

My Journeys with San Josemaría Escriva

Personal testimony of an engineer who discovered St. Josemaría Escriva and made it his mission to spread this devotion.

06/21/2022

In 2017, I returned to the Philippines after finishing my contract with a South Korean Engineering and Construction firm based in Singapore. There was a downturn in

the oil and gas industry and it became difficult for me to find another overseas job. I felt that the skills I painstakingly accumulated through nine and a half years had become obsolete in an instant. I prayed hard to find a new job.

I lived then in a condominium in Makati that is a stone's throw away from St. Andrew the Apostle Parish. I would attend Mass and visit the Blessed Sacrament there. At the entrance to the Blessed Sacrament chapel, there is an image of San Josemaria Escriva which I found inviting. I would stop and pray there either before or after visiting the Blessed Sacrament.

One day, I read an article on Facebook which mentioned that an image of San Josemaria was being given for free. I messaged the contact address given, requesting for an image of San Josemaria, which I

intended to install in the Zamora Memorial College located in my hometown, Bacacay in Albay, more than 300 kilometers southeast of the country's capital region. Fr. Willy Ong responded and I scheduled a visit to Molave Study Center in Muntinlupa to pick up the image.

When I arrived at the place, I was surprised because located at the back of Molave Study Center was the dorm where I used to stay when I first worked in Alabang. I regret that at that time, I did not know about Molave and that I could visit the center to learn more about St. Josemaria and Opus Dei.

I thought my involvement with San Josemaria and Opus Dei would end there. But no. With the welcoming nature of Fr. Willy, we became friends and he asked me to help him promote the devotion to San Josemaria in Albay. I readily agreed

because it is a good thing. It took me some time to get it going though because I was working in Makati.

On Facebook, I was attracted by an advertisement of a doctrine class being conducted at Philam Life Chapel on Paseo de Roxas. The name of the organizing group was Bagtikan. Work in Makati was tiring and I needed to refresh myself and rekindle my relationship with God. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that Bagtikan was a center of Opus Dei organizing activities in Makati. I attended the doctrine classes and recollections there.

By God's design, my faith was tested. I had to resign from my work in March 2019 because I was treated badly by my superior and I myself had a bad temper. I went back to my hometown, Bacacay. While looking for a job, I talked to some parish priests in Albay about having the

image of San Josemaria installed in their churches. Two responded in the positive but I was not able to do anything at that time.

I got a wonderful job in Cebu and had to fly there by April 2019. Unfortunately, in December of that year my contract was terminated. Back home in Bacacay, I wrote letters to all the parish priests in Albay about installing San Josemaria images in their church. Again things got stalled.

In January 2020, I flew to the US for family reasons and stayed until June because of the pandemic lockdown. I followed up the parish priests from there and got an additional four positive responses.

I stayed in Makati from June to December because of travel restrictions. Eventually, I was able to spend Christmas with my parents in Bacacay. I got back to my apostolate

of spreading devotion to San Josemaria. I contacted the interested parish priests and started installing images in various churches and distributing many beautiful prayer cards. Things were hindered by travel restrictions during pandemic times. Eventually we were able to install images in 10 churches. I also gave out A4-size framed images to various chapels, schools and private individuals in my network.

What made me tenacious in this devotion was my desire to respond to the call to holiness. San Josemaria espoused holiness through the diligent performance of one's duties, whatever role he or she is in, be it as a janitor, teacher, engineer, lawyer, priest, etc. To me, that is a straightforward way to become holy. In having devotion to San Josemaria, I was also able to overcome my bad temper. Now, I can hold it, though there are still a few outbursts.

The enjoyable thing about this apostolate of spreading devotion to Saint Josemaria was that I was able to visit municipalities in Albay that I had never gone to before. In one gathering at Muararo Parish in Guinobatan, Albay, I was happy to meet members of Opus Dei from the place. They of course are the best allies in my apostolate of promoting the devotion to San Josemaria.

My journey these past five years, especially through the current global crisis, has convinced me that one can live a solid Christian life and seek holiness right where one finds himself at any given time, especially in one's work or profession. Devotion to San Josemaria will definitely lead one along that path. It won't be easy -- no worthwhile endeavor ever is -- but it provides clear, sure footing to our common destination.

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