

Learning the message of St Josemaría at home

In anticipation of his priestly ordination in 2013, Rev. Deacon Daniel McCaughan reflects on the impact that the message of St Josemaría has had on his life.

21/02/2013

In October last year, I was ordained a deacon for the Archdiocese of Sydney, Australia. I am currently in Rome, completing my theological studies before returning to Sydney

for my priestly ordination on 6 July 2013. St Josemaría's message of finding God in work and in the little details of everyday inspires me today, as it did growing up in Sydney, where I saw this lived out by my parents.

I grew up as the eldest of 11 children. My parents are both supernumerary members of Opus Dei. From an early age, I saw my Mum and Dad incorporate time for God into our everyday family life. They would get up early, go to Mass and spend time in prayer afterwards. They would pray again in the evening and invite us to pray the Rosary, especially if we were travelling in the car. This constant example acted like a gentle drip on my soul. I guess I realized that one's faith is something completely natural, a bit like breathing.

My parents never suggested that I should become a priest, but their

love for the Mass and respect for the priesthood led me to consider it as a natural option. Dad used to fill us with excitement, saying that God had a special vocation for each of us, one tailor made for our happiness and sanctity. It could be marriage or a celibate path. Dad encouraged us to ask God to show it to us, a bit like a child persistently asking a parent for something he or she wants. When God responded we would know.

When I was in year seven at Redfield College, a school inspired by the teachings of St Josemaría, I experienced the call to the priesthood. It was a powerful moment in prayer in the chapel where I felt overwhelmed with God's love and peace all centred on an interior realization that he wanted me to be his priest. To my surprise, the chaplains at the school, who are priests of Opus Dei, took me very seriously when I told them about my

experience. They began to pray daily for me and this support continues today.

I assumed I would enter the seminary straight after school but God, it seemed, had other ideas. I met a girl who I really liked. Priesthood suddenly was put on the backburner, so much so that I could not commit to the seminary after completing the HSC exams. Instead I moved to Tasmania to study and, providentially, secured the last available place at Mountview Study Centre, a student residence of Opus Dei near the University of Tasmania. Living there with members of Opus Dei reinforced the example set by my parents and gave me an even greater exposure to the beautiful spirit of St Josemaría. They supported me with great friendship and prayer and helped enormously with my human development! They created a space of intense discernment that helped

me realize I could not run from the priesthood any longer. I graduated with my History and Political Science degree in December 2005 and entered the seminary in February 2006.

While life in the seminary was a change of pace, I was able to continue living “a plan of life” that I learnt from my parents and consolidated in Mountview. Each day, I try to spend time in mental prayer, do some spiritual reading, pray the Rosary and make small acts of self-denial. I am trying to keep this up these days in Rome in the hope of deepening my friendship with Jesus Christ, whom I regard as my dearest friend. I guess the risk of being in the seminary is that God can become too “academic”, particularly with all the classes of Theology!

I’ve learnt of St Josemaría love for the Holy Father and the Church.

Living in Rome certainly gives me the opportunity to pray for Pope Benedict and the universal church on a daily basis. I continue to be grateful for the support of the priests of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, both in Rome and from Sydney.

As my ordination day approaches, I can't help but give thanks for the impact that my parents, family and the message of St Josemaría have had on my life.

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