

THE DANGERS OF A DOUBLE LIFE

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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.

Many of us remember the days after Pope Benedict XVI had announced his resignation in February of 2013. It was really quite sad to see the helicopter taking away- the very security guards wept openly when they helped him aboard and then the cameras showed these last images of the Pope waving from the helicopter window. There was lift off, and the cameras picked up the silhouette of the helicopter flying against the sun as he was flying over Rome. Then, as you know, came the conclave of the Cardinals to elect a new Pope. Perhaps you remember the address that the then Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio made to the Cardinals that were present because, in that pre-conclave series of talks, when all the Cardinals were getting to know each other, kind of warming things up, Cardinal Bergoglio ended up quoting from that passage from the book of Revelation. It says, chapter three, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and I will dine with him and he with me." That's the voice of Jesus that- that St. John writes down there. And this is what the Pope commented, he was then Cardinal, but he said that we often think that he, the Lord, wants to enter into our lives. But he doesn't knock just to enter, he said, he knocks so that he can be let out into the world. He does not want the Church to be closed in on itself to be, he said, excessively self-referential.

And so the Pope dreamt of a Church looking outwards going out in on in a mission. And this- this is a danger that Pope Francis has often alluded to that there are Catholics who are quite happy with their faith, they go to Mass, they pray, and they- they do their acts of piety, their special devotions, maybe they're- they're meeting, and that it's good, it's good. But it is as though they- they kind of keep their faith always within the narrow confines of their own very personal life. It's as if their faith were kind of preserved with formaldehyde in a jar and they don't seem to kind of move beyond it. Their faith, it's as though it doesn't really enter into their profession, it doesn't always seem to be present when they go out with their friends, when they have a drink maybe, it just stays kind of closed in. And it is as though something has weakened their sense of integrity, their- like- their coherence about their faith. And this is something that has affected their unity of life. And there's a danger there of really having a double life- one for the faith and another for the ordinary profession, their- their "life" out there.

And indeed, *Evangelii Gaudium*, the first encyclical that Pope Francis wrote, is a document that is mainly directed towards evangelization, evangelization with joy. That is, to encourage the apostolate, and this is the principal and most fundamental task of the Church. And the Pope is always looking about reaching out and evangelizing. And this follows, of course, what other popes have said, like Paul VI, when he said that the Church exists to evangelize, to bring the kingdom of God to the entire world— this is the baptismal mandate and it is a mandate of all Christians. And that's why you can't just stay within ourselves, our faith that is. And recently, in 2018, Msgr. Ocariz, the prelate of Opus Dei, spoke about this apostolate, of going out, of- reaching out, but in particular in- in connection with friendship. He said that, "Apostolate is not something superimposed on friendship because" he's, as he wrote before, "we don't just do apostolate, we are apostles." We don't do apostolate, we are apostles. "Friendship is itself, apostolate. Friendship is itself a dialogue," he said, "in which we give and receive light. In friendship, plans are forged as we mutually open up new horizons."

So, when you bring together these two realities, friendship and apostolic drive, they don't necessarily fuse together but they're more like parallel train tracks that run in the same direction. But they're distinct, like two train tracks. And so, we won't advance in the apostolate, in evangelization, if we were not to do it with true friendship, friendship with others, and if our friendship were not deeply abiding and strong with our friends. If we don't have that, we will, it will be very difficult to make Jesus Christ known to them with great naturalness. And so, with great zeal, we want to really transmit those things that we ourselves have really lived and experienced. We want to transmit those things to those who we love. And it can only be with this growth of true friendships. Without true friendship, it's not really possible to evangelize in the middle of the world, it's impossible. This was St. Josemaria who said in *Furrow*. He said, "If we Christians really lived in accordance with our faith, the greatest revolution of all times would take place. The effectiveness," he said, "of our co-redemption depends on each one of us. You," he said, "should meditate on this." This idea of living in accordance with our faith, its coherence, this unity of life that he spoke about.

And indeed, St. Josemaria had a marvelous dream which is really not unlike that of Pope Francis today. And he had this dream of the Christian life really lived to the full, lived in plenitude. And, like oil in the engine that seeps down into the pistons and functions that can lubricate, but needs to be present in all the parts of the engine, lest the motor break down, our friendship and our apostolate kind of have to be like that. See, oil keeps an unbroken film under pressure, it won't evaporate and doesn't cause the parts to rust. But if there's no oil, but then there's this intense friction, which causes a tremendous amount of heat and therefore no movement. And then, of course, oils, they pick up any kind of contaminants in the engine and they carry them away. And larger particles are filtered out in the oil filter and small ones, the soft, tiny particles, they remain-

remains kind of suspended in the engine oil until you get an oil change and change the oil. But it's clear that oil affects the entire engine not just one part.

And so, today in our prayer, we must ask ourselves, well, do I need an oil change? If my interior life- if it has been too restricted to the moment in the parish Mass, maybe, or too narrowly defined, like, I know when I say the Rosary or something, how narrowly defined is my faith? Or is it like the oil that enters into all the elements of my life? Is it possible? Could it be that I'm one person at Mass, nicely greeted by the parish priest and other parishioners perhaps, but then at work, maybe I'm a bit like rough with my employees, or I'm way stressed and the next deadline- for the next deadline. And maybe even my off-color language is known to all. Or- or I might lose sight of the fact that my colleagues are not just fellow employees but, you know, that they're really loved by Christ. And that I too, I must really show at least a good example. Or, you know, do I allow myself maybe certain compensations in comfort or in sensuality that are really openly not coherent with Christian living? This would be a sign of a breakdown of unity of life and a danger, that double life is in some way seeping in to my life.

Ultimately, that's how we Christians must be recognized, by the way we treat others. If they don't recognize us by this, by the way we treat others, well, that's bad. And we don't mean that they recognize us with honorific titles. They don't need- we don't need to have titles, but they have to be able to see us in our day to day life, in mowing the lawn- I mean, just live a lived reality that others see and appreciate. And also, by the way, we do a professional work, that we may interact with others.

You know, I read a story of a guy who had written a book about spiritual life, and it gives in that book an example from his own professional life, and he had been working in a lawyer's office- this is before he became a priest. He later became a priest and- but before that he was a lawyer. And he recounts that, like one of the first days he was working in this lawyer's office, he was looking over some files, and he's in the office and then somebody rings the bell in the office and he hears somebody saying, I want to see the person who is of Opus Dei here. And he said, well, I didn't tell anybody that I was in Opus Dei. I mean, he didn't think it was necessary, you know, but- but, you know, people were saying, I don't know, I don't know, you know, like, people weren't really react- react- responding to this lady who was asking about this. So then, with kind of trepidation, he went to the door where this lady was and kind of owning up, you know, he said, Yeah, if, you know, I'm the one- I'm the Opus Dei person that you're- you're looking for. And he was fearing that, you know, who knows, some unpleasant words that might come from her. But the lady said, finally I can work in an office with somebody who is decent. If only all of you could be like him, she said to everybody. And he thought to himself, well boy, I mean, nobody really knows me here. I mean, you know, there's certainly a lot of guys that are- people that are, you know, way more virtuous than- than me

here. But now, with this, I have a whole project to fulfill, it's a real challenge, I really have to prove myself. It's like a statement, he thought, that I have to kind of like live up to. And, he can't just stay like anonymous. And well, in the end, it turns out, it was a good occasion for him to make good friends, to connect with the new colleagues that he had, and really to make a special effort to live that kindness.

So, to say that others recognize us or know that we are disciples of Jesus is the same to say that they recognize Jesus somehow in us in our actions, in our words; they see his behavior, his manners, his way of teaching, his own character in some ways, and- and it's somehow appears in us. Otherwise, Jesus would- would only appear- like when I'm on my knees at church. And somehow, it's as though he's saying, I'm happy here but I'd like to go out into the street, in the office, into the bar, and the golf course. And that's what unity of life is, that he wants to be in all those places. And it leads to a marvelous harmony without dissidence, a living integration of all my affairs at home, at work, on the computer screen, into what we might call a symphony of praise. There may be lots of loose strands in my life but we have to bring them together.

Have you observed the great- a great- any great conductor directing a famous piece like by Beethoven, like- like Beethoven's Ninth, you see that the conductor has to manage with his baton, and he has to manage a lot of people. Like in Beethoven's Ninth, as all these instruments that must be fully present to his command. I mean, it's a massive crowd. You got, you know, if you see any well-filmed orchestra, you see flutes and oboes and clarinets and bassoons and contrabassoons and horns and trumpets and trombones and the bass drum and cymbals and a triangle and tons of violins and- and not only that but a huge choir with all the different you know, voices in that choir. And if you like- if you- if you listen to the *Ode to Joy*, like for them most earlier movements, the choir just sits there and waits until it arrives at this triumphant end with the *Ode to Joy*. So- so richly interwoven over its twenty-four minutes. And imagine Beethoven himself, when he wrote this, he was fully deaf when he wrote his symphony. And apparently, when he presented it in Vienna in 1824, he was apparently there as the composer, of course, but also the conductor. And one of the most poignant moments was in the grand finale of the *Ode to Joy*. It's just a magnificent passage, and finally, everything is over. It's a beautiful finale. And, well, the music is over. But he's still for some reason, he's still leafing through his score. And he had no idea because he was deaf, but he had no idea that the entire Viennese audience was just cheering him in a standing ovation. And he was just looking through his score, you know, like, until finally one of the soloists caught his attention and pointed to the audience. And it seems he- he turned around and politely bowed.

And now, maybe we're not the composers of our life, but in some way, the Lord has given us the freedom to conduct all the different elements into beautiful, harmonious unity. You know, when I saw this conductor, he had the whole score in front of him and he was waving the baton, but

sometimes he would like reach out and point to somebody in the orchestra kind of quite vigorously, kind of giving him a sign, like, go softly on you- you know, whatever, with the trombone or like, go softer. But at times, he would- he would raise his hand, okay, now in this case, raise up the volume again, you know, he had to be conscious of every instrument, right. And so, we too- we have to ask, what areas in my life do I have to really raise the volume of God's love and do we have to see God's providence plan for me?

Maybe there's that colleague, maybe it's just a colleague for me, and I haven't really prayed for him or shown interest in his personal life, or encouraged him in front of some great challenge that he might have. People need encouragement. Or maybe I'm all alone at home doing an unpleasant chore of cleaning the gutters or raking the leaves or mopping the floor, but that's another element of my life, that's another instrument there. It's part of the score. Do I really mop with love? This is how we can make a beautiful symphony of love. We can say, Lord, I'm going to mop this floor now for you so that my mother feels better when she walks here or something.

And St. Josemaria wrote, at one point, the statutes of Opus Dei, you know, that are like- it's a little booklet that kind of summarizes the details of the spirit of Opus Dei. And in one of my favorite paragraphs, he says that, "Our spirit is characterized by a perfect intertwining of the ascetical with the apostolic. They are harmoniously calm penetrated with the secular nature of the work and with the secular character of its members." That was a way, you know, for him to explain unity of life. In this- this intertwining and calm penetration in its the ascetical and the apostolic, the spiritual aspects and the apostolic aspects. The secular aspects are in there as well- whether it's work, whether it's sports, golf course. But, it's clear that it is not simply a *fait accompli*, that is, it's not just done, it is something that must be forged. I mean, isn't that- isn't that the forge that St. Josemaria refers to? He has a book called *The Forge and the Furrow*, well, that's the world- in the world. We've forged this furrow. I don't know if you can say that but...

And so in the plans of God, for men, this unity was there already in paradise- in paradise, in the Garden of Eden, human powers, divine grace was always present and that meant that there was a really an elevated life, indeed, in the Garden of Eden. All man's actions were directed perfectly to their supernatural end. But then, of course, as we know, sin entered the picture and unleashed a series of disorders, particularly the rebellion of man's inferior potencies, his powers. So that harmony that was there originally was deeply wounded and now, well, we're kind of- we're wounded, we're in a sort of disharmony. We're kind of all shaken up. There was a decomposition kind of dismantling of man's powers. Now, from our perspective, this is a rupture that is there, it is now like a like a wound in our very being. And we have to work at rebuilding the broken structure and make it one again so that we're not kind of broken down into pieces.

St. Josemaria used to use an expression in Spanish– I don't know how well I can translate it– but he would say, we have to become *ombre de la pieza*. In English, we might say that we have to become a man or a woman of one piece, or one piece man or one piece of woman. And we can think of, I don't know, a one piece dress or something, you know, a one piece suit, I guess. But, you know, think-think of the example of St. Thomas Moore in the 16th century, when his boss Henry XVI divorced and remarried and justified by breaking allegiance with the Pope and making himself the head of the Church of England. He wanted everybody in his kingdom to swear an oath- an oath of allegiance to this new order, to this new like Church without the Pope. And indeed- and practically everybody jumped on the bandwagon. And I think all bishops signed this oath of allegiance except one, John Fisher. And indeed, all of Thomas More's friends did the same thing. But Thomas Moore knew that signing this oath of allegiance would violate his conscience, it would compromise his integrity, it would offend God. And indeed, it would encourage others to do evil. I mean, he loved God and, you know, he loved God too much to do this. So, he lost the esteem of his friends, he lost the esteem of his- his boss, and he resigned his position and he lost all his income. And as we know, ultimately, he lost his head. He was put in prison and he was executed. Anyway, prefer that, rather than deny his heart, rather, to admit to some form of disintegration or lack of integrity. He was a man who really lived the unity of life and he overcame the temptation to a double life.

A friend once told him, look, just- just sign the thing and then- then live your life. Just sign- it's just a signature, what does it matter? But his solidity was so strong, his unity was so strong. I mean, I don't- there's no way he would have been canonized if he had signed that paper. He could have been a nice guy still, he would have been good, but- but that signing would have been a lack of unity of life, would have been incoherent with his faith.

So, you and I want to become a man or a woman of one piece, *ombre de la pieza*, as St. Josemaria would say, not a dispersed accumulation of cool ideas that we stack up. There must be that coherence, that inner unity, and a real consistency between what we think and then how you pray, and then how you live, how you work. There must be kind of a seamless unity there like an interconnection so that we can- we can really live that- that unity of life.

St. Teresa of Avila, the great mystic of the 16th century, she said that she did not think that she herself was worth much at- but she describes this unity of being in a state of grace and she describes it quite beautifully. She says, "In the state of grace, the soul is like a well of limpid water from which float only streams of clearest crystal. Its works are pleasing both to God and man, rising from the river of life besides which is rooted like a tree." We have to be planted next to the river of life. We always have to be next to that river, always close God, always a child of God, always a fully fledged Christian of one piece, not a scattered series of ideas in different parts of my life.

And we can ask our Blessed Mother, she will help us to arrive at that unity. As St. Josemaria said in *Furrow*, he said, "A great sign appeared in Heaven, a woman adorned with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and the crown of twelve stars about her head. From this," he said, "you and I, and everyone may be sure that nothing perfects our personality to so much as correspondence with grace. Try to imitate the Virgin Mary and you will be a complete man, a complete woman," in Spanish *ombre de la pieza*— a complete man or woman." We ask this of our Blessed Mother so that it really becomes a reality.

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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