

Meditations: October 6, Canonization of Saint Josemaria

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on the anniversary of Saint Josemaria's canonization in 2002.

- Saint Josemaría let God work through him
- Example of the saints
- Their closeness and intercession

ON OCTOBER 6, 2002, Saint Josemaría was canonized in Saint Peter's Square in Rome. John Paul II

in his homily highlighted as especially important the founder of Opus Dei's commitment to encouraging Christians to strive for holiness in the midst of ordinary life: "He never stopped inviting his spiritual children to invoke the Holy Spirit to ensure that their interior life, namely, their relationship with God and their family, professional and social life, totally made up of small earthly realities, would not be separated but would form only one life that was 'holy and full of God'."^[1]

We are all called to always stay close to Jesus, in a relationship that progressively fills us with peace because it leads us to realize, with ever greater clarity, that we are in God's hands, no matter what happens. "The ordinary life of a Christian who has faith," Saint Josemaría stressed, "when he works or rests, when he prays or sleeps, at all times, is a life in which God is

always present.”^[2] — This vision of life heals our internal divisions and opens up an immense horizon for us: “God comes close to us and we can cooperate with his plan of salvation.”^[3] — Opening ourselves to the action of the Holy Spirit – that is, to holiness – contributes to transforming the world and raising it up to God.

Nevertheless when we reflect on this mission, we may feel that it is not for us, but rather for people who are better prepared. “We can find it helpful, “the prelate of Opus Dei wrote, “to remember that Christ did not call his disciples because they were better than others. He was well aware of their weaknesses and (as is also true of us) of the deepest corners of their heart and their past.”^[4] — Saint Josemaría experienced something similar when he founded Opus Dei. As Cardinal Ratzinger wrote in an article published that day: “When

Josemaría Escrivá says that we are all called to be saints, it seems to me that he is in fact referring to his personal experience, because he never did incredible things by himself, but limited himself to letting God work.”^[5] —

WHEN THE CHURCH raises up a saint to the altars, she presents that person as a model for imitating Christ. The saints have lived with Christian hope, and show us by their witness that it is worthwhile following our Lord, who has filled their lives with a joy and peace compatible with the most varied external circumstances.

At the same time, all the saints remind us that living close to God is a goal that is not achieved by our own strength, but is the result of divine grace. It is God who has made them

holy, certainly counting on their free choice and often their determined effort. They are not models of unreachable goals, but rather “people who lived with their feet on the ground; they experienced the daily toil of existence with its successes and failures, finding in the Lord the strength to rise again and again, and to continue on their journey.”^[6] Saint Josemaría said that his life involved beginning and beginning again, even several times each day. He referred to this effort as a “sporting spirit.” “Tackling serious matters with a sporting spirit gives very good results. Perhaps I have lost several games? Fine, but – if I persevere – in the end I will win.”^[7]

The path to holiness is not made up only of isolated heroic acts, but of a lot of daily love. We can all love one another with Christ’s concern and refinement. In the lives of the saints we see this “daily love” embodied in

specific deeds. From them we learn that in each person we can encounter “the ‘hidden’ God (Is 45:15). Thanks to them, He is revealed, becomes visible, makes himself present in our midst.”^[8] —

Each saint, therefore, is “like a ray of light streaming forth from the word of God.”^[9] — They show us different aspects of Christ’s face and of his teachings. As the Catechism of the Church tells us, the saints “in their rich diversity are refractions of the one pure Light of the Holy Spirit.”^[10] —
“Holiness means nothing else than union with God,” Saint Josemaría said. “The greater one’s intimacy with God, the greater the sanctity.”^[11] —

THE SAINTS “contemplate God, praise him and constantly care for those whom they have left on earth.

When they entered into the joy of their Master, they were ‘put in charge of many things’ (cf. *Mt* 25:21). Their intercession is their most exalted service to God’s plan.”^[12] The saints not only show us the path to holiness, but also help us to walk along it. Their activity “is not limited to their earthly biographies but also includes their being and working in God after death. In the saints one thing becomes clear: those who draw near to God do not withdraw from men, but rather become truly close to them.”^[13] Saint Josemaría, and so many sons and daughters of his in Opus Dei, perhaps even someone we might have known, are living in heaven, close to God, and intercede for us.

In fact, we already see this closeness and intercession in our human relationships. A parent or a teacher strives to accompany their child or student in taking the first steps in

life; they themselves experienced this help when they were young, and now they see it as only natural to do the same for the new generations. In a similar way, the saints also had to struggle to live close to God. They experienced difficulties like ours, and remind us that even though we feel the inclination to sin, holiness is much more effective in furthering our happiness. “Each time we join our hands and open our hearts to God, we find ourselves in the company of anonymous saints and recognized saints who pray with us and who intercede for us as older brothers and sisters who have preceded us on this same human adventure.”^[14] —

Our Lady is present in the lives of all the saints. The only thing Saint Josemaría wanted us to take as an example from his own life was his love for Mary. “Lady,” we can pray with words of the founder of Opus

Dei, “you can make my soul take off on that glorious and definitive flight which has as its destination the very Heart of God. Trust in her, for she is listening to you.”^[15] —

^[1] — Saint John Paul II, Homily, 6 October 2002.

^[2] — Saint Josemaría, Meditation, 3 March 1954, cit. in Saint John Paul II, Homily, 6 October 2002.

^[3] — Saint John Paul II, Homily, 6 October 2002.

^[4] — Fernando Ocáriz, Message, 20 July 2020.

^[5] — Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *Osservatore Romano*, “Letting God Work,” 6 October 2002.

^[6] — Francis, Angelus, 1 November 2019.

^[7] — Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 169.

^[8] Saint John Paul II, Angelus, 1 November 1983.

^[9] Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no. 48.

^[10] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2684.

^[11] Saint Josemaría, *In Love with the Church*, no. 5.

^[12] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2683.

^[13] Benedict XVI, Angelus, 1 November 2010.

^[14] Francis, General Audience, 7 April 2021.

^[15] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 994.

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