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Catholics should not fear spreading Christian message

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"Holiness is not reserved for perfect people, but is for ordinary people who have to fight against their weaknesses and their sins"

Catholics often lack the confidence to spread the Christian message because of the temptation to "turn in on themselves" and disengage from

the culture they find themselves in, said Bishop of Wollongong, Philip Wilson.

He was speaking at the recent Mass at St Mary's Cathedral to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the death of Blessed Josemaria Escriva, the founder of Opus Dei and the man who forged a new spirituality for lay people.

The bishop said he was concerned Catholics had no real confidence in trying to spread the Catholic message they believe in and were reluctant to engage with the prevailing culture.

"The real work that needs to be done for us to have an influence in the society in which we live, is for all of us to take seriously the call of the Lord to live 'holiness'," he said.

Bishop Wilson reminded the congregation that all Catholics were

called, through baptism, to be holy people.

"We are reminded by Blessed Josemaria's vision of life that holiness can be found in the ordinary circumstances of life in the world," he added.

Bishop Wilson said he read Butler's Lives of the Saints every night before bed and drew inspiration from the saints' lives. But, unfortunately, many of the stories made it appear that the only way to pursue holiness was to leave the world.

"What is most interesting and powerful about the vision of Blessed Josemaria is that (he says) it is possible to pursue holiness within the context of our ordinary lives.

"In the Church, we have been affected for a long time by a view that is suspicious of the world. People have had the view that

anything to do with the world, or ordinary ways of living, is very dangerous.

"As a result, the world had to be rejected for people to find a life to grow in holiness. But Blessed Josemaria talks of ordinary life being charged with God's presence ... It is possible for us, in the midst of our ordinary lives, to be intimately connected with Our Lord."

Bishop Wilson emphasised that holiness is not reserved for perfect people, but is for ordinary people who have to fight against their weaknesses and their sins.

He pointed out that one of the hallmarks of the Second Vatican Council was its "universal call to holiness".

Since the Council, he said, the Church has been grappling with the reality that holiness is something for

everybody who is baptised, that holiness is for all of us. The Mass at St Mary's Cathedral was attended by about 2,000 people and concelebrated by 17 priests.

Opus Dei, a prelature of the Catholic Church, was founded in 1928 by the Blessed Josemaria Escriva to help ordinary lay people seeking sanctity in the middle of the world.

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