

SAINT JOSEMARIA

Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop of Dublin

October 2 sees the anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei, the work of St Josemaría Escrivá. This homily reminds us that we are all disciples of the Master called to continue his work of Redemption.

MY DEAR FRIENDS, the Gospel text (Lk 5: 1-11) that we've listened to is a very important text about discipleship and mission. It's about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and about how we bring Jesus' name, his message, his truth and his love into the concrete world in which we live today.

Bringing Christ to the heart of earthly realities was also at the heart of the message of Saint Josemaría Escrivá. "Your ordinary contact with God", he wrote, "takes place where your fellow men, your yearnings, your work and your affections are. There you have your daily encounter with Jesus Christ."

Discipleship through work

And that's where discipleship began also for the apostles that we encountered in today's Gospel. Jesus encounters them in their daily work as fishermen.

If there was anything that Simon and his friends in today's Gospel knew something about, it was fishing. Fishing was their profession. And we all know that the fisherman learns not just from textbooks, but from personal experience passed on from generation to generation about fish, about the

seas, about the winds and the rains. The expert fisherman has it in his genes before he has it in his mind.

In St John's Gospel (21:1-19), almost the same story is presented, but presented as having occurred after the Resurrection. And we see that even after the Resurrection, Peter and his disciples began to feel somehow or other that the death of Jesus was really the end. And they began to doubt his message. And what did they do? They wanted to go back to their boats, to take up their life as fishers again.

Obeying the Master

And if we read between the lines in today's text, it's clear that the instinct of Peter and his friends, and their experience, clearly told them: there's no fish to be found in this area today. They'd come back to shore and they were tidying up their nets. Then Jesus says to them, "Go back out again." And they must have felt in their hearts: "we are the ones who know about fishing. What can this preacher, this son of a carpenter tell us?" But out of respect, perhaps out of the fact that they liked being with Jesus and hearing his word, out of that growing fascination they had about his teaching,

they decided to heed his word. That word seemed to be telling them something that all their own wisdom told them would serve to no purpose.

And if you look a little later in the Gospel, it's obvious that Peter had such doubts and, knowing Peter, he expressed them, as otherwise he would not have turned to Jesus and professed himself as a sinful man.

Following Christ's logic

So, despite their doubts, they do as Jesus says and they enclose a huge shoal of fish, so many that they have to call their partners and they fill both boats, to the point that both almost sink.

Discipleship means giving up the logic of our own self-sufficiency and setting out into the deep, with as our only insurance the fact that we are following the word of Jesus. Encountering Jesus makes us look in a new direction in our lives, painfully turning away from the self-assurance that our own apparent expertise might show us. It means moving away from man-made security – the security we build around ourselves – into that great risk, the risk of following Jesus, which however leads us to surpass ourselves, to transform ourselves into something greater, to a new knowledge of the deeper meaning of the realities we encounter in our daily lives.

Discipleship means giving up our own securities and following the logic and the call of Jesus. Discipleship, abandoning ourselves to the word and to the logic of Jesus, will lead us to find

what we have been seeking but have not been able to achieve on our own.

Discipleship, following the word and the logic of Jesus, is the answer to the emptiness and anxiousness which beset so many people in our culture of plenty and affluence. It's only when we set our sights on what is really the purpose of our lives, that we will overcome a path which leads to nothingness, despite the hectic and the frenzy with which we might pursue that path.

Faithful to our Christian heritage

So many great moments of the history, the art and the culture of Europe have been inspired by those who drew from the Christian roots of our common heritage and led people beyond the narrowness of existing structures into something deeper, more beautiful, more truly at the heart of the human family. The recent EU Constitutional Treaty may not have mentioned the Christian heritage of our European culture, but we know well how much a lived Christianity can and must bring to the future of our continent and its peoples. Europe more than ever needs to be transformed into a Europe of the Spirit, a Europe with a soul. And Christians should proudly and urgently bring the contribution they draw from their faith to the construction of the future of Europe, respectful of and alongside others, yes, but unashamedly and with vigour.

Saint Josemaría warns us that it's not just that we should bring the message of Jesus into the world in which we live, but in the midst of that world in

which we live, that's where we find Christ. It's only when we find Christ and work within the logic of his truth that we will truly be able to achieve what we seek.

The path of prayer

In a homily in 1967, Saint Josemaría notes that the path that leads to holiness is the path of prayer. He says we must always seek Christ, find him, get to know him, and love him, especially in prayer. And he has words of encouragement. He says: "For many of you it may seem that you are only at the first stage but I am ready", he says, "to guarantee you that you have already found Jesus and that you are already getting to know him and love him and hold conversation with him." Once we encounter Jesus and abandon ourselves to following him, then that logic of Jesus, which is greater than our logic, embraces us; his love embraces us and helps us to change our lives, to change direction, to know him more intimately day by day. When we come to know Jesus, then that process begins in us by which we bring our boats to land, in which we leave everything, and in which we begin to follow Jesus in a different way. We use the realities of our daily lives to reach out to others and to bring Jesus to those same realities.

Today's Gospel, as on so many other occasions, shows us how Jesus responds to our abandoning ourselves to him. He responds with an answer which is superabundant. A few Sundays ago, we heard the Gospel of the

multiplication of the loaves and fishes. And the Gospel ends with a detail which some people may find trite and irrelevant. They note that they gathered twelve baskets of what remained. But this isn't just irrelevant. Jesus' gift is always something which goes way beyond our basic needs. His response is always superabundant.

The Lord's superabundance in giving

In today's Gospel, Jesus leads Peter, after a barren and wasted night, to find fish. But he doesn't give him just enough to satisfy his needs; he gives enough for two boats and enough for two boats that are brimming over. Jesus' love, Jesus' care for us always goes way beyond what we need and what we deserve. If we abandon ourselves to discipleship, then we will receive gifts which go beyond what we, in our sinfulness, deserve.

You could interpret that Gospel in a slightly different way and say that we will receive gifts not just enough for ourselves but, like Peter and his partners, those who worked on the other boat, through our fidelity, for those who are close to us. They too will encounter that superabundant love and generosity of Jesus and will come, through us, to recognize him and what he means for us and for the world.

Discipleship means opening ourselves to Jesus, with all our defects and limitations, and allowing that superabundant love of Jesus to touch our hearts and to touch the hearts of other people and to touch the realities of

those around us. Saint Josemaría notes that “we are other Christs” but he says “we, with all our defects and limitations, are other Christs”. With all our defects we can serve Jesus, we can serve our brothers and sisters, if we allow that superabundant love of Jesus to transform our lives and to work through us. Amen.

This is the text of the homily given by Most Rev Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop of Dublin Mass in honour of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, June 26, 2004 in the Church of the Miraculous Medal, Bird Avenue, Dublin.

At the end of the Mass, Archbishop Martin said:

We stand for the final blessing. Before the blessing, I fear that at the beginning of the Mass I may have reduced Saint Josemaría to being a Blessed. I'll have to do a hundred days penance for

that. It may be because I was in Rome at the time of the beatification and was able to celebrate on that occasion, but for the canonization I was elsewhere, and that beatification has remained in my heart. We'll ask God's blessing now on all of you, especially on those who are sick, those who are distressed, those who have doubts. We'll ask God's blessing on all the activities of Opus Dei in this diocese and around the country, and we'll ask God's blessing on each individual one of us, that we may become, through the intercession of Saint Josemaría, disciples and witnesses to the name, the message, the truth and the love of Jesus Christ, wherever we are.

“The Lord be with you. May Almighty God bless you all in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The Mass is ended. Go in peace.”