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Audio of Prelate: Bearing Others' Defects Patiently

"It is not a question of 'putting up with' other people but of welcoming them with humility. Let us look at others with the kind eyes with which God sees them." A new podcast on the works of mercy.

10/06/2016

Previous podcasts in the series:

1. Prelate Speaks about the Works of Mercy (Introduction)

2. Visiting and Caring for the Sick
3. Feeding the Hungry and Giving Drink to the Thirsty
4. Clothing the Naked and Visiting the Imprisoned
5. Sheltering the Homeless
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7. “Instructing the ignorant” and “offering good advice”
8. Correcting those who err
9. Forgiving offenses
10. Comforting the Sorrowful

Translation of the Prelate's audio recording is found below.

To listen to the 10-minute audio in Spanish click here.

Throughout this year, we are trying to let God's mercy leave its mark on our interior life and be shown in deeds. As Saint Josemaría would say, it is in ordinary situations that we find the best place to make God's goodness present: we either find Him there, or we will never find Him.

Thus, living alongside others in the workplace or in the family offers opportunities to identify ourselves with Him and, with this "lever of love," to raise the world to God.

Therefore it is very timely to examine how we are practicing the work of mercy we are considering this month: patiently suffering and loving our neighbor's defects.

Love and suffering are two realities difficult to separate. Who has not suffered for love of a spouse, a child or a friend? Sometimes this odd combination may seem mysterious, but from the Cross Jesus shows us

that this was the path taken by God himself. Aware that our Lord knows best, when we face this mystery in our daily life, let us look at the Cross that will be a source of peace.

The founder of Opus Dei always advised that we carry a crucifix in our pocket, or that we have one on our desk, next to the photograph of our loved ones. Then, by kissing the crucifix or praying a few words to Jesus Crucified, it becomes easier to accept the day's annoyances, to confront our defects without being discouraged, or to overcome the inevitable frictions with others. Saint Josemaría would add that we aren't being asked to "put up with" our neighbor but rather to love each person and accompany them on their daily journey.

Losing our fear for the cross, loving it and embracing it when it appears in ordinary or extraordinary situations,

will enlarge our heart and help us welcome others when they need it most. Thus we will prepare ourselves to appear before our God, who understands us and awaits us in Heaven, ready to pour out superabundantly in our poor soul his infinite Love.

Saint Paul describes the characteristics of a purified love with these words: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.”

My friends, if we seriously seek the good of others, we will understand why a weak brother or sister is no excuse for haste, criticism or impatience. Although we may try to shape our neighbor to our own liking, and are easily irritated by their persisting in the same defects,

isn't it true that God has had and continues to have even more patience with us?

During the Transfiguration, while our Lord rejoiced with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the nine disciples waiting for Him at the foot of the mountain tried in vain to heal an epileptic boy. Their lack of faith rendered them unable to cure the boy, who threw himself into water and fire trying to inflict self-harm. When informed about the failure of his disciples, Jesus reacts with a certain note of disillusionment, in which perhaps we recognize our own disappointment or distancing ourselves from the faults of others. "How long must I be with you?" the Redeemer exclaims. "How long must I bear with you?"

However, as Jesus came to earth to redeem mankind, to show great patience towards all, he heals the boy

and tells his disciples the source of their failure: "If you had faith," he tells them, "nothing would be impossible for you." Our Lord's deep love for mankind – for you, for me – is the strength that spurs Him to save us, to offer us his forgiveness again and again, to see in us the dignity of God's children, which He has won for us and which is hidden under the cloak of our miseries.

Following in the footsteps of Christ, let us not turn our backs on the faults of others; and, without seeing oneself as a victim, let us strive to understand that it is not a question of "putting up with" other people but of welcoming them with humility. Let us look at others with the kind eyes with which God sees them and us, instead of with our own. If internal criticism easily arises in us, or we think ourselves unable to cope any longer with the temperament of this or that person, let us take better care

of our personal examination of conscience. A person who does not know himself well, who does not seek humility, tends to be intransigent with others. On this topic, Saint Augustine wrote that “a humble sinner is better than a proud righteous person.”

I remember how Saint Josemaria used to recollect himself before the Tabernacle for a few minutes, also at the end of the day, before retiring, to draw up a balance for his day. Those moments before our Lord helped him remember the times when he could have given himself more to others, and he would ask God for forgiveness and help to better tackle the next day. Only a person who knows his own weakness, and has laughed at himself a bit, discovers how much he needs God and the understanding of his brothers.

Only a patient and humble soul, aware of its own shortcomings, is capable of being available when needed to those seeking a hand to hold on to, some apt advice or a smile that expresses sincere understanding. Little is accomplished, in contrast, by confrontations or phrases filled with cynicism or spite.

Saint Josemaría told married couples, “Try to be ever youthful, and to keep yourselves completely for one another. You have to love each other so much that you love even the defects of your spouse, so long as they don’t offend God.” Loving the defects of one’s spouse, or a friend, is possible when love is mature. And this attitude does not imply stoically accepting the shortcomings of others. We want the good of others, and therefore we try to help them get rid of their faults, such as their angry or apathetic character, lack of order,

sensuality, laziness or activism, tardiness, wastefulness, and so on.

These imperfections are crosses that each of us carries for many years, and perhaps permanently. Let us not add more weight to the cross that each one bears: our patience towards others will be for many people the Simon of Cyrene that soothes their daily struggle, and that helps us identify ourselves with Christ on his way to Calvary, carrying the Cross for us.

Let us ask our Lady to teach us to be patient. She was quick to welcome the Apostles who had abandoned her Son, and with her motherly presence accompanied the Church in its early stages. We can be sure that Mary walks with us, helping us to imbue all human relationships with merciful understanding.

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