

ST. JOSEMARIA INSTITUTE PODCAST

TRANSMITTING THE GIFT OF FAITH

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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.

In this meditation, we want to pray about our responsibility to transmit the faith, especially to our loved ones and especially to our children. When we talk about transmitting the faith, we are really corresponding to the mandate that Our Lord gave the Apostles: “Go to the whole world and baptize everyone in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

We are all very fortunate to have received the faith, maybe most of us have received the faith in baptism when we were little kids, when we were children, and we did nothing to deserve this gift. And we were baptized into a Christian family. Perhaps others have converted, having studied the faith and having prayed for the grace of a conversion after the age of reason.

Whatever the case may be, the faith is always a gift. And it's not something we have given to ourselves. But as a gift, if we have freely received it, as Our Lord says, in the Gospel of Matthew, we should also freely give it. Everyone who receives the faith owes God for the faith and also, in a secondary way, all those people that have been a kind of chain that goes all the way back to the Apostles, and to Jesus himself.

You know, what would, where would we be had it not been for all those martyrs in the early centuries? They are kind of like the first or second link in the chain; maybe you have Christ as the hook, and then you have the first link, which is the Apostolic era, all the Apostles, everyone who saw Christ when he was living here on Earth. And then the second link is all those early Christians who heard the Apostles and who also died for the faith.

The grace that those people received, and those people corresponded to generously, is why we believe as well; or in a certain sense, why we also need to transmit that to others. We have the same responsibility as they did in order to be able to even die for the faith. Actually, if we are talking about how to transmit the faith, the only real way of transmitting the faith is to die for it.

Or at least be willing to die for it, because if I'm not willing to die for this Truth, then it will not take the place in my life that it should. I will not lead a life that is in accord with the Faith or that it is worthy of the Faith. The only way is to realize that what I have received is the greatest truth that any man or woman can receive.

And that is that Jesus Christ has died for me and He has resurrected, and that we are made in His image and likeness, and that He wants us for Himself in eternity as children of God participating of the divine life; you know, like St. Peter says in his letter:

“He made us partakers of, of his life.” Unbelievable. Or actually it is believable when He gives us the grace to believe, but we believe it. We believe in something that, that we cannot really explain. But we, if we are willing and able to die for it, it really is what gives the next generation an example. And so, the first condition I think, for transmitting the faith is, “Am I willing to die? Am I willing to die for it? Am I willing to die for it? So many people have, can I do the same? Am I generous enough? Or am I lukewarm? Would I not go that far?”

Well, we have to pray about this very carefully. You know, a lot of people think that, “Well, transmitting the faith means well, I gotta send my kids to Catholic school, I gotta pay, I gotta save up money for Catholic school, and then the, you know, Catholic school will take care of everything else.”

And, you know, when you talk to parents, a lot of times, or many times at least they’ve spoken something like this: “I can’t believe my kids don’t practice anymore. You know, after all that sacrifice that I made to send them to Catholic school! Gosh, what a failure of the Catholic school system.”

It’s like, well, why are you blaming it on the Catholic schools? Many people have not gone to Catholic schools and have actually become saints! And many people have also gone to Catholic school and become saints. And, and it has really very little to do on whether I sent my kids Catholic schools or not. That’s part of it, maybe. Hopefully, it’s a good Catholic school and all that stuff. But that’s not sufficient.

And it’s not the main thing, either. The main thing that our children have to see is whether I am willing to live by my faith and die for my faith. And they see that through deeds, whether or not I go to a Catholic school. That’s, that’s an add-on. I mean, and it’s good. It’s a good add-on, if it’s a good school. But if I don’t, if I’m not willing to live my faith, I don’t care how good the Catholic school may be, you know, it’s not about that.

It’s not about that. I cannot give a counter witness at home of what my children hear in the best Catholic school ever because then they won’t get all that, that is being taught to them, you know. I have to give witness, not a counter witness, and the witness I have to give is, “I am ready to die for my faith.” That is the first thing. I have to preach with my life. I have to preach with my deeds. And so, think about that.

Think about, you know, the Creed. The Creed is the first part of the Catechism. Maybe you know the Creed, maybe your children know the Creed. And it’s good that they know it by heart so that they could have a reference in their lives when they don’t have a book, that they can recite it to themselves, and they can see what actually they should be willing to die for.

But let’s say we believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, came down, everything, we believe the whole thing in theory, and then when we have a little league game, or a soccer game, that inconveniences our going to Mass on Sunday or Saturday evening, we, we so easily blow Mass off.

And we say, “Well, I couldn’t go.” What do you mean, you couldn’t go? Why? “Well, because I had the soccer game for my kids,” or “I had this.” You know, what does that say? It basically says to the children, “My parents, they’re cultural Catholics. They don’t really believe.” Yeah, they say they believe. Yeah, but if that’s what it means, then I guess that’s what it means.

It doesn't mean that you're, you know, you're willing to change your plans, because, you know, you paid for the soccer league, and you pay for all this, all the sports. It you know, of course, if you paid for it, then you got to, you know, you got to go show up at the sports league and, and play the game and watch the children play. That's more important than Mass. That's what we're telling them.

And the fact is, you know, when we say, when we ask ourselves, are we willing to die for that? Well, if we're not willing to give up, you know, the complexities of the schedule up or we're not willing to miss one soccer match for that for the faith in order to go to Mass, then how could we be willing to die for it?

That's something that we have to ask ourselves. "Where in my life do I have incongruities between the praxis of my desire of what I want to do and the content of the faith?" In other words, "is my behavior such that, as St. Josemaria says in *The Way*, "is my behavior and conversation such that people can say this man, this woman reads," and I would add lives, "the life of Jesus Christ?"

Is what I do actually an expression of the content of faith? How else am I going to transmit the Creed? It's not simply by teaching. And it's not simply by memorization. It's actually by putting it into practice. Same thing with the Sacraments, the Ten Commandments, the life of prayer, a spirit of service, the life of the Beatitudes. Maybe we teach the Ten Commandments, but do we teach the Beatitudes, which is a, a, the new law of, I would say, the law of maximums?

It's not about just living a minimalistic life, okay, as long as you check off, and you do, and you do this, or you don't do that, then you're okay. Look at the rich young man. He lived the commandments all his life. That was the Old Law, but he was still not happy. And Our Lord invites them to give everything that's the law of maximums, not the law of minimums. And he couldn't because he was attached to too many things.

Think about that. If we're going to transmit the faith to our children, we are going to need to help them be detached from all those things that keep them from giving themselves readily to God when God passes by. I think a successful parent is the one who is able to educate his children or her children in such a way that when the time comes, let's say age 12, 13, 14, 15, and onwards or whenever, that they ask themselves, "What does God want of me? What does God want of me?"

If your children can ask that question and you can be ready for whatever answer they come up with, even if it was not, you know, within our plan, like it was for St. Josemaria when he wanted to become a priest and he told that to his father and his father cried because he didn't, you know, expect his son to want to become a priest or he didn't want his son to become a priest.

That, you know, he had other plans for his son, but he accepted that as the will of God and he didn't place any obstacles in his path. And, in fact, he facilitated things so that he could get in touch with a spiritual director and then, you know, be guided to discover the will of God for him.

Well, this is what we have to do, is educate our children in such a way that they can ask themselves what God asks of them. And also think of a couple of small things which may be human things but are so necessary for the faith to actually have the soil in order to develop properly. Think of the virtue of loyalty.

Just think of that. Do we teach our children that they have to be men and women of their word, that they have to be men and women who stand up to their commitments, with a sense of mission? That they are able to take risks for Our Lord, and when the risk goes bad that they stick, and they stand up for Our Lord?

You know, that's one human virtue, loyalty, which is then elevated to faithfulness or fidelity when it's Christianized, when it's enlightened by grace. But it's so needed; if we don't have the human virtue of loyalty, it's very hard, you know, to persevere in the faith when we come up against all sorts of obstacles in our life.

Another virtue is what I would say, it's the art of reasoning well. The art of reasoning well, which is otherwise known as logic, you know, so that when our children come up against an article in the newspaper that calls into question certain principles of morality or faith, they are able to see through those reasons that those people who defend a, an alternative lifestyle, like maybe a gender ideology or pro-choice philosophy or evolution or, whatever it may be, or atheism.

Simply put, that they are able to have critical reading skills and be able to decipher and be able to point out the logical errors in, in the thinking of those authors. Because they have these, as St. Josemaria called them in Spanish, he said, "ideas Madres," they have these bedrock ideas with which they can judge everything else.

You know and that these bedrock ideas are held in an unquestioned way because they're the bedrock ideas of the faith, you know, and maybe even sound philosophy just because it's the tenants of reason, that, you know, what allows you to then reason properly to, let's say, the existence of God, or the immortality of the soul, or the natural law, or forming your conscience and things like that. This love for truth, for instance.

Another thing that St. Josemaria pointed out many times is also having a sense of history, awareness of the latest trends in the science and politics, having a formed, a well-formed opinion of culture, and a healthy love for the world but at the same time being able to critique it, you know, where it needs critiquing, you know so that we are able to stand with our own two feet with confidence in this world of ours that we love, but which at times may be so tainted with sin and with evil, but we have to save what is savable, you know, or what can be saved, if that's not a word, but salvageable, I suppose.

Some people, when their kids go off to college, they say to their kids, "Now, don't lose your faith in college," you know, "go to Mass every Sunday," and they give a whole series of advice, but invariably say, "Don't lose your faith in college." And I don't know what kind of impression that gives to tell a child, "Don't lose your faith in college."

Well, it gives the impression that you all you care about is the minimal, you know, set of requirements that you need in order to keep your faith. That's what you need to live by. Instead of saying, you know, "How many people are you going to lead to the faith in college?" Now you're forming an apostle. We have to form our children to desire to be apostles, that desire to transmit the faith, not just to minimally live the faith so that they don't lose it all together because we got to shoot higher than our aim.

We have to go over the target, otherwise, we're going to miss it. We have to really form apostles, form apostles. Another aspect of the formation of our children which we need to take into account is that we need to educate them not in simply doing good things but in knowing why they ought to choose to do good things.

So, we shouldn't be satisfied or we shouldn't give praise or blame when we simply see their external actions. We should always ask them, "Why did you choose to do that?" In other words, get into their thinking, their way of thinking, why is it that they did that and explore, investigate their motives of why they were choosing to do what they did.

Even if they were mistaken, but they had good intentions, that's a very good thing. You know, because at least you understand why. And yes, you can correct them later because they made a mistake and whatever it was, but the important thing is the motive, more than the actual thing that they performed or failed to perform.

Ultimately, it's going to be our example. Ultimately, it's going to be whether or not we believe it, whether or not we put it into practice. And that's what we hope to do. And that's why we need to pray about how I actually carry out my life. Whether or not it is in accord with the Creed, with my life of prayer, with the life of the Spirit that St. Paul talks about so often in his letters.

Let us turn to Our Lady to help us transmit the faith the way she did. She was a woman who had a predisposition to being generous. And as soon as she conceived of the Word in her womb, she was then able to spring up in haste and go running to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, to serve, to lead by example, but also to bring the joy of the Word Incarnate in her womb, which necessarily comes not only physically with her, but also with her word.

And that's why St. John the Baptist leapt in the womb of Elizabeth as soon as the greeting, the words of Mary, entered into the ears of Elizabeth. Let us ask Our Lady to bring us the Word of God and to also be able to engender Christ Himself in our own life, to actually incarnate him in our own life so that we too may be able to transmit it, transmit Him, to the people we love.

I thank you, my God for the good resolutions, affections and inspirations which 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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