



Saint Josemaria Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

[Home](#) - [Saint Josemaria](#) - [Talking to God](#) - How and why did you found Opus Dei?

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Would you describe how and why you founded Opus Dei and the events that you consider the major milestones in its development?

Why? The only explanation for things that are born of God's will is that He has wanted to use them as an expression of His desire to save all men. From the first moment, the Work was universal, catholic. It was born not to solve the concrete problems facing Europe in the nineteen-twenties, but to tell men and women of every country and of every condition, race, language, milieu and state in life (single, married, widowed or priest) that they can love and serve God without giving up their ordinary work, their family life and their normal social relations.

How was it founded? Without any human means. I was a twenty-six year old priest with nothing but God's grace and good humour. The Work was born very small. It was only a young priest's desire to do what God asked of him.

You asked me about milestones. For me every time the Work helps someone to draw closer to God and therefore become more of a brother to their fellow men, it is an important milestone in the history of [Opus Dei](#).

I could also mention some crucial dates. Although they may not be the most important, I will give you a few approximate ones from memory. Early in 1935 we were ready to begin working in France, as a matter of fact in Paris. But then the [Spanish civil war](#) broke out, and afterwards the Second World War and we had to put off the expansion of the Work.

But since expansion was necessary, the delay was minimal. In 1940 our work in Portugal began. After a few preliminary trips in previous years, practically coinciding with the end of the hostilities it began in England, Italy, France, the United States and Mexico. Afterwards the rhythm of growth and expansion became more rapid. From 1949/1950 on: in Germany, Ireland, Holland, Switzerland, Argentina, Canada, Venezuela and the other European and South

American countries. Simultaneously we began in other continents: North Africa, Japan, Kenya and other East African countries, in Australia, the Philippines, Nigeria.

I also like to recall, as notable dates, the numerous occasions on which the Popes have shown more tangibly their affection for our Work. I have resided in Rome since 1946, so I have been fortunate enough to know personally Pius XII, John XXIII and Paul VI. All three of them have always shown truly paternal affection for us.

[Conversations with Msgr. Escrivá de Balaguer](#) (Interview for *Time* magazine), Princeton: Scepter, 1993, 32.