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"Seeking Holiness in Family Life", second video of the Series "The Richness of Ordinary Life"

In the second episode of the series "The Richness of Ordinary Life" Prof. Regina Eya explains how the message of St. Josemaría about seeking holiness in ordinary life can be lived in the family life, striving to make the home bright and cheerful.

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This is the second of the Series of videos presented by Prof. Regina Eya who explains how the message of St. Josemaría of seeking holiness in ordinary life, can be lived in the daily routines which make family.

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CHAPTER 2

JUST MY HOME, NOTHING MORE!

(Supernatural life in the home)

Having a home is just one of the most ordinary things any one can boast of in Africa. Everybody has one—your father's house or your husband's or that of any relation of yours—and you are always welcome. So you

wake up in the morning and go about your business, eat, drink, sleep, fight, make peace etc, and get back home at the end of the day.

Bright and cheerful homes!

But fancy what St. Josemaría has described as “a bright and cheerful home!” Imagine a well- ordered home, with everything in its place, clean... and with simple objects kept lovingly to make you comfortable and happy to return to it after the day’s work. Every room is clean—the kitchen, the toilets, and the bedroom as much as the sitting room. The sitting room is adorned with taste, but with simplicity, not cluttered up with too many chairs, almanacs and calendars. The kitchen has all utensils put in place so that you can easily find them, use them and replace them. The floor is regularly washed and the cobweb is cleaned off the ceiling regularly. The toilet is

washed daily and towels are hanging in place while pieces of soap are not lying about and causing accidents. The bed in the bedroom is properly made, with inexpensive but clean sheets. Shoes and bags are in their place. Perhaps here and there some flowers, paintings and dainty pictures have been thoughtfully put, to cheer you up or to provoke some holy thoughts. And all this has been done to imitate the Home in Nazareth and therefore with love for God. In other words anybody could keep a tidy, cheerful home; but doing it with a supernatural intention makes the difference. Doing it with the intention of pleasing God and therefore doing it well enough and telling God that this has been done for Him certainly puts a new feeling in the doer. An inner strength and joy accompany such a person that would probably be lacking in the person who has done the same just for the sake of doing so. So because

you are in continual dialogue with God, you are always on the lookout for what has fallen out of place, to put it back in its place and put order back in your home.

Teaching virtues naturally

Fancy everybody in this home seeing himself/herself as a child of God. Fancy calling everybody to morning prayers at a fixed time. So each member learns to wake up at a particular time—and this is learning and teaching punctuality. During the morning prayers each person learns to put all the day's work in God's hands, offering up the joys, hopes and pains of the day, and even learns to ask for daily bread! And this is done in the company of everyone else. Thus, in the midst of the social support offered by the family, one learns the virtues of faith, of hope, of courage and endurance and of humility. Then breakfast begins with

the “daily bread” and family members do not take this for granted because it is seen as part of God’s kindness. So we really thank God before and after the meal and any other meal of that day. So on days the “daily bread” becomes meagre we thank God for making us even more aware of His goodness as we learn to intensify our plea, while accepting at His hands whatever conditions He allows us to go through. That way we learn, like St Paul, to live in want and also in affluence and see both conditions as different ways of relating to God’s will. So when there is plenty, we see this as coming from God, and being God’s children we take it with temperance, having learned, indeed, that man does not live by bread alone and glad that we have learned not to let the sight of food excite us too much. We are therefore not dragged below the dignity conferred on us as children of God. When there is not much,

there is no undue complaint. Being children of God everyone knows that self-denial or mortification is required of us as it was practised by Christ. So everybody is glad to find a painful situation, (no surplus food), to offer to God and this encourages the practice of the virtue of patience. And if we are able to smile on such occasions, see what inner strength we gain later, making more calm and trusting of God when such occasions repeat in the future. And once in a while everybody learns to deliberately do without certain foods and luxuries, so as to have something to offer up and so as to train the body to obey. At other times this may mean eating more of what we do not like (like some who do not like beans) and eating a little less of our favourite dish (like those who love rice with chicken stew)! So nothing is of much importance except the private conversation we are having with God as if in secret. On some

occasions we tell Him “We don’t have enough food today; thank you God for giving me something to offer up; I offer this up to you for so and so, help me to smile and not to grumble or weep!” On other occasions the dialogue may be “...Now Father, imagine! How come this friend gives my baby this large amount of money! Now I can buy not just the baby’s soap but a basin of *garri* and chicken for our Sunday stew! Imagine! Thank you, Father and bless this woman.” And we may see Him smile at us and then we remember He had said we should not fret about our lives...and we understand more.

Everybody then does his/her chores before leaving for school or work. Take the child that sweeps the house or the one that waters the garden. Sweeping the house so it looks like the home in Nazareth (as mother has taught her) makes her think how the Blessed Virgin must have done a

thorough job of cleaning or of watering her garden not just for the sake of cleanliness but for the love of God. So if each person has been taught to do his/her work while thinking of God and do the chore well enough so it can be offered to God, then one is really praying and doing the will of God, holding a small conversation with God, silently, while making everybody else happy through service. The domestic chore takes on a different meaning... a prayer, an offering a conversation with God. And if everybody in the house is thinking the same, they would compete over who serves more rather than running away from serving others. How wonderful! And how much more love they would have for one another!

Coping with difficulties

In such a prayerful family, Mummy may be making ends meet by

managing to put good but perhaps cheap food on the table, smiling and telling God how things have not been easy but how this has been done for Him. Ice fish may be served grilled and surrounded with cheap vegetable and pieces of yam cut in cubes or finger-like chips, (instead of big shapeless chunks), making the children wonder whether this is really ice fish and this other yam indeed!

And Daddy who might be wondering how to pay school fees, seeing that indeed Mummy is smiling through tough times and putting every care possible in the management of the home, finds the courage to go on catering for the family even in spite of the bad economy and seeks God's help in prayer. And they support one another. They accept whatever number of children God sends them in spite of the fact that abortion and contraception are now greatly

popularized in Africa. While it was a traditional African value to have large families, such a couple now adds a supernatural angle to this value. Rather than have babies just to prove one's fertility and to ensure the survival of some of them from childhood diseases, this couple accepts children so as to participate in God's creative work. They aim at having more children that would say "Yes" to God in the face of the increasing social ills that are resulting from broken homes and neglected children. They actively aim to save, not just some, but all the children God may give them, and to bring them all up with love and warmth and in the fear of God. This they do even if some of the children have problems or defects that make them difficult to bring up. Or if such a couple does not have children they can still have a bright and cheerful home by accepting God's will for them. This they do, cheerfully

bringing up so many children that have no home, instead of resorting to the practice of harmful traditional practices that degrade the woman. These practices include polygamy or betrothal of women to sick or dead relatives or to fellow women, in order to ensure succession in the family. By rejecting such common practices, the couple is Christianizing society. And the integrity of the woman is ensured in a Christian way.

The rich can also imitate Christ!

Or perhaps the family is not poor and does not have to pinch and save. In which case the members of the family, if they have learned interior life, live temperance and save to help poorer families etc. And other difficulties might crop up—sickness, a child that is not behaving well, or even a spouse that is going astray. Then family prayers bring people together to share the problem. And

the one who suffers more finds solace in the invitation from Our Lord “Come to me all ye who labour and are over burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matt, 11:28). Thus he/she finds cause to cast the moment’s cares on Christ, forgiving wrongs done to him/her and “drowning evil with an abundance of good,” as St. Josemaría would say. Thus people really learn how to “take up the cross daily” by taking up Christ’s cross, which was taken patiently and for one purpose—to use it to bring others to God—our difficult children, spouse, in-laws, house helps, neighbour, etc.

Something is offered to God every day

By the end of the day each person looks and sees that some joys as well as some sorrows have been gathered during the course of the day and these are seen as something to be offered up to God. And the children

learn that each day there is the need to do the will of God through service to others. So they eat, learning to be considerate of the appetites of one another. Somebody clears the table cheerfully and even washes up on behalf of a sick brother while the sick brother in turn learns to offer up his ailment to God for the sake of his father or some other thing. Then after school they wash their clothes and do their homework at the stipulated time before going out to play. And even as they play, they are conscious of not offending God by cursing or using profane words. They have come to learn what they can watch on television and what they cannot so as not to offend God in spite of current fashions. And if they have servants they are taught that these, too, are part of their family. They learn to appreciate the servants and often to help them with some of their duties. They learn that order and punctuality kept at meal times

for example enable the servant to organize herself well to serve them better and thus have something, herself, to offer up to God.

Ending the day as family

And when mummy and daddy come home (if both are working), each person thinks about the welfare of the other. "How has the day been?" And perhaps they make the effort to have dinner together. (Often mummy learns to use some tricks to achieve this feat of family dinner as in family prayers). This means some sacrifice on the part of daddy who would want to read the newspapers or mummy who would really give anything to eat quietly and go to bed. These are offered up. And these are rewarded! Because the children come up with stories of what went on at school, with their friends etc. Then the parents have the opportunity to get to know the

children better and in all naturalness give them useful advice and teach them justice, fortitude, temperance and prudence depending on which is called for. They are taught to see themselves as God's children and to really relate to God as their father. The children also get to know more about their parents and get to feel their love and attention. Joys as well as sorrows are shared and all are offered up at night prayers where God is thanked for everything. At the same time each one examines himself/herself to see how he/she has lived the day and how to serve God better tomorrow, by being a better father, or a better mother, or a better child. Each person asks God's forgiveness for acts of commission or omission and prays for one another. They thus encourage and teach one another to live a happy, cheerful life even with normal family problems. This is normal family life except that this is a prayerful family so the little

everyday things have been done and offered to God. This is a family which has learned to support one another and to “cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the development of children into men and women who will be authentic Christians.”

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