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Biography of José Luis Múzquiz

Fr. Joseph (José Luis Múzquiz de Miguel) was born in 1912 in Badajoz, Spain. He helped St. Josemaria spread Opus Dei to many countries, especially the United States.

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Brief Biography

Fr. Joseph (as he was known in the United States) was born on October 14, 1912, in Badajoz, Spain. While studying engineering in Madrid in

1934, he met Saint Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei. Responding to God's call, he joined Opus Dei in January of 1940.

He would eventually obtain three doctorates, in Engineering, History, and Canon Law. As a civil engineer in the early 1940's, he strove to sanctify his work of building bridges and railroad stations, and carried out apostolate with colleagues and friends. On June 25, 1944, he was one of the first three priests to be ordained for Opus Dei.

In 1949 Father Joseph went to the United States to start Opus Dei's apostolic work there, first in Chicago and then in other cities. In the late 1950s, he traveled extensively, laying the groundwork for Opus Dei's beginnings in Asia. He subsequently worked in Rome, Switzerland and Spain, and then in 1976 he returned to the United States.

On June 21, 1983, Father Joseph died, after suffering a heart attack while teaching a class at Arnold Hall Conference Center in Pembroke, MA. He is buried in St. Joseph's Cemetery in Brookline, MA.

Father Joseph was an inspiration to thousands of people of every social background. His warm love, tireless work, and humble simplicity brought him a reputation for holiness among all who knew him.

Photos of Fr. Joseph Muzquiz

Longer Biography

“There is no greater love than Love [of God]. All other loves are little loves.” Joseph Muzquiz had just met St. Josemaría Escrivá, the Founder of Opus Dei, and his words deeply impressed the young engineering student. But he little suspected that this encounter would change his life. It was the 1934-35 school year,

Joseph was a 22 year old handsome, athletic young man and an outstanding student with a bright future and nothing further from his mind than a life totally dedicated to the service of God.

The Servant of God Joseph (José Luis) Muzquiz was born on October 14, 1912, in Badajoz, Spain, the eldest of two children. His father, a colonel in the infantry, was born in Havana, Cuba, and his mother was from Badajoz. Their home combined deep piety with a sense of freedom. “José Luis was the heart and soul of family gatherings,” says his sister, Sagrario. “Always very affable, he teased people and encouraged everyone.”

José Luis spent his childhood in Toledo and Madrid. He finished first in his high school class, enjoyed sports and taught catechism to children. A classmate, Fernando Labrada, recalls that he was “mature,

cool-headed, affectionate and very pious.” In 1930 he began studying civil engineering at the university.

After his initial meeting with St. Josemaría, Muzquiz decided to attend classes which the former gave once a week to small groups of university students.

In July 1936, six months after he graduated from the university, the Spanish Civil War broke out. The Servant of God spent the next three years in the army as an engineering officer. In July 1937, he met up with an Opus Dei member who had just escaped across the lines from the Republican zone, and learned that Saint Josemaría was still alive, though many other priests had been killed.

In 1938, a letter from St. Josemaría caught up with him at the Guadalajara front. “At that point, I completely changed. I saw clearly

that the Work was something our Lord wanted, which God had protected with a special Providence.” And he added: “I continued to speculate and I thought that I would end up in the Work. In fact, that was the day I dedicated myself internally.”

In January 1940, shortly after leaving the army, he joined Opus Dei.

Muzquiz’s human and supernatural maturity led Saint Josemaría to rely heavily on him from the start and to entrust him with many responsibilities. For the next few years he sought to sanctify his work as a civil engineer and helped bring many colleagues and friends closer to God.

When Saint Josemaría asked him if he would begin preparing for the priesthood, Muzquiz agreed. After a rigorous preparation, on June 25, 1944, in Madrid, Joseph Muzquiz,

Alvaro del Portillo and José María Hernández Garnica became the first three men ordained as priests for Opus Dei. From that moment on, Father Joseph poured himself into his pastoral work.

In 1949 Saint Josemaría sent Father Joseph to begin Opus Dei in the United States. Father Joseph arrived in Chicago without money and knowing almost no English, but with deep supernatural confidence. Within six months of his arrival, he purchased a student residence in Chicago, persuading his real estate agent to donate the commission towards a down payment. Richard Rieman, a former naval aviator, became the first American to join Opus Dei.

Soon Father Joseph began work on expanding to other cities. With only a handful of people available to staff the new centers, he fully appreciated

the increased burdens that would fall to him, accepting them cheerfully. He had an exceptional capacity for using time well, with intense, effective work. He always pushed himself hard, while at the same time being very solicitous of the others, frequently asking if they were tired or needed a rest.

The source of his seemingly inexhaustible energy was the Holy Eucharist. “His piety and devotion were extraordinary...He didn’t ‘say’ the Mass; Father Joseph ‘lived’ the Mass,” recalls Robert Stepp, who lived at the Woodlawn Residence in the early 1950s.

In 1961 Saint Josemaría called Father Joseph to work with him in the international government of Opus Dei in Rome. At that time there were already centers in Boston, Chicago, South Bend, Milwaukee, Madison, Saint Louis, and Washington, D.C.

Father Joseph had also been instrumental in starting Opus Dei's work in Canada and Japan.

After working in Rome for three years, he moved to Switzerland as the head of Opus Dei in that country. Subsequently, Saint Josemaría, concerned that the 54-year-old Father Joseph was aging rapidly from so much intense work, decided to return him to a less stressful position. Father Joseph became the chaplain of Pozoalbero, a conference center in southwestern Spain.

Despite having worked for many years in more senior positions, Father Joseph cheerfully accepted the change. He then threw himself into the new assignment, generating a very demanding schedule of pastoral activity: preaching retreats, giving spiritual direction, and hearing confessions in nearby parishes. Besides, he devoted time to visiting

priests scattered around the towns and villages of the area. His generous work embraced people of all social classes and economic conditions, and his cheerful, humble guidance has led many to lives of deep commitment to our Lord.

He returned to the United States in 1976, serving first as the U.S. head of Opus Dei, and later as the chaplain of Arnold Hall Conference Center, near Boston. His deep love and concern for priests led him to keep up until the end of his life his custom of regular brief visits to many priests, as a way of befriending them and making himself available to help them in any way possible.

On June 21, 1983, Father Joseph died after suffering a heart attack while teaching a class at Arnold Hall. His last day, before and after the heart attack, and through his hours in the hospital, was filled with what had

filled each of his days for many years: constant acts of concern, of service, for the others, for the sake of our Lord.

Among the mourners at his wake were Boston's Cardinal Humberto Sousa Medeiros and several auxiliary bishops. Father Joseph is buried at Saint Joseph's Cemetery in Boston.

There were many witnesses of Father Joseph's reputation for holiness during his lifetime, and since his death this reputation has continued to grow around the world. The postulator has been receiving many testimonies of favors granted through his intercession.