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Cebu Farmland Yields Harvest of Blessings

A mother of 10 from the highlands of Dalaguete in Cebu province expresses affection for St. Josemaria and Opus Dei.

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"Get used to lifting your heart to God, in acts of thanksgiving, many times a day. Because he gives you this and that. Because you have been despised. Because you haven't what you need or because you have. Because he made

his Mother so beautiful, his Mother who is also your Mother. Because he created the sun and the moon and this animal and that plant. Because he made that man eloquent and you he left tongue-tied... Thank him for everything, because everything is good."

This well-known quote from the founder of Opus Dei, St. Josemaria Escriva, in point 268 of *The Way* found a resounding echo in the life of a farmer's family in central Philippines.

ROSALINA (Rosing) BELIA hails from the mountain range of Dalaguete, a southern municipality in Cebu province, which is known as the vegetable basket of the region. She and her husband, Valerio, have been growing cabbages, spring onions, and pechay for many years now.

They were blessed with 10 children whom they have supported and continue to support through school by their farm livelihood. Danica, their eldest, is 29 years old, followed by Mae (27), Jessie (26), Jaylord (24), Joseph (22), +Von Ryan, Rhian Valerie (17), +Jeremie, Rona Jane (13), and the youngest, Josemaria, now 9 years old.

Momentous encounter

Rosing had the chance to talk to the Prelate of Opus Dei, Msgr. Fernando Ocariz, during a gathering at the Oakridge Pavilion in Mandaue City, Cebu in central Philippines in the afternoon of August 4, 2023.

Msgr. Ocariz met with faithful of Opus Dei, their families, cooperators, and friends from Cebu as well as from the neighboring islands like Bacolod, Iloilo, Dumaguete, Leyte, Cagayan de Oro and Davao. The

gathering of 800 was documented on video.

It takes about three hours or more to travel from Dalaguete to Cebu City by public transportation. For Rosing, it was worth the time and effort because she wanted to relate to the Father things close to her heart.

“My only ambition is for my children to be happy in life,” she told the Father.

She talked about her children who graduated from the Banilad Center for Professional Development (BCPD) and the Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise (CITE), technical vocational schools established by members of Opus Dei in Cebu.

She spoke of her son, Joseph, who is studying for the priesthood at the San Carlos Seminary of Cebu. “I pray

that he becomes a priest and dies as a priest,” she said.

Lastly she talked about her youngest son, nine-year-old Josemaria, a special child. “He cannot walk,” she said. “I pray that he may live longer and that we could take care of him well.”

“Our family loves St. Josemaria and Opus Dei,” she shared, before asking the Prelate to bless her family.

Birth of a devotion

Rosing recounted that when Danica finished senior high school, she expressed her desire to go to college. *"Gitugyan nako ang tanan nga damgo sa akong anak nga babaye sa Dios kay nasayod man ako nga dili namo makaya ang pagpa-edukar kaniya o pagpasulod ngadto sa kolehiyo. Salamat sa Dios, si Marife, ang ika-tulo nga ig-agaw ni Danica, naghigot kanamo kabahin sa BCPD, ang*

tunghaan kung diin siya nahuman sa pag-eskwela,” she said in the Cebuano dialect.

(Translation: I entrusted my daughter’s dreams to God because we could not afford the cost of a college education. Thanks be to God, Danica’s third degree cousin, Marife, told us about BCPD, and she studied in that school.)

BCPD is known to produce chefs, bakers, and competent food service professionals who form the backbone of the tourism industry. Most of the graduates immediately find employment and become the breadwinners of their families. Dalaguete town alone boasts of 40 graduates of BCPD. Danica is now a successful overall professional in the food services industry.

It was through Danica that Rosing and her family learned about Opus Dei and St. Josemaria Escriva, who is

popularly considered as the patron saint of the school. Rosing says that what she likes most among the teachings of St. Josemaria is that of offering all that one does every day to God.

As farmers, Rosing and her husband get up very early each morning. She has to juggle her time between the demands of the farm and household work. She says that she manages to get everything done, with the help of St. Josemaria. She turns to St. Josemaria daily, before retiring at night and upon waking up in the morning.

She shares some of the favors she has received from him: *“Una sa tanan ang malinawon nga kinabuhi, ikaduha nga gihatagan mi ug mga buotan nga anak, ug ikatulo sa daghan kaayo nga mga tawo nga nitabang kanamo sa nagkalain-lain namo nga kinahanglan, bisan pa man*

gani dili sila namo kadugo o kaila man lamang. Labaw na gayud kadtong mga malumo ug kasing-kasing nga nagbayad sa bayranan ni Joseph sa seminaryo aron lamang siya maka-eskuwela. Ug labi na gayud sa dili maisip nga tabang niadtong panahon nga nagdaut ang akong anak nga si +Jeremie. Ubay-ubay o dili gayud maihap sa tudlo ang mga tabang nga nadawat sa among pamilya. Sama niadtong pinansiyal nga tabang aron intawon maimpas ang dako nga kantidad nga bayranan sa ospital.”

(Translation: Firstly, my peaceful life in the farm. Secondly, the goodness of all my children. Thirdly, the many people who help our family survive, those we don't even know, like the sponsors of my son Joseph who is studying in the seminary. And those who helped us when my son +Jeremie was hospitalized. Many

people we don't even know helped us pay the huge hospital bills.)

Multiplying value

Danica's younger sister, Mae, is also a graduate of BCPD. She is giving back to her *alma mater*, now working as the school receptionist. Aside from culinary and baking skills, Rosing observed that in BCPD, Danica and Mae, her two eldest, have learned to give great value to the Sunday Mass, as well as to praying the Holy Rosary.

Through BCPD, the family got to know about CITE, a technical-vocational school for boys in Talamban, Cebu. Jessie, her third child, qualified for a scholarship there and graduated with a diploma in Electrical Engineering Technology.

He now has a stable job in the machine department of a PVC factory in Nagoya, Japan. Rosing is happy that despite the distance, the family

is able stay close to him through video calls. She considers her son's job in Japan as an express favor granted through St. Josemaria's intercession. Jessie is now contributing substantially to sustain their family's daily needs.

“Dako pud gayud nga pagtabang aron lamang makalarga sa gawas sa nasod sa Japan among kinamagulangan nga anak nga si Jessie, nga sa pagkakaran, dako-dako na gayud ang iyaha nga natabang sa tibuok pamilya, kay si Jessie walay buwan nga dili magpadala ug pinansiyal nga tabang diri balik kanamo. Nakabawi-bawi na sa puhonan ug nakaginwa na intawon kami tungod sa gipadala ni Jessie nga tabang kada-buwan diri kanamo,”
Rosing narrates.

(Translation: It's such a big help that my eldest son, Jessie, was able to leave for Japan to work. He has been helping us a lot with the financial

needs of the family. Our quality of life has improved thanks to the monetary support that Jessie sends us monthly.)

Studying for the priesthood

Rosing's fifth child, Joseph (22), is now in 3rd year at the San Carlos Seminary College located along Pope John Paul II Avenue in Mabolo, Cebu City. Joseph had been an altar server in their parish since he was 13 or 14 years old. He had always liked to assist their parish priest, and enjoyed being relied on in the rectory.

Joseph was bent on studying for the priesthood after he finished senior high school. The family asked around for people to support his seminary studies and, to the family's surprise, a number of generous individuals responded.

Twice a year, Rosing and her husband get invited to stay a few

days at the San Carlos seminary. Aside from being close to their son, Rosing treasures the interactions with the other seminarians.

Josemaria: special gift

When Rosing gave birth to her youngest, Josemaria, in 2015, it was Danica who recommended that he be named after St. Josemaria Escriva, the founder of Opus Dei. Josemaria has been unable to walk since he was a toddler and was diagnosed with *polio*. He is an intelligent boy and is home-schooled, thanks to the support of teachers in Rosing's town who give little Josemaria the academic modules needed to study at home. He is now in third grade.

Rosing had 10 children but lost two sons. Von Ryan died of pneumonia in 2010 when he was 5 years old, while Jeremie died of leukemia when he was 11 in 2019.

She wanted to express to the Prelate of Opus Dei their family's gratitude for the many blessings received through people of the Work in Cebu. In December 2021, for example, their house was badly damaged by super typhoon Odette. Through their help, the family managed to rebuild the severely damaged portions of their house.

Always a mother

Rosing is moved recalling how Msgr. Ocariz, responding to her narration at the Oakridge gathering, told her that she had a great family. He advised her to pray a lot for her children. He said that parents never cease to be parents of their children. When they get older and go their separate ways in life, the parents continue to exercise responsibility towards them, which often will be limited to prayer. "It may seem little," the Father said, "but it is a lot."

She recalls: *"Si Monsenyor Fernando ningtambag kanako, sa pagpapangayo alang sa pisikal nga kaayohan sa among "gamay" nga Josemaria, ug mipahinumdom siya nga ang tanan anaa ra gayud sa palad sa Dios."*

(Translation: Msgr. Fernando also advised me to ask for the healing of little Josemaria, and he reminded me that everything is in the hands of God.)

For six years now, St. Isidore parish in Dalaguete has celebrated Holy Masses on the feast of St. Josemaria, June 26. For Rosing, it is always an occasion for thanksgiving, despite the usual challenges and trials in life, which everyone faces.

On his feast, her family gathers around the altar to thank God for the many blessings He lavishes on each of them and for the gift of family.

Michelle C. Salon and Rabbi A.
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