



Saint Josemaría Escrivá

Founder of Opus Dei

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He put all his love into saying Holy Mass

Msgr Javier Echevarría

Msgr Javier Echevarría saw from close at hand, from 1953 onwards, how St Josemaría prepared to celebrate Mass, how he said it, how he did his thanksgiving afterwards, and how he prolonged it throughout the day. The following is an extract from Msgr Echevarría's book *Memoria del Beato Josemaría*, Madrid: Rialp, 2000.

You could plainly see that his [St Josemaría's] Mass was very different every day, regardless of how many people were in the congregation. When he celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, he brought with him to the altar all mankind, the Angels and Archangels, the whole of creation, feeling the company of all created beings, with their praises and their needs, which he offered up to the Blessed Trinity.

For his part, he put a great mental and physical effort into it, which sometimes, because he was tired by his work and ill-health, meant that by the time he finished Mass he was absolutely exhausted. At the same time, you could see immense joy reflected in his face because of the encounter he had just had with the Blessed Trinity, since he had a deep conviction of the very direct closeness of the Three Divine Persons in the renewal of the Sacrifice of Calvary. There was not a single gesture to which he failed to give a deep spiritual meaning, nor did he say a single word without focusing his attention on it, and putting into it all the love of which he was capable. This exactly matched something I heard him say in 1956: "We have to do all we can to make the Mass devout, for ourselves and for other people. We can't – and please don't – waste all that infinite, centripetal force that sums up all of God's gifts in this one supreme Sacrifice."

After Mass St Josemaría began his thanksgiving in the oratory, but then continued it throughout the day. Ever since he was young he would divide the day into two parts. He spent the first half of the day giving thanks for the Holy Communion he had received that morning, and spent the other half preparing for the Mass he

would, God willing, celebrate the next day. He taught us to live out our day, hour by hour, close to the Altar in spirit, knowing that each of our actions can be offered up in union with the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

He used to meditate on the texts of the liturgy and bring them into his preaching and his own personal prayer. Many of the phrases from the liturgy became short prayers, aspirations, which also helped him to “prolong” that day’s Mass. He would say that the Mass is not over at the end of the celebration, but should continue throughout the day through our thanksgiving and the offering up of whatever we do. For that reason, after he had celebrated Mass he would often take notes of passages from the readings, the Gospel, or the prayers. On other occasions he would ask me, when I had a spare moment, to copy out certain phrases from Scripture for him so that he could go over them in his meditation and use them in documents he was composing.

With great forcefulness, as coming from deep in his soul, he opened his heart to us on June 7, 1973: “Get used to thanking God for the Holy Mass all day long. When I get to the examination of conscience at night, if I see that I haven’t done all I could, I feel so sorry! It really hurts me that I haven’t loved our Lord. These days I am saying as an act of thanksgiving: *‘Iesu, Fili Dei, miserere mei!* Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me!’ I think that in the course of my life God our Lord has often seemed to leave me on my own so that I would realize that everything worked out because He wanted it to.” Back in 1956 he had told us, “Our day is a Mass, a sacrifice of love; and so we have to be joyful and learn how to cope with difficulties.”