

Venerable Văn Thuận Talks about Saint Josemaría

Remarks by the Vietnamese cardinal, speaking about Josemaría Escrivá during an international congress titled “The Greatness of Ordinary Life” in January 2002.

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François-Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận was a Vietnamese archbishop and cardinal. He spent thirteen years in his country's communist prisons.

He was born in Huế, Vietnam, on 17 April 1928, and died on 16 September 2002 at the age of 74, after suffering from cancer. In 2017 he was declared Venerable by Pope Francis.

In January 2002, while serving as President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Cardinal Văn Thuận took part in the international congress “The Greatness of Ordinary Life,” held to mark the centenary of the birth of Saint Josemaría Escrivá.

These were the Vietnamese cardinal’s remarks on that occasion:

The contemporary world is, so full of hope, at the very same time presents challenges and urgent problems requiring of Christians a convincing response. For — we must never forget it — Christ is our peace.

Christians, with their gaze fixed on the heavenly homeland, do not turn their backs on the destiny of our

earthly homeland, because *this* is the place where we prepare ourselves, through a faith that is lived and embodied in the pursuit of peace and justice, to enjoy eternal Peace and divine Justice, identified with Mercy and Love.

The active presence of Christians in society must transform the hopes of today's world into beautiful realities of love and service, and offer firm and authentic answers to the problems and challenges of our time. Christians are called to be builders of peace and justice, or, in the words of the founder of Opus Dei, "sowers of peace and joy." Throughout his life, and through his example and teaching, Josemaría Escrivá effectively sowed justice, peace and love. A fruitful sowing that continues today, alive and active, in the apostolic spirit of his spiritual children and in the many social

initiatives that he directly promoted or at least inspired.

The heart of his message centres on the sanctification of ordinary life through daily work. And where, if not in ordinary, everyday life, is a world of peace and justice to be built? It is in the family home, in schools, in public offices, in businesses, in the fields, that Christians must bear witness to their faith and become true sowers of peace and joy, as — once again — the founder of Opus Dei liked to say. It is right there that the world must be shaped in a Christian way: in daily life, in social relationships, with the freedom of the children of God.

“The world awaits us. Yes! We love the world passionately because God has taught us to: *Sic Deus dilexit mundum...* — God so loved the world. And we love it because it is there that we fight our battles in a most

beautiful war of charity, so that everyone may find the peace that Christ has come to establish" (*Furrow*, no. 290).

I know that Josemaría Escrivá wished the catechism of Christian doctrine to include references to the social and political duties of Christians within the civil community, so that Catholics might be formed from childhood in unity of life: a good Christian must also be a good citizen. His wish was fulfilled, and the current *Catechism of the Catholic Church* devotes the second chapter of the third part to this topic. There we read:

“‘Participation’ is the voluntary and generous engagement of a person in social interchange. It is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is

inherent in the dignity of the human person” (no. 1913).

“Participation is achieved first of all by taking charge of the areas for which one assumes a *personal responsibility*: by the care taken for the education of his family, by conscientious work, and so forth, man participates in the good of others and of society” (no. 1914).

Our Christian apostolic mission, according to Josemaría Escrivá’s teaching, entails social participation and personal responsibility. May the Lord, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of Josemaría Escrivá, grant that we Christians may truly become artisans of a peace and a justice founded on forgiveness, or, in the words of the founder of Opus Dei, sowers of peace and joy.

And I hope that these sowers of peace and joy, with the breath of the

Holy Spirit, will also reach our Far East, Vietnam.

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