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Americans head to Rome for canonization

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POPE CANONIZES JOSEMARÍA
ESCRIVÁ, FOUNDER OF OPUS DEI

Pilgrims from 84 countries, including more than 4,000 Americans, were at St. Peter's Square on Oct. 6, 2002, when Pope John Paul II canonized Josemaría Escrivá.

Saint Josemaría founded Opus Dei in Madrid on Oct. 2, 1928, to help people seek holiness in ordinary, everyday life, especially through work.

“By declaring Escrivá a saint, the Church is saying that everyone can live a full and vibrant Christian life,” said Rev. Arne Panula, the vicar of the Prelature of Opus Dei in the United States. “The Church is not just canonizing Josemaría Escrivá,” Rev. Panula said. “The Church is canonizing ordinary life.”

There are 85,000 members of Opus Dei worldwide but his message has been an inspiration for a much greater number of people around the globe.

Saint Josemaría’s most popular book, *The Way*, a collection of points for prayer, has sold nearly four million copies in 43 languages. After Saint Josemaría died in 1975, more than a

third of the worlds' bishops, an unusually high number, asked the Vatican to begin the cause of his canonization. The official Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, estimated that 300,000 people attended his beatification, which took place in Rome on May 17, 1992. A similar number appeared to be present for the canonization ceremony.

Opus Dei's work has been encouraged by all the Popes since its founding: Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul I, and finally Pope John Paul II.

“Your institution has as its aim the sanctification of one's life, while remaining within the world at one's place of work and profession,” Pope John Paul II once told members of Opus Dei. “This is a truly great ideal.”

Saint Josemaría was born in Barbastro, Spain, on Jan. 9, 1902, and

died in Rome on June 26, 1975. After his death, 6,000 people — including 69 cardinals, 241 archbishops, 987 bishops, and 41 heads of religious orders — wrote the Pope requesting the opening of his cause of canonization.

The Vatican formally opened the cause in February, 1981. Church tribunals examining his life took place, in Rome and Madrid, from 1981 to 1986. In 1990 Pope John Paul II issued the decree of heroic virtues.

Besides an exhaustive investigation of the life of a candidate for sainthood, Vatican procedures require two authenticated miracles — the first for beatification, and the second for canonization. The first authenticated miracle was the cure of a Carmelite nun, Sister Concepción Boullón Rubio, in 1976. She was suddenly cured of a rare disease called lipomatosis, after members of

her family prayed to God for a cure through the intercession of Josemaría Escrivá. Pope John Paul II issued a decree accepting the cure as miraculous in 1991.

The second miracle was the cure of a Spanish orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Manuel Nevado Rey. Dr. Nevado suffered from chronic radiodermatitis – injuries to his hands, including cancerous lesions – caused by repeated exposure to X-rays. The condition had made it impossible for him to continue his work. In November, 1992, he was healed, after praying for Saint Josemaría's intercession. Pope John Paul II issued a decree recognizing this second cure on Dec. 20, 2001.

The canonization ceremony will be broadcast seven times this week by EWTN. For scheduling information, see the EWTN Web site, www.ewtn.com.

Inspired by Saint Josemaría's preaching and example, members of Opus Dei have begun numerous charitable initiatives in fields like health and education. Everyone attending the canonization is being invited to contribute to Project Harambee, a fund to support educational programs in Africa.

Opus Dei has centers in 60 countries. According to Vatican statistics for the year 2002, there were 1,788 priests and 82,715 lay members worldwide. Most members are married, and there are about an equal number of men and women. There are about 3,000 members in the United States.

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