

Prelate's Homily at the University of Navarra: October 23, 2010

Here on the campus of the University of Navarra, in a setting evoking that of 50 years ago, we find ourselves taking part in the most important event in the history of mankind: Christ's Sacrifice, made present in a sacramental way in the Eucharist. We are offering this Eucharist to the Most Blessed Trinity in thanksgiving, as we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Association of Friends and the transformation of the *Studium Generale* into a University. Let us pause in amazement before the Holy Mystery of the Mass, through which our Lord has wanted to draw close to us in the most intimate way, offering us the possibility of sharing in his own Life. He wants us to enjoy already now something of the intimacy that will be ours forever when we go to meet him in our definitive encounter.

It was in this same setting, back in 1967, that St. Josemaria, the Founder of Opus Dei and the first Grand Chancellor of this University, celebrated the Holy Eucharist. I will not stop to consider now the external details of that scene, which he commented on in his homily and which were such a help to all of us who were present then. But I will make use of the text of the homily that this holy priest read standing next to the altar.

The echo of his words still resounds in the hearts of many people. They have helped countless Christians to take more seriously their response to the Love of the Blessed Trinity, with the awareness that our existence must be centered, in a unity of life, on Christ's Sacrifice, in which God's infinite Love is poured out on all humanity.

St. Josemaria brought us to consider once again (having preached this since 1928) that our Christian life has to be directed, amid a great variety of circumstances, towards the Eucharist. He showed us that, if we want it (because God's grace is never lacking), the Eucharistic mystery will guide and nourish the true path of our daily journey.

As he said at that time, with gratitude and conviction: "the sacramental sacrifice of the Body and Blood of our Lord . . . binds together all the mysteries of Christianity."¹ In other words, he insisted that not only have we received these gifts, but that through them we enter fully into the mysteries of God. And thus our entire life is enriched, for we find ourselves entering into the fullness of a God who gives himself to us, both in extraordinary and ordinary events, in the course of our daily life.

We should be filled with joy and a sense of responsibility because it is entirely certain that *Deus nobiscum*, God is with each one of us. And he is *Deus ad salvandum*, a God who saves us. In this we can discover the richness of God's Love for his creatures. St. Josemaria insisted that the possibility of raising to the supernatural order even the most material things should be clear to us, since God has wanted to use bread and wine, fruit of the earth and of the work of human hands, as the material to be transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, perfect God and perfect Man, who took on our nature with all its characteristics, except sin, in order to carry out our salvation.

The first Grand Chancellor of the University encouraged us (as he does now from heaven) to discover the *quid divinum* hidden in all the circumstances and concerns of our life, even those that seem most material. He told us that this will come about as a consequence of a deep Eucharistic life, an

¹ St. Josemaria, Homily: *Passionately Loving the World*, homily given on October 8, 1967, text in *Conversations with Josemaria Escriva*, Scepter Publishers, 2002, no. 113. Hereafter cited as: *Conversations*.

essentially Eucharistic life, knowing that God-made-Man himself chose to walk along our human paths. Thus we will become more fully men, more fully women, to the extent that we want and allow the Body and Blood of Christ to nourish and energize us, in such a way that our life becomes a continuation of his Life. We can always attain this if we look more steadily at him, if we deal more with him, if we love him more!

Let us never forget, as St. Josemaria reminded us, that we have to focus “seriously on the most material and immediate reality, which is where our Lord is,”² that is, our daily life. That holy priest, throughout his earthly journey, always wanted to see with the eyes of Christ: *Domine, ut videam*; and to act in Christ and for Christ: *Domine, ut sit*. And he urged us to give that divine transcendence to our daily life. And precisely because of this, he never tired of repeating his advice that we who know we are God’s children need to “make our day into a Mass.” For this great Mystery, the same Holy Sacrifice of Calvary, has definitively linked heaven and earth. Yes, my beloved brothers and sisters, when we see with Christ’s eyes, when we act in Christ and for Christ, when we live the Mass, we offer ourselves with him to God the Father, through the Holy Spirit, “uniting ourselves to his intentions in the name of all creatures.”³

It is very moving to realize that, in spite of our littleness, in spite of our personal weaknesses, our existence takes on a new and much richer dimension if we live our lives with Christ. Through the Eucharist, God makes us the Church, the Body of the Lord, and he places us in his boat so that we might sail confidently through all the waters of society, proclaiming that God calls all men and women to holiness. The path that each one travels in this world of ours (which God loves passionately, even to the point of giving up his Son for us) is linked to the Eucharist, since the force that flows from Jesus’ Body and Blood enables us to make all the pathways of the earth divine. As St. Josemaria said: “When a Christian carries out with love the most insignificant everyday action, that action overflows with the transcendence of God.”⁴ If we make up our minds to travel along this path, at times a narrow and difficult one, we will know how to embrace joyfully (perhaps swallowing the tears) the burden of suffering when illness comes, the consequences of poverty, and misunderstanding even on the part of good people, because we will discover, not a cold fate, but the lovable hand of our Father in heaven, who blesses us with the loving demands of the Cross.

Our Lord transmits to us the infinite fruitfulness of the Holy Cross in a special way in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, “the most sacred and transcendent act which man, with the grace of God, can carry out in this life.”⁵ The sanctification of each moment—our response to God’s trust in giving us five talents, or two talents—is always a service to the Kingdom of Christ, of which the Church—governed by the Pope and the Bishops in communion with him—is “the seed and the beginning,”⁶ and of which we form part. Therefore this priest, St. Josemaria, this good and faithful servant, repeated with great insistence and forcefulness: all of us, each one of us is the Church, and we have to build up the Church, realizing that our work, our family life, our rest, everything, is a “means and an occasion for a continuous meeting with Jesus Christ.”⁷

In this holy battle to carry out God’s will, St. Josemaria, from the time when he was very young, strove to have frequent recourse to the Paraclete, and also advised others to do so. The Holy Spirit has

² St. Josemaria, *Conversations*, no. 116.

³ Formula for the Consecration to the Merciful Love.

⁴ St. Josemaria, *Conversations*, no. 116.

⁵ St. Josemaria, *Conversations*, no. 113.

⁶ Vatican II, Dog. Const. *Lumen gentium*, no. 5.

⁷ St. Josemaria, *Conversations*, no. 114.

a close connection with the Cross, and therefore with the Eucharist. St. Josemaria expressed this in simple but profound words, saying that “the Holy Spirit comes as the result of the Cross,”⁸ and that, after receiving Holy Communion, “when the species disappear, the Holy Spirit remains.” This intimate presence of God in our soul has to spur us to be more serious about sanctifying each of our days.

Certainly, this is not an easy task, and it requires constant effort. But with St. Josemaria I say to each one: counting on grace, you can! For he always carried deep in his heart this marvelous reality: every man and woman has been created in the image and likeness of God and called to share in divine intimacy as a child of God the Father, in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Thus God entrusts us with the task of cooperating with him in the salvation of the world. St. Josemaria reached this conclusion also because—in his deep humility—he knew that he had to do Opus Dei and yet he had no human means, only his youthful years and, above all, God’s grace. Although well convinced of his own littleness, he constantly reminded us that we are all capable of renewing this world of ours and converting all mankind, if we carry out our duties faithfully.

I am very happy to refer here to another point that St. Josemaria preached constantly, with courage and clarity, so that no one would feel left out. Breaking with the way of thinking common at the time when he began the Work, he proclaimed without any hesitation that marriage is a vocation. In the homily that we are recalling today he insisted that the “love which leads to marriage and family, can also be a marvelous divine way, a vocation, a path for a complete dedication to our God.”⁹ And as he pointed out on another occasion, it is also clear that to sanctify married life, human love is not sufficient; one needs to practice the theological virtues.

Now I want to address myself in particular to the Friends of the University of Navarre. I cite some words spoken on this campus at the gathering we are commemorating: “You are part of a body of people who know it is committed to the progress of the broader society to which it belongs. Your sincere encouragement, your prayers, sacrifices and contributions are not offered on the basis of Catholic confessionism. Your cooperation is a clear testimony of a well-formed social conscience, which is concerned with the temporal common good. You are witnesses to the fact that a university can be born of the energies of the people and be sustained by the people.”¹⁰

I thank you with my whole heart for helping the University of Navarra and I bless your efforts so that they might be more effective every day. At the same time, I remind you that your activities, each day, must be a quest for sanctity, also for the persons you are dealing with. In order to show you the great scope of your work and to confirm you in your commitment, I will mention some words that I frequently heard from the lips of St. Josemaria right from the time I got to know him in 1948, words that he also pronounced here: “the Christian vocation consists in making heroic verse out of the prose of each day. Heaven and earth seem to merge, my children, on the horizon. But where they really meet is in our hearts, when you sanctify your everyday lives.”¹¹

Hence a Christian, a man or woman of Christ, of the Eucharist, cannot be satisfied with simply working well, with human rectitude. Millions of people who neither know nor deal with God already do this. The men and women who know they have been united to Christ by Baptism and who are nourished by the Eucharist, strive to convert their professional and family life, their daily work, into an instrument of sanctification and of loving service to both heaven and earth. The Opening Prayer we

⁸ St. Josemaria *The Forge*, no. 759.

⁹ St. Josemaria, *Conversations*, no. 121.

¹⁰ St. Josemaria, *Conversations*, no. 120.

¹¹ St. Josemaria, *Conversations*, no. 116.

have just prayed, addressed to God the Father, emphasizes this for us, seeking the intercession and example of St. Josemaria: “so that carrying out our daily work we might be formed in the likeness of your Son Jesus Christ and serve the work of Redemption with an ardent love.”

A few moments ago, when the Gospel was read, we listened to the account of the first miraculous catch of fish. This is a scene the Founder of Opus Dei often meditated on. He discovered there how the Master wants to count on the men and women of all times who desire to follow him.

As we have just heard, St. Luke pauses on an apparently marginal detail. The fishermen, who will later be disciples, are washing and mending their nets after a night of working in vain. The nets symbolize our professional work, our daily tasks, by which we serve and build up society. But by loyally obeying Christ, listening to him as we carry out our tasks, the nets are converted into an instrument to bring souls to God, to the sacraments.

Let us sanctify our work, finishing it well, knowing that from public life, from a professorship, from manual work, from the home, we can reach very far, carrying out Christ’s command: *duc in altum!* He asks us to bring the net of salvation to every corner of the earth. Like the first Christians, we can’t be put off by the environment around us, by the secularism and practical materialism, even though it may be a rarified, aggressive and even hostile atmosphere for us. Full of optimism—for we possess Christ’s Truth, the only Truth—let us meditate on St. Josemaria’s words: “All the seas of this world are ours, and the places where it is harder to fish are the places where it is all the more necessary.”¹²

As we find Christ along our path each day, as we stay close to him in the midst of the concerns of our fellow men and women, let us truly exercise our faith. Faith in God’s love for us. Faith in his Providence. Faith in the power of his message. Faith in his promise to remain with us until the end of time. Faith finally, as the first Grand Chancellor of this University put it, “to show the world that all this is not just ceremonies and words, but a divine reality, by presenting to mankind the testimony of an ordinary life which is made holy.”¹³

Before concluding, I want to wholeheartedly thank all the Authorities who are here today. I also want to thank the beloved people of Navarre and their representatives. I am deeply aware of the material and moral support that they have given to the University since the foundation of the *Studium Generale* in 1952, and since it was raised by the Holy See to the status of a University, now 50 years ago. I am also aware of how this noble region, so rich in history and in traditions of service to the Church and to civil society, gratefully acknowledges how much this University has done and is doing for Navarre. This was made manifest several years ago when this Community granted its Golden Medal to the University. Thanks to the formation that this Alma Mater offers students from so many countries and its international prestige in such important fields as medicine, the humanities, law, business, industrial engineering and the ecclesiastical faculties (to cite only some of its areas of study), the name of Navarre is ever better known and esteemed in Spain and abroad, in countries all over the world.

I feel the need, out of justice and sincere affection, to thank the Spanish Episcopal Conference for the support they have offered this university from the first moment. My deepest appreciation goes out to the Most Reverend Archbishop of Pamplona, Don Francisco Perez Gonzalez, and to his immediate predecessors, with especially warm memories of Don Enrique Delgado y Gomez.

¹² St. Josemaria, *The Forge*, no. 979.

¹³ St. Josemaria, *Conversations*, no. 123.

I also want to recall the love St. Josemaria showed when he commissioned the statue of Our Lady of Fair Love to be sculpted, in order to give it to the University of Navarra after it had been blessed by the Servant of God, His Holiness Pope Paul VI. Today I want to leave in the hands of the Mother of Jesus and our Mother, your work, your intentions, your joys and your sorrows. From the moment when he had the idea of preparing this statue, the first Grand Chancellor frequently expressed the desire that, guided by the hands of Holy Mary, who had cared for God-made-Man, those who work and study in this University and the inhabitants of this whole regional Community would be led to a noble and strong love. He asked Holy Mary to foster in us a fair love, that is, a clean, generous, noble life that would enable us to love the Most Blessed Trinity, and to love and serve all souls, in marriage or in apostolic celibacy, each on the path that God has prepared for us. Amen.