



Saint Josemaria Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

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Bishop Javier Echevarría

At the end of the Thanksgiving Mass for the canonization of the Josemaria Escriva, the Holy Father John Paul II met with the participants of the canonization. The following is the greeting given by the Prelate of Opus Dei, Msgr. Javier Echevarría to the Holy Father at the beginning of the audience.

Holy Father,

Ten years ago, in this very Square, my predecessor as Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, addressed to Your Holiness heartfelt words of gratitude after the beatification of Josemaria Escriva. Today, it is my turn and my unmerited honor to express the joy and gratitude of the thousands of faithful and cooperators of the Prelature, and of the countless souls devoted to Saint Josemaria Escriva who, both in Rome and outside of Rome, have participated with jubilation in the canonization ceremony. Thank you, Holy Father.

The solemn recognition of the sanctity of this good and faithful servant, whom God Our Lord chose as a herald of the universal call to holiness and apostolate in the ordinary circumstances of life, is an invitation to all Catholics to meet God in the fulfillment of their own family, professional and social duties.

The canonization of Josemaria Escriva is, without doubt, a gift for the whole world, because we will always be in need of intercessors before the throne of God. It also provides a new reason for confidence among the lay faithful, who see reaffirmed once more their high calling as God's children in Jesus Christ, called to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect (cf. *Matt* 5:48) in the ordinary circumstances of life. As Your Holiness wrote in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte*, «now is the time to propose once again to all, with conviction, this "high standard" of the ordinary Christian life» (NMI 31). Saint Josemaria Escriva was ahead of his time, reminding us of the universal call to holiness and apostolate which the Second Vatican Council was to proclaim with such force. He

not only spread this teaching throughout the world, reinforced by the example of his cheerful and persevering ascetical struggle, but also opened up within the Church, by God's will, a way of sanctification «*as old and as new as the Gospels,*» another eloquent sign of God's mercy toward men and an efficacious instrument in the service of the Church's salvific mission.

Millions of people, Holy Father, are rejoicing today all over the world, both within and without the visible walls of the Church. Indeed, many non-Catholics and non-Christians admire Josemaria Escriva and have recourse to his teachings as a source of inspiration for their own conduct and for their professional and social activity. These people too have received encouragement in their efforts to improve our world, beset by injustice and, at the same time, hungry for understanding and peace.

In the ten years that have passed since the beatification of Josemaria Escriva, the apostolic activity of the faithful and cooperators of the Prelature of Opus Dei has grown in intensity and extension in many countries. Sustained by the grace of God, their activities on behalf of all souls, especially the neediest, have multiplied. On the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Saint Josemaria Escriva, dozens of initiatives for personal and professional formation have begun in developing countries and in the poorer parts of large cities. These activities bear witness that the search for personal holiness — the union of the soul with God — is inseparable from the concern — shown with deeds — for the material and spiritual welfare of our brothers and sisters.

Before ending, I want to assure Your Holiness of the fervent prayers for the person and intentions of the Holy Father which the faithful and cooperators of Opus Dei throughout the world are continually raising to heaven. I entrust these prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom we honor especially today with the title of Our Lady of the Rosary. Enriched by her maternal intercession before Jesus, these prayers will assist Your Holiness in the joyous fulfillment of the mission of Supreme Pastor.

Holy Father, permit me to thank you once again, with all my heart. As we prepare to receive and meditate upon your words, and to congratulate you, in the name of all, on the upcoming anniversary of your election as Peter's Successor, I ask of you — on behalf of the faithful and cooperators of the Prelature of Opus Dei, and the countless souls devoted to Saint Josemaria, and for myself — the strengthening grace of Your Apostolic Blessing.