

# Archbishop Lori's Homily: Feast of St. Josemaria Escrivá

*Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary,  
Baltimore*

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First, it is a pleasure to welcome you once again to this venerable basilica, our nation's first cathedral, to celebrate the Feast Day of St. Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer.

I thank you for your presence and with you, I give thanks to the Lord for raising up in the not-too-distant past a saint who speaks to us so powerfully about holiness and evangelization in our everyday lives – our lives at home, at work, and at leisure.

More than a corpus of inspiring writings that embody the truth, wisdom, and love of the Scriptures and the Church's teaching, St. Josemaria has also bequeathed *Opus Dei* to the whole Church, as a way of living and working in holiness, *en medio del mundo, por todo el mundo*, that is to say, living and working in holiness in the midst of the world for the sake of the sanctification of the world.

This evening's readings, proper to the Feast Day of St. Josemaria, help us to grasp more profoundly the vision of this great saint and in the overflowing graces of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to put into practice what he taught us about everyday spirituality and evangelization.

Let us briefly review what we have heard so that we may contemplate with joy the sacrifice in which we shall share.

## **Cultivating the Earth**

The reading from the Book of Genesis reminds us that we are God's creation and that we were meant to be, not private contractors, but God's co-workers in cultivating the world He had so graciously created.

In this account of creation, we are reminded that the world was a formless waste but was transformed into a beautiful garden by God's creating hand.

So too, it reminds us that out of a clump of nothingness, a handful of dust, God created our original parents, and with and through them, created all of humanity.

Scripture says, "Then [God] breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, and thus man became a living being," a being endowed with intellect, will, and an immortal soul, a being unlike any other on the earth, made in God's own image.

God bestowed upon man the rich and verdant garden he had created. It was to be his home, the place where he would experience God's providential care. It was to be the place where he would find nourishment, shelter and happiness. One might also say that the Garden was to be man's workplace, for God entrusted the garden to man to cultivate it and to take care of it.

From this we learn about the importance and dignity of work. From the beginning God intended man to be his co-worker in cultivating the earth. Work was not only a way of obtaining life's necessities but also a way of glorifying God by participating in his creative work, by developing the world in accord with his creative wisdom and gracious love.

Yet, Sacred Scripture elsewhere teaches us, early on man declared his independence from the Lord who made him and decided in his pride to work for his own glorification, not God's.

Ever since, man has been tempted to work for money, power and pleasure, to pile up riches, to impose himself on others, to enjoy himself at other's expense.

It is a temptation that we also experience, living as we do in a post-original sin world where sin often still holds sway. How often we are enticed to live and work for ourselves and not for God.

## **Divine Filiation**

Yet, in his mercy God has called us back from such self-destructive behavior, for we are made not ourselves but to share God's love, now and for all eternity. In his letter

to the Romans, St. Paul takes us to the heart of the Gospel and to the very heart of Opus Dei – if I may say so – namely, that while we were yet sinners, God has called us in Christ Jesus, his only begotten Son, to become his adopted sons and daughters, to be the children of God.

“Everyone,” he says, “moved by the Spirit is a son of God!”

Instead of being enslaved by our passions for self- aggrandizement, living in greed and living in fear, God sends his Spirit into our hearts, pouring into them the love of Jesus Christ, whereby the Father can see and love in us what he sees and loves in his only Son.

With freedom and joy, we can cry out, “Abba!” “Father!” “Our Father in heaven!”

Once it truly dawns upon our hearts that, in baptism, we have become God’s children, then everything changes in our lives. We no longer see our everyday lives as merely a way of making ends meet, nor is it any longer our ambition simply to enjoy success, as the world defines it.

Nor do we allow ourselves to exploit others or the world that is around us. Instead, we see our everyday lives as a path to sanctification, as a pathway to our becoming like Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

If we go about our daily work as true sons and daughters of God in Christ, then we will bring our daily work of heart and hand to the Father and ask him to bless it, to help us do it well and wisely and for the glory of his name.

United with his only-begotten Son, we will speak daily to the Father in prayer. We will bring to him our joys and sorrows and consolation and desolation. We will lay out before him our sins and failings asking for forgiveness. We will ask daily for the grace to become more like Jesus so as to reflect Jesus’ love onto the world all around us and will also pray to Mary as our Mother in the order of grace.

Thus, the invaluable importance of daily prayer, Holy Mass, the sacrament of penance, spiritual direction, mortification and Marian devotion. This is how we become like Christ so as to live and work like Christ!

## **Evangelization**

In the Gospel, we see the good fruit of living our everyday lives in holiness. The Apostles are going about their everyday occupation – they were fishermen.

And they experienced, as we often do, a sense of futility as we go through our routine seemingly without effect. Yet, as we pray, confess our sins, mortify ourselves, seek Mary's intercession, and receive Our Lord in Holy Communion, the Risen Lord stands beside us in whatever it is we have been called to do, and tells us to keep trying, "to put out our nets for a catch."

And without our really understanding how, the Lord transforms our meagre efforts in a powerful instrument of his truth and love, making of us, his disciples, "fishers of men".

If the hope that is ours in Christ Jesus is reflected in the thoughts we think, the words we choose and the deeds that we do, people we will be "hooked," as it were, by the attractiveness of the Gospel.

When we are ready to give an account of the hope that is ours, as St. Peter urges, and can articulate what we believe and why we believe it, we will be able to sway many to embrace the Lord and the Church.

And when we use our network of our personal influence not for ourselves but for the Lord and for that which is true and good, we will always draw many, more than we know, to open their hearts to Christ.

In these days there are many programs and strategies of evangelization afoot but nothing replaces personal holiness and the personal witness of our lives in attracting those around us to Christ and to the Church.

Let me conclude by giving St. Josemaria the last word; somewhere he wrote:

"When a Christian carries out with love the most insignificant everyday action, that action overflows with the transcendence of God. That is why I have told you so often, and hammered away at it, that the Christian vocation consists in making heroic verse out of prose each day. Heaven and earth seem to merge, my daughters and

sons, on the horizon. But where they really meet is in your hearts, when you sanctify your everyday lives.”

May heaven and earth unite in our hearts as together we celebrate the unending sacrifice of Christ, the source and summit of all holiness.

St. Josemaria, pray for us!