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Thanksgiving Masses

From October 8 to 10, there were 29 thanksgiving Masses celebrated in 19 churches in Rome, presided over by a number of cardinals and bishops. The Masses were celebrated in 18 languages.

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The Masses were celebrated in: Arabic, Bahasa Indonesian, Czech, Chinese, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swedish. In

their homilies, many of the presiding bishops underlined the universality of the message proclaimed by the new saint. They also expressed their happiness that St. Josemaría Escrivá has been added to the rolls of saints, making him part of the patrimony of the whole Church.

Around 200 faithful from **Hong Kong** participated in the Mass celebrated by Archbishop Joseph Ti-Kang of Taipei (Taiwan) in the Church of S. Girolamo della Carità. In reference to the life of the new saint, Archbishop Ti-Kang emphasized that the "Far East was in his heart from a very young age." He also pointed out that the value of work and the love towards the family preached by St. Josemaría are two values very much rooted in Chinese culture. Among the participants present was a married couple from the People's Republic of China, George and Maria Li, with their two children. The parents have

a great devotion to the new saint and have named their youngest son Josemaría.

The Mass for the faithful coming from **Japan** took place in the same church. This Mass was presided over by Takaaki Hirayama, Bishop of Nagasaki. Bishop Hirayama explained that excessive worry over work is one of the greatest problems of the Japanese population and that the message of sanctification of ordinary life preached by St. Josemaría Escrivá can help "give meaning" to this work. One of those attending, Edward Wijaya, commented that Japanese culture greatly values human virtues. He added that the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá proves that it is possible to "rise higher above" human virtues.

The Basilica of Trinità dei Monti was the setting for the Thanksgiving Mass

in the **Maronite Rite**. The Mass was concelebrated by the Archbishop of Beirut, Paul Youssef Matar and the Archbishop of Byblos (Lebanon), Bechara Rai. At the end of the ceremony, Archbishop Marat asked the new saint for the grace to "sanctify our lives and the lives of others." Cardinal Ignace Moussa Daoud also spoke, pointing out that the message of the Founder of Opus Dei, the universal call to holiness, "is not only for the privileged few" but for the whole world. Gilbert, a Lebanese seminarian studying in Rome, served at the ceremony and expressed his happiness for this canonization: "What I most appreciate about this new saint is his message of unity among diversity. For me, it was fantastic to see the variety of people of the Church present in St. Peter's Square."

The Thanksgiving Mass in Dutch took place in the Basilica of

Sant'Apollinare. It was presided over by the nuncio of the **Netherlands**, Bishop François Bacqué.

More than 9,000 people participated in the concelebration that took place in the Basilica of S.Paolo fuori le Mura for the participants of the canonization coming from **Spain**. The ceremony was presided over by the Cardinal of Madrid, Antonio María Rouco Varela, along with the Archbishop of Toledo and the Primate of Spain, Francisco Álvarez Martínez. Thirty Archbishops and Bishops and nearly a hundred priests also concelebrated. In his homily, Cardinal Rouco highlighted that St. Josemaría was a Spanish saint with a universal heart, and he invited all the faithful of Opus Dei to "maintain alive the charisma of your founder and father." At the end of the Mass, Cardinal Rouco added that God had made St. Josemaría a "master of

spiritual life, of an authentic Christian life."

The Basilica of S. Maria Maggiore was overflowing in the Thanksgiving Mass held for the faithful coming from **Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia**. In order to come to Rome, many had to overcome serious difficulties as a result of the economic crisis in many of these Latin American countries. Cardinal Jorge Mejía presided over the celebration. With him, numerous Archbishops, Bishops and some 60 priests concelebrated also. The Eastern rite was also represented at the Mass, by Bishop Charbel Georges Merhi of San Charbel (Buenos Aires) of the Maronite rite. In his homily, Cardinal Mejía pointed out the love of the Church which St. Josemaría had. He also highlighted the evangelization of culture which is being promoted by faithful of Opus Dei through educational initiatives.

Some teenagers coming from Argentina said that in the weeks leading up to the canonization, they worked continuously and turned to the intercession of Josemaría Escrivá to obtain the necessary amount of money to travel to Rome.

Cardinal Poupard, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, presided over one of the concelebrations in **French** in the Basilica of S. Maria in Trastevere. The Cardinal explained that the call to holiness preached by the new saint invites all to harmonize the interior life and the exterior life, that is to say, the life of prayer and the activities of ordinary life. The Thanksgiving Mass, at which some 2,000 people were present, was accompanied by a choir from Ivory Coast and another choir from Cameroon. Another Mass in French also took place in S. Maria in Trastevere, presided over by

Cardinal Bernard Agré, Metropolitan Archbishop of Abidjan (Ivory Coast). Cardinal Agré stated that the message of St. Josemaría has "democratized" holiness, making it accessible to everyone.

Around 2,500 people from the **United States** came together in S. Maria Maggiore to participate in the Mass presided over by John Myers, Archbishop of Newark, New Jersey. In his homily, Archbishop Myers invited all those present not to live a minimalist Catholicism, and explained that holiness is an invitation addressed to all Christians. Myers also added that the vocation to Opus Dei was "not just for elite Catholics, but rather for ordinary Catholics. All that is needed is an urgent availability and a desire to serve." At the end of the ceremony, the participants demonstrated their gratitude with an ovation to John Paul II. Among those present was

Kevin Majeres, Psychiatry resident at Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. Kevin was born on June 26, 1975, date of St. Josemaría Escrivá's death. Years later, his mother, who is not a member of Opus Dei, told him this fact. According to Kevin, "this coincidence changed my life. The man that taught me how to pray, to live my life with a more profound spirit, has now been declared a Saint by the Church. It is really very moving."

In the St. Josemaría Escrivá Parish, a thanksgiving Mass took place for the **Venezuelan group**. At the end of the Mass, the public sang Happy Birthday to the Archbishop of Mérida, Baltazar Porras Cardoso, who was to celebrate his birthday the following day.

There were two celebrations in **Italian** presided over by Cardinals Giovanni Battista Re and Camillo

Ruini. These took place in the Basilicas of SS. Dodici Apostolic and S. Giovanni in Laterano, respectively. During his homily, the Vicar of the Pope for the city of Rome defined St. Josemaría as "a contemplative of the face of Christ." His profound union with Christ "explains the sweeping apostolic dynamism that characterized his existence." For this reason, "the Holy Spirit makes St. Josemaría and his preaching a sure point of reference for evangelization." The Cardinal reiterated that "the Italian bishops should echo the 'launch out into the deep' with which the Pope has been urging the faithful to communicate the Gospel in this changing world." He concluded by entrusting "these hopes to the intercession of St. Josemaría, who very much loved this Italian land and its Christian roots, and who always urged Christians to walk in the direction marked by their pastors."

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