

Somebody useful

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Constancy has never been my strong suit. Many's the time I've regretted not finishing what I'd started. But there is one glowing exception: at college I converted to Catholicism.

One day, nothing special, a friend and classmate dropped by my dormitory room. Before leaving he said, "Listen, Toshimi, why not read

it?" referring to a book he left behind.

It was a paperback entitled *The Way* by Blessed Josemaria Escriva. It consists of 999 points for reflection. The first reads, "Don't let your life be sterile. Be useful. Blaze a trail. Shine forth with the light of your faith and of your love." It hit me between the eyes, though I'd yet to know anything of Christianity.

Two years after having stumbled upon *The Way*, I became a Catholic. Perhaps where I live had something to do with it. The spiritual atmosphere of Nagasaki, where there are more Catholics and churches, also influenced me.

All that was some 20 years ago. There's been never a regret over my conversion. In fact, my gratitude keeps on growing.

Every now and then I'm asked why I got baptized. I've tried to gather my answers in a slim book entitled Path to Prayer (Inori no komichi). It starts off with the story of Dr. Nagai (a famous physician of Nagasaki, also a convert). I think adult converts follow more or less the same process. I summarize it in knowing God, knowing oneself and taking up prayer. One must also add-of this I'm absolutely sure-that for there to be converts, many people have to have prayed for him or her.

This past summer took me to Spain, where I hoped to gather material for a book on Blessed Josemaria, the author of The Way. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that Escriva had prayed very much for those of my country. He also got many others to do the same, so that "the Japanese, a wonderful people, may come to know Jesus Christ."

There I also learned that a stamp dedicated to Blessed Josemaria had been issued. Besides his image, it quotes a phrase that expresses his spirit: "Work is both a means and path to holiness."

His life and teachings will continue to spread, without barriers or frontiers, because his message is crucial for our lives.

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