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# **First Mass of Saint Josemaria in Iraq**

On Saturday, 24 June 2023, a Mass to celebrate the feast of St. Josemaría Escriva, will be held in Erbil, Iraq. It will be said in Aramaic using the Chaldean liturgical rite.

06/15/2023

Preparations are in full swing for the first Mass in Iraq to celebrate the feast day of Saint Josemaria Escriva.

It will be held on Saturday, 24 June 2023, 6:00 pm at the Church of Saint

Anthony the Great in the General Complex of the Chaldean Antonian Order of St. Hormizd, in Erbil, Iraq.

Rev. Father Samer Soreshow

Yohanna, the superior general of the Chaldean Antonian Order, will celebrate the Mass in the Chaldean Liturgical rite. Rooted in Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus Christ, this liturgy offers a deep connection to the earliest days of Christianity.

“We are honored and blessed to celebrate the feast of Saint Josemaria Escriva in our religious community and with the faithful, to let them know about one of the greatest Saints of the last century, the saint of ordinary things,” Father Samer said.

Erbil is the capital of Kurdistan, known for its stability and security, compared to other regions of Iraq. It is a multicultural city open to people of diverse religious and ethnic groups.

## **Arba'ilu International Conference on Syriac and Sureth Studies**

The Second Arba'ilu International Conference on Syriac and Sureth Studies will be held in Erbil on 21-23 June 2023. This conference brings together scholars, researchers, and enthusiasts from around the world to exchange ideas on preserving and advancing the Syriac language, culture, and literature. The first Arba'ilu International Conference on Syriac and Sureth Language Studies was held in Erbil in 2017.

Syriac, an ancient language with roots in the Aramaic family, was the language used by early Christians in the Near East. Sureth, or Neo-Aramaic, is the modern form of the Syriac language spoken by various communities across the globe.

Among the academics and professionals coming from Madrid is anthropologist Dr. Paco Moya, whom

I met recently in Erbil. He believes that much anthropology is hidden in the gospel written in the original Aramaic language. We came up with the idea of organizing a Mass in Aramaic to celebrate the feast day of St. Josemaría on the day after the Conference closes.

Some academics from Lebanon and Madrid, faithful of Opus Dei, will be attending the Arba'ilu International Conference. Between them, Paco, and myself we are sending out invitations in Arabic, Aramaic, and English for the Mass in Erbil.

Father Samer is a member of the organizing and scientific committee of the Second Arba'ilu International Conference. Regarding Aramaic, he explains, "this language is precious to us, since it was the lingua franca of the old near east and furthermore, it was the language of Jesus Christ himself. We hope that these efforts

will give it a push for the new generations and proceed for another millennia.”

Father Samer will say the Mass in Aramaic, which is familiar to the Christian faithful of the neighborhood. The Mass booklets provided will be in Aramaic. The locals are happy to receive Our invitations to the Mass and many are eager to attend. We expect that the pews of the church, which can accommodate 150, will be filled on June 24.

We look forward to Christians in Erbil discovering Saint Josemaria, his life and his teachings. I believe that Iraqi Christians, who trace their roots to the apostle St. Thomas and who have been unwavering in their faith since the first century, will easily assimilate the spirit of St. Josemaria, who taught that the model for

holiness in ordinary life are the early Christians.

Lito L. Articono

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