

## From Sea to Sea

From Montreal to Vancouver, passing through Petrolia, masses on the occasion of the feast day of St. Josemaria (June 26th) were celebrated across much of the country.

2008-08-04

### ***Petrolia***

Petrolia? What's that? Where's that? We are glad you asked. Petrolia (pop. 5,222), in south-western Ontario, boasts of being "Canada's Victorian Oil Town" with the discovery in 1858

of what is thought to be the world's first oil well in a nearby location which naturally became known as Oil Springs.

So Pete and Shelley Aarssen thought they would try and add another first for the town by asking the pastor of their parish if he would celebrate a mass for St. Josemaria Escriva, the founder of Opus Dei, on the occasion of his liturgical feast, June 26th. Fr. Steve Savel gladly acceded to their request, and he celebrated the mass of St. Josemaria at 6:30 pm on Thursday, June 26th for some 50 or 60 people (member, Cooperators and their children) from the London-Sarnia-Windsor triangle in south-western Ontario. Fr. Steve had been at the canonization of St. Josemaria in 2002, and in his homily he quoted Pope John Paul II from the canonization and the beatification ceremonies, as well as drawing out

applicable lessons from each of the readings of the mass.

## Edmonton

Being the capital (pop. ~1 million) of oil-rich Alberta, Edmontonians were not to be outdone by Petrolia, and a mass for St. Josemaria was also celebrated here. Fr. Vic Perron was the celebrant at St. Andrew's Parish for some 200 people, including a good number of children.

## Ottawa

In the nation's capital, about three hundred people attended the Solemn Anniversary Mass of Saint Josemaria at the Notre-Dame Cathedral-Basilica of Ottawa in the evening of June 26th. Msgr. Terrence Prendergast, Archbishop of Ottawa, presided the concelebration with Msgr. Frederic Dolan, Regional Vicar of the

Prelature for Canada, along with several other priests. The choirs of the Sacred Music Society and the Sparrows, under conductor Üwe Lieflander contributed to the solemnity and enjoyment of the occasion.

In his homily, Msgr. Prendergast underlined Saint Josemaria's love for the Eucharist and encouraged the faithful to be 'Eucharistic souls' -in words of Saint Josemaria- especially in the light of the recent Eucharistic Congress.

At the end of the ceremony, Msgr. Prendergast spent a good deal of time meeting many of the families who had come to the Mass.

## Montreal

Msgr. Frederick Dolan, Regional Vicar of the Prelature for Canada, celebrated the mass of St. Josemaria

in St. Patrick's Basilica. It was remarkable to see so many young faces among the crowd of 600 people gathered for the celebration.

In his homily, Msgr. Dolan, quoting St. Josemaria's brief put powerful point from Forge, encouraged the participants to be more eucharistic souls:

“Be a eucharistic soul!

If the centre around which your thoughts and hopes turn is the Tabernacle, then, my child, how abundant the fruits of your sanctity and apostolate will be!” (Forge 835)

He went on to say: “We can learn much from the intensity with which St. Josemaria prayed the Mass. During a conference on the priesthood in the mid-90's, Cardinal Ratzinger told a story about the early days of Opus Dei:“

A young woman had the opportunity to listen for the first time to a talk given by Fr. Escriva, the founder of Opus Dei. She was very curious to hear a famous preacher. But after participating in a Mass he celebrated, she no longer wanted to listen to a human orator. She recounted later that from that moment on, her only interest was to discover the word and will of God.” The Ministry and Life of Priests By Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, October 1995.

”Dear friends, I would like to end with this moving story: “At the beginning of the fourth century, Christian worship was still forbidden by the imperial authorities. Some Christians in North Africa, who felt bound to celebrate the Lord's Day, defied the prohibition. They were martyred after declaring that it was not possible for them to live without the Eucharist, the food of the Lord:

*sine dominico non possumus*  
(*Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 95).

May our celebration this evening confirm us in the conviction that Jesus is truly here, and that just like those Christians of the 4th century, we too cannot live without the sacrament of our salvation.”

Toronto

A standing room-only crowd estimated at about 800 attended the mass of St. Josemaria Escriva, the founder of Opus Dei, on his liturgical feast, June 26th, in Sts. Martha and Mary Church (full disclosure requires acknowledging that this parish is actually in the Toronto suburb of Mississauga). The mass was presided by the Most Reverend John A. Boissonneau, Auxiliary Bishop of Toronto, with Msgr. Gregory Haddock, former Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Canada, and

several other priests from south-western Ontario as concelebrants.

In his homily, Bishop Boissonneau highlighted how St. Josemaria's message was confirmed by the Second Vatican Council and he encouraged the Faithful of the Prelature to continue to be very apostolic without fearing the environment.

One attendee's story demonstrated some originality, both in his situation, and in his solution. Robert Quinto is a Philippino businessman who happened to be on a business trip to Nova Scotia and found himself in Canada for the feast of St. Josemaria. But he did not abandon hope of being able to attend a celebratory mass, and went to the Canadian web site of Opus Dei and, *Eureka!* he found the listing of masses across the country, and arranged to stop in Toronto for the

mass on his way back to the Philippines.

Another touching story is that of a man and his wife who, with their four young children, attended the mass. The husband was a baptised Catholic, but did not know it until he became an adult, and the wife may not have been baptised at all.

Through his studies and the friendship of a member of Opus Dei, the husband decided to pick up his long-neglected faith, and a few days after the mass, they took a first step by having their marriage validated in the presence of a Catholic priest. Within a few weeks, the family's journey to the faith should be completed as the wife and children are currently preparing for baptism.

In the time before, during and after the mass, Fr. Fausto Bailo said that he spent 3 hours in the confessional. Priests at the other masses reported

similar experiences, giving an idea of the type of people attending and the conversion graces obtained by St. Josemaria.

Peter Rebello, the father of 11 children sent us the following report:

*"We had our usual 'Rebello' village contingent; Steve, Liz and his 8 children. Mark and Andrea. David and Jean and their 3 children. Mary and her two girls. Catherine, Anne and Sarah were also there, along with Louise and me. John was en route to Tel Aviv, so was not present at a mass, and Clare and Martin were in Florence where they attended a mass in honour of St. Josemaria. I had spent the day in Montreal and was on the 4.30pm flight from Montréal to Toronto. As there were thundershowers in the Toronto area, we circled the airport many times and finally landed just in time to let me go and pick up my parish priest Fr. Paul Zimmer and take him to the church.*

*On the way back from Montreal on the airplane I sat beside a young mother from South Vietnam expecting her second child and I told her about St. Josemaria and Opus Dei and gave a prayer card and told her to pray to the founder for grace to bring up her children well. On walking in to the mass with my parish priest and a seminarian Luis Calleja who I also invited I bumped into Robert Hurley an 87 year old friend of mine who came to the mass by himself. He was thrilled with the way the mass was said and that the church was full. When I invited Luis he told me he wanted to go to confession and so I introduced him to Fr. Cris Graas for that purpose.”*

For Chris and Karen Nivet it was also a personal anniversary as they celebrated their 37th wedding anniversary that day. Chris is chairing a fund-raising effort to support one of the apostolic activates

of Opus Dei, and a couple of hours before the mass, the project achieved its first-round goal. People “in the know” consider this as a bit of a gift from St. Josemaria to Chris.

## ***Vancouver***

Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB presided over the Mass of St. Josemaria in Corpus Christi parish with a crowd of some 750 people. Among the concelebrants were Fr. Joe Soria, a former Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Canada, Fr. Cal Christiansen, just ordained a week earlier for the diocese of Seattle, WA, and eight other priests from the Vancouver area. As in all the masses for St. Josemaria, confessions were heard before the Mass and throughout the celebration, in this case by Fr. Eric Nicolai and Fr. Fernando Mignone

In his homily Mgr. Miller spoke about the passion with which Saint

Josemaria proclaimed the universal call to sanctity in ordinary life. He underlined the real meaning of ordinary, emphasizing that “seeking holiness must not be misunderstood as if it involved some kind of extraordinary existence, possible only for a few “uncommon heroes” numbered among the saints”.

Quoting from a speech of Joseph Ratzinger, he said “heroic virtue does not mean that the saint performs a type of “gymnastics” of holiness, something that normal people do not dare to do. It means rather that in the life of a person God’s presence is revealed--something man could not do by himself and through himself... Heroic virtue properly speaking does not mean that one has done great things by oneself, but rather that in one’s life there appear realities which the person has not done himself, because he has been transparent and ready for the work of God. Or, in other words, to be a

saint is nothing other than to speak with God as a friend speaks with a friend. This is holiness.”

The archbishop went on to describe the scene of the Gospel which speaks of Peter and the miraculous draught of fish, inviting the faithful to also launch out into the deep as Peter had done at the Lord’s invitation. This launching out, he said, can most effectively be done through the apostolate of friendship, but it must start with a sincere deepening of friendship with Christ. And Christ is present in the Eucharist, “which must become for us a school of life in which we learn to give our lives.” After evoking the figure of St. Joseph the carpenter, Archbishop Miller reaffirmed St. Josemaria’s constant teaching on work as an integral element of God’s saving plan. He therefore reiterated the Lord’s invitation made to Peter: to follow him and launch out into the deep

accompanied by the Lord, especially in the Eucharist.

The choir greatly enriched the celebration with hymns of Eucharistic devotion such as the *Adoro te devote*, and the *Panis Angelicus*.

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