

Trending Souvenirs for Funerals

Laura narrates her experience in sharing books as souvenirs for the guests to funerals and especially the occasion when she distributed 800 copies of The Way.

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My name is Laura. I am a pharmacist and a supernumerary of Opus Dei. Ever since I met the Work, I have found the books written by St. Josemaría very good for my personal time of prayer and very helpful for

living in the presence of God. I have also discovered their value as souvenirs at funerals.

To understand this, you have to know that funerals in Igboland, in Nigeria, hold a very prominent place in social life. Funerals, despite the sad reason for them, are usually some of the most eventful social gatherings. The norm at such gatherings is to hand out mementos to the guests in appreciation to them for having come. The choice of what to use as souvenirs depends on the giver and, as such, the souvenirs tend to be quite varied, ranging from kitchen utensils through Bibles to some other educational or inspirational books.

I have always marveled at the importance of good souvenirs, as I can see that a lot of thought goes into them. However, when I was put in a position of having to give out

souvenirs, I said to myself, “Rather than spending money on souvenirs that will lie unused for decades in people's kitchen cabinet, why don't I give them something more beneficial to them, a book that can bring a whole world of good?” Of course, I already knew what books I would give out. I immediately started looking for the books of St Josemaría, books that say the truest of things in the simplest way.

So, at the funeral of my mother-in-law, copies of *The Way* were shared out as souvenirs. We gave out 800 copies! The experience was wholesome. I later got a lot of calls and feedback from people, all confirming the greatness of God through St Josemaría's writing. They all talked about how much good the book had done them.

Another occasion to do something similar came up at the burial of my

mother. This time, in addition to St Josemaría's *Friends of God*, we enriched the gift packs with *Jesus as Friend* and *Guidebook for Confessions* (books that I treasure very much). The book, *Jesus as Friend*, caught many people's interest. "The books are meant to be read, not just like a novel; you should spend time reflecting on them, either personally, or as a family," I explained as we distributed them.

The feedback afterwards showed that the books truly won the hearts of those that had received them, especially the Catholics amongst them. They have been led to value the Sacrament of Confession, and some of them have also been moved to take advantage of the other Sacraments of the Church. I am particularly thrilled at the so many wonderful testimonies of people returning to the Sacraments after reading these books. I also received

calls from some people who said, "Aunty, I got this book, but I didn't get the other one of the last funeral," or "Mrs. Okoye, please send me such and such a book."

Thanks be to God for all this! My family and I have no regrets on the money spent on the books because it has been so wonderful seeing how they have touched a lot of souls. And it has been interesting to see so many people value such things – things that have to do with God and their souls – and then returning to the of the faith by reading these books.. **Rather than jotters, coolers or dozens of silver ware and plates, I guess books are the trending souvenirs at the moment.**

Laura Okoye, Enugu, Nigeria.

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