

Audio Meditation of the Prelate (19 March 2020)

On the feast of Saint Joseph, the Prelate of Opus Dei advises us to foster "the certainty of the impossible" that we see in the Holy Patriarch: "a man with a permanent smile who shrugged his shoulders."

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**Meditation preached in the
prelatic church of Our Lady of
Peace (Rome, 19 March 2020)**

The second reading from today's Mass for this great solemnity of Saint Joseph (which contains so much that is relevant for us and for the whole Church) presents us, first of all, with the figure of Abraham: that great patriarch whom the Church has come to see as our father in the faith.

In the epistle to the Romans that we will read today, Saint Paul tells us that Abraham "believed, hoping against hope." He believed against all hope that he would become the father of many peoples, and this won for him righteousness.

The story of Abraham is well-known to us: his readiness to do God's will even when it was not humanly understandable—to become the father of many peoples at his advanced age. Then, going to a place without knowing where he was going, trusting that God would

always show him what he should do, what he should plan. His great faith.

The liturgy today presents him to us as a forerunner to Saint Joseph, to that great patriarch in the New Testament, our father and lord Saint Joseph. We are also shown very clearly Saint Joseph's great faith.

And now, in our prayer, we address Saint Joseph and ask him to obtain for us a great faith. We ask the one whom we call our father and lord to obtain for us a faith without conditions, a faith that brings with it complete trust in God, a trust in everything that happens.

Today at Mass the liturgy offers us two possible Gospels. The one from Saint Matthew tells us how Saint Joseph faced a mystery, the great mystery of the Incarnation. He discovers it first humanly, and since he is just, he does not want to denounce Mary, he wants to send her

away secretly. But then a dream comes. A dream in which the Mystery is revealed to him: “For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’ When Joseph awoke,

he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him.” Certainly it is a very special dream, accompanied and clarified by God’s grace.

We know very well what Saint Joseph’s attitude was when faced with extraordinary events: the Child’s birth, after having prepared everything with great affection. And they have to go from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where they cannot find a place to stay. And they have to leave quickly for Egypt at night, fleeing. The Angel had told him that this Child would save his people from their sins. But he cannot even save

Himself and they have to flee. And with great uncertainty, since Joseph isn't told, "Go to Egypt for a specific time," but "Go there until I tell you otherwise." It could be months, it could be years, it could be weeks... It is a readiness to do whatever God asks of us, when what He asks of us brings with it a special doubt, the unforeseeable, when the future becomes somewhat uncontrollable. But with faith, the faith of trusting in God.

We too will often find in our lives moments (probably not so extraordinary) when we need first of all to trust in God. We are going to ask for this for everyone, especially today to Saint Joseph: that we have great trust in God. And that we trust Him through the means by which He wants to speak to us. Saint Joseph might have thought: "I've had a dream, I've dreamed this, but I will be told this now in a clearer way."

A great faith. And then, the return from Egypt. Obeying intelligently, employing his responsibility and initiative to return to Nazareth, instead of staying in Bethlehem. It is the obedience of faith. Trusting, trusting in God. Lord, help us to trust you. To trust everything that comes to us through your Providence, even when it is so extraordinary. So that we know how to obey. So that by knowing how to obey out of love, we are free.

An obedience that does not mean to stop thinking. Our Father [Saint Josemaria], speaking about Saint Joseph, told us in a homily that, in all the circumstances in his life, the patriarch never refuses to think, and never neglects his own responsibilities. Therefore, our obedience to God's plans, both in great and in little things, has to stem from our freedom, and therefore from our responsibility, doing things

because we want to. Because we want to, and thus we will always be free. How often we have meditated on it, following our Father's teaching. We are not free simply because of the ability to choose between one thing or another: we are free because we can love, because we can feel—as our Father also said—as free as the birds. Also free in these circumstances in which we find ourselves enclosed because of the coronavirus. We are as free as the birds, because we can love. We can love, and therefore do everything, suffer everything out of love: because we want to.

Saint Joseph is for us also a model in what is ordinary, in the monotony of ordinary life. Our Father also tells us: what could someone living in an insignificant village like Nazareth expect from life? Every day, the same tiring work. And, at the end of the day, a poor small house to regain

strength and begin working again the next day.

That is our life. One day of work after another, without anything especially new happening. But what can we expect from this?, our Father asks. What could Saint Joseph expect? And our Father continues: the name Joseph in Hebrew means “God will add.” God adds unsuspected dimensions to the holy life of those who fulfill his will. He adds what is truly important, what gives value to everything, a divine value. And this is our life.

We thank you, Lord, and we ask you through the intercession of Saint Joseph, especially today, to make us understand the greatness of ordinary life. What we have meditated on so often, and so often need to relearn: the greatness of ordinary life. And specifically, the greatness of a life of work.

Because God, to that apparently monotonous life of ours adds, as our Father said, the divine. And what is the divine? The divine is He himself, his Presence, his Grace; the divine is the supernatural effectiveness of our work. It is making our work divine, making it a holy reality.

We know few details about Saint Joseph's life, but we can imagine his work in Nazareth. How would he work, especially with Jesus? We, Lord, want to work with you; we want our daily work, which is so ordinary, to have that added divine dimension, which is above all your presence. May we work with you, Lord. With or without words, may we often tell you, Lord, in our day and in our work: "Jesus, we are going to do this between the two of us." This is truly so. This should give us, on the one hand, joy, security; and also the responsibility that we are not doing something that is ours, on

our own, but that we are doing something very divine, working in collaboration with Christ in everything we do.

Faith: the faith of Saint Joseph. Hope: the faith that grounds our hope. The hope that, as we read in the epistle to the Colossians, is placed in what “is reserved for us in heaven.” That is how we have to see our work too, with hope in what “is reserved for us in heaven” And already now, not only when we go to heaven by God’s grace and mercy, if we are faithful, but now what is reserved for us in heaven is all the help of God, all the love of God, with the Lord looking at us lovingly all day.

What is our hope? What do we expect during the day? So many things. But may our hope be in heaven. May it be the fruit of faith, a hope that is the fruit of faith. May we

always be expecting, with sure hope, the divine in our life.

This will also give us security when faced with what seems difficult in our own spiritual life, which so often—in realizing our vocation to holiness—could seem impossible to us, when faced with the frequent experience of our limitations and miseries. So often it could seem impossible to us to carry out our apostolic mission, to transform this world, to bring this world to God, to place Christ at the summit of all human activities. So often, humanly, we will say: "Lord, this is impossible; but we ask you Lord, here, before the body of our Father, to give us—as our Father had—the certainty of the impossible."

Saint Joseph too was certain of the impossible. And that certainty will also lead us to imitate Saint Joseph like our Father, who saw in Saint

Joseph a man with a permanent smile who shrugged his shoulders. A shrug not of indifference, but saying, “Well, it doesn’t matter, because no matter what happens it will be effective.”

And with a permanent smile. In the Gospel we don’t see Saint Joseph smiling, but we can with our Father easily imagine his kindly face, his friendly face, his face with a permanent smile that gives joy to others, security to others. We also ask you, Lord, through the intercession of Saint Joseph, that we be people who know how to smile, that we know how to smile also when difficulties arise, when we encounter setbacks. We know very well, and we will often have experienced it, that sometimes, as our Father said, a smile is the best mortification. Because sometimes it is hard to smile, because there are difficulties, worries, an illness. It may

be hard to smile. But to smile then is not to put on an act. It can and should be deeply authentic, because we smile because we know that God is placing the divine element in our life. And smiling also to help others, to give security, to give joy.

In difficult situations, knowing how to smile and, above all, how to pray. Yesterday Pope Francis, speaking about the pandemic, addressed this invitation to us: “Always invoke Saint Joseph, especially in difficult times, and entrust your life to this great saint.” So now, uniting ourselves to the Pope’s prayer, let us ask Saint Joseph to end, to shorten this difficult time for so many people all over the world.

Faith, hope and charity. Love. Faith that works through charity. We can imagine Saint Joseph’s love for the Child Jesus, Saint Joseph’s love for our Lady. A love shown in service, in

self-giving, in responsibility for bringing the Holy Family forward.

And charity has so much to do with fidelity, a fidelity that today we want to renew with Saint Joseph. We want to tell Our Lord once again now: “Here I am, Lord, for whatever you want.” And we also want to give you thanks, because we are very aware that the ability to give ourselves to God, the ability to give ourselves in everything, is a great gift that God grants us, that He offers us.

Benedict XVI once said that fidelity over time is the name of love. Indeed, renewing our fidelity is the name of love; it must be something that stems from love, from truly wanting to, from desiring union with God. And consequently, it needs to stem from our love for others, because our fidelity to the plans of God, fidelity to our Christian vocation, to our vocation to the Work

is love for God, love for others, renewed over time.

Today we ask Our Lord especially, through Saint Joseph, for the fidelity of everyone, for the renewal of the fidelity of everyone in the Work. May we all always have the clear awareness that fidelity to our vocation is fidelity to Christ. Yes, it is fidelity to a way of life, to a mission, to a spirit, but this means fidelity to Jesus Christ, so that we always feel very much the Lord's.

Saint Paul says: “If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's” (*Rom 14:8*). That is our great identity. Our identity is that “we are the Lord's.”

Our fidelity means reaffirming with gratitude that “we are the Lord's.” And doing so of course through fidelity to the spirit that we have received from our Father: today is

his saint's day. It is only natural that today we also go especially to his intercession.

This fidelity of ours that we want to renew today with a true and strong voluntariness, is fidelity to our Father. We should never view our Father (we don't see him like this) as a figure of the past, who is certainly admirable, who has left us some wonderful writings... We should see our fidelity in light of Paul VI's advice to Don Alvaro: "When you have to decide something, think about how the founder would have decided, and you will be right." Don Alvaro said that this advice made him very happy, because it was what he had already been doing from the first moment.

May our fidelity also have this note (for us a very important one) of fidelity to our Father. We need to foster our eagerness to get to know

him better, to know his spirit better, his writings, his life, which will help us to be more faithful in the ordinary, in our work, in the small things of each day, in the today and now. And at the same time, it will help us to be faithful when on some occasion we face, like Saint Joseph, special circumstances that are particularly difficult.

Fidelity. Fidelity over time is the name of love. And it is true: our love is love of correspondence. And therefore a large part, or better a key element of our faith, is faith in God's love for us. Then our love, our fidelity will mean responding to Him, knowing we are loved by God. As our Father said, knowing that we are looked upon lovingly by God at all hours, at all hours. That we are never alone, not only because we are, through God's goodness, surrounded by people who love us, but because Our Lord is with us. Our Lord is with

us so closely that we are His. *Domini sumus*, we are the Lord's.

Our fidelity needs to be a fidelity filled with joy. And it is. Today, as we renew our fidelity, we want it also to be a renewal of the joy with which we face everything we have in our hands, our work, the very special circumstances of the epidemic now. Living with joy.

Living with joy, with Saint Joseph's permanent smile, because it is what God wants. Being faithful to God also means being happy. When we are not happy we are not being faithful, because Our Lord wants our joy: “that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (*Jn 15:11*).

It is marvelous to realize that God wants us to be happy, joyful. And not only that, but He also gives us all the means to be happy. And above all He gives us his presence, his love, his company.

And with this faith, this hope, this charity, this faithful correspondence, we want ours to be an apostolic fidelity. It can't be any other way. Our identification with Christ necessarily leads to a hunger for souls, which in a special way yesterday we put in the hands of Saint Joseph. And today, with words of our Father, we tell Our Lord, going to Saint Joseph's intercession: "Souls, apostolic souls, they are for you, for your glory." Let us repeat it frequently, perhaps today: "Souls, apostolic souls, they are for you, for your glory." Going in our thoughts all over the world, because the whole world is ours (Our Lord has given it to us as an inheritance), going to North America, South America, Asia, Africa, Europe, Oceania: "Souls, apostolic souls, they are for you, for your glory."

We finish by going with Saint Joseph to Mary, our Mother, and with Mary

and with Joseph to Jesus, to this trinity on earth (Jesus, Mary and Joseph), asking that they always lead us by the hand to the Trinity in Heaven, to that God of ours to whom we belong. *Domini sumus*, “we are the Lord’s.”

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