

The Second Vatican Council asks us priests to “holily and eagerly, humbly and courageously carry out [our] ministry, in imitation of the eternal High Priest, the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls.”³² For this we need a strong unity of life, an expression St. Josemaría frequently used. As he liked to repeat, in one way or another: “There is only one life, made of flesh and spirit. And it is that life which has to become, in both body and soul, holy and filled with God.”³³ Applying these words to our priestly life, I would say that it is a matter of seeking to grow in love for God and neighbor through the daily exercise of our ministry, at times in humble and hidden tasks, which are always transformed by grace into a joyful path of holiness and service to others.

I want to conclude with some other words of the Founder of Opus Dei, who so loyally incarnated the figure of the Eternal High Priest: “The priest, if he has a true priestly spirit, if he is a man of interior life, can never feel alone. No one can have a heart so much in love as his! He is the “man of Love,” the representative among mankind of Love made man. He lives through Jesus Christ, for Jesus Christ, with Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ. I am deeply moved by this divine reality when, each day, holding in my hands and raising the Chalice and the Sacred Host, I repeat slowly, savoring them, these words from the canon: *Per Ipsum, et cum Ipso et in Ipso...*

Through Him, with Him, in Him, for Him and for souls I live. I am living from his Love and for his Love, in spite of my personal miseries. And in spite of these miseries, perhaps because of them, my Love is a love that is renewed every day.”³⁴

Let us ask Mary Most Holy, Mother of Fairest Love, Mother of Priests, to obtain these sentiments for us from the Blessed Trinity.

Interview granted to Zenit (March 31, 2010)

*“The Mass, a question of love”
by Jesús Colina*

What would you recommend to Catholics who say they are bored at Mass?

I would recommend that they participate with sincerity in the Mass, seeking and loving Jesus. In *The Way*, St. Josemaría wrote: “You say the Mass is long and, I add, because your love is short.”

Feelings must not be given too much importance: enthusiasm or apathy, desire or lack of it. The Mass is sacrifice: Christ gives himself out of love. It is an action of God and we cannot fully understand its grandeur, because of our

32. Vatican II, Dogmatic Const. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 41.

33. St. Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 114.

34. St. Josemaría, Notes taken at a family gathering, April 10, 1969 (AGP. P01, 1969, p. 502. Cit. in Javier Echevarría, *Para servir a la Iglesia. Homilias sobre el sacerdocio*, Rialp 2001, p. 243.

limited condition as creatures. But we must make the effort, not only to be at Mass, but to live it in union with Christ and the Church.

When did you discover the mystery that the Eucharist conceals and reveals?

Thank God, I try to rediscover it every day: in the Liturgy of the Word—which helps to maintain conversation with God during the day—and in the Eucharistic liturgy. We should always be ever more astonished before this reality that surpasses us, but in which the Lord allows us to participate, better said, invites us to participate.

In the Mass, not only is a descendent communication of the redeeming gift of God fulfilled, but also an ascendant mediation, man's offering of himself to God: his work, his sufferings, his griefs and his joys, everything is united to Christ—through him, with him and in him. I cannot be silent about the deep impact that St. Josemaría made on me when he celebrated the Holy Sacrifice, on contemplating his daily Eucharistic devotion.

It profoundly moves us to think that in the presentation of the gifts, the priest asks God to accept the bread and wine, which are "fruit of the earth (or of the vine) and the work of men." Man can offer his work in any circumstance to God, but in the Mass, that offer reaches its full meaning and value, because Christ unites it to his sacrifice, which he offers to the Father for the salvation of men.

When the Mass is the center and root of the Christian's day, when all his tasks are oriented to the Eucharistic sacrifice, it can be affirmed that his whole day is a Mass and that his place of work is an altar, where he gives himself fully to God as his beloved son.

In his pontificate, Benedict XVI is stimulating a rediscovery of the greatness of this sacrament. What has most caught your attention in the words and gestures of the Pope on the Eucharist?

Especially important, it seems to me at this time, is his insistence that the liturgy is God's action and, as such, it is received in the continuity of the Church.

The Pope has written that the best catechesis on the Eucharist is the Eucharist itself well celebrated. Therefore, the first duty of piety for the priest that celebrates or for the faithful that participate in the Mass is the attentive, devout observance of the liturgical prescriptions: the obedience of *pietas*.

Moreover, the Pope also insists that the Eucharist is the heart of the Church: God present on the altar, the close God, builds the Church, congregates the faithful and sends them to all men.

Something more personal. According to your memories, what was the Eucharist for St. Josemaría? What role did it have in his day?

I served Mass many times for St. Josemaría. At these times he would ask me to pray so that he would not

get used to celebrating that very sublime and sacred act. In effect, I was able to verify something he once said: that he experienced the Mass as work—at times an exhausting effort, such was the intensity with which he lived it.

Throughout the day, he would recall the texts he had read, in particular the Gospel, and many times he commented on it, in a perfectly ordinary tone, as food for his spiritual and human life.

He was conscious of the fact that in the Mass the protagonist is Jesus Christ, not the minister, and that the faithful fulfillment of the prescriptions enables the priest to "disappear," so that Jesus alone shines. Many people who attended his Mass—also in the difficult circumstances of the Spanish Civil War—commented later that his way of celebrating Mass had something that moved them profoundly, and that they felt invited to grow in their devotion to the Holy Sacrifice. I am convinced that what moved those who participated—those of us who participated—in his Mass was precisely that: that he let Christ appear and not his person.

“Bringing God Near to Us”—on the Fifth Anniversary of Pope Benedict XVI, *Avvenire*, Italy (April 21, 2010)

Today is the fifth anniversary of the election of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as head of the Catholic Church. John Paul II had died on April 2, 2005. The television networks provided unprecedented coverage of the event. And in the midst of that climate of commotion and of affection for the deceased Pontiff that still pulsed through the streets of Rome, on April 19, we saw for the first time the kindly face of the new Pope on the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica.

Among the motives for recognition of Benedict XVI, perhaps the most notable is his constant effort to make people aware of the nearness of God. This expression—taken from the title of a book of Cardinal Ratzinger about the Eucharist—is also an affectionate way of speaking of the Creator, which the faith shows us as loving and near, interested in the state of his creatures, as a modern day saint affirmed. Indeed, St. Josemaría often recalled that in the midst of the bustle of every day, at times we live as though he were far away, in the heavens high above, and we forget that he is also continually by our side. He is there like a loving Father. He loves each one of us more than all the mothers in the world can love their children—helping us, inspiring