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"Sanctifying Rest and Leisure", fifth video of the Series "The Richness of Ordinary Life"

This is the fifth of the Series of videos presented by Prof. Regina Eya in which she explains how the message of St. Josemaría of seeking holiness in ordinary life, can be lived in fulfilling the need to rest.

11/18/2020

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The collection was published by Criterion Publishers under the title *The Rich, Rich Ordinary Life*.

CHAPTER 5

OH—I AM TIRED! GOT TO REST!

(Sanctifying rest and leisure)

The business of family, work and civic responsibilities often get one exhausted. So one has the need to switch off from hectic life—to rest and recuperate. People go on leave, take vacations and travel to see places just to get away from their usual or hectic routine. This is also normal and ordinary. This too, has drawn Josemaría's attention. He also

calls on us to sanctify our rest! Hear him:

“I have always seen rest as a time set aside from daily tasks, never as days of idleness. Rest means recuperation: to gain strength, form ideals and make plans. In other words it means a change of occupation, so that you can come back later with a new impetus to your daily job.”(1)

St. Josemaría drew examples from the Gospel. When Our Lord sent out His disciples to preach, upon their return, He gathered them together and invited them to a desert place by themselves to rest. But this time was not spent sleeping or lying about in idleness. Our Lord must have spent time teaching the disciples many things that they were yet to learn. (cf. Furrow, 470). Also when Jesus Christ Himself got tired as He was truly man, he went to rest at Jacob's well while His disciples went to find food.

There He met the Samaritan woman. The Gospel of St. John, chapter 4, verses 5 to 26 tells us in great detail how he spent that time of rest teaching and converting the Samaritan woman. This is to teach us that, even in our time of rest, we must continue that quiet dialogue with God. We must continue to live presence of God and look out for opportunities to save souls. Rest, he says, does not mean 'doing nothing'. It means a change of activity, from one that is strenuous to one that is perhaps less strenuous or is at least of a different nature. There, too, at that leisure activity, we also must discover something divine, because even in that, God is waiting to meet us.

Holy rest?

So how is one to sanctify one's rest? As we have mentioned earlier, those who work outside the home come

back at the end of the day tired. Love of God urges them not to switch off and fall on their bed in one heap; they must think of others. The children need them, several things in the home need attention. So we plan the evening rest with the children. For example parents can plan to relax with a television programme with their children. This gives them the opportunity to talk to their children about what to watch on television and what not to watch and why. This is a change of activity and has been utilized for the proper upbringing of children. Going to bed upon return from work would have given the parents some temporary comfort but could have resulted in some harm to the otherwise unsupervised children.

‘Appart from Sundays and Holy Days of when the family goes to Mass and has more time for rest’(2), Saturdays are a good example of days of rest.

Parents probably won't go to work. They have the opportunity to sleep a little longer and take things easy. This gives a wonderful opportunity to take the children out and enjoy some hours with them using whatever crops up naturally as an occasion to form them in virtues and show alternative leisure time activities other than the television.

Then there are the bigger holidays and vacations. I remember all the teachings of St. Josemaría. And these are really no different from longstanding Catholic Church teachings. It is just that they are reemphasized and practical examples are given. Examples include planning to go on vacations with the entire family and to choose places of interest that will suit all members of the family and that will not lead to offending God. Notorious hotels or holiday resorts are avoided. The opportunity is created for some

activities that will teach some virtues to the children. Books are selected for them beforehand and they are encouraged to read them. They may learn some vocational skills or develop hobbies according to their age. They do things with their parents who now have all the time in the world to live family life to the full. Prayers are said as usual, because we don't take a holiday from God. We make sure that in all we do at leisure and on holidays we still establish a Christian atmosphere where we are. We do the things Christ would have done and avoid the things He would avoid. We think of our souls and the souls of everybody around us and the urgency with which God wants everybody saved and how He relies on us to be His modern-day apostles.

Helping families out

Often we find that working parents in Nigeria never find time to rest. Even when they obtain their well-earned annual leave the tendency is to go to the village for other community development efforts or to work on their farms or supervise their building projects. The children are then left to their whims and caprices. Most of them watch videotaped films most of the time, visit friends or sleep. Then I see the need to run holiday camps for such children. I arrange for those with the right kind of professional, doctrinal and religious formation to assist with the programme. Supervision is provided and the children are kept busy, educated and entertained at the same time. Once in a while parents are invited to some of the ceremonies and the opportunity is used to talk to parents on the need for meaningful holiday activities for and with their children. Samples of censored books, films and other

entertainment packages are introduced to the parents and they are grateful you have done the job for them. Then I encourage them to run a lending library of books and videotapes and link them up with organizations that provide information on materials that are safe for Christian families. So we all enjoy ourselves during the holidays and we still help families to enjoy themselves while doing something beneficial to every member and doing things that do not offend God. So whether for short periods of rest or for long vacations we try still to continue our dialogue with God as a loving father and we try not to offend Him. Holiday, ordinary holiday, therefore becomes prayer.

1. St Josemaría Escrivá, Furrow, 514.

2. cf. *'The Day of the Lord'*, John Paul II.

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