

Homily of John Paul II at the beatification of Josemaría Escrivá

On May 17, 1992, Pope John Paul II beatified Msgr. Josemaria Escriva, the founder of Opus Dei, and Josephine Bakhita, a Daughter of Charity of Canossa. Here are excerpts from the Pope's homily at the beatification.

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"Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

To the two disciples walking along the road to Emmaus Jesus said: "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Lk 24:26).

Moreover, the first reading has enabled us to hear the Apostles Paul and Barnabas "strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22). They announce the same truth about which Jesus had spoken on the road to Emmaus, a truth confirmed by his life and death: "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God".

The disciples of the crucified and risen Christ through the succession of generations down the centuries choose the same path which he had indicated to them.

"For I have given you an example" (Jn 13: 15).

Today we are given an opportunity to fix our gaze once more on this salvific path -- the path to holiness -- concentrating on the figures of two people who from now on we will call "Blessed": Josemaria Escriva, a priest and the founder of Opus Dei, and Josephine Bakhita, a Daughter of Charity of Canossa.

The Church desires to serve and profess the whole truth about Christ. She wishes to be the steward of the whole mystery of her Redeemer. Although the way of the kingdom of God passes through many tribulations, it ends in a sharing in glory that glory which Christ revealed to us in his resurrection.

The measure of that glory is given by the New Jerusalem, announced by the inspired words of the Apocalypse of John: "Behold, the dwelling of God

is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them"(Rv 21:3).

"Behold, I make all things new" (Rv 21:5) says the Lord of glory. The path toward the definitive "newness" of all things passes, here on earth, through the "new commandment": that you love one another; even as I have loved you"(Jn 13:34).

That commandment was at the center of the lives of two exemplary members of the Church who today, in the joy of Easter, are proclaimed "Blessed."

Born of a deeply Christian family, already in adolescence Josemaria perceived God's call to a life of greater commitment. A few years after his ordination to the priesthood he began his mission as founder, a mission to which he would devote 47 years of loving and unfailing care for

the priests and laity of what is today the Prelature of Opus Dei.

The spiritual and apostolic life of the new Beatus was based on knowing himself, through faith, to be a son of God in Christ. This faith nourished his love for the Lord, his evangelizing drive, his constant joy, even in the great trials and difficulties he had to overcome. "To carry the cross is to find happiness and joy", he tells us in one of his Meditations; "to carry the cross is to identify oneself with Christ, to be Christ, and therefore to be a son of God."

With supernatural intuition, Blessed Josemaria untiringly preached the universal call to holiness and the apostolate. Christ calls everyone to become holy in the realities of everyday life. Hence, work too is a means of personal holiness and apostolate when it is lived in union with Jesus Christ, for the Son of God,

in the incarnation, has united himself in a certain way with the whole reality of man and with the whole of creation (cf. Dominum et vivificantem, n. 50). In a society in which an unbridled craving for material things turns them into idols and a cause of separation from God, the new Beatus reminds us that these same realities, creatures of God and of human industry, if used correctly for the glory of the Creator and the service of one's brothers and sisters can be a way for men and women to meet Christ. "All things of the earth," he taught, "including the earthly and temporal activity of men, must be directed to God" (Letter, 19 March 1954).

"I will praise your name for ever, my God and my king." This acclamation which we sang in the responsorial Psalm is as it were the summing up of the spiritual life of Blessed Josemaria. His great love of Christ by

whom he is fascinated, impels him to consecrate himself for ever to him and to share in the mystery of his passion and resurrection. He likewise has a filial love for the Virgin Mary which leads him to imitate her virtues. "I will praise your name for ever": this is the hymn which rose spontaneously in his soul and which led him to offer to God all that was his and all that surrounded him. In fact, his life is marked by Christian humanism, with the unmistakable seal of goodness, meekness of heart, the hidden suffering by which God purifies and sanctifies his chosen ones.

The relevance and transcendence of this spiritual message, deeply rooted in the fruitfulness with which God has blessed the life of and work of Josemaria Escriva. The land of his birth, Spain, is honored by this son of hers, an exemplary priest, who succeeded in opening up new

apostolic horizons of missionary and evangelizing activity. May this joyful celebration be an auspicious occasion that will stimulate all the members of the Prelature of Opus Dei to greater commitment, in their response to the call to holiness and to a more generous participation in ecclesial life, being always witnesses of genuine evangelical values, and may this be expressed in an ardent apostolic dynamism, with particular attention to the poorest and most needy. [. . .]

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:3435). With these words of Jesus the Gospel of today's Mass ends. In this saying we find the summing up of all holiness; the holiness which Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer and

Josephine Bakhita attained, by paths that were different and yet met in one and the same goal. They loved God with all the strength of their heart and gave proof of a charity taken to the point of heroism through their works of service to their brothers and sisters. For this reason the church today raises them to the honor of the altars and holds them up as examples in the imitation of Christ, who loved us and gave himself for each of one of us (cf. Gal 2:20).

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