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“Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.” (Lk 5:5)

Homily of Bishop Isabelo Abarquez (Calbayog) at the Solemn Mass held at the Manila Cathedral on the liturgical feast day of St. Josemaria Escriva, June 26, 2019.

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“Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.” (Lk 5:5)

These words of our Lord, addressed to his apostles, are actually addressed to all of us also. Our Lord wants us to go beyond what is easy, what is shallow in life, because what is best for us, what is fruitful is found in the deep. But these words were also especially addressed to St. Josemaria Escriva, Founder of Opus Dei, whose feast we celebrate today.

Like the apostles who first doubted the practicality of these words but then obeyed just the same and to their surprise yielded a great haul of fish, St. Josemaria was given the divine vocation of spreading the gospel truth about the universal call to sanctity, at that time a crazy idea. But he obeyed and was also surprised to see the great harvest of souls responding to that diving message.

It was this message that was enshrined in the teachings of Vatican

II and later described as “lay spirituality,” as we all know, this spirituality is what is most needed these days when the world is gripped by a rapid pace of development on the one hand, and an increasing number of all sorts of worldly problems, personal and family, economic, political and social on the other. The world is somehow teetering in a highly unstable condition, and now greatly needs a spirituality that would bring it back to God, and not detached from its proper moorings.

To this divine vocation, St. Josemaria responded with everything that he had. He became so united with God that there was no moment when he was not with him praying, talking, praising, thanking, begging, asking for pardon, asking for favors, etc.

When one is in love, he can never have enough of his loved one. And St.

Josemaria was so in love with God, he never let go of God at any moment. Especially in times of great need or danger, when, for example, St. Josemaria could not as yet clearly see his vocation or when he was subjected to severe and massive misunderstanding, etc., he just prayed and prayed, offered a lot of sacrifices, worked hard and quietly, always with confidence and optimism. It was in this way that he managed to pursue what God wanted of him, without falling into doubts, fears, getting angry or discouraged, or sad and depressed, etc. He used to tell us that we have to “drown evil with an abundance of good,” echoing the gospel truth that we have to love our enemies; that we have to love without measure, that love actually conquers all.

Although he did not like to be imitated, because as he said, we should only follow Christ, his lifestyle

is actually worth imitating, because he reflected well the life and message of Christ by embodying very well the spirit of Opus Dei which is described as “a way of sanctification in daily work and in the fulfillment of the Christian’s ordinary duties.” In fact, during his canonization on Oct. 6, 2002, the late Pope, now Saint, John Paul II, said: “Following in his footsteps, spread in society the awareness that we are called to holiness, without distinction of race, class, culture or age.”

We are, therefore, all encouraged to follow the example of St. Josemaria. His way helps us to find Christ in the middle of the world, to be a real contemplative while immersed in our earthly affairs, with heart and mind in heaven and our feet firmly established on earth, to really be serious and determined to seek sanctity and to do apostolate in the context of our daily routine. If we

don't see God in the little things of each day, he used to say, we would likely not see him in the big, extraordinary things either.

We have to be wary of becoming worldly, of being held captive by the forces and impulses of the world, by its allurements and its deceiving logic. We have to be cautious in using the new technologies that can provoke us into an impetuous involvement in the world that would make us forget God and our other important duties in life. Yes, we have to be careful about this phenomenon called impetuosity, because that is a passion which we would like to have but is detached from God. Yes, while we need to be passionate and driven in our life, we should see to it that we would not fall into mere impetuosity which is a passion deprived of reason, and worse, deprived of faith and charity. Impetuosity makes us vulnerable to rash judgement, self-

righteousness, the impulses of hatred, envy, lust. It's a passion that cannot last long, since it is not sustained by God's grace, but only by our own very limited powers and used only for our own narrow, short-ranged purposes. My brothers and sisters, our life cannot be other than a life with God. Anything that undermines this fundamental character of our life is a danger to us. We need to be with Christ, to do the will of God, and not just pursue our own personal or the worldly goals.

St. Josemaria was madly in love with God, and because of that love, he was also madly in love with all souls. For him, as it also should be for us, loving God and loving others always go together. We have to develop a passion for this kind of love, such that it will always be with us, whether we are alone or with others, working or resting or playing. Wherever we are, we should always

be thinking of God and of others. If our thoughts simply revolve around ourselves, let's realize that we have a problem that we need to resolve as soon as we can. Thinking only of ourselves will have no other end or result but sin and our own perdition.

St. Josemaria was a very practical, down-to-earth man, but he never failed to pray nor to make use of all spiritual and supernatural means to develop his personal life, to fulfill his mission, and live his vocation. This is something we always need to remember. No matter how busy or engrossed we are with our earthly affairs, we should not forget that we have to be with our Lord, that we ought to do things, whatever they may be, with Him and for Him.

This frame of mind would also help us to be very sensitive and attentive to the needs of others. This is how we can truly live and practice charity

with justice, justice with mercy, mercy with magnanimity. These values of charity, justice, mercy, magnanimity, etc., etc. would not remain beautiful but abstract ideas or mere nice words. They would become real and alive as long as we develop the mind frame of thinking always of God and of the others. This way of thinking would help us to be realistic in our perception of things, contrary to what some people say that it would detach us from reality. This way of thinking will enable us to understand things more deeply and completely and to react to them the way our Lord would react to them.

This was how St. Josemaria lived. This, I think, is how we should try to live also, thanks to St. Josemaria Escriva.

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