

Feastday Masses in honour of St. Josemaria in East Africa

58 years after those first members of Opus Dei arrived at the port of Mombasa, the message of St. Josemaria has spread to more than 13 cities and towns in East Africa including Kigali in Rwanda, Kampala in Uganda and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. Here are some snippets on the various public Masses that were celebrated in these different cities on the feast of St. Josemaria.

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Kampala

In Kampala, Bishop Antony Zziwa of Mityana diocese -some 40 miles west of Kampala- was the main celebrant of the solemn High Mass. All 600 seats of the centrally-located church of Christ the King were full, and many were standing outside. The whole congregation joined in the singing of the Kyrie and Gloria, as well as the English, Luganda and Swahili hymns, a moving symbol of the universality of the Church.

Taking his cue from the words of the Gospel reading: “Put out into the deep and pay out your nets for a catch” (Luke, 5, 1-11) he spoke of St Josemaria as a fisherman of souls; and the fruit of his prayer and efforts had brought about the spread of

Opus Dei throughout the world, including Uganda.

He had begun his homily with words from the first reading, that all God had made was good, and that man had been created to work. God, he continued, sanctified man's work.

After a brief biographical sketch of St Josemaria, he made special reference to his love for preaching and writing, and that, in the very beginnings, he had found spiritual strength among the sick and poor of Madrid.

Modern secular society, he concluded, poses many challenges, but, if we follow the teachings of the saint, we shall be well able to confront them.

Thika.

The Mass took place on 2nd July in St Patrick's church, and was celebrated

by Bishop Dominic Kimengich of Lodwar.

Bishop Kimengich went to the core of the teaching of St Josemaria: the sanctification of daily work. Father, mother, student, secular priest are all called to be holy working just where they are. All of us should be very aware of this call, to the extent that “we feel it in our blood.”

Holiness comes from being close to Jesus Christ, and by talking to God every day through the norms of Christian piety: the Rosary, the Angelus, Mass and frequent Communion. Only by following this path shall we be able to be fishers of men.

Divine filiation, the awareness of being children of our loving Father, God, is at the basis of the spirituality of Opus Dei. A very practical way to live it is to reason that all things work out for the best for those who

love God, to paraphrase the “omnia in bonum” of St Paul. When difficulties crop up, we go trustingly to God, who knows best.

Nakuru

Bishop Muhatia of Nakuru celebrated the Mass.

Referring to the first reading, he said that by breathing into man’s nostrils, God shared His life with us. There is a portion of God in all of us. We are God’s greatest work. He breathed His life into us, but none of His other creatures.

God, he went on, gave Man the garden of Eden, to protect newly-created human life, and then Marriage, and, with marriage, the family. Today, he said, the family is in special need of support and protection.

Commenting on the words of the Gospel reading, he said Jesus used Peter's tool of trade -his boat- as a pulpit to preach the Gospel. The message of Opus Dei is this: to use our tools of trade -whether as housewife, soccer-player or company manager- to do apostolate and spread the word of God.

We are called, he went on, to preach a Christianity of joy, although at every corner we shall meet the Cross. The Cross, however, is a reminder of God's love for us.

St Josemaria, he concluded, taught that we meet Christ not only in church, but mainly in our work and family, and there is where God is waiting for us.

Mombasa

Saturday, 2nd July, Holy Ghost cathedral, was beautifully decorated with flowers for the Mass of St

Josemaria. The choir sang hymns in Swahili and English.

The main celebrant was Fr Thomas Ayugi, chaplain of Jawabu and Nyali, Opus Dei centres in the city. He was assisted by Fr James Kamau, military chaplain of Nyali Barracks; Fr Augustine Lape, chaplain of the Sisters of Mercy and of Jomo Kenyatta University, Taita-Taveta campus; Fr Maxwell Okello, parish priest of St Francis of Assisi, and Fr John Shaw, chaplain of Tewa training centre, Shariani.

Fr Ayugi spoke of various aspects of the life of St Josemaria, with special emphasis on the family.

Nairobi

More than 2,000 faithful attended the Solemn Mass in honour of St. Josemaria at Holy Family Basilica held on Saturday 25th June.

The Mass was presided by Bishop John Oballa of Ngong' diocese assisted by a number of priests of the Prelature including the vicar of Opus Dei in East Africa, Rev. Fr. Silvano Ochuodho.

The homily was preached by Fr. Paul Mimbi, Chaplain Strathmore University in which he emphasised on living out the Works of Mercy in our ordinary day to day life like we see in saints such as St. Josemaria and Blessed Mother Teresa.

At the end of the Mass, Bishop Oballa offered a few remarks of gratitude to share in the joy of this day, as we give thanks. He recounted that he in his life, he witnessed both the beatification and canonization of St. Josemaria in Rome. He remembered how there wasn't any space to throw wood in St. Peter's Square at these events, due to the sheer number of people. In fact, for the first and only

time in his days in Rome, he missed his classes the morning after Canonization, because he couldn't find a bus to the university, all were filled with people leaving Canonization event.

He went on to comment that the message that St. Josemaria brought is refreshing, inspiring to the Church and at the same time simple: every human encounter is an opportunity to sanctification, through daily life and activities... to become Christ-like.

“We have to be attentive to the work of the Holy Spirit and remain resilient, with hope and prayer, which same things characterised the life of St. Josemaria.

...Now thinking about our country. How it needs to be sanctified for Jesus Christ. Dear Christians, let us be in prayerful mood. Bomb Heaven with our prayer, unity, truth, understanding.”

He proposed two tools. Prayer and genuine love for one another. “May the Rosaries, Masses, our prayers throughout the day and night also find resonance for the needs of our country. St. Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, pray for us. Thank you, thank you! God bless you all!”

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