

The First Time I Heard His Voice

José Luis Soria was a doctor who first met St. Josemaria in 1953. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1956 and from then until St. Josemaria's death in 1975 he lived and worked with him in Rome. Fr. Soria now exercises his priestly ministry in Vancouver. This is the third installment of "My memories of Saint Josemaria".

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I will always remember the impression I received in the summer of 1950 when I had the opportunity of hearing a tape, on which was recorded a meditation on faith preached by Saint Josemaria.

Years later he would rework it and publish it in *Friends of God* with the title “Living by Faith.”

Similar impressions were repeated later on, every time I attended one of his preached meditations, and those occasions were many, to say the least.

His words were very powerful, simple and deep, attractive and challenging, moving from the most delicate moments of dialogue with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament or compassionate understanding of human weakness to instances of forceful and sometimes thunderous demands upon the listeners.

It was mostly dialogue with the Lord, but certainly he knew how to teach us to share in the same dialogue.

When Saint Josemaria preached, you could immediately see that Jesus (and especially Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle) was fully real and at the same time fully loved by him.

The Lord was not for him somebody to pray to in moments when an emergency struck. Very often Saint Josemaria talked to us about the need of living in the presence of God, in spite of distractions and the commitment to the most intense activity.

We were supposed to become, he added, “contemplative souls in the midst of the world.”

What he wrote in the 1930s expresses perfectly the same idea: “It’s necessary to be convinced that

God is always near us. Too often we live as though our Lord were somewhere far off —where the stars shine. We fail to realize that he is also by our side – always. For he is a loving Father. He loves each one of us more than all the mothers in the world can love their children, helping us and inspiring us, blessing... and forgiving.” (*The Way*, no. 267)

Convinced of his sanctity and future canonization, from the very moment I had the opportunity to do so,

I kept everything I could obtain, as souvenirs or relics. I remember among those things an empty insulin bottle (the severe diabetes suffered by Saint Josemaria from 1940 until April 1954 forced him to receive large doses); a rosary he blessed and gave me; several small papers with some of his hand writing...

But I was very far from imagining that my stay in Rome was going to be much longer than I had initially planned.

In fact my original idea was that, after three years of ecclesiastical studies and formation in the spirit of Opus Dei, I was going to return to my native Spain to practice my career as a physician.

The prayers, the example and the preaching of Saint Josemaria changed all that, and led me to the priesthood.

Once I was ordained in 1956, the founder wanted me to remain in Rome, working close to him, and there I stayed for 20 more years.

Those years in his company allowed me to attempt to move from this initial sketch to a more detailed portrait of the founder of Opus Dei.

We will explore this in the next article.

This article is part of a series of articles by Fr. Soria. The other articles are available below:

My memories of Saint Josemaria (I)

My memories of Saint Josemaria (II)

The text above first appeared in The Westbrook Voice.

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