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Mass for the Feast of St Josemaria

Homily of Bishop Bernard
Longley

09/10/2005

"Put out into deep water." "If you say so, I will pay out the nets."

Over the past four years, these words from St Luke's Gospel have become more and more familiar. The Holy Father put the instruction of Our Lord at the centre of the great Jubilee celebration in the Holy Year 2000:

"Put out into deep water - Duc in Altum".

St Peter's reply will be familiar to us in Westminster: "If you say so" or "At your word, Lord" is the motto for the Cardinal's programme for diocesan and spiritual renewal.

The words of St Peter seem very appropriate for our celebration today for the feast of St Josemaria Escriva. St Peter's long experience as a fisherman made him hesitate: "Master, we worked hard all night long and caught nothing". Despite the persuading argument from experience and human wisdom, he puts his trust in Christ: "But if you say so".

St Josemaria was also driven by his confidence in the word he received from Jesus Christ and his bride, the Church. In the words of the saint: "A man cannot act in accordance with his Christian faith, cannot truly

believe in the Holy Spirit, unless he loves the Church and trusts it". We hear the voice of Christ speaking in his Church and we respond with Peter, with St Josemaria, "if you say so, we will pay out the nets".

There are also times when we share St Peter's hesitation: we are diffident in the face of the task that Our Lord puts before us. We feel unworthy or ill-equipped - we know that what he asks will need our whole-hearted and generous commitment, and we shrink.

It is then above all, that we need the Holy Spirit to give us strength to embrace the Cross we are asked to carry. Over the 18 months that I have been in Westminster I have been able to visit three of the houses of Opus Dei, and I appreciated the way each visit began and ended before the Blessed Sacrament in the chapels at Orme Court, Netherhall and

Ashwell House. I noticed at the entrance to each chapel the simple, but compelling, presence of the Cross. It was a reminder of the way that St Josemaria had lovingly embraced the cross of Christ in his own life, and so deepened in trust.

This confidence and trust has attracted many others to St Josemaria, so that today the family of Opus Dei is moved by his life and teaching, and recognises ever more clearly the wonderful work that the Holy Spirit is achieving through his example and intercession.

St Josemaria had a truly loving relationship with the Holy Spirit. He said "Christian tradition has summarised the attitude we should adopt towards the Holy Spirit in just one idea: docility." He also knew that this relationship would be dynamic and lead to great change: "He is the one who cleanses the soiled, heals

what is sick, sets on fire what is cold, straightens what is bent and leads men towards the safe harbour of salvation and eternal joy."

In these words from the great hymn of the Holy Spirit, St Josemaria sums up the work of God in which we also are caught up.

In every home, in each centre of learning and in the workplace we are called to give ourselves generously to this task - to reply with St Peter and St Josemaria: "At *your* word, Lord".

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