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Blessed Josemaría Escrivá to be canonized October 6, 2002

The Vatican has announced that Pope John Paul II will canonize Josemaría Escrivá, Opus Dei's founder, Padre Pío, Juan Diego, and 6 others this year.

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Pope John Paul II will canonize Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, Opus Dei's founder, the Vatican announced on February 26, 2002. The canonization

will take place in Saint Peter's Square on October 6, 2002.

The Holy See also announced that Padre Pío would be canonized June 16, Juan Diego would be canonized July 30, Pedro de San José Betancurt would be canonized July 31, and a canonization ceremony would take place May 19, 2002, for Alonso de Orozco, Ignazio da Santhiá, Umile da Bisignano, Paulina do Coração Agonizante de Jesus, and Benedetta Cambiagio Frassinello.

Blessed Josemaría founded Opus Dei in Spain in 1928 to help people seek holiness in everyday life, especially through work. By the time of his death, on June 26, 1975, Opus Dei had spread to 32 countries and had 60,000 members.

"By his example and preaching, Blessed Josemaría has taught many thousands of people that their daily activities can bring them closer to

God," said Rev. Arne Panula, the vicar of Opus Dei in the United States. "The Church, in declaring Blessed Josemaría a saint, reminds us that all men and women are called to sanctity."

Blessed Josemaría's emphasis on lay holiness, while first considered radical by some within the Catholic Church, was later re-affirmed by the Church's Second Vatican Council. Pope John Paul and other Church leaders have described Blessed Josemaría as a precursor of the Council.

"Your institution has as its aim the sanctification of one's life, while remaining within the world at one's place of work and profession," Pope John Paul once told members of Opus Dei. "This is a truly great ideal, which right from the beginning has anticipated the theology of the lay

state, a mark of the Church and the Council."

Blessed Josemaría was born in Barbastro, Spain, on Jan. 9, 1902. He founded Opus Dei on Oct. 2, 1928. After his death in 1975, a third of the world's bishops petitioned the Vatican to open his cause of beatification and canonization.

Vatican procedures for canonization — a formal declaration that someone is a saint — require an exhaustive investigation of a potential saint's life, plus two authenticated miracles.

Pope John Paul II beatified Monsignor Escrivá in Saint Peter's Square on May 17, 1992, attracting an audience of about 300,000 people.

On Dec. 20, 2001, the Vatican authenticated a second miracle attributed to Blessed Josemaría, thus clearing the way for the canonization. A Spanish doctor

suffering from chronic radiodermatitis, damage to his hands caused by repeated exposure to x-rays, was miraculously healed after praying for Blessed Josemaría's intercession.

The canonization later this year coincides with a worldwide, year-long series of events commemorating the hundredth anniversary of Blessed Josemaría's birth. At one of these events last month Pope John Paul said, "Blessed Josemaría placed at the center of his own preaching the truth that all the baptized are called to the fullness of charity, and that the most immediate way to reach this common goal is through the ordinary events of each day."

Since Blessed Josemaría's death in 1975, the number of people in Opus Dei has grown to 84,000 people worldwide, with 3,000 in the United States.

In 1982 Opus Dei became the Catholic Church's first personal prelate. Personal prelatures, like dioceses, are hierarchical jurisdictions of the Church. Personal prelatures exist to carry out specific pastoral missions within the Church worldwide.

U.S. groups needing tickets for the canonization can obtain information at www.escriva2002.ca.

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