

## The Feast of All Saints November 1, 2020

We begin every November with this great feast - the Feast of All Saints. It is a day for us to celebrate all the great men and women who followed Jesus and who taught others to follow Him as well. We remember not only the saints whose names we know but those we don't know. We celebrate those who have been recognized by the Church as saints and those who have never been recognized, who labored in secret, without acknowledgement, unknown by others but whose great passion was to serve God.

While we celebrate all the saints today - the great as well as the small – I want to focus on one particular saint from the last century who teaches us what it means to be a saint in this century. His name is St Josemaria Escriva.

He was born in Spain in 1902. Though his first job was as a clerk in a clothing store, he felt the calling to give his life to Jesus and become a priest. He entered the seminary and was ordained a priest in 1925.

While on a retreat, he sensed another calling. He wanted to teach lay people how they could become saints in their daily lives. He realized that people often identified holiness with the work of priests and religious sisters. But he wanted to teach people how they could serve God by living well in whatever place God had put them - whether that be as a lawyer or as a tailor, as a doctor or as a factory worker.

To do that, he founded an apostolate named *Opus Dei* which means “work of God.” It is dedicated to helping Catholic lay people live their faith in their everyday life. He also wrote a book called *The Way* which is a collection of wise sayings mapping out what it means to be a saint in the modern world.

Let's look at some quotes from St Josemaria Escriva and what they have to teach us about our call to be saints.

One of the first things we learn from him is that saints aren't perfect. He says, “The saint is a sinner who keeps trying.” Being a saint is really a lifelong process of falling down and getting back up again with God's help. The saint isn't someone who has arrived, who has it all figured out, who has total control of their emotions, or who knows what the right thing to do is in every situation. The saint isn't necessarily someone who never sins. Rather, the saint is the one who keeps going, despite their own failings, with their eyes fixed on Jesus. It is in that constant striving that we grow in holiness and become saints.

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Because of this, the greatest sinner can also become the greatest saint. Whatever your sins are, whatever my sins are, they do not have to keep us from living holy lives and becoming saints. We just need to keep repenting of them, keep confessing them, and keep striving to make amends. That is how the devil is defeated - when we don't let ourselves get stuck in the mire of our own weakness. And that is how we grow in holiness - by looking to Jesus and allowing Him to draw us closer and closer to His heart.

He also teaches us that we can become saints in whatever situation we find ourselves in. We can live holy lives by serving our children in our homes just as well as by serving the poor in a soup kitchen. We can become holy by serving our co-workers in the office just as well as we could by going to the missions. Wherever we find ourselves can be mission territory.

So, St Josemaria says, "Great holiness consists in carrying out the little duties of every moment." And, "Do everything for love. That way there are no little things. Everything is big."

And so, if I have to do laundry for my family, I can use it to grow in holiness. I can accept the drudgery of it to grow in patience. I can unite it to Jesus' cross and offer it up for the salvation of sinners. I can iron the clothes and fold them, praying for whoever will wear them that they are touched by God's love. In doing so, I can make a task as simple as doing laundry into a moment of grace.

When we realize that we should put our heart into everything we do, our work is transformed. Love becomes the reason for everything we do. Even if we do not particularly enjoy what we're doing, even if we don't particularly like the people we're doing it for, we can find joy in it if we embrace it with love. We get a greater sense that God is by our side no matter what we are facing. And there is renewed purpose to our lives when we realize that every moment can be an opportunity to show love and to experience God.

The natural result is that we are more joyful. Saint Josemaria says, "True virtue is not sad or disagreeable, but pleasantly cheerful." If we embrace the challenge to do all things with love, it will show in our face. It will show in the way we treat others. And others will notice. The saint is the one who radiates joy because they are filled with the love of God. That joy naturally attracts others. And so, the saint can then share their secret with others and draw them as well into the love of God.

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This feast we celebrate today is not only a commemoration of all the holy men and women of the past. It is a reminder that we too are called to be saints - each and every one of us no matter our state in life, what we do for a living, how young or old we are, or how weak and sinful we are. We can all become saints. Saint Josemaria teaches us, "Don't wait until you are old to start becoming a saint. Begin right now, cheerfully and joyfully, by fulfilling the duties of your work and of your everyday life."

With the help of his prayers, let us commit ourselves today to loving God through the people around us and in the place He has put us. And let us pray that we too will one day join the saints in the glory of Heaven simply by being faithful to God in our everyday lives.