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Two saints united by love for Mary

Bishop Javier Echevarria, Opus Dei's prelate, speaks of Blessed Juan Diego and Blessed Josemaria Escriva.

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"Four centuries separate Blessed Juan Diego and Josemaria Escriva, but something of great value, their love for our Lady of Guadalupe, unites them in heaven and in the hearts of many Mexicans. This was highlighted by Cardinal Norberto Rivera, Archbishop of Mexico City,

during the Eucharistic celebration on the centennial of the birth of Blessed Josemaria, which he presided over in the Basilica of Guadalupe. In his homily, Cardinal Rivera said that the decision of the Pope to canonize the founder of Opus Dei and Juan Diego is a motive of joy 'for the whole world, but especially for Mexicans.'

"He recalled with deep feeling Msgr. Escriva's visit to Mexico in 1970, his prayer to our Lady of Guadalupe, who was venerated at that time in the old shrine, his joy at seeing the devotion of Mexicans to the Mother of God, and his holy 'envy' of Blessed Juan Diego, the privileged intermediary with the Queen of the Americas. One day, after a period of conversation with some priests in the State of Jalisco, he felt very tired from his work. He went into a room to rest where there was a picture showing our Lady of Guadalupe

giving a rose to Juan Diego. Looking at this canvas, Blessed Josemaria commented: 'That is the way I would like to die, looking at the Most Blessed Virgin and having her give me a flower.' As my predecessor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, recalled, our Lady granted his request: on June 26 1975, when our founder reached the room in which he used to work, his heart stopped. In that office was a picture of our Lady of Guadalupe which received his final affectionate glance.

"The Pope wanted to unite these two men, canonizing them in the year 2002. I would like to interpret this fortunate coincidence as a gesture that will remind all Christians that devotion to our Lady does not grow old, that it never goes out of fashion, that it is always up to date, beyond space and time. I think that there are many of us who are going to her with the petition that Blessed Josemaria

formulated in Mexico during that 1970 trip: 'May our Lady, our Mother of Guadalupe, obtain peace for all the peoples of America.'

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