

Always the Same, yet Always Different

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Diane studied Occupational Therapy in Singapore and is currently undertaking postgraduate studies in Education at the University of Sydney, Australia. In her presentation she explains how the teachings of Blessed Josemaría have helped her to discover God in the simple occupations of each day instead of trying to do extraordinary things or seek emotional 'highs'.

“Live life to the fullest!” This has always been my motto. You can say I am a person who enjoys the adventure and excitement in life. Before I learnt of Blessed Josemaría and his message of holiness in ordinary life, I was convinced that in order to get the most out of life I had to do as many spectacular things as I could. And thus, as a youth, I did all sorts of crazy things, so that I could have — what I then thought was — an interesting life.

It has now been more than three years since I met God through Blessed Josemaría. And I must say that my life has been more interesting ever since. Thanks to him, I have discovered the secret to happiness in life, that of using the most ordinary daily events as a means to grow more in love with Life itself. He has taught me that great heroism lies not in doing extraordinary things that are often hard to come by, but in faithfully fulfilling the little things of each day.

I was fascinated by the idea that all of us are called to be saints. Upon deeper reflection, I came see the truth in his words — that loving God to the fullest means that I shouldn't be satisfied with a mediocre kind of holiness. As you know, I always wanted the most out of life. And this time, having known the love of God, I wanted to love God fully, and thus discover the fullness of Life itself. Now, thanks to Blessed Josemaría, I have learnt that holiness is not reserved exclusively for the religious life, but that all of us, even ordinary lay people in the middle of the world, are called to be saints!

But coming to the reality of it all, to be a canonisable saint was certainly a tall order for me. I was pretty scared as it demanded a lot of self-giving and sacrifice on my part to become what Blessed Josemaría called “another Christ, Christ

Himself”¹. Having been used to a life of enjoyment, I always sought the easiest and most comfortable way of doing things, avoiding difficulties and sufferings at all cost. However, I learned from Blessed Josemaría that in order to be like Christ, I would have to “have my heart free, not tied to earthly things”². This meant I would have to give up and face up to many things, which I was reluctant to do. I found myself in a dilemma: on one hand, I had big dreams of becoming a saint, but on the other hand, I was too afraid to face up to the challenges it entailed. Also, I was encouraged to learn that “Our Lord, besides wanting us to be saints, grants each one of us the relevant graces”³. Therefore, I have come to learn that in my struggle for holiness, I am not alone. God’s grace is never lacking, and though I may fall time and time again, what pleases Him is that I do my part to get up and begin again.

My challenge to live life to the fullest, now lay in putting as much love as I could into my everyday tasks. As Blessed Josemaría says, “no task is in itself great or small”, but “everything gains the value of the Love with which it is done”⁴. Now, seeing God and souls behind my everyday work has enabled me to grow more deeply in love with Our Lord, and acquire many human virtues at the same time. It has enabled me to see the true meaning behind doing my everyday tasks, providing a constant source of motivation for me.

I would like to end with a very encouraging quote from Blessed Josemaría in his book *The Way*: “Youth gives all it can — it gives itself without reserve”⁵. I have learnt the secret to happiness in Christian life, the real answer, in my youth. And I thank God for that, because it means I have many more years to go in this divine adventure. And really, it is so beautiful to give one’s life for Christ. So let’s not wait till the future to put Christ at the summit of all human activity. We, as youths, are today’s future, which we shape by the way we live our lives today, whether we’re working in a plantation in Brazil, or studying in a university in Hong Kong. Christ is passing us by very closely in our youth. Let us seize the challenge to live as He did, for only then will we be truly happy.

¹ *Friends of God*, 6.

² *The Way of the Cross*, Tenth Station.

³ *Furrow*, 314.

⁴ *Ibidem*, 487.

⁵ *The Way*, 30.