



Saint Josemaría Escrivá

Founder of Opus Dei

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Saint Josemaría, a pilgrim at Fatima

Pope John Paul II spoke of Fatima as “a sign of the times that helps us to see the hand of God, who guides us by his Providence, and who is our patient and compassionate Father. (...) I ask you, in the name of our Lady and through her, to pray: ‘We fly to your protection, O holy Mother of God. Turn not away from the prayer we make in our need, but deliver us always from every danger, O blessed and glorious Virgin Mary’.”

Saint Josemaría visited Portugal frequently, and never omitted a stop at Fatima. On one of those occasions, April 14, 1970, as he arrived on Portuguese soil, he gave the reason for his trip. “I am praying all day long, trying to speak continuously with God, taking our Lady as my intercessor, since she is all-powerful in her supplication. I have made these journeys in the simple, joyous spirit of a pilgrim of old.” Then he exclaimed, referring to Portugal, “Land of our Lady, where she chose to leave a sign of her love for men! I come here once more to beg her not to abandon us, but to take care of her Church, to take care of us.”

After that Saint Josemaría said three Hail Marys for Opus Dei’s apostolate in Portugal, as he did in every country he visited, and finished with an invocation to the Blessed Trinity. At 12.30 that day his party stopped off in Buçaco for lunch and then continued on to Fatima. As they drove, they said the joyful mysteries of the Rosary. Saint Josemaría confided to his companions with great simplicity, “Before, I used not to pray for things. I acted like that because I understood that it was better to abandon oneself trustingly to God. During those early times, that was good, because like that everyone could see that it all came from God. Now, however, I think that I have to pray for things, and I understand more fully all the force of our Lord’s words, ‘Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.’ I am convinced that we have to pray hard, and I want to place my prayer into our Lady’s thousand-times-blessed hands.”

By the road on the way to the shrine of Fatima a large group of Portuguese faithful of Opus Dei were waiting for him. As he had done at Torreciudad, Spain, a few

days before, Saint Josemaría took off his shoes to walk up the road to the shrine itself. After some time, seeing that he continued barefoot, someone suggested that he should put his shoes on, as there was gravel on some parts of the ground. “What’s the problem?” he responded. “OK, so I took my shoes off! Every last countryman does the same, and they walk for kilometers without thinking twice about it. I’ve only come a few meters – a pitiful little distance!”

His visit to Fatima was also one of thanksgiving. He felt secure and optimistic – “today, here, more optimistic than ever.” His time in the shrine went far too quickly for him, but his prayer there had been intense, as he told his sons when he took his leave of them: “I have tried to put into my times of conversation with our Lady, in silence, all the prayers I've made over these past months, and all the prayers my children have made too.”

[Other visits of Saint Josemaria to Fatima](#)

See further: Andres Vazquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei, vol. III The Divine Ways on Earth*, New York, 2005.