

ST. JOSEMARIA INSTITUTE PODCAST

TIME IS SHORT

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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.

November is a month that invites us to speak to Christ about the last things or the eternal truths. What are they? We're not going to cover all of them. Death, judgment, particular judgment, final judgment, Purgatory, Hell, and Heaven. Let's begin with a phrase from St. Paul. And he says, "Time is short." And why does he say that?

Well, he's inspired by the Holy Spirit, but at the same time, you could see jumping off the page of his Epistles, this sense of urgency to unite himself to Jesus, and the sense of urgency to speak about Jesus Christ to others and to extend the good news of the Gospel. And he says it himself, "Time is short. I'm running against the clock." There were probably no clocks in those days. Or "I'm running against the sundial."

Okay. But time is short. And St. Josemaria kind of piggybacks on that phrase, in his homily, "Time Is a Treasure" in *Friends of God*. And St. Josemaria kind of complains lovingly to the Lord, "Time is short, too short to love." He's saying, "I don't have enough time to love, to offer You deeds of love." So, why this topic? Because it's meant to give me a little freedom. In spite of all the healthy food at our disposal, all these antioxidants that are accessible, no matter how much broccoli we eat, or Brussels sprouts, at best, we will prolong our life here and we may be fortunate enough to die healthy.

And no matter how much we torture our pet dog, and make him run with us in the morning, again, last time we checked, there is a fourth quarter. And the Lord, part of our vocation to be holy, is that Our Lord well, has a time to call us out of this world. Everything's very personal, from our conception to our death, our passing out of this world, it's all orchestrated by the Lord. We are not just creatures.

We are daughters and sons. Everyone is custom-made by the Lord. And everyone has a custom-made calling. We may have similar callings. But everyone has a very unique calling. Because love is individual. Love is always personal. And when you're God, you're infinitely loving. And why are we doing this? Well, in fact, if we don't contemplate the end of our life and the judgment, Jesus, very seldom, I think it's probably the only time He actually calls someone a fool! hypothetically, He tells a parable, which I will read in a minute. He actually says, if you don't contemplate that your life here is finite, that's foolish.

I was enlightened by kind of mentoring a recently ordained priest. And we were having pizza. And he was asking all sorts of questions from the veteran here. And he was a rookie. And lo and behold, during our dinner, he had a phone call. Someone was dying in the hospital in critical condition, can he anoint him? So uh, so much for our pizza dinner. And he said, "Can you please go with me? I haven't done this too often. And can you coach me?" So, I went with him to the hospital.

And I said, "All right, start, get the oils out, and first hear his Confession. Guy was in a semi-coma. And anyway, he starts going through in detail all the Commandments. So that was my first interaction. I said, whatever his name was, "Jimmy, stop. Get him to kiss the crucifix. And that's it." Well, I learned that he should make an integral Confession. I said, "He can't! He's in a coma. Just get him to kiss the crucifix. Move it! Hurry up!" "Why are you in such a rush?" "Because he may die before you give him the absolution. Just get it done!"

So, I'm a little bit pushy, but you know this is a real case! He says, "Okay, now what?" "Well, get the oils out and anoint him," you know, and so we got all that done. So that was good. You know, he was relieved, and he was pretty nervous, and he was kind of shaking, and I said, "Listen, you're going to do this a lot. So, you know, the first few times it's a little bit challenging." And so, the parents, this young man was in his 30s, and was, was happy because he came back to the Church, sad because it was from drug overdose.

And the parents were, especially the mom who was very, very sorrowful, but very happy at the same time her son received the Sacraments, that was very important to her. That was her dream, that he would come back. So, it was wonderful that, that part is very good. And that, that it had to come to this for him to come back to God because he wanted the priest to come. He wanted to go to Confession. He wanted to be anointed. And so that, very consoling for the mom.

And I was happy too but there was kind of a sad thought that came to mind. We're not called, listen, we'll take what we can get, but we can do better than this. We're not called to make it by the skin of our teeth. Well, he died with the Sacraments. That's huge! Fantastic. All right, but what the Lord wants of us is that we have a goal, and it's to be a saint. And that doesn't mean that, you know, we don't care about anything else, we have no interests, you know, our, our work doesn't mean much to us, you know, that we're, we're indifferent towards everything.

No, it doesn't mean that. It just means that I'm going to put the love of Christ in everything I do. That's my mission statement. And, you know, I pray that you have a real long life, but one of these days, I'm going to only have two months left. And one of these days, I'm going to only have a week left and one of these days, I'm going to only have a day left. And more than you know, "I'm afraid of that judgment!" I'm not afraid, we don't want to be afraid of the judgement. We want the gift of the Holy Spirit. I want to be afraid of not loving enough. That's a good fear.

I want to, I want to give a lot of glory to God through my love, my deeds of love. I don't want to presume, but I know how much the Lord loves me. And so, I don't doubt that. But once that spiritual formaldehyde sets in, it sets in. That's the teaching of the Church, that you are doused with spiritual formaldehyde. In other words, you're fixed. In the moment of your passing out of this world, you can't merit any more.

That's why traditionally, November is a time to give special concentration to the souls in Purgatory. You know, they've, they've made it, but they need purification. But they can't merit that purification, it has to be merited by souls in Heaven and individuals on Earth. So, what does Our Lord say? Every, every parable is tailor-made to us personally, and I think this one is especially tailor-made to our own culture. And St. Luke is the one who records this, and Jesus says, "Take heed and beware of all covetousness. For man's, [or woman's], life does not consist in the abundance of his or her possessions."

Okay, so far, so good. And he tells us something: that we have a choice to make. And we'll get into the parable. You know, a general choice to make: Is my life going to be about God and others? Or is my life going to be about myself through the medium of achievement, the medium of health, the medium of wealth, the medium of notoriety, through the medium of social acceptance, I mean, you know, whatever, false gods we could present to ourselves. And that's, and that's the choice Jesus wants us to make.

And he says, in this parable, that a selfish attitude is extremely addictive. And it's fleeting and never enough, that all the glories that are possible in this life are fleeting, are mirages; they don't fulfill us. And we invoke that famous saint, one of the key figures of Western civilization, St. Augustine, who, for a while, anyway, was all about himself, his achievement, his fame, his intellectual acumen, his sensual self-indulgence.

So, he tried it all. And he says, you know, "Learn from my bad experience, learn from my sinfulness. Our hearts are restless, Lord, until they rest in you." And he converted in his early 30s. And he said, "How late have I loved you!" That was his disappointment: that he decided, or corresponded, whatever the right phrase is, too late. Well, we listen to Jesus here. We literally put words in His mouth because he presides in the Blessed Sacrament. And that's one of the purposes of the Gospels: to put words in the Eucharistic mouth of Our Lord.

"And He told them a parable saying that land of the rich man brought forth plentifully. And he thought to himself, 'What shall I do for I have nowhere,'" now let's focus on a pronoun, the pronoun is exclusively first person. And there's no second person, there's no, "you" here, or "other," or "they." It's only "I" or "my." And if we would advise the Holy Spirit, who inspired St. Luke, we'd say, you know, why don't you remove 90% of the "I" because it's very redundant, it's very repetitive, and the Holy Spirit would say, "That's the point."

"What shall I do for I have nowhere to store my crops? 'And he said,'" I'm going to exaggerate it, "And he said, I will do this. I will pull down my barns and build larger ones. And there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul: soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years, take your ease; eat, drink, be merry."

And so, we see that he's addicted to crops, he has a lot of crops, but what does he want to do? He wants more. And in allegorical style, he never has enough crops. And as he is self-absorbed with the crops, they're never enough and he needs more and more and more. So, what does he live for? He lives for crops. And they could be any of those idolatries that we even have in our culture, you know, any form of self-absorption, vis a vis lust, vis a vis work, vis a vis accomplishments, vis a vis success, etc.

I received this strange text. Was it yesterday? Yeah, yesterday, strange text, talking about crops. And this is not any judgment, and it was two friends of mine from the East Coast. And in between these two friends was an elderly woman. And I could tell she was an Italian woman. elegantly dressed. And I immediately said, "Who in?" She looked like a generic Italian woman who was about eighty years old, elegantly dressed, lipsticked, you know, eyelashes were pronounced and stuff. I'm not into all that stuff. But that's what I noticed in the picture. And I said, you know, could be twenty-five ladies I knew in my previous life, very stereotypical-looking elderly Italian, elegant woman.

And it was just a picture of her. My two friends, no, no message, no, nothing. I don't know if that's the "in thing" now. You know, I'm always twenty years behind all this, all the gadgetry. So, so I'm kind of a little apprehensive, you know, I don't know who this is. Maybe it's, you know, my next-door neighbor, you know, or, but she looks like ten people I know, in my previous life. So, I finally muster up the humility and say, "Who is this woman?" And then the response is that of surprise: "You've got to be kidding me." Maybe you don't know who they are, who she is, because you're too young. But I certainly knew that person, you know, decades ago.

I didn't know her personally, but from movies and everything. Sophia Loren. And I said, "Wow." And I texted back, I said, "Wow, did she change!" You know? And uh, so I was, I was a bit embarrassed. But really, you know, I think it was an innocent failure to recognize who this famous person was. Because the last time I saw a movie of hers, you know, when you're my age, you can say it was probably at least forty years ago, okay? Way before you were born, maybe before your parents were born.

And what's my point here? And I'm not casting judgment on Sophia Loren, but if crops were her good looks and her acting and her movies, that's gone, you know. What can I tell you? I mean, she's beautiful in other ways, but not what, not like forty years ago. So, the point here is that anything we do in life is a little bit, the same phenomenon that happens to everybody. When I focus on myself, I'm not saying she did, but when I focus on myself, I never get enough of it. And I become less free because I'm kind of tied to myself. And the meaning of my life, for every human life, especially a Christian life, is to fill my day with deeds of love because that, and Our Lord reveals, that remains. My love remains.

In fact, this sounds a little bit radical, not only do I amass love, I keep the love I have. I don't lose it; I add to it. I become love. And you say, "Well, what does that mean?" Well, Jesus, in two instances says, "You must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." And then St. Luke qualifies that perfection: "You must be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful." And God is mercy. He doesn't have it, he is it. And then Jesus says, "A new commandment I give you, that you love as I have loved." And who is God? God is self-giving love. He is, He doesn't have it, He doesn't do it, He is it.

And who is Jesus? Well, he's the human translation of this infinite self-giving love. And so, as I love as I give myself in love freely, I have to be free because that's a necessary ingredient. Can't be forced, can be guilted, has to be free. I become love. I become more, I become transformed with those deeds of love. And let's read the end of this: "I will store, will collect, my grain and I will say to my soul: soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years. Take your ease; eat, drink, be merry."

You're healthy. Not to insult our collective intelligence as you've never experienced death. And psychologically, you probably don't go to too many of them, I do. When I go to a wake, I feel bad, I'm sorrowful, but you know, I see that person in the coffin as an exception. I mean, wow, shouldn't have happened. The norm is that we, that no one lands in the coffin. Well, the norm is that eventually everybody lands in one of those things, one of those contraptions.

Lord, why do you why do you call me a fool if I don't think about this? But God said to him, "Fool, this night your soul is required of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" You never see a U-Haul truck stopped in front of a grave site. Unless you're an Egyptian, you know, or an ancient Egyptian. So, what can I bring with myself? Well, your deeds of love. That stays with you, you know. Can I amass more? Well, according to the teachings of the Church, everything stops when I check out. This is the time for merit.

So, he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God, when I check out, I'm going to have an exit interview. We're all going to have an exit interview. I don't know if it's going to be a video. I have no idea. "Can you tell us because you're going to be in that interview before us?" Well, I'll try! But you know? And if I don't, it's because it was not possible. But what is it? What's going to be on that test? Our Lord says, "Okay, these are the questions they're going to ask you. So, I want you to get ready for that test." Alright, what's on the test?

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick? Or in prison and visit you? And the King will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of these, one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to Me.'" And what does this mean? You know, I'm just going to allude to it here.

This giving means what it means, you know, corporal works of mercy or, you know, whatever opportunities we have within our circumstances, to help those in physical need. But there's a deeper issue here. It is to give them Christ. People are hungry for Christ, the Word of God, the Eucharist. "Well, how do I do that, Lord?" Love them. Love people. Give them the experience of the heart of Christ. It's all about an absence of Christ. That's what he's talking about.

This thirst for truth, thirst for Christ. This hunger for Christ, the nakedness signifies this lack of, lack of Christ because Paul always says, "Put on Jesus Christ as a clothing." In the loneliness is another allusion to an absence of Christ. The prison is a paralysis because there's an absence of Christ; you become paralyzed with sin, and you lose your freedom. And so that's, that's the question Jesus is going to ask. And I know I used him as an example, but I'd like to do it again. Especially since the Holy Father has quoted him in his encyclical on sanctity, this Vietnamese Cardinal whose, I think, canonization cause is open.

And when he was imprisoned in Vietnam, when Saigon fell, which is now Ho Chi Minh City, well he, at first, he went into a blue funk: the harsh conditions, and pain, and sorrow because his diocese was in shambles, maybe not spiritually, but all sorts of persecutions start to occur. He's the cardinal, well, he's the archbishop and he's in jail.

Well, Our Lord scripted his story, and he underwent a conversion there. And he said, "Well, I've been talking about God for decades in Vietnam and all over the world. I was rector of two seminaries talking about God and organizing the seminaries, the enrollment went up. I wrote articles and books. Sought after speaker. And now, a number," literally had a number tattooed on him.

And some kind soul would smuggle in a little bit of wine and bread. It's a rice culture, rice diet culture. So, his chalice had to be the palm of his hand, and he would say Mass with a couple of drops of wine. Well, anyway, I think what we want to use here is he said, "Well, what I'm going to do is turn every minute of the rest of my life," well, he was thirteen years in jail, in prison, and nine years of solitary, more or less because he converted a lot of guards.

So, couldn't have been total solitary. And so, they stop rotating the guards because they cut their losses and just kept the same ones. He was that good. Anyway, he said, "I'm going to turn the rest of my life into many

deeds of love. Every minute I want it to be a deed of love and the Lord can do whatever He wants with it.” He had a powerful influence on St. John Paul, he gave his retreat to him, and he finally got banished from Vietnam after his prison sentence was up.

But I want to embrace that as well, Lord, you know, with your grace, with your enlightenment, installments, but that’s the important thing. Those, that’s, those are the crops I have to go after. Those deeds of love in the form of my work, in form of my prayer, in form of my conversation with others, in form of my service, in form of my suffering. I want to turn everything into a deed of love. And Mary, ingrain this point in my mind and heart from The Way: “If you’re an apostle, death will be a good friend who helps you on your way.”

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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