

ST. JOSEMARIA INSTITUTE PODCAST

BEING EXTRAORDINARY IN THE ORDINARY

REV. PETER ARMENIO

In the Name of the Father and of the Son 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.

We focus our attention on Our Lord. I'm on a roll, I'm making people laugh and I haven't said a thing. And we focus on the Blessed Sacrament. And that is our greatest theology book, our greatest catechism. Everything's implied there. And it's very germane to any topic, but the topic we're going to pray about today: the Holy Spirit speaks in a very special way, in a direct way, through the official representative of Jesus called His Vicar. And that Vicar is the one who succeeds Peter the Apostle, our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

And the Holy Spirit has moved the Holy Father to write a longish exhortation; one of the few perks of being a pope is you could exhort and get away with it. And he wrote an exhortation on holiness, which strikes at the heart of what we always contemplate, reflect on, in a certain sense, every theme of meditation, of the talks, the classes, hearken back to imitating Jesus Christ and becoming as much like him as possible, which is what holiness is all about.

And why would the Holy Spirit move the Holy Father to write this long exhortation on being a saint? Because as he himself teaches, and his predecessors have taught very clearly, that the extension of this kingdom of peace, joy, freedom, truth, love, depends on witnessing the heart of Christ. In other words, being saintly. And to the degree that the followers of Jesus are saintly - it's that simple - to that degree, the Kingdom grows. It spills into other hearts.

And it doesn't take a rocket scientist or a brain surgeon to figure out that the Church has to be brought into the nooks and crannies of society by her laywomen and laymen. Otherwise, we priests, we parish priests will be flipping hamburgers. The Church has to be brought to the people so that the people are brought to the Sacraments. How did I title this conversation with Our Lord taken from the exhortation [*Gaudete et Exsultate*, exalt and glorify, *exsultate et glorificate*]. It's a phrase from the exhortation: "being extraordinary in the ordinary," the Holy Father said.

Extraordinary love in the ordinary medium. Whether it's making a bed, whether it's coming and going to class, whether it's setting the table, whether it's writing a dissertation, whether it's sponging up a table, that we learn to connect with Christ through every ordinary activity. It's sort of like in the societies gone by, I mean, not, you know, centuries ago, but maybe a century ago, in these villages all over the world of where the culture was mostly agricultural.

And you grew your own food and slaughtered your own food, and on special occasion, whatever it is, you slaughter your pig or your cow, whatever it is, and people about four generations before you would say that they didn't have all that many economic means, so absolutely nothing was wasted, even the snout of the pig. I don't want to get into too much detail, but just trust me, nothing was wasted.

And they said, "we were so scrupulous about utilizing every part of that animal that we even preserved the squeak." All right? So, even the squeak was utilized, or the grunt, or the snorting, or whatever the right word is. And holiness is a little bit like that. Everything counts to connect with Our Lord. Now let's look at this a bit. I have to maybe correct myself, not maybe, I definitely have to correct myself but I'm thinking about something specific.

I think I may have shared with you that the Gospel is broken down into a number of parts; you got the infancy and then you got the public life and then you got the Passion, and then you got the Resurrection. Life. So those are the parts of the Gospel. And I missed, understandably, but still, it's a mistake. I missed a key part of the Gospel that is silent. There's no record of that part of the Gospel. And I'm plagiarizing St. Josemaria, who says the silent part of the gospel also is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

And what's that silent part of the Gospel? It is the majority of time the Son of God made man spent in this world. The majority of the time was confined to, well, there's a number of years in some Jewish ghetto of Alexandria, Egypt, I would presume between you know, one month old or two months old to age six or seven when his parents lived in Egypt and in Nazareth. And then only for three years, miracles, public sermons, etc.

And that in itself is terribly important, that Our Lord did that. If he had American consultants, maybe he would be advised. First, become a hermit for two or three years. Dress in sheepskin. Have a long, scraggly beard of disheveled hair. And, you know, just fulminate on repentance. Be the ancient version of a Jonathan Edwards or Cotton Mather or something, you know, make a splash. And do it when you're about seven or eight years old, you know.

Well, you can't have a beard when you're seven or eight years old even if you are God, if you're gonna be human, you can't have it both ways. But, you know, seclude yourself and then enter into Jerusalem, creating animals out of nothing. Dropping succulent food from the sky in the poor neighborhoods of Jerusalem or some of the villages. Make a splash. Make it really obvious that you're the Messiah.

He didn't do it. And what he does is the best way. What did he do? He did, he was so ordinary that there is no written record. There's a summary: St. Luke says, "he grew in stature and grace before God and man." That was it. To me, that's not exactly a biography. You got the Joyful Mysteries, you know, some highlights of his infancy. And nothing is typical workday, his schedule, little vignettes of relationships he had, good friends of his, his best friend, feast days customs, sporting events, if they had that, I'm sure they had some form of games.

Nothing, nothing at all. And then the Gospel does allude to that, in the Eucharistic discourse, which is his most jarring discourse. And that's when he started to lose people because he started talking about he himself being the Bread of Life. That's different. And that since he's the Bread of Life, to really have an intense life in him and him in us, we need to eat his flesh and drink his blood.

I'm sure that put everybody on edge, especially if you don't - if you've never heard of the Eucharist. We understand that we have the light of faith, but we also could understand the apprehensive reaction. The Apostles had the right reaction, we don't get it either. But we really trust you and believe that we can eat your flesh and drink your blood in a way that is commensurate with the natural law.

And so, he said, he was the bread of God too. And he said that he's the Bread of Life, and you'll never hunger, you'll never thirst, you'll have life. So, this is all radically new. And the rap against him, the Jews then murmured at him because he said, "I am the bread which came down from Heaven," and they didn't like that too much. And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?"

In other words, "He's a carpenter! That's what he's been! He's - this is new!" And he had a similar reaction when he preached for the first time in the synagogue, claiming that one of the prophecies of Isaiah have been fulfilled in him. And the rap against him was, "isn't this guy the carpenter?" He's been ordinary up to this very point, that's what they're saying. For us, this is tremendous light. These insulting words, for us, open up a whole new vista. And that vista has made St. Teresa a Doctor of the Church. That whole new vista is part of the enlightenment that St. Josemaria miraculously received on October 2, 1928.

You know, there's different Gospel versions. He's the carpenter, he's the son of the carpenter, he's the - just the son of Mary, you know, she'll be Queen of Heaven and Earth, but you're "just the son of Mary," because they were super ordinary as well. And this ordinariness of Jesus' hidden life is such that it didn't even merit a write-up - it was that ordinary. Now in hindsight, we appreciate that it wasn't written up.

Also, the Gospel where these are seminal words of Jesus: "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" - from Thomas - Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." "I am the way." Why does he say, "I am the way?" He doesn't just say, "I'm just the model." "I'm the way," because what do you do, well, you walk along the way? And so, we're supposed to follow in his footsteps. He says you're supposed to convert into deeds what I did. And a big part of the way is his life and Nazareth, his life as a worker, his life as a friend, his life as a son, his life as a person who had a lot of relationships.

And what did Jesus do for the majority of his years? He - because who is Jesus? We look at it theologically: Jesus is the Incarnation of infinite love. That's what God is, God is infinite love,

he's infinite goodness. There are all sorts of perfections that apply to God, essentially, infinitely. But Aquinas says it's merciful love. It's the salient quality, the most obvious quality of God. He is infinite love with a human face. He's the true human translation of infinite love and infinite love within the mysteries of Divine Wisdom and Providence, manifested itself in an ordinary way.

He didn't write treatises, wasn't known for, you know, radical works of mercy, even though he did works of mercy within the confines of his possibilities, in his work as a carpenter, in his visits to people, but it was it was kind of, the microcosm of his conversion of the world occurred in Nazareth. And all of us have to be a microcosm of the conversion of the world. Because we are on that wavelength.

Everything Jesus said can't go to waste. Nothing, just like in the olden days, slaughtering, you know, livestock. Nothing can go to waste. And he says, "You're the light of the world." Get the Gospel to every corner of the world. Start in Jerusalem. In other words, start in Nazareth, start in Chicago. Start in Berwyn. Start in your dorm, start in your classroom, start it, if you're working at 711, start there because you are a microcosm of the world.

And you're also you are a microcosm of the Church of the universal Church. You are an ambulatory Church that Our Lord is calling us, and hence the Holy Father's document, to bring the Church into the world. We can't just passively sit back and expect by osmosis people to come back to the Church. This is what the Holy Father, driven by the Holy Spirit, that's what he repeats and reinforces constantly. We've got to get out there in the periphery.

Periphery doesn't mean to go into the wilds of Central Africa unless you are a central African. Sometimes it could mean our best friend, sometimes it can be our brother or sister, etc. He quotes a number of saints, he sort of piggybacks on, especially this Cardinal, a Vietnamese Cardinal who has since passed away. If I'm not mistaken, I think his cause for canonization has been opened. And he was a very famous prelate in the Church before Vietnam fell.

And he was the designated cardinal – well, I don't know if he was Cardinal yet - Archbishop of Saigon, that is now called Ho Chi Minh City. And when Saigon fell, he was arrested and imprisoned. And maybe you've read his book. I do recommend it. I read two books, I think the retreats he gave, one is Five Loaves and Two Fish and the other one is Testimony of Hope. Testimony of Hope is his sort of autobiography of his sojourn in jail. And nine of those 13 years were in solitary. And miraculously, the guards became Christian. And the government official stopped rotating guards because too many were converting.

And he would say Mass, they would smuggle in a little wine, not exactly bottles, and he would have, he would cup his hand and hold a few drops of wine in his hand. And he had a little bit of bread, not easy to get bread in Vietnam. It's a rice-based diet, not wheat. Anyway, he got bread and wine, he was saying Mass, you know, in tatters, but he said Mass. And he was a real human being, and it took a while getting used to solitary confinement. He just was called a number. It was literally a number he had tattooed on him.

And he wrote books, he gave speeches all over the world before the Communists took over the country. And he was Rector of a couple of seminaries, he traveled to Rome, he's doing all those important things. And he was the most important prelate in the country and well respected by the people. And now he's a, humanly speaking, there's no such thing as a nobody, but you know, psychologically, he was treated as you know, less than a nobody. And, you know, subject to all sorts of indignities, a lack of hygiene, lack of food.

He'd be kept in the dark for a long time and then be kept in the light so he'd lose all sorts of track of time and he realized, you know, that all his accomplishments, all his work, all his influence came to naught, a grinding halt. And he started to undergo his own conversion. He's quoted in this exhortation that he's always talked about God, he said, he says, well, now it's dawning on him that he's got to talk to God, you know, and now he has the time for it. And he said, "Well, I don't know what God has in store for me. But my goal now," and the Pope quotes this, "is to turn every minute of the rest of my life into an act of perfect love." That's what we're gonna do. That's what they're trying to do.

Every moment, every minute is going to be an act of love to Our Lord. He had mega graces, he had a lot of graces. But that was his resolution, to fill every minute with deeds of love. And the Holy Father says translate that into the ordinary. Ordinary – and we ask Our Lord: Lord, help us have that holy ambition to be extraordinary in the ordinary like you were. And right now, as I said, the Eucharist bespeaks to that. What is the Eucharist?

Well, it is the true presence, the full presence of the resurrected Christ, mind-boggling truth of faith, but it's hidden in bread. The appearance of bread, it doesn't get more ordinary than that. It's hidden in the appearance of ordinary food, that's a big message. And that you have to make bread for the creator of the universe in his human form and his divine for him to reside within the confines of the properties of bread.

So, Our Lord says, "Do not underestimate the ordinary. I want you to love me, whole heart, whole soul, whole strength, when you make your bed, I want you to hang out with me on Calvary when you got snubbed. I want you to connect with me when you are fatigued. When I fall down, you know, you're kind of out of breath, and out of stamina, I want you to give me that.

And St. Josemaria says here, and he's also very influenced by another person the Holy Father quotes extensively, is the Little Flower, St. Therese of Lisieux. She's a doctor of the Church. Even though, I don't know, my guess is she was educated for about seven or eight years if that because what she brings to the table is the powerful role loving in small ways has in the eyes of Our Lord and in terms of evangelization.

"Do everything for love," St. Josemaria says, "in that way, there will be no little things. Everything will be big. Perseverance and little things for love is heroism. A little act done for love is worth so much." And last point. It couldn't have been scripted better, because you know, probably in the

present moment, as St. Therese, you know, this, this sister who's in her 80's and the sister gets on her nerves, okay. And she's probably 19. She's making noises with her. I don't she had any teeth and she's smacking her lips, that kind of stuff seemed to at least in my recollection, irritate her.

And she thought, "This is good because I'm going to try to see St. Joseph in this girl, woman, and treat her as she were St. Joseph." And in fact, then she started to emotionally like her too wasn't just, you know, supernatural, self-giving, which is a tall order in itself. Or she, for special celebrations, she'd put on a skit, and it'd be pretty funny. And she would, "Okay, this is something I can do for Our Lord."

And she was so ordinary that when she died and there was an investigation on her sanctity, her fellow sisters were kind of dumbfounded that she was being considered for canonization or, you know, Servant of God because she was so ordinary. You know, she didn't levitate, she didn't glow in the dark. You know, she sometimes slept in her prayer, you know, did those kinds of things. But nevertheless, she's a Doctor of the Church.

And you may say, "Well, does that make an impact?" Yes, an impact that she could have never imagined within you know, a nowhere place in Normandy, France. Did this Cardinal make an impact as he was all by himself, literally in a hole in the ground outside of Ho Chi Minh City? Yes, but in a way that he couldn't script. We also, to the degree we have Our Lord, whether we see the statistics or not - we won't - we also make an impact. Let's go to the Blessed Virgin Mary and ask for her prayer of intercession.

I thank you, my God, for the good resolutions, affections, and inspirations you've 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. Holy Mary, our Hope, Handmaid of the Lord, pray for us.



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