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Saint Josemaria in Madrid

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11/09/2012

It is now 40 years since Saint Josemaria's visit to Madrid during his catechetical trip in Spain and Portugal, in 1972. In Madrid he revisited the places where he had begun Opus Dei's apostolate in the 1930s.

During the catechetical trip that St Josemaria made to Madrid in October 1972, he visited many places that he knew very well because during the 1920s and 1930s he went for long distances, often on foot from one place to another, looking after the sick and the dying.

For instance, on October 17, 1927, he visited several sick people in five different districts of Madrid, as is seen on the paper that he used to organize his trips. He traveled 14 kilometers that day in total. Some places were particularly significant in his life, like the residence of the Missionaries of St Vincent de Paul, Garcia de Paredes Street.

On October 2, 1928 St Josemaria was doing a spiritual retreat in this house when he founded Opus Dei, and he could hear the pealing of the bells of the nearby church of Our Lady of the Angels, celebrating her feast-day.

St Josemaria was especially happy to see that several of the schools and colleges he visited were located in the poor outlying districts where he had looked after so many people forty years before. As well as Tajamar, in Vallecas, where the most numerous gatherings were held in the college hall, and Senara, in the nearby district of Moratalaz, St Josemaria visited other educational and training projects that had been set up in new districts in Madrid. In Pozuelo he went to Retamar; he went to Montealto and the El Prado school, Mirasierra, and the Besana training school in Pueblo Nuevo.

During his 1972 trip he also went to Molinoviejo, an estate 20 km outside Segovia. In the 1950s St Josemaria and the first members of Opus Dei came to Molinoviejo to spend a few days studying and relaxing. In 1972 he paused for a few moments' prayer

to our Lady before the statue in the chapel.

Another place he visited was Los Rosales, a retreat centre at Villa Viciosa de Odon, 15 km outside Madrid, for a gathering with a group of schoolchildren. He went to several university halls of residence such as Moncloa, Zurbaran and Alcor. He also visited the catering training school and met with journalists.

His days were very intense, driven by St Josemaria's zeal to infuse the hearts of many thousands of people with the Christian spirit and a desire to serve others in their ordinary everyday lives.