



Saint Josemaria Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

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Difficult Times

1970.1.1

“If we all pray together, if we add just a bit of good will, our Lord will give us his grace and end this dark, terrible night. Then will come the dawn, the morning filled with sunlight.”

On December 22, 1971, a beautiful antique image of the Blessed Mother arrived at Villa Tevere. It was a wooden sculpture, almost life-size and... badly in need of restoration. It was a gift to the founder from his Italian sons and daughters. Seeing it, Saint Josemaría addressed our Lady with words of affection while asking from what Church it had been removed. He had it restored as quickly as possible and asked that in the meantime it be mounted in an appropriate temporary site, with freshly cut flowers always kept at [rosary](#) beads purchased, and gave them out to whoever came to see him, asking them to pray for the Church. It was a time to turn to the Mother of the Church so that the “time of trial” would be cut short. He went forth on a series of Marian pilgrimages, the sorrow in his heart mitigated only by a robust supernatural hope and his instinctive good humor.

“I am going to visit two shrines of the Blessed Virgin,” he wrote to his children prior to a trip to the Iberian Peninsula. “I am going like a pilgrim of the twelfth century: with the same love, with the same simplicity, with the same joy. I will pray there for the world, for the Church, for the Pope and for the Work... . Join me in my prayers and in my Mass.” In April of 1970, he went to [Torreciudad](#), the mountain chapel to which he was brought after his cure in 1904 and where through his efforts work on a large shrine had just commenced.

Praying for the Church and the Holy Father

Added to his concern for the Church was his preoccupation with the definitive juridical status of Opus Dei. The figure of secular institute had already appeared inadequate to the founder from the moment of the first pontifical approval in 1947, but it had to be accepted until such time as a canonical framework suitable for the theological and pastoral phenomenon of Opus Dei could be found. New

possibilities were opened by Vatican II that would later be developed in canon law — specifically, the provision for [Guadalupe](#), in Mexico, in May, 1970. He made a novena to our Lady there, praying for the Church and for the Work. Kneeling in a small balcony facing the sanctuary, he recited the Rosary and spoke aloud to Mary with moving child-like trust. “Lady, I bring you — for I have nothing else — thorns, the ones I have in my heart. But I am sure that with you they will turn to roses... Grant that we may have in us, in our hearts, little roses blooming all the year round: the roses of daily life, ordinary roses, but filled with the perfume of sacrifice and love. I have said little roses, on purpose, because it suits me better, for in my whole life I have only been able to do ordinary, everyday things, and even then I often haven’t been able to finish them. But I am sure that it is there, in my everyday ordinary behavior, that you and your Son are waiting for me.”

At another point he continued, “Here I am. Because you can do everything! Because you love! My mother, our Mother(...), keep us from everything that stops us being your children, everything that is trying to obstruct our path and spoil our vocation(...). Hail Mary, Daughter of God the Father; Hail Mary, Mother of God the Son; Hail Mary, Spouse of God the Holy Spirit; Hail Mary, Temple of the Most Holy Trinity: greater than you, no one but God! Show us that you are our Mother! Show what you are able to bring about!”

To console the Pope, Saint Josemaría requested an audience and was received on June 25, 1973. He did not go to ask for anything, only to give the