



2021 Walk to Bethlehem



St. Josemaria Escriva

Josemaria Escriva is known for founding Opus Dei, an organization of Catholics who seek holiness in daily life.

He was born in Spain in 1902 to a devout family. He had five siblings, but three of his sisters died as infants. His father owned a small business but struggled to stay afloat and finally filed for bankruptcy. These misfortunes seemed to have matured Josemaria at an early age.

As a teenager, he once discovered the footprints a monk left behind in the snow—the image struck him and awoke within him a desire to become a priest. He entered the seminary and was ordained in 1925.

In 1927, Josemaria moved to Madrid to begin graduate study in civil law. Because his father had died three years prior, his mother, sister, and brother joined him—Josemaria was the family provider and supported them by tutoring other law students.



During this time, he also took on pastoral care for people who were sick or poor, as well as manual laborers in Madrid. University students who came to know him joined him in this work. When he was on retreat in 1928, it became clear to him that he should formalize this way of life and organize a Catholic community under the name Opus Dei, or “work of God.”

The community included clergy and laypeople, married and single people, men and women. It involved people from all walks of life in the effort to follow Jesus and seek holiness in their daily experience. The idea of Opus Dei was not to find holiness by escaping the world, as monks did, but by entering it more deeply and sanctifying it in the way members fulfill their responsibilities in their occupations and families and communities.



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Josemaria's work was interrupted by the Spanish Civil War, which began in 1936 and included a violent persecution of the Catholic Church. Many priests were killed, but Josemaria escaped into a safe region of Spain. When the war ended in 1939, he returned to Madrid and finished his law degree. He began spreading the work of Opus Dei and gave many retreats for laypeople, religious, and clergy.

Opus Dei began spreading through Spain, and after World War II it became an international organization. Members established institutions to serve the Church and society, such as hospitals and schools. It was formally approved by the Vatican in 1950 and today claims more than 80,000 members in more than 60 countries.

Josemaria moved to Rome to assist the growing international expansion of Opus Dei and to be a part of the conversation that was changing the Church in the era of the Second Vatican Council. He died in 1975, and was canonized in 2002 after a miracle was confirmed in which a surgeon's hands were healed from a career-ending disease through his intercession.

“With supernatural intuition, Blessed Josemaria untiringly preached the universal call to holiness,” said [Pope St. John Paul II](#) in his homily at the beatification of St. Josemaria. “Christ calls everyone to become holy in the realities of everyday life. Hence, work, too, is a means of personal holiness and apostolate, when it is done in union with Jesus Christ.”

St. Josemaria Escriva is the patron saint of the Opus Dei movement and for those people who suffer with diabetes and his feast day is June 26th.

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