

# **Trip to Ghana: When the Cedis Were Not Enough**

Mike's journey to Ghana to organise Masses in honour of St. Josemaría Escrivá. Despite financial challenges before the trip, generous friends helped raise the needed funds, allowing the mission to proceed. The visit included multiple events, such as talks with Catholic students at Ashesi University and eleven Masses across Ghana. The experience became a testament to perseverance, friendship, and faith.

11/08/2025

Permit me to say that for months leading up to my visit to Ghana this year, my dreams were filled with faces and places I hoped to encounter in the beautiful country. For three successive years now, my friends and I have been organising Masses in honour of St. Josemaría Escrivá across different parts of the 'Land of Cedis', as I fondly call Ghana. We've gradually reached more parishes each year, and on this third adventure, our ambitious goal was to organise at least ten Masses.

In light of this, a friend Andrew, a postgraduate student at Ashesi University in Berekuso, Ghana, had also invited me to speak to his fellow Catholic students about the saint. But there was an obstacle: we couldn't afford enough "cedis" for the trip.

Ten days to go, the trip seemed unlikely to happen. In a beautiful twist of fate, some acquaintances I had met on my previous visits to Ghana rallied together and raised the money. The trip was back on.

I flew from Lagos, Nigeria, to Accra on June 22, just a few days before the feast of St. Josemaría. While catching up with my friends Nicholas and Obed from the University of Ghana, I received a call from Axel with incredible news: The Apostolic Nuncio to Ghana himself, Archbishop Julien Kaboré, had confirmed he would celebrate the Mass on June 26. We were overjoyed. It was a huge milestone for us, as it was the first time an Archbishop would be celebrating this Mass in Ghana.

With multiple Masses happening simultaneously, we got to work, sharing out tasks to make sure every parish had the necessary Mass kits

and prayer cards. Nicholas, Stanley, and Christian designed the flyers, and everyone pitched in to handle the logistics.

On June 24, I had the speaking opportunity with the students at Ashesi University. It was one of many beautiful highlights. Since the school was between sessions, I spoke to a small, available, and dedicated group of freshmen and postgraduates. After the session about the saint and Opus Dei, interesting questions arose about how to live out their faith in the middle of their daily lives. I brought copies of *The Way* with me on the trip, and many were eager to take one. One student initially hesitated, saying she wouldn't have time to read it. Having acknowledged her honesty, I simply opened a copy and suggested she read the point number that matched how old she was at the time. She did so and was visibly moved, but still handed the

book back. A few minutes later, she returned and asked for it after all—a beautiful moment.

Meanwhile, in Accra, coordination was in full swing. Obed way-billed a Mass kit to Fr. Frederick at St. Theresa's Minor Basilica, Nandom, almost 800km away. Nicholas delivered another one to Fr. Lawrence at St. Maurice, in La, Accra, while Luke and I attended the Mass at the Nunciature. Fabian handled the arrangements for Masses at Holy Spirit Cathedral and Christ the King Parish in Accra. In the other towns of Nkurakan and Asamankese, Fr. Martins and Fr. James, were expecting us at St. Stephen and St. Mary respectively, while the Mass at the University of Ghana was set for July 2 by the Chaplain, Fr. Michael.

During the homily at the Nunciature, Archbishop Kaboré spoke about

finding God in ordinary life—the very essence of St. Josemaría's teachings—and encouraged us all to turn to the saint's intercession. Meanwhile, another speaking opportunity came for Nicholas, a final-year Economics student, at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church, University of Ghana at the close of the feast day Mass. While speaking, Nicholas quoted point 335 of *The Way*, where St. Josemaría writes, “An hour of study, for a modern apostle, is an hour of prayer.” With this, he encouraged his colleagues to embrace their studies not merely as academic work, but as a genuine path to holiness and a way of serving God.

In the *Land of Cedis*, it wasn't all work. I got to try delicious Ghanaian food, and discovered my love for the famous delicacy: *Kenkey* (made from fermented corn meal and eaten with fried fish and pepper sauce!) I also

visited colleagues at the University of Ghana Medical Centre and even made it to Cape Coast, where I met Archbishop Charles Gabriel Palmer-Buckle. He was incredibly supportive of our work, which gave us hope for future Masses in the region.

Leaving Ghana was hard. It was a beautiful accomplishment but had come to its end. What started as an impossibility became an incredible adventure, full of faith, friendship, and good food. We had beaten our target! Eleven Masses had been said across five different towns/cities: Accra, Asamankese, Berekuso, Nkurakan and Nandom. As I took my flight back, I decided to write this piece in thanksgiving for the fruits of this trip- knowing that St. Josemaría was pleased that his friends didn't give up when the cedis were not enough.

Michael Dike

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