



# Saint Josemaria Escriva

## Founder of Opus Dei

[Home](#) - [Saint Josemaria](#) - [Biography](#) - [Catechetical Trips](#)

## Catechetical Trips

1970.1.2

**St Josemaria decided to put his shoulder to the wheel in the task of strengthening people's faith. Starting in 1970, he went on long catechetical trips to various countries around the world.**

Starting in 1970, the founder of Opus Dei decided to undertake catechetical trips to various countries. With doubt and uncertainty spreading among the faithful, it was time to put his shoulder to the wheel, to proclaim the authentic teachings of the [Church](#) to large numbers of people and thus strengthen their faith. The method that he liked to use was one of personal contact, and personal it was for each of those present, despite the numbers that came to listen to him. Questions and answers, jokes and prayer, stories, and truths proclaimed loudly and firmly.

### **Mexico, 1970**

He began in 1970 in Mexico, in conjunction with his pilgrimage to Guadalupe. He met with groups from different walks of life. Among them some countryfolk from Morelos, where members of Opus Dei, together with other people, had started a farm school. To them he said, "All of us, you and I, are concerned with improving things for you, so you can get out of this situation, so that you are not under financial burdens... We are also going to do our best so that your children acquire culture. You'll see how between us all we will succeed, and so those who are talented and want to study, can rise high. At first they won't be many, but as the years go by... And how will we do it? As if we were doing a favor?... No, my children, not that way! Haven't I just told you we are all equal?"

### **Spain and Portugal, 1972**

In 1972, he set aside time for a two-month swing through a string of cities in Spain and Portugal, filling his schedule with all types of meetings, many of which were filmed. It was an exhausting journey, though one would not guess it from the drive and animation shown by the founder in those films. To a veritable kaleidoscope of

questions submitted, he responded with style and understanding, with the simplicity of a catechist but with the doctrine of a theologian and the faith of a saint. People asked him questions about the sacraments, about devotion to our Lady, about prayer, about family life — questions, for the most part, that had been widely debated, leaving a trail of perplexity in the souls of the faithful.

“In the get-togethers that the apostles had with our Lord, they talked about everything: *in multis argumentis*, as Sacred Scripture says. Our get-togethers have that evangelical feel to them: they are a friendly way of speaking in family about the teaching of **Jesus Christ**. You see I am not exaggerating when I tell you that Opus Dei is a great catechesis.”

He encouraged people to ask “impertinent” questions, and a few took him at his word.

“Father, how do you spend the time of thanksgiving after Communion?”

“This fellow wants me to confess in public!”

But he did answer, speaking of his effort to prolong the thanksgiving until noon, and then to begin preparing for the next day’s Mass. The one who asked had received a thought-provoking suggestion.

“Father, what virtues do you think are most important in a teacher?”

“You need them all, but above all show the students a lot of loyalty.”

“Father, how can we help friends recover the faith they claim to have lost?”

“If they truly had the faith, it may be that they have not really lost it. It can happen that over the faith right now there is a shell, and another on top of that, and another: a series of layers of indifference, of misguided readings, perhaps of bad habits, and bad influences. I advise you first and foremost to pray.”

“Father, some say that we should teach all the religions to children so that they can choose among them when they are older...”

And so on and so forth with questions and answers of surprising spontaneity. His preaching in those weeks reached more than 150,000 people. In every city he wanted to visit cloistered convents to show his love for the religious vocation and ask for prayers. He also made a pilgrimage to the most important shrine of our Lady in each place he visited.

## **Latin America, 1974**

Between May and August of 1974, he traveled through South America: Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, and Venezuela. Once again he wanted to

strengthen the souls of the faithful in their love for the Church and the Pope, and in their fidelity to the Magisterium through an intense apostolate of catechesis. Thousands of people heard him speak words of burning love for the Church and the Pope, asking them for faithfulness to the Church's teachings including those of the [Sacrament of Reconciliation](#). He went on pilgrimages to the main centers of devotion to Mary the Mother of God in each country, to pray to her, and said that all the effort and discomfort involved in his journeys would be worth while if just one person was converted and reconciled with God.

In Peru a severe attack of bronchitis confined him to bed, and the doctors expressed their worries. While not completely recovered, he started preaching again. On the first of August he arrived in Ecuador, where a bad case of el soroche (altitude sickness) gripped him. However, he had apostolic gatherings with several groups of people there and later in Venezuela, until the doctors advised him that he needed to suspend all activity.

### **Latin America again, 1975**

February 4, 1975, he returned to the Western Hemisphere, visiting Venezuela and Guatemala. Very many people, including a lot of native Indians, came to Guatemala City to listen to him. Among other things, he spoke to them about St Joseph, and said, "He taught us the value of ordinary work, which humanly speaking is the means we have within our grasp to sanctify ourselves with. We can put love into what we have to do every day, what we do every hour, every minute so that we can offer it to God... Just the same whether it's building a skyscraper or a wicker basket woven by one of my Indian daughters."

And he finished forcefully, "The wicker basket is just as valuable to me as the skyscraper, if they are made with love!"

On this last leg of the trip he fell ill again; left without any energy whatsoever, he had to cut the trip short and go home on February 23, ahead of schedule. St Josemaria accepted God's will and offered this disappointment to God for the Church in Latin America.