

St. Josemaria in a church close to the world's tallest building

Auxiliary Bishop of Taipei officiates in ceremony at the Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Parish Church.

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On Saturday, August 11, Taipei Auxiliary Bishop Jhung An-jhu officiated at a ceremony at the Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Catholic Church to formally bless a

painting of St. Vincent de Paul, the founder of the Vincentian Order and another painting of St. Josemaria, the founder of Opus Dei.

Filipino painter Dennis Tiamson did both paintings that were later mailed to Taiwan in rolls. Fr. Esteban Aranaz, the parish priest of the church, had them mounted on the elegant frames that had always hung on the wooden wall panels on both sides of the sanctuary. The frames used to contain the references for the readings and responsorial psalms for Sunday masses.

Fr. Aranaz, a member of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, an association of clergy intrinsically united to the Prelature of Opus Dei, was inspired to put up an image of St. Josemaria by an incident that happened some years ago in the diocese of Tarazona, his birthplace, when he would visit towns and

parishes showing videos of the founder of Opus Dei. “I wanted to spread devotion to this saint from Aragon,” he said.

“I had just shown a video in one small town when I heard a woman tell her friend, ‘Look, a saint who speaks!’ Before she had watched the video, saints for that woman were plaster-cast lifeless figures who stared down from their niches.”

“Her words hit a nerve in me,” said Fr. Aranaz. “Indeed St. Josemaria is a saint who speaks to the heart—he speaks of God and with God. So I told the painter to paint him like that—like speaking to whoever stands before him.”

Having a painting of St. Vincent de Paul on the other side is a gesture of gratitude. “I met with our parish council and we decided that to show appreciation for the establishment of this church by Vincentian Fathers

from the Netherlands, a painting of their founder should hang on one side panel of the sanctuary,” said Fr. Aranaz.

“The Jhu family agreed to shoulder the price of the painting of St. Vincent and I asked my parents to shoulder that of St. Josemaria’s.”

Taipei 101, the world’s tallest building is within walking distance of the church that Fr. Esteban says is a place of prayer and peace for those who work in the 502-meter high edifice with an elevator that travels at 16.82 meters per second.

From 1954 to 1992, Vincentians served as parish priests of Miraculous Medal Church. Vincentian Father Fang Jhih-yung was the last to serve as parish priest before diocesan priests took over.

St. Josemaria received the extraordinary grace to found Opus

Dei on October 2, 1928 while doing his spiritual retreat in the Vincentians' headquarters in Madrid. Next to the building where he did his retreat, was the St. Vincent de Paul Church, now called Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church.

“Both saints are deeply linked to this church,” said Fr. Aranaz, who left his parish in Alhama, Zaragoza, Spain in 2004 to work for the Archdiocese of Taipei.

Very Rev. Fr. Wang Cheng-chien, the superior general of the Vincentian Fathers in Taiwan and Monsignor Ramon Lopez, the vicar of the Opus Dei region that includes Taiwan were also present during the ceremony.

“St. Josemaria once desired to work among the Chinese people as a missionary and now that he is in heaven, the installation of his image in a church in Taipei, is like the

fulfillment of that dream,” said Msgr. Lopez.

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