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Letter from the Prelate (October 2016)

"We are continuously presented with opportunities to 'open ourselves like a fan' to serve more people, including those who have had no experience of Christian life, or do not have faith, or habitually fail to practice it," the Prelate tells us.

10/02/2016

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

Tomorrow we will celebrate, with the Church and in the Church, the liturgical commemoration of the Holy Guardian Angels, a solemnity in the Prelature because—on that date in 1928—the Trinity sowed in the soul and the heart of our Founder a seed destined to bear fruit in thousands upon thousands of people of all languages and nations. Saint Josemaría often said that afterwards there ever resounded in his soul the ringing of the bells of the church of Our Lady of the Angels, bringing home to him, until his transit to heaven, the duty of doing Opus Dei with the force of the year 1928, and later of 1930. I ask our Lord that our deeds may be imbued with the same responsibility, since each and every one of us is “the continuity.”

“Once more the parable of the tiny seed has become a reality; and we have to be filled with gratitude to our Lord. Time has gone by and God has confirmed our faith, granting us all and even more than what we saw back then. Faced with this marvelous reality throughout the whole world—a reality that is like an army in battle array, for peace, for goodness, for joy, for the glory of God—faced with this divine work of men and women in such different situations, of lay people and priests, with a marvelous expansion that necessarily will encounter points of affliction, because we are always beginning; we have to lower our head lovingly, and turn to God and give him thanks. And also turn to our Mother in Heaven, who has been present from the first moment in the entire path of the Work.”[1]

Saint Josemaría’s words still resound in my soul. I recall, as though it were

yesterday, these words spoken as a prayer filled with love for Jesus present in the Eucharist, in the oratory dedicated to Pentecost in the central offices of the Work. They are a help to us now too, at the beginning of this new year of Opus Dei, to be filled once again with hope, because God, who brought forth the Work, continues to keep it active and fruitful with the passage of the years, with your response and mine.

Like Saint Josemaría on that anniversary in 1962, today too we are amazed to see what has already become a reality in this "little portion" of the Church: the Work. It is He who gives the increase, making a reality once more (as has frequently happened in the Church's history) of the parable of the grain of mustard seed: *It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the*

air come and make nests in its branches.[2]

Just as in 1928, now and always we see so clearly the disproportion between the means and the fruit that God brings forth. His salvific power has not been diminished, but he expects of each and every one of us, and also of those who find shelter in the shade of this leafy tree, our generous response, all that we are capable of, with his help.

Our soul breaks forth in praise and thanksgiving to God. "Thank you, Lord! Because this oven full of marvelous bread is already spreading *the good aroma of Christ* (*2 Cor* 2:15) throughout the entire world; thank you for these thousands of souls who are glorifying God in every corner of the world, because they are all yours."[3]

A wholehearted gratitude to God who, despite the various difficulties,

never abandons us. He is always with us! Therefore, when these crop up, “we have to smile amid the harshness of certain circumstances, repeating to our Lord: *Gratias tibi, Deus, gratias tibi!*”[4] Saint Josemaría, in the depths of his soul, heard one day: *si Deus nobiscum, quis contra nos?*[5] If God is with us, neither the secularized and even aggressive external environment, nor the lack of material means or of health, nor the precarious employment situations in many places, nor family complications or those outside the home—nothing should be able to daunt us!

These times are not worse than previous ones. As Saint Augustine makes clear: “why then do you think that any past time was better than the present time? From the first Adam to the Adam of today, this is the human perspective: work and sweat, thorns and thistles.”[6]

October 2nd is also a very good time to see whether each of us individually is behaving as the instrument God expects of us. We should assimilate in our soul the personal prayer of Saint Josemaría on the feast we are commemorating: "When I woke up this morning, I thought that you would want me to say a few words, and I had to blush because I felt embarrassed. Then, going in my heart to God, seeing how much there is still left to do, and thinking also of you, I was convinced that I was not giving everything I should to the Work. He, yes; God, yes."[7]

In spite of our good will, which thanks be to God we have, we need to ask for pardon for our specific failures to correspond to the divine gifts; that is to say, our little generosity from time to time, our personal mistakes that could disedify those around us. Let us do so with a

joyful contrition, which shouldn't take away our peace. For "just as men write with a pen, our Lord writes with the leg of a table, so that it can be seen that it is He who is writing: that is what is incredible, that is what is marvelous."[8]

The Pope is insisting that all of us Christians have to enlighten with our faith the situations and people we meet on our path. Let us feel called, in this new year of the Work, "to preach the Gospel to all: to all places, on all occasions, without hesitation . . . the joy of the Gospel is for all people: no one can be excluded."[9] This is an echo of those words of Christ that burned in our Founder's heart from the moment he began to sense inklings of the divine call, ten or twelve years before 1928. "*Ignem veni mittere in terram et quid volo nisi ut accendatur?* (*Lk* 12:49). I have come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I, but that it be enkindled?

And the answer: *ecce ego quia vocasti me!* (*1 Sam* 3:8), here I am because you have called me. Are all of us, now, saying this to our God?"[10]

October 2nd is a call that resounds in each of us with the conviction of the mission that our Lord has entrusted to us: we are in the world to do the Work as part of the Church's mission. Therefore we know that, wherever we are, we are on the front line of evangelization.

We are continuously presented with opportunities to "open ourselves like a fan" to serve more people, including those who have had no experience of Christian life, or do not have faith, or habitually fail to practice it. They are waiting for us, to transmit to them our joy at having found Christ.

Let us foster a deep and real awareness of being heralds of the joy of the Gospel in our own

environment and at every moment; men and women capable of making friends with everyone—serving others, being fully available, with a friendly and generous demeanor—who don't limit themselves to a few apostolic efforts, but who try to behave as apostles at all times and in all circumstances. And this, my children, has many specific manifestations: taking very seriously the practical implications of the sanctification of work (justice, charity, humility, interest in others, a positive tone, etc.); behaving as people who unite, who work well with others, capable of learning the good points that each one can bring to society.

We will keep this sense of mission alive if we strive to have a deep piety and if we base our action on the supernatural means, on the contemplation of Christ. Transmitting the gospel message is a

good that humanizes and offers a response to the desires for happiness found in all men and women, Christians and non-Christians. At times it will be opportune to point out to them with affection some aspect of their external behavior where they could improve: the fraternal correction that Jesus recommends in the Gospel! I spoke to you extensively on this point in the letter that I wrote at the beginning of the Jubilee year; therefore I won't go into this topic at more length. I only want to mention to you that, following the good criteria of our Founder, we have to exercise this work of mercy with prudence, with calmness, with humility, realizing that all of us need this help that is so human and so supernatural.

I want to end by asking you, as always, to pray for the Holy Father; and specifically, for his trip to Georgia and Azerbaijan that he is

carrying out right now, and the one that he will make to Sweden at the end of the month. These two trips are part of the Pope's ecumenical efforts, following in the footsteps of his predecessors.

Closely united to my intentions, also pray for the 31 faithful of the Prelature whom I will ordain as deacons on the upcoming 29th, and for all the Church's sacred ministers.

With serenity, and still with heartfelt sorrow, I invite you to remember the daughters of mine who died in a traffic accident in Mexico. The sorrow is still strong because we are a united family; the serenity also comes from the unanimous reaction of prayers all over the world. Let us ask our Lord to grant them a very rich Heaven, to the measure of divine Mercy.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father,

+ Javier

Rome, October 1, 2016

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[1] Saint Josemaría, Meditation, October 2, 1962 (AGP, biblioteca, P09, p. 57).

[2] *Mt* 13:32.

[3] Saint Josemaría, Meditation, October 2, 1962 (AGP, biblioteca, P09, p. 59).

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

[5] See *Rom* 8:31.

[6] Saint Augustine, Sermon Caillau-Saint Yves 2, 92 (PLS 2, 441-442, cit. in *Liturgia horarum,* second reading for Wednesday of the 20th week of Ordinary Time).

[7] Saint Josemaría, Meditation, October 2, 1962 (AGP, biblioteca, P09, p. 60).

[8] *Ibid*., p. 59.

[9] Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhort. *Evangelii Gaudium,* November 24, 2013, no. 23.

[10] Saint Josemaría, Meditation, October 2, 1962 (AGP, biblioteca, P09, p. 62).

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