



# Saint Josemaria Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

[Home](#) - [Documentation](#) - [Accounts](#) - [St Josemaria and the Guardian Angels](#)

## St Josemaria and the Guardian Angels

*Bishop Alvaro del Portillo*

**Opus Dei was founded (in 1928) on October 2 – the feast of the Guardian Angels. St Josemaria’s devotion to the Guardian Angels, whom he saw as celestial protectors and messengers, went back to his childhood. Here Bishop Alvaro del Portillo recalls some aspects of this devotion.**

The Father learned from his parents to have recourse to his Guardian Angel. Then later on, as a seminarian, he read in a book by one of the Fathers of the Church that, in addition to a Guardian Angel, priests have a ministerial Archangel as well; and so, from the day of his ordination to the priesthood, he turned to this Archangel with great simplicity and confidence. In fact, he said he felt certain that even if the author he had read turned out to have been mistaken, our Lord would have given him a ministerial Archangel anyway, just because of the faith with which he always invoked him.

In any case, after the feast of the Guardian Angels in 1928, the founder of Opus Dei had a still more intense devotion to them. He was always telling his children, “familiarity with, and devotion to, the holy Guardian Angels is at the heart of our work. It is a concrete manifestation of the supernatural mission of Opus Dei.”

Convinced that God has placed an Angel beside each and every human being to help that person along the road of life, he had recourse to his own Guardian Angel for all his material and spiritual needs. He would often say, quite frankly, “For years I’ve experienced the constant and immediate assistance of my Guardian Angel, even in the smallest material particulars.” In the years between 1928 and 1940, his alarm-clock sometimes didn’t work and he didn’t have the money to repair it, so he turned in trust to his Guardian Angel and asked him to wake him up in the morning at the right time. His Angel never once failed him. And that’s why our Father affectionately called him “*mi relojero*” [“my dear watchmaker”].

Whenever he greeted our Lord in the Tabernacle, he always thanked the Angels who were present there, for the unceasing adoration that they give to God. On

more than one occasion I heard him say, “When I go into one of our chapels, one that has a Tabernacle, I tell Jesus that I love him, and invoke the Blessed Trinity. Then I thank the Angels who guard the Tabernacle and adore Christ in the Eucharist.”

Through heroic and persevering correspondence with God’s grace, he acquired the habit of always greeting the Guardian Angels of the people he met. One day in 1972 or 1973, the retired archbishop of Valencia, the Most Reverend Marcelino Olaechea, came to visit him, accompanied by his secretary. They were very good friends, so that Father greeted him and then asked him playfully, “Marcelino, let’s see if you can guess – whom did I greet first?” The archbishop replied, “You greeted me first.” “No,” the Father said, “I greeted the VIP first.” Archbishop Olaechea, understandably perplexed, replied, “But of the two of us, my secretary and me, I am the ‘VIP’.” Then our founder explained, “No, the VIP is your Guardian Angel.”

During some days of rest that we spent in a rented house in a village in Lombardy, Italy – I can’t remember whether it was Caglio or Civenna – we would play *bocce* ball every so often, to get a little exercise. Since we didn’t know the rules of the game too well, at times we would make up our own. I remember that during one of these games, the Father threw the ball unusually well and made an exceptional score. But he said immediately, “That doesn’t count – I was helped by my Guardian Angel. I won’t do that any more...” I tell this little story because I consider it indicative of the constant friendly rapport he had with his Guardian Angel, and also of his humility; as he later told me directly, he was ashamed of having asked his Guardian Angel for help in such an unimportant matter.

**Extract from Cesare Cavalleri, *Immersed in God – Blessed Josemaria Escriva, founder of Opus Dei, as seen by his successor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo*, Princeton NJ: Scepter Publishers, 1996.**

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