

## Settling Down to Work

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*Felicitas studied Law and last year began a Masters in Law in SOAS at the University of London. Her contribution to the workshop also centred on joy, on the joy of marvelling each day at the opportunity of finding God in ordinary life.*

I first got to know about Blessed Josemaría while I was an undergraduate law student at a Nigerian university. I was quite conversant with the teachings of the Church and the Bible and was active in Church activities and student social life on campus. Although I was trying to be a good Christian, I had unconsciously come to the conclusion that it was not possible for one to achieve holiness. For a person who lived in the midst of society, interacting with other human beings, I thought that it would be virtually impossible to live from day to day, responding to people and situations in a perfectly Christian way.

As I became familiar with the life and teachings of Blessed Josemaría, my perceptions and considerations were challenged as they had never been before. Blessed Josemaría's message of a universal call to holiness was very clear, direct and, as a result, fascinating — we are all called to be saints during our lifetimes, in whatever circumstances we live. We must interact with our fellow human beings, partaking in social and community life while transforming our every thought, word and action into acts of holiness. I understood for the first time, that we do not have to live in seclusion to be holy. The monk in the desert, the lawyer in the courtroom, and the student, are all called to the same standards of holiness within their everyday lives and activities.

This teaching of having a supernatural outlook in every situation of life, no matter how important or trivial, was a new teaching for me. I began to understand that everything we think, say and do is important, and that as Christians, these must all be pure and holy. Only in this way can we become pleasing to God. I slowly began to realise that holiness must begin with my everyday ordinary activities, simple things long taken for granted and perhaps done in a slovenly manner had to be performed as perfectly as possible. Activities like keeping my

lecture notes tidy and complete, offering the use of my personal effects (like an iron or a bucket) to people in need, greeting roommates whom I didn't like [...] I had to try to cultivate all these positive characteristics.

Thus began a relationship with Blessed Josemaría that led to changes in my life and a broadening of my relationship with God and Jesus Christ. The words of the Bible and the teachings of Jesus Christ began to take on a new meaning for me. I always found a challenge therein and the grace to meet the challenge. Words in the Bible, like “the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life”<sup>1</sup> started to make sense. I realised the relevance and the significance of the Bible to my life. I started to put some effort into carrying out family obligations, participating in the family Rosary and prayers without grumbling (or falling asleep) and taking the initiative of communicating with uncommunicative friends. These effort and initiatives I found quite difficult and I did not always succeed, but I realised that just the effort to do these things for the love of God gave me a peace and joy that was inexplicable.

The words of the Bible began to take on new meaning and life for me as I realised that it is possible to be a saint, if we practice and practice and persist in practising Christian ideals. I also learnt that the more intimately I knew and remembered the words and actions of Jesus Christ, the more often I would be able to act and react to situations as Jesus Christ did. I began to follow the counsel of Blessed Josemaría, which was that, if I wanted to know Jesus Christ, I must read about Him and I must talk to Him. I therefore began to read the Bible more frequently, especially the Gospels, and to spend more time praying to Jesus Christ.

It has been over seven years since my first encounter with Blessed Josemaría, and for me, the message is new each day — I must be a saint, I must lead a holy life, here and now! I still marvel at the seriousness and truth of his words and they give me hope, strength and encouragement.

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Jn. 6, 63.