

Father Joseph L. Soria

Obituary - Father Joseph L.
Soria (17 April 1932 - 3 October
2022)

2022-10-14

José Luis Soria Sáiz was born on April 17, 1932, in **Valladolid**, Spain, the eldest of five children. His mother became one of the first supernumeraries of Opus Dei in that city. Joe, as he was nicknamed when young, studied medicine in Valladolid, and there, in 1949, he saw

his calling to Opus Dei as a numerary.

In 1953 he moved to **Rome**, where he studied for the priesthood and obtained a doctorate in Canon Law. Ordained a priest on November 18, 1956, he worked closely with St. Josemaria. He served as the Spiritual Director of Opus Dei (1956–1961), then General Postulator (1961–1976), and fulfilled many other functions in its central government.

He attended to the founder as his personal physician until the saint's death. When St. Josemaria suffered a heart attack on June 26, 1975, Fr. Joe tried to revive him, later writing: "After an hour and a half of vain efforts by a small group, some of them also physicians, I closed his eyes with my fingers."

For more than twenty years, he contributed to the formation of future priests as Professor of Pastoral

Medicine and Catholic Doctrine at the Pontifical Lateran University and as Apostolic Examiner of the Clergy for the Vicariate of Rome. He was a specialist in moral and spiritual theology, as well as the author of more than fifteen books and booklets, and more than sixty articles.

IN CANADA, 1976–2022

In December of 1976, at the age of 44, Fr. Joe began another stage in his life. He moved to **Montreal**. In 1977 Blessed Alvaro del Portillo asked him to direct the apostolates of Opus Dei in Canada, which he did until 1984. He next served as chaplain for Hawthorn School for girls in **Toronto**. In the mid-eighties, he started travelling monthly to Alberta and British Columbia to preach and provide spiritual guidance. He was a catalyst for the growth of the Opus Dei apostolates in Western Canada.

In February of 1997, Fr. Joe joined other numeraries in establishing the first centre of Opus Dei in **Vancouver**. His priestly service made him well known and much loved as a wise, prudent, and gifted preacher and spiritual director - of young and old, women and men, of all social strata. He was also very dedicated to helping diocesan clergy. In recognition of his fruitful years of pastoral work in the Vancouver archdiocese, in 2020, Pope Francis awarded him the Cross *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*.

Fr. Joe was an example of order and hard work. He was very demanding on himself, while truly affectionate and understanding with others. Because of his clear and wise counsels, many sought his advice, winning him the affection of countless friends. A man of many talents, he was widely read and loved discussing historical events and

ideas. Later in life, when he had a free moment, one would find him gardening or wood carving. He also enjoyed sharing magic tricks with children.

Fr. Joe was very faithful to the spirit of Opus Dei, and had a great love and veneration for its founder. His well-known book, *Maestro de Buen Humor (Teacher of Cheerfulness)*, spotlights St. Josemaria's optimistic and smiling attitude to life. This spiritual son well learned that lesson – heroically and serenely offering up a decade of illness. He was surrounded over those years by the constant care of his brothers, his sisters in the Administration and of his caregivers. Countless Canadians and many others owe him what only God can measure.

This is what the Prelate highlighted in a letter to his Canadian children upon learning of Fr. Joe's passing

away: “We are all, in some form, indebted to the generosity with which he answered God's call. In this way, we can add to our prayers for Joe a thankfulness to God because he offers us a new example of how a “yes” to what God asks of us—which takes place in our different circumstances—is worthwhile.”

On Friday, October 14, 2022 at 10 a.m. (Pacific Time), the Most Reverend J. Michael Miller, CSB, Archbishop of Vancouver will celebrate a Funeral Mass for Fr. Joseph Soria at Holy Rosary Cathedral, accompanied by Msgr Antoine de Rochebrune, Vicar of Opus Dei in Canada. A recording of the funeral can be viewed [here](#).

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