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Working on Trust (8): God chose my son

God has a plan for each one of us. A Christian family is entrusted with the task of accompanying each of its members in discerning God's plan. Eighth video in the series "Working on Trust."

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All of us have a vocation. This brings us God's light to see our life in dialogue with His plans, and it is also

a strength that allows us to launch ourselves with enthusiasm into our life's mission and to seek holiness. Saint Josemaria described it this way: "If you were to ask me how the divine call is perceived, how one becomes aware of it, I would say that it is a new outlook on life. It is as though a new light is lit within us; it is a mysterious impulse that spurs a person to dedicate their noblest energies to an activity that, over time, becomes a way of life. That vital force, somewhat like an avalanche sweeping all before it, is what others call a vocation" (*Letter*, 9 January 1932).

The Christian family is the context where the vocation of each person takes root and develops, and parents are called to accompany their children on this path of discovering their life-project.

Many times, a person's decision to give their life to God represents a joy for the whole family, even when the logical doubts and worries are raised at the same time. In some cases, the same occurrence causes shock and even distress. Either way, the task of accompanying and accepting the vocation of a son or daughter can be a challenge for most families.

When God calls our children to live a life of dedication through a specific vocation, a number of questions arise. Is this the right choice? Are they making a mistake? Are they sufficiently mature to be making this decision right now? In the case of a celibate vocation, is he or she conscious of what it means to not have a spouse and children? Is this just the feeling of the moment? These questions arise in the hearts of parents who deeply love their children and who want with all their

hearts to take care of and protect them always.

Loving your children implies loving their freedom also. But respecting that freedom inherently involves the risk of leaving it so that they -- together with God -- are the ones who determine their path to heaven.

Questions for dialogue:

- Do I know my children, what qualities they possess and in what areas they need to improve? Do I help them in their formation so that they continue to grow little by little in the virtues they most need?
- Fathers and mothers are called to accompany their children along their path of discovering their life project. Do I make sure to dedicate time to talk with my children about their dreams, wants, and plans for the future? Do I know what my

children carry in their hearts?
Do I know what "makes them tick"?

- The decisions that our children make tend to challenge our paradigms of them. Am I willing to put aside my own expectations with respect to the future of my children and help them to discover and embrace with freedom the specific path that God wants for their lives?
- Although I might have my own fears and doubts with respect to the future choices my children make, do I try to keep an open attitude, knowing that youth is the best moment to be daring?

Some suggested action-steps:

- Make sure that you and your spouse share the same ideas about respect for your children's freedom and their life choices.

- Think together about how to accompany your children along this path of discovery and discernment: helping them to foster a life of piety and prayer; presenting the exciting challenge of forming a Christian family; encouraging affection for priests and those who have dedicated their lives to God in celibacy; creating an atmosphere of generosity and concern for those in need; praying for the vocation of your children.
- If you have questions about a specific path or vocation, ask someone from that institution, the priest of your parish, etc.
- If your son or daughter is indecisive with respect to the future, show them that you trust them and help them see that God always accompanies us along the path of life.

- Listen carefully to the motives behind your son or daughter's decision to follow a certain path, without rushing to give your opinion. Later, once you have had time to think objectively about what your child proposes, you will be able to speak about it calmly.
- If your son or daughter has discovered a vocation, your task as parents continues to be most important, as you continue to accompany him or her throughout their entire life of dedication, in the different phases and processes, helping them to live their vocation as a path to personal fulfillment. Show trust in their abilities, giving them the necessary instruments to grow and mature, in an atmosphere of true freedom.

Quotes from Sacred Scripture and *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- So the Lord God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The Lord God then built the rib that he had taken from the man into a woman. When he brought her to the man, the man said: “This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; This one shall be called ‘woman,’ for out of man this one has been taken.” That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body. *Gen 2: 21-24*
- The word of the Lord came to me: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I

appointed you. “Ah, Lord God!” I said, “I do not know how to speak. I am too young!” But the Lord answered me, do not say, “I am too young.” To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you—oracle of the Lord. Then the Lord extended his hand and touched my mouth, saying to me, See, I place my words in your mouth!” *Jer 1, 4-9*

- He went up the mountain and summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him. He appointed twelve [whom he also named apostles] that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach and to have authority to drive out demons: [he appointed the twelve:] Simon, whom he named Peter; James, son of Zebedee, and John the brother

of James, whom he named Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus; Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him. *Mk 3: 13-19*

- The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for: The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully

according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 27)

- This vocation to eternal life is *supernatural*. It depends entirely on God's gratuitous initiative, for he alone can reveal and give himself. It surpasses the power of human intellect and will, as that of every other creature. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1998)
- *Education in the faith* by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents

have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God. The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents. (Cf *Lumen gentium*, 11). (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2226)

- Family ties are important but not absolute. Just as the child grows to maturity and human and spiritual autonomy, so his unique vocation which comes from God asserts itself more clearly and forcefully. Parents should respect this call and encourage their children to follow it. They must be convinced that the first vocation of the Christian is to *follow* Jesus: "He who loves father or mother more than me

is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Matthew 10: 37).

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2232)

Quotes from Pope Francis for reflection:

- *That young people may respond generously to their vocations and seriously consider offering themselves to God in the priesthood or consecrated life.* (Pope Francis' monthly prayer intentions for April 2017)
- Even amid these troubled times, the mystery of the Incarnation reminds us that God continually comes to encounter us. He is God-with-us, who walks along the often dusty paths of our lives. He knows our anxious longing for love and he calls us to joy. In the diversity and the

uniqueness of each and every vocation, personal and ecclesial, there is a need to *listen, discern* and *live* this word that calls to us from on high and, while enabling us to develop our talents, makes us instruments of salvation in the world and guides us to full happiness.
(MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS FOR THE 2018 WORLD DAY OF VOCATIONS)

- Three basic beliefs underlie the process of discernment, beliefs which are ingrained in every human being's experience understood in the light of the faith and Christian tradition. The first is that the Spirit of God works in the heart of every man and woman through feelings and desires that are bound to ideas, images and plans. Listening carefully, the human being has the possibility to interpret these signals. The

second belief is that the human heart, because of its weakness and sin, is normally divided because it is attracted to different and even contrary feelings. The third belief is that every way of life imposes a choice, because a person cannot remain indefinitely in an undetermined state. A person needs to adopt the instruments needed to recognize the Lord's call to the joy of love and choose to respond to it. (Synod Preparatory Document: Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment)

- "Vocational service must be seen as the soul of all evangelization and of all the Church's pastoral ministry. Faithful to this principle, I do not hesitate to affirm that the vocational ministry cannot be reduced to activities that are closed up in themselves. This

could turn into proselytism, and could also lead to “the temptation to practice lax and unwise recruitment” (John Paul II, Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, 64). The vocational ministry, however, must be placed in close relation with evangelization, education in the faith, so that vocational ministry is a true itinerary of faith and leads to a personal encounter with Christ, and with ordinary pastoral work, in special with the pastoral care of the family, in such a way that the parents assume, with joy and responsibility, their mission to be the first vocational animators of their children, freeing themselves and freeing their children from the inner barrier of selfish, calculating perspectives or of power, which often occur in the bosom of families, even those practicing

the faith." (Message of Pope Francis to the participants of the international Congress: “Vocational ministry and consecrated life: prospects and hopes”)

Quotes from Saint Josemaría for reflection:

- "The parents are the first persons responsible for the education of their children, in human as well as in spiritual matters. They should be conscious of the extent of their responsibility. To fulfil it, they need prudence, understanding, a capacity to love and a concern for giving good example. Imposing things by force, in an authoritarian manner, is not the right way to teach. The ideal attitude of parents lies more in becoming their children's friends — friends who will be

willing to share their anxieties, who will listen to their problems, who will help them in an effective and agreeable way." (*Christ is Passing By*, 27)

- "Children learn to place God first and foremost in their affections. They learn to see God as their Father and Mary as their Mother and they learn to pray following their parents' example. In this way one can easily see what a wonderful apostolate parents have and how it is their duty to live a fully Christian life of prayer, so they can communicate their love of God to their children, which is something more than just teaching them." (*Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá*, 103)
- "Parents have to be on guard against the temptation of wanting to project themselves unduly on their children or of

moulding them according to their own preferences. They should respect their individual God-given inclinations and aptitudes. If their love is true, this is easy enough. Even in the extreme case, when a young person makes a decision that the parents have good reason to consider mistaken and when they think it will lead to future unhappiness, the answer lies not in force, but in understanding. Very often it consists in knowing how to stand by their child so as to help him overcome the difficulties and, if necessary, draw all the benefit possible from an unfortunate situation." (*Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá*, 104)

- "Parents can, and should, be a great help to their children. They can open new horizons for them, share their experiences

and make them reflect, so they do not allow themselves to be carried away by passing emotional experiences. They can offer them a realistic scale of value. Sometimes they can help with personal advice; on other occasions they should encourage their children to seek other suitable people such as a loyal and sincere friend, a learned and holy priest or an expert in career guidance." (*Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá*, 104)

For further reading:

- Educating in Freedom
- Series on vocation: "Something great that is love"
- "The World Needs You" - Saint Josemaria to Youth
- Video of Saint Josemaría: "God and your children's vocation"

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