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Quotes from St Josemaria on the Priesthood

On the occasion of the Feast of Jesus Christ Eternal High Priest, we offer a selection of brief texts from St Josemaria on the life and vocation of priests.

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1. What is the identity of the priest? That of Christ. All of us Christians can and should be not just other Christs, *alter Christus*, but Christ himself: *ipse Christus!* But in the

priest this happens in a direct way, by virtue of the sacrament (*In Love with the Church*, 38).

2. We priests are being asked to have *the humility of learning not to be fashionable*; of being, in fact, servants of the servants of God (...), so as to enable ordinary Christians, the laity, to make Christ present in all sectors of society (*Conversations*, 59).

3. A priest who says the Mass in this way — adoring, atoning, pleading, giving thanks, identifying himself with Christ and who teaches others to make the Sacrifice of the altar the centre and root of the Christian life really will show the incomparable value of his vocation, the value of that character with which he has been stamped and which he will never lose (*In Love with the Church*, 38).

4. I have always seen my work as a priest and shepherd of souls as

aimed at bringing each of them to face all the demands of life and helping them discover what God wants from them in particular – without placing any limits on that holy independence and blessed individual responsibility which are features of a Christian conscience (*Christ is passing by*, 99).

5. How great is the value of piety in the Holy Liturgy!

I was not at all surprised when someone said to me a few days ago, talking about a model priest who had died recently: “What a saint he was!”

–“Did you know him well?” I asked.

–“No,” he said, “but I once saw him saying the Mass.” (*The Forge*, 645).

6. Though you may well know it, I want to remind you again that the Priest is “another Christ”. –And that the Holy Spirit has said: *Nolite*

tangere Christos meos, Do not venture to touch “my Christs” (*The Way*, 67).

7. The *professional work*, to put it that way, of priests is a *divine and public ministry*, so demanding that it embraces everything they do, and to such an extent that it can be stated as a general rule that, if a priest has time to spare for other occupations that are not strictly priestly, he can be sure that he is not fulfilling the duties of his ministry (*Friends of God*, 265).

8. Christ, who went up to the Cross with his arms wide open, with the gesture of the Eternal Priest, wants to count on us – who are nothing! – to bring to *all* men the fruits of his Redemption (*The Forge*, 4).

9. Neither on the right nor on the left nor in the centre. As a priest I strive to be with Christ. Both of His arms — not just one — were outstretched on

the Cross. I freely take from every group whatever seems to me good and helps me to keep my heart and my two arms open to all mankind (*Conversations*, 44).

10. That priest, a friend of ours, worked away while thinking of God, holding on to his paternal hand and helping others to make these fundamental ideas their own. That is why he said to himself: “When you die, all will be well, because He will continue to look after things.” (*Furrow*, 884).

11. I was convinced by that priest who is a friend of ours. He was talking about his apostolic work, and he assured me that there are no tasks of little importance. Hidden under this garden covered in roses, he said, is the silent effort of so many souls who with their work and prayer, their prayer and work, have won from Heaven abundant showers of

grace, which makes everything fertile (*Furrow*, 530).

12. Live the Holy Mass!

–You may be helped by a consideration which that priest, in love, used to repeat to himself: “Is it possible, my God, to take part in the Holy Mass and not be a saint?”

–And he would continue, “Each day, in fulfilment of an old promise, I will remain hidden in the Wound of Our Lord’s Side!”

–Shouldn’t you do the same? (*The Forge*, 934).

13. To be a Christian, and in particular to be a priest –bearing in mind, too, that all of us who are baptized share in Christ’s priesthood – is to be at all times on the Cross (*The Forge*, 882).

14. Let us not get used to the miracles happening before our eyes: to this awesome fact that our Lord should come down each day into the priest's hands. Jesus wants us to be awake, so that we may be convinced of the greatness of his power and may once more hear his promise: *Veníte post me, et fáciam vos fieri piscatóres hominum* (Mark 1:17), if you follow me, I will make you fishers of men; you shall be effective and attract souls to God. We should trust, therefore, in our Lord's words: get into the boat, take up the oars, hoist the sails and launch out into this sea of the world which Christ gives us as an inheritance (*Christ is passing by*, 159).

15. If it is true that we experience the drag of our personal failings, it is also true that our Lord takes into account our errors. It does not escape his merciful gaze that we are creatures with limitations, weaknesses and

imperfections, that we are inclined to sin. But he tells us to fight, to acknowledge our defects; not so as to give in to cowardice, but to repent and foster a desire to be better (*Christ is passing by*, 159).

16. –“My brother in the priesthood, please speak always about God and, when you really do belong to him, your conversations will never be monotonous.” (*The Forge*, 965).

17. Custody of the heart. That priest used to pray: “Jesus, may my poor heart be an enclosed garden; may my poor heart be a paradise where you live; may my Guardian Angel watch over it with a sword of fire and use it to purify every affection before it comes into me. Jesus, with the divine seal of your Cross, seal my poor heart.” (*The Forge*, 412).

18. As he was giving out Holy Communion that priest felt like

shouting out: this is Happiness I am giving to you! (*The Forge*, 267).

19. So as not to give scandal, or to provoke even the faintest suspicion that the children of God are soft and useless, so as not to disedify..., you must strive to show an example of balanced justice, to behave properly as responsible men (*Friends of God*, 70)

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