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The Joy of Serving God

Excerpt from a meditation by Saint Josemaria dated 25 December 1973. Published in "In Dialogue with the Lord," pp. 181-188.

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Today a light will shine upon us. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Is 9:2, 6).

My daughters and sons, we have prepared for today's solemnity by trying to build a crib for our God in our hearts. Do you remember what we did when we were small? How eagerly we built the Christmas scene, with its mountains of cork, its tiny houses and all those little figures around the manger God chose as his birthplace. Since Opus Dei is for adult Christians who know how to become children out of love for God, I know that with the passage of time my daughters and sons become more childlike every day. We have prepared a stable in the intimacy of our souls even more eagerly than when we were children.

The desire to contemplate Jesus

Dies sanctificatus illuxit nobis. A holy day has dawned for us. Come, you nations, and adore the Lord. For this day a great Light has descended upon the earth (Third Mass of Christmas

Day, *Alleluia*). We would like people everywhere to treat him well. We would like the whole world to welcome him affectionately. And we cloak the indifferent silence of those who do not know him or do not love him by singing Christmas carols, the popular songs sung by young and old in all countries with a Christian tradition. Have you noticed how they always speak about going to see and gaze upon the Christ Child as the shepherds did on that blessed night? *They went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger (Lk 2:16).*

It stands to reason. People in love yearn to see each other. Lovers only have eyes for their beloved. Isn't it only natural? That's the way the human heart is. I would be lying if I said I wasn't deeply affected by the thought of contemplating Christ's face. *Vultum tuum, Domine, requiram*: Lord, I will seek your face

(cf *Ps 27:8*). I love to close my eyes and think that, when God wills, the moment will come when I will be able to see him, not as *in a mirror dimly, but face to face (1 Cor 13:12)*. Yes, my children, *My soul thirsts for God, the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?* (cf *Ps 42:3*).

My dear children, look at him, contemplate him, speak to him. We can do so right now. That's how we strive to live. It is part of our existence. We define our vocation to the Work as contemplative, because we strive to see God in all earthly things: in people, in events, in big things and little things, in what pleases us and in what we regard as painful. My children, renew your resolution to live in God's presence always, each one in your own way. It is not for me to dictate your prayer. But I can overcome my

embarrassment and show you something of how I treat Jesus.

My dear children, now I will speak with a bit of pride. I am the oldest person in Opus Dei! That is why I need you to pray for me, helping me especially in these days in which the Christ Child listens to all my daughters and sons. For they too are children, strong and hardy souls; like me they have passions but are able to control them with God's grace. Pray for me so that I may be faithful, so that I may be good, so that I may love him and help others to love him.

With Mary and Joseph

For in the mystery of the Word made flesh, a new light of your glory has shone upon the eyes of our mind, so that as we recognize in him God made visible, we may be caught up through him in love of things invisible (Preface for Christmas).

Let us all contemplate him lovingly. Where I come from they sometimes say: 'See how that person contemplates!' They may be referring to a mother with a child in her arms, or to a young man looking at his future wife, or to a woman watching over her sick husband – pure and noble human affection. That's how we should contemplate as we re-live the Saviour's coming. We begin by going to his all-pure, ever-virgin Mother, praising her and repeatedly telling her we love her. Especially now when, as never before, those who should defend and bless God's Mother are spreading so many absurd and horrible things about her.

The Church is pure and clean, spotless. She is the Spouse of Christ. Unfortunately, some people nowadays, while acting in her name, scandalize the flock. They deceive many who would otherwise be

faithful. This helpless Child throws his arms around your neck so you can press him to your heart and offer him the firm resolution to make amends calmly, forcefully, joyfully.

I have not hidden these things from you. In the last ten years all the sacraments have been attacked one by one, especially the sacrament of Penance and even more maliciously the holy Sacrifice of the Altar, the Sacrifice of the Mass. Let your hearts throb faster, and with this surge of blood you must each offer reparation to our Lord as you would console your mother or anyone else whom you love very tenderly. *Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:6-7).*

Having begun by praising and making amends to Mary, we immediately go to the Patriarch St Joseph, telling him how much we love him. I call him my Father and Lord, and tell him I love him very much, very much indeed. You should do the same; otherwise you're not good children of mine. He was a young man, very pure, very strong, whom God himself chose for his own guardian and for his Mother's.

Thus we enter the stable at Bethlehem: with Joseph, with Mary and with Jesus. Then our *heart shall thrill and rejoice* (Is 60:5). In the intimacy of this family circle, I go to St Joseph and I clutch his strong, powerful arm, the arm of a workman. He has the attractiveness of all that is clean and noble and divine, though being very human. Holding tight to his arm, I ask him to take me to Mary, his spotless, holy spouse. For she is my Mother, and I

have a right. It's as simple as that. Then, the two of them take me to Jesus.

My children, this is not make-believe. It is what we do so often in our life when we get to know a family. It is a human way, raised to the divine level, to get to know and become part of the home at Nazareth.

Christ's Most Holy Humanity

When you find yourself before our Redeemer, tell him: I adore you, Lord, I beg your forgiveness. Cleanse me, purify me, set me ablaze, teach me to love. If we were not to do so, what would become of us? My children, I am trying to guide you along a path you can follow. It doesn't have to be exactly the same as mine. I am giving you a bit of light so that each of you can personally prepare your lamp and make it shine in God's service (cf *Mt 25:7*). What I advise you to do, I repeat, is to read

the holy Gospels a great deal so as to get to know Jesus, *perfectus Deus*, *perfectus Homo*, perfect God and perfect Man, to talk and listen to him and so fall in love with his most holy Humanity, living with him as did Mary and Joseph, as did the Apostles and the holy women.

One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life (Ps 27:4). What then will we ask our Jesus? To take us to the Father. He has said, *No one comes to the Father but by me (Jn 14:6).* We invoke the Holy Spirit along with the Father and the Son, getting to know the Blessed Trinity. Thus, going through Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the “trinity” on earth, we will each find our own way to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Trinity of Heaven. With God’s grace and our own willingness, we will find ourselves in the highest heaven and in the

humble lowliness of the manger, amid the greatest desolation and want. My children, don't expect anything else in Opus Dei. Such is our way. If God exalts you, he will also humble you. The humiliations we lovingly accept are sweet and flavoursome. They are a blessing from God.

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