

ST. JOSEMARIA INSTITUTE PODCAST

SOWERS OF PEACE AND JOY

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, 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.

Jesus, please shower your grace upon us as we contemplate your defining characteristic, the most salient impression you give others, especially all those individuals surrounding your infancy, your hidden life as a worker, as a carpenter, as a family man, son of Mary and Joseph, and when you really went public, that's why we call it your public life, that salient quality. People were profoundly moved by your love, your affection, and the different components that what the Church teaches as fruits of love, fruits of the Holy Spirit. St. Thomas Aquinas says that the main manifestation of charity is to transmit joy. We will have that personal experience when someone greets us with sincere joy, when someone walks in a room joyful, when a person is happy to speak with us, when someone's spirits are lifted in our presence, we automatically feel loved. It's not the only component of charity— there's service, there's patience, there's understanding, there's fortitude, to correct, but we want to hone in on being sewers of peace and joy.

And why peace and joy? Those are the two fruits of the Holy Spirit first revealed by the Holy Spirit through St. Paul, if I'm not mistaken, from his Letter to the Galatians. And most of all because those words are the two descriptions of Jesus. Those aspects of Jesus keep reemerging in the gospels. In fact, the introduction to Jesus is that he doesn't just have joy, he is that good news of great joy— that defines him. He himself is good news, a good news that transmits joy. He is joy. And in the Blessed Sacrament, in a certain sense, we have the true sacramental presence of good news of great joy.

Before Jesus was born, approximately 800 years, the Holy Spirit describes that future Messiah through Isaiah, the prophet, as Prince of Peace. And St. Paul calls him peace, he is our peace. In the Lord's grand finale that we call the Last Supper, the Last Supper discourse whereby St. John devotes 25% of his Gospel, those two descriptions come to the fore more than any time in the rest of the narrative of Jesus' teachings and life. They're there, but now they are mentioned explicitly, relatively often.

We are a mission Church, an evangelical Church. It doesn't mean we are evangelicals in the non-Catholic Christian sense, but Catholicism— Catholic, which means *universal*, is all about

transmitting the gospel. As Jesus tells the Samaritan woman who happens to become- at least she's on record to a brought most people- more people than anybody else, at least in the gospel narratives, she brought her entire town. And the gospel says because of the witness of the woman, that was prefaced by Jesus telling her that if he- if she accepts the gift that he wants to give her, the gift is himself, her- the water that she receives in herself will be as a well-spring up to everlasting life. Jesus is everlasting life, and he's saying that she will participate in transmitting that everlasting life. Jesus is the Light of the World. He says, he who walks with me will have the light of life. He is the light par excellence. In his Sermon on the Mount he identifies his disciples of- as light of the world. He says, "Do not hide that light under a bushel." The bushel could be many things- could be lukewarmness, it could be falling outside the state of grace- but for our intents and purposes, it could be sadness or an excessive seriousness that hides that good news of great joy. It's interesting to note that there are some adjectives that Jesus applies to his disciples that are also applied to him- not as an adjective itself, but what essentially defines Jesus. He is everlasting life. He is the life. He is good news of great joy. He is our peace, but we radiate that peace.

We reflect on the last Sunday of Ordinary Time that traditionally the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Christ the King, and that segues into Advent, then into the Christmas season, etc., and we see this burning need to be in an evangelical Catholic, to spread the gospel, and we need to duplicate what our first brothers and sisters in the faith did. They spoke in tongues. We may say to ourselves, well, I barely know English, let alone another language. And if I do know another language, it's not even close to most languages. How do I duplicate that? Well, there is a common language, and Jesus implies that by saying, "Amen, amen I say to you. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you. And in this way, they will know that you are my disciples by the love you have for one another." What kind of love? The love of Jesus. And that is most manifested, not exclusively, but most manifested by radiating light in life in the form of joy, the form of peace, I'll be it imperfectly.

We have our own temperaments and, on account of the effects of Original Sin, our temperaments are wounded. But on some level, whether we're anxious, whether we're phlegmatic, whether we're naturally jovial or not, it's that joy and peace that the world cannot give. It's a language that is convincing. It's the language of witness which, if I'm not mistaking, we are called to witness the gospel and teach the gospel, preach the gospel. But witness, especially in this day and age, and every age, but especially this day and age, of colossal ignorance of the faith, of an overwhelming moral relativism, a confusion and crisis of faith, of hope. We need to speak that language everybody understands, which is that commandment of peace and joy. We evangelize whether we see an immediate response or not, by being, quoting St. Josemaria, "sowers of peace and joy"- that is the immediate work of evangelization which proves that Jesus is real. And as our Holy Father Pope Francis says, we are called to be extensions of Christ, extensions of that everlasting life, extensions

of that light. We reveal- reveal Christ through our own personal union. We are not the source of that light in life, but we need to unite ourselves to Christ- sort of like a desk lamp, or a light fixture. Does it radiate light? Indeed it does. It makes a big difference. Is it the source? No. It needs to be connected with the power source. Analogously speaking, I convey that peace and joy of Jesus by being connected to the power source.

I keep telling the same anecdote and you may ask to yourselves, well, maybe it's time to find another anecdote. But the same anecdote keeps coming up, even quite recently- I have the habit of asking people, what's the cause of their joy? But, let me rephrase that- I express gratitude for a smiling face, a cheerful face, and usually I get the same answer. It all started when I was going from the sublime to ridiculous, getting an oil change in Jiffy Lube- it was a number of years ago now. And it was a cold, steely Chicago morning, probably a Monday morning, snowing a bit, temperature with wind 27 degrees, very grey. Everybody seemed to be in a glum mood, perhaps they were afraid that they would have to spend more than they planned to, especially when you don't know much about cars- I'm speaking for myself.

And I was waiting in line, and there were four or five different people paying their bill or looking very serious and glum. And the man behind the counter was jovial and trying to lighten things up and cheer people up and, you know, talk baby talk to infants- there were a couple of women with infants in their arms. And I was the last one, and I thanked the gentleman. I said well, you know, given the circumstances and the foul weather, thank you for being so cheerful. You've helped all of us. And he immediately reacted- don't give me the credit, it is the Lord. I spend an hour reading my- my Bible, talking to the Lord, and that's where it comes from.

And I've done that a whole series of times throughout the year and I usually get that kind of answer, whether it's at a hospital, whether it's in a restaurant. There's one exception, but the exception proves the rule. I asked you for a cup of coffee. The woman behind the counter was in a great mood. I thanked her for her good mood, and I said, what's the reason for your joy? She said, how can you not be joyful when you have this top quality hot chocolate? I said, yeah, that makes sense. So, anyways, I didn't get a hit on that question.

But very recently, I was on a sick call. This woman I was visiting, terminally ill, in a lot of pain, and she was the most cheerful person in the room, her family, understandably so, sorrowful over this serious illness this woman had. And I said, well, you're always in a great mood, I told her. And she said what the gentleman at Jiffy Lube said, in a similar fashion. She said, Don't know- please don't give me the credit. It's Our Lord. So many people are praying for me. How can you not be cheerful? And I would also qualify her remark by saying that she was also very close to God, she is very close to God. And so, let's unpack these experiences. And the same woman in the hospital is evangelizing

everybody in her own way, you know. She wasn't preaching a meditation like myself, but she was that meditation for the nurses, the doctors, the maintenance people, etc, and she used the authority of really walking the walk to speak a little bit about God, at least including what Christ meant to her, what Christ does for her. And she spoke with overwhelming authority because of her compelling witness of peace and joy. She led with peace of joy. And we want to lead with peace and joy.

We could also reflect on the historical situation when Jesus first revealed his new commandment and when- and in that occasion of so much talk of peace and joy. And during Last Supper, we have to keep in mind that Jesus was going to cut his disciples loose within the next couple of months, at best, into a hostile world, a world totally ignorant of the gospel. Not only ignorant that the gospel message would fly into the face of the mores of the people of that time. And you could not lead with elaborate, theological discourse, or moralizing, or castigating or correcting, you have to lead with peace and joy, with the- lead with- that doesn't mean that we simply lead with peace and joy and don't speak about the truth, but we need that peace and joy so that people's curiosity is awakened and that they want to know why this peace and joy as it has happened to me in running into joyful people.

All of us are a captive audience. I mean, who doesn't want to have peace and joy? And, we being practical people as Americans, everybody's practical, we want to know how to do it, what's involved, give me an instruction manual on this. Well, Jesus does. It's a very short instruction manual, a couple of verses, again at the Last Supper. He says, "Abide in my love. So have I loved you, abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love. Just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." And here's the clincher, "These things I've spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full." Now, let's analyze a bit, prayerfully, what are those commandments?

Pope Benedict says that Jesus is the new Torah, which would mean he's the new law. He is the new covenant. What's the Christian law? It's Jesus. He is both messenger and message. And for the first time he speaks about the fullness of his own joy, and we need to keep his commandments which simply means that we need to be very conversant in his life and in his words, which is an implicit invitation to pray about his life, pray about his words, in the spirit of faith, that those actions and those words are aimed at us personally. It's not just Bible study- that's very valuable. It's not just reviewing facts. It's meditating. It's communing with Jesus, but with the proviso that we are going to struggle to put those reflections, those actions, those words pointed at us into practice. He doesn't say, know my commandments. He says, keep them. It's not the Ten Commandments, but it's the life of Jesus and his teaching which are completion and perfection of the Mosaic Law.

St. Josemaria, in a certain sense, elaborates on this without saying it specifically in his celebrated book of aphorisms called *The Forge*. And he says, "I will not stop repeating until it is deeply engraved in your soul: piety, piety, piety. For if you lack charity, it will be for want- it will be for want of interior life, not for any defective character." What's the theology behind that point, in light of what Jesus says, that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full, that it is communing with Christ. Ideally, but not absolutely necessary, if circumstances don't permit, in front of the tabernacle, through the Rosary, through mental prayer, that we communicate with Christ, we seek him out, then we draw from those living waters from his Sacred Heart. It's an image originally stated by Isaiah himself centuries before Christ, that we tap into that heart and we tap into that heart in prayer. Using another teaching of St. Josemaria, crisp, succinct. We communicate with him through the bread and the Word. When we do that, we indeed become sowers of peace and joy.

Lord, help us have the faith to spend time with you and to equate this possibility of sowing peace and joy. Yes, I have to work at it. Prayer is not magic, but I- it's sort of like a car, you know, a good car. If it doesn't have gasoline, it's not going to move. The car that has gasoline can move. You have to press down the gas, but you have to turn it on and press down the pedal. Well, we are like that car if we pray, if we spend time with the Lord, with fuel, but we have to struggle to convey- to transmit that peace and joy, which is a way of talking about Christ himself.

It's kind of interesting, you know, and I'll start winding this down, that St. Josemaria had a rich personality and people who knew him, diverse people who knew him, they're right now very much an endangered species. And it's a matter of years, a few years that those who did know him will be extinct, they'll live on in Heaven. But anyway, it's interesting to know, just diverse people, different people, and I'd say, at least in my experience, those people who spoke of their contact with St. Josemaria were serious- didn't have to be, but these individuals were. And each one, without any provocation, would mention how cheerful he was. And some became resentful when they would see a video of him and not emphasize his sense of humor. And one person who knew him relatively well, many years ago, who's now also enjoying everlasting life became very indignant because the documentary, which I thought was very good, did not transmit, did not convey, his joy and his peace. And this gentleman was an American saying, he was fun to be with, he was lots of fun, and it's important to make sure people realize that this is a key part of his- his temperament. And he had to work at it. It was through his interior life because sometimes he said a smile could be the most challenging form of mortification or penance.

So, anyway, let's feel that urgency, first with our families, creating as best we can a bright and cheerful home and instilling in any environment we find ourselves that joy and peace. Let's take the opportunity to invoke the Blessed Mother, using one of the aspirations of the Litany of Loreto. She's cause of our joy and it's no mere coincidence that as she recites her Magnificat she speaks about her

inner self and appropriately says, "My soul rejoices in God by Savior." She speaks about her own joy. Cause of Our Joy, pray for us.

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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