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Highlights of the international Escrivá congress in Rome

Pictures and summaries from
the Blessed Josemaría Escrivá
centennial congress held in
Rome from January 8 to 12,
featuring the Pope, the Prelate,
and others

12/30/2003

**1,200 participants from 57
countries**

The international congress "The Grandeur of Ordinary Life" gathered 1,200 people from 57 nations to discuss themes related to the family, development, education and social integration in light of the message of Opus Dei's founder.

The site of the congress

The Congress was held in the Complesso Monumentale di Santo Spirito in Sassia (photo), about 500 meters from the Plaza of San Pedro and the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. In three days, there were 9 presentations, 102 papers and 18 workshops in which 260 panelists participated.

The fullness of Christian life in ordinary occupations

Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, gave the inaugural address, recalling the nucleus of the message of Opus Dei's founder,

according to whom "holiness is not reserved to a minority," but is open "to all the children of God." Also speaking were Giorgio Rumi (photo), professor of Modern History at the University of Milan (Italy), and María José Cantista, professor of Philosophy at the University of Oporto (Portugal).

Peace, justice, forgiveness

On January 9, the centennial of the birth of Blessed Josemaría, the basilica of Saint Eugene was the scene of a mass concelebrated by the cardinal vicar of Rome, Camillo Ruini (photo), with Cardinals Paul Poupard, Alfonso López Trujillo, Giovanni Battista Re and José Saraiva Martins; Bishop Javier Echevarría, prelate of the Opus Dei, and other bishops and priests. During the homily, Cardinal Ruini emphasized the "supernatural intuition of Josemaría Escrivá, according to whom each one of us is

called to discover something holy and divine in the most ordinary circumstances of life" which are thereby converted into a "place of encounter with God." At the end of the ceremony, the prelate of the Opus Dei recalled to those present the words of the Pope – "peace does not exist without justice, and justice not without forgiveness" – and encouraged everyone to spread the culture of forgiveness with confidence.

Commemorative Stamp

The Italian Minister of Communications Maurizio Gasparri presented a new stamp commemorating the centennial of Josemaría Escrivá in the main auditorium of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, the country's first stamp denominated in Euros. The minister stated that "the continuity in history of the actions

and deeds of Opus Dei's founder requires that the memory they evoke remain not only in the individual, but also in the collective conscience. This is the reason this stamp remembering the centennial of his birth has been issued." The Minister of Communications delivered a case with the new stamp to the prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría. The stamp, of which 5 million copies had been issued as of January 9, has a value of € 0.41.

Concert for Solidarity

The congress attendees enjoyed a symphonic chorale concert on the evening of January 10, directed by Msgr. Colino of the National Academy of Holy Cecilia, with the participation of the Chorus of the Roman Philharmonic Academy, the *Capilla Giulia* and the *Gli Amici Dell'armonia* Orchestra. The proceeds of the concert are being given to the

human development and improvement programs of the Monkole Center Hospital, a hospital started some years ago by some members of Opus Dei in Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo).

The third day of the Congress

Cardinal François-Xavier Nguyễn Van Thuân, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, inaugurated the last day of the congress on January 11. The cardinal, who was born in Vietnam in 1928 and spent 13 years in jail as a victim of religious persecution, finished his presentation with a prayer for peace and justice in the East. Subsequently, Mireille Heers (photo), professor of Human Rights in the Institute of Political Studies of Strasbourg, gave a presentation on "The freedom of the children of God."

The Audience with John Paul II

The Holy Father received the congress participants in the Paul VI Hall at the Vatican on the morning of January 12. In his speech, the Pope recalled how "Blessed Josemaría Escrivá placed at the center of his own preaching the truth that all the baptized are called to the fullness of charity" and that "the Lord wants to enter into a communion of love with each of his children, in the network of everyday occupations, in the daily context in which a person's existence is lived out."

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