

opusdei.org

Holy Mass, Center and Root of Christian Life

“I have always taught you, my beloved daughters and sons, that the root and the center of your spiritual life is the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar.” Saint Josemaría Escrivá’s words and writings constantly pointed to the Eucharist as the center and root of Christian life.

12/12/2012

“I have always taught you, my beloved daughters and sons, that the root and the center of your spiritual life is the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar.”¹ Saint Josemaría Escrivá’s words and writings constantly pointed to the Eucharist as the center and root of Christian life.

He stressed this truth especially when explaining Catholic teaching on the Eucharistic sacrifice, and when describing the Christian vocation as *living in Christ, with a priestly soul*. “If the Son of God,” he wrote in 1940, “became man and died on a Cross, he did it so that all men might become one with him and with the Father. All of us, therefore, are called to form part of this divine unity. With a priestly soul, making the holy Mass the center of our interior life, we seek to be with Jesus, between God and mankind.”² He urged everyone to live in accord with the centrality of the Eucharist in the

life of the Church, channeling one's whole existence through the Eucharistic sacrifice each day: "Keep struggling, so that the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar really becomes the center and the root of your interior life, and so your whole day will turn into an act of worship – an extension of the Mass you have attended and a preparation for the next. This will then overflow in aspirations, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and the offering up of your professional work and your family life."³ And he backed up his preaching by the example of his own life. As Bishop Alvaro del Portillo testified: "Day after day, for forty years, I witnessed his struggle to transform each day into a holocaust, into a prolongation of the Sacrifice of the Altar. The holy Mass was the center of his heroic dedication to work and the root that nourished his interior struggle, his life of prayer and penance. Thanks to his union with Christ's sacrifice, his

pastoral activity had a great sanctifying value. Truly everything in his daily life was *operatio Dei*, Opus Dei, the work of God: a true journey of prayer, of intimacy with God, of identification with Christ in his complete self-giving for the salvation of the world.”⁴

In the pages below, I will first consider the dogmatic foundation and theological content of the expression so often used by Saint Josemaría Escrivá: “The Mass is the center and root of a Christian’s life.” Then I will try to show, through his teachings, what this expression implies for a Christian’s daily life.

The Eucharist, a perpetuation, in the time of the Church, of the Holy Trinity’s current of love for mankind

Anyone opening the writings of Saint Josemaría immediately notices the profound sense of divine filiation

reflected in them, imbued with a deeply Trinitarian perspective. In a homily entitled “The Eucharist: Mystery of Faith and Love” (April 14, 1960, Holy Thursday), he draws us to the consideration of the Eucharistic mystery in the following terms:

“The God of our faith is not a distant being who contemplates indifferently the fate of men – their desires, their struggles, their sufferings. He is a Father who loves his children so much that he sends the Word, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, so that by taking on the nature of man he may die to redeem us. He is the loving Father who now leads us gently to himself, through the action of the Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts.

“This is the source of the joy we feel on Holy Thursday – the realization that the Creator has loved his creatures to such an extent. Our Lord

Jesus Christ, as though all the other proofs of his mercy were insufficient, institutes the Eucharist so that he can always be close to us. We can only understand up to a point that he does so because Love moves him, who needs nothing, not to want to be separated from us. The Blessed Trinity has fallen in love with man, raised to the level of grace and made ‘to God’s image and likeness.’ God has redeemed him from sin – from the sin of Adam, inherited by all his descendants, as well as from his personal sins – and desires ardently to dwell in his soul... The Blessed Trinity’s love for man is made permanent in a sublime way through the Eucharist.”⁶

The most Holy Trinity’s presence and action in the Eucharistic sacrifice forms the core of his reflections. “The holy Mass... is the gift of the Blessed Trinity to the Church. It is because of this that we can consider

the Mass as the center and the source of a Christian's spiritual life.”⁷The Eucharist manifests to us and makes us sharers in the love of the Father, who in his salvific plan sent his only-begotten Son into the world and handed him over to death on the Cross, in order to free us from the power of sin. It shows us and offers us the love of the Son, the Bread come down from heaven, who, obedient to the will of the Father, gave up his life for us. It reveals to us and communicates to us the love of the Holy Spirit, through whose action the Word became flesh, who continues to make himself present among us in each celebration of the Eucharist, offering us his flesh vivified by the Spirit.

“The three divine Persons are present in the sacrifice of the altar. By the will of the Father, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, the Son offers himself in a redemptive

sacrifice.”⁸ Each time that the Church celebrates the Eucharist, our Lord becomes present under the sacramental signs of the bread and wine, in the act of offering up his life to the Father in expiation for the sins of all mankind. In Christ and with Christ, God’s salvific work becomes present, the sacrifice of our redemption in the fullness of the Paschal mystery, Jesus’ passion, death and resurrection. This is not a static or purely passive presence of our Lord, for he makes himself present with the saving dynamism of his death and glorious resurrection. He is present as a Person who seeks us out to redeem us, to show us his love, to give us his very life in the Bread of eternal life and the Chalice of eternal salvation. He unites us to himself so that in Him – in Christ and through the action of the Holy Spirit – we may give back to the Father, in an act of thanksgiving, all that comes forth from the Father.

“Because of the Blessed Trinity’s love for man, the presence of Christ in the Eucharist brings all graces to the Church and to mankind.”⁹ From this Trinitarian current of love which the Blessed Sacrament offers us, comes the strength that enables Christians to live in Christ, animated by a single Spirit, as children of the one Father, loving to the point of complete self-giving, fully dedicated to the building up of the Church and the transformation of the world according to the divine plan. The Eucharist, then, is not just a mystery that we can admire in the light of faith; it is infinitely more, for in this sacrament Jesus invites us to accept the salvation that he offers us, to receive the sacrificial offering of his Body and Blood as the food of eternal life, permitting us to enter into communion with him, with his Person and his Sacrifice, and into communion with all the members of his Mystical Body, the Church.

Participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice in the teachings of Saint Josemaría Escrivá

Saint Josemaría's writings present us with a deeply unified vision of the different aspects of the Eucharistic mystery. Particularly emphasized is its sacrificial dimension, viewed in the perspective of the sacramental order entrusted by Christ to his Church. The holy Mass is "the sacramental sacrifice of the Body and Blood of our Lord."¹⁰ Following the Church's tradition, he identified this sacramental sacrifice with the unique sacrifice of our Redeemer. "It is the sacrifice of Christ, offered to the Father with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit – an offering of infinite value, which perpetuates the work of the redemption in us."¹¹ And on contemplating this reality with eyes of faith and love, we discover that this "sacrifice [holy Mass] summarizes all that Christ asks of

us.”¹² We learn what he wants from us when we take part in the Eucharistic liturgy, and what he wants from us in every moment of our life.

Our Father God wants us to live in accordance with what we are, as sons and daughters in the Son, identified with Christ in filial love and obedience. In Christ Jesus, in communion with his divine Person, we can live in a constant relationship of filial love with the Father; and the Father pours out upon us his paternity overflowing with love. In addition, through communion with the Body of Christ, with his life-giving Humanity vivified by the Spirit, we also enter into communion with the Third Person of the Trinity, receiving the Holy Spirit’s power to love, which creates, renews, inflames and sanctifies everything. He “makes us entirely Christ-like” and enables us to sense deeply our divine filiation in

Christ. Saint Josemaría wrote: “The life of grace, into which we are brought by baptism, and which is increased and strengthened by confirmation, grows to its fullness in the Mass. ‘When we participate in the Eucharist,’ writes Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, ‘we are made spiritual by the divinizing action of the Holy Spirit, who not only makes us share in Christ’s life, as in baptism, but makes us entirely Christ-like, incorporating us into the fullness of Christ Jesus’.”

This pouring out of the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ and makes us acknowledge that we are children of God. The Paraclete, who is Love, teaches us to saturate our life with the virtue of charity. Thus *consummati in unum*, ‘made one with Christ,’ we can be among men what the Eucharist is for us, in the words of St Augustine: ‘a sign of unity, a bond of love.’¹³

The contemplation of Christ's love for us revealed in the Eucharist and, above all, the identification with Him that is effected by faith, by the Eucharist's "Christifying" grace, and by the action of the Paraclete in our soul, should move any Christian who participates in the Eucharistic sacrifice "to correspond to such great love". Therefore, says Saint Josemaría, "we must give ourselves completely, in body and soul."¹⁴ We are moved to surrender ourselves as Jesus did: with a loving, complete, unconditional, humble, hidden, persevering self-giving.

What God expects of us in every Eucharistic celebration is that we adhere fully to Jesus' words: "Take and eat... this is my Body, which will be given up for you; take and drink... This is the cup of my Blood, which will be shed for you and for all men for the forgiveness of sins." Our Lord's command to "do this" (what I

have done) “in memory of me,” demands not only that the priest repeats his words and gestures. He wants all those present to receive with faith and love the gift that he offers us and, united to him, to give ourselves to the Father, in the Spirit, for the salvation of the world.

All the faithful, the entire priestly People of God and not just the priest-celebrant, are called to share in the Eucharist in this way, that is, to make present their self-giving to God at the moment of the consecration of the gifts, and at the moment of Holy Communion when we become one and the same with the divine Victim. Although only the sacramentally ordained minister, the priest or bishop, has the power to carry out the Eucharistic sacrifice *in persona Christi*, in the person of Christ, the Eucharistic celebration affects and involves each of the faithful present, who are called upon, in virtue of

their common priesthood (that is, their participation in the priesthood of Christ received in Baptism), to offer to the Father a “spiritual worship” (*Rom 12:1*), the sacrifice of their lives, united to Christ’s sacrifice. Therefore all the faithful, who are much more than mere spectators at an act of worship carried out by the priest-celebrant, can and should participate in the offering of the Sacrifice.

Saint Josemaría insisted strongly on this doctrine of the Church, urging us to renew at holy Mass the offering of our life and everyday work, all that we are and have: our intelligence, will and memory; work, joys and sorrows. He wanted everything placed on the altar so that our Lord could take it up and give it a salvific value “in the supreme moment of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, where time blends with eternity.”¹⁵ He wanted our whole existence to be

directed day after day, to the Eucharistic sacrifice, teaching everyone to live with a priestly soul. Thus he anticipated what the Second Vatican Council said about the Christian faithful: “For all their works, prayers and apostolic undertakings, family and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, if they are accomplished in the Spirit – indeed even the hardships of life if patiently borne – all these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. In the celebration of the Eucharist these may most fittingly be offered to the Father along with the body of the Lord. And so, worshiping everywhere by their holy actions, the laity consecrate the world itself to God.”¹⁶

What we have said up till now about the faithful applies in a special way to the priest-celebrant. Insofar as he acts “in the person of Christ” in the

Eucharistic celebration, he is called to identify himself in a special way with Christ, Victim and Priest. The offering of his own life to the Father, through Christ and in Christ, should be a reality for him in every celebration of the Eucharist. The Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* states that “when priests unite themselves with the [sacrificial] act of Christ the Priest, they daily offer themselves completely to God.”¹⁷ What they carry out sacramentally on the altar commits their entire life: they are called to give themselves fully, in Christ and with Christ, to the Father, thus allowing our Lord to take over their entire existence and to fill it with redemptive meaning and value.

Saint Josemaría Escrivá was fully conscious of this truth. He frequently recalled it to priests, and lived it himself every day in the Sacrifice of the Altar.

“The sacrament of Holy Orders, in effect, equips the priest to lend Our Lord his voice, his hands, his whole being. It is Jesus Christ who, in the Holy Mass, through the words of the consecration, changes the substance of the bread and wine into his Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

“This is the source of the priest’s incomparable dignity. It is a greatness which is on loan: it is completely compatible with my own littleness. I pray to God our Lord to give all of us priests the grace to perform holy things in a holy way, to reflect in every aspect of our lives the wonders of the greatness of God. Those of us who celebrate the mysteries of the Passion of Our Lord must imitate what we perform. And then the host will take our place before God because we render ourselves hosts.”¹⁸

Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, a privileged witness of the faith and love with which Saint Josemaría celebrated Mass each day, tells us:

“At the elevation of the Eucharistic Bread, and again at the elevation of the Blood of our Lord, he would repeat certain prayers – not aloud, because the rubrics do not permit it, but in his mind and heart – and he did this with heroic perseverance which lasted for decades.

“Specifically, while he had the consecrated host in his hands, he would say, ‘My Lord and my God,’ the act of faith of St Thomas the Apostle. Next, again taking his inspiration from the Gospel, he would slowly repeat, ‘Increase our faith, hope, and charity,’ asking the Lord to give to the whole Work the grace of growing in these virtues. Immediately after that, he would repeat a prayer addressed to the Merciful Love, a prayer which

he had known and meditated upon since his youth, but which he never used in his preaching – for many years he only rarely confided to us that he recited it – ‘Holy Father, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary I offer to you Jesus, your beloved Son, and in him, through him, and with him I offer myself for all his intentions and in the name of all creatures.’ Afterwards he added the invocation, ‘Lord, grant purity and joy with peace to me and to all,’ thinking especially, of course, of his sons and daughters in Opus Dei. And finally, while he was genuflecting after having elevated the Host or the Chalice, he recited the first stanza of the Eucharistic hymn *Adoro Te Devote* – ‘Devoutly I adore Thee’, and he said to the Lord, ‘Welcome to the altar!’

“All of this, I repeat, was said by him not just on this or that occasion, but

every day, and never mechanically, but with all his heart and love.”¹⁹

We can easily understand the joy that Saint Josemaría felt when he read in the Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* something that he had been preaching for many years: the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is “the center and root of the whole life of the priest, so that the priestly soul strives to make its own what is enacted on the altar of sacrifice.”

Saint Josemaría taught, and he himself lived, a radical dedication of one’s life to God in the holy Mass – “Our Mass, Jesus,” as he wrote in *The Way*.²¹ We should love the Mass and make it the center of our day. If we attend Mass well, surely we are likely to think about our Lord during the rest of the day, wanting to be always in his presence, ready to work as he worked and love as he loved.”²² He

strove to make his whole day a continual Mass, making each day “totally Eucharistic”.²³ He wrote in 1945: “In this way, closely united to Jesus in the Eucharist, we will attain a continual presence of God, in the midst of the ordinary occupations proper to each one’s situation on this earthly pilgrimage of ours, seeking our Lord at all times and in all things. Making our own Christ’s sentiments on the Cross, we will find our entire life becoming an unceasing act of reparation, an untiring petition and a permanent sacrifice for all mankind. For our Lord will give us a supernatural instinct to purify all of our actions, elevating them to the order of grace and turning them into an instrument of apostolate. Only thus will we be contemplative souls in the midst of the world, as our vocation demands, and we will become truly priestly souls, converting every aspect of our

being into a continual praise of God.”²⁴

Saint Josemaría taught in a practical way how to make the Mass the center of our daily life. He divided the 24 hours of the day into two parts:

“Until noon he lived the presence of God by concentrating on thanksgiving for the Mass that he had celebrated that morning, and after the Angelus he began to prepare himself for the next day’s Mass.”²⁵ When preparing for Mass, he made many acts of faith, hope and love; he pleaded tirelessly for “apostolic souls” and renewed his intention of placing all his prayers, works, thoughts, affections, joys and sufferings, on the paten, so that our Lord would make all of it his own and give it a redemptive value.

For Saint Josemaría, teaching the faithful to take part in the Eucharistic sacrifice was an essential part of

every priest's ministry. "In the Holy Mass, all the affections and needs of a Christian's heart find their best channel: through Christ the Mass leads to the Father in the Holy Spirit. The priest should make a special effort to ensure that people know this and put it into practice. No other activity should, normally, take precedence over this task of teaching people to love and venerate the Holy Eucharist." And he continues: "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."²⁷

The central role of the Eucharist in the daily life of each Christian should show, particularly, in care for the Eucharistic liturgy, in the faith and

the love with which we treat God and the things of God.

“I ask all Christians to pray earnestly for us priests that we learn to perform the Holy Sacrifice in a holy way. I ask you to show a deep love for the Holy Mass and in this way to encourage us priests to celebrate it respectfully, with divine and human dignity: looking after the cleanliness of the vestments and other things used for worship, devoutly, without rushing.

“Why the hurry? Do people in love hurry when they are saying goodbye? They seem to be going and then they don't go; they turn back again and again; they repeat quite ordinary words as if they had just discovered their meaning... Please don't take exception to my applying to the things of God the example of noble and fine human love. If we love God with our heart of flesh –

and we have no other – we will not be in a hurry to finish this meeting, this loving appointment with Him.”²⁸

His example left a deep impression on the lives of his daughters and sons in Opus Dei. “From the beginning of his priestly ministry, he struggled not to give in to either routine or haste when he celebrated the Holy Sacrifice, in spite of the scant time that he had to carry out his many pastoral activities. On the contrary, his spontaneous tendency was to say Mass with great tranquillity, going into each text and into the meaning of each liturgical gesture so carefully that for many years he had to make a real effort – in accord with what he was told in spiritual direction – to go faster, so as not to attract attention and because he realized that he was at the service of the faithful who were often pressed for time when attending Mass. In this context, we can understand what he wrote in

1932, like a sigh escaping from his soul: ‘When one says Mass, the clocks should stop’.”²⁹

Those who witnessed how Saint Josemaría Escrivá celebrated holy Mass are unanimous in affirming that externally there was never anything extraordinary or singular about his Mass, although it was impossible not to notice his profound reverence. His piety was nourished by the liturgical texts and manifested itself in a multitude of gestures – indicated in the Eucharistic liturgy itself – such as the kissing of the altar table (a symbol of Christ), the bowing of the head, the unhurried genuflections with which he adored the Holy of Holies.³¹ He lived the holy Mass and taught everyone to live it as a very personal encounter with Christ, our Love, and with his whole Mystical Body, the Church: “To live the Holy Mass means to pray continually and to be convinced that,

for each one of us, this is a personal meeting with God. We adore him, we praise him, we give him thanks, we atone for our sins, we are purified, we feel united in Christ with all Christians.”³²

“The intensity,” wrote Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, “with which he personally united himself to the sacrifice of our Lord in the Eucharist, culminated in something that I have no doubt was a special mystical gift, and that the Father himself told us about, with great simplicity, on October 24, 1966: ‘At my age, sixty-five, I have made a marvelous discovery. I am always very happy to celebrate Holy Mass, but yesterday it cost me a tremendous amount of work. What an effort! I saw that the Mass is truly Opus Dei, real work, as the first Mass was real work for Jesus. I saw that the role of the priest in celebrating Mass involves working to produce the Eucharist; that one

undergoes pain, and joy, and tiredness. I felt in my flesh the exhaustion of a divine work’.”³³

The Eucharist and life in Christ

Thanks to the Eucharist, a Christian can truly be a Christ-bearer, bringing Christ who is present to those around us. This is how Saint Josemaría saw it in a homily given on April 28, 1964, the Feast of Corpus Christi:

“The Corpus Christi procession makes Christ present in towns and cities throughout the world. But his presence cannot be limited to just one day, a noise you hear and then forget. It should remind us that we have to discover our Lord in our ordinary everyday activity. Side by side with this solemn procession, there is the simple, silent procession of the ordinary life of each Christian. He is a man among men, who by good fortune has received the faith and the divine commission to act so

that he renews the message of our Lord on earth. We are not without defects; we make mistakes and commit sins. But God is with us and we must make ourselves ready to be used by him, so that he can continue to walk among men.

“Let us ask our Lord, then, to make us souls devoted to the blessed Eucharist, so that our relationship with him brings forth joy and serenity and a desire for justice. In this way we will make it easier for others to recognize Christ; we will put Christ at the center of all human activities. And Jesus’ promise will be fulfilled: ‘I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself’.”³⁴

In the Eucharist we encounter the impetus for the evangelization of the world, the basis of the efficacy of the apostolate that Christ’s disciples carry out.³⁵ Inserted into the current

of life and love of the One and Triune God, they strive to fulfill, in the Son and through the Holy Spirit, the will of the Father, who wants all men to be saved (cf. 1 *Tim* 2:4).

The Eucharist, in uniting us to Christ, the one Bread of which all Christians partake, unites us to one another, thus building the Church up as a single Body. In this way, when participating in the Eucharistic celebration, “we feel united in Christ with all Christians.”³⁶ The Eucharist makes us more united with the entire family of God, which is the Church.

The Eucharist, since it contains the incarnate Word, the crucified One who has risen and is now glorious at the right hand of the Father, possesses a salvific efficacy that transcends time to enter into the realities of the world to come.

“Eternal happiness begins now for the Christian who is comforted with

the definitive manna of the Eucharist. The old life has gone forever. Let us leave everything transitory behind us so that everything will be new, 'our hearts, our words and our actions'... This is the Good News, because in an inexplicable way it gives us a foretaste of heaven."³⁷

In the Eucharist Jesus gives us a sure pledge of his presence in our souls; of his power, which supports the whole world; of his promises of salvation, which will help the human family to dwell forever in the house in heaven when time comes to an end. There we shall find God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit: the Blessed Trinity, the one and only God." The Eucharist contains as a seed, in an incipient manner, God's universal salvific plan: with the risen Christ there is also present the new creation, "a new heaven and a new earth", the new humanity. For in

Jesus' glorious transfiguration the eschatological renewal of the world has already begun. In the risen Lord – who is the eschaton, the One who represents the final realities – the eighth day is already present, the eternity that breaks through into the present, giving us a foretaste of what eternal life will be.³⁹

Thus we can say that every Eucharistic celebration is a Passover, the passage of the Church and of all creation towards its final goal. In every Eucharist “Jesus, with the gesture of a high priest, attracts all things to himself and places them, *divino afflante Spiritu*, with the breath of the Holy Spirit, in the presence of God the Father.”⁴⁰

Excerpts from an article published in the journal *Romana* n. 28 (January-June 1999), pp. 144-161. The complete article in English

should soon be available on the journal's website, www.romana.org.

Notes

1. Saint Josemaría Escrivá, Letter of February 2, 1945, no. 11. In the citations that follow, whenever the author is not named it is Saint Josemaría Escrivá.
2. Letter of March 11, 1940, no. 11.
3. The Forge, no. 69.
4. Alvaro del Portillo, “Sacerdotes para una nueva evangelización,” in *La formación de los sacerdotes en las circunstancias actuales* (11th International Theology Symposium of the University of Navarre), Pamplona 1990, p. 996.
5. Cf. F. Ocáriz, “La filiación divina, realidad central en la vida y en la enseñanza de Mons. Escrivá de Balaguer”, in *Mons. Josemaría*

Escrivá de Balaguer y el Opus Dei,
2nd ed., Pamplona 1985, pp. 175-214;
C. Fabro, “La tempra di un Padre
della Chiesa,” in C. Fabro, S. Garofalo
& M. A. Raschini, *Santi nel mondo.*
Studi sugli scritti del beato Josemaría
Escrivá, Milan 1992, pp. 106-110.

6. Christ is Passing By, nos. 84-85.

7. Ibid., no. 87.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., no. 86.

10. Conversations, no. 113.

11. Christ is Passing By, no. 86.

12. Ibid., no. 88

13. Ibid., no. 87

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., no. 94.

16. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 34
17. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 13.
18. “A Priest Forever,” *In Love with the Church*, no. 39.
19. Cesare Cavalleri, *Immersed in God: Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei as seen by his successor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo*, Princeton, 1996, pp. 110-111.
20. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 14. On the relation between this text and the preaching of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, see Alvaro del Portillo, “Sacerdotes para una nueva evangelización,” *op. cit.*, p. 995.
21. *The Way*, no. 533.
22. *Christ is Passing By*, no. 154.

23. The Forge, no. 826. The teaching that the Mass can be prolonged throughout the whole day has been formulated in various ways throughout history. On this point one can see a clear harmony between the teachings of Saint Josemaría and the doctrine of the French school of spirituality. For example, F. Mugnier, following such authorities as J. Bossuet, P. de Bérulle and C. de Condren, expresses himself as follows: “Faire ainsi de sa journée comme une Messe en action, continuant, s’il se peut, la sainte Messe quotidiennement entendue et pratiquée, ce devrait être la vie normale de tout chrétien” (F. Mugnier, *Roi, Prophète, Prêtre avec le Christ*, Paris 1937, p. 215). [“To make one’s day into a sort of Mass in action like that, continuing, if possible, the holy Mass, understood and practiced daily: that should be the normal life of every Christian.”]

24. Letter of February 2, 1945, no. 11.

25. Cavalleri, op. cit., p. 109.

26. “A Priest Forever”, op. cit., no. 45

27. Ibid., no. 49.

28. Ibid., no. 45.

29. Alvaro del Portillo, “Sacerdotes para una nueva evangelización,” op. cit., p. 996.

30. Cf. J. M. Casciaro, *It is Worth While. Three Years with the Founder of Opus Dei: 1939-1942*, Princeton, 2000, pp. 134-136. See also the testimonies that appear in the “Articoli del Postulatore”, nos. 379-384.

31. Cf. *Christ is Passing By*, nos. 85-91.

32. Ibid., no. 88. Years earlier Saint Josemaría had written: “Never get used to celebrating or assisting at the Holy Sacrifice. Do so, on the contrary,

with as much devotion as if it were the only Mass in your life, knowing that present there is Christ, God and Man, Head and Body, and therefore, together with Him, the whole of his Church” (Letter of March 28, 1955, no. 5).

33. Alvaro del Portillo, “Sacerdotes para una nueva evangelización”, op. cit., pp. 996-997.

34. Christ is Passing By, no. 156.

35. The Second Vatican Council affirms explicitly that the Eucharist is “the source and summit of all preaching of the Gospel”. Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 5; cf. Decree *Ad Gentes*, December 7, 1965, no. 36.

36. Christ is Passing By, no. 88.

37. Ibid., no. 152.

38. Ibid., no. 153

39. Cf. Saint Basil the Great, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 27, 66.

40. Christ is Passing By, no. 94.

pdf | document generated
automatically from [https://opusdei.org/
en/article/holy-mass-center-and-root-of-
christian-life/](https://opusdei.org/en/article/holy-mass-center-and-root-of-christian-life/) (03/25/2025)