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Preparing for October 6th

This Christian World (Mundo Cristiano) article on the canonization of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá provides information about the logistics of the ceremony, volunteers who will collaborate in the celebration, special programs to attend to the needs of pilgrims, and the inspiration of solidarity behind "Harambee 2002."

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Only a few months remain before the Holy Father proclaims Blessed Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, the founder of Opus Dei, a saint. All agree that the beatification ceremony, which took place in 1992 and was attended by more than 300,000 persons, marked a highpoint as regards the number of pilgrims visiting Rome. This is how the famous Italian journalist David Murgia, who covers Vatican affairs for *Il Tiempo*, described the event: “Some 300,000 persons attended the beatification of Escrivá in 1992. Such a large crowd had never before been seen in St. Peter’s Square. It was truly a feast of the people which Pope John Paul II himself defined as a meeting that was out of the ordinary. Pilgrims came from all over the world and by all types of transport: by ship, bicycle, plane.... A richly diverse group of devotees who wanted to honor him whom the members of the Prelature call affectionately Father.”

The Forecast for October

“It’s difficult to predict the attendance for an event of this kind, but we expect a great number of people to come – equal to the number that came for the beatification or greater. On May 17, 1992, 300,000 persons filled St. Peter’s Square, according to the L’Osservatore Romano. And, of course, I know that many of those people want to return. So it’s not an exaggerated prediction. During the Jubilee, Rome showed that it has the capacity to absorb quite a large influx of people,” said Marta Manzi recently, spokesperson for the Organizing Committee of the Canonization of Josemaría Escrivá.

Asked whether organizing an event of such dimensions is very complicated, Manzi replied, “Not as much as might appear. Perhaps in some other place it might be, but in

Rome, especially in the last years, we have picked up a lot of experience. The Organizing Committee is working in the first place for those who will be attending the ceremony. But we also have in mind the many other persons who would like to come but cannot, because sickness or financial straits or family or professional commitments make it impossible. In fact, we consider participants not only those who will actually come but also those others who would like to come but cannot. For this reason, we would like to do all we can so that those people can in some way participate in the events of those days, with the help of television and the other services available from the media.”

Rome Opens Its Doors

Benvenuti a casa mia is the name of the project being promoted by the Organizing Committee of the

Canonization of Josemaría Escrivá to help those pilgrims coming to Rome to attend the ceremony.

“With the occasion of the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá,” observes Federica Paolini, collaborator in the project, “many Roman families will open the doors of their homes to the pilgrims from every corner of the world who will be coming to the event. For many of us the founder of Opus Dei is simply the Father. Thanks to him, we’ve discovered that the Church is a family, and hospitality is a spontaneous gesture towards persons whom we consider very close to us. There’s so much to say, so many ideas to comment on, so many experiences to share! I’m sure it will be a fabulous experience - not only for the pilgrims but also for those families receiving them.”

Young People Too

Besides Roman families, there are also many Roman young people preparing to receive the pilgrims coming for the canonization. “The volunteers want to offer the gift of hospitality to all who come to Rome those days,” explains Elizabeth Heil, collaborator of the project Volunteers for the Canonization. “The project consists in gathering together a good group of young people who want to help in taking care of the pilgrims during the days of canonization.” The volunteers will be working at strategic points of the city and will perform diverse services according to their possibilities: “Guiding pilgrims who have arrived at the airport and at the Termini train station; facilitating access to St. Eugene’s Basilica, where the holy body of Josemaría Escrivá is venerated, as well as to the Masses of thanksgiving that will take place in various churches of Rome; accompanying handicapped people

on the day of the canonization as well as at other times. The group of Roman volunteers will be reinforced by groups of youth volunteers of other countries coming to Rome to attend the event.

Three Good Reasons

What is the purpose of the canonization? We find the answer to this question in the formula used by the Pope to proclaim someone a saint: “To give honor to the most Blessed Trinity, for the exaltation of the Catholic faith and an increase in Christian life....” In proclaiming certain persons blessed, and later, saints, the Church gives thanks to God, and at the same time honors those children of hers who have responded generously to divine grace, and proposes them for all her children as intercessors and models of the holiness to which all are called. These words, pronounced by

Cardinal José Saraiva Martins, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, in the symposium "Witnesses of the 20th Century, Models of the 21st Century"(Seville, April 8th), help one appreciate the importance of this pontifical act.

Three reasons stand out for making this pilgrimage. In the first place, to take part in an act of canonization means to take part in a magisterial act of the Holy Father that has great supernatural and historical value. To be able to see the Holy Father and show him devotion is another good reason for making a pilgrimage to Rome. Lastly, Rome has a unique historic and artistic value. The Eternal City is the cradle of western civilization and the center of Christianity; for Catholics it is a must-see place to visit in order to pray in its basilicas and see its monuments.

To participate in the ceremony and in the Masses of thanksgiving the following days, one must have the appropriate tickets, which are free for all these events. Many countries have local organizing committees in charge of distributing all the necessary tickets. In addition, in Rome on Oct. 5, 6 and 7, a number of information booths will be set up where one can also request tickets.

Project Harambee 2002

Harambee is a Swahili word that means “all together as one.” It’s a word on the tongue of every person at the moment of undertaking an enterprise that will benefit everyone. This is the idea behind Project Harambee 2002, which is closely related to the canonization. It often happens that, in conjunction with the great gatherings convoked by the Pope, a monetary fund is established for a particular need. This has been

the desire of the Pope on numerous occasions. “Every canonization is a gift, a present that invites one to give thanks. As a concrete expression of gratitude, the Organizing Committee of the Canonization has decided to promote Project Harambee 2002. Besides, Josemaría Escrivá was a very practical saint, who always encouraged people to draw out concrete resolutions, to serve God and others with deeds,” explains Linda Corbi, the person in charge of the project. Project Harambee 2002 basically consists of creating a fund for financing educational projects in Africa. Donations will be accepted from pilgrims coming to Rome for the canonization, as well as from others who are unable to come to Rome but wish to collaborate. “We are suggesting that everyone try to contribute 5 euros, which should be quite feasible, but of course the size of the donation will depend on the

possibilities of each person,” said Corbi.

The donations received will be allocated according to the amount collected. Funds will be assigned to educational projects through a public meeting. Details of the meeting – which is open to all educational organizations that work in Africa – can be found, along with all the technical data, on the canonization website.

For more information see
www.escriba-canonization.org.