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From Ethiopia to Canada with a friend

I was born in Ethiopia and have lived in Quebec since 1985. I'm the youngest daughter of a large family of 18 children.

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Hayat Hassan Ali

When my brothers and sisters and I had to escape from Ethiopia because of the war, my grandmother sewed a prayer-card of Msgr Josemaría Escrivá into the inside of our clothes, to protect us from danger. We felt

secure on the way to the border, as we knew our friend was with us. On our long journey on foot, we were terribly thirsty but there was no drinking-water. All we could find were dirty puddles. The guide knew our devotion to our “saint” and encouraged us to kneel down and pray to him. Afterwards we came to a fork in the path, and we saw a man dressed in white waving to us from some way off, as if to say “Over here! This way!” We decided to follow him, and found ourselves standing before a stream of clean water where we could all drink. We couldn't see any sign of the "guardian angel" who had guided us to it.

My grandmother first heard about Msgr. Josemaría Escrivá at the end of the 1970s, when she travelled to Fatima to pray to our Lady. She met a Spanish couple who told her about the Founder of Opus Dei. Afterwards she visited Spain and took the

opportunity to find out more about St Josemaría and Opus Dei. She was very happy when she returned to Ethiopia. Straight away she taught me to say the prayer-card and kiss it every time I left the house and got home again from school. We also used to say the prayer to him after praying the rosary. From then on I've always considered St Josemaría as my best friend.

Now I work for the New Evangelization in Quebec. Specifically, I'm in charge of diocesan youth activities. I've taken part in several of the World Youth Days. St Josemaría always accompanies me on these adventures. For example, when we were preparing the trip to Cologne in 2005, we fell far short of the sum of money needed. I encouraged the group of young people with me to make a novena to the founder of Opus Dei. On the last day, a lady came up to me after the

parish Mass and gave me an envelope. It contained a cheque for 25,000 dollars for us.

Since I got involved in the preparations of the 2008 International Eucharistic Congress, I've entrusted to St Josemaría all the arrangements and negotiations I have to do, as well as the fruits of the Congress. Every morning before starting work, I turn to him and say, "You had to undergo hard times, misunderstandings and everything. Please help me to be patient and do what I have to do optimistically and well." When we heard that the Holy Father would not be able to come to the Congress in person, we reckoned that the likely number of inscriptions would be rather small. However, two months before the Congress opens we have reached the figure of 10,000 inscriptions – the original target figure.

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