altar and the initial greeting, everyone went to the part of the Cathedral where the statue of St Josemaria stood. The Bishop read the prayers for the blessing and installation of the statue, and then continued with the Mass.

In his homily the Bishop said that together with St John Orione and Blessed Camila Rolon, for whose canonization he encouraged his hearers to pray, St Josemaria is the third saint to have stayed in the diocese. Bishop Fenoy said how happy he was to have taken this new step. The first step was declaring St Josemaria's feast-day an obligatory memorial in the diocese, so that the Mass of St Josemaria is celebrated in all the churches in the diocese on June 26; and the new step now taken is to have installed his statue in the Cathedral so that from now on, as he put it, "his presence in this Cathedral shrine is assured."

What his children got from him

Bishop Fenoy also recalled St Josemaria's final words in Argentina, "which his children got from him when he was on the point of leaving": he told them to love St Joseph very much, and never to separate him from Mary. "And this statue," the Bishop continued, "will help us to remember his words: may we love St Joseph and always keep him with Jesus and Mary."

Before the Bishop gave the final blessing, the Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Argentina said a few words, thanking Bishop Fenoy. Then he encouraged those present to follow the Bishop's guidance, as St Josemaria always taught people to do, in order to live up to the faith they profess. And, of course, he invited them to have recourse to Our Lady of Lujan, at whose feet St Josemaria said he left his heart, to imitate his holiness.