

THE LIFE OF JESUS

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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.

The gospel is the life of Jesus Christ, it's a treasure. I remember one of the gifts that I- the only gift actually that I remember, for my First Communion, was a copy of the four Gospels, a very beautiful edition. *Domine Navarre*, with translation in Latin and then footnotes. And the person that gave it to me, that gift for my First Communion, I was seven years old, wrote something on the first page- handwritten dedication, like an autograph. And it was my nanny, Selia. And then she wrote down, "The life of Jesus is the best treasure in the world. If you read it, it will enrich you. With all my affection, Selia," which was her name. And to this day I remember that- that gift, and I guess it had an impact in my life, and it still has an impact in my life, because reading your life, Jesus, is rediscovering my life. And redemption is not just a historical event that happened years ago- inspiring, beautiful- no. It is a- it is an event that is happening because it has to do with the eternal God. So, every page, every word in the Gospel speaks to us right now. And if I am praying, Jesus, today, it is because of the sacraments and Scripture, the Gospel, the Bible.

So, let's read it carefully. St. Josemaria liked to recommend to get inside the scene, to be a character, to be protagonist. So, let's do it today in this first meditation which is about the divine meaning of the early life of Jesus, let's get into that scene, let's travel through time right now with our imagination and then get into the house of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. We don't know a whole lot about what happened during those years. I actually want to read two lines from the- chapter two of St. Luke- St. Luke's Gospel, "When they had done everything the law of the law required," they visited Nazareth every year- Mary, Joseph, Jesus- as any Jewish family. So, when they have done everything, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth, little town. And then the Gospel says, "And the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was with him."

As you probably know, St. Luke interviewed the Blessed Virgin Mary and is the only gospel that has the infancy of Jesus Christ. So, when they got to that point in those conversations that Luke and Mary had, long conversations, I imagine after dinner, and St. Luke taking notes about the memories of the Blessed Virgin Mary. What a dream, right, to sit down with Mary- just hey, do you remember anything else? And then Mary, oh yeah, I remember, we went to the temple and then... So, at that point, the Holy Spirit inspired the Blessed Virgin Mary not to say anything more, and this is because we don't need anything more to know, but that the child Jesus grew in maturity and he was filled with wisdom- he was filled with wisdom. He wasn't born with that in the sense that the humanity of Jesus Christ switched off his divine knowledge. So

he grew, he learned, taught by Mary and Joseph, domestic things- traits, language, reading, animals, collars, kisses, work, winter, summer, cooking, running, falling, crying. So, he was filled with that as a normal kid, and God's favor was with him as it is with you and with me. Again, we are entering into a life that touches us, and this is the beauty of Christmas, that everything from the moment of the Incarnation has been redeemed, everything. There is no human occupation or human endeavor that has not been touched by the Son of God.

And Jesus, you shed light to every human activity, and you can tell that when you read the gospel and you see Our Lord preaching parables- all of them very human, about a net that is cast into the sea, because Jesus was walking on the sea- I mean, walking on the sea, not walking besides the sea. Later, he walked on the sea, but he was seeing fishermen. And then he saw them, throwing- cast out the net, or the Kingdom of Heaven is like a fisherman that, you know, casts the net and then grabs everything, and then beautiful fishes. My father, God, is casting the net into the world to get you to Heaven. That's the Kingdom of Heaven, the kingdom of my Father. Or, it is like a wedding feast, and there are guests and there's music, and they're- people are invited and some of them make excuses and then my Father suffers because- why? Why didn't you come? And then he sends another group of people to recall, to invite again. So- and then you see the heart of God the Father trying to invite people.

But many times, little things- the kingdom of God is like a woman that lost a coin. And after research- after searching through this whole house, she finally found it and there's a party- that is joy, that's Heaven. I was thinking that today, Jesus would say that, you know, he's like you, when you lose your car keys or your phone and you're panicking, and then suddenly you find it. Oh, it was in the sofa in between this, whatever, of course. The other day someone told me that she forgot her phone in the refrigerator, right. After many hours trying the whole house, and when someone went to eat, just to take a break, to sit and enjoy- celebration.

And all those things, Jesus, my Lord, are important, because the relevance of our lives, the relevant- that is relevant, in the love that we put, in the meaning that we put in, and that's the discovery that maybe around Christmas, thinking about my vocation, I need to understand to be open to that, that everything is meaningful, everything can be redeemed me, everything can be offered, touched by you. That's what St. Josemaria saw as a message of Opus Dei. "God is calling you," I'm reading a quote by St. Josemaria, "God is calling you to serve him in and from the ordinary activities of human life." Not in this pious- being in the world, you can be a saint precisely in the asphalt of the cities. That's your place.

St. Josemaria was once in a get together in Rome, and he was talking about different oratories that he liked and churches. Not that he was talking about this all the time, but that day they were talking about churches or whatever, images. And- and someone asked, What's your favorite one? Father, what's your favorite one? He said the street. My favorite chapel is the street. There- there's where we meet God, in the middle of the street. Not that he didn't care about oratories. You go to Rome, and he took care of them in every little detail, and they're very well decorated and beautiful, and he put a lot of money and good taste. But he was

trying to say the cathedral is your interior life. The cathedral where God wants to live is not made out of stone. It is in your heart. And the whole teaching, the Old Testament is about that. By the way, now that we are reading, preparing for Christmas, you can see how God the Father and the Holy Spirit through the prophets, through kings, is dreaming about building a cathedral inside you. I will put my law in their hearts, not temples. And in the book of the Revelation, it says, "In Heaven there will not be any Church because God will be present there in their lives." So, that's it- the calling is inside you. So, how do I build that cathedral inside me? Giving meaning, putting love in everything I do. Not waiting, my Lord, for churchy moments or for very special moments professionally, or for moments with a family that are more relevant- everything can be relevant if we have the generosity- if I have the generosity of seeking you where I am right now.

"He waits for us every day," St. Josemaria says. He waits for you. Jesus is waiting for you. Have you waited for someone? Yeah, it's- Jesus waits for you with a smile, not disappointed. "In the lab, in the army barracks, in the university chair, in the factory, in the workshop, in the fields, in the home- at home, and in all the immense panorama of work. Understand this well, my sons," says St. Josemaria, "There is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of us to discover it." Something divine- a treasure. My Lord, thank you for giving meaning to my life. Thank you for touching my life with your presence. I don't deserve that. How many people wake up in the morning and don't know what I know? And I'm not proud of it, I'm just grateful, and I wish they would know. I wish the whole world right now, and I'm praying for that, that the whole world would know you and they would know today that their hearts are precious, that every life is precious at every- every second of every single human being, life is a gift. How important it is around Christmas to open our eyes to this interior reality, this hidden reality, this hidden treasure divine that St. Josemaria is presenting us.

I read an article recently in New York Times. I like the city of New York a lot. I like all the cities, but I got a special inclination to love New York City because I think it's so powerful, humanly speaking, that it has to be redeemed- every place in the world, right, but precisely because there's a lot of power there, we should bring God to the street. And it is there. I remember two summers ago, I was spending some weeks there for a conference, studying theology and- and we will go on excursions, visiting museums and stuff, and then, if there was a Church nearby or went to the museum, we would swing by to say hi to Our Lord, to pray the Rosary, maybe, or just a quick visit here and there, just to greet Our Lord in the streets of the city of Manhattan, and I loved it to see Our Lord there, right. And in the evenings, I was very moved because many times we would stop to pray, like mental prayer, like we're doing right now, twenty minutes or whatever, and I will see a lot of young couples, young people dating or young professionals, after working hard, you know, the "yuppies" of Wall Street or whatever, going to Mass, or going to pray. And I saw a lot, actually, I was really moved- young people in their thirties, you know, very well dressed, very professionally driven, meeting God in Manhattan. I thought, that's so powerful, that's the Church. I love it.

So, anyway, in New York, in any city, we can encounter- we should encounter Jesus Christ, greet him, and bring him to the last corner of the world. But I told you that I was reading this article in The New York

Times, and one of the things that I was reading in fashion in New York, apparently is a new trend, is to be late for meetings, very unprofessional, anyone to look kind of driven or top notch. It is kind of cool to be late for meetings because it means it means that you are busy. And then, you know, it's like oh, wow, he's so- he's so busy that he was late, obviously, because his life is so interesting, he has so many things today, he's late, obviously. If you're punctual, he looks like a loser like, oh, you have anything else to do or what? That's absurd. So, I don't want to fall into that either, right. And on the contrary, I want to give meaning and not to have fear, Jesus, in- in questioning myself. Is my life meaningful? Am I accepting this mentality of that rat race, running fast without direction? Am I falling into activism? Am I building my- my- my life on the shaky foundation of just, you know, hecticness because maybe this is kind of a mask of an existential insecurity? Maybe this is something that is a fear?

There's this author, Manfred Kets that, speaking of young people that fall into this trap, he explains what's going on inside them. And I'm not judging anybody- I'm the first one to fall into this sometimes, but he says that they fear discovery, being discovered of their fraudulence and then they undertake too much work to compensate for their lack of self-esteem and identity. They just run in order to be blind, but at least numb with activity and noise.

“When they had done everything, they went back to Galilee.” And they went to their city, their little town of Nazareth, and the child grew in maturity, but he was not obsessed, he was not stressed out, nor was St. Joseph, busy as he could be, tough, not wasting time, but with peace. And, so was Mary, because they had a meaningful life, and they had time for everything. When we put meaning into what we do, we put love and direction, there's time for everything.

There is a spiritual author that compares our personalities to a stool with three legs, and he says that one leg is our relationship with God- our prayer, our gratefulness, being created, our vocation, etc- our relationship with God, that's one leg. The other leg is our social life- our loves, could be family, girlfriend, boyfriend, friends, acquaintances, you know, there's another leg that sustains this stool. And the third one is work- our professional life. We spend a lot of- a lot of hours daily- 8, 9, 10 hours- sometimes working hard- that's a big leg, that's a big- it's a third of the day. So, he says, you take away any of those legs, and the stool will fall. It doesn't matter which one, you pray a lot, and you work a lot, but you don't have friends, there's something missing. Or, you have a lot of friends, and you pray a lot, but you don't work. Or you work a lot and you have a lot of social activities but your life is empty, there's no direction because there is no God- any of them is essential. Maybe objectively, God is the most important one, but- but God doesn't want you to be just praying all the time. He wants you to engage with the world, to put your talents into action. That's so important. So, help me, my Lord, to- to go back to those years in Nazareth, and as St. Josemaria would say, to look through a window, not to spy, but to contemplate you in your daily life with St. Joseph, and then to learn to be open to learn, to participate in your life, to participate in the creation and recreation of the world by God the Father through you because then with your life and with your Incarnation is that God has come here forever. And I can learn not only from a God that is powerful and mighty, eternal, and that we- but that will be enough, by the way, because with the reading Genesis and

creation of the world and light, and the order and the beauty, it would be enough. But we have more. We have Our Lord, working as a carpenter, as a craftsman, right. And- and reading and observing. And his parables are inspiring because they are human, and we- and we see Jesus going to parties, to dinners, inviting himself to dinners. So, social life, friendship. And then Jesus with his family, growing in wisdom, in love. And then Jesus praying in the temple and praying every morning and praying at night. And Jesus working- Oh, is he not the son of the carpenter? Isn't his father Joseph? I know this guy, he's from Nazareth. I know that, you know- Jesus had the three legs very clearly developed, all of them. Being human and divine, being human and elevated to a higher possibility through my connection with you, participating in your hidden life. What a beautiful dream.

"I have," says the Pope, "I have a dogmatic certainty. God is in every person's life." It's a dogmatic certainty that comes from the Pope. "God is in every person's life." Now, there's a guy that I know God is not in- no, no. Or, there's a woman that is- no. God is in every person's life. God is in everyone's life. Even if the life of a person has been a disaster, even if it is destroyed by vices, drugs, or anything else, God is in this person's life. You can- you must try to seek God in every human life. Although the life of a person is a land full of thorns and weeds, there's always a space in which the good seed can grow. You have to trust God. And if I believe that in every person's life, Jesus, I do believe in the same thing in my own life. How can this seed grow if I give meaning, if I look at the world with your eyes, if I touch the world with your hands, if I love the world with your heart, my profession, my friends, my relationships, my body and my soul, my hobbies and my work, my time. Not- I don't want- I don't like talking about free time because my time isn't free, but let's say my free time, my busy time, everything- my vacation, my nights and my days, my dinners, and my after-dinners, my basement, my bed, my office, my car, my phone, my superficial things, my deep things- my deep friendships, and my superficial entertainment that I like it because it helps me to rest. Everything has been touched by God in this world and everything can be meaningful if I take advantage to meet you there, to allow you to enter, to show me the way. You are the way. I want to do everything, to love everything, to look at everything with your eyes, with your heart.

Let's go to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary was never bored or idle. She knew how to rest. She knew how to contemplate. She pondered things in her heart. So, she was not just busy, busy, busy- no, she was able to contemplate and- and to love and to cry and to- and to listen and to dream. Mary was normal- is normal. Let's ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to teach us or to accompany us in this contemplation of the life of Jesus. I can imagine Mary many times just with a sense of awe, almost, you know, her eyes not crying but like a scene thinking to herself, am I dreaming? This is for real? Am I living with God in the same house? Is this for- And then she was probably many times looking around Jesus running when he was a baby or eating dinner and Jesus talking, and Mary, inside her heart, thinking, is this for real? Is this a face of God in my house, at dinner? Am I feeding the Son of God? Am I laughing with the Son of God? Is my son- is the Son of God asleep on my lap right now? Jesus, 12-13 years old, as a teenager, you know, falling asleep on a sofa or whatever they were sitting at and after, you know, get together and just falling asleep and Mary combing his hair, kissing him on the forehead, you know, and then saying, is this for real? And seeing Jesus everyday would be for Mary very normal, and at the same time, the water that she would drink to- to be happy and

to share that joy with others. So, let's go to the Blessed Virgin Mary asking her to teach us to- to discover Jesus as she did on a daily basis.

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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