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St. Josemaria's First Communion

April 23 is the 100th anniversary of St. Josemaria's First Holy Communion. A brief video about this anniversary, with words from Benedict XVI recalling his own First Holy Communion 69 years ago.

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"Josemaria's First Holy Communion" (from Life of St. Josemaria for Children)

St Josemaria's parents had a card printed to mark his First Holy Communion. It was the feast of St George, the local patron saint, in his school chapel, the Piarists' school in Barbastro.

He was just 10 years old. His parents Jose and Dolores explained the Catechism to him. He was also prepared by a Piarist priest, who taught him a prayer that he remembered all his life, and afterwards taught to thousands of people.

"I wish, Lord, to receive you with the purity, humility and devotion with which your most holy Mother received you; with the spirit and fervor of the saints."

Not everything went well that day. As was traditional, a barber curled his hair with hot tongs. But he gave him a small burn by accident. Little Josemaria didn't say anything so as

not to upset his mother, and offered the pain up to Jesus. It was a small sacrifice to prepare for that important day.

Years later, he said that when he received Holy Communion he prayed for his parents and sisters and he asked Jesus for the gift of never losing him. And his prayer was heard: he always thought that that day, our Lord took possession of his heart.

Benedict XVI asked Jesus for something very similar when he made his First Holy Communion. He recalled this on 15 October 2005, in an encounter with children in St Peter's Square.

"I remember my First Communion day very well. It was a lovely Sunday in March 1936, 69 years ago. It was a sunny day, the church looked very beautiful, there was music.... There were so many beautiful things that I

remember. There were about 30 of us, boys and girls from my little village of no more than 500 inhabitants.

"But at the heart of my joyful and beautiful memories is this one: I understood that Jesus had entered my heart, he had actually visited me. And with Jesus, God himself was with me. And I realized that this is a gift of love that is truly worth more than all the other things that life can give. So on that day I was really filled with great joy, because Jesus came to me and I realized that a new stage in my life was beginning, I was 9 years old, and that it was henceforth important to stay faithful to that encounter, to that communion.

"I promised the Lord as best I could: 'I always want to stay with you', and I prayed to him, 'but above all, stay with me.'

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