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Msgr. Ocáriz in “El Mundo”: Renewing our commitment to work for peace

A column by Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, published in the Spanish newspaper El Mundo on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the death of Saint Josemaría. This is an English translation of the original piece.

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- Read the original column in *El Mundo*.

A month and a half ago, on that historic spring afternoon in Rome, the newly elected Pope Leo XIV turned the greeting of the Risen Christ into his first words as pontiff, addressed from the balcony of St. Peter's Square to the entire world: "Peace be with you!" A little later, he expanded on this: "I, too, would like this greeting of peace to enter your hearts, to reach your families and all people, wherever they are; and all the peoples, and all the earth."

The Pope's message outlines a path from peace in hearts to peace

throughout the world. Of the many things he could have said, he chose to proclaim peace. And yet, the front pages of newspapers continue to reflect the troubling lack of peace in our times. Peace is absent in the headlines and among global powers, but also in small, everyday things; between relatives, neighbors, friends, and coworkers. It is lacking, too, in the human conscience, where fear, doubt, anxiety, and worry often reign.

In light of this, the desire for peace may seem, at best, a utopian dream… Or, at worst, a surrender of the very ideals we are meant to defend. Yet as Christians, we know that Christ is our peace (cf. Eph 2:14), and that the peace we long for is a gift from God, one we must learn to receive and to share.

Today marks fifty years since the death of Saint Josemaría Escrivá,

founder of Opus Dei. One of his most well-known sayings comes to mind: his invitation to be “sowers of peace and joy.” This might sound like a beautiful but unrealistic phrase, but it is the testimony of someone who lived through a civil war and the devastating aftermath of a world war. In that dramatic context, Saint Josemaría strove to be a bridge, not a barricade; a source of unity, not division. His convictions as a priest and as a Christian led him to live “with arms wide open so that everyone fits: those on the right, those on the left, those in front, those behind… Everyone, everyone, everyone!” Arms open like Christ on the Cross, who begged forgiveness for his executioners and, as Pope Benedict XVI liked to say, set the “revolution of love” in motion.

Thus, when violence seems to have the last word, when aggression appears to be the only option, it is a

chance to challenge worldly logic and lift our gaze to the Christ's example. "Christ goes before us," Pope Leo XIV affirmed in his first address, just minutes after his election. "The world needs his light. Humanity needs Him like a bridge to reach God and his love." Peace is a gift from God that we must ask for together.

Moreover, we can all help build peace in hearts and in relationships, often through small acts of peacemaking at home, in our neighborhoods, and at work. At the same time, peace needs to rest on a justice enlivened by love. Those who know themselves to be children of God come to recognize others as "brothers and sisters," as Saint Josemaría advised: "Each one of us has been born in Christ to be a new creature, a son of God. We are all brothers, and we have to behave

fraternally toward one another!" (*Furrow*, no. 317).

The universal yearning for peace is becoming more and more visibly urgent. It is not enough to lament violence; all of us, believers and non-believers alike, are called to foster an ecosystem of peace in our own spheres. Those who possess peace radiate it through their presence and the way they respond to other people and events. This task begins in the smallest things, from the language we use to our conversations and everyday gestures at home, work, school, and online. A few days ago, Pope Leo XIV reflected: "Peace is not a spiritual utopia: it is a humble path, made up of daily gestures that interweave patience and courage, listening and action" (17 June 2025).

In this sense, when Saint John Paul II canonized Saint Josemaría in 2002, he called him the "saint of ordinary

life." That title captures the heart of his message: God is found in the everyday, and that is where peace is built. Most of the time, this will not involve heroic feats, but the steady work of forging relationships through patience, kindness, and forgiveness. The battles of daily life do not begin with bombs, but with harsh words, small acts of contempt, gestures of selfishness or indifference that gradually escalate.

Commenting on the beatitude — the joy — of those who "work for peace" (Mt 5:9), Pope Leo invited members of the media to consider that "the way we communicate is of fundamental importance; we must say 'no' to the war of words and images" (12 May 2025).

For this reason, the first ground in which to sow the seed of peace is our own heart. Achieving inner peace is a particular challenge in these

anxious and fearful times. In Saint Josemaría's words: "There is no peace in many hearts which vainly strive to make up for their intranquility of soul by continuous activity, by seeking a thin satisfaction in things which do not fill them" (*Christ is Passing By*, no. 73).

The words of the Apostle James remain astonishingly relevant today, expressing that inner tension between good and evil that we all carry within our human nature: "Where there is envy and rivalry, there is also disorder and every kind of evil. But the wisdom that comes from above is, first of all, pure; then peaceable, gentle, and open to reason" (Jas 3:16–18).

Peace in the world around us is born from interior peace. We experience this within ourselves and, in a special way, we are grateful when a peacemaker enters our life. They are

people who carry light, who weave unity and harmony (a harmony of hearts), who open new horizons and radiate joy. To use a phrase from Pope Francis, they are the “saints next door” who build peace *next door*. These people inspire us by their example as teachers of peace.

Very often, our contribution to peace in the world around us consists in developing an attitude of understanding toward others. “Charity, more than in giving, consists in understanding,” Saint Josemaría taught. “The understanding we must show is a proof of christian charity on the part of a good child of God. Our Lord wants us to be present in all the honest pursuits of the earth, so that there we may sow, not weeds, but the good seed of brotherhood, of forgiveness, of charity and of peace” (*Christ is Passing By*, no. 124).

Remembering Saint Josemaría today means renewing our commitment to work for peace, by being “brothers and sisters to every creature, sowers of peace and joy.” The “disarmed and disarming peace” of the Risen Christ Pope Leo XIV proclaimed in his first address could well inspire our daily lives — not as an abstract ideal, but as a concrete attitude, a way of being in the world that fosters reconciliation, hope, and unity.

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