

## Episode: St. Josemaria Escriva: Holiness and Good Humor

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In the Name of the Father, the Son, and 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 you 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 all know that our founder St. Josemaria died in 1975, June 26. He died after stepping out of an elevator. He walked into his office. He looked at an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe where Juan Diego was offering her a rose and she was happily accepting that rose. And after he looked at that image, he accomplished his mission on Earth, he had a heart attack, and within a few minutes he was dead.

Going up that elevator was like the first step towards Heaven; going up towards Heaven. Let's say he had a premonition that he was going to die. He had spoken before his death that he was no longer very useful here, he'd be more effective from Heaven. He would repeat the phrase from the Psalm 26:8 Vultum tuum, Domine, requiram. I wish to see your face O, Lord. And that phrase, is placed on the tomb of some priests and laymen that passed away. On the tombstone, Vultum tuum, Domine, requiram. I wish to see your face.

And that's the phrase he would repeat, often towards the end of his life. And the Lord granted him that, that desire that wish. And after his passing, Don Alvaro, had to gear himself up for what was coming. So, he wrote a long letter, about the first days just before his passing, and then everything that happened practically minute by minute after his passing, like the funeral and the authorities that came and the Pope who sent his condolences and so forth.

It was a fairly long letter that he wrote, with the title, Nuestro padre en el cielo, our Father in Heaven. I remember at the time reading it, it was a beautiful letter with all the details, you know, you could vividly paint a picture of what was going on. And when news went out throughout the world, people were quite stunned. He wasn't that old, 72 years old. I mean, it wasn't terribly old.

And the reaction throughout the world was like they had lost a father. That their own father had died. There were funerals all over the world. People remembered the moment when they heard the news. And why is that? Why did so much effect have on people's lives of his death? Well, because God granted St.

Josemaria or founder, a deep spiritual paternity. He could embrace everyone, that could come in contact with him.

And since this paternity was completely supernatural, it was strengthened by the fact that he went to Heaven. And he could continue to exercise that spiritual paternity by interceding for us. It's like he became somebody to emulate someone with criteria with prudence but also somebody with impressive dreams and magnanimity and great apostolic drive and zeal. It's as though people around him would like flourish.

He brought out the best out of people. They will be able to realize their dreams. He was you could say that he was like the former of saints like he formed saints that came in contact with him. That is He provoked great, great desires in others. He opened up horizons.

One of the young men who met him in the 1930s, during the Civil War, Pedro Casciaro, who became an architect, eventually was ordained a priest. He said that the one phrase that stayed in his mind that, that he never forgot from St. Josemaria was it said, dream, and your dreams will fall short. Dream, and to be told to dream. What would you dream about if you're invited, just dream just like think big, big, don't stay in your little garden there, you know, fixing little things and getting the little beetles out of the way. Which is a good thing. It's not a bad thing.

But he invited people to think big. And for example, Pope John Paul II at his canonization quoted at the opening of the homily of the canonization, quoted from St. Paul, who said in his letter to the Romans, all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons and daughters of God, the Spirit of God leads you to become a son or daughter of God. So, the Pope said these words the Apostle Paul, which we have just heard, help us to understand better the significant message of today's canonization of St. Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer.

With docility, he allowed himself to be led by the Spirit, convinced that only in this way, can one fully accomplish God's will. He let himself be led by God's spirit, but he led others to be led by God's spirit. He opened those horizons to many people. And all that started when he was still a fairly young priest, aged 28. He was doing his priestly duties. He was a young young man, a young priest.

But he knew that God wanted something of him. He didn't know what it was, you know. And our Father says that it was not like a personal discovery. It was, when he describes in founding Opus Dei, he describes that as an illumination, or, let's say, a clear idea of his mission. That how he had to change and how he could now strive energetically for holiness.

You know, somebody asked me recently, "Father, what motivated Josemaria to found Opus Dei, like, why did he do that? What was he trying to do?" I said, what motivated him? What did he? Well, I don't think he was motivated. I think he just as he described himself, it was just the illumination that he received. He wasn't motivated to do anything. In fact, he would have preferred not to have gotten involved in this. Let somebody else that's more capable take care of this. I don't want to do this.

But he describes this, he said, I received on October 2, 1920, I received the illumination about the entire work. He says, it involves a clear, general idea of his mission. He didn't have all the details yet. But now something had come into the world that allows us now really, to live by faith, and to give really great importance to earthly things, but in a way that we could dream about their value their greatness, as a means that we must sanctify on the way to God. To take that elevator, and go up to God, to be led by the Spirit of God.

You know, St. Therese of Lisieux, she was from Lisieux. In those days, he couldn't just get on highway and go places. It was like a big deal to travel to another city. Didn't have highways and stuff. They had trains, I guess. But anyway, she went to Paris. I don't know what year it was. And she was still fairly young. And she was super excited about going to Paris because when she went to Paris, she saw a thing that she'd never seen before. She saw buildings with elevators.

She said, wow. So, you can go from first floor to the seventh floor, or eighth floor or whatever. And just the back, you just get in the door. You're up. You don't have to trudge up these stairs, you know, I never realized that, you know, elevators are pretty modern thing. And then she would see that image of going up all those floors so quickly. She said, when I ever get discouraged, I say, Stop, get into the elevator, Divine filiation to go up to God, go up, be led by the Spirit.

And that she was really led by God to do that. Just like an elevator is led by whatever or however the elevators work, I don't know. And that could be said also about St. Josemaria. He suddenly grasped that sanctity was within the reach of anyone, anyone who freely wanted to let themselves be led up to God. And so, that moment, on October 2 was a major, major reframing of his life. Suddenly, the time that he had spent in Madrid, his studies his family, his political situation, that he was in that his health, now everything was seen through a new lens.

Because, you know, we think our life is made up of little things. We have to get on the TTC, we have to, we have professional engagements, we have family things all these small, little earthly realities, we have to do the dishes. But now all that small stuff, or bigger stuff can all suddenly be holy and full of God, he said. If we are led by the Spirit.

And Pope John Paul II said at his canonization, he said, This teaching of his is still timely and even urgent today. In virtue of the baptism that incorporates him to Christ, the believer is called to establish with the Lord, an uninterrupted and vital relationship, he is called to be holy, and to collaborate in the salvation of humanity. The believer is called to go up that elevator.

And this was sometimes later expressed in a famous expression that I'm sure you've heard before that Second Vatican Council described as the universal call to sanctity. I'm not actually sure if St. Josemaria use that exact expression. And when you say the universal call to sanctity, it's like, okay, yeah, it's true, everybody's called to sanctity. But it has a certain kind of overly academic sound to it. I mean, it's true. It's not that it's not true.

The Second Vatican Council emphasized that everybody is called to sanctity. But St. Josemaria had a way, a very appealing way, of making it clear that not just priests, not just religious, are called to sanctity, not just the professionals of sanctity are called, but everybody. And you may have been there, this past Saturday, when the Auxiliary, Bishop of Toronto, Bishop, Robert Kasun celebrated the Mass of St. Josemaria, and he said that, you know, when I was growing up, he was saying, the idea of sanctity, oh, that was something limited to priests, and, you know, religious, but it was not something intended for laypeople.

He said, he remembers understanding when he was a layperson that the lay people have to pray, obey, and pray. That's what the lay people are for. Good thing you pray you obey and pray. But the other people there, the priests and so forth, they're the ones who really do the hard lifting. Just pray, just obey, and pray. That's all you got to do. It was it. Okay. Father, okay. We'll do that.

So, St. Josemaria received this illumination about the universal call to sanctity, that no no no sanctity, being holy. Being able to be on the altars was a reachable goal. And we could do it without abandoning all those daily obligations that we all have. We don't have to, I don't know, say vows or something like that.

Now, remember, St. Josemaria was a secular priest. He was a diocesan priest. And it's interesting that he had these kinds of inklings. You know, they say in Spanish, they say barruntos, but I had no idea what barruntos were. But barruntos means, like intuitions or inklings that God wanted something of him when he was a young man. A young student. He didn't know what was, but he thought that, well, if I, if I become a priest, I'll be more available to do whatever that thing is that God wants for me.

It's interesting that he thought by being a priest, he'd be more available. Today, you become a priest and that's exactly the opposite, you are no longer available at all. Because you gotta do stuff. The bishop tells you go there, no, don't go there, don't go, just stay there. You know, he tells you whatever you have to do, you're stuck.

But St. Josemaria, at that time, because of the role of the priest, and so forth, especially the secular priests, he really understood that this would make him more available. And in many ways it's true. You know, priests, they have a task of running parishes, they administer the sacraments. And they have to keep the records and who's been baptized, who has been married, all that stuff.

It takes time. You gotta stay at home and, you know, do all that stuff. But, St. Josemaria, he attracted a lot of young people around him. And that's where he began to open horizons, he would do spiritual direction with them. You know, that's where he started making people dream about what God was really calling them to. He would preach retreats. Actually, bishops asked him to preach retreats. This was normally the purview of religious doing spiritual direction. Teaching retreats, no, but no secular priests ever did that.

But he kept, you know, this is one thing we can think, you know, that he kept opening these horizons. He had the common duties of other priests. But he was particularly charismatic. And you could say, one of the things that characterized him was his good humor. He said, at that time, this is now the 1930s or so said, I have nothing but my youth, God's grace, and my good sense of humor. That's all I had.

So, that means you have it. I have my youth. Well, okay, thanks. You know, you have your youth. I mean, that's just what you have, okay. You have God's grace. Okay, that's given to you. But all he had was good humor. And he felt that God gave him that good humor. It was like, a good seed bed in which you could plant that this supernatural seed, this specific plant, that would grow into a lush and fruitful plant that would give many, many fruit.

And if you look at many of the pictures of him back then he's laughing, he's people around him, ha, they're laughing, you know, they're, they're, they're in a get-together, smiling. And none of this was staged. It was just, that's the way he was. And it's part of our life, right to be men and women of good humor that we know how to laugh and that we do so often, despite the challenges that we have to face.

And we have challenges, we have hard work, we have setbacks, we have work to do. The temptations that are there to get us irritated are numerous. They are numerous. So, maybe you just have something we can ask St. Josemaria, Father give me some, please give me some good humor? Okay. And please, you know, I need to not take myself so seriously. I think the most important thing when I think and this is right, because I read this and, and we like we, we get very serious.

And maybe you can help us keep that good humor. This can be like a specialized trait. That's part of our life. Because when we do that, we exercise a kind of a superpower. You know, like all the all the superheroes, you know, each one has special powers. You know, I don't know Superman, he can, I don't know what he can do, but he can look with, you know, when he looks through objects and stuff like that, I don't know, what do you call that? You know, when he can do zoom in, or spider man can swing around and he's, you know, all the things they can do their superpowers, that's what they're supposed to do.

And our superpower is not this absolute, brilliant intelligence or this intense ability to concentrate, or this logistical capacity to organize the home perfectly. Well, if you can that's good, but it's a good thing. But our superpower has to be we ask St. Josemaria now to give us his good humor. To be a master of good humor.

You know, I saw recently, a little video that was done about an interview with an English priest, but who has been in Italy for many years now, a priest of the Work, his name is Robin Weatherill. And this was, I don't even know what, this was like an interview in one of those Italian programs. And he had been born in England. His father during the war, married Neapolitan woman, an Italian woman.

And so, he'd been born in England, but then he moved fairly early in life to Italy. And that's where he met Opus Dei. So, most of his life, he's lived in Italy. And, you know, he remembers having the opportunity to meet St. Josemaria. First he met members Opus Dei, then he met St. Josemaria. But he was all, you know, all nervous. They said, Okay, now you can meet the Father, you can meet the father. Okay, so, oh, he's coming. Okay, now you can meet him.

And so, he like, elegantly reached out his hand to shake his hand as you're supposed to do like in England, I guess. And St. Josemaria said, forget this, come on, give me a hug. Come on. And let's go and have a snack. Look, let's go and have a snack. And then he pulled out one of these. I don't know what they're called these, like, pastries. And he said, here, and voom. He put it right in his mouth. And he was there stuck with this pastry hanging out of his mouth, you know? And, and he was immediately, you know, disarmed by him.

And he would laugh. And then, of course, he decided to live apostolic celibacy as a numerary. And he had to go and explain this to his father. I don't know if he had to go back to England or what exactly, but his father was not happy. His father had planned other plans for him. So, somehow, his father was kind of a serious military man.

And he recounts this, and in the recounting of it, I don't know why they did this, but there's, you know, when you see a kind of like, Dr. Phil, you know, they have all these people around, you know, watching and you and you have the interviewer asking, and every time he made a statement the people would clap, they would start clapping. You know, it was like, it probably that said, applause. And now applause. And he would start applauding, they were started applauding him. What's, what's going on here?

But, he recounts how his father was very serious military type. And he was he was against his vocation. And somehow, they organized it that he could meet St. Josemaria. And he was going to save him, he reaches out his hand to shake his hand properly, like a man. And St. Josemaria is like, forget about it, come on, let's have a big hug. And he held on to him. And he said, come on, squeeze.

You know, and this guy, Robin Weatherill recounts is the first time he saw his father break down. And he began to weep. And his father said, okay, thank you very much, Sir. whatever, you know, and then he

wanted to leave, but he couldn't stop bawling, he was bawling. And he was touched by... just the human, the charisma that he had. He was very charismatic. But above all, he had this, this good humor.

And, you and I, if we keep this good humor, for supernatural reasons, really with a desire to reflect our faith, and our confidence in God. That too, will be like a seed bed around the people will cry literally. It's so pleasant to be with somebody who knows how to have good humor, doesn't mean you have to know the best jokes, but you know, good humor. Do I have good humor?

Do I have to force myself to be cheerful? There are different things that make us cheerful. Like things superficial things. There're things that happen that don't depend on us. Your soccer team wins, we get good weather, you go on a beautiful excursion, and you have some nice wine; makes us cheerful. Good drink.

And of course, when we have those things we can give thanks to God. These are good things. But it's normal to be cheerful when we have a nice bottle of wine. But we must also understand that cheerfulness is also a choice, that depends on our greater vision. So, even when we don't have that Chardonnay and all we have is a warm glass of water in a greasy glass or just tepid Milk. We can still be, this is great milk. I wonder what year this milk is, you know, but we have to have a greater vision beyond the immediate.

And I invite you to do that today, the rest of you may be tired, you may be, I don't know, you have to go home, you have to deal with something that's challenging. It's good. It's good. It's challenging. I want to show you, Lord, that I love you. Despite these challenges, those are the places that the Lord is calling you and me.

St. Josemaria didn't have much power. He didn't have much strength. But he did have the power of good humor. And he would have had many reasons to be cynical, to be even pessimistic. Robin Weatherill in that, in that interview, he recounts that what really pained him was the situation of the Church, post conciliar crisis, all these people leaving the Church, and priests abandoning.

All this always made him... just pained him a lot when he saw that. People rejecting the faith and not coming to mass and stuff. But he was not a pessimist. Even before that in his own country, entered into a bloody civil war. He faced a lot of opposition, he was misunderstood. He was slandered. He had physical pain, he had diabetes. Though it's true, God granted him a swift death. That's true. But at the same time, it was very supernatural, he had no time to complain.

Indeed, there are many things that could make us unhappy, some depend on us, others are outside factors. So, yeah, let's ask St. Josemaria. We can ask him that specifically, right, that we rejoice as the Pope has said in that encyclical, *Gaudete et exsultate*, you know, rejoice that we not go around with a funeral face. And it's, well it's a specific thing we can ask St. Josemaria. And it's a kind of like a moment of conversion that we can ask the Lord to grant us. And if we do so with faith, certainly the Lord will give it to us with the help of our Blessed Mother.

I thank you, my God for the good resolutions, affections, and inspirations that you communicate to me in this time of prayer. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel intercede for me.