



Saint Josemaría Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

[Home](#) - [Documentation](#) - [Accounts](#) - The Holy Mass was the center of Saint Josemaría's day

The Holy Mass was the center of Saint Josemaría's day

Bishop Alvaro del Portillo

Saint Josemaría often spoke of the Holy Mass as the “center and root of the interior life”. Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, the Founder's first successor at the head of Opus Dei, spent nearly forty years with Saint Josemaría, and was an exceptional witness of how the Holy Mass really was the center of his day, quite literally. The following is an extract from Bishop del Portillo's recollections, published in the book *Immersed in God*.

The holy Mass was the center of his day, quite literally. He divided the day into two parts: until noon he lived in the presence of God by concentrating on thanksgiving for the Mass he had celebrated that morning, and after the Angelus he began to prepare for the next day's Mass.

He often confided to me that ever since his ordination he had prepared to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice every time as if it were to be his last. The thought that the Savior might take him away immediately afterwards would stir him every day to pour out in the Mass all the faith and love that he could muster. And this is how he lived right up to June 26, 1975, when he celebrated his last Mass with extraordinary fervor.

It would take too long to describe how the Father lived each part of the holy Mass. So I will just mention two details which I often heard him speak of. At the elevation of the Eucharistic Bread, and again at the elevation of the Blood of our Lord, he would repeat certain prayers – not aloud, because the rubrics do not permit it, but in his mind and heart – and he did this with heroic perseverance which lasted for decades.

Here are the specifics. While he had the consecrated host in his hands, he would say, “My Lord and my God,” the act of faith of Saint Thomas the Apostle. Next, again taking his inspiration from the Gospel, he would slowly repeat, “Increase our faith, hope, and charity,” asking our Lord to give the whole Work the grace of

growing in those virtues. Immediately after that, he would repeat a prayer addressed to the Merciful Love, a prayer which he had known and meditated on since his youth, but which he never used in his preaching – for many years he only rarely confided to us that he recited it –: “Holy Father, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary I offer to you Jesus, your beloved Son, and in him, through him, and with him I offer myself for all his intentions and in the name of all creatures.” Afterwards he added the invocation “Lord, grant purity, and joy with peace, to me and to all,” thinking especially, of course, of his sons and daughters in Opus Dei. And finally, while he was genuflecting after having elevated the Host or the Chalice, he recited the first stanza of the Eucharistic hymn *Adoro Te devote* (“O Godhead hid, devoutly I adore Thee”), and he said to our Lord, “Welcome to the altar!”

All of this, I repeat, was said by him not just on this or that occasion, but every day, and never mechanically, but with all his love, with everything in him. I know about all this because he told me himself – me and Fr. Javier Echevarria. One time he confided this to us was a day in 1970, in Mexico, when he was praying aloud in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe; he had gone there, in the company of several of his sons, to make a novena to the Blessed Virgin.