

and give thanks to God for a man, a priest, a saint, who reminds us day by day of the ordinary, extraordinary gifts given to us in the Church and which enable us to rejoice and find joy in our service of the Lord.

If we are celebrating today the 80th Anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei, we are also remembering the 50th Anniversary of St. Josemaría's visit to England. We are told that St. Josemaría loved England in a special way and that he was always grateful for the five peaceful summers that he spent here, from 1958 to 1962. "England", he wrote in a letter, is a great and beautiful place – a cross-roads of the world". It is good to know that among his visits was one to Westminster Abbey where he recited the Rosary and, of course, here in this church, Westminster Cathedral, where he prayed. It was in the hustle and bustle of this City, in the heart of the financial world, that he experienced what he called a 'locution' from God. As he looked round the powerful business centres of our City he recalled that he sometimes lost his composure; he felt useless and powerless; he felt sad, like a faithful donkey pulling a cart. And in the middle of the street, the people were walking and crossing crowds, he heard in the depths of his heart an ocean of God's power, of God's spirit. He wrote, "I felt Him reassuring me: You can do nothing but I can do everything. You are weakness but I am strength; I shall be with you and that will have an effect. We shall lead souls to happiness, to unity, to the way of salvation. Here, too, we shall sow peace and happiness in abundance".

So today we should ask the intercession of St. Josemaría to help us to be faithful to the vocation to which we are called as God's children, brothers and sisters of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, called to be His Presence in our world, in our society today. Nor should we be afraid in spite of the challenging times in which we live, when there are a number of people in this country who wish to make it a God-free zone, who wish to privatise religion and the Church and put it on the periphery of society. That cannot be because you and I are here, in our world, living in an ordinary way doing God's work, being His Presence in this world. So I want to encourage you today to live out faithfully, lovingly, the spirit of your Founder in total communion, as he did, with the mind and heart of Christ's Church. And I should like to add in a very personal way how pleased I am to have in my Diocese the presence of Opus Dei and commend them very warmly for the work and the witness that they give. May it continue to flourish, enabling men and women to know, as our first reading said, "that the Lord is God and that there is no other. May your hearts be wholly with the Lord our God, following his laws and keeping his commandments as at this present day.

I will end with a prayer for the intercession of St. Josemaría, a prayer for you and me: "O God, through the mediation of Mary our Mother, you granted your priest, St. Josemaría countless graces, choosing him as a most faithful instrument to found Opus Dei, a way of sanctification in daily work and in fulfilment of the Christian's ordinary duties. Grant that I too may learn to turn all the circumstances and events of my life into occasions of loving you and serving the Church, the Pope and all souls with joy and simplicity, lighting up the pathways of this earth with faith and love. Deign to grant us, through the intercession of St. Josemaría, the favour of responding more generously to our call to holiness, following Jesus Christ and imitating Him in thoughts, feelings, words and deeds. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## HOMILY AT MASS FOR 80th ANNIVERSARY OF OPUS DEI

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor celebrated Mass to mark the 80th anniversary of Opus Dei [on 2 October 1928] in Westminster Cathedral on 8th October 2008 at 5.30pm.

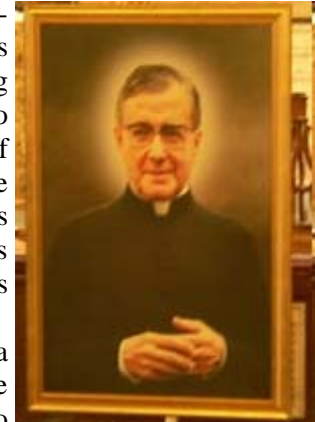
During his homily, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, commenting on the teaching of Opus Dei's founder said: "What is so attractive about the teaching of St Josemaría Escrivá is that quite simply it is so familiar, because he taught and live those realities of our Catholic Faith for which we can never be sufficiently thankful: God as Father; the Church as family; Mary as Mother of all believers; all humanity as brothers and sisters, and all the baptised as God's children."

He later invoked the intercession of St Josemaría who was canonized in 2002 saying: "So today we should ask his intercession to help us to be faithful to the vocation to which we are called as God's children, brothers and sisters of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, called to be His Presence in our world, in our society today."

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Opus Dei was founded by Saint Josemaría Escrivá on 2nd October 1928. As a young priest he was on a retreat in Madrid when he realised that God had called him to remind all men and women that everyone is called to holiness, and founded Opus Dei. The institution is now established in 64 countries and has around 87,000 members worldwide. Opus Dei complements the work of local churches by offering classes, talks, retreats and pastoral care that helps people develop their personal spiritual life and apostolate.

St Josemaría visited Britain several times between 1958 and 1962, and referred to it as 'a great and beautiful place — a crossroads of the world', this is also the celebration of the 50th anniversary of his first visit to Britain.



## Full text of the homily

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ – dear Friends,

I very much enjoyed the story of the young priest who, according to your oral tradition, made a meditation at the Opus Dei Centre in Rome on the subject of humility. He prepared his sermon well, like all young priests do, and he knew that Mgr. Escriva had written much about humility. But at a certain point in his meditation he said with conviction, “The spiritual foundation of Opus Dei is humility”. And there was a short pause to let the point sink in. He heard a firm and fatherly voice from the back of the chapel: “No, it is not”. From out of the shadows came St. Josemaria and in a very courteous and firm way he finished the meditation himself, revealing to his listeners that the true spiritual foundation of Opus Dei was, he said, “divine filiation”. It is good, at the beginning of these few words, to meditate for a little while on the profound meaning of that phrase, ‘divine filiation’. Quite simply, it meant that for St. Josemaria, the Fatherhood of God should be at the centre of our lives. As St. John says, “See what love your father has given us that we should be called children of God, and so we are” (1 John 3:1).

Could we not realise this when we heard the Gospel today: Jesus filled with joy by the Holy Spirit saying, “I bless you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, that is what it pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father and no one knows who the Son is except the Father and who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. For Jesus, God was his Father, Abba, so no wonder we say every day the prayer that Jesus taught us, giving us the courage for us to call God, Our Father, who art in heaven. It is through baptism that we become God’s children, for we live in Christ. So we share in Christ’s Sonship and what an extraordinary privilege that is. It affects our spiritual life; it affects our human life, it affects the whole way we look at the world in which we live. For St. Josemaria it was the foundation of his spiritual life.

There is a lovely custom in Orthodox monasteries that at the end of the day, after Night Prayer, the Abbot sits in his chair and the monks come up to him one by one and kneel before him and he kisses each one on the top of his head, a sign of acceptance, forgiveness and love. I mention this because we live, metaphorically, in a world without a father, with no one to say, ‘you are accepted, you are forgiven, you are loved’. Out of the profound mystery so beautifully expressed and taught by St. Josemaria, we have already a vision of what our world ought to be, a world where humanity are brothers and sisters with a common father in heaven; that this is God’s world; that we are his family, his children. So simple, so profound. We are told that it was on October 16th, after saying Mass, that St. Josemaria found it difficult to pray, even in the quiet of his

church. So he went out and bought a newspaper before boarding a street car and, settling into his seat, he started reading the news of the day when suddenly and very intensely he felt the action of the Lord. It was the gift of the Holy Spirit given to him that enabled him to express with utter, utter conviction, “Abba, Father”. He immediately got out of the bus and wandered the busy streets, invoking his heavenly Father, “Abba, Father; Abba, Father”. No wonder that for him God’s fatherhood was at the heart of the meaning of his life and for the work that he wished he himself and others to do. It is right that we should remember that today, on this the 80th Anniversary of the foundation of Opus Dei.

Nor should we forget his conviction that for the members of Opus Dei, they should understand that there are certain things that are the common property of the Church and of all Christians, namely, ordinary work and a passionate love for the world. St. Josemaria – Opus Dei – bears witness that the Church is present wherever there is a Christian who strives to live in the Name of Christ. It is not that the Church needed to penetrate, intervene, in professional life, but rather that they are ordinary citizens, the same as their fellow-citizens, and that they are there already. As St. Josemaria himself said, “Religion cannot be separated from life, either in theory or in daily reality”. We cannot lead a double life. So it is, as St. Paul says in today’s reading. “We urge you, brothers, to go on making even greater progress and to make a point of living quietly, attending to your own business and earning your living just as we told you to, so that you are seen to be respectable by those outside the Church, though you do not have to depend on it”. Some time ago, I was invited to offer Mass on Ash Wednesday in the offices of a major bank in Canary Wharf. How pleased I was to see so many men and women, over 500 of them coming for Mass, yet working, day by day, in that kind of Aereopagus of the business world. It is as if the words of St. Josemaria were made manifest: “The Church is present wherever there is a Christian who strives to live in the Name of Christ”.

So as we remember that great Saint today, we should reflect on his profound conviction that God is our Father, that we share the Sonship of Jesus Christ so that we are able to call God, ‘Father’. We are called to do his work, to be his presence wherever we may be. It was St. Teresa of Avila who spoke of the extraordinary dignity which is ours that Christ has given us as his co-workers. ‘Christ has no body now but yours; no hands, no feet on earth, but yours. Yours are the eyes with which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses the world’. It is the challenge for all of us, priests or lay people who strive to follow Christ and be his presence in our society.

What is so attractive about the teaching of St. Josemaria is that quite simply it is so familiar, because he taught and live those realities of our Catholic Faith for which we can never be sufficiently thankful: God as Father; the Church as family; Mary as Mother of all believers; all humanity as brothers and sisters, and all the baptised as God’s children. It is no wonder that all of you in Opus Dei, in a particular way, feel the Church is your home; that just as Mary is the Mother of Jesus, so the Church is our Mother, because the Church is our family and we are nurtured by the Church with the gifts of the sacraments, the Word of God, the *Communion* which binds us together, the Holy Spirit who nourishes us and enables us to speak and pray, “Abba, Father”. It is right that we should remember