

ST. JOSEMARIA INSTITUTE PODCAST

## HOLY MASS

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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.

On leaving the synagogue, says the gospel, Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. He was invited; you, my Lord, invited to a house, maybe for lunch, or dinner. “And Simon’s mother-in-law lay sick with fever. They immediately told her, or him, about her. And then he approached, grasped her hand, and held her up. And then the fever left her.” And this is the first miracle.

“When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons. And the whole town was gathered at the door.” Maybe hundreds, we don’t know. “And he cured them, who were sick with various diseases, and he drove out demons, not permitting them to speak.” And then you wonder, “How is this happening? What’s the making of these miracles? What is the source of your power, Jesus?”

“Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place where he prayed.” That’s the key thing here. All the activity, all the performance, so to speak, of Jesus Christ’s life, has a root in prayer. “And Simon and those who were with him went after him and then on finding him said, ‘Everyone is looking for you.’” Jesus, you don’t have a second, you don’t have a break.

“And then he told them, let us go to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. Because for that purpose have I come.” And again, you see this kind of, in our culture, they would, this would be like, maybe a Snapchat or some Instagram-moment video, “A Day in the Life of Jesus” in 30 seconds with those images. And then you think, “How in this Snapchat, in this video Jesus? How do I understand? Or what’s the, so beautiful, no? And then you say, how do you do that?”

And the answer is because the life of Jesus was meaningful. And that meaning was rooted or permeated by your sacrifice. It wasn’t just an easy life; it was really demanding! But you see Our Lord giving himself with freedom. And I don’t know if you have seen these days the video that is in the Opus Dei website about the visit of the Father. You can see people happy, just basically happy.

I mean, you cannot watch that video and not to smile, or to feel better. It’s just, it’s contagious, right? And I was wondering, “My Lord, this is what your life is about: impacting other people’s lives.” The topic of this meditation is sacrifice. Sacrifice has a bad reputation, right? So, “sacrifice,” no, it’s not Lent, yes, or whatever, right?

But sacrifice is the most, the most, the Father, the Prelate of Opus Dei, in that video, answering one of the questions says, “When one, when you and I take the Cross, like Jesus Christ, we are imitating, we’re following, the supreme act of freedom, which is to love something that you don’t like. And that’s a sacrifice.” And then you say, “My Lord, Sometimes I’m scared about sacrifice. I always get defensive. And maybe it’s because I don’t give meaning to my sacrifice.”

I was reading the other day. It was an article about millennials. No, nothing, no, I don’t want to offend anybody. But they were saying that the millennials, among other things, they have many virtues, one of them, maybe things that are lacking, is the capacity of risking out of fear. And I don’t think it’s fear would stop anybody or, or security.

I don’t think that’s what a millennial or anybody else kind of feels when stopped, what really stops you is the lack of meaning. What really blocks me, Jesus, is not risking my securities because when I have a goal that is worth following, I jump out of my, whatever, security, comfort zone easily because if I have a meaning, that moves me into action or to commitment or whatever it is.

So, maybe the point here with sacrifice, my Lord, instead of doing more things, or examining myself, it’s just giving meaning. That’s the first thing: to connect my sacrifice with you, with your Cross, with your eternal sacrifice is not a matter of doing more difficult things; it’s basically going deeper in. “Why should I do this?” And then asking myself, “Why should I do this? Honestly, Jesus, why should I take the Cross?” And the answer is not just in a minute.

The answer is something that builds up inside you, inside me, over the years. I was thinking watching that video, for example, imagine that you had the capacity of traveling through time and space. And you take that clip, and then you go back to the thirties in Spain. And you go to a Spaniard woman, [Blessed] Guadalupe [Ortiz], in 1939, after the Civil War, and then you go on a random Tuesday or Monday morning to Guadalupe, and then you appear in her room.

“Hey, Guadalupe, how are you doing?” And then Guadalupe is, you know, whatever, is working on something, or is just going to, to the visit to the Blessed Sacrament or she’s trying to, you know, whatever. And you say, “Guadalupe, you know what, I’m gonna show you something that has to do with you.” And then she looks at you like, “Where are you coming from?”

And then you put that video and you tell her, you know, there are two people in Opus Dei, in the woman’s side after the Civil War, you, one of them is you, and then fourteen guys, and I know that now it sounds very crazy, but in few years, look at the impact of your life. And then you show to Guadalupe a bunch of *gringos* smiling, being with the Prelate, talking about schools, talking about initiatives, families, and flags, and music and testimonies.

And a paralytic saying, “I have, I’m offering this for you,” and a young girl saying, “You know it’s so inspiring to have the teachings of St. Josemaria,” and then you see that video for Guadalupe. And Guadalupe says, “Wow, is this the impact of my life?” Now, Jesus, my Lord, in this present moment, Redemption is still going on. And the video of 2070 will be connected to my life now.

Or the year 200, you know 2300 years or whatever is connected to what I'm doing now. I'm connected to your Cross; I'm connected to Abraham. I'm connected to the creation of the world. And this is meaningful. And it gives me peace to know that it's meaningful, that I have something that is worth living and also is in itself, is an encounter with you. Sacrifice is an encounter with you.

And then when I examine my fidelity, my commitment with you is a commitment of love. When I pray the Rosary, when we pray the Rosary, we say, "Oh God, whose only begotten Son, by His life, death, and Resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life." Sometimes we say those words so quickly. But there is something there very, very big.

We're saying, "Oh God, that through the life, death, and Resurrection of your son, you have bought me. You paid for me, eternal life." And then we continue with our prayer. Okay, I want to consider, I want to meditate on these mysteries of the Rosary in order to have a light and to receive this light, to grow in my understanding of the beauty of my vocation. And the good news, my Lord, is that my fidelity then becomes creative, becomes part of something that is beautiful.

I remember I went to Texas for my course. And one of the excursions days we went to this Nimitz Museum, just like a couple of hours north of Houston, and this is a museum about the Pacific War. I don't know if you're interested in that, but I was, I wasn't that much into the whole thing. But anyway, we went there. And I was really, really impressed because we have all the battles, Guadalcanal, Midway, Okinawa, and then every room is so well done.

And you have maps, videos, pictures, sound, you can touch, okay, you can move things. And you get into the battles, you get into the, and then one of the things that I realized, that is very shocking when you go to one of those war museums, the same happened to me when I went to the Memorial Museum in New York, September 11.

You see faces. Real people. Some of them are looking at the camera, and then you feel like they're looking at you from eternity, in a way, right? And they're, some of them, wounded. Some of them, they are dead. And you see what? Those guys were fighting for something that they didn't see. The freedom that they conquered came later. In the moment of the battle, everything was disgusting and tough, and really, I mean, heroic. But they did it.

They said, "It's not just about me. I'm making history here." And I'm not promoting war or anything like that, far from me doing such a thing, but at the same time, you can see something beautiful there, that they were seeing beyond themselves. And this is what happens when I discover your Cross, Jesus. I'm seeing beyond myself, beyond my problems.

When I go to Mass, I'm part of this Snapchat, Instagram video that we saw about your life in these few lines in the Gospel of St. Mark, chapter number one: Jesus healing. And not healing in a spectacular way. First the mother-in-law; then in the house; then dinner; then people come; sick people; people possessed; and Jesus imposing his hands on them; the following morning, praying, going outside, recollecting himself; and then having Redemption at the center of his heart.

My Lord, I really want to be part of this Redemption that you are bringing to the world. I want to be, not the protagonist in a vain way, but I want to be part of those videos about Catholics that go throughout history. Videos, in the sense, images of happy people throughout history. I'm connected with them; I don't want to be indifferent. This is what Pope Francis keeps saying, "We cannot live in an indifferent mode or in a world that is far from each other."

Nearby my house, there's a new homeless now. I didn't stop yet to say hi or to talk to him. But the other day I was stuck in traffic, far from him. Anyway, so, I was thinking about that guy. And now, he's probably you know, whatever, five-something feet tall, African American, big guy. I don't know his name. But he's there every day. And I was thinking 30 years ago or whatever, 40, that guy was a baby.

A cute baby, you know? Like anybody else in the world. You started as a baby. He was a nice baby. And then later, he was two years old, baby. Or kid, or children. And then he's, he would be smiling and making noises like little babies do and whatever and playing with a ball or with whatever, and opening his eyes for music, and falling to the ground. Very cute, very, like a nice kid. And then I press "stop" in his movie. And I thought, "What happened to you?"

"Who abandoned you? What's your story? How did you end up in the streets of Chicago, in a cold winter, without the love of a house, of a family? What happened to you?" And I don't know, I don't know the answer. I need to ask him. And I will, probably one of these days. No, no, not that I want to examine him or to investigate or whatever, just, "What happened to you?"

And this is what Pope Francis, I think, and Jesus Christ in this Gospel we just read is trying to convey to the world, that the sacrifice of the Cross is about giving ourselves to others. It's the, St. Josemaria said, "Jesus your Mass is a center and the root of my interior life." It is just there, it's the center of everything, it's like a magnet, like a gigantic magnet in my interior life that attracts everything there.

A magnet that is at the same time a filter that purifies my thoughts, my intentions, my ideals, everything is transformed by your Cross. It's not, it's not destroyed, it's not changed in the sense of burdening, no, it's just transformed to better, like, like gilded or whatever, through the Cross. And every single sacrifice, every single act of love, then has, you know, higher meaning, scope, which is: Redemption, Redemption, Redemption.

And I can then Jesus, with my imagination and with my heart, especially, go with you to pray early in the morning, to recollect myself and to say, "What am I doing with my life, Jesus? What am I doing today? Or what do I do tomorrow?" And then it's, "Okay, I want to help you. I want to go to my workshop, to my office," whatever, and then say, "How can I help you to redeem the world?"

And sometimes I will feel the temptation of indifference, or maybe discouragement or whatever. And then I will drink from the clear waters of your Cross, of the sacrifice in the Mass and say, "No, the Eucharist is the answer. Your fidelity here, your creative fidelity, gives me strength, gives me,

you know, the impulse to go out. And then I will contemplate the Church, the little boat of the Church, in the sea of history making its way through waves, storms, and with the strength of the Eucharist.”

I’m not super big into Twitter, but the other day I saw this tweet by Robert George, this professor at Princeton, and he was saying, “What is common among Elizabeth Anscombe, Oscar Wilde, Alasdair McIntyre, Walter Percy, and John Wayne,” and many other names. And I was like, “What? Anscombe with John Wayne? What is going on?” And then I realized I didn’t know some of the names and then I Googled them. And all of them are converts to the Catholic faith. All of them.

And it was a lot more names and I don’t remember now, you know, philosophers, scientists, writers, actors, everything. And I just thought, “Man, it’s the same thing I was telling you about the video of the Prelate of Opus Dei in this country, and then going back in time to the Spaniards in the thirties, saying, “Hey, if you keep your fidelity, later, great things will happen!”

And then you go back in history, and you go to Abraham and you say, “Hey, you’re in your comfort zone in, at Ur, which is your little town, but if you get out of there, and then look at the stars, and you say yes to me,” says God, “your descendants will be like, like the sand in the beaches or like the waters, like stars in the galaxy, and it’s going to be varied and powerful and beautiful.”

“And it’s gonna be a constellation of different people, of races, and, and different people of all backgrounds and,” and then he said, “Yes,” but he didn’t see it! And all the saints in history: St. Ignatius, St. Josemaria, all of them started things that went beyond their lifetime. I mean, some of them saw something, but not the whole thing. And the whole thing is going to be seen only in Heaven, when I, Jesus, will be able to see the connection between all the lives touching each other, the influence, the Communion of Saints.

*What a beautiful thing to be Catholic. What a beautiful thing to go to Mass.* Like a refuge, my Mass is a refuge. It’s a place so sacred, so fresh, so new. It’s a place where I meet you in eternity. I connect myself to your eternal sacrifice, and I connect my day, the little things of my day; my effort to smile; to forgive; to look to others with the eyes of mercy; to begin again; to be humble. In spite of my failures, or whatever, Jesus forgives me. Jesus takes me.

And I, maybe like Simon of Cyrene, that is coming back, is distracted, “I don’t want to take this Cross,” but okay, come on, I help a little bit, and then I take it. And then Jesus says, “Your sons will be Catholics.” And Jesus bought eternity for your family because you just helped me a little bit with my Cross. Or maybe I want to be like Veronica, Jesus, with atonement, washing your face with my acts of love.

Whatever it is. Or I’ll be like St. John, scared, but close to Mary. Not understanding the whole thing, but at the same time giving myself to you because I love you. And I don’t understand, but I love you and I stay there. Let’s put ourselves there, close to the Cross, close to Jesus. And let’s think about the scenes in history: I don’t know if you have read this book by Bishop Văn Thuận.

He was, I think, thirteen years or so in a concentration camp in Vietnam run by the communists. In the beginning of the book, he says that he was really upset with God, again, because they were suffering, but there wasn't meaning. And he was rebellious, saying, "Why did you put me here? I didn't want to be a bishop if that was the deal. I was supposed to be taking care of people and I'm in a concentration camp. And what's the point of this? You're not using my life well."

He was talking to God in a way. Then, little by little, his eyes, became, you know, cleaner, to see reality; and to embrace it! He said, "Okay, I got to do something here." And then he says that after years, or months, maybe, he explains his deal. "In the re-education camp," in a concentration camp, "we were divided into groups of fifty people. And we slept in a common bed, and everyone had the right for four feet of space."

"At 9:30 pm, we had to turn off the lights, and everyone had to go to sleep. It was then that I would bow over the bed to celebrate Mass by heart." And there was no Altar, no candles, no nothing. And then, in other parts of the book, he explains that he would put the wine in one hand, directly on his palm, and the host on the other. And just starting the Mass by heart, right there, surrounded by five people, four people.

I mean there were fifty, but he would put the Catholics around him, "Okay, I'm gonna say Mass." "With three drops of wine and a drop of water in the palm of my hand. This was my altar. And this was my cathedral. I distributed communion by passing my hand under the mosquito net. We even made little sacks from the paper of cigarette packs, to preserve the Most Holy Sacrament and bring it to others. The Eucharistic Jesus was always with me in my shirt, my shirt pocket."

"Everyone knew that Jesus was in their midst. At night, the prisoners would take turns for Adoration." Oh! Again, let's pause. Okay, wait a second. Let me let me digest. Let me think about what you just said, Văn Thuận. So, you're there for 13 years. And then suddenly, the Mass transforms you. And you start bringing Jesus back to this world, to a world that is not only imperfect, or whatever, is a disaster, but Jesus still comes through the miracle of the consecration, the Transubstantiation, the reality of Jesus in the midst of a concentration camp, and then you start bringing it to others, to sick people.

Everybody knows that. And then Adoration at night. Sometimes we complain, "Oh, I'm gonna organize an Adoration for my friends, and then nobody's gonna come." Listen, maybe it's because we lack faith. Maybe it's because we don't realize and we need to make, I want to atone, to make atonement to you, Jesus, because, I mean, there's no worse scenario than a concentration camp run by the communists, and there is precisely where the light of Jesus shines.

And in other parts of the book, he says that they organized catechesis for Buddhists, for Christians. People would receive Baptism. This is the power of the sacrifice of the hidden life of Jesus in the Eucharist, of your sacrifice on the Cross, Jesus. And this is also my life. So, help me, my Lord, to give meaning to everything I do, the meaning of love, then I will have pain, I will be in dark, in

darkness, sometimes. I will experience frustrations, human reactions, all of the above, but meaning will transform my life, the meaning of a life given to God.

I was reading a book about the Eucharist, and I didn't know that at the beginning, the words of the Eucharist were more, when the early Christians would say Mass, the Consecration words, the words that the priest will say, were, "Take, eat, this is my body, which shall be destroyed for you." Later through the translations, we lost a little bit of meaning because we say "deliver." Right? Or "given."

But it's not "given" in the sense of "distributed" to you or "given" in the sense of "delivered," it's more "given to death." And originally it was "destroyed for you," so: "take my body that will be destroyed for you." So, imagine a priest saying that today. Imagine now he's saying that but with those words, and then you: "Oh! That's the price of my, of my happiness, of my eternity." If I can, like Abraham, look at the sky, and see a constellation, a galaxy of saints, all of them happy, all of them with hope.

All of them lived their lives here in a beautiful way. It's because Jesus Christ gave himself and that eternal sacrifice is so powerful that has an, it's like an atomic bomb of grace throughout history that keeps you know, hitting hearts in a good way to transform them, to purify them, to clean them, to heal. And good news, you can be part of that atomic bomb of grace.

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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