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# **Anniversary Mass of St Josemaria in Ho Chi Minh City Before Lockdown**

Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam was among the few places where the anniversary Mass of St Josemaria on June 26 could be held in public during the pandemic.

08/09/2020

*On Friday afternoon of June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Monsignor Barnaba Nguyen Van Phuong celebrated the solemn Mass in*

*honour of Saint Josemaria Escriva, the Founder of Opus Dei, at the chapel of the Pastoral Center of Saigon Archdiocese, Vietnam. Also present were our beloved priests who concelebrated the Mass with Mons. Barnaba, the members, co-operators, families and friends.*

***“God wills you all to be holy.” (1, Th 4,3)***

In the homily, Mons. Barnaba gave a brief summary of the Founder of Opus Dei: Saint Josemaria Escriva was born in Barbastro, Spain on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1902. Ordained to the priesthood at the age of 23, he had pastoral care at Saragossa and later at Madrid before continuing his studies and graduated in Civil Law. On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1928 God made him see clearly what up to then he only had inklings of; that is to found Opus Dei (in English, *the Work of God*) which brings in a new spirituality to

the Church inviting people of all social status to become holy and do apostolate by sanctifying their ordinary work in their own conditions/circumstances. He died on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1975 in Rome after devoting himself to spread this message through fostering the presence of Opus Dei across five continents, to serve the Church in close communication with the Holy Father and the Bishops. Saint John Paul II beatified Monsignor Josemaria Escriva in 1992 and canonized him in 2002; calling him “the saint of the ordinary life.”

Talking about the spirituality of Opus Dei, Mons. Barnaba recalled: “The foundation of the spirituality of Opus Dei is the awareness of divine filiation. When you are aware of it every thought, every behavior and action will be directed to God, because of God and for God. There was a story relating how intensely

Saint Josemaria felt the joy of being a child of God's in a simple way:

“...while traveling on a bus, St. Josemaria immersed himself in meditation and prayers. Suddenly, he felt an immense joy for being a son of God. When the bus stopped at the next station, he could not wait any longer, he got out of the bus, jumping and crying out loud on the pavement: “Abba! Abba! Father.”

Saint Josemaria is considered as “the saint of the ordinary life” because he had spent his whole life spreading and promoting a simple way to holiness which is very close to everyone. He said, “There is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it.” The way to become holy via the professional work, daily duties which St. Josemaria directed is the process of seeking something holy, something

divine in the small details of life and one's daily work. By doing that, no matter what profession you may have, from students, professionals, engineers, teachers, doctors, salesmen, workers, farmers, drivers... getting married or single, young or old, healthy or ill... no matter what circumstance we may be in, we can all become holy by fulfilling our daily duties with the love of God.

We can see this point clearly in the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading, taken from Chapter 2, the book of Genesis: "The Lord God planted a garden in Eden which is in the east, and there he put the man he had fashioned... The Lord God took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it." Mons. Barnaba commented "Thus labour is the natural law which God gave human beings in order to participate in His creation, helping to develop one's

own talents and gaining benefit for himself, his family and society.

Having the same spirit of “labour is to sanctify oneself”, the Gospel according to Saint Luke (Chapter 5) shows that through daily work, facilitated by obedience to God, the disciples of Jesus Christ, the fishermen were turned into “fishers of men”, zealous apostles.

Saying “Yes” to God, we will be able to do extraordinary things. Thanks to that obedience, Peter realized that his Master is really the Son of God. When one realizes God, the only attitude one may have is to worship and to be afraid. The Gospel recalls: “When Simon Peter saw this he fell at the knees of Jesus saying, “Leave me Lord; I am a sinful man.” But Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on it is men you will catch.”

Just like Saint John Paul II once said: “Do not be afraid. Open the doors for Christ! To his saving power, open the boundaries of states, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilization and development. Do not be afraid. Christ knows “that which is in man,” He alone knows it...” Jesus Christ knows what is troubling each and every one of us today.

He knows well all of our happiness, worries, hopes, fears and wishes. Only God knows the answers to all of our questions at this moment.

The main celebrant continued sharing that Saint Josemaria also taught not to be afraid to cooperate with others, even with non-Catholics. It was clearly so on the occasion of his canonization when many people from all social status, different professions, from the simple poor people to many countries' leaders,

friends from other religions such as Protestants, Orthodox, Jewish, Muslims were also present.

To finish the homily, Mons. Barnaba encouraged the congregation to practise three specific things following the spirit of Saint Josemaria in their daily lives:

1. Always strive to become holy by fulfilling one's daily duties, as "God wills you all to be holy." (1, Th 4,3) Do not be afraid to be saints!"

2. Always be aware that we are God's children. Live our lives according to that dignity, be proud of being God's children, think and behave like His children.

3. Do not be afraid, but be courageous to do Apostolate, committing oneself to serve others in our families, communities and society.



At the end of the Mass, the group had a short Thank-you speech and took the advantage to congratulate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of priestly ordination of Mons. Barnaba Nguyen Van Phuong, thanking him for his great affection and continued support, to guide and accompany the faithful of Opus Dei in Vietnam.

***Presenting the Vietnamese-English bilingual edition of “The Way”***

*In the get-together after the Holy Mass, the Vietnamese-English bilingual edition of The Way, the first and most well-known work of St. Josemaria Escriva, was gladly presented to the faithful.*

First published in 1934 in Spanish, and reprinted many times and translated into 50 difference languages, “The Way” is a collection of 999 points of brief reflections coming from the spiritual and pastoral experiences of Saint

Josemaria which aim to lead us to love God and live by God. Over the past 80 years, being listed among the best-sellers of modern spirituality, “The Way” has help millions of readers to “enter upon ways of prayer and Love”, to “seek, find and love Christ.”

The book was translated into Vietnamese by Monsignor Barnaba Nguyen Van Phuong while he was serving the Roman Curia. He also translated two other books of Saint Josemaria Escriva which were already published in Vietnam: Holy Rosary (2010) and The Way of The Cross (2015).

After being first published in 2014, “The Way” has attracted much attention among the Vietnamese Christian readers in only a short time. 2,000 copies were sold out after only 6 months on sales in all Catholic bookstores. Another 2,000 reprinted

copies were also “sold-out” at the end of 2017.

In response to the readers’ demand, also to enrich the need to read foreign spiritual books of young Vietnamese Christians in the context of today’s international composition, “The Way” now comes in a whole new packaging under the Vietnamese-English bilingual edition (English translation by Scepter Publishing). Especially, this edition has the Foreword personally written by Monsignor Fernando Ocariz, the Prelate of Opus Dei from Rome.

It is a great joy and full of meaning when the Vietnamese-English bilingual edition of “The Way” is published right on the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Saint Josemaria being granted Heavenly glory by God (June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1975 – 2020). Thanks to Saint Josemaria’s continual intercessions, may the readers of “The Way” obtain

countless spiritual fruits when seeking his practical and sincere advice, the little things which he confides to them as “a friend, a brother, a father” as he indicated, “and that way you will improve your life and enter upon ways of prayer and of Love, so you can become a just man.”

*The books are now on sale in every Catholic bookstore (price: 80,000 VND). Associate publishing: Our Lady of Peace Bookshop – No. 1 Cong xa Paris. District 1, Ho Chi Minh City. Tel: (028)38 250 745 – 0938 037175 – <https://ducbaohobinhbooks-osp.com>*