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Letter from the Prelate (June 2015)

The Prelate this month continues his reflections on the family. "The earthly journey of Saint Josemaría is filled with his loving teaching that we need to spread constantly the holy atmosphere of the home at Nazareth."

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My dear children: may Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!

I receive your letters, in which you tell me so many “wonderful things.” You also tell me about the pilgrimages you make, to which I unite myself each day; and on reading about the specific details, I accompany you on your visits to the Mother of God and our Mother.

With immense joy and gratitude to God and to our Lady, we have celebrated for the first time, all over the world, the liturgical commemoration of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo. And within a few weeks we will join so many people throughout the whole world in celebrating the feast of St. Josemaría. Forty years have gone by since that 26th of June in 1975, when God called our Founder to the joy of heaven. How many gifts he has gained for us since then! And he has certainly fulfilled his promise: “from heaven I will help you more.”

Among these gifts, I would like to stop to consider a reality that has been present right from the beginning in Opus Dei, and that now is the responsibility of each and every one of us: passing on the atmosphere of a home of this "small family," now very numerous in the heart of the Church. In praying more intently during this Marian year for the institution of the family, we are invited to consider some of its specific features that reflect the atmosphere of the Holy House of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. For "we belong to that family," as our beloved Father told us, when thinking of the Centers of the Work and all Christian homes.

Our Lord has chosen us to bring to others the love of God, the joy of serving, and to make a special effort to find him in each one's home and place of work, from which many acts of thanksgiving should rise up each

day. The need to care for material details that strengthen the home atmosphere, out of love for God and others, can be a true contemplative dialogue. In striving to look after these small points of service, we build up the Church, Opus Dei, and our own home.

The earthly journey of St. Josemaría is filled with his loving teaching that we need to spread constantly the holy atmosphere of the home at Nazareth. Let us consider the different moments of our Father's response. God wanted him to learn those first lessons of Christian life, of joyful service to others, in his life with his parents and brother and sisters. The Grandparents [St. Josemaría's parents] were the first ones to teach him the Christian way of behaving, a very important foundation for developing in an harmonious and peaceful way the

human and Christian personality of children and adolescents.

When God inspired Opus Dei in his heart, our Father took responsibility for everything. Then, in the first Residence on Ferraz Street, with the help of a few sons of his in those early years, he strove to create a joyful home atmosphere in the midst of the most complete lack of means; and he dreamed about the universality of the Work, with the same family tone that we have to create everywhere.

Later on, during the construction of the central offices of Opus Dei, with the great effort of Don Alvaro, he said that those walls "seemed to be built of stone but were really built of love," so abundant was the prayer, sacrifice and concern to finish those buildings very well, thinking also of the people who were to come in future years. His example and words

here were the best school for everyone, and especially for the women of the Work who would over time be responsible for the Administration of the Centers.

Our Father alluded to the great social importance of work in the home, seeing it as an absolutely essential factor for Opus Dei's apostolic work. "All of our apostolates would crumble if my daughters didn't carry out the work of the Administration with that professional spirit, with that supernatural sense, with that joy, with that effort of artists, who know that they are serving God, and that God looks at them with an enchanted look, with a look of love."[1]

We are also grateful to the Grandmother and Aunt Carmen [St. Josemaría's mother and sister], since their assistance was decisive in helping the first women of Opus Dei.

From there, as from a spark that ignites everything it touches, this way of acting has spread to thousands and thousands of homes all over the world.

I dare to say that, in large part, the sad crisis afflicting society today has its roots in the neglect of the home. If fathers, mothers, children paid greater attention to the home, taking a joyful responsibility for the various tasks, the human tone would improve; the sincere charity that Christ came to bring us would spread, and many causes of conflict would be avoided.

No one should consider themselves dispensed from this effort. Fathers too, even though they have many professional concerns, need to take responsibility for these aspects as well, which contribute so much to supporting their family. As St. Josemaría wrote, parents should

never forget that “the secret of married happiness lies in everyday things, not in daydreams. It lies in finding the hidden joy of coming home in the evening, in affectionate relations with their children, in the everyday work in which the whole family cooperates; in good humor in the face of difficulties that should be met with a sporting spirit; in making the best use of all the advantages that civilization offers to help us rear children, to make the house pleasant and life more simple.”[2]

The sons and daughters too, as they get older, need to take seriously their service in the home. Thus they “learn to take responsibility for their family. They mature in sharing its sacrifices. They grow in their appreciation for its gifts.”[3] Moreover, “fraternity in the family shines in a special way when we see the care, the patience, the affection that envelop the weakest little brother or sister, the

one who is sick or physically challenged. There are countless brothers and sisters who do this throughout the world, and perhaps we do not sufficiently appreciate their generosity."[4]

I can't fail to mention here that I give thanks to God for the special effort my daughters and sons put into caring for the sick. Each of us should learn how to transform into prayer these small material acts of service, which are not really simply material. To be with Jesus, to see Jesus in people, in those who are suffering, has to become something "natural" for us, with a strong link—as our Father used to say—between the supernatural and the natural, in a unity of life.

Let us never let up in our daily desire to see in every Center, in every home, an extension of the home at Nazareth, a strong support for

thousands, for millions of souls—even when we are tired. We can't give in to the mistaken thought: “always the same, Lord...” And it's not the same. It's what we are always called to, but with more love.

Let us place our trust in our Lord: Jesus, we can't nor do we want to spend our days without you. May we never distance ourselves in any way from the tone of your thirty years in Nazareth; nor from our Father's efforts to look after the Administration in the first Residence. We have to be eager to highlight the supernatural and human importance of that dedication, and each of the tasks it entails.

The good that we can do people, even in apparently “insignificant” tasks, is very great. First, because hour after hour our Lord is very close to us: he stays close to us and we have to stay close to him. Besides, let us not forget

that the perfection with which we carry out those small daily services has an effect on the Church and on the Work, now and in the future, through the Communion of Saints.

Let us go frequently with a joyful heart to Nazareth, to the place where Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived. Within those walls, in their friendships with the people of that village, in their conversations, a very strong bond united heaven and earth—the same one that we have to create where we live or work. Everything has to spur us to an intense dialogue with our Lord, and to help the others, with each task, to advance with joy and peace along the paths of ordinary life.

Not a few men and women, on contemplating the work of the Administration, or the peace that habitually reigns in the homes of the faithful of the Work, think and say:

God is here. Nothing is truer. Let us always keep alive our awareness that God counts on our renewed responsibility, also in moments when we feel dry or even exhausted. Let us say then: Lord, I offer you this tiredness, because I want to rely more on you and serve the others better.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph carried out all their tasks, even the smallest ones, with a love that imparted the savor of a loving and joyful home to those poor rooms in which they lived; poor, but made rich by the intensity of the supernatural and human content provided by the three. We have to do likewise, with a sense of responsibility, and the twenty-four hours of the day, well employed in the presence of God, will bring the world closer to heaven and heaven to the world.

I won't stop to remind you of the other feasts during the month of June: Corpus Christi, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Immaculate Heart of Mary.... Prepare for them yourselves, closely united to St. Josemaría. Let us continue praying for the Pope and those who assist him: the upcoming solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul offers us a good opportunity to intensify this prayer. And continue being closely united to my intentions. I, with God's help, will be beside you.

With great joy, I want to mention the recent priestly ordinations: they were days of intense unity, and all those taking part unanimously said, although using other words: *quam bonum et quam iucundum habitare fratres in unum!*^[5] That is, how wonderful it is to be part of a family!

With all my affection, I bless you,
Your Father,

+ Javier

Rome, June 1, 2015

[1] St. Josemaría, Notes taken in a family get-together, May 25, 1974.

[2] St. Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 91.

[3] Pope Francis, Address at a general audience, February 11, 2015.

[4] Pope Francis, Address at a general audience, February 18, 2015.

[5] *Ps* 132 [133]: 1.