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Meditations: June 26, Saint Josemaria

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on the feast of Saint Josemaria, founder of Opus Dei.

- The call to holiness in ordinary life
- Contemplatives in the middle of the world
- Apostolate of friendship

WE COMMEMORATE once again Saint Josemaría's birth in heaven, on that 26th of June 1975. He is now in our definitive homeland, glorifying God together with all the Church's saints, with all the people his

preaching and work as founder has helped to live close to God. On several occasions he told us that his great dream was to be hidden away in some corner in heaven, and to see all the people who, by God's will, he has been a father to in Opus Dei, and also those who have drawn close to the warmth of this family. At his beatification ceremony in Rome in 1992, Saint John Paul II said: "The timeliness and transcendence of his spiritual message, deeply rooted in the Gospel, are evident."^[1]

Undoubtedly, Saint Josemaría's spiritual message has many different aspects, but a light received from God guides all of them: reminding people of the universal call to holiness and apostolate in the middle of the world; that we are all called to find happiness by being close to God, in the midst of everything we do.

"There is just one life, made of flesh and spirit. And it is this life which

has to become, in both soul and body, holy and filled with God. We discover the invisible God in the most visible and material things. There is no other way. Either we learn to find our Lord in ordinary, everyday life, or else we shall never find Him.”^[2] —

Perhaps we face a day filled with problems to solve, while carrying out a demanding job. Or we may find that our daily routine begins to become monotonous, or we may undergo moments of special difficulty in our relationship with a specific person. Then we could be tempted to think that the best thing would be to get through these difficulties as quickly as possible so that, perhaps later, in a quiet moment, we can enjoy our relationship with God. Nevertheless, the words of Saint Paul come to our assistance: *all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God (Rom 8:14)*. Saint Josemaría’s message invites us to let ourselves be led by

God's Spirit in the midst of our ordinary occupations. God has not forgotten us in these moments. He awaits us there, to assist us with his Fatherly love. "You have the power to transform everything human into something divine, just as King Midas turned everything he touched into gold!" ^[3] —

It is easy to understand why Saint Josemaría had a special love for Christ's hidden life and for the life of the first Christians. In our Lord's hidden life, we see God himself leading a normal life, like our own in so many ways, experiencing hardships and joys. In the first Christians we see ordinary people, from all imaginable professions and backgrounds who, apparently without any external change, have allowed God's light to enter their lives, so that they may also bring light to those around them. And all this marvelous reality is based on the

Baptism we Christians have received:
Let the grace of your baptism bear fruit in a path of holiness. Let everything be open to God; turn to him in every situation. Do not be dismayed, for the power of the Holy Spirit enables you to do this, and holiness, in the end, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life (cf. Gal 5:22-23).^[4]

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“WHAT A STRANGE CAPACITY man has to forget even the most wonderful things, to become used to mystery! While being fully involved in their everyday work, among other men and women, their equals; busy, under stress, Christians have to be at the same time totally involved with God, for they are children of God. Divine filiation is a joyful truth, a consoling mystery. It fills all our spiritual life; it shows us how to

Speak to God, to know and love our Father in heaven. And it makes our interior struggle overflow with hope and gives us the trusting simplicity of little children. More than that: precisely because we are children of God, we can contemplate in love and wonder everything as coming from the hands of our Father, God the Creator. And so we become contemplatives in the middle of the world, loving the world.”^[5]

Saint John Paul II, in the beatification ceremony for Saint Josemaría, said that “the believer, by virtue of baptism, which incorporates us into Christ, is called to establish an uninterrupted and vital relationship with the Lord.”^[6] The founder of Opus Dei had the clear conviction that holiness in the middle of the world is only possible if it is built on the solid rock of a life of prayer as God’s child. A child’s conversation with their Father adapts to any

circumstance; it breathes an atmosphere of freedom and is filled with the trust of those who know they are always understood. The life of prayer to which Saint Josemaría invites us is so deep that, although we live in the middle of the world, he did not hesitate to compare it with the highest spiritual peaks reached by the mystics. Prayer, an “uninterrupted and vital relationship with God,” is the “foundation of the spiritual edifice.”^[7]

“Let our prayer be a prayer of sons and daughters and a continuous prayer. *Oro coram te, hodie, nocte et die (Neh 1:6). Haven't you heard me so often say we are contemplatives, at night and during the day, even when sleeping; that sleep forms part of prayer? Our Lord has said so: Oportet semper orare, et non deficere (Lk 18:1).* We must pray always, always. We must feel the need to go to God, after every success and every failure

in our interior life. When we walk through the streets and squares, we should be praying constantly. This is the spirit of the Work.”^[8] —

SAINT JOSEMARÍA was canonized on October 6, 2002, in Saint Peter’s Square. Pope Saint John Paul II said in his homily: “To elevate the world to God and transform it from within: this is the ideal the holy founder points out to you, dear brothers and sisters, who rejoice today to see him raised to the glory of the altars . . . Following in his footsteps, spread in society the awareness that we are all called to holiness whatever our race, class, society or age. In the first place, struggle to be saints yourselves, cultivating an evangelical style of humility and service, of abandonment to Providence and

constant listening to the voice of the Spirit.”^[9] —

On several occasions, Saint Josemaría referred to Opus Dei as an “intravenous injection in society’s bloodstream.”^[10] — He was referring to the fact that the people of Opus Dei, and those who take part in its formational activities, do not approach the world as something foreign to them, as somehow different or alien. Rather those who have been enlivened by the spirit of the Work are *of the world*. This perhaps brings to mind the Gospel image of the leaven in the dough (cf. *Mt 13:33*). Jesus himself stressed that Christians are like the others, ordinary people, not distinguishable by external signs, and that only thus can they leaven everything from inside. To do so there is no need for special strategies. Wherever a Christian, close to God, tries to be a good friend to those around them,

evangelization will necessarily take place, since they will naturally share what makes their heart happy. This is what Saint Josemaría called the “apostolate of friendship and confidence.”^[11] —

“In the first reading, we heard that God placed man in the world ‘to cultivate and care for it’ (*Gen 2:15*). And in the psalm that we sang (and that Saint Josemaría prayed every week) we are told that, through Christ, we have all the nations as our inheritance and that the whole earth is ours (cf. *Ps 2:8*). Sacred Scripture tells us clearly: this world is ours; it is our home, our task, our homeland. Therefore, knowing that we are children of God, we cannot feel like strangers in our own home; we cannot go through life as visitors in a strange place, or walk the streets with fear, as though treading on uncharted territory. The world is

ours because it belongs to our Father God.”^[12]

Saint Josemaría used to say that if anyone wanted to imitate him in something, it should be in love for our Lady. We can ask our Mother to help us lead a contemplative life in the middle of the world, to share with so many people the joy of living close to God.

^[1] Saint John Paul II, Homily, 17 May 1992.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 114.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 221.

^[4] Francis, *Gaudete et exultate*, no. 15.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 65.

^[6] Saint John Paul II, Homily, 17 May 1992.

[7] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 83.

[8] Saint Josemaría, Notes from his preaching, 24 December 1967; in *In Dialogue with the Lord*, Scepter, pp. 90-91.

[9] Saint John Paul II, Homily, 6 October 2002.

[10] Cf. Saint Josemaría, *Intimate Notes*, no. 47, June 1930.

[11] Saint Josemaría, *Letters* 37, no. 10.

[12] Fernando Ocariz, Homily, 26 June 2019.