



Saint Josemaría Escrivá

Founder of Opus Dei

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“Deeds are love – not sweet words”

Bishop Javier Echevarría

Bishop Javier Echevarría recalls the divine locution that gave rise to n. 933 in *The Way*: “There is a story of a soul who, on saying to our Lord in prayer, ‘Jesus, I love you,’ heard this reply from heaven: ‘Love means deeds, not sweet words.’ “Think if you also could deserve this gentle reproach”.

St. Josemaría often referred to this event, which took place on February 16, 1932, but always in a way that kept the protagonist hidden. Only after he left us for heaven did we come to know the details regarding this event.

Our Founder had been suffering from a bad cold for several days and, as he tells us in his personal notes, “it has been an occasion for my lack of generosity towards my God to show itself. I slacked off in my prayer and in the thousand little things that a child... can offer his Lord each day. I started noticing this, and that I was postponing the fulfillment of certain resolutions about putting more time and effort into devotional practices, but I calmed myself with the thought, ‘Later, when you’re well, when your family’s financial situation is in better shape... then!’” (St. Josemaría, *Apuntes íntimos*, n. 606, February 16, 1932; cf. A. Vazquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. I, p. 318).

How human is the figure of St. Josemaría! He too had to fight, as do we, in so many small things. He too was affected, as we are, by trials in our health, economic difficulties, lack of time and energy. How can he fail to understand us, when we ask him to help us overcome our limitations? Let us go trustingly to his intercession, for he understands very well our needs. But let us strive at every moment to recognize God’s will in the most varied circumstances, and let us accept it without hiding behind the excuses we so easily manufacture to justify our lack of generosity.

I continue with the episode from St. Josemaría’s life. On that 16th of February, while giving Holy Communion to the nuns at Santa Isabel, he addressed Jesus in his heart and, without external words, told Jesus what he so often said to him,

both day and night: “I love you more than these.’ And immediately I understood, without the need for words: ‘Love is deeds, not sweet words and excuses.’ I saw clearly at that moment how little generosity I have, and suddenly recalled many unnoticed details I hadn’t been paying attention to, which brought home to me with crystal clarity my lack of generosity. O Jesus, help me, so that your donkey will be fully generous. Deeds, deeds!” (*Ibid.*).

Don Alvaro told us that this intervention by our Lord deeply moved St. Josemaría, not because he was slacking off in his prayer, but because God was asking more of him. Through this locution, our Lord illumined his intellect and strengthened his heart to help him discover “many unnoticed details” in which he could be more refined. Our Founder reacted with generosity, and the memory of that “gentle reproach” by Jesus spurred him on throughout his life to a greater self-giving in serving God and souls.

Read more from the [Prelate’s letter](#) to the faithful of Opus Dei for February 2007