

On the Anniversary of St. Josemaría's Birth, Prelic Church of Our Lady of Peace, Rome (January 9, 2023)

We lift up our hearts to God today to thank him for the holiness of our Founder. We know that our Father considered himself a “useless instrument,” but we thank our Lord that he was a faithful instrument.

Now, speaking with St. Josemaría, who is listening to us from heaven, we congratulate him on his birthday and we also congratulate the grandparents on the birth of their son. And we also congratulate ourselves, because our Father's life has a lot to do with us. It was the visible beginning of a story written by God, which is also our story. And we repeat those words that he so often uttered when seeking God's will: “*Ut videam! Ut sit!*” We make these petitions our own: that we may see the meaning of all our actions, of our life, of our work. We want to be protagonists in the same adventure that God entrusted to our Father.

We ask our Lord to help us to see St. Josemaría's life, not as a distant and matchless model, but as the very origin of our vocation. The visible and instrumental principle of our call. May we see him as always very present, very close to us, and not as a figure in the past. May we feel the responsibility of passing on to future generations this reality: that our Father is today and now our Father.

Looking to the future

Since his birth he had been preparing to receive that divine commission, which came when he was barely twenty–six years old and only had, as he liked to add, “God's grace and good humor.” This call was also a great burden, which he bore with a youthful spirit that he retained throughout his life. Even as the years went by, he kept the youthful spirit that impelled him to always be growing, since a young person is someone who desires to grow.

Whatever our age, we always want to have that youthful spirit. Young people always are ready to begin again; they don't stop when faced with discouragement; they don't think that there is nothing more to do. Young

people have their eyes fixed on the future, on going forward. Those who have lost their youthful spirit look backwards, always telling stories about the past. Our Father never stopped looking forward eagerly, with the experience he had acquired and with that great youthfulness of spirit.

We ask our Lord today, through the intercession of St. Josemaría, that we may always live with this spirit. May we all be young. May we have the eagerness to grow, to not go backwards, to always have the hope and joy of a better future. And this also implies a youthful awareness of the divinity of our vocation; that is, to realize it is something permanent, that our Lord is always calling us. We want and desire to begin living our vocation anew every day, responding to that call with a youthful spirit. We can return to the enthusiasm of our first steps in the Work – an enthusiasm that should now be even greater: deeper, more firmly grounded, with greater knowledge.

“Don’t wait until old age to be saints,” our Father wrote. The youthfulness that we desire for our life is that of knowing how to live today and now. We want to discover in the present moment the possibility of an encounter with God, of service of others, “without looking back on ‘yesterday,’ which has already passed, or worrying about ‘tomorrow,’ which may never come for you.” as St. Josemaría said. Logically, we count on our past experience and knowing how to make plans for the future, but always realizing that it is today, the present moment, that we really have in our hands: this is what really counts, what we have to sanctify.

Being young also means wanting to learn. We ask our Lord to help us keep our soul open to continue learning, even if we already have a lot of experience. That we go to the means of formation and to our personal prayer with a hunger to learn and to know God better. We want to be young people and even children, with this longing to know and grow in love for God. Formation is not a luxury, or something only for certain stages in life: it is needed always and for everyone. Hence we want to increase our knowledge, and above all our love, to renew our eagerness to carry out the Work with our lives.

The only weapon

Besides his youthfulness, our Father also had God's grace. He taught us to center our life on the Eucharist, with a permanent commitment to make the encounter with Jesus at Mass the strength of our life. May we be ever more aware of what the Holy Eucharist is: our Lord who gives himself to us.

Our Father was, above all, a man in love with Christ. He was deeply grateful for the gifts he received from God, especially for the gift of the Eucharist. We can ask him to help us to be each day more centered on the Mass, that it may be for us a more real, more living reality.

We also want to learn from our founder the strength of prayer, which is the weapon to move everything forward. This is how the Work came into being. So we can ask ourselves: is prayer really my only weapon? Therefore we want to transform everything into prayer. First of all, our work. We can always go deeper into this reality. But we need to realize that everything is God's gift, that our strength comes from him. It is he who does the Work, also in us.

Our Father had his twenty-six years of life, God's grace, and also joy, good humor. He was always very happy. A child of God can suffer and cry, but with God's grace there is no room for sadness. We now address one more plea to our Lord: may he help us to always be happy, to recover our joy whenever necessary. A joy that is compatible with suffering, with some things not going well, with the ordinary difficulties of daily life. For as St. Josemaría often said, our joy "has the shape of the cross," and is born of the certainty of God's love for us. This was our founder's own experience throughout his life: he was happy, even amid the great difficulties he had to live through. We see this in the Honduran Legation. When everything seemed to be falling apart, he sought to lift everyone's spirits. With God's help, we can keep our good humor, no matter what happens, even amid sickness and difficult times.

We end our prayer by asking St. Josemaría for a youthful spirit, for trust in God's grace to carry out the Work, and that we may never lose our joy. We ask him for this with the certainty that we can count on his help, for he continues to be our Father, with the certainty that he loves us more than when he was alive, with "the heart of a father and a mother."

On the Anniversary of the Women's Section and of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, Rome (February 14, 2023)

We would like to begin this day of thanksgiving – and also this time of prayer – by renewing the resolution that our Father advised: “*Ut in gratiarum semper actione maneamus,*”^[1] that we should always be giving thanks. And this is so because we always, continually, have reason, Lord, to thank you for so much, for so much..., for much more than we know; because in all our life – also in those moments that in one way or another may seem negative to us because of difficulties – God’s love has always been caring for us, protecting us.

And today, especially, we thank our Lord for our vocation, for that February 14, 1930 and February 14, 1943. A double anniversary of those very special graces from God for the world, for the Church, for each one of us. Because we have to see it this way, not as wonderful events in the past, but as events that have a very clear influence on our personal life, and not only since the year when we joined the Work, but always, for God was always thinking of us and we were present in those dates.

We thank you, Lord, because you think of us, because you take care of us constantly. And we give special thanks for the women in the Work, for the priests in the Work. And especially today we would like to thank you, Lord, for our unity: men, women, priests, laity. It is a small part of the Church, but it has a great unity within the variety: a unity of vocation, a unity of apostolic work – with the separation that you want, Lord, but always with a unity that is proper to a family. Today we also remember the anniversary of February 14, 1938, when our Father said that we should begin to pray the *Oremus pro Patre* in the Preces. Filiation, fraternity: the reality of the unity of the Work is a great gift of God. And when giving thanks to God on this double anniversary, we also thank you, Lord, for unity. And we thank our Father. And certainly our Lady, through whom all