

CALLED TO CREATE

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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.

“As Jesus passed by,” says the Gospel of today’s Mass, “he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the customs post. And he said to him, ‘Follow me.’ And he got up immediately and followed him.”

And not only followed you, my Lord, but he celebrated that event with a party - a very human reaction. While he was at a table in his house - and the Gospel doesn’t say it, but we can say it with a big smile, having dinner with Jesus Christ, with you, my Lord, with the second person of the Blessed Trinity, coming to this world, seeing God face-to-face, for dinner. When he was there at table, he invited his friends. And the Gospel says that many tax collectors and sinners came and sat with Jesus and his disciples.

And I want to stop right here. First of all, to give you thanks, my Lord, for coming into my world because reading the Gospel makes me aware that you are in this world, that you really like it, you created it, you put us at the pinnacle of creation in order to develop with our creativity, with our freedom, a better world, so to speak, or a world with a touch that is only possible or made possible through human intervention. And this is a topic that I want to consider in my meditation today, the beauty of creation and the beauty of creation through my work, through my interaction, in my workshop, in my office, in my home.

And the first reflection is I am not only allowed, so to speak, to create, but I am called to create as a part of my vocation. Or, my vocation, better to say, it is to create at different levels - I can create writing a paper, I can create building a company, I can create composing music, I can create friendship, love, and maybe the ultimate creation which is a human being, between a man and a woman, the possibility of cooperating with God the Father and the Holy Spirit and the Son in bringing new life to the world - what a dream.

When I consider this as a big picture, then there are no differences or there’s no difference between work and my personal life. Everything has to do with creating a new world with you, my Lord. And I feel that there is no distinction between walking on the street, meeting a friend, sitting at my desk, cleaning something, playing sports - everything is a work of creation, everything has freedom and a possibility of loving better. And that’s what makes my vocation a second nature - something that encompasses all my actions, all my choices, all my desires. I am a son of God interacting in this world, learning, improving it, making it a better place.

Pope Benedict, before being Pope Benedict, was Cardinal Ratzinger and was invited to say a Mass- to celebrate a Mass in commemoration of the beatification of St. Josemaria. And- and his homily was pretty beautiful because he expressed personally his understanding of Opus Dei, his vocation of being a saint in the middle of the world, for him was a discovery. And then he explained it very well. I'm going to read a quote by him - a little long, but it's so beautiful that I couldn't help quoting the whole thing. And he said all this:

“All this, the life of St. Josemaria, his message, enabled me to discern more clearly the profile of Opus Dei. This surprising link between absolute fidelity to the great tradition of the Church with that desire and simplicity and unconditional openness to all the challenges of this world. In the academic world, in the world of work, in the world of economics, art, those who have this link with God, those who have this un-interrupted conversation with him, can respond to these challenges and are no longer afraid because those who are in God's hands always fall into God's hands. This is how fear disappears and instead, the courage is born to respond to the contemporary world.”

This link is amazing, it really is - unconditional openness to all the challenges of the world. And then, Jesus, I am like you, at ease in this world because there are so many beautiful things that can show me a possibility of redemption. And I don't need to go and to hide. I was thinking that, after the Original Sin in the book of Genesis, there's this passage that I really like to meditate on. After committing this rejection to God's plan by Adam and Eve, the book of Genesis says that God was walking through the garden and then Adam hid, he was afraid. And I think this is a consequence of sin - fear. And that fear is not the fear only of dying or fear of making a mistake or the fear of the devil. It's the fear of not being aware of our dignity, it's that nakedness of Adam and Eve after the Original Sin, not only in their bodies, but especially in their hearts, this kind of lack of a ground under their feet because there was no purpose anymore. And they were scared of you, my Lord, and scared of the world. And you come in after many centuries, after the teaching of the Old Testament, with all the prophets and kings, and- and you tell us, I want to work for thirty years because these are- the world needs redemption in little things, in a way that is human. It is so beautiful, so powerful.

I remember many years ago I was in Madrid and we had a get-together with the Prelate of Opus Dei, Javier Echevarria back then. And we were in an arena for basketball and the- it was transformed into a kind of a living room for 20,000 people. A lot of people were there and all sorts of people, different backgrounds, and the Prelate of Opus Dei was very happy, meeting each one of us, and then there were some questions. The first one - I will never forget that one. I was far away, but I could hear this woman talking through the mic. She stood up and said, 'Father, I'm a supernumerary, a daughter of yours, a daughter of St. Josemaria. I'm trying to live my vocation as a supernumerary, I'm the mother of three.' And then she started talking about her job - how exciting it was for her to meet daily with her co-workers and explaining things and being friendly and then getting to know them and explaining some things about her faith and her family and interacting and some doctrinal questions. And she was very excited - she must be probably like, you know, a businesswoman or someone really amazing in her professional job. And then the- the Prelate was listening to her and she was smiling, he was smiling - all of us were happy. And at the end, he asked her, 'My daughter,

what's your job?" And then she said with naturalness and with a big smile, 'Oh yeah, I forgot - I'm a street cleaner. And every day, when I go through the streets of Madrid, I really like to...' and then she started talking about her job.

Her job as a street cleaner - not the most relevant, humanly speaking, job in the world, not the most exciting task if you want to- to put your- your suit, or to put your dress for street cleaner. Like- probably many people despise that job. And she was so excited, the mother of three, sharing her faith, her joy of being alive, her vocation with naturalness. The same as Matthew bringing Jesus to my home, to my- my friends, to tax collectors and sinners, and Our Lord sitting at a table, not talking about the Torah or the temple, but just having fun, getting to know them. And there was no division in Matthew's life between time for work, time for friendship, time for family - it was all the same. I am creating a better world. And then Jesus said, come and follow me and we will do even better.

Maybe Our Lord is asking you and me today to do the same thing, to follow him where we are. And not in a la la land, not in better conditions, not to wait. But Jesus, I have only friends that are atheists. Great, bring them home, let's have dinner. And if you pray, I will be in the midst of you and I will do the rest. But they are tax collectors and- and sinners. Maybe - so what, bring them home, bring them to your heart. But what about my co-workers? They are just about money. Bring them to your heart, transform them with your friendship and with your loyalty, with your professional life; be top-notch, professional. But Jesus, I'm just a street cleaner. Be excited about your job, whatever it might be, it doesn't really matter. It's not about the label that society gives you. It's not about your skills. It's about the love and the professional interest that you put in your profession, in your- in your job. That's it, that's a transformation, a miracle.

I'm reading now, these days, this book by Jordan Peterson. You probably know it, *12 Rules for Life*, and he's very inspiring. And one of the things that he says, I think it's rule number four, is the aim that you have in your life, whatever you aim at determines what you see. He explains very well - I am going to try to do something similar here. But basically, he says that your vision is projecting what you love or what you want, which is basically the same idea. What you love, what you want, what you are aiming at, in your heart, in your soul, determines what you see. And it can be whatever - it doesn't need to be good. You can be aiming at comfort and then everything would bother you in your job if you are aiming at comfort. But you can aim at changing the world and then you will see opportunities, you will see ideals, you will see always things with Jesus' eyes.

"God is calling you to serve him in and from the ordinary activities of human life," says St. Josemaria. "He waits for you everyday in the lab, in the army barracks, in the university chair, in the factory, in the workshop, in the fields, in the home, and in the immense panorama of work. Understand this well: there is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations and it is up to each one of us to discover it." That's the beauty - it's up to you to discover it. Whatever you aim at will determine what you see. I don't see anything. You need to aim higher. And it's not about changing circumstances, not about having more talent. It's about aiming higher.

Let's go back to that morning of our creation. Jesus, my Lord, I want to put myself like- as it- as if I had a camera or something and go right now back to that morning when Adam and Eve opened their eyes for the first time and the virginal world, the untouched world of creation - pure, beautiful - was in front of them. And they heard your voice, 'Go, procreate; help me to make this world habitable and help me to make it homey. Use everything you need. This is my gift.' Let's look at everything - not only the planets, the stars, the plants, the birds, animals, water, and especially human beings, with this gift of the world, with this gift of existence. And God telling us, enjoy, help me to finish this. And then, you and I, receiving such a treasure of freedom and also creativity.

And let's apply it to whatever we are working on now. Whatever is in my hands, Jesus, can be transformed, molded, into a masterpiece for you. And it's up to me to discover this hidden, divine pearl in my ordinary situations. And it makes a huge and amazing- it's so different to live with purpose or to live without it. I have experienced it so many times, my Lord, that it doesn't really matter what we have in my hands. If I put love there, my life makes sense.

I remember when I was in Italy, I was studying Theology and there was this guy, a maintenance guy, in the residence where I was living. One day, I was studying in the library, third floor of the building, and I was close to the window. So, I got to be honest with you - sometimes I was distracted looking through the window to the trees, the garden. And, in the bottom of that building there was a maintenance guy, Piño-Pinto, sorry. He was fixing a roof, putting some cement, fixing something there. He was working hard, it was hot. It was a warm day of summer. So, I was inside with the air conditioning, you know, studying or doing some research. And I saw him working all morning, like for hours. And I had a chance to see him putting the last tile on the top of the- on top of the roof, of one of the things that he was finishing. And he was putting- after cement that was still moist, he put the last tile. And he didn't see me, but I saw him. So, what I saw was him looking up to Heaven, whispering something - I couldn't catch that - but he, with that- with a nail, he signed the kind of- the cement, which is still humid, he put his name, Pinto, looked at Heaven, and put the last tile there. And he went down the ladder and to his next thing. And, and then I looked at his work, and all the tiles were- were well done, well finished. And I had envy of him, thinking, man, it's like the street cleaner that I was telling you before, that he was giving meaning to everything he was doing. This is what makes us happy.

My Lord, I live in a world where everything is about external success, noise, recognition, and maybe it's time to look inside me - what do I love? What am I thinking about when I wake up in the morning or when I go to sleep or when am alone? Am I thinking about changing the world? I think like Matthew that day, that if I meet you, if I have you, everything should be different and better, and not because you are naive or you bring us to la la land. No, you bring us to a world that now is wounded by the Original Sin. It needs to be fixed in many ways. But here's- your presence changes everything, and I want to be aware of that.

Maybe one of the resolutions of this time of prayer, my Lord, is with your help to distinguish between means and ends. The end of my life is to meet you when I cross the threshold to eternity, this is the end, to enjoy your presence forever. Everything else is a means. Everything else is just a means for that. If I have this clear- clear idea of distinction between means and ends, I'll be happy because everything will be helpful for me to meet you or not and then I will despise or uproot that, because if it's not helping me to my ultimate end or to my only end, I don't want that. It means because it's a hindrance for that. And I will give to every action the transcendence of eternity instead of putting emphasis on human recognition or personal satisfaction.

I was reading this interview with Manfred Kets, which is apparently a guy- an expert in- in work and managing, and then he studies or he studied the reactions of human beings or their thoughts, internal thoughts in the world of jobs and work. And then he says that there is some of them that work hectically or work like a workaholic, so to speak. He says that they had a fear, they have an intrinsic fear, the fear of discovery of the real value. And then they undertake too much work to compensate for their lack of self-esteem and identity. The fear that makes us run hectically towards nowhere, but just because we're running we feel like we're doing something, and it keeps us distracted. I got to be busy because then at least I don't have time to think and then these insecurities, this lack of self-esteem, this identity- lack of identity, sorry, that is inside me, that is killing me - if I make noise working, just doing things, just opposed to one to the other but without direction, at least I don't have time to think how pathetic I am, how worthless I am - that's so bad.

We need to stop. We need to stop and say, wait a second. Where am I going? It's not about the speed, it's about the direction. Matthew was not just filling his days to do something. No, he was trying to find a meaning and then when he saw Jesus, he saw the opportunity and he followed him immediately. He thought, finally, all the pieces are together. Now my life makes sense, this is what I was aiming for, someone that will give me a comprehensive understanding of my existence and not just a salary, a recognition, a medal or statue or whatever. No, I need someone deeper - Jesus Christ, and it's enough running from one place to another without any purpose. What I really want is a meaningful life.

Another interview that I read recently about- seeks ways top women CEOs balance work and life. I'm not into this world that much to be honest, but then there is this gal, Athelia Woolley, or something like that, CEO of a big company and then she says, 'Don't be perfect.' And then quote, 'I strive for excellence, never perfection. My first priority is to my husband and our relationship. Next, my daughter. And finally, my relationship with work. If my daughter is crying and I am on the conference call, I excuse myself from the call and say, 'I'll have to call you later.' I know that this affects how I am as a boss, but I am an excellent boss, not a perfect one. And when it comes to self-care, I want to look fashionable, but leave room for messiness.'

I need to be honest with you - I didn't understand this last part probably because I'm not woman, but I think I get the whole message of, you know, strive for excellence not perfection. Don't be rigid, don't be

stiff. Don't be just about externals or don't be just about results. Aim for fruits, not from results. A fruit is something that you need to cultivate. It takes years and it has to do with the whole thing of your personality, your relationships - that's a fruitful life, and it's not just about the results or money.

My Lord, thank you so much for my vocation. And after considering for a while this time of prayer that you are coming to meet me where I am, after considering how St. Josemaria understood the vocation of the lay people in the Church, to be in the middle of the world without fear. Coming back to this pristine scene in paradise, walking with God, with you, my Lord, in this world of creation, at ease, enjoying- looking around, opening our eyes intellectually, artistically, and then we will transform everything. I want to be a good doctor, a good lawyer, a good businessmen, creating jobs, taking care of my clients, of my co-workers, bringing dignity to my workshop. And I want to bring you, my Lord, or your flavor, your fragrance to every single human activity - to sports, to entertainment, to the work of music, to the work of whatever creativity. And also, the constant work of a lawyer, or a doctor, or a mother, at home, whatever it is, I want to bring you there, your flavor, your touch.

Maybe I can ask your two teachers, that is a mystery- it's always a mystery to consider that you learned something, humanly speaking, that you did - you learned from St. Joseph and from Mary how to run a house, how to run a workshop, how to be a worker that is not just working hard but providing for the world, providing for his family, for her family.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I want to be always with you and want to learn from you. I want to bring dignity to this world. I want to behave with your naturalness, with your spontaneity, with your creativity, with your joy, with your fortitude, with your perseverance. I want to be part of your family. Teach me how to understand my creation, my vocation, as a gift open to a better world, to a better understanding of myself, the better understanding of my existence. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I want to be with you always.

I thank you, my God, for the good resolutions, affections, and inspirations that you have communicated to me in this meditation. I ask your help to put them into effect. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and Lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.



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