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From Chicago to Kaunas, bishops commend Opus Dei's founder

Bishops around the world have recently celebrated masses commemorating the centennial of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá's birth. Here's what some of them had to say about Opus Dei's founder.

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**Cardinal Francis George,
archbishop of Chicago, USA. St.**

Mary of the Angels Church, Chicago,
January 9.

"A hundred years ago today,
Josemaría Escrivá was born—a man
who fell in love with the Lord, whom
he recognized in faith as our Savior
and the Savior of the world, a man
who was called by Jesus to the work
of a preacher of God's Word, and a
fisherman—an evangelizer."

**Cardinal Cahal B. Daly, archbishop
emeritus of Armagh, Ireland.**

Church of the Holy Rosary, Dublin,
January 9.

"The truths brought out by Josemaría
Escrivá are as old as the Gospel of
Jesus Christ, and yet as new as the so-
called post-modern age of the new
millennium. They are wide-ranging,
but one may single out some of the
core principles. Josemaría reiterated
the New Testament teaching that
every Christian, in virtue of his or
her baptism, is called to be a saint."

"Josemaría, indeed, often spoke daringly and unconventionally, to emphasise this point. He spoke, for example, of the need to 'materialize' the quest for holiness; one might say, the need to 'earth' holiness in ordinary tasks, whether these be what are called 'menial' tasks, or more esoteric careers in, say, cosmic physics or biochemical research."

Archbishop George Pell of Sydney, Australia. St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, January 4.

"Blessed Josemaría worked to help people know God more and better. For him, the work of Opus Dei was a great catechesis. Catechesis is what he did all his life, with a skill that brought to doctrine the newness of the Gospel, which is always old and always new (Mt. 13:52)."

"Blessed Josemaría considered himself an 'inept and deaf instrument', saw himself when an

old man 'as a stammering child'. I pray to the good God that he will raise up among us many other men and women, who are equally inept and deaf, and who allow God to work in and through them as He wishes."

Archbishop Adam Exner of Vancouver, Canada. Holy Rosary Cathedral, Vancouver, January 9.

"The saints are not people who plan and map out for themselves a way of life and perfection, and carry it out to the letter by themselves. Saints are rather people who love and trust God so much that they are willing to let God lead and direct them wherever He wishes them to go.... Blessed Josemaría was willing to let God lead him and shape his life. Throughout his life, the theme of his prayer was 'May that which you want and I do not know, come about.'"

"I deeply feel that Blessed Josemaría is a special gift to the Church and to

the world of our times. I believe that his charism is particularly relevant for our world of today."

Cardinal Jaime Sin, archbishop of Manila, The Philippines. Cathedral of Manila, January 9.

"But perhaps more important than these and the many other physical miracles, are the countless interior conversions attributed to his intercession. So many people were moved by Blessed Josemaría's message of discovering God in the ordinary circumstances of life. Blessed Josemaría is indeed a powerful intercessor before God - I encourage you to turn to him for your spiritual and material needs."

Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, archbishop of Paris, France. Church Saint-Honoré d' Eylau, Paris, January 8.

"Josemaría Escrivá is one of those figures that crosses the centuries and indicates in some way, to the attentive observer, what the Spirit is carrying out in the Church. It would be possible to say that in the past century God has stirred up men and women —such as Escrivá and many others— who anticipated what the Spirit would make clear in Vatican Council II. The precise task that Providence entrusted to Blessed Josemaría coincides with one of these messages: to find in work a calling of holiness for all Christian people."

Archbishop Kaname Shimamoto of Nagasaki, Japan. Cathedral of Nagasaki, January 9.

"The best congratulation we can give to Blessed Josemaría on the centennial of his birth is making the resolution to follow his spirituality with fidelity. We can also endeavor to

inspire an awareness of God in the depths of the conscience of today's society, in that of our contemporaries. In other words: let us manifest our purpose of dedicating ourselves to the new evangelization."

Cardinal Frédéric Etsou,
archbishop of Kinshasa, Congo.
Cathedral of Our Lady of Congo,
Kinshasa, January 9.

"The centennial of Blessed Josemaría's birth occurs in a time of conflict in the world, and particularly in our country. Violence and division are frequently caused by intolerance and rejection of difference. It would behoove us to discover and live Blessed Josemaría's message: a constant call to learn to live and work together, without regard for race, ethnicity, religion, social status, political views.... On the occasion of this anniversary, we ask

God to grant us, through the intercession of Blessed Josemaría, peace for our souls, peace for our country, peace for the Church and, finally, peace for the world."

Cardinal Miguel Obando Brave,
archbishop of Managua,
Nicaragua. Cathedral of Managua,
January 9.

"The emphasis on doctrine in Opus Dei's apostolate has always impressed me. Opus Dei's work is in truth a continuous catechesis, a noble task of spreading good doctrine. Msgr. Escrivá de Balaguer always followed Jesus' example of doing and teaching. The imprint of his personality has left a deep furrow in the life of the Church: across the world, his words and deeds have stirred up a renewed Christian spirit, expressing itself as service to others with authentic and practical charity."

Cardinal Adrianus Simonis, archbishop of Utrecht, The Netherlands. Gerardus Majella Church, Utrecht, January 19.

"The distinguishing features of the parents can be seen in the children. With his spiritual children, the faithful of Opus Dei, Josemaría Escrivá has been able to speak several times over. In this sense I am able to say that have known the founder through his children in Opus Dei. In them –priests and laity– I see a desire for holiness and apostolate."

Cardinal Giacomo Biffi, archbishop of Bologna, Italy. Cathedral of Bologna, January 9.

"The human, Christian, and priestly adventure of his life —an adventure both extraordinary and direct— is framed entirely by the 20th century. If we learn to interpret events with the penetrating vision of faith, it is not difficult to see in this marvelous

existence the merciful answer of God to the harsh interrogations of one of the most tragic and most complicated centuries of history."

Cardinal Audrys Backis,
archbishop of Vilnius, Lithuania.

Cathedral of Vilnius, January 9.

"The saints are friends of God, that is to say, our friends. They help and they advise, they bless us from heaven and they fortify us in our weaknesses. They especially show us the way with their example. Blessed Josemaría is rightly famous for his book *The Way*, which many people cherish and in which many find strength and beautiful reflections on Christian life in the middle of the world."

Cardinal Nicolás de Jesús López,
archbishop of Santo Domingo,
Dominican Republic. Primada de América Cathedral, Santo Domingo, January 7.

"Blessed Josemaría is a man who dared to challenge the world. He proposed holiness —as he said— in the street and for the people of the street, that is to say the people who toil every day in the world, in business, in politics, in the economy, in academia, etc. Therefore he was certainly a man who drew guidelines that I would hope many others can follow day by day."

Cardinal Lázló Paskai, archbishop of Estergom-Budapest, Hungary.

Matyas-Templon, Budapest, January 9.

"We have heard in the Gospel the words of Jesus: 'Put out into the deep and lower your nets for a catch.' The Holy Father placed his emphasis on these same words at the end of the Holy Year in his apostolic letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. His desire was that we would not return after the enthusiasm of the jubilee to the gray

of every day, but that we would instead have inside us the enthusiasm of the apostle Saint Paul, who wrote of himself: 'I strain forward to what is before, I press on towards the goal, to the prize of God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus.'"

"This evangelical teaching of Jesus, these proposals of the Holy Father, were fulfilled in an extraordinary way in the life of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, Opus Dei's founder. He was an outstanding sacerdotal personality of the twentieth century, who throughout his life worked for the spiritual renewal of the Church. His beatification on May 17, 1992, was the recognition of his holiness of life."

Cardinal Antonio González Zumárraga, archbishop of Quito, Ecuador. Cathedral of Quito, January 9.

"Blessed Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, in fulfilling the mission God entrusted to him, contributed to the spiritual renewal of the Church – teaching and spreading the doctrine of the universal call to holiness, of the sanctifying value of work and of the calling of the faithful Christian to do apostolate."

**Cardinal Antonio María Rouco,
archbishop of Madrid, Spain.**

Cathedral of the Almudena, Madrid,
January 9.

"The history of the saints is the history of 'Christ who passes by' – to use a beautiful phrase from one of the books of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer. Let us 'be' Christ as he passes through the times and spaces of history.... This is true of Opus Dei's founder. Through him and his Work, Christ passes through history again in our time, through the history of the twentieth century.

We give thanks to the Lord for him, and we ask that if God wants, the day will arrive this year – the sooner the better – when the Church will finally travel the canonical road to recognition of Blessed Josemaría's holiness. May the Lord grant that the Prelature, its priests and faithful, and all the Church will celebrate this event in a way that makes him visible among us again as Christ who passes by."

Archbishop Christopher Pierre, nuncio to Uganda. Christ the King Church, Kampala, January 9.

"We are grateful to God for the existence of Blessed Josemaría, founder of Opus Dei. We are grateful for his life, for what he has offered us – a big challenge! Remember what the Pope said at the beginning of his pontificate: 'Do not be afraid, do not be afraid of the call to holiness.' This call to holiness is for me, for you, for

each one of us. We are all invited to be members of God's family; we are all invited to enter into the Church, and to be active members of this Church, the living presence of God in our lives, in this world: do not be afraid to be called to holiness."

**Cardinal Norberto Rivera,
archbishop primate of Mexico.**
Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe,
January 9.

"Like Blessed Juan Diego and so many of our sisters and brothers who enjoy eternal beatitude, Blessed Josemaría joins a diverse crowd of saints who are not special people – super-men – but ordinary and normal beings like us, distinguishing themselves only in having been faithful instruments of God."

**Archbishop Józef Zyciński of
Lublin, Poland.** Cathedral of Lublin,
January 9.

"Sanctifying work, sanctifying oneself through work and sanctifying others through work – this has been Blessed Josemaría's primary message. And these are not merely pretty words; he practiced them in his own life. Just as Christ not only spoke of the Cross but, above all, died on the Cross for us, so our Blessed not only spoke of holiness in work but carried it out in his life, being holy and sanctifying others."

Bishop Armindo Lopes Coelho of Oporto, Portugal. Trinity Church, Oporto, January 9.

"In celebrating the centennial of Blessed Josemaría's birth – 'duc in altum!' (Put out into the deep!). Holiness should be your ideal. Our providential God will open before you the way of happiness and optimism on the path to holiness. Be not afraid. The Teacher goes in front of us and he says continuously: duc

in altum! Have hope, you are a son of God, be not afraid. Strive, dare.... In celebrating the birth of the Blessed, we give thanks to God for his life, writings, work, and example. We ask him to intercede for us before God."

Auxiliary Bishop Peter Henrici, S.J., of Zurich. Our Lady of Zurich Church, January 10.

"I have said that I consider Blessed Josemaría one of the most important figures of Catholicism in the twentieth century, and I owe an explanation. Blessed Josemaría was one of the first ... to recognize the importance of the laity in the Church. And he proposed a spirituality appropriate for the specific needs of the laity. In this he was a pioneer.... In fact, he has had the merit and also the grace of being probably the first one traveling this road. We pray therefore that his Work may continue to be guided by

his spirit, and that many laity may find their vocation in daily life."

Archbishop Sigitas Tamkevicius of Kaunas, Lithuania. Cathedral of Kaunas, January 8.

"This year marks the beginning of Opus Dei's work in Kaunas, which I have received with great happiness and pleasure. My hope is that Opus Dei will bring the benefits of holiness that come to all the countries where the Prelature works. I am convinced that the Catholic Church in Lithuania needs the spirit of Blessed Josemaría that is embodied in his children, who uphold the authentic Magisterium of the Church.... The faithful of Opus Dei, fulfilling the desire of their Founder and following in his steps, grasp the essence of and faithfully respond to the invitation of His Holiness John Paul II – 'Put out into the deep!'"

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