

## **Mass for Opus Dei**

### **St Mary's Pro-Cathedral Saturday June 12**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ

When I received the invitation to offer this Mass in honour of St Josemaria Escrivà, I felt that in accepting it I was paying back a form of debt ...

As some of you know I was honoured to be present in Rome on the morning of October 6 2002 when the founder of Opus Dei was raised to the glory of the altars by the late Holy Father, Venerable John Paul II.

A few years later I was asked to celebrate Mass in the Cathedral in honour of the new saint in our Cathedral – an invitation I readily accepted only to have to pull out due to illness on the day.

Going back further still I know that my predecessor, Cardinal Winning was due to celebrate this annual Mass in 2001, but he died so sadly and suddenly just a few days before the event.

So although the Prelature of Opus Dei has been working fruitfully and faithfully within this Archdiocese now for almost 30 years, this is the first time a serving Archbishop of Glasgow has been able to celebrate this Mass of thanksgiving in honour of your founder.

And so after 30 years of apostolate the first message I should convey to you is one of thanks ... Thank you for the innumerable activities which you organise and run at the service of the whole local Church ... I think of the countless evenings of recollection, retreats, study days, and courses that have been held for priests, laymen and women, young people and families. So much has been achieved from small beginnings.

One can find an echo of that labour in the first reading of today's Mass taken from the Book of Genesis ... As Mgr Ronald Knox puts it so poetically in his translation of the scriptures: "The Lord God took the man and put him in his garden of delight, to cultivate and tend it ..."

"To cultivate and to tend" ... these tasks are common to all the baptised. Human work is not to be seen as a drudgery or a punishment, but rather as a share in the creative power of God. Christ himself ennobled human work by his 30 years of hidden life, and it is one of the great charisms of Opus Dei to remind people that human work can be sanctified, offered up, turned into prayer, and should be the setting for the ordinary apostolate of lay persons.

That universal call to sanctity and apostolate was such a clarion cry of the Second Vatican Council, and had been preached faithfully since the 1920s by St Josemaria.

In the Second Reading of today's Mass we find another theme beloved of the Founder of Opus Dei ... that of our dignity as children of God, or divine sonship ... St Paul reminds us that the spirit we have been given is not that of slaves but of sons ... it is that spirit which has us cry out "Abba Father".

One consequence of that knowledge of being children of God is a deep joy – a joy St Josemaria was keen to cultivate among his spiritual sons and daughters. Indeed he wrote very forcefully about it in his collection of spiritual thoughts, "Furrow": "May no-one read sadness or sorrow in your face, when you spread in the world around you the sweet smell of your sacrifice: the children of God should always be sowers of peace and joy." (Furrow, 59).

Today's Gospel contains those unforgettable words of Jesus: "Duc in altum" Put out into the deep ... On hearing those words I am reminded of Pope John Paul's letter on the occasion of the Great Jubilee of the year 2000. As he wrote at the beginning of his Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*

**"Duc in altum!** These words ring out for us today, and they invite us to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to look forward to the future with confidence: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (*Heb 13:8*)."

Today as we look back in gratitude on the life of St Josemaria and the apostolate of the Opus Dei prelature here in Glasgow, I should like to make my own the words of the late Holy Father in that great letter for the third millennium.

"Now we must look ahead, we must "put out into the deep", trusting in Christ's words: **Duc in altum!** The experiences we have had should *inspire in us new energy*, and impel us to invest in concrete initiatives the enthusiasm which we have felt. Jesus himself warns us: "No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (*Lk 9:62*). In the cause of the Kingdom there is no time for looking back, even less for settling into laziness. Much awaits us ... It is important however that what we propose, with the help of God, should be profoundly rooted in contemplation and prayer."

There is the recipe for successful apostolate ... audacity built on prayer, or as the Founder of Opus Dei famously put it ... "*Dios y audacia* ... God and daring!"

Prayer should be at the centre of our lives ... prayer in its many forms: liturgical prayer, meditation and vocal prayer.

I conclude my reflection today in a sense where it began .. in St Peter's Square on that memorable October morning eight years ago when St Josemaria was canonised.

That focus on prayer as being the foundation of every good work was at the heart of the Holy Father's homily that morning.

Let me quote that powerful section: "To fulfil [our] mission, one needs constant interior growth nourished by prayer. St Josemaría was a master in the practice of prayer, which he considered to be an extraordinary "weapon" to redeem the world. He always recommended: "in the first place prayer; then expiation; in the third place, but very much in third place, action" (*The Way*, n. 82). It is not a paradox but a perennial truth: the fruitfulness of the apostolate lies above all in prayer and in intense and constant sacramental life. This, in essence, is the secret of the holiness and the true success of the saints."

And the Holy Father's conclusion is one I make my own today:

"May Our Lady make everyone an authentic witness of the Gospel, ready everywhere to make a generous contribution to building the Kingdom of Christ! May the example and teaching of St Josemaría be an incentive to us so that at the end of the earthly pilgrimage, we too may be able to share in the blessed inheritance of heaven! There, together with the angels and all the saints, we will contemplate the face of God and sing his glory for all eternity."

Amen!