



Saint Josemaría Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

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Tracing the history of the Church in the footsteps of St Josemaría

Places in Rome (1)

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St Josemaría is a good guide to the many places in Rome that he himself visited to draw faith from the witness of the early Christians. The aim of the articles gathered under the heading Places in Rome is to reveal the main traces of the history of the Catholic Church that are to be found in Rome, the Eternal City.

- [St Peter's Basilica](#)
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The description will follow in St Josemaría's footsteps, so that his teachings can help draw the maximum fruit from this tour. For Catholics, Rome is not just a city of great artistic and historical significance, but something much more: it is home, a return to their roots, the setting of the marvelous story of the infinite Love of God, who wants to reach all mankind. The history of Rome will always be a present, living thing, and at the beginning of the third millennium it takes on particular relevance, as the children of the Church face up to the challenge of a new evangelization.

June 23, 2006 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the day the founder of Opus Dei arrived in Rome. This anniversary highlighted many aspects of St Josemaría's life:

his self-abandonment into God's hands; his heroic fortitude in fulfilling God's Will; his trust in the Church and his love for the Pope; his dreams of expanding the apostolate in the face of all the odds; his desire to "Romanize" Opus Dei, giving it a universal, Catholic heart in union with Peter, the visible center of the unity of the Church.

St Josemaría was once asked when he first thought of traveling to Rome, and his reply was both concise and revealing. "I'd never thought of coming to Rome," he said. "But I had to come, because Opus Dei was born Roman." ¹ On other occasions he spoke in more detail about the meaning of the Church's "Roman-ness", in which Opus Dei shares. "For me, "Roman" is synonymous with Catholic, Ecumenical and Universal," ² he said in 1964. A few years later, he wrote: "I venerate with all my strength the Rome of Peter and Paul, bathed in the blood of martyrs, the center from which so many have set out to propagate throughout the world the saving word of Christ. To be Roman does not entail any manifestation of provincialism, but rather of authentic ecumenism. It presupposes the desire to enlarge the heart, to open it to all men with the redemptive zeal of Christ, who seeks all men and takes in all men, for he has loved all men first." ³

Christ's Church is Roman because, through divine Providence, the first Bishop of Rome was St Peter, the source of unity and guarantee of the faithful transmission of the deposit of revealed truth. It is quite natural, therefore, for Catholics to wish to become more and more "Roman", so that what St Josemaría said to some of his children who had recently arrived in Rome should come true in their lives too. He said, "Rome will leave a deep and lasting mark on your souls, if you take advantage of your time here. And it will teach you to be more faithful children of the Church and to have a more supernatural love for the Holy Father." ⁴

Notes

1. St Josemaría Escrivá, General Archive of the Opus Dei Prelature (AGP) P01, 1968, p. 224
2. St Josemaría Escrivá, AGP, P01, II-1964, p. 17
3. St Josemaría Escrivá, homily "Loyalty to the Church", June 4, 1972, published in *In Love with the Church*, Scepter Publishers, p.13
4. St Josemaría Escrivá, AGP, P01, 1973, p. 283