

Prelate's June 26 Homily

The feast of Saint Josemaría was celebrated in Rome in the Basilica of Sant'Eugenio, among other churches. Bishop Javier Echevarría in his homily focused on the topic of faith, in this Year of Faith. With photos from the ceremony.

06/27/2013

Dear brothers and sisters,

1. This year we are celebrating the liturgical memorial of St Josemaria in

the middle of the Year of Faith. Several months of it have already gone by, but there are still a few months left before it ends. So today I think it is timely for us to reflect together on the way we are living through this grace-filled period. Let's turn our eyes to St Josemaria; we can have recourse to his intercession, as we consider some aspects of the faith that he received from God and practised heroically.

I'd like to dwell on certain features of the virtue of faith that he had. For a long time before founding Opus Dei, when he was still a boy, St Josemaria intuited that God wanted something of him, but he didn't know what. So as to be available to God's Will he set aside his perfectly legitimate personal plans and decided to become a priest. For the next ten or eleven years of study and trusting spiritual preparation, he prayed hard, condensing his personal prayer

into the words of the blind man in the Gospel: *Domine, ut videam!* Lord, that I may see! And he added an appeal to our Lady: *Domina, ut sit!* Lady, may it come to be, may your Son's will be fulfilled in me! In that way, through his intense life of faith, hope and love, he was ready to receive God's plan for the Work on October 2, 1928.

Almost at the end of his life on earth, in a family gathering with many people, he said that his life had somehow followed what happened to Abraham, our father in faith, who *in spe contra spem credidit* (Rom 4:18), believed in God against all hope. He went on, "Because about forty-seven years ago there was a priest – whom I know slightly, he's a sinner like me – who had no resources, had nothing; all he had was twenty-six years of age, the grace of God and good humor." Here he paused, and then said, "Humanly speaking, that's no

great treasure, is it? But in God's eyes... And now, here you are; and there are brothers and sisters of yours all round the world: of every colour, every race, every language" (St Josemaria, notes from a family gathering in Argentina, June 9, 1974).

2. I think that this life of faith ties in very well with the Gospel of today's Mass, where we contemplated St Peter's reply of faith. Those fishermen had exhausted themselves in vain all night, working hard and catching nothing. And Jesus, after speaking to the crowd, said to Peter, *Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a catch.* A moment of uncertainty, and then the Apostle replied . . . *At your word, I will let down the nets.* And the miracle happened: *They enclosed such a great shoal of fish that the nets were near breaking (Lk 5:4-6).* It was a miracle that God worked with the humble,

faith-filled cooperation of Peter and his companions.

We shouldn't forget this fact: in our lives too, in our work too, God is ready to bring about great things. However, he is waiting for our faith: for us to really believe in him, the Son of God who became man to save us. On another occasion the twelve Apostles asked our Lord how to work the miracles he worked. And Jesus' reply was: *This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent (Jn 6:29).*

"God is the same as always," wrote St Josemaria in *The Way*. "It is men of faith that are needed: and then, there will be a renewal of the wonders we read of in the Gospel. *Ecce non est abbreviata manus Domini!* – God's arm, his power, has not grown weaker!" (*The Way*, no. 586).

Today, like yesterday, our Lord is ready to do great things. He only

needs our cooperation, our efforts towards a conversion that will spread to all the people around us. “The Year of Faith, from this perspective,” explained Benedict XVI in the letter convoking it, “is a summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Saviour of the world” (Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*, 11 October 2011, no. 6).

3. Believing theoretically is not enough. Undoubtedly we have to accept the teachings of the Church faithfully; but it is also necessary for our faith to find expression in the whole of our lives, to be shown in all of life’s circumstances, both the ones that seem important and the little occupations that make up the fabric of our daily living. “Only through believing, then, does faith grow and become stronger; there is no other possibility for possessing certitude with regard to one’s life apart from

self-abandonment, in a continuous crescendo, into the hands of a love that seems to grow constantly because it has its origin in God” (Benedict XVI, *Porta Fidei*, no. 7).

In total loyalty to this law of supernatural life, St Josemaria made a determined effort to grow in faith day after day. Relying on this virtue that was infused in his soul by God, and cooperating with his personal response, this holy priest was able to overcome all the difficulties that arose in fulfilling God’s will.

For example, in 1934, a few years after the founding of Opus Dei, he wrote, “I am aware of the obstacles you will encounter. Some of them may seem insurmountable..., but *inter medium montium pertransibunt aquae*, the supernatural spirit of the Work and the impetus of your zeal will pass through mountains, and you will overcome those obstacles”

(*Instruction*, 1 April 1934, no. 7). And with the same conviction, he said again in 1974: “This world of ours will be saved . . . not by those who try to drug the life of the spirit and reduce everything to questions of economics or material well-being, but by those who have faith in God and in man’s eternal destiny, and receive Christ’s truth as a light that guides their actions and behavior” (Speech at the conferral of honorary doctorates, Pamplona, 9 May 1974).

St Josemaria aimed to preach that faith, in other words to teach it and spread it throughout the world. And today, thank God, there are millions of people of all ages, backgrounds and walks of life, who, following in the footsteps of that teaching, are doing their best to find God in all the circumstances of their daily lives. Men and women alike are following Christ closely, just as Peter, John, Andrew and the other Apostles did

after the miraculous catch of fish. With what force those stupendous words must have rung out in their souls: *“Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men.”* And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him (Lk 5:10-11).

4. We too, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, are able to follow Jesus as the first Twelve did, each in the place where God's call finds us: it isn't difficult! And there, where our Lord has found us or asks us to be, we can make Jesus known to, and loved by, many other people. In Pope Francis' words, we can ask ourselves: “Are we capable of bringing the word of God into the environment in which we live? Do we know how to speak of Christ, of what he represents for us, in our families, among the people who form part of our daily lives? Faith is born from listening, and is strengthened by proclamation.”

“But this also applies to everyone,” the Holy Father continues: “we all have to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel. We should all ask ourselves: How do I bear witness to Christ through my faith? Do I have the courage of Peter and the other Apostles, to think, to choose and to live as a Christian, obedient to God? To be sure, the testimony of faith comes in very many forms, just as in a great fresco, there is a variety of colours and shades; yet they are all important, even those which do not stand out. In God’s great plan, every detail is important, even yours, even my humble little witness, even the hidden witness of those who live their faith with simplicity in everyday family relationships, work relationships, friendships” (Pope Francis, homily in the Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls, 14 April 2013).

To finish, we can listen to some words by St Josemaria. “Our faith is not in any way a burden or a limitation. What a poor idea of Christianity one would have if one thought that way! When we decide for God we lose nothing, and we gain everything . . . We have drawn the winning card, the first prize. If anything prevents us from seeing this clearly, let us look inside our own soul. We may find that our faith is weak, that we have little personal contact with God, that our life of prayer is impoverished” (*Friends of God*, no. 38).

Let us ask God our Lord, through his Mother, who is our Mother too, “to increase his love in us, to grant us a taste of the sweetness of his presence. Only when we love do we attain the fullest freedom: the freedom of not wanting ever to abandon, for all eternity, the object of our love” (*Friends of God*, no. 38).

And, through St Josemaria's intercession, let's beg God that in the remaining months of the Year of Faith, and afterwards throughout our lives, our faith may become stronger, firmer and more ardent, in the life of the Sacraments, with frequent reception of Confession and Holy Communion. Amen.

Rome, Basilica of Sant'Eugenio, June 26, 2013

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