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50th anniversary of Opus Dei Founder's visit

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin celebrated a Mass to mark the 50th anniversary of the visit to Ireland of St Josemaría Escrivá in the parish church which he had entrusted to priests of Opus Dei in 2008.

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**A Mass to mark the 50th
anniversary of the visit to Ireland
of Opus Dei Founder St Josemaría**

Escrivá has been held in the Church of Our Lady, Queen of Peace, on Merrion Road in Dublin. The Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin who is pictured with Mgr Robert Bucciarelli (left), Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Ireland, and Fr Fergus O'Connor, parish priest of Our Lady, Queen of Peace. (Pic by John McElroy)

Archbishop Martin's homily:

The texts chosen for our readings this evening are texts which inspire confidence. The Christian life is challenging, but not burdensome. We have heard how from the first moment of creation God showed his love through his care and attention for humankind in providing a home within this earth.

In Jesus Christ we come so close to God as to be able to call him with Jesus: "Abba, Father". Saint Paul

stresses that we do not possess the spirit of slaves, but the spirit of sons. The Christian faith is not a faith based on fear, but based on knowing that the God of love comes out to meet us, and accompanies us on the path of our lives.

But so often we place obstacles on this path of love and we are continually tempted to decide on our own way, rather than taking the risk of following the path which Jesus challenges us to follow. In the Gospel reading we heard how the disciples thought that they knew more about fishing than Jesus did. In the end they discover that on their own they have no success in catching fish, but when they abandon themselves to the indications of the Lord, not only do they have success, but they have a success which goes way beyond anything they could have envisaged.

More than one Gospel story ends with examples of the way in which God's love is always superabundant, producing fruits which go way beyond not just our imagination, but indeed of our very categories of comprehension.

In the face of many challenges and scandals, the Church today needs an injection of confidence. That confidence is not something that we can generate on our own. It can only spring from a renewed sense of trust in the Lord, who has promised that he will be with his Church always.

The teaching of the Second Vatican Council brought a sense of renewal to our idea of the Church. This is something that is present in all the documents of the Council, not just in the two documents which deal directly with the Church, 'Lumen Gentium' and 'Gaudium et Spes'.

The teaching of Vatican II brought renewal especially to the way we should understand the Church. The Council did so not by creating new images, but through returning to the roots of scripture and the tradition of the Church and rediscovering the wealth of that teaching, and also by removing or clarifying many non-essential reflections and practices which had accumulated over centuries.

The Council emphasised the concept of the Church as the Body of Christ, showing the essential link between Church and Eucharist. The Church is not something of our own creation. It is not simply an institution. It is the Eucharist which constructs the Church. It is in celebrating the mystery of the sacrificial love of Jesus in the mystery of his body which endured death but which was raised to new life, that we become the Church “in memory of me”. The

Body of Christ which is the Church leads us daily through the same path of self giving-love, so that our Christian lives can be transformed by the redeeming power of God's grace and of God's love.

The Council also emphasises that the Church is the people of God, part of that same movement of redemption which began with the pilgrimage of God's people in the desert and continued right throughout the revelation of the Jewish scriptures.

Perhaps in the years after the Council there was a temptation to examine the Church as People of God in terms of a secular analysis of structures and functions. The challenge of renewal of what had in many places become overly clerical and authoritarian led many to think that the criterion of renewal would be one close to the idea of secular structures. In some cases people

thought reform would come principally through reform of structures. In some cases there was the tendency to think that structural reform was the principal reform requested by the Council.

But if we return to the biblical reflection we see that the criterion for truly belonging to God's people was not political or demographic but was about faithfulness. God remains faithful to his people despite all their doubts and infidelity. The more our response becomes a response of faithfulness, the more authentically we are truly God's people.

This concept of faithfulness as the key characteristic of those who are called to be God's people is expressed in another particular concept of the Council's teaching on the Church, namely "the universal call to holiness", so dear to Saint Josemaría and included in the Collect prayer of

his Mass today. 'Lumen Gentium' stresses that "all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love, and by this holiness of life a more human way of life is fostered also in earthly society".

This is a remarkable description of what is essential in the Christian life and also of the contribution which the Christian message brings to the life of society and of humankind. At times there has been a certain dichotomy in the way we think of the role of the lay person in the Church. Some would stress only the presence of lay persons in secular society; others would stress a kind of inner Church spirituality detached from the realities of life. The concept of the universal call to holiness shows that both sides of the mission of lay persons are intrinsically connected.

It is interesting to examine how the text of ‘Lumen Gentium’ addresses the various ways and areas in which the call to holiness is lived. After speaking of Bishops and clergy, the text immediately speaks of the place of married couples and parents in the call to holiness. This evening, as we celebrate the anniversary of the death of Saint Josemaría, we recall just how much he stressed the role of married persons in advancing the call to evangelization of the world and the transmission of the faith.

The call to married life and parenthood is a special call to be witness to the love of God. The mission of married lay persons is also to “show forth in temporal service the love with which God loved the world”, a witness and a mission so essential today when the distinctiveness of married love is under challenge.

I am happy to celebrate this double anniversary, that of the passage to the eternal life of Saint Josemaría, and also the fiftieth anniversary of his visit to Ireland.

In the notes that I was given about his visit to Dublin, it was noted that Saint Josemaría met my predecessor, Archbishop McQuaid, at his residence in Killiney. On his way there he most likely drove past what was then a large, striking, newly built church on this Merrion Road, never imagining that this church fifty years later would be a focal point for his followers who dedicate themselves to responding to the call to holiness and of commitment to bring Jesus' message of love to a world which has changed so radically in that space of time.

The Church needs an injection of confidence. That will not come from imposing a human model of

confidence, but in recognising our weakness and humility and then opening our hearts to the Lord. In a reflection on the Gospel reading we have heard, Saint Josemaría encouraged us that “if you feel that you cannot manage to go on, abandon yourself in God, telling him: Lord I trust in you, I abandon myself in you, but do help me in my weakness! Filled with confidence, repeat: See Jesus, my life seems so miserable; I am not worthy to be a son of yours. Tell him all this, and tell him so over and over again. It will not be long before you hear him say: Ne timeas! — do not be afraid” (The Forge, 287).

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