



Saint Josemaría Escrivá

Founder of Opus Dei

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St Josemaría's own account of his sister's death

Andrés Vázquez de Prada

After St Josemaría died, a sealed envelope was found among his papers. Written on it were the words, “**Not to be opened until my death. Mariano, 2-VII-1957.**” Inside were six handwritten sheets that read as follows:

When Alvaro told me that the doctor gave my sister Carmen no more than two months to live, I was filled with sorrow. For the first ones and for me, Carmen had come to represent twenty-five long years of sufferings and joys in Opus Dei.

After accepting God's will with tears, I decided to launch a campaign of prayer to the Lord; I prayed and got everyone else to pray. And I continued to weep bitterly, although at times I thought that if the others noticed I might be setting a bad example this way. But I immediately rejected that thought, since we are children of God, and he did give us a heart.

Some days went by, and after seeing Carmen's marvelous readiness to go and enjoy heaven, and the admirable serenity she showed, I understood – and told her – that the logic of our Lord God has no reason to accommodate itself to our poor human logic.

The moment arrived to give my sister the last sacraments. Then came the long agony – almost two days, because of the oxygen and injections. Even then I kept asking for Carmen's recovery through Isidoro's intercession, until, at the end, fully accepting God's Most Holy Will, I slowly prayed the prayer that gives peace: “*Fiat, adimpleatur, ...*” [“May the most just and most lovable Will of God be done, be fulfilled, be praised, be eternally exalted above all things for ever. Amen. Amen.”]

I was worn out, with an exhaustion that made me think of Jacob's struggle with the angel.

As soon as my sister died – when José Luis Pastor, the doctor at her bedside,

said “now” – I prayed an “Eternal Rest”. And as soon as possible I went down to celebrate Holy Mass in the oratory.

When I began the Mass, for a few seconds I had the idea of asking the Lord to give me a clear sign that the soul of my sister – for whom I was going to offer the Mass, by special permission – was in the glory of heaven. Becoming aware of that thought, which my will had not consented to, I rejected it and asked the Lord’s pardon for what had come into my head, since it was like tempting God.

I continued the Holy Mass. I went up to the altar, and everything went normally until the first Commemoration. I was surprised to find that I was not offering the Mass for my sister who had died just a few minutes earlier, but for another intention. I corrected myself and offered the Holy Sacrifice for Carmen’s soul. I went on normally again until I got to the Commemoration of the Dead – again, inadvertently, I offered the Mass for another intention. But again I immediately made the correction: “for the soul of Carmen.” And I felt a great enlightenment and an immense joy, and a boundless gratitude for God’s goodness, for I understood with supernatural certainty that the Lord, in his infinite goodness, had willed to give me “a clear sign” that Carmen had already entered in gaudium Domini sui [into the joy of her Lord].

From that moment I’ve felt changed – not one tear, and instead a joy that has affected me physically. And I have no hesitation in writing that it is, by the goodness of God toward this miserable sinner, a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Ever since then, I’ve found it hard to offer suffrages, but I am doing it, and getting others to, because it is the practice of the Church.

Rome, June 25, 1957

Extract from the book *The Founder of Opus Dei: the Life of Josemaría Escrivá*, Volume III, *The Divine Ways on Earth*, A. Vazquez de Prada, Scepter, 2005, pp. 191-192.