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Masses of St Josemaría

Masses in honour of St Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, were celebrated in June, in London, Manchester and Paisley. The occasion was the thirty-first anniversary of his death on 26th June, 1975.

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In the parish church of St Thomas More, Swiss Cottage, which has been entrusted by Westminster Archdiocese to the care of Opus Dei since Easter 2005, over 300 people

came to a Mass of St Josemaría celebrated by Bishop Alan Hopes.

“As members of the Church, our work is to engage and to assist in the Church’s work of evangelisation,” said Bishop Hopes. “Josemaría’s aim in founding the Opus Dei, was to open up a new way of sanctification, of growing in holiness, in the midst of the world through our ordinary work. He was convinced that men and women are called to grow closer to God through the work they perform. The first reading for our Mass tonight, gives us a model of what we can become when we work in co-operation with God: to work for God and with God, can lead the way to the perfect way — the sanctified way that Adam and Eve found in the Garden of Eden before their fall from grace.

“But why should we be encouraged to grow in holiness? Josemaría knew

the truth, that we cannot share in the Church's work of evangelisation until our lives are sanctified. For each of us, there is a constant need to be converted, to turn our lives to God, to be forgiven, to be open to the activity of the Holy Spirit, to be sanctified. Evangelisation is never a mere programme. The desire to bring others to know and love Jesus Christ, can only take root in our lives, when we our selves have been caught up in that love for Jesus Christ and his Church. S Paul teaches us this in the second reading of our Mass tonight. Your Founder knew the importance of becoming a spiritual daughter or son of the Lord and his Church. And so tonight we thank God for his goodness that through Baptism we are his adopted children and that we are commissioned to go out and witness to others how much his love has changed our lives.”

We are God's adopted Sons and daughters – what a privilege – and what a responsibility is given to us.” (For the text of the full homily, see [here](#).)

Fr Bernard Marsh, the Spiritual Director of Opus Dei in Great Britain, was the chief celebrant for a Mass at the Church of St John the Baptist, in Purley. He used the World Cup, currently in progress, to speak about his theme: “When St Josemaría spoke of holiness for the ordinary person,” said Fr Marsh, “he wasn’t inventing a new sort of ordinary holiness, one that the ordinary man or woman in the street could aim for. A new brand holiness which was like a diluted or toned-down version of the sanctity achieved by the Saints of old: an abridged version – with all the hard words and difficult passages taken out.

“In contrast, St Josemaría often referred to the need for all of us to aim at heroic holiness. Consider the analogy of being invited to play football. We are not just going to have a gentle kick around with a tennis ball, with pullovers marking the goals, and no off-side rule to complicate things! What we are invited to play in is real, world class, football – there with the stars: the sort that people are longing to watch in the World Cup.

“The message that St Josemaría taught is that God is calling all of us to world-class holiness: there with all the other great Saints whom the Church holds up to us as examples. Full-blown holiness. With a proper referee, with linesmen... and the dreaded off-side rule too! And this call or invitation to sanctity is not just a wild dream: it can become a reality for each one of us — with all our weaknesses and limitations. It

can become a reality because it is God who is going to do the work. He proves he is serious about this by becoming man for us! But, and a very important but which we mustn't forget: he relies on our cooperation.

“So this universal call to holiness is a call to leap out of our mediocre lives into the world of Christian heroes. And it is an invitation, more than that, a command, addressed to all who are baptised.”

At Salford Cathedral, a Mass was celebrated by the Dean, Rev. Canon Antony McBride. In his homily, Canon McBride spoke about the need for faith:

“We live in a world increasingly dominated by public relations. Everything has to be portrayed as a success. Image-making is a booming economy all by itself. We all want to come across as successful. But actually, Our Lord does not begin by

urging us to be successful. Simon Peter had certainly not succeeded with his fishing the night before. Jesus simply asks us to be faithful; to take him at his word.

“Our Lord amazed his fishermen friends, especially Simon Peter, because he seemed to know more about catching fish than they, the experts, did. However, we must never forget that it was the faith of Simon Peter that gave Our Lord the opportunity to show his power. Peter said, ‘we worked long and hard all night long and caught nothing, but if you say so, I will pay out the nets.’ ‘If you say so, Lord!’ What a powerful prayer of total faith!”

The Mass in Paisley’s St Mirin’s Cathedral was presided over by the diocesan bishop, Bishop Philip Tartaglia, who described St Josemaría as “a champion of the new evangelisation. It has become

blindingly clear that the new evangelisation must aim for a renewal of holiness, and, conversely, that a renewal of holiness is the key to the success of the Church's work of evangelisation. "The Spirit comes to help us in our weakness," says St. Paul to us this evening. The Holy Spirit is the divine source of sanctification through whom we are renewed in the image of Christ and in faithfulness to his Gospel.

"If we are led by the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we will turn to prayer, which leads us to friendship and intimacy with the Lord. If we are led by the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we will centre our lives on the Eucharist and on the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, through which we can offer our lives to God. If we are led by the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we will make salutary and regular use of the sacrament of reconciliation, so that

we may experience a true conversion of the heart. If we are led by the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we will read, consult and pray the Sacred Scriptures to be inspired and nourished by the Word of God. This is the only authentic plan of evangelisation, this is the only way we can hope to carry out our service to creation and raise the world once more to God.

“Strangely enough, or maybe not, this is what we learned as children: say your prayers, go to Mass; go to confession; listen to what God is saying to you. The experience of the Church in recent decades has taught us that the gimmicks and the shortcuts just don’t work. We need to relearn the perennial wisdom of Catholic spirituality for our own time. I see that many of you are here with your children. Be sure to pass on to them your faith. Teach them to pray. Let them know the importance

of Mass and of going to confession. Help them to love and read the Scriptures. Teach them the rosary and introduce them to Mary who will love and protect them as a Mother. If you give them this, you will be giving them the basis of a sound spiritual formation which will serve them well and which will endure.”

(See the the full text of Bishop Tartaglia’s homily on the *Paisley Diocesan website*.)

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