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Books of Fire: The Works of St. Josemaría around the Globe

Promoted by the Studium Foundation in Madrid, new translations of St. Josemaría's books are constantly being published in new languages. Last year the global circulation of the various titles was 135,000 books. Here we offer a few examples of the books' impact in Russia, China, and Eritrea.

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The Studium Foundation promoted the publication of 22 new editions and reprints of books by St. Josemaría in 2004, 25 in 2005, and 35 in 2006. Worldwide circulation in 2006 was 135,000 books.

Some of the languages into which the books were translated from 2000 through 2007 include English, German, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian, Croatian, Slovenian, Slovak, Rwandan, Eastern Armenian, Malayalam, Tigrinya, Estonian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Finnish, Russian, Simplified Chinese, Catalan, Swedish, Arabic, Basque, Korean, Polish, Galician, Guarani, Japanese, and Romanian.

A SHAKE-UP FOR THE RUSSIANS

Alex Havard, who is in charge of this work in Russia and Finland, comments: “Recently the third edition of *The Way* came out in Russian—the second one that has

been published in Russia—and I frequently receive letters from young people from various cities of the former USSR who explain that after reading it, their vision of the world changed profoundly.

“I could relate many anecdotes of the kind, but I think that the paragraphs of an article published in the journal of the members of the Union of Russian Writers, written by a poet friend, Alexander Ivanovich Zorin, are sufficiently eloquent:

‘The book, *The Way* by Josemaría Escrivá,’ writes Zorin ‘is written by a poet, even though the author is probably not considered a poet. The dynamic, the rhythm and the energy of each phrase make the points of *The Way* authentic “verses,” in the same sense that we designate as “versicles” certain expressions of the Bible. In *The Way*, one can find the

poetic echo of the books of the Bible, such as the *Book of Wisdom*.

‘The Church, as much in the East as in the West,’ affirms Zorin, ‘is passing through a difficult moment. A large number of believers remain passive. The uniform standardization of labor has deprived man of the spirit of initiative and of his proper vocation. Escriva addresses these masses telling them that God looks for them in the exercise of their profession in the same way that He looked for the apostles. He tells them that it is not necessary to “change places,” nor to dream of ideal circumstances, because the circumstances of place in which one finds one’s self can be converted into ideal ones.

‘This book is a fount of invaluable advice. For us, who suffer poverty and material inequality and react badly against the sufficiency of the “New Russians” (nouveau riche), it

can be very useful to read this point on poverty: “True poverty is not to lack things but to be detached, to give up voluntarily one’s dominion over them. That’s why some poor people are really rich--and vice versa.”

‘This is authentic wisdom that emerges from the Book of Books, confirmed by the personal experience of Escriva, who uses paraphrase, evocations and direct quotes from Scripture as obligatory points of reference. That is why, for some years, the spiritual teachings of Escriva are my “textbook,” and in the same way that verses from Scripture do, constitute repeated and learned prayer...

‘One day the young Josemaría saw the footprints of a religious who traveled barefooted through the snow, and he thought: “If others are capable of making these sacrifices for the love of God, what am I going

to offer Him to demonstrate my love?” And he offered his whole life to God.

“This book is like a snow-covered road in which we clearly distinguish the footprint that we need to follow: the footprint of the Saint.”

IN ERITREA, A TIGRINYAN EDITION

Luis Franceschi administers the publications of St. Josemaría in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Rwanda. “In 2005,” he relates, “the first Tigrinyan edition of *The Way* came to light. It was translated by an Eritrean monk who lives in a Cistercian community in which they have much devotion to St. Josemaría. Until recently they were using a manuscript version of *The Way* in Tigrinya, the mother tongue, for their prayers.

“Eritrea is a small country of 3 million inhabitants in which half of the population are Christians who live peacefully with the other half of the population, who are Muslim. The Orthodox faithful are the majority within the Christians, and the work that the Catholic Church fosters, especially in the field of education, is much valued and respected.

“Eritrea was part of Ethiopia until 1992 when it became a country of its own and gained control the Ethiopian coast along the Red Sea. Lamentably, since then Eritrea and Ethiopia have been in a very tense situation, and have frequently had recourse to arms.

“On the occasion of this edition, I traveled to Asmara, the capital, where Alem met me. His story, so painful, reflects the situation of many Eritreans: Since the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia began

nine years ago, he has not been able to see his wife nor his daughter who were expelled for being of Ethiopian origin. He introduced me to Bishop Abune Menghsteab Tesfamariam, who is a great disseminator of devotion to St. Josemaría in this African country.

“Another country in which devotion to the author of *The Way* exists is Rwanda, a land that suffers deeply because of the tearing apart of genocide that ended with the destruction of almost one third of the population. I ask God that *Inzira*, the Rwandan edition of *The Way*, helps to bring peace and forgiveness among the Rwandians. A Rwandan diocesan priest who has great devotion to St. Josemaría translated it into the country’s language, and it will be published soon.”

A “SPRING” FOR CHINESE CULTURE

In 1997 some of the faithful of the Prelature in Hong Kong set out to publish the writings of St. Josemaría in Chinese. The characters in Chinese writing are the same for the numerous dialects that exist in China, and this made things easier. That is the way *Spring Publications* was born. Why “Spring”? The selection of a name is very important in Chinese culture. A spring is a place from which water springs forth, and there is a Chinese proverb that says, “The spring drowns murky waters.” This sentence echoes what St. Josemaría taught: Drown evil in an abundance of good.

Spring is also the season in which vegetation blooms, bringing joy and hope. In addition, it is an object that recovers its original form after it has been compressed. The Founder of Opus Dei used to say something similar when he referred to contradictions and suffering: they

are like coil springs from which one should gain strength and energy.

Ten years have passed, and almost all of St. Josemaria's books have been translated to Chinese. The bishop of Guangzhou (Canton) recommends these books to his faithful to become better Christians. And the books are beginning to be recognized not only by those who reside in China, but also by Chinese scattered throughout the five continents, since many people send them to their relatives in other countries.

I was told a few days ago that a woman translator found herself very tired during a day of intense work and did not feel like continuing the translation she was doing. She randomly opened one of the books that she had on her shelves: It was a Chinese copy of *Friends of God*. She opened it and read the considerations of St. Josemaría in

where he says that many are those who begin, but few that finish...

Those words so lifted her spirits that she was able to continue with her work.

These works are being disseminated among persons of the most diverse professions: For example, in Taipei there is a taxi driver who has great esteem for the books by St.

Josemaría, and he always has them in his taxi. Frequently the passengers become interested in them, and they end up talking about the sanctification of work from a Christian perspective of life.

Studium Foundation

Studium Foundation was established in 2001 to promote the translation and publication of the works of St. Josemaría throughout the world. Studium has representatives residing in countries throughout five continents who collaborate in this

work. They count on collaborators in America, Oceania and in some African and Asian nations such as Japan or India.

Money from royalties and donations by people throughout the world are used to finance editions and translations for economically disadvantaged countries or countries in which Catholics are in the minority.

In addition to the books by St. Josemaría, Studium has promoted the publication of 61 other titles, including books by Bishops Alvaro del Portillo and Javier Echevarria.