

Italy's First Euro Stamp Commemorates Josemaría Escrivá

"The continuation in history of the deeds and actions of Opus Dei's founder requires that his memory remain not only in the minds of individuals but also in the public conscience," says Italy's Communications Minister. Stamps and postmarks were also issued in the Philippines, Uruguay, Costa Rica, and Spain.

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The Italian Ministry of Communications recently unveiled a new stamp in honor of Blessed Josemaria Escriva's centennial. The stamp was the first postage denominated in Euros to be released by the Italian government. In a ceremony at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, Maurizio Gasparri, Italy's Minister of Communications, presented a case containing one of the new stamps to Bishop Javier Echevarria, who thanked him and noted that the Founder of Opus Dei had always felt a deep affection for his second homeland, Italy.

"The continuation in history of the deeds and actions of Opus Dei's founder requires that his memory remain not only in the minds of

individuals but also in the public conscience," Gasparri declared. With his message that every person "can sanctify himself through work," continued Gasparri, Blessed Escriva "made it possible for all to live daily life with faith, hope and a new light."

The Italian government has printed 5 million of the stamps, which are worth €.41, the regular price of ordinary national mail. The depiction on the right of men walking around a sphere is meant as an allegory of Christians engaging the world.

On the other side of the globe, Postmaster General Nicasio P. Rodriguez, Jr., presided over the release of a Philippines stamp commemorating Blessed Josemaria Escriva, featuring a painting by renowned artist Godofredo F. Zapanta, Sr.

"The inspiration brought by Escriva has contributed to educational, cultural and religious development as well as to empowerment of the poor in our country," said Rodriguez. "It is therefore fitting for the Philippines to honor him in his centennial."

Referring to the stamp's caption, "Magpakabanal sa Gawain" (Tagalog for "Holiness through one's work"), Rodriguez said that this message needed to spread. "Indeed, this is what the Philpost wants to achieve with this commemorative stamp, as our contribution to celebrate the centennial of a great man of God, Josemaria Escriva."

Rodriguez reported that the stamp, which had been issued several days prior to the launching ceremony, was already sold out. "No other commemorative stamp issued to any individual, institution or province

has sold as briskly as the birth centennial commemorative stamp that we have issued as part of the year-long celebration of Father Escriva's 100th birthday. In fact, not even the stamps issued to commemorate the centennial of the Republic of the Philippines sold as well and as fast."

In Uruguay, the National Post Administration issued a four-stamp series commemorating the centennial of Blessed Josemaria. The stamps feature the work of Uruguayan artist Gerardo Barrabino and cost 48 pesos (\$3.24). A release ceremony took place in the headquarters of the Postal Union of the Americas, Spain and Portugal (UPAE).

Elsewhere in South America, centennial stamps were released in Paraguay and Costa Rica. And in Spain, the Post Office of Barbastro,

where Opus Dei's founder was born, issued a commemorative postmark.

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