

Archbishop Lori's Homily: St. Josemaria Escriva

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Basilica of the Assumption

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The story of St. Josemaria's spiritual awakening is well known. He was already a good priest, well-trained and faithful as well as prayerful. Yet, the Lord had something more in mind for this beloved son of his. Thus it was that, while on a streetcar in the midst of Madrid's sound and fury Father Josemaria Escriva heard the voice of God the Father. Although he had been unable to pray in the quiet of his church only hours earlier, now in the noise of the city, surrounded by people on their way to work, he suddenly experienced the Fatherhood of God as never before. From his priestly heart prayer poured forth - simple yet profound - "Padre!" "Pater!" "Abba!" "Father!"

That story means a lot to me. Like yourselves, I am immersed in the busyness of the world. I often find myself in planes and trains, on noisy streets, working in an office with a hectic pace - and I know from experience -how important it is not to lose sight of God's filial love in the midst of it all. You might be interested to know that I prepared this very homily in a courthouse, sitting in a waiting room as a potential juror, waiting for my number to be called. The thought crossed my mind - not an eloquent thought but a true one nonetheless -"Your number has already been called! You have been chosen to be a child of God!" With that I found myself at peace in an atmosphere that was anything but peaceful.

How powerfully St. Paul proclaims this fundamental truth of the Gosepl to us: "Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back in fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, "Abba, Father!" (Rom. 8:14-15)

These are words we often hear but thanks to your association with Opus Dei, you know how foundational they are to your life, your work, your apostolate, your eternal

destiny. You know well that when God created the human race, he breathed his spirit into Adam's nostrils - not merely the breath of mortal life but indeed the breath of his very own life. For, he wanted Adam, Eve, indeed the whole of humanity, to be his beloved children, members of his family, brothers and sisters to one another.

How well we know the sequel. Man sinned, and we have sinned, and rejected God's call to friendship, indeed, his call to be his own sons and daughters. Throughout the liturgical year, we celebrate God's response to our rejection, namely, the great events in salvation history that gave us new life in Christ -not only the forgiveness of our sins - marvelous and undeserved as that is -but even more so, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit by whose gifts our status as God's adopted children is restored.

For it is the Spirit poured into our hearts in Baptism who cleanses us from sin and fashions in us the image of Christ, the Incarnate Son, who died and rose for us and for our salvation. Through the Spirit, we share in the unique Son-ship of Christ and for that reason we claim God as our Father and as members of his family, the Church, we experience his goodness and mercy -the fullness of life and love for which our human spirit longs.

Josemaria taught that all of us, in every walk of life, is called to holiness, that is to say, called to share the Father's life and love in Christ through the Spirit. He taught us that we didn't need to live in a monastery or a hermitage to do so; rather, we could be contemplatives in the midst of the world -in the joys and challenges of family life, in our professional life, in the lay apostolate. He taught us to live as God's children who are "in the world" but not "of the world".

That is why I want to commend all that Opus Dei teaches about daily discipline -a balanced, well-ordered way of life founded on daily Mass whenever possible, and on a regular regime of prayer throughout the day. By framing and punctuating your day with prayer, you are constantly reminded to live as children of God in the world.

This sense of order founded on prayer opens up your day, "multiplies your hours" - as St. Josemaria would sometimes say -such that you can concentrate on doing all things well -with that integrity, virtue, diligence, & goodness proper to God's sons & daughters. This includes your vocation as parents, your daily work, your charity, and

much more. Even your leisure becomes a time of renewal and interior renovation, not merely a temporary state of being comatose.

How easy it is for work to dominate everything - it's something I struggle with too. St. Josemaria used to warn against "professional-itis" and reminded us that on the seventh day God rested. As sons and daughters of God, we need to enter God's rest, that is to say, his loving presence in our midst.

A joyous sense of divine filiation coupled with a distinctively Christian way of life -these are foundational to the apostolate to which you've been called. You are sent into the world as messengers, bearers of the Good News that everyone is called to be a child of God in Christ. Very often when the subject of evangelization comes up, people speak in grandiose terms of plans, strategies, even gimmicks -but really, when the Lord taught the Apostles about evangelizing, he resorted to what was most familiar to them - fishing, their daily work.

Doing your daily work well, offering it to God in prayer, living in this passing world with your heart set on the world that is to come -being God's sons and daughters in the midst of this worldly mischance and confusion -these are the ways you become the Lord's fishermen -these are the things that open up opportunities to share the Gospel, to call the lapsed back to the faith, back to their status as God's children -and to piece barriers of unbelief, skepticism, and anger among those searching. St. Josemaria reminds us to response to these opportunities with charity: "If one proceeds with charity, anyone who might otherwise have been opposed to Christianity & deceived by error, may easily and honestly end up committing himself to it" (Furrow, № 939). Thus our catch of fish can also be abundant.

Allow me, then, to entrust you to the prayers of St. Josemaria, especially your families and your vocation to be spouses and parents who reflect the goodness of God and the spousal love of Christ for the Church. May the prayers of our patron prompt you to open your hearts even more widely to the Holy Spirit in whom we cry out, "Jesus is Lord" -in whom we cry out, "Abba, Father!" May God bless you and keep you always in his love!