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The process of canonization for Josemaría Escrivá

Facts about the procedures followed in the canonization of the founder of Opus Dei.

03/02/2006

Josemaría Escrivá died on June 26, 1975. By 1978, 10,000 favors received through his intercession had been reported. 6,000 people wrote the Pope requesting the opening of his cause of canonization, including 69 cardinals, 241 archbishops, 987

bishops, and 41 heads of religious orders and congregations. The Congregation for the Causes of Saints opened the cause on February 19, 1981.

The Decree on Heroic Virtue

The Congregation established tribunals to investigate Escrivá's life and virtues in Rome and Madrid, presided over by Cardinals Ugo Poletti and Enrique y Tarancon.

The proceedings lasted from March 1981 to November 1986, and involved 980 sessions with 92 witnesses testifying. Among the witnesses were 4 cardinals, 4 archbishops, 7 bishops, 28 priests and 5 members of religious orders. They all knew Escrivá and had had personal dealings with him. More than half of the witnesses were not members of Opus Dei. The testimony filled 11,000 pages in 22 volumes. The tribunals also accepted more

than 100 written testimonies, and other relevant documents, which together filled 16 volumes. Escrivá's writings, consisting of 13,000 pages in 71 volumes, were also submitted.

In 1987 the Congregation certified the canonical validity of the proceedings and appointed a Dominican, Fr. Ambrogio Eszer, as the Relator. He directed the postulation office as it prepared the Positio, a systematic exposition of the evidence gathered in the investigatory proceedings, which was completed and presented to the Congregation in June 1988. The Congregation reviewed and approved the Positio, and on April 9, 1990, Pope John Paul II promulgated a decree of heroic virtue.

The Beatification

From January to April, 1982, Cardinal Enrique y Tarancon presided over a tribunal in Madrid investigating

evidence of a miraculous cure of Sister Concepción Boullón Rubio, a Carmelite nun. After her nieces sought Escrivá's intercession, she had been cured overnight in June 1976, of a painful tumorous lipomatosis with multiple localities that had rendered her an invalid. The largest of the tumors, on her left shoulder, was the size of an orange. She had also suffered from a gastric ulcer, a hiatal hernia, and grave hypochromic anemia.

The Congregation was presented with a Positio on this miracle in April 1990, after the Pope's decree of heroic virtue was issued. The Congregation, with the assistance of medical and theological consultants, reviewed the Positio and unanimously accepted the miraculous character of the cure and its attribution to Escrivá's intercession. On July 6, 1991, Pope John Paul II promulgated a decree

approving the miraculous cure, and beatified Escrivá on May 17, 1992, before around 300,000 pilgrims in St. Peter's Square.

To provide ample documentation of Escrivá's reputation for miracles, the postulation office had also given the Congregation 75,000 signed statements describing favors of various kinds, including documentation on 20 extraordinary cures attributed to his intercession, selected from among the 36 included in their archives.

The Canonization

From May to July 1994, a canonical tribunal in Badajoz, Spain conducted proceedings to investigate a miraculous cure of an orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Manuel Nevado Rey. Dr. Rey's chronic radiodermatitis in a terminal stage had left him unable to work because of cancerous lesions on his hands. He had been cured

rapidly and completely in November 1992, after asking for Saint Josemaría's intercession.

After reviewing the results of the proceedings in Badajoz, the Congregation and its medical and theological consultants unanimously agreed on the miraculous nature of the cure and its causal relationship to the invocation of Saint Josemaría's intercession. On December 20, 2001, Pope John Paul II promulgated a decree confirming the miraculous cure, and canonized Escrivá on October 6, 2002.

A Note on the Speed of the Cause

Josemaría Escrivá's beatification was the first one to follow the streamlined procedures laid down in the new canonical legislation of 1983, which were designed to present contemporary models of holiness to the faithful. Perhaps for this reason, many people were surprised at the

speed with which the process was carried out. But in the years that have passed, others have followed the new procedure much more rapidly.

For instance, Escrivá's cause was opened 5½ years after his death; Mother Teresa's was opened in under 2 years. Escrivá's beatification took 11 years; Carlos Rodriguez' took 9 years ('92-'01) and Pelé Zeferino Gimenez Malla's took 4 years ('93-'97). Escrivá's canonization has come 10 years after his beatification; Josefina Bakhita, beatified the same day as Escrivá, was canonized in 8 years; 4 recent canonizations took 6 years; and Padre Pio's canonization was only 3 years after his beatification.

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