

The Pope's address at the Mass of Thanksgiving

An address by Pope John Paul II
to pilgrims gathered for the
canonization of St. Josemaría
Escrivá on October 7, 2002.

10/18/2002

Dear brothers and sisters!

1. With joy I extend to you my cordial greetings, on the day after blessed Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer's canonization. I thank Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, for

what he said on behalf of all of you here. I greet affectionately the many cardinals, bishops and priests who have decided to take part in this celebration.

This festive encounter brings together a wide variety of the faithful, proceeding from many countries and belonging to the most diverse social and cultural environments: priests and laity, men and women, young and old, intellectuals and manual workers. This is a sign of the apostolic zeal that burned in Saint Josemaría's soul.

2. In the Founder of Opus Dei, love for the will of God was an outstanding characteristic. Here is a sure criterion of holiness: faithfulness to the fulfillment of the divine will, even to the last consequences. For each one of us the Lord has a plan, to each one he entrusts a mission on earth. The

saint cannot even conceive of himself outside God's plan: he lives only to carry it out.

Saint Josemaría was chosen by the Lord to proclaim the universal call to holiness and to indicate that everyday life, its customary activities, are a path towards holiness. It could be said that he was the saint of the ordinary. He was really convinced that, for whoever lives with an outlook of faith, everything offers an opportunity for a meeting with God, everything becomes a stimulus for prayer. Seen in that way, daily life reveals an unsuspected greatness. Holiness is really put on everyone's doorstep.

3. Escrivá de Balaguer was a saint of great humanity. All those who dealt with him, of whatever level of education or social condition, felt him to be a father, totally dedicated to the service of the others, because

he was convinced that each soul is a marvelous treasure; in fact, each person is worth all the Blood of Christ. This attitude of service is plain to see in his dedication to priestly ministry and in the magnanimity with which he pushed ahead so many works of evangelization and of human development to help the poorest.

The Lord made him understand deeply the gift of our divine filiation. Blessed Josemaría taught how to contemplate the tender face of a Father in God, who speaks to us through the most varied vicissitudes of life. A Father who loves us, who follows us step by step and protects us, understands us and waits for a response of love from each one of us. The consideration of this paternal presence, which accompanies him everywhere, gives the Christian an unshakable confidence; at every moment he should confide in the

heavenly Father. He never feels alone, nor is he afraid. In the Cross, when it appears, he does not see a punishment but rather a mission entrusted by the Lord himself. The Christian is necessarily optimistic, because he knows that he is a son of God in Christ.

4. Saint Josemaría was profoundly convinced that Christian life entails a mission and an apostolate: we are in the world to save it with Christ. He loved the world passionately, with a "redemptive love" (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 604). It is precisely for this reason that his teachings have helped so many ordinary members of the faithful discover the redemptive power of faith, its capacity to transform the earth.

This is a message that has abundant and fruitful implications for the evangelizing mission of the Church.

It fosters the Christianization of the world "from within," showing that there can be no conflict between the divine law and the demands of genuine human progress. This saintly priest taught that Christ must be the apex of all human activity (cf. Jn 12:32). His message impels the Christian to act in places where the future of society is being shaped. From the laity's active presence in all the professions and at the most advanced frontiers of development, there can only come a positive contribution to the strengthening of that harmony between faith and culture which is one of the great needs of our time.

5. Saint Josemaría Escrivá spent his life in the service of the Church. In his writings, priests, laypersons who follow the most diverse ways, and men and women religious find a stimulating source of inspiration. Dear brothers and sisters, in

imitating him with an openness of spirit and of heart, with availability to serve the local Churches, you contribute to giving force to the "spirituality of communion" which the Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte* identifies as one of the most important aims of our times (cf. nos. 42-45).

It is a joy for me to conclude with an appeal to the liturgical feast of this day, Our Lady of the Rosary. Saint Josemaría wrote a fine short work entitled *Holy Rosary*, which is inspired in spiritual childhood, a disposition of spirit proper to those who want to reach total abandonment to the divine will. I wholeheartedly entrust all of you to the maternal protection of Mary, along with your families and your apostolate, thanking you for your presence.

6. I thank once again all those present, especially those who have come from far away. I invite you, dear brothers and sisters, to give clear witness of faith everywhere, following your holy founder's example and teaching. I accompany you with my prayer and give you, your families and your activities my heartfelt blessing.

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