



Saint Josemaria Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

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I Seek Your Face

1975.1.1

St Josemaria's soul burned with the desire to see God's face. "Lord, I long to see your face, to contemplate you in wonder!"

On March 28, 1975, Father Josemaría completed fifty years of [priesthood](#). He did not want any festivities, he wished to spend that day — which fell on Good Friday — in recollection and prayer, continuing to live the “hide and disappear” that he had adopted as a rule of life in order to give all glory to Jesus Christ. On the eve of the anniversary he made his prayer aloud, opening his heart to God and to those sons of his with him in the chapel.

50 years a priest

“Fifty years have gone by, and I am still like a babbling child. I am just beginning, beginning again, as I do each day in my interior life. And it will be so to the end of my days... A glance backwards ... What an immense panorama, so many sorrows, so many joys. But now all is joy, all joy ... because experience teaches us that sorrow is the chiseling of the divine artist, who is eager to make of each one of us, of this shapeless mass that we are, a crucifix, a Christ, that *alter Christus* each one of us is called to be.

“My Lord, thank you for everything. Many thanks! I have habitually given you thanks. And now many lips, many hearts, are together repeating the same cry to you: *gratias tibi, Deus, gratias tibi!* , for we have motives only for giving thanks.

“We should never be afraid of anything. We must never let anything worry us. We must never lose our peace of mind over anything whatsoever. Lord, grant my children peace of mind. Don't let them lose it even if they commit a serious error. If they realize that they've done wrong, that in itself is already a grace, a light from heaven.

“*Gratias tibi, Deus, gratias tibi!* The life of each one of us ought to be a hymn of

thanksgiving; just look how Opus Dei has come about. You, Lord, have done it all, with a handful of good-for-nothings... *Stulta mundi, infirma mundi, et ea quae non sunt*. Saint Paul's teaching had been fulfilled to the letter. You have laid hold of instruments that were utterly illogical and in no way suitable, and you have spread the Work all over the world. People are thanking you all over Europe, and in places in Asia and Africa, and in the whole of America, and in Australia. Everywhere they are giving you thanks."

Torreciudad

In the month of May, the founder of Opus Dei made his last trip, visiting the shrine of Torreciudad, by then almost finished. He became completely absorbed in contemplating the reredos, a large altar sculpture with scenes of the life of Mary, and in the center, from top to bottom, the tabernacle, the crucifixion, and the ancient venerated image of our Lady of Torreciudad. In these months he frequently repeated the aspiration "I seek your face." "Lord I have a great wish to see you face to face, to admire your countenance, to contemplate you!... I love you so much, desire so much to see you, Lord!"

While he looked at Our Lady of Guadalupe

On June 26, 1975, he got up early, as usual, made the usual half hour of prayer and celebrated Mass at about 8 o'clock. After a quick breakfast he asked those who were with him to tell a particular person that: "For years I have been offering the Holy Mass for the Church and particularly for the Holy Father... . This very day I have offered my life to our Lord for the Pope... ."

About 9:30 am they left for Castelgandolfo where they would get together in a family-style formative meeting with his daughters at the Roman College of Saint Mary. It was a very hot day. During the ride they prayed the Rosary and conversed pleasantly.

"You have priestly souls," he said to those young women upon his arrival. "I will repeat it as I do every time I come here... . Your brothers who are not priests also have priestly souls. With this priestly soul you can and should help out, and with God's grace, along with the priestly ministry of the priests of the Work, we shall work effectively... . I suppose that in everything you do ... you find a reason to talk to God and to his Blessed Mother, who is our Mother, and to Saint Joseph, our father and lord, and to our Guardian Angels so as to help this Holy Church, our Mother, who is in such great need, and who is having such a difficult time in the world these days. We should love the Church very much and the Pope, whoever

he may be. Ask our Lord that our service on behalf of the Church and the Pope may be effective.”

After twenty minutes or so he felt ill. He returned to Rome with Father Álvaro del Portillo and Father Javier Echevarría. Back at Villa Tevere, they greeted our Lord in the tabernacle, and then went toward the room where he worked. Having just crossed its threshold, he glanced lovingly at the image of our Lady, and said to Father Javier:

“Javi!...I don't feel well.”

He collapsed on the floor.

During his stay in Mexico, in 1970, he had contemplated an image of our Lady of Guadalupe handing a rose to the Indian Juan Diego. He said that he would like to die like that, looking at the Blessed Mother while she offered him a flower. It was the image of our Lady of Guadalupe, presiding over his office in Villa Tevere, that received his last glance on earth.