

Episode: “Glowing Witnesses”: Third Sunday of Advent

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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.

I am following you, Jesus, in this third Sunday of Advent. In the first two, we see how you moved us up to inclined plane towards holiness, step by step. In the first Sunday, the invitation was to come and to receive some gifts from you, that you have prepared from eternity. And it's so exciting to think about, it is so intriguing and mysterious and wonderful to think that the God that is almighty has been thinking about me. It's just mind blowing.

During the second Sunday, you told us to go to the desert to create some space of quietness around us not that we got physically to any desert. But the invitation was to, to listen to you, right. And then we examine ourselves a little bit after the invitation to receive some gifts, and then to to encounter you personally. We understood in that Sunday, that our dialogue with you is not just as a Church, as a community, but that it's me, with you, and it helps me a lot.

And in this third Sunday of Advent, getting closer to the day of Christmas, the invitation is on an interior journey, which to me are the best ones. In every book, in every movie, in every story, at the end, what happens is interior journey. It's what gets your attention at the end and it's beautiful. And in this interior journey, there is a question that comes and it is, “Who are you?” Who are... Who am I? And that's a very difficult question to answer. Who am I? What's my identity? What's the reason of my existence? Many big questions that have to do with my, not only my personality and my now existing in the world in this actual moment of history, but what's my identity? St. Josemaria and his meditation on *Christian Vocation* in the book, *Christ is Passing By*, which is a meditation about Advent, puts this question very similarly. And then the answer says, well, the first thing that we need to cultivate is our interior life, my interior life. In order to understand my identity, the reason of my existence, I need to go inside myself and meet you there, and then look at myself, not in a vain way, like in a mirror, in the gym, so to speak, or something like that, but just in front of you.

St. John the Baptist was asked the same question. And then he immediately said, “I am not the light, but came to testify to the light,” which is very interesting. In my vocation, and again, Advent is a journey to discover my vocation, to discover you, my Lord, walking by my side, calling me to happiness—it's my vocation basically. St. John the Baptist says, when he was asked, I'm not the light, but I came to testify about the light, which is really, really important because in both realities, we have the answer. In one side, I am not the light of the world, Jesus Christ is, and that's why I'm following you. But on the other side, it isn't that I am completely empty, I am

reflecting that light, I came to testify about this light. So I think today in my meditation, I want to consider the importance of my mission as an apostle in order to make a lot of friends, in order to have a lot of friends. Why? Because I'm engaging? Because I'm a genius? No, because I'm reflecting your light.

So, I like to compare friendship, or our mission, to the mission of the moon. I am not an expert in astrology, but I think the moon, all things considered, is pretty ugly. It's, it's just a rock, right? A satellite around earth, without trees, without any vegetation, I think, with some holes pretty dark. But, man, when, when it reflects the sun, at night, it is majestic. It is really beautiful. And we don't see the craters or or we don't pay attention to any of the deficiencies of the moon, it is just a great lamp in the sky with stars, with different shapes. And it's reflecting such a powerful light that it looks beautiful. So that's my mission. My friendship with you, my encounter with you, go into the desert gets me illuminated by a light that is not mine, but it is still beautiful. And I need to be aware of it because it's part of my mission, it's a very important part. The first part is my conversion. My dialogue with you, no question about it. But at the same time, I'm called to be light for others.

We don't have pictures nor videos of St. John the Baptist, but we have his words. And I think we can fill the gaps of what we don't have, with our imagination. And when he was answering, "I'm not the light," I don't know about you, but I imagine St. John the Baptist, with a big smile, saying "I'm not the light. Let me talk to you about the light. Let me talk to you about who's coming, because I know him. And I need to talk to you." So, in other words, St. John the Baptist was talking about his friend, his really close friend, Jesus, to others. And he was so happy in doing that. Now, he was giving us an example of how deep friendship can be. And maybe today I want to examine myself in your presence, Jesus, always with peace, about my friendships. In the Book of Wisdom, thousands of years ago, and I really like the Bible, or other books like classics as the *Odyssey*, or other books that are classics, because it shows you how human beings in a way speak the same language throughout history. It doesn't really matter we think that sometimes the modern man has all the answers, and that you look back into history, and you see that we are the same, right? And it's wonderful to see that connect with people that lived thousands of years ago, and all of them have the same dreams, the same fears, virtues defects—it's great, it's really awesome to me, it's very inspiring. And the Book of Wisdom says that the faithful friend is a sturdy shelter, it's rock. He or she that has found one has found that treasure. There is nothing so precious as a faithful friend. It is so true. A faithful friend is a rock, is a sturdy shelter. I want to have a lot of friends like that. And I want to be that guy for my friends.

I remember when I was in college, one of my best friends, we lived together in the same dorm. It was so funny. And it was one of the guys that influenced my vocation. I think one of them, most influential one for me, at least, to follow Jesus Christ and, and he was so funny. I hope he's not listening to this meditation. But anyway, he's great. He was bald, like no hair, in his 20s, which is super funny, because he would make fun of that—he was kind of a Woody Allen. And I remember one morning, we were, you know, in the morning, taking showers, shaving or whatever, in the dorm. He was getting out of the shower with a towel or whatever. And I was shaving with another friend in the same common bathroom. And, I'm sorry about this example, but I think it shows something about friendship that is very important. This guy was getting out. And then he was cleaning the shower, whatever, or something fell and he was taking it from the ground, and then he fell out awkwardly and dislocated his shoulder. And in front of me, in front of us. And then he was yelling, screaming with him pain. And we were so close friends that we were trying to help him, but he was so funny, that we started laughing. And it was impossible to lift him up. And he started yelling at us and insulting us with funny words. And it was the whole event until we get him into taxi and rushing to the hospital was so funny. And I remember walking with him on campus and people will stop us, in a normal day, because he wanted/they wanted to talk to him. He was always welcoming. He was a sturdy shelter and it was a treasure for us. And very cheerful even or precisely because he was so kind of funny in his way of doing things and very smart. He was a very good student. People were attracted, there was a light there. And he showed me the value of friendship. And it is true, my Lord, the value of just unconditional friendship is so strong. And this is what John the Baptist is saying about his relationship with you. And he's reflecting it in a way that people are attracted to John—a "Who are you? We

see some light here.” And he says, “No, I’m not the light. I’m reflecting him that will make you really, really happy, that has the power to make you happy. But I’m very happy too.” So that’s, that goes hand by hand with the awareness of our nothingness, the joy of our friendship with Jesus Christ, and through him with others.

St. Josemaria says, “You understood the meaning of friendship, when you began to feel that you were like a shepherd of a little flock.” And you understand a little bit of that meaning if you, if you see yourself as a shepherd, not because you’re bossy, not because you have your agenda—that hurts friendship so much when we go trying to convince people or to we have an agenda. No, no, no. The real value of friendship is to care, to understand, to pray for, to be there, to be faithful, as the Book of Wisdom says, a faithful friend. Are you faithful? Am I faithful to my friends? Hopefully, I am. But I want to go deeper in that faithfulness. I want to understand, like John the Baptist, that my mission has this beautiful dimension of reflecting something that is really saving people, even if I am not wonderful in myself, or if I am feeling like the moon, kind of a rock, floating around that’s pretty ugly, I have something special, something eternal.

There is this book, I think it’s a classic in America—I’m from Spain originally, so I’m not sure—but I think it’s very well known. The name of the book is *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, I read it some years ago, the author is Mitch Albom. And there is a story, there’s a fictional story, about a guy that dies in the first chapter. So, don’t worry, I’m spoiling the book, but he dies in an accident, in an amusement park. And then he goes to the other side, he is basically dead. He doesn’t know he’s kind of assimilating, digesting what happened. And then he, he goes through kind of a purgatory, a journey, a little bit like *The Divine Comedy* of Dante—short version, I guess. And then he meets five people. And the first one is sitting down. The other side is kind of the whole atmosphere is white and he’s very confused, and, and then there is this guy sitting down behind the table. He interviews him a little bit. And then the protagonist asks, “What am I doing here? What is this?” And then the other guy shares the news, “You’re dead and you died in this car accident, or in this amusement park accident, and before you get to see God face to face, you will meet five people in heaven.” And then these guys sitting down, says, “Do you remember me?” And the protagonist kind of stops and looks at him says, “Oh yeah, I think your face is familiar to me. I’m not sure, but we met, right? Yeah, and I think, I think, I met you in the street that day, or you were part of my neighborhood or whatever. And then, I remember you, but we would never talk, right?” And the guy says, “Well, actually, that’s the whole point, you are going to meet five people that, with all due respect, but you just, you despised, you had the opportunity to help them or to care about them. And it’s not that you did anything wrong, or attack them or hate them or anything, but you just didn’t care. And you’re going to meet them and talk to them. And earn, learn about their lives. And then you will appreciate how beautiful they were. And they are now. And that’s what you need to clean your heart before you see God, because God cares so much about them, about every single person, even people that you don’t like or you didn’t like when you were on earth, that in order to understand God’s love, you need to go through this human experience of deeper friendship.” And then the book is great because he meets five different people and he talks to all of them and his heart has been transformed. He’s been, you know, and it’s not the transformation from just a mortal sin or some horrendous heresy, or I think that he was burning churches or killing nuns, or no, no, he was just indifferent. But that was separating him from God, for at least from understanding God deeply.

So again, we are, in these Sundays, going to receive a gift. God, Jesus Christ, “I prepare something for you.” For Sunday, Second Sunday, “Come to me if you want to receive those gifts.” Let’s make some room. Let’s create some space. And in this Sunday, “Who are you? Who are you?” Not, not as, not that we are asking Jesus, “Who are you?” It’s that he’s asking us, “Who are you?” And then you answer, “I’m not the light. But I have the light. And maybe because of that, my life needs to be different. I have a sense of a mission.” One of my sisters told me that during the summer, they were on vacation with her family, her husband, children, and they were in this resort in a place nearby the beach, I think. And on one of the days they were walking around, I don’t know, went out for an ice cream or whatever. And maybe it was a little late at night and they saw someone, I think it was a woman, pretty poorly dressed, and I think drunk, going through streets, yelling, and maybe it was a group of people. But I think there was one especially, you know, causing that that pity scene, someone that is losing

her dignity, in a way, right. And, and then my sister's family, her husband the kids, were walking too, and one of her sons approached her and said to her, "An empty tabernacle. This is an empty tabernacle." And my sister said, "What are you saying?" And then the kid said, "It's an empty tabernacle." Repeated. Meaning there's a person that—and it's a young boy, so I'm not saying that he was judging her. He was with pity looking at her and saying, "What a waste, right? You, you could be so happy with Jesus inside you, and you look so empty to me." Like again not judging, but just praying for her. "You should be wearing or bearing Jesus, in your attitude, in your, in your personality, right? In your life, you should be reflecting the same Jesus that I have." And with sorrow, he was saying this. And I think it's a beautiful way to look around at the world, every single human being, all my friends, Jesus, all my friends are tabernacles, are the dwelling place of the Blessed Trinity. And in this Advent, preparing myself to receive you in this world, I want to pray about them and about myself.

You came Jesus 2000 years ago to be part of our destiny. And, of course, we honor you in the churches and we build beautiful ones and tabernacles with the box for the Eucharist so rich, sometimes, many times, made out of gold and decorated with pearls or with diamonds or... But, at the same time, the place that you really want to be is inside me—that's your dwelling place. You didn't come to this world to be in boxes, as beautiful as they may be. You came to be inside me. And I am a tabernacle. I am, I am... This is my destiny and every single human being. So, in my interactions with people, do I see tabernacles? Do I see the potential of, of my friendship? Do I approach every relationship as an opportunity to reflect my light, or the light that I have received upon them, inviting them to follow you? Like St. John the Baptist, "I'm not the Christ, but he's coming. And I can, I can talk to you about him. And I can introduce you to him." Actually, it is wonderful to me that St. John the Evangelist and St. Andrew, both followed you, my Lord, because of St. John the Baptist. And it is great: the Beloved Apostle followed Jesus, and also Andrew, but later on introduced Peter to Our Lord. The first pope was introduced by his brother. So you see how John the Baptist was talking about Jesus constantly and encouraging people to follow him, like, "He's he light. Even if I am preaching to you, or whatever, I'm talking about him, actually. I want you to meet him, and they did it." "Master, where do you live?" was the question that John the Evangelist and then Andrew asked Our Lord. And then Jesus said, "Come and you will see." And when John the Evangelist was writing the gospel, many years later, he remembered it was four in the afternoon. I remember the hour or the day that I met the person that changed my life. It's a memory that I will never forget. And it all happened because my friend told me about him, told me about someone that was happiness in itself. That is so wonderful, my Lord. I wish I could through my friendship bring people to Heaven, or encouraging people to meet you and to many to meet the or to discover the meaning of their lives.

And there is this movie, *Stand By Me*. It's a classic from the 80s by Rob Reiner. It's about a bunch of friends. And it's funny because is it a real team: there's a very smart guy, very quiet leader. There's a crazy guy with weapons. There's the chubby guy that is always with practical ideas. And there's the other guy that is kind of different from everybody—strong, smart. And, anyway, and there's a moment in the movie. The movie is about friendship, basically, and it's wonderful. And it has a very good music as well. So it's, it's a great movie. And they're for two days, they are on a mission, so to speak, to find someone that has died in the forest and it's adventurous, and they team up, and it's really funny and deep. And there's a moment that this quiet leader is going through a crisis, because he feels that his dad is not loving him or he thinks that way. And, and then he goes to his friend. They're walking on the rails of a train, road at night, trying to get to the place and, and then he says, they're reflecting, they're in silence, walking under the stars. And then he, he's behind the other group, and then they're together, the two of them, and then he says to him, "Am I weird?" And it is a very interesting question that the friend asks another friend like, "Am I weird or what, right? Because I've been thinking about this thing or whatever..." And then the answer from his friend to him is a masterpiece because he hesitates for a second and then he says, "Yeah but everybody's weird." And then they both laugh and keep walking, and you can feel how they are both relaxed and then there's this peace, like, "You're not perfect. It's not that you're weird. And if you're really weird, and I'm your friend, I will tell you, right? But, it's no big deal. I mean, you have some oddities, like anybody else. But I don't care, we are friends." Of course, friendship, at the end, if you have a friend, you gotta help him or help her, even in those things, and maybe point out to some maybe eccentric

things that she has, or he has, right? But the point is, regardless that, we're friends—it's that common ground here, there is the foundation of our relationship. And you can trust me, that even if you are, I will love you. That is powerful, indeed. My Lord help me to, to have, to foster and to have those deep friendships. Because the more the closer I am to you, if I talk to you, if I follow you, if I receive your gifts, if you bring me to the desert in order to listen to your voice, I want to keep it inside me to bring it to others. And that's a wonderful dimension of my vocation, to be a friend of friends, like to be sharing with others the friendship that I have received from you.

Pope Paul VI said that in our world today we need glowing witnesses who know how to break open the dark skies of the world, not with words, but with the witness of their lives. With our joy, with our friendship, a friendship that we learn from you, my Lord. So maybe today, in my time of prayer, I went to consider this. Maybe this week, to ask you to be a very good friend, to be a rock for others, to be a treasure for others. Again, not because I want to be vain or to have followers in Twitter, whatever, but to be a rock, a shelter for others. I wish I could be like John the Baptist, so friend of you, that I naturally will reflect the beauty of your life in me. That's not vain, that's a dream.

Let's ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to do things like she would do things. I don't know you, but I imagine both Mary and Joseph with a bunch of friends. Actually, if you read the gospel, there's a scene that proves that they had a ton of friends, which is when they lost the baby Jesus or, sorry, the young Jesus, in the temple. I don't blame them, but I think they lost him, so to speak, I mean, he was behind because he wanted to stay. But, anyway, they didn't realize because they were talking to friends, obviously. They were so engaged with our conversations that for them, Jesus was left behind in a natural way, so to speak. And later on, we see how Mary went to a wedding and Jesus performed the first of his miracles at a wedding with wine at stake. So it was not even a blindness or a possession, it was just wine at the wedding feast, at the party. Right. So we see how Mary, Joseph, Jesus had a ton of friends, good friends. Let's ask them to bring our relationships to the light of Jesus Christ; to your light, Jesus.

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