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Radiologist's Cure Attributed to Intercession of Opus Dei Founder

Pope Recognizes Miracle
Attributed to Blessed Escriva

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VATICAN CITY, (Zenit.org).- The case that prompted John Paul II to approve a decree on a miracle of Blessed Josemaria Escriva involved the healing of a Spanish physician from an incurable disease.

Dr. Manuel Nevado Rey suffered from chronic radiodermatitis, a typical disease of physicians whose hands have been exposed to radiation from X-ray machines over a long period of time. It is a progressive disease that leads to skin cancers.

Radiodermatitis has no cure. The only known treatments are surgical -- skin grafts, and amputation of the affected parts of the hand. Until now, no case of a spontaneous cure from cancerous chronic radiodermatitis had been recorded.

Nevado, born in 1932, is a specialist in orthopedic surgery. For nearly 15 years he operated on fractures and other injuries, exposing his hands to X-rays. He carried out these operations very often, beginning in 1956.

The first symptoms of radiodermatitis began to appear in

1962, and the disease continued to worsen. By 1984 he had to limit his activities to minor operations because his hands were gravely affected. He stopped operating completely in the summer of 1992. Nevado did not undergo any treatment.

In November 1992, he met Luis Eugenio Bernardo, an agricultural engineer working for the Spanish government. On hearing about his disease, Bernardo offered him a prayer card of the founder of Opus Dei, who had been beatified on May 17 that year, and invited him to pray for a cure for his radiodermatitis.

Nevado began praying for a cure through the intercession of Blessed Josemaria. A few days later he traveled to Austria with his wife in order to attend a medical conference. They visited several churches, and

came across prayer cards of Blessed Josemaria.

"This impressed me and it encouraged me to pray more for my cure," Nevado explained. From the day that he began to entrust his cure to the intercession of Blessed Josemaria, his hands began to get better, and in about a fortnight the lesions disappeared completely. The cure was complete, and beginning in January 1993, Nevado was able to return to carrying out surgical operations without any problem.

The canonical process on this miracle took place in the Archdiocese of Badajoz, where Nevado lives, and was concluded in 1994.

On July 10, 1997, the Medical Committee of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints unanimously established the following diagnosis: "a cancerous state of chronic radiodermatitis in its third and

irreversible stage" -- and therefore with a certain prognosis of "infaust" (without hope of a cure).

The complete cure of the lesions, confirmed by the objective examinations carried out on the patient in 1992, 1994 and 1997, was declared by the medical committee to be "very rapid, complete, lasting and scientifically inexplicable."

On Jan. 9, 1998, the Committee of Theologians gave its unanimous approval for attributing the miracle to Blessed Josemaria. The cardinals and bishops of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints confirmed these conclusions last Sept. 21.

Josemaria Escriva was born in Barbastro, Spain, on Jan. 9, 1902. He had five siblings: Carmen (1899-1957) and Santiago (1919-1994), plus three other younger sisters who died when they were small children. His parents, José and Dolores, gave their

children a profound Christian education.

In 1915 Josemaria's father's business failed, so the family relocated to Logroño, where he found other work. It was in Logrono that Josemaria perceived his vocation for the first time.

After seeing the bare footprints left in the snow by a monk, he felt that God wanted something of him, even though he did not know exactly what it was. He thought that he would more easily discover it if he became a priest, so he began to prepare for the priesthood, first in Logrono and later in Saragossa.

His father died in 1924 and he was left as head of the family. Ordained in 1925, he began his ministry in a rural parish, and afterward in Saragossa. In 1927, with the permission of his bishop, Father

Josemaria moved to Madrid to obtain his doctorate in law.

There, on Oct. 2, 1928, during a retreat, he saw what it was that God was asking of him: He founded Opus Dei. From that time on he began to work on the development of Opus Dei while he continued his priestly ministry, particularly to the poor and sick. In addition, he studied at the University of Madrid and gave classes to support his family.

When the civil war broke out in Madrid, religious persecution forced him to take refuge in several places. He exercised his priestly ministry clandestinely until he finally was able to leave the Spanish capital.

After a harrowing escape across the Pyrenees, he took up residence in Burgos. At the end of the war in 1939 he returned to Madrid where he finally obtained his doctorate in law. In the years that followed he gave

many retreats to laity, priests and religious.

In 1946 Blessed Josemaria took up residence in Rome. There he obtained a doctorate in theology from the Lateran University and was named consultor to two Vatican congregations, as well as honorary member of the Pontifical Academy of Theology, and prelate of honor by Pope Pius XII.

From Rome he frequently went to various countries in Europe, and to Mexico in 1970, to spur the growth of Opus Dei in those places. In 1974 and 1975 he made two long trips to Central and South America, where he held gatherings with large groups of people.

Opus Dei is a personal prelature of the Catholic Church. Based in Rome, it has 80,000 members worldwide.

Monsignor Escriva died in Rome on June 26, 1975. After his death, thousands of letters were sent to Rome asking the Pope to open his cause of beatification and canonization. Among them were letters from 69 cardinals and nearly 1,300 bishops -- more than a third of the world episcopate. Escriva's cause was opened in 1981.

Many miracles have been attributed to Blessed Josemaria's intercession, including some inexplicable medical cures.

In 1976 Carmelite Sister Concepcion Boullon Rubio was at the point of death when she was suddenly and completely cured of a rare disease called lipomatosis, after members of her family prayed to God for a cure through the intercession of Blessed Josemaria.

The miracle was unanimously approved for Monsignor Escriva's

beatification by the Board of Physicians for the Congregation of the Causes of Saints, a meeting of the Theological Consultors, the Congregation for Bishops, and, finally, by John Paul II.

After an exhaustive examination of Monsignor Escriva's life and work -- a process lasting nearly 10 years -- the Pope beatified him on May 17, 1992, in St. Peter's Square. The beatification of Monsignor Escriva, along with that of Josephine Bakhita, drew 300,000 people.

In his homily, John Paul II told the faithful, "With supernatural intuition, Blessed Josemaria untiringly preached the universal call to holiness and apostolate. Christ calls everyone to become holy in the realities of everyday life. Hence work, too, is a means of personal holiness and apostolate, when it is done in union with Jesus Christ."

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