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10 Quotes from Saint Josemaria about Love for the Poor

November 18 is the 2nd World Day of the Poor, convoked by Pope Francis. Here are ten quotes from Saint Josemaria about seeing Christ in the poor and loving and serving them.

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1. The poor “masses” have been going off down the “road of a justified discontentment” and continue to do so. It hurts... but how

much resentment we have caused among those who are spiritually or materially in need!

Christ has to once again be placed among the poor and the humble: it is precisely with them that he prefers to be! (*Furrow*, 228)

2. A friend of ours used to say: “The poor are my best spiritual book and the main motive of my prayers. It pains me to see them, and in each one of them, Christ. And because it hurts, I realize I love Him and love them.” (*Furrow*, 827)

3. Serving and educating children, caring lovingly for the sick. To make ourselves understood by simple souls, we have to humble our intellect; to understand poor sick people we have to humble our heart. In this way, on our knees in both body and mind, it is easy to reach Jesus along that sure way of human wretchedness, of our own

wretchedness. It will lead us to make “a nothing” of ourselves in order to let God build on our nothingness.

(The Forge, 600)

4. A man or a society that does not react to suffering and injustice and makes no effort to alleviate them is still distant from the love of Christ's heart. While Christians enjoy the fullest freedom in finding and applying various solutions to these problems, they should be united in having one and the same desire to serve mankind. Otherwise their Christianity will not be the word and life of Jesus; it will be a fraud, a deception of God and man. *(Christ is Passing By, 167)*

5. It is wrong to shut oneself up in comfortable religiosity, forgetting the needs of others. The man who wishes to be just in God's eyes also tries to establish the reign of justice among men. And not only for the good of

God's name, but because to be a Christian means to work at fulfilling all the noble yearnings of men.

Paraphrasing a well-known text of St John, we can say that the man who says he acts justly towards God, but does not do so with other men, is a liar: and there is no truth in him.

(Christ is Passing By, 52)

6. It is easy to understand the impatience, anxiety and uneasiness of people whose naturally Christian soul stimulates them to fight the personal and social injustice which the human heart can create. So many centuries of men living side by side and still so much hate, so much destruction, so much fanaticism stored up in eyes that do not want to see and in hearts that do not want to love!

The good things of the earth, monopolized by a handful of people; the culture of the world, confined to

cliques. And, on the outside, hunger for bread and education. Human lives—holy, because they come from God—treated as mere things, as statistics. I understand and share this impatience. It stirs me to look at Christ, who is continually inviting us to put his new commandment of love into practice. (*Christ is Passing By*, 111)

7. All the circumstances in which life places us bring a divine message, asking us to respond with love and service to others. “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne ... Then the King will say to those at his right hand, Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was

sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will answer them, Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (*Mt 25:31-40*).

We must learn to recognize Christ when he comes out to meet us in our brothers and sisters, the people around us. No human life is ever isolated. It is bound up with other lives. No man or woman is a single verse; we all make up one divine poem which God writes with the cooperation of our freedom. (*Christ is Passing By*, 111)

8. “The poor will have the Gospel preached to them” (*Mt 11:6*), we read in Scripture, precisely as one of the signs which mark the arrival of the Kingdom of God. Those who do not love and practise the virtue of poverty do not have Christ’s spirit. This holds true for everyone. For the hermit who retires to the desert; and for the ordinary Christian who lives among his fellow men, whether he enjoys the use of this world’s resources or is short of many of them. (*Conversations*, 110).

9.. Recalling an expression of the prophet Isaiah—*discite benefacere* (*Is 1:17*)—I like to say that we have to *learn to live every virtue* and perhaps this is especially true of poverty. We have to learn to live it, otherwise it will be reduced to an ideal about which much is written but which no one seriously puts into practice. We have to make people see that poverty is an invitation which our Lord

issues to each Christian, and that it is therefore a definite call that should shape every human life.

(Conversations, 110)

10. To my way of thinking, the best examples of poverty are those mothers and fathers of large and poor families who spend their lives for their children and who with their effort and constancy—often without complaining of their needs—bring up their family, creating a cheerful home in which everyone learns to love, to serve and to work.

(Conversations 111)

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