

Masses of Saint Josemaría

26th June 2007 was the thirty-second anniversary of the death of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, in 1975.

01/08/2007

Public Masses in honour of St Josemaría were celebrated in London, where there were three separate Masses, Manchester, Oxford and Glasgow.

On 23rd June there was a Mass of St Josemaría at St Columbkille's Church,

Rutherglen, Glasgow, presided over by Bishop Joseph Devine. Over 200 people attended. Among the congregation were families from Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Dundee, Ayr and Largs.

The homily was preached by Fr Robert Farrell. The text follows:

I thought I would start off telling you a story. We all like stories – just like children. It is a French mediaeval tale about three stonecutters working by the roadside. A stranger passing through the town stops beside them. He asks the first stonecutter “What are you doing”. Back comes the simple reply: “I’m cutting stone”. Then the same question is put to the next man who says he is earning money to keep his wife and children. Finally the third stonecutter is asked the same question and he says “I’m giving

glory to God building him a cathedral”

Here we have three men all, externally, doing the same thing, cutting stone. Looking at them one might not see any difference and yet there is a great difference – the inner motive. The first sees his work as just something to be done. The second has a noble motive – love for his family. But the third , doing the same as the first man, cutting stone and also working for his family, has an even higher motive. He links his work with his Creator; he finds God in what he is doing. He is putting into practice what St Paul told the first Christians: “So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:21). And it is God who sees that inner motive: “For nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known” (Mt 10:26).

This reminds me of some words of St Josemaria in whose honour we are offering this Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He said: “You are writing to me in the kitchen by the stove. It is early afternoon. It is cold. By your side your younger sister – the last one to discover the divine folly of living her Christian vocation to the full – is peeling potatoes. To all appearances- you think – her work is the same as before.

And yet , what a difference there is! It is true: before she only peeled potatoes, now, she is sanctifying herself peeling potatoes”.

Listen to what the Second Vatican Council has to say to all of us: “The faithful must recognise the inner nature, the value and the ordering of the whole of creation to the praise of God”. That is our task. Through our ordinary every day activities to give glory to God in our work, time spent

with family and friends, moments of relaxation and so on.

St Josemaria had been saying this well before the Council. Let us listen to his words: “With the beginning of Opus Dei in 1928, my preaching has been that holiness is not something for the privileged few. We have said that all the ways of the earth, all states of life, all the professions all honest tasks can be divine...we tell each one – all women and men – that there, where you are, you can acquire Christian perfection”. As the Council so clearly taught: “all Christians in any state or walk of life are called the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love” (L.G. 39).

No one can say I am too old to become saint, I am too young to become saint, or too busy, or too sick. You who are teachers, you who are students, you who are manual

workers, housewives, secretaries, married or single, you the laity the salt of the earth and the light of the world, this is your God given role on earth. To do your work well and offer it to God. This what Adam was doing: “The Lord God took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it” (Gen 2:15).

In 1982 I was in Bellahouston Park to hear Pope John Paul 11 say to about 300,000 people, young and old, married and single: “It is essential for us to understand that Jesus has a specific task in life for each and every one of us. Each one of us is hand picked, called by name- by Jesus! There is no one among us who does not have a divine vocation!”

St Josemaria is a model for us. I met him for the first time in London in 1962. He came into the room where I was, sat down beside me, slipped his

arm through mine and started chatting. He was very normal, cheerful and affectionate but I realised that apart from this normality, I was in the presences of someone who was very holy. This holiness was recognised by many people in his own lifetime and on 6 October 2002 the Church also officially recognised this by raising him the altars, declaring him a saint.

This is the man who said: “Sanctity for the vast majority of people, implies sanctifying their work, sanctifying themselves in it and sanctifying others through it” (Conversations n.55).

In this phrase we see that holiness is catching and we have an obligation to spread it. Speaking about laity the Council says: “Even in their secular activity they must help one another to greater holiness of life so that the world may be filled with the Spirit of

Christ" (L.G. 36). And you will agree that the world certainly needs that. This is the apostolate of the laity. For many years apostolate was thought to be only for priests and a few chosen ones. Thank God the early Christians did not think like that. They were few, they were living in a deeply immoral society, they had none of the modern means of communication, yet they converted the whole of the known world.

They were apostolic. They were following their Master who told them as we read in today's Gospel: "Launch out into the deep" (Lk 5:4). The Founder of Opus Dei tells us: "Each one of us has to be not only an apostle, but an apostle of apostles, bringing others along, so that they in turn will encourage others to make Jesus Christ known to everyone" (CPB n.147).

And so we are left with a summary of what Opus Dei is all about – sanctity and apostolate. To encourage everyone to have these as their goals in everyday life, to live their Christian faith to the full, twenty four hours a day. Not an easy programme, but it is what God wants of us and therefore it is possible. He will give all the graces. All he asks is our cooperation, using all the means he has left us in his Church, especially frequent use of the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion.

He also left us his Blessed Mother. I noticed the statue of Our Lady across the road on the facade of the Town Hall. St Josemaria would have liked that. He had the knack of noticing her images as he went through the streets. Let us entrust all our resolutions to our Blessed Lady. And when the time comes for us to go to meet our Lord and he asks us what we have done we will be able to say:

“I have been building you cathedral”, and we will hear those words: “Well done good and faithful servant because you have been faithful over a little, enter into the joy of your Lord” (Mt 25:21).

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