



# Saint Josemaria Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

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## Letter to the faithful of the Prelature and cooperators of Opus Dei

*Bishop Echevarría*

**Rome, 3 April 2005**

May Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!

My dearest children: We were already preparing for the painful event of the death of our much-loved Pope John Paul II, who, yet more frequently in these last years and months, offered the whole world the serene and joyful witness of his close union with God through his suffering.

Ever since last Wednesday, when the Holy Father's state of health suddenly worsened, the whole Church has been gathered around its supreme Shepherd, praying with faith in every corner of the earth. Once again the scene narrated in the Acts of the Apostles has been repeated: when King Herod imprisoned the Apostle Peter, intending to have him killed, *earnest prayer for him was made to God by the Church* (Acts 12:5).

This prayer for the Successor of Saint Peter, as well as being a source of strength for the Pope in these past days, has united us more solidly to Christ and his beloved Spouse, the Church; it has made us Catholics discover once more that we are part of the great family of God's children, who have a common Father on earth too.

Additionally, we have felt the closeness of many other Christians and countless men and women of good will, who have also united themselves to our prayer. Let us thank God for all these good things, and for such a good and faithful servant, Pope John Paul II!

In the Work, we are bound in gratitude to John Paul II for many reasons. Our Father taught us to love the Pope ardently, no matter who he was, for the simple and sublime reason that he is Christ's Vicar, his visible Representative on earth. But this veneration becomes still more focused as we consider how in these years

of his ministry as Supreme Pastor, he made it so much easier for us Catholics to be faithfully loyal to him, as is our duty, through the example of his intense – palpable! – spiritual life; his joy in the service of souls; his charity for all, and also his fatherly demands as he established the Work as a Prelature, so that we can do Opus Dei, this *little part* of the Church, as God wants.

We knew the enormous spiritual and moral standing which the Holy Father enjoyed throughout the world; but in the past days, and also on seeing the extensive coverage given by the media, I think that everyone, including people who are not Catholics, has experienced the truth of the saying *ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia*: where Peter is, there is the Church. And now, after so many years of generous dedication to God, the incisiveness and effectiveness of his ministry as Supreme Shepherd is still more clearly seen.

We are filled with the certainty that the Blessed Trinity has opened wide the gates of Heaven to him, to reward his constant zeal for souls, his persevering invitation that we should all open the doors of our souls to Christ.

At the same time, with deep, serene gratitude, let us offer suffrages for the eternal repose of his soul. As well as those that Saint Josemaría laid down in Opus Dei for times like these, I advise you to be generous in offering suffrages for Pope John Paul II.

Be convinced that those prayers – we are already accustomed to seeing this – will be petitions with a “return ticket”: they will go up to Heaven, and God our Lord will send them back down to earth, transformed into an abundant shower of graces.

My daughters and sons: John Paul II, now with God, continues inviting us: “**Rise, let us be on our way!**” So that we make up our minds, day after day, to set off again decisively along the path of our Christian life. *Duc in altum!* (Lk 5:4), he is reminding each of us individually.

All of us Christians, as faithful children of the Church, have to launch out into the great ocean of the world, to carry out, without half-heartedness, with full, resolute dedication, the co-redeeming mission which Christ has entrusted to us.

When the Conclave of Cardinals, gathered under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, chooses the new Successor of Peter, we will hear the proclamation “*Habemus Papam!*” Let’s prepare the path for him starting from now. Let us ask our dearly-loved Pope John Paul II to intercede before God our Lord so that the new Pope may find the furrow opened and prepared by the abundant prayer and

mortification of all Christians.

We already love him with all our souls, no matter who he is; and, as our Father told us on similar occasions, let's offer up everything for him and his intentions... even our breathing!

During these days of *sede vacante*, perhaps we may be helped by the aspiration our Founder suggests in Furrow: ***I thought the comment of loyalty you had written to me was very appropriate to all those moments in history (...) "I carry with me every day in my heart, in my mind and on my lips an aspiration: Rome"*** (Furrow, 344).

A very affectionate blessing from

your Father  
+ Javier