

# **Nešto veliko što je Ljubav (IX): Mi smo apostoli!**

Apostolat za kršćanina nije samo „zadatak“ ili aktivnost kojoj posvećuje dio dana. To je potreba koja proizlazi iz srca koje je postalo „jedno tijelo, jedan duh u Kristu“.

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Apostolska avantura koju je Isus započeo u svijetu počela je u Kafarnaumu. Znamo da su barem četiri od dvanaestorice apostola bili

ribari iz toga grada. „Prvi apostoli, kada ih je naš Gospodin pozvao, bili su uz staru lađu i popravljali poderane mreže. Gospodin im je rekao da ga slijede i statim, odmah, relictis omnibus, ostavili su sve-sve! – i pošli za njim...“[1]

Isusove riječi kada je pozvao prve apostole označile su put koji će zauvijek promijeniti tijek povijesti: „Podjite za mnom i učinit ću vas ribarima ljudi“ (Mk 1,17). Ne ide u detalje. Oni će i dalje biti ribari, ali od sada će loviti drugu vrstu „riba“. I upoznat će druga „mora“, ali vještine koje su naučili u svom poslu bit će i dalje korisne. Doći će dani povoljnih vjetrova i obilnog ulova, ali i dani kada ništa ne ulove, ili kada uhvate samo nekoliko riba te se vrate na obalu s osjećajem da su ostali praznih ruku. Međutim, nije presudna količina ribe ili ono što ljudi smatraju uspjehom ili neuspjehom; važno je ono što oni

postati. Od samog početka, Isus želi da budu svjesni svog novog identiteta, jer poziva ih ne samo da nešto rade—nešto lijepo i izvanredno—nego da budu netko tko ima poslanje biti „ribarima ljudi“.

## „Sve za evanđelje“

Kad odgovaramo na Božji poziv naš identitet se preoblikuje. „To je novi pogled na život“, rekao je sveti Josemaria. Svi jest da nas Isus osobno poziva da sudjelujemo u njegovom poslanju budi u svakom čovjeku želju „posvetiti svoje najuzvišenije energije aktivnosti koja s vremenom postaje način života“. Tako, malo po malo, „poziv nas vodi, a da toga nismo ni svjesni, do toga da zauzmemo poziciju u životu koju marljivo i radosno čuvamo do trenutka smrti. I daje našem radu smisao poslanja.“[2] S vremenom to oblikuje naš način bivanja i

djelovanja, naš pogled na svijet i čini nas sretnima.

Mons. Ocáriz rekao je snažne riječi: „Mi se ne bavimo apostolatom, mi jesmo apostoli!“[3] Apostolsko poslanje ne zauzima određeno vrijeme ili mjesto u našem osobnom životu, nego zahvaća sve što činimo i dolazi u svaki kutak našeg života. Sv. Josemaria je u Djelu od samog početka na tome inzistirao: „Ne zaboravite, sinovi moji, da nismo duše koje su se spojile s drugim dušama da bismo učinili nešto dobro. To je mnogo... a opet malo. Mi smo apostoli koji izvršavamo Kristovu obvezujuću zapovijed.“[4]

„Jao meni ako evanđelja ne navješćujem!“ povikao je sveti Pavao (usp. 1 Kor 9:16-23). To je bilo uvjerenje koje je nosio duboko u duši. Ovaj ljubavni impuls bio je za njega i poziv i dužnost: „Jer što navješćujem evanđelje nije mi na

hvalu, ta dužnost mi je.“ Stoga je jedina nagrada koju traži „da propovijedajući pružam evanđelje besplatno“, jer sebe vidi kao „slugu svih, da ih što više steknem.“ Pavao nam otvara svoje srce: on je posljednji od apostola, nevrijedan i bez zasluga, ali ipak apostol. Stoga za njega nema okolnosti u kojoj ne može biti apostol: „Sve činim zbog evanđelja.“ To je njegovo „uvodno pismo“, tako želi biti viđen: „Pavao, sluga Isusa Krista, pozvan za apostola, odlučen za evanđelje Božje“ (Rim 1:1).

Na sličan način apostolat za kršćanina nije samo „zadatak“ ili aktivnost u kojoj će provesti određeni broj sati dnevno, niti nešto važno što treba obaviti. To je potreba koja proizlazi iz srca koje je postalo „jedno tijelo, jedan duh u Kristu“, [5] u jedinstvu s cijelom Crkvom. Biti apostol „nije i ne može biti počasni naslov. To konkretno i dramatično

uključuje čitav život osobe.“[6] Ponekad će nam biti potrebno ohrabrenje i savjeti drugih ljudi u našim naporima da objavimo Krista. No, budući da znamo da je naš poziv dar od Boga, trebali bismo ga moliti da apostolat iz našeg srca teče prirodno kao voda iz izvora (usp. Iv 4:14).

## **Sol, svjetlo i kvasac svijeta**

Naš Gospodin često je koristio prispodobe kako bi svojim učenicima objasnio ulogu koju će imati u svijetu. „Vi ste sol zemlje ... vi ste svjetlo svijeta“ (usp. Mt 5:13-14). Drugom prilikom je Isus govorio o kvascu—kako mala količina kvasca uskisne cijelo tijesto (usp. Mt 13:33). Jer takvi Isusovi apostoli moraju biti: sol koja donosi radost, svjetlo koje pomaže drugima da se usmjere, kvasac koji čini da cijela masa raste. Tako je sveti Josemaria zamišljao apostolat svojih kćeri i sinova: „Imate

poziv od Boga na konkretan put: da se smjestite na svim raskrižjima svijeta, s vašim srcem u Bogu. I da tamo budete kvasac, sol, svjetlo svijetu. Da obasjavate, da dajete okus, da budete kvasac, da podižete.“[7]

Vjernici Opusa Dei, kao i mnogi drugi obični kršćani, obavljaju svoj apostolat usred svijeta, s prirodnosću i diskrecijom. Iako to ponekad izazva nesporazume, oni pokušavaju ostvariti ove Isusove prispodobe u svom životu. Sol se ne vidi kada je dobro pomiješana s jelom; daje okus hrani koja bi inače bila bezukusna, iako je kvalitetna. Isto je tako i s kvascem; daje volumen kruhu, a da ga nitko ne primijeti. Svjetlo se, pak, “stavlja na svjetiljku da svjetli svima u kući”, i uvijek je “pred ljudima” (Mt 5:15-16). Međutim, ne traži pažnju za sebe, nego je usmjerava na ono što želi obasjati. Kršćani bi trebali uživati u društvu drugih, dijeleći

njihove snove i planove. "Mi, koji smo sol i svjetlo Kristovo, trebali bismo se osjećati nelagodno kad nismo okruženi ljudima." Ova otvorenost također znači druženje s onima koji ne misle kao mi, s mirnom željom da u njihovim srcima ostavimo "Božji pečat". [9] To ćemo činiti na način kako nam to Sveti Duh sugerira: ponekad kratkom molitvom za njih; ponekad prijateljskom riječju ili gestom...

Apostolska učinkovitost nečijeg života ne može se svesti na brojke. Mnogo plodova ostaje skriveno, a mi nikada nećemo znati za njih u ovom životu. No, sa svoje strane trebamo uvijek iznova njegovati želju živjeti usko povezani s našim Gospodinom. "Moramo prolaziti kroz život kao apostoli, sa svjetлом Božjim i soli Božjom. Bez straha, s prirodnosću, ali s tako snažnim unutarnjim životom i tako uskom povezanošću s našim Gospodinom da dajemo svjetlost i

izbjegavamo kvarenje i tamu.” [10] Sam Bog će oploditi naše napore, a mi nećemo gubiti vrijeme brinući zbog vlastitih mana ili vanjskih poteškoća: da nas ljudi ne razumiju, da su nas počeli kritizirati, da je put naporan, da je jezero preveliko, da ne možemo napredovati u ovoj oluji...

## Ljudi inicijative

Kada ponovno razmotrimo popis dvanaest apostola, shvatimo koliko su oni bili različiti jedni od drugih, s vrlo različitim osobnostima. Isto je tako s muškarcima i ženama koje je Crkva kanonizirala, a tako je i kad promotrimo živote mnogih običnih ljudi koji slijede našeg Gospodina s diskretnim, ali odlučnim predanjem. Svi su oni različiti, a u isto vrijeme, svi su oni apostoli, vjerni, zaljubljeni u našeg Gospodina.

U predanju Bogu ne gubimo svoje osobne darove i osobitosti; naprotiv,

jer “kada Gospodin razmišlja o svakome od vas i o tome što vam želi dati, on vas vidi kao svog bliskog prijatelja. I ako planira dati milost... sigurno će to biti dar koji će vam donijeti više radosti i uzbudjenja nego išta drugo na ovom svijetu. Ne zato što će taj dar biti rijedak ili izvanredan, nego zato što će savršeno odgovarati vama. Savršeno će odgovarati cijelom vašem životu.”[11] Stoga oni koji odluče slijediti našeg Gospodina shvaćaju, kako godine prolaze, da milost, praćena njihovim osobnim naporima, transformira čak i njihov karakter, olakšavajući im ljubav i služenje svim ljudima. To nije rezultat volje i težnje za idealom savršenstva. Naprotiv, to je rezultat Kristove ljubavi u životu apostola.

Nedugo nakon izbora za Prelata, mons. Javier Echevarría upitan je o osobnom životu uz Osnivača i njegovog prvog nasljednika: “Jeste li

mogli biti što jeste?” Njegov odgovor vrlo je dirljiv, odražava gledište nekoga tko se osvrće na svoj život i vidi sve što je Bog učinio u njemu. “Da, sigurno sam živio svoj vlastiti život. Nikada ne bih mogao ni sanjati o tako ispunjenom životu kao što sam ga imao. Da sam bio sam, moji horizonti i ciljevi bili bi mnogo uži... Ja, kao čovjek svog vremena, kao kršćanin i svećenik, imao sam vrlo bogat osobni život. I moje srce je otvoreno cijelom svijetu, zahvaljujući životu uz dva čovjeka [sv. Josemariju i blaženog Álvara] s tako velikim kršćanskim srcem.”[12]

Osoba koju Krist šalje i koja dopušta da On odredi smjer njenog života nikada ne smije zaboraviti da On očekuje odgovor koji je duboko slobodan. Prvenstveno slobodan od sebičnosti, ponosa i želje da se ističe. Ali također slobodan da stavi na raspolaganje sve svoje talente, inicijativu i kreativnost. Kao što je sv.

Josemaría rekao, “jedna od najjasnijih karakteristika duha Opusa Dei je njegova ljubav prema slobodi i prema potrebi da razumijemo druge.”[13]

No, ovaj duh slobode ne znači “djelovati u skladu s vlastitim hirovima i bez ikakvih ograničenja od strane zakona,”[14] kao da je sve što ne dolazi od nas nametanje kojeg se moramo oslobođiti. Naprotiv, znači djelovati u istom Duhu kao Isus: “Jer siđoh s neba ne da činim svoju volju, nego volju onoga koji me posla” (Iv 6,38). Ako bi se na apostolat gledalo kao na samo još jednu “aktivnost,” postojala bi opasnost da se osjećamo ograničeni uputama onih koji koordiniraju apostolske inicijative. Nasuprot tome, osoba koja shvati da je poslana od Krista zahvalna je na pomoći i poticaju koje Bog pruža kroz njegove mnoge instrumente. Živjeti s duhom slobode znači dopustiti da nas

oblikuje i vodi Duh Sveti, koji također koristi one koje je stavio uz nas.

Oslobodenje duha vodi nas da budemo „ljudi inicijative” kada se suočavamo s izazovima apostolskog poslanja: to znači da to ne činimo s pasivnim stavom, nego s uvjerenjem da je ovaj izazov ono što Bog od nas sada traži i što odgovara nama kao apostolima. Tako, kontinuirano, u svakodnevnim situacijama našeg života, možemo osjetiti „svježi povjetarac” Duha, koji nas potiče da se zaputimo „u dubinu” (Lk 5,4), kako bismo nastavili s njim čudesnu povijest Božje ljubavi prema nama.

Kad bi naša misija bila „provoditi apostolat”, mogli bismo pasti u napast staviti je sa strane kada se suočimo s opsežnim poslovnim projektom ili bolešću, ili uzeti apostolske „odmore”. No, „mi jesmo apostoli!” — to je naš život! Stoga ne bi imalo smisla izaći na ulicu i

ostaviti kod kuće našu želju za evangelizacijom. Dakako, apostolsko poslanje često će zahtijevati napor i hrabrost da prevladamo naše strahove. Ipak, ovaj unutarnji otpor ne bi nas smio uznemiriti, jer Duh Sveti potiče, u srcima onih koji su mu poslušni, autentičnu apostolsku spontanost i kreativnost, pri čemu sve u našem životu postaje prilika za apostolat.

Stječemo „svijest da smo na straži na ispostavi,” [15] u stalnom „bdijenju ljubavi, ostajući budni i spremni, radeći marljivo.” [16] To je „bdijenje ljubavi,” stoga ne smijemo postati tjeskobni ili nervozni. Imamo u rukama čudesnu misiju koja nas usrećuje i donosi sreću onima oko nas. Radimo u Gospodnjem vinogradu i sigurni smo da je poduhvat njegov. Ako ikada osjetimo manjak mira u svojoj duši ili prekomjernu napetost, to je trenutak da se približimo njemu i kažemo:

„Radim ovo za Tebe; pomozi mi da radim smirenno, sa sigurnošću da ćeš Ti učiniti sve.”

## **Božanska svjetlost koja daje toplinu**

U prispopobi o pozvanima na svadbenu svečanost, kada otac sazna da su neki od pozvanih gostiju dali izgovore zbog kojih ne dolaze, zapovijeda svom sluzi da dovede „prosjake, sakate, slijepi i hrome” (Lk 14,21). Svadbena dvorana počinje se puniti, no još uvijek ima mjesta za druge goste. Tada kaže svom sluzi: „Idi na puteve i među ograde i prisili neka uđu, da mi se napuni kuća” (Lk 14,23). „Natjeraj ljude da uđu,” compelle intrare: njegova želja išla je do tog ekstrema.

Zapovijed je kategorička jer je poziv na spasenje univerzalan. Sveti Josemaria je rekao: „To nije fizičko tjeranje, nego obilje svjetla, nauka. To je duhovni poticaj tvoje molitve i

rada, koji autentično svjedoče nauk. To su sve žrtve koje prinosiš. To je osmijeh koji dolazi na tvoje usne jer si dijete Božje: tvoje sinovstvo, koje te ispunjava mirnom srećom (iako će ponekad tvoj život imati i padove), koju drugi vide i na kojoj zavide. Dodaj tome svoje ljudsko držanje i šarm, i evo sadržaja compelle intrare.”[17] Dakle, nije riječ o prisiljavanju nego o uvijek novoj kombinaciji molitve i prijateljstva, svjedočanstva i velikodušne žrtve — radosti koja se dijeli, ljudskoj toplini koja slobodno privlači druge.

Bog djeluje „privlačenjem,”[18] dosežući duše kroz radost i privlačnost u životu kršćana. Stoga je apostolat ljubav koja se preljeva. Srce koje zna voljeti zna privući druge: „Privlačimo sve svojim srcem,” rekao je sveti Josemaria. „Zato tražim da svatko ima jako veliko srce: ako volimo duše, privući ćemo ih.”[19] Doista, ništa ne privlači

tako snažno kao autentična ljubav, osobito u vremenu kada mnogi ljudi nikada nisu iskusili toplinu Božje ljubavi. Pravo prijateljstvo je „način vršenja apostolata koji je sveti Josemaria našao u evanđeljima.”[20] Filip je privukao Bartolomeja; Andrija je doveo Petra; a ljudi koji su donijeli uzetoga Isusu u Kafarnaumu sigurno su bili njegovi dobri prijatelji.

„U kršćaninu, u djetetu Božjem, prijateljstvo i ljubav čine jednu cjelinu: božansku svjetlost koja daje toplinu.”[21] Imati prijatelje zahtijeva marljiv osobni kontakt; primjer i iskrenu odanost; spremnost pomoći drugima, uzajamno pomaganje; empatiju i slušanje; sposobnost preuzimanja tuđih potreba. Prijateljstvo nije sredstvo apostolata; naprotiv, apostolat je, u srži, prijateljstvo: velikodušna želja za dijeljenjem svojeg života s drugima. Naravno, želimo da se naši

prijatelji približe Bogu, ali spremni smo dopustiti da se to dogodi kad i kako Bog želi. Iako je sasvim prirodno da apostol želi vidjeti dobre rezultate i imati utjecaj na druge, nikada ne smijemo zaboraviti da su apostoli nastavili slijediti Isusa i kada su gotovo svi drugi otišli (usp. Iv 6,66-69). Rezultati će doći s vremenom (usp. Dj 2,37-41).

Jedan mladić je jednom upitao svetog Josemariju: „Oče, što možemo učiniti da mnogi ljudi ‘zvižde’?”[22] Sveti Josemaria je odmah odgovorio: „Puno molitve, odano prijateljstvo i poštovanje slobode.” Mladić nije bio zadovoljan, pa je rekao: „Ali ne znači li to da idemo presporo, oče?” „Ne, jer poziv je nad-na-ra-van,” odgovorio je, naglašavajući svaki slog. „Jedna sekunda bila je dovoljna da se Savao pretvori u Pavla. A onda, nakon tri dana molitve, on je postao žarki apostol Isusa Krista.”[23]

Bog je taj koji poziva, a Duh Sveti je taj koji pokreće srce osobe. Uloga apostola je pratiti svoje prijatelje molitvom i žrtvom, ne postajući nestrpljivim kada dobiju odgovor „ne” na svoje prijedloge, i bez ljutnje kada netko odbije pomoć. Pravi prijatelj naglašava jake strane druge osobe kako bi joj pomogao rasti, i nastoji ne kritizirati. On ili ona zna kada je najbolje šutjeti, a kada je potrebna drugačija „strategija”, ne zadržavajući se na negativnom, nego nastojeći izvući najbolje iz svake osobe.

„Bez da postanemo dosadni, i uvijek s osmijehom, možemo tiho davati pristojne prijedloge, kao što je to činio naš Gospodin. I uvijek ćemo u svom srcu održavati žar želje da mnogi ljudi bolje upoznaju Njega. „Ti i ja, djeca Božja, kada gledamo ljude, moramo gledati duše: ovo je duša, trebamo si reći, duša kojoj treba pomoći, duša koju treba razumjeti,

duša s kojom moramo živjeti, duša koju treba spasiti.”[24]

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[1] Sveti Josemaria, Kovačnica, br. 356.

[2] Sveti Josemaria, Pismo, 9. siječnja 1932., br. 9.

[3] Fernando Ocáriz, Pismo, 14. veljače 2017., br. 9.

[4] Uputstvo, 19. ožujka 1934., br. 27 (kurziv u originalu), citirano u Putu, Kritičko povjesno izdanje, bilješka uz br. 942.

[5] Rimski misal, Euharistijska molitva III.

[6] Benedikt XVI., Opća audijencija, 10. rujna 2008.

[7] Sveti Josemaria, Bilješke s meditacije, travanj 1955., u Djelima 1956, XI, str. 9.

[8] Sveti Josemaria, Sami s Bogom, br. 273.

[9] Cf. Javier Echevarria, Homilija, 5. rujna 2010. (Romana, br. 51, srpanj-prosinac 2010.)

[10] Sveti Josemaria, Kovačnica, br. 969.

[11] Papa Franjo, Apostolska pobudnica Christus vivit (25. ožujka 2019.), br. 288.

[12] Intervju Pilar Urbano s Don Javierom Echevarriom, Época, 20-IV-1994., citirano u Álvaru Sánchez Leóni, En la tierra como en el cielo, Madrid, Rialp 2019., str. 349-350.

[13] Sveti Josemaria, Pismo, 31. svibnja 1954., br. 22.

[14] Fernando Ocáriz, Pismo, 9. siječnja 2018., br. 5.

[15] Sveti Josemaria, Pismo, 31. svibnja 1954., br. 16.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Sveti Josemaria, Pismo, 24. listopada 1942., br. 9; usp. Prijatelji Božji, br. 37.

[18] Benedikt XVI., Homilija, 13. svibnja 2007.; Franjo, Homilija, 3. svibnja 2018.

[19] Sveti Josemaria, Bilješke s obiteljskog susreta, 10. svibnja 1967., u Kronici 1967., str. 605.

[20] Fernando Ocáriz, Pismo, 14. veljače 2017., br. 9.

[21] Sveti Josemaria, Kovačnica, br. 565.

[22] U Madridu 1930-ih, „zviždati” je bio žargon za „dobro funkcionirati”.

Sveti Josemaria je to koristio kao izraz za osobu koja je zatražila da je prime u Opus Dei. Ovaj izraz sada je postao obiteljski izraz u Djelu.

[23] Sveti Josemaria, Bilješke s obiteljskog susreta, 24. travnja 1967., u Kronici 1967., str. 506.

[24] Sveti Josemaria, Meditacija, 25. veljače 1963., u Kronici 1964., IX, str. 69.

he apostolic adventure inaugurated by Jesus in the world began in Capernaum. We know that at least four of the twelve Apostles were fishermen from that town. “The first Apostles, when our Lord called them, were by the side of an old boat busy mending the torn nets. Our Lord told them to follow him and *statim*, immediately, *relictis omnibus*, they left everything—everything! —and followed him...”[1]

Jesus' words when calling the first Apostles marked out a path that will forever change the course of history: "Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men" (*Mk 1:17*). He doesn't go into more detail. They will continue being fishermen, but from now on they will catch another type of "fish." And they will come to know different "seas," but the skills they have learned in their work will still be useful. Days of favorable winds and an abundant catch will come, but also slow days, without any fish, or with such a small catch that they will return to shore with the sensation of being empty-handed. But the decisive thing is not the amount of fish, or what men judge to be a success or failure; the important thing is what they are going to be. Right from the beginning, Jesus wants them to be aware of their new identity, since He is calling them not only *to do something*—a beautiful and extraordinary undertaking—but

*to be someone* who carries out a mission: being “fishers of men.”

## “All for the sake of the gospel”

In responding to God’s call, our identity is reconfigured. “It is a new outlook on life,” Saint Josemaria said. Realizing that Jesus Himself is inviting us to share in his mission enkindles in each person the desire “to dedicate their noblest energies to an activity that, over time, becomes a way of life.” Thus, little by little, “vocation leads us, without realizing it, to take a position in life that we preserve eagerly and joyfully right to the moment of death. And it gives our work a sense of mission.”<sup>[2]</sup> Over time, it shapes our way of being and acting and of looking at the world, and makes us happy.

As Monsignor Ocáriz said forcefully: “we do not ‘do apostolate,’ we are apostles!”<sup>[3]</sup> The apostolic mission doesn’t occupy a specific time or

place in our personal life; rather it affects everything we do and reaches every corner of our life. Saint Josemaria insisted right from the beginning to the people in the Work: “Do not forget, my sons, that we are not souls who have joined with other souls to do a good thing. That is a lot... and yet it is little. We are apostles *who fulfil an imperative command from Christ.*”[4]

“Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” Saint Paul exclaimed (cf. *1 Cor* 9:16-23). It was a conviction that he bore deep in his soul. This loving impulse was both an invitation and a duty for him: “if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me.” Hence the only reward he seeks is “that in my preaching I may make the gospel free of charge,” since he sees himself as “the servant of all, that I might gain the more.” Paul opens his heart to us: he is the last of the apostles,

unworthy and without merits, but he is an apostle. Hence there is no circumstance that is not apostolic for him: “I do it all for the sake of the gospel.” This is his “letter of introduction,” and how he wants to be seen: “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God” (*Rom 1:1*).

In a similar way, apostolate for a Christian is not simply a “task” or an activity that takes up certain hours every day, nor even something important that needs to be done. It is a need that stems from a heart that has become “one body, one spirit in Christ,”<sup>[5]</sup> in union with the whole Church. Being an apostle “is not and cannot be an honorary title. It involves concretely and even dramatically the entire life of the person concerned.”<sup>[6]</sup> At times we will need the encouragement and advice of other people in our efforts

to make Christ known. But since we know our calling is a gift from God, we should ask Him that the apostolate may flow from our heart as naturally as water from a fountain (cf. *Jn* 4:14).

## **Salt, light and leaven for the world**

Our Lord often made use of parables to explain to his disciples the role they were going to carry out in the world. “You are the salt of the earth ... you are the light of the world” (cf. *Mt* 5:13-14). On another occasion, Jesus spoke to them about leaven—about how a small amount leavens the whole batch (cf. *Mt* 13:33). For that is how Jesus’ apostles have to be: salt that brings joy, light that helps guide others, leaven that makes the whole mass rise. And that is how Saint Josemaria envisioned the apostolate of his daughters and sons: “You have a call from God to a specific path: to place yourselves at

all the crossroads of the world, with your heart placed in God. And to be there leaven, salt, light for the world. In order to illumine, to give savor, to leaven, to raise up.”[7]

The faithful of Opus Dei, like so many other ordinary Christians, carry out their apostolate in the middle of the world, with naturalness and discretion. Although this may sometimes have given rise to misunderstandings, what they are trying to do is simply to make these parables of our Lord a reality in their own lives. Salt isn’t seen, when mixed in well with the meal; it gives flavor to food that might otherwise be insipid, even though of good quality. The same is true of leaven; it gives bulk to the bread, without being noticed. The light, in turn, is “placed on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house,” and is always “before men” (*Mt 5:15-16*). It doesn’t call attention to itself, however, but

to what it seeks to illumine. Christians should enjoy being with others, sharing in their dreams and plans. “We, who are salt and light of Christ, ought to feel uncomfortable when we are not surrounded by people.”<sup>[8]</sup> This openness, moreover, means interacting with those who don’t think like we do, with the serene desire to leave in their hearts the “mark of God.”<sup>[9]</sup> We will do so in the way the Holy Spirit suggests to us: at times saying a short prayer for them; other times, with a friendly word or gesture...

The apostolic effectiveness of a person’s life can’t be reduced to numbers. Much of the fruit remains hidden, and we will never know about it in this life. But on our part we need to foster the desire, ever renewed, to live closely united to our Lord. “We have to go through life being apostles, with God’s light and God’s salt. Without fear, with

naturalness, but with so strong an interior life and such close union with our Lord that we give light, and avoid the corruption and darkness.”<sup>[10]</sup> God himself will make our efforts fruitful, and we won’t waste time worrying about our own shortcomings or external difficulties: that people don’t seem to understand us, that they have begun to criticize us, that the path is tiring, that the lake is too big, that I can’t make headway in this storm....

## **Self-starters**

When we consider once again the list of the twelve Apostles, we realize how different they were from each other, with quite distinctive personalities. The same is true when we think about the men and women who have been canonized by the Church. And also when we consider the lives of so many ordinary people who follow our Lord with a discreet

but determined self-giving. All of them different, and at the same time, all of them apostles, faithful, in love with our Lord.

In giving ourselves to God we don't lose our own personal gifts and qualities; on the contrary, since "when the Lord thinks of each of you and what he wants to give you, he sees you as his close friend. And if he plans to grant you a grace ... it will surely be a gift that will bring you more joy and excitement than anything else in this world. Not because that gift will be rare or extraordinary, but because it will perfectly fit you. It will be a perfect fit for your entire life."[11] Hence those who decide to follow our Lord realize, as the years go by, that grace, accompanied by their personal efforts, transforms even their character, making it easier for them to love and serve all men and women. This isn't the result of will-

power and striving for an ideal of perfection. Rather, it is the result of Christ's Love in an apostle's life.

Soon after his election as Prelate, Msgr. Javier Echevarría was asked if he had had a personal life alongside the Founder and his first successor: “Have you been able to be yourself?” His answer is quite moving, reflecting the viewpoint of someone who looks back at his life and sees all that God has done there. “Yes, I certainly have lived my own life. I would never have dreamed of such a fulfilled life as I have had. On my own, my horizons and goals would have been much narrower ... I, as a man of my time, as a Christian and priest, have had a very rich personal life. And my heart is open to the whole world, thanks to having lived alongside two men [Saint Josemaria and Blessed Alvaro] with such a big Christian heart.”[12]

A person who is sent by Christ and who lets Him set the course for their life should never forget that He expects a response that is *deeply free*. Free, in the first place, from selfishness, from pride and the desire to stand out. But free also to place at his service all our talents, initiative and creativity. As Saint Josemaria said, “one of the clearest characteristics of the spirit of Opus Dei is its love for freedom and for the need to understand others.”[13]

But this spirit of freedom doesn’t mean “acting in accord with one’s caprices and without restraint by any law,”[14] as though everything that doesn’t come from ourselves were an imposition we had to free ourselves from. Rather, it means acting with the same Spirit as Jesus: “I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me” (*Jn 6:38*). If apostolate were viewed as simply another “activity,”

there would be the risk of feeling restricted by the indications of those who coordinate the apostolic initiatives. In contrast, a person who realizes they have been sent by Christ is grateful for the help and impulse that God provides through his many instruments. Living with freedom of spirit means letting the Holy Spirit be the one who shapes and guides us, and who also makes use of those He has placed at our side.

Freedom of spirit leads to us to be “self-starters” when facing challenges in the apostolic mission: that is, doing so not with a passive attitude, but with the conviction that this challenge is what God is asking from us right now, and what corresponds to the apostle who we are. Thus continually, in the small circumstances of our daily life, we can sense the “fresh breeze” of the Spirit, who impels us to set out “into

the deep” (*Lk* 5:4), in order to continue with Him the marvelous history of God’s Love for us.

If our mission were to “do apostolate,” we could be tempted to set it aside when faced with an absorbing work project or an illness, or to take apostolic “vacations.” But “we are apostles!”—it is our life! Therefore it would make no sense to head out into the street and leave at home our eagerness to evangelize. Certainly, the apostolic mission will often require an effort, and courage to overcome our fears. Nevertheless, this interior resistance shouldn’t unsettle us, since the Holy Spirit fosters, in the hearts of those who are docile to Him, an authentic apostolic spontaneity and creativity, where everything in our life becomes an opportunity for apostolate.

We acquire the “awareness of being on guard duty at an outpost,”<sup>[15]</sup> in a

constant “vigil of love, remaining awake and alert, working diligently.”[16] It is a “vigil of love,” so we shouldn’t become anxious or nervous. We have in our hands a marvelous mission that makes us happy and brings happiness to those around us. We are working in the Lord’s vineyard and are certain that the undertaking is His. So if we ever sense a lack of peace in our soul, an excessive tension, then is the moment to draw close to Him and say: I am doing this for You; help me to work calmly, with the certainty that You will do everything.

## **Divine light that gives warmth**

In the parable of those invited to the wedding feast, when the father learns that some of the invited guests have sent excuses for not coming, he orders his servant to bring in “the poor and maimed and blind and lame” (*Lk 14:21*). The banquet hall

starts to fill up, but there is still room for more guests. So he tells his servant: “Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled” (*Lk* 14:23). “Compel people to come in,” *compelle intrare*: his eagerness went to this extreme.

The command is categorical because the call to salvation is universal. Saint Josemaria said: “It is not a physical push but an abundance of light, of doctrine. It is the spiritual stimulus of your prayer and work, which bear authentic witness to doctrine. It is all the sacrifices you offer. It is the smile that comes to your lips because you are children of God: your filiation, which imbues you with a serene happiness (although at times your life will also have setbacks), which the others see and envy. Add to this your human bearing and charm, and here we have the content of the *compelle*

*intrare.*”<sup>[17]</sup> Hence it is not a question of forcing anyone; rather it is an ever-new combination of prayer and friendship, witness and generous sacrifice—a joy that is shared, a human warmth that draws others freely.

God acts “by attraction,”<sup>[18]</sup> reaching souls through the joy and appeal in the life of Christians. Therefore apostolate is love that overflows. A heart that knows how to love knows how to draw others: “we attract everyone with our heart,” Saint Josemaria said. “Therefore I ask that everyone may have a very big heart: if we love souls, we will attract them.”<sup>[19]</sup> Indeed, nothing attracts as strongly as an authentic love, especially in a day and age when many people have never known the warmth of God’s Love. True friendship is “the mode of doing apostolate that Saint Josemaría found in the Gospel narratives.”<sup>[20]</sup> Philip

drew Bartholomew; Andrew brought Peter; and the men who brought the瘫痪人 to Jesus at Capernaum must have been good friends of his.

“In a Christian, in a child of God, friendship and charity form a single thing: divine light that gives warmth.”<sup>[21]</sup> Having friends requires diligent personal contact; example and sincere loyalty; the readiness to help others, to mutually assist one another; empathy and listening; the ability to take on others’ needs. Friendship is not an instrument for the apostolate; rather apostolate itself is, at heart, friendship: the generous desire to share one’s life with others. Of course, we want our friends to draw closer to God, but we are ready to let this happen when and how God wants. Although it’s only natural that an apostle wants to see good results and to be influential with others, we should never forget that the apostles

continued following Jesus even when almost everyone else went away (cf. *Jn* 6:66-69). The results would come with the passage of time (cf. *Acts* 2:37-41).

A young fellow once asked Saint Josemaria: “Father, what can we do to get many people to ‘whistle?’”[22] Saint Josemaria answered right away: “A lot of prayer, loyal friendship and respect for freedom.” The young fellow wasn’t satisfied, so he said: “But doesn’t that mean going too slowly, Father?” “No, because the vocation is su-per-na-tu-ral,” he replied, emphasizing each syllable. “A second was enough to turn Saul into Paul. Then, three days of prayer, and he became an ardent apostle of Jesus Christ.”[23]

It is God who calls and the Holy Spirit who moves a person’s heart. The apostle’s role is to accompany their friends with prayer and sacrifice, not

becoming impatient on receiving a “no” to their suggestions, nor getting angry when someone refuses to be helped. A true friend relies on the other person’s strong points to help them grow, and tries not to criticize. He or she knows when it is best to keep quiet, and when a different “tack” is needed, not dwelling on the negative but rather striving to draw out the best in each person.

Without becoming bothersome, and always with a smile, we can quietly offer polite suggestions, as our Lord did. And we will always keep enkindled in our heart the eager desire that many people may come to know Him better. “You and I, children of God, when we see people, we need to see souls: here is a soul, we should say to ourselves, a soul who has to be helped, a soul who needs to be understood, a soul we have to live alongside, a soul who has to be saved.”[24]

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[1] Saint Josemaria, *The Forge*, no. 356.

[2] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 9 January 1932, no. 9.

[3] Fernando Ocáriz, *Letter*, 14 February 2017, no. 9.

[4] *Instruction*, 19 March 1934, no. 27 (italics in the original), cited in *The Way, Critical Historical Edition*, note to no. 942.

[5] *Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer III.

[6] Benedict XVI, General Audience, 10 September 2008.

[7] Saint Josemaria, Notes from a meditation, April 1955, in *Obras* 1956, XI, p. 9.

[8] Saint Josemaria, *Alone with God*, no. 273.

[9] Cf. Javier Echevarria, Homily, 5 September 2010 (*Romana*, no. 51, July-December 2010).

[10] Saint Josemaria, *The Forge*, no. 969.

[11] Pope Francis, Apost. Exhort. *Christus vivit* (25 March 2019), no. 288.

[12] Interview by Pilar Urbano with Don Javier Echevarria, *Época*, 20-IV-1994, cited in Alvaro Sánchez León, *En la tierra como en el cielo*, Madrid, Rialp 2019, pp. 349-350.

[13] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 31 May 1954, no. 22.

[14] Fernando Ocáriz, *Letter*, 9 January 2018, no. 5.

[15] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 31 May 1954, no. 16.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 24 October 1942, no. 9; cf. *Friends of God*, no. 37.

[18] Benedict XVI, Homily, 13 May 2007; Francis, Homily, 3 May 2018.

[19] Saint Josemaria, Notes from a family get-together, 10 May 1967, in *Crónica* 1967, p. 605.

[20] Fernando Ocáriz, *Letter*, 14 February 2017, no. 9.

[21] Saint Josemaria, *The Forge*, no. 565.

[22] In Madrid back in the 1930s, “to whistle” was a slang term that meant “to function well.” Saint Josemaria used it to refer to the fact that someone had asked for admission to Opus Dei. This has now become a family expression in the Work.

[23] Saint Josemaria, Notes from a family get-together, 24 April 1967, in *Crónica* 1967, p. 506.

[24] Saint Josemaria, Meditation, 25 February 1963, in *Crónica* 1964, IX, p. 69.

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