"Aprite le finestre": the soundtrack Saint Josemaría wanted for his farewell from this world

The song "Aprite le finestre" was the piece with which singer Franca Raimondi won the popular Sanremo Music Festival in 1956, Italy's most important musical competition. St. Josemaría liked it and saw it as a simple and radiant expression of Christian hope in eternal life. He told those around him that he would like it to be sung at the moment of his death.

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In 1966, during a get-together at Villa Tevere, some of those living with St Josemaría sang *Aprite le finestre*, a song then popular in Italy. The founder told them he would like it to be sung in his final moments on earth, joyfully, after he received the last sacraments.

The song celebrates the joy of springtime, when flowers begin to bloom again, birds return from migration, and the sun streams through open windows, filling homes with light. Its lyrics invite listeners to open themselves to new dreams and to a life that begins afresh.

La prima rosa rossa è già shocciata The first red rose has already bloomed

E nascon timide le viole mammole	violets hide
Ormai, la prima rondine è tornata	Now, the first swallow has returned
Nel cielo limpido comincia a volteggiar	In the clear sky, it begins to flutter
Il tempo bello viene ad annunciar	The beautiful weather comes to announce
Aprite le finestre al nuovo sole	Open the windows to the new sun
È primavera, è primavera	It's spring, it's spring

And the shy

St Josemaría enjoyed singing, and often repeated a phrase from St Augustine: "He who sings, prays twice." He also used to say that he liked "all the songs about pure holy

love, for in them I find, interwoven, both human and divine love."[2] It is not surprising, therefore, that he saw more than a mere description of the season in this song. Asking for it to be sung at the end of his life, made it clear he saw it as a metaphor for the passage to eternal life: death not as an end, but as a peaceful, radiant awakening. For him, 'opening the windows' meant opening the soul as he had done throughout his life to the Love of loves, to the definitive encounter with God, "for ever, for ever... for ever" (The Way, no. 182).

The sun, which Church tradition sees as a symbol of Jesus Christ, offers itself gently to each person, and enters in when we freely open the door or the windows of our lives.

At times, St. Josemaría would talk about that definitive encounter with God: "It moves me deeply to think of the moment — whenever God wills

— when I will be able to see Him, not as in a mirror, nor through obscure images... but face to face." He never described that moment as something jarring, because "we are always seeking God, hoping for Him. If we were to die suddenly, it would be as if the Lord had surprised us from behind, and, turning round, we found ourselves in his arms..."

Afraid neither of life nor of death: that is how he tried to live each day, because, as he used to say, "we don't know when the final battle will come, because we could die at any moment... But don't be afraid: beyond death there is Life and Love." [5]

Sul davanzale un piccolo usignolo

On the windowsill, a little nightingale

Dall'ali tenere, le piume morbide

wings, soft feathers Ha già spiccato il timido suo volo Has already taken its timid flight E contro i vetri ha cominciato a And it has started picchiettar to tap against the glass Il suo più bel messaggio vuol It wants to bring portar: its beautiful message: È primavera, è primavera It's spring, it's spring Aprite le finestre ai nuovi sogni Open the windows to new dreams

With tender

Might that symbol of people in love
— the nightingale on the windowsill,
tapping on the glass — not also be
interpreted as grace, Love Himself,

coming to prepare the soul for its long-awaited encounter? Then, for the last time, the soul will open the window to the most beautiful of dreams: eternal life.

Aprite le finestre ai nuovi sogni

Open the windows to new dreams

Alle speranze, all'illusione

To hopes, to excitement

Lasciate entrare l'ultima canzone

Let in the last song

Che dolcemente scenderà nel cuor Which will descend gently into the heart

On 26 June 1975, Josemaría Escrivá died suddenly of a heart attack. Another of his wishes was fulfilled: he had asked God for the grace to die "without being a nuisance," so as not to be a "burden" to his sons and daughters in Opus Dei.

"That day will come for us. It will be our last day, but we're not afraid of it. Trusting firmly in God's grace, we are ready from this very moment to be generous and courageous, and take loving care of little things: we are ready to go and meet our Lord" (*Friends of God*, no. 242).

"In the sky, amid silver clouds, the moon has already set a date." Our Lady, like the moon that reflects the light of the sun, reflects the image of God and guides Christians through moments of darkness. She accompanied St. Josemaría from his earliest years, and she was with him at the end of his life, too. In his last moments on earth, he fixed his gaze on an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, confident that she was accompanying him in that final step toward heaven. Five years earlier,

while looking at a picture in Jaltepec of Our Lady of Guadalupe giving a rose to Juan Diego, he had said aloud: "That is how I would like to die: looking at the Blessed Virgin and receiving a flower from her..."

You might enjoy this playlist of songs Saint Josemaría liked:

One of the biographies of the founder recounts a family story from that day. Severino Monzó, who was spending a few days in a house near the shrine of Torreciudad, received the news of St Josemaría's passing and remembered something the founder had said to him a decade earlier in Rome about that song: "You will sing it for me... without tears."

He went over to the record player in the sitting room and put on "Aprite le finestre." He began to sing it, hoping to fulfil the Father's wish. He tried to hold back his emotions, but wasn't quite able to fulfil that second part. At one point, his voice broke and he had to stop. He gathered himself and sang it through to the end. The lyrics of the full song are as follows:

Italian	English
La prima rosa rossa è già sbocciata	The first red rose has already bloomed
E nascon timide le viole mammole	And the shy violets hide
Ormai, la prima rondine è tornata	Now, the first swallow has returned

Nel cielo limpido	In the clear sky,
comincia a	it begins to
volteggiar	flutter

Il tempo bello	The beautiful
viene ad	weather comes
annunciar	to announce

Aprite le finestre al	Open the
nuovo sole	windows to the
È primavera, è	new sun

primavera	It's spring, it's
_	spring

Lasciate entrare	
un poco d'aria	Let in a bit of
pura	fresh air

Con il profumo dei	With the scent of
giardini e i prati in	gardens and
fior	blooming
	meadows
Anrite le finestre	

ai nuovi sogni	Open the
	windows to new
Dambina balla	

Bambine belle dreams

Innamorate	Beautiful girls
È forse il più bel	In love
sogno che sognate	It may be the
Sarà domani la felicità	most beautiful dream you
[Ritornello]	dream
Nel cielo fra le	Happiness will
nuvole d'argento	come tomorrow
La luna ha già	[Chorus]
fissato	In the sky among the silver clouds
appuntamento	
Aprite le finestre al nuovo sole	The moon has already set a
È primavera	date
Festa dell'amor	Open the
	windows to the new sun
La, la, la	It's spring, the
Aprite le finestre	n s spring, the

feast of love

Aprite le finestre

al nuovo sole

Sul davanzale un La, la, la... piccolo usignolo Open the windows to the Dall'ali tenere, le piume morbide new sun Ha già spiccato il On the timido suo volo windowsill, a little nightingale E contro i vetri ha cominciato a With tender wings, soft picchiettar feathers Il suo più bel messaggio vuol Has already taken its timid portar: flight È primavera, è primavera And it has started to tap Aprite le finestre against the glass ai nuovi sogni

Alle speranze, all'illusione

It wants to bring its beautiful message:

Lasciate entrare	It's spring, it's spring
l'ultima canzone	Open the windows to new
Che dolcemente scenderà nel cuor	dreams
Nel cielo fra le nuvole d'argento	To hopes, to excitement
La luna ha già fissato	Let in the last song
appuntamento	Which will descend gently
Aprite le finestre al nuovo sole	into the heart
È primavera, festa dell'amor	In the sky among the silver clouds
La, la, la	The moon has already set a date
Aprite le finestra al primo amor	Open the windows to the new sun

It's spring, the feast of love

La, la, la...

Open the window to first love

Celaya I., in *Recuerdos de san Josemaría*.

Conversations, no. 92.

Sastre A., *Tiempo de caminar*, chapter XII.

^[4] Cfr. Testimony of Encarnación Ortega Pardo, RHF 5074.

^[5] **Ibid**.

Cejas J.M., *Cara y Cruz: Josemaría Escrivá*, chapter XXVI.

__ Urbano P., *The Man of Villa Tevere*, chapter XIX.

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