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I went to my Patron Saint's Canonization

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to attend your patron saint's canonization? Ten-month-old Mary Jo from Vancouver, named after recently canonized Saint Josemaria, did just that. And she will remember it for the rest of her life.

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My daughter, who is now 10 months old, was born in the first week of December just before Christmas and

after a pilgrimage we made to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe -- our third child in four years of marriage We thought it would be nice to name her after Mary and Joseph, and since we also owed so much to St. Josemaria, we decided to call her Mary Jo.

Because of our affection for the founder of Opus Dei, my wife and I made up our minds to go to the Canonization from the very beginning. And taking Mary Jo with us seemed challenging but a must, as we wanted her to be at her patron saint's canonization. Not many people have a chance to do that: in my case, I would have liked to be at the canonization of St. John of the Cross (and my wife at St. Agnes').

So Mary Jo was there at the Canonization Mass. She arrived at seven in the morning after leaving the hotel at six. She waited a long

time in the cold Roman morning chill followed by a scorching autumn sun without complaining. She had two feedings and two diaper changes. To be quite honest though, at the moment of the rite of canonization, Mary Jo was fast asleep.

The next day we attended the thanksgiving Mass with the Prelate of Opus Dei, Most Rev. Bishop Javier Echevarria. After the Mass, we stayed for the audience with the Holy Father who was going to pass in the open Popemobile about 50 meters away from where we were. When he did pass by all the people sandwiched to about 5 layers in an attempt to get closer to the Holy Father. In her excitement my wife asked if she could get closer to the barrier so that Mary Jo could be blessed by the Pope; but she was getting nowhere with the ladies who had come a couple of hours earlier than us and were not about to

relinquish their prime position for greeting the Holy Father. As he approached, my wife begged one of them to pass on the baby and she finally agreed. The right moment came; my Mary Jo was passed from one lady to another into the grasp of one of the security guards, who passed her on to the Holy Father. He gave Mary Jo a big hug and a kiss. Being only ten months old, Mary Jo didn't have a clue of what was happening. But I have the picture of the Holy Father kissing her to show it to her when she is old enough to understand that she was the one who got the best of this special pilgrimage to Rome.
