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Anniversary Mass of St Josemaria in Singapore

This year, the Anniversary Mass of St Josemaria was held in Singapore on June 26 at the Church of the Holy Cross. Fr Avelino Marin, Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Southeast Asia, was the main celebrant. He was joined by the four other priests of Opus Dei who carry out their pastoral work in Singapore. Some 700 to 800 people attended the solemn Mass.

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June 26, 2019 commemorates the feast day of St Josemaria Escriva, founder of Opus Dei. The solemn Mass in honour of St Josemaria in Singapore was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Cross this year by the priests of Opus Day, led by Fr Avelino Marin, Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Southeast Asia.

What were the thoughts and feelings of the congregation which packed the church for this annual feast day eucharistic celebration?

15-year old Rebecca Tan, student of the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus (CHIJ) St Joseph's Convent, shared that it was a great experience. "It was a beautiful Mass and the homily was good," said Rebecca. She expressed her view that the sermon was

insightful and helpful. From the homily, she was reminded that we can be saints in daily life, just like St Josemaria. She stated, "We can include our faith in our daily lives, no matter where we are.

Worshipping God in our everyday life is important."

James Sobejano and Nena de Pablo, married couple in their 60s from Navarra, Spain attended this Mass for the first time in Singapore.

"Fantastic!" remarked James. He and his wife said that they were very happy to see many people attending this Mass. He noticed that the congregation was engaged in the Mass. Nena observed that in Europe these days, there are not many young people attending Mass. James and Nena who have seven children and 16 grandchildren expressed their hope to follow St Josemaria in his struggle to be holy, carrying out the ordinary duties in daily life.

A Singaporean youth with Opus Dei, Sean Ooi, 27, said that the sermon by Fr Marin was encouraging in that it was achievable to be a saint.

“Though it can take a long time, we should not give up,” commented Sean.

Ranjit and Christine Cooray from Colombo, Sri Lanka joined their son, grandson and family for this Mass for the first time. They attended past feast day Masses of St Josemaria in Sri Lanka. This 69 year old couple visited Singapore to see their son and their young baby grandson. “The Mass was very good. The homily was enlightening,” said Ranjit. One of his key learning points was that in our daily work, we can remember the Lord and offer it to God.

Married couple, Joseph and Maureen Chew, who are in their 70s, noted that it was a solemn and joyful celebration. They were happy to see

Opus Dei growing in numbers. They knew Fr Michael Chan more than 30 years ago when he was a still working as an engineer at the then Singapore Institute of Standards and Industrial Research (SISIR). They were then neighbours, living in Faber Drive and Faber Terrace. Joseph and Maureen were delighted to see Opus Dei grow in numbers and in their good work. Maureen observed that there are now more and more ordinary people and this is the charism of Opus Dei.

After the eucharistic celebration this year, a special booklet was given out to the congregation. Entitled, "Letters to a Saint", this booklet consisted of letters to St Josemaria Escriva by the new Blessed Guadalupe Ortiz, first layperson of the Opus Dei to be beatified.

A letter by Pope Francis to the Prelate of Opus Dei, Msgr Fernando

Ocariz, on the occasion of the beatification of Guadalupe Ortiz was included in the booklet. In the letter, the Pope said that “with the joy that came from knowing she was a daughter of God, as she had learned from Saint Josemaria himself, Guadalupe Ortiz placed her many human and spiritual qualities at the service of others, helping in a particular way other women and families in need of education and development.”

The inspiring life of St Josemaria continues to encourage and motivate many people around the world, including Singapore. The Mass booklet contains his homily on “Passionately Loving the World” which was given on the campus of University of Navarra on October 8, 1967. His words of wisdom resonate then and now: “I assure you, my children, that when a Christian carries out with love the most

insignificant everyday action, that action overflows with the transcendence of God...Heaven and earth seem to merge, my sons and daughters, on the horizon. But where they really meet is in your hearts, when you sanctify your everyday lives.”

Turning to St Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians, St Josemaria urged us, “Let us take up the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is God’s Word.” This annual Mass in honour of this “saint of the ordinary” encourages us to “present to mankind the testimony of an ordinary life made holy”. – By Edmund Lim, Singapore.