

PART SEVEN | INTERIOR LIFE: THE HEART OF EVANGELIZATION

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. My Lord and my God, I firmly believe that you are here, that you see me, that you hear me. I adore you with profound reverence. I ask your pardon for my sins and the grace to make this time of prayer fruitful. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.

This meditation concludes our conversation with Our Lord concerning that walk to Emmaus and the eventual return from Emmaus back to Jerusalem - I would say the high point of this encounter with the Resurrected Christ and the high point of our union with Christ. It was a long walk, even the length of time serves as a symbol of the amount of prayer and interior life we need to generate with the help of the Holy Spirit in order to duplicate what Jesus did, he profoundly affected the hearts of his two companions. This serves as a template of evangelization. Evangelization is the ultimate fruit of the interior life.

St. Josemaria teaches that the apostolate, the work of evangelization, is an overflow of one's life from within, it's love of God that overflows out of our hearts into the hearts of others. It's that abundance of light that we radiate, it's Our Lord's radiation of light, and we radiate the Lord's light by being united to the Light, the ultimate Light of the World, which is Jesus Christ, entering through those ports of entry of prayer, sacrifice, and charity.

And we read here, "And their eyes were opened and they recognized him and he vanished out of their sight." This commentary of the two disciples is key to the new evangelization or any evangelization, but right now we're dealing with the new one. These disciples tell us their experience of conversing with the now recognized Resurrected Jesus, "And their eyes were opened, they recognized him, and he vanished out of their sight. They said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road while he opened to us the Scriptures?'"

So, it's interesting that the commentary of these two disciples is the mode, the manner by which Jesus explained the Scriptures. We notice they didn't comment on the brilliant insights - they were there, of course. They don't comment on the exhortation spinning off his explanation of Scripture. Rather, they describe the inner experience they have by being exposed to this mysterious companion who now they recognize as the Resurrected Christ. What do we draw from that? We

always meditate on Scripture from the perspective that the Lord talks to me personally, that his words are eternal. St. Josemaria says it very succinctly. If I'm not mistaken, that was shared in my first meditation: "Was not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way?" If you are an apostle these words of the disciples of Emmaus should rise spontaneously to the lips of your professional companions when they meet you along the ways of their lives."

So, this strikes at the heart of the new evangelization, that we give people an experience of Christ, that they also sense their hearts being uplifted, they have that sense that they are loved, they're affirmed, that they sense the kindness and affection of Christ, they become recipients of the joy and peace of Christ - a very necessary way of evangelizing, in light of this colossal absence of doctrinal knowledge of the faith, amid so much rampant moral relativism where natural law is substituted by one's subjective inclinations and we make up now the moral law as we go along. How do we draw someone to Christ? The Lord does not say that we need to remind them of the true facts concerning the gospel, concerning Catholic teaching - that has its role, obviously, but if they're not willing to listen or if they are completely indifferent to the gospel message, the only way to draw someone to Christ is by dealing with an individual in such a way that he or she cries out, at least interiorly, wasn't my heart burning within it- within me as he or she dealt with me or explained to me the faith?

We read on: "And as they rose that same hour and return to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven gathered together and those were with them who said, 'The Lord has risen indeed and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told what had happened on the road, how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread." This is a paradigm of our personal apostolate, our work of evangelization. But we need to contemplate closely the whole event. They only return to Jerusalem once they reach a threshold of friendship with the mysterious companion that happens to be Christ himself. And, it's a long walk - I can't estimate how long it took, but in modern measurements, seven miles in very primitive conditions. That very hour, didn't go to bed, probably had a bite to eat, maybe relaxed for a few minutes, and headed back to Jerusalem for another long walk.

And what's going on here, we notice the gospel doesn't say, well then they spent the night in Emmaus - crashed, had a long night sleep given the long walk and they're fatigue, their emotional fatigue, physical fatigue, and eventually, return to Jerusalem. No, they couldn't contain themselves. They immediately walk back. Who knows, the whole up and back trajectory could have taken close to twenty-four hours, who knows, but it took a long time and they felt compelled to get back to Jerusalem as soon as possible and be one of the first of two millennia of evangelizers, could be one of the first of evangelizers that mark the next couple of millennia.

True evangelization does not consist in charm. If you have it, use it, but it's very secondary. True evangelization doesn't necessarily consist in an ability to win theological debates. True evangelization doesn't make us good moralizers or consistent moralizing. True evangelization does not consist in defending good moral causes. These are all important elements of evangelization, but what's important in this work of evangelization is what Pope Francis says, that we attract, we encounter, we accompany; that we attract by how? That my product, what I have, is of great value; what I have is the secret of fulfillment, of hope, of joy, of true happiness; that what I have empowers me to love in a way above average way; that when I deal with someone I habitually prompt them to say, wasn't my heart burning within me? Perhaps without those exact words, but that our love is noticeable.

The general consensus of people who knew St. Josemaria during his lifetime was this general consensus of his big heart, how much he loved those people in touch with Opus Dei and in Opus Dei. Every individual who ran into him felt that deep affection, that huge love he had. And we have to have very much in mind, especially in our pragmatic American society where we are perhaps a culture of "can do" people, that given our- our history that we pick ourselves up by the bootstraps, that we take individual responsibility for achievement and success. When it comes to evangelization, when it comes to attracting someone to the Lord, it rests on long walks with the Lord. That long walk means that my prayer life cannot be a cursory prayer life or a token formal prayer at the beginning or the end of the day or before a meal, but it should consist in true conversation, true quiet time in silence with him because this true attraction to Christ, as the Holy Father talks about, is the immediate fruit of my union with Christ.

In a, if you will, in a very poignant way, in a public way, I would say an extraordinary way, I was so fortunate to have lived in Rome knowing Bl. Alvaro, being able to exchange some words with St. John Paul on two occasions, and being present at some of the gatherings with him, that ability to move many, many hearts and to draw at times millions of people to hear him, to see him, that ability to move people. And thinking about his trips to Mexico where the- some of the indigenous population would wait on the side of the road for a few days just to see the pope-mobile go by and get blessed. And the correlation between being able to touch so many lives and move so many people was his protracted time in front of the tabernacle, many times prostrate all night in front of the tabernacle - spending long hours in prayer - that is not the moral of the story. The moral of the story is that we need to walk with Our Lord, which means kneeling or sitting before the Blessed Sacrament for an extended amount of time. "They recognized him at the breaking of the bread." The most important dimension of our apostolate is to be centered on the Eucharist.

I recall in Rome where there was a gathering with young priests of the Prelature of Opus Dei who were involved with pastoral work with younger people. We were all young at that time, and Bl.

Alvaro wanted to address those priests or have a conversation with them, a get together. And I was asked to ask the first question. Since I had a knack for butchering Spanish and Italian as well, just to lighten things up, I was asked to pose the first question - ask him something pretty concrete and very American, "How can we get more results out of our pastoral work with young people?" And it's now become famous. He didn't give any methodology. He didn't say, well, launch a phone-a-thon or a mass mailing or get it on Facebook and send it to scores of people. But, he said, "center yourself around the Eucharist." It was such- it was an answer that I did not expect that my first reaction was that Bl. Alvaro did not understand my question. I butchered the question so much that he didn't understand it. He saw me frown and said "I understood the question. You want to imitate St. Josemaria. Be centered on the Mass, say Mass better, with more love." And he said that there's a correlation between that and evangelization. It turned out he- he always would begin by saying, let's see where the Holy Spirit leads us, more or less. And he didn't talk about methodology at all. In fact, this gathering consisted in discussion and encouragement and insights and a bit of exhortation as well on being centered on the Eucharist.

And St. John Paul, the one who came up with the term of new evangelization, he said a couple of things concerning the *how*. In many instances he said, "We must contemplate the face of Jesus so that we can transmit the face of Jesus. That evangelization, just like in those early times, must begin always with conveying an experience of Jesus Christ. Jesus says, 'A new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I have loved you and in that way they will know you are my disciples, by the love you have for one another.'" It's not any old love, it's his love, and we could only get that through the interior life, a real interior life. Not a perfunctory interior life, but an interior life that is driven by a desire to be centered on Christ, to get to know him; an interior life that is based on true conversations with him, or at least the effort based on Eucharistic adoration, adoration of the Lord.

St. John Paul will say there's two pillars in order to contemplate the face of Christ: one is the Holy Eucharist and the other is the Rosary. "Was not our hearts burning within us?" This transformation, this experience of dealing with Christ energized them, transformed them, so much so that their spirit drove their tired bodies back to the center of Christianity, where Christianity was launched, where the Redemption culminated, where Pentecost would take place, where the first followers of Our Lord were present. And they go back to that city of God, Jerusalem, that city of the Redemption, that city of the infamous Cross that drove the Apostles away - that same Cross and Resurrection now bring them- brings them back with renewed energy.

Within the Church, many good people suffer what is termed as *burnout*. Burnout has a very specific connotation, at least within the Church, in terms of pastoral work or apostolate or evangelization. Burnout means bit of weariness or disillusionment, discouragement, that discouragement that

marked the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. They didn't have those sentiments leaving Emmaus and going back to Jerusalem. And, barring sickness or lack of rest or sleep, burnout at times with many instances is a consequence of spiritual malnutrition, that we are not eating enough, we're not nourished enough with the Word of God which we call mental prayer. If you want more classical term, *lectio divina*, contemplation, meditation on his Word. And that main entree that is nothing less than the Bread of God or, to quote Bl. Alvaro - and you need the Spanish, it's a play on words - I heard him say it. He said that "you should fulfill these standard acts of piety." And in Spanish it's- the word is *cumplimiento*, which means *fulfillment*. And he said, "Be on your guard for *cumplo y miento*." Which- it's a play on words you can't translate into English, but *cumplo* means *I fulfill*, *y* means *and*, *miento* means *I lie*. That I fulfill and I lie. And what he means by- meant by that is that my acts of piety, my attendance at Mass or celebration of Mass, my appearance before the tabernacle is perfunctory. And it's not done out of love, it's done out of, you know, habit or duty, where my heart is not there, my heart could be elsewhere, and so, we don't want that to happen.

St. Josemaria says, from his own personal experience, he says the following in *The Way*, underneath the heading of *Apostolate*. He says: "It is necessary that you be a man or woman of God, a man or woman of interior life, a man or woman of prayer and of sacrifice. Your apostolate must be the overflow of your life within." I'm not the light of the world, Jesus is. But nevertheless, Jesus caused me to be light of the world which means I need to participate in his light, walk with him as he, to quote him: "I am the Light of the World, and he who walks with me will have the light of life." Walking with him is spending time with him.

And, we need to have this kind of faith, you know, out there in the world we have all these *isms*, all these attacks on objective morality, the moral teachings of the Church, but objective morality is not just reserved for the Church, but the Church obviously embraces that; obstacles of indifference; obstacles of religious ignorance; obstacles of hedonism and sexual perversity; obstacles of attacks on human dignity and human life, on gender identity, on and on and on. Those are real obstacles and they have to be dealt with prudently but firmly as well. But the real obstacle, and I say this in a positive sense because we need to have a lot of hope, that the real obstacle is my lack of union with Christ, because if I'm united to Christ, victory is assured. That is, the victory that has overcome the world. My faith- but faith in its truest meaning means to be completely centered on Christ with the attitude of putting all his words into practice, walking with him - that's the fullness of faith; that's the lingo the early Christians heard. It's a question basically of interior life. The real obstacle is not all these *isms* that militate against the gospel or fly in the face of the gospel. The real obstacle is such a dearth of sanctity.

Well, Lord, on my own I can't- you make it abundantly clear that without you I could do nothing but with you, in the words of St. Paul, "I could do all things in him who strengthens me." And as we

begin to wind down our meditation, it bears reflecting on these powerful words of St. Josemaria in his meditation- homily in *Christ is Passing By*, on occasion of the Feast of the Ascension, let me read and we'll finish: "Christ has taught us in a definitive way how to make this love for God real. Apostolate is love for God that overflows and communicates itself to others. The interior life implies a growth in union with Christ in the bread and in the Word and apostolate is the precise and necessary outward manifestation of the interior life. When one tastes the love of God, one feels burdened with the weight of souls. There is no way to separate interior life from apostolate just as there's no way to separate Christ the God-man from his role as Redeemer."

Lord, integrate those sentiments into my mind and heart, and I ask humbly for the intercession of St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother. I thank you, my God, for the good resolutions, affections, and inspirations you have communicated to me in this meditation. I ask your help in putting them into effect. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.



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