

Homily of Archbishop Conti

Homily of Archbishop Conti for
Feast of St Josemaría Escrivá, St
Andrew's Cathedral, June 26
2003.

14/08/2003

My dear brothers and sisters,

As we gather together this evening to celebrate the first ever liturgical feast of St Josemaría Escrivá I cannot help thinking back nine months to the morning of October 6, 2002.

That day I arrived - if truth be told - a little later than I had hoped, at the Vatican to take part in the canonisation of Josemaría Escrivá. I know that many of you here this evening were also present in Rome that morning. I confess that never have I seen St Peter's Square, the great ceremonial Via della Conciliazione and the neighbouring "borghi" so full of people.

But it was not only the size of the crowd which impressed me on that day. I was struck too by the devotion and comportment of that vast throng of faithful from the five continents. The atmosphere was one of celebration, yes, but also of recollection.

What brought such numbers of people from all walks of life to Rome that October morning?

The phenomenon can only be explained through the life and

teaching of St Josemaría, whose message of sanctity for all has truly struck a chord with the men and women of the modern world.

In his homily at the canonisation Mass, the Pope said that the new saint was calling on Christians to "raise the world towards God and to transform it from within," and not to be swayed "by a materialistic culture, which threatens to dissolve the most genuine identity of the disciples of Christ."

That message, proclaimed by St Josemaría since the foundation of Opus Dei in 1928, was taken up and cultivated, one might say, in the heart of the Church, by the fathers of the Second Vatican Council.

It is extraordinary to compare the insights of the new saint with the doctrine of the council fathers and note the convergence.

We read in the words of the new saint: "We have to be everywhere with our joy, with our interior peace, with our desire to bring souls to Christ. Where, you may ask? Among the professions? Yes among the professions. Among manual workers? Yes among manual workers. And which of the two occupations is better? The best work is the one done with most love of God."

These sentiments are expressed more formally in Vatican II's decree on the lay faithful. There we read that lay people should "exercise a genuine apostolate by their activity on behalf of bringing the gospel and holiness to men, penetrating and perfecting the temporal sphere of things through the spirit of the gospel." (Apostolicam Actuositatem 1)

The council's vision of lay people is that they should "hold in high esteem professional skill, family and civic spirit, and the virtues relating to social behaviour, namely justice, honesty, kindness and courage without which there can be no true Christian life." (Apostolicam Actuositatem 4)

St Josemaría put it more directly: "Christian: you have the obligation of being an example in everything you do - including being an example as a citizen, in your fulfilment of the laws directed to the common good."

In these and in countless other areas - devotion to Our Lady and the Blessed Eucharist; the vocation to marriage; the universal call to holiness and many more St Josemaría faithfully reflected the teaching of the Church and prefigured the insights of Vatican II.

It is now more than two decades since Opus Dei was welcomed to this great Archdiocese by my predecessor Cardinal Winning. Indeed the Cardinal was due to celebrate this feast day Mass for the then-Blessed Josemaría two years ago, but died just a week before the Mass.

Tonight I welcome you here, to this Cathedral, members, co-operators and friends of Opus Dei and parishioners from across the diocese who have found in the spiritual insights of Saint Josemaría sure guides along the path of life.

You are part of our diocesan family. That phrase is used in the document of the Holy See, *Mutuae Relationes*, which delineates the basis for a rich and fruitful communion between all sectors of the Church, priestly, religious and lay. All form part of that diocesan family, under the pastoral governance of the local

bishop to whom the pastoral care of the diocese is committed.

One of the great constants in the teaching of Saint Josemaría was the importance of fidelity to the Church and awareness of the communion of saints. Tonight, as the Church celebrates his feast day that communion of saints is very visible. This congregation on the banks of the Clyde is united in prayer with the faithful all over the world.

This evening in Milan's great cathedral Cardinal Tettamanzi is celebrating the feast day Mass, as is Patriarch Angelo Scola with whom I received the pallium on the Feast of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul a year ago. That celebration is taking place this evening in St Mark's Basilica in Venice. Cardinal Lustiger will lead the faithful at Notre Dame in Paris on a special feast day Mass, while at the Shrine of the

Immaculate Conception in Washington St Josemaría is being commemorated by Cardinal William Keeler and in New York's St Patrick's Cathedral Cardinal Egan is marking the feast with his faithful.

In Africa, Asia, Australasia, South America and all over Europe hundreds of congregations are gathering on this day to mark this feast with their local bishop in a sign of fidelity to the Church and as a testament to their devotion to the founder of Opus Dei.

I end my words to you tonight by encouraging you to ever greater efforts to help in the new evangelisation here in the Archdiocese of Glasgow, that evangelisation to which the Holy Father constantly calls us.

I end by returning to that lovely October morning last year, and I

make my own the words of Pope John Paul:

"Following in his footsteps, spread in society the consciousness that we are all called to holiness whatever our race, class, society or age. In the first place, struggle to be saints yourselves, cultivating an evangelical style of humility and service, abandonment to Providence and of constant listening to the voice of the Spirit. In this way, you will be the "salt of the earth" (cf. Mt 5,13) and "your light will so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (ibid., 5,16).

Amen.

Archbishop Mario Conti

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