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Gathered Together in Unity

Saint Josemaria was ordained to the priesthood on 28 March 1925. Here is a meditation he gave on Holy Thursday, 27 March 1975, eve of the 50th anniversary of his ordination and three months before his death.

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Adauge nobis fidem. Increase our faith! That's what I've just been saying to our Lord. That's what he wants me to ask for: for him to

increase our faith. Tomorrow I'm not going to say anything to you; and even now I'm not sure what I would like to say. Help me thank our Lord for this great accumulation of favours, of blessings, of affection... of blows! – which are also a sign of affection and blessing. Lord, increase our faith! As always, before beginning to speak intimately with you, we have turned to our Mother in heaven, to Saint Joseph, to our Guardian Angels.

Like a faltering child

Fifty years have gone by, and I am still like a faltering child. I am just beginning, beginning again, as I do every day. And so it will be to the end of my days: always beginning anew. Our Lord wants it that way, so that none of us may ever have any reason for feeling proud or vain. We should be waiting upon him, upon his words: our ear attentive, our will

alert and ready to follow his divine inspirations.

A glance backwards... What an immense panorama, all those sorrows, all those joys. But now, all is joy, joy everywhere... Because experience teaches us that suffering is the chisel of the divine artist, eager to make of each of us, of this shapeless mass that we are, a crucifix, a Christ, the *alter Christus* each of us is called to be.

My Lord, thank you for everything. Many, many thanks! I have given you thanks; I have always been thankful. Before saying that liturgical exclamation just now – *gratias tibi Deus, gratias tibi!* – I was already saying it to you in my heart. And now many lips, many hearts, are together repeating the same cry to you: *Gratias tibi Deus, gratias tibi!* For we only have reasons for giving thanks. We must never let anything upset us.

We must never let anything worry us. We must never lose our peace of mind over anything whatsoever. I've been saying so these days to everyone who comes from Portugal: don't worry, don't worry! [1] And it puts them at ease. Lord, grant my children peace of mind. Don't let them lose it even if they commit a serious error. If they realize they have done wrong, that in itself is already a grace, a light from heaven.

Gratias tibi Deus, gratias tibi! The life of each of us ought to be a hymn of thanksgiving. Just look how Opus Dei has come about. You, Lord, have done it all, with a handful of good-for-nothings. *Stulta mundi, infirma mundi, et ea quae non sunt.* [2] Saint Paul's teaching has been fulfilled to the letter. You have laid hold of instruments that were utterly unreasonable and in no way suitable, and you have spread the apostolate all over the world. People are

thanking you all over Europe, and in places in Asia and Africa, and in the whole of America, and in Australia. Everywhere they are giving you thanks.

May they look at you, may they seek you, may they love you

And in this Tabernacle, which is so beautiful and was fashioned with such tender care by my children, and was placed here by us when we didn't have any money even for food; in this display of luxury, which I think is dreadfully poor, and really it is as a shelter for you, I asked for two or three special features to be put.

The most interesting one is the phrase written above the door: *consummati in unum!*^[3] Because it is as if we were all here, all of us, right here beside you, never leaving you day or night, in a canticle of thanksgiving and (why not?) also of begging forgiveness. I think that you

must feel a little hurt that I should say this. You have forgiven us always. You are always ready to forgive our mistakes and faults, the consequence of pride and sensuality.

Consummati in unum! In order to atone, to please you, to give you thanks, which a great obligation. Not just an obligation for this moment, today, or the anniversary we will be celebrating tomorrow. No, it is a constant duty, an expression of supernatural life, a human and divine way to respond to your Love, which is both divine and human.

Sancta Maria, Spes nostra, Sedes sapientiae!^[4] Grant us heavenly wisdom, so that we may behave in a way that is pleasing to your Son, and to the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, who lives and reigns world without end.

Saint Joseph, I cannot separate you from Jesus and Mary. Saint Joseph, to

whom I have always had great devotion. But I have come to understand that I should love you more each day and proclaim it to the four winds, because this is the way we human beings express our affection, saying: I love you! Saint Joseph our Father and Lord: in how many places will they have been invoking you already by now, repeating these very words! Saint Joseph our Father and Lord, intercede for us.

Christian life on this paganized earth, on this earth gone mad, in this Church which no longer looks like your Church, because it seems to be full of madmen everywhere – they don't listen, they give the impression of not being concerned about you: not just of not loving you, but of not knowing you, of having forgotten you. This life which, if it wishes to be human, for us must also be divine, will be so only if we make much of

you. We would do it even if it meant long hours spent in waiting, even if we had to make many requests for an audience. But we don't have to ask even once! You are so thoroughly almighty, in your mercy too, that though you are Lord of lords and King of those who wield dominion, you humble yourself to the point of waiting like a poor beggar who timidly approaches our half-open door. It is not we who do the waiting. You are awaiting us all the time.

You await us in heaven, in Paradise. You await us in the Sacred Host. You await us in our prayers. You are so good that when you are there hidden for Love, hidden in the sacramental species – I believe this firmly – when you are there really, truly and substantially, your Body and Blood, your Soul and Divinity, the Blessed Trinity is there as well: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Besides, through the indwelling of the Paraclete, God

seeks us in the centre of our souls. The scene at Bethlehem is in some way repeated every day. And it may be that – not with our lips, but with our deeds – we have said: *non est locus in diversorio*,^[5] there is no room for you, Lord, in my heart. Forgive me, Lord; I am sorry!

I adore the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God. I don't understand the marvel of the Blessed Trinity; but you have placed in my soul a yearning, a hunger to believe. I believe! I want to believe like the best. I hope! I want to hope like the best. I love! I want to love like the best.

You are what you are: perfect Goodness. I am what I am: the filthiest rag in this rotten universe. And yet, you look at me, and you seek me, and you love me. Lord, may my children look at you, and seek

you, and love you. Lord, may I seek you, look at you, love you.

To look is to turn the eyes of our soul towards you, yearning to understand you, insofar as – with your grace – human reason can come to know you. I accept my littleness. When I see how little I understand your wonder, your goodness, your wisdom, your power, your beauty... when I see how little I understand, I don't get discouraged. I'm glad you are so great that you don't fit inside my poor heart, inside my miserable head. My God! My God! If I can think of no other thing to say to you, this will suffice: My God! All that grandeur, all that power, all that beauty... mine! And I... his!

On earth and in heaven

I strive to reach the Trinity of Heaven through that other “trinity” on earth: Jesus, Mary and Joseph. They are, as it were, more accessible.

Jesus, who is *perfectus Deus* and *perfectus Homo*. Mary, who is a woman, the purest of creatures, the greatest: greater than her, only God. And Joseph, who is there right beside Mary: clean, manly, prudent, trustworthy. O my God! What models for us! Just to look at them makes me want to die of grief, for, my Lord, I have behaved so badly. I haven't risen to the occasion and become divinized. You gave me the means, you give them to me now, and will go on giving them to me. For to live humanly on this earth, we must strive to live in a divine way.

We must live – and I realize I've told you this many times – in heaven and on earth, always. Not *between* heaven and earth, because we belong to the world. In the world and in Paradise at the same time! That could be the formula to express how to go about our life while we dwell *in hoc saeculo*; in heaven and on earth,

divinized; but knowing that we belong to the world and are made of clay, with the fragility of clay: an earthenware vessel which our Lord has deigned to use in his service. And whenever it has been broken, we have riveted the bits back together again, like the prodigal son: *I have sinned against heaven and against you.*^[6] We have often felt that way, both in big things and little things. At times we have felt deeply sorry over a little failure, a lack of love, a failure to look at the Love of loves, a failure to smile. Because when one is in love nothing is little, everything is important, everything is big, even in a poor and wretched creature like myself, like you too, my son.

God has wished to deposit a very rich treasure within us. Am I exaggerating? No, I have said very little. I have said little now, because I just said more. I reminded you that God, with all his greatness, dwells

within us. Heaven dwells habitually in our hearts. I need say no more.

Gratias tibi Deus, gratias tibi: vera et una Trinitas, una et summa Deitas, sancta et una Unitas![7]

May the Mother of God be for us *Turris civitatis*, the tower guarding the city. The city which is each one of us, with so many things coming and going inside: so much movement and at the same time so much quiet; so much disorder and so much order; so much noise and so much silence; so much war and so much peace.

Sancta Maria, Turris civitatis: ora pro nobis![8]

Sancte Joseph, Pater and Domine: ora pro nobis![9]

Sancti Angeli Custodes: orate pro nobis.[10]

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[1] At that time the situation in Portugal was very difficult because of the likelihood of a Marxist revolution.

[2] Cf. *I Cor 1:27-28: what is foolish in the world... what is weak in the world... even things that are not.*

[3] *Jn 17:23: may they become perfectly one.*

[4] Holy Mary, our Hope, Seat of Wisdom.

[5] Cf. *Lk 2:7: There was no place for them in the inn.*

[6] *Lk 15:18.*

[7] *Thanks be to you, O God, thanks be to you: true and one Trinity, one and highest Deity, holy and one Unity.*

[8] *Holy Mary, Tower of the City: pray for us; a reference to Our Lady of Torreciudad.*

[9] *Saint Joseph, Father and Lord: pray for us.*

[10] *Holy Guardian Angels: pray for us.*