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Cardinal Ruini addresses Escriva Congress

Escriva's Message Is a Service to
the Universal Church and All
Particular Churches.

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In Rome this morning, Cardinal Ruini presided at the inauguration of the third day of the Congress "The Grandeur of Ordinary Life." In his remarks, Ruini spoke about Blessed Josemaria Escriva, the founder of Opus Dei, and the effect Escriva's

message has had and is having in the Church and the world.

"The founder of Opus Dei preached constantly," said Ruini, "about the universal call to holiness in and through work and other ordinary circumstances of daily life." Ruini contended that Escriva's message "offers today's world, which is in such need of holiness and authentic witnesses to the truth, a sign of hope." "This hope," the Cardinal Vicar noted, "has taken root in many souls who have followed the teachings of Blessed Josemaria."

Ruini described Escriva as a man who "loved the Church *opera et veritate*, with deeds and in truth." He stated that Escriva "did not view his life, his message, and the organization he founded as anything other than service to the universal Church and to all the particular Churches."

Recalling the spirit of Opus Dei's founder, Ruini reaffirmed that "the great majority of the children of God and the Church do ordinary sorts of work," and it is in this context that the Lords calls for and expects "a faithful testimony of Christian faith."

Ruini expressed his hope that the congress would help make the Christian message in the world even more "incisive." He concluded his remarks on a prayerful note, asking the Blessed Virgin and Blessed Josemaria to intercede with God to increase the number of Christians responding to the universal call to holiness through the ordinary circumstances of life, so that "this world, starving for holiness, justice and peace" would regain an understanding of "the transcendental and divine significance of human existence."

Holiness requires service to others

Janne H. Matlary, professor of international politics at the University of Oslo (Norway), and Archbishop George Pell of Sydney, Australia, also spoke today at the congress.

Professor Matlary, formerly an undersecretary in the Norwegian government, described her discovery of Blessed Escriva's message as a "Copernican revolution" in her life. "The goal of human life," she said, "is to love and praise God, and therefore one who aspires to holiness will necessarily serve every human being and contribute towards the improvement of the world. The primacy is on the personal quest for holiness; and everything else flows from this."

Giving a conference titled "Work – Path to Holiness," Matlary affirmed that "the first key to finding Christ in one's work must necessarily entail

that it is done well, even in purely human terms. And the moment one succeeds in turning one's work into service, one has made a major step." To service, love must be added, because love is the "prime mover" of work.

"Peeling potatoes could be sterile and boring," said Matlary: "at the most somewhat useful for those who will eat them. Or, it could become a work full of praise and love for God, offered to Him – and He will transform it and use it according to His plan. Then it is prayer and work united in love for God – a real unity of life."

In his talk, Archbishop Pell said that "Josemaria's Christo-centrism, with its unifying explanation of all aspects of life, promises to overcome the inconsistencies that have arisen in the previous centuries between intellectual life and the life of faith,

between spiritual life and scientific work, between Christian life and professional life. This is particularly providential today, especially in the Western world where our sociological defenses of parish and school, and even the family itself, have been weakened by theological developments easily exploited by the neo-pagan radio, television and Internet."

The archbishop noted that "the theological teaching of Blessed Josemaria follows on from the works of great figures such as Irenaeus, Augustine and Thomas and goes beyond them. However, it follows a different path from those of Anselm, Guardini and von Balthasar, without clashing with them."

Workshop on Social Integration

The workshop "Social Integration," one of seven held during the second day of the congress, facilitated an

exchange of experiences between people throughout the world who are involved in social initiatives inspired by Blessed Escriva's teachings. The coordinator, Florence Oloo, spoke about the history and principles of Strathmore College (Kenya), the first interracial school in Africa. She discussed the importance of religious freedom and of cooperation and respect between persons of different nations and cultures. She described Strathmore as an institution that serves the particular society where it is located. In this sense, Oloo contended, it is possible to apply the principles governing Strathmore College in other African countries, always "taking into account the situation of each country."

Michael Cook spoke about daily life at Warrane College (Sydney, Australia), saying that living there helps make the students aware that it is possible to live a Christian life in a

highly secularized society like Australia's. Raquel Zelaya, an economist from Guatemala, described "the social impact that a Christian can provoke" with his or her life. Zelaya cited as an example the Christian outlook of those involved in peace negotiations after the guerrilla warfare that desolated Guatemala for twenty years.

The workshop concluded with a contribution from representatives of various programs for inner-city children and marginalized women. The speakers included Michael Winn of Midtown Educational Foundation in Chicago, Maria Meza of Metro Achievement Center in Chicago, and Mae Parreno of Baytree Centre in London. In addition, Henton Figueroa spoke about various activities undertaken in Estonia.

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