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Letter from the Prelate (June 2012)

The Prelate's letter focuses on the month's many important feasts: "Let us draw close to Him filled with trust especially on the feast of the Sacred Heart, on June 15th, placing ourselves in that Heart opened by a lance on the Cross."

06/04/2012

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

A few days ago we celebrated the solemnity of Pentecost. We prepared ourselves for this feast in close union with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, [1] so that the Holy Spirit might once again take possession of our souls. In the following days, the liturgy introduced us once more into ordinary time, which is an image, as it were, of our earthly pilgrimage. The Divine Paraclete, sent by Jesus from the Father's bosom, guides us decisively towards the goal we all yearn for: eternal life in God, sharing in his infinite beatitude. Our Father spoke of Opus Dei as being, for its faithful, a reflection of heaven, and he urged us to follow this path with joyful fidelity every day—also in difficult moments.

And so that we don't forget, amid the ups and downs of life, the joyful destiny that awaits us, the liturgy invites us to celebrate and contemplate, next Sunday, the

mystery of the Most Holy Trinity: one God in three Persons, whose definitive possession and enjoyment will bring us the goal of our existence. Let us prepare as well as possible for this solemnity. St. Josemaría, following an ancient custom of the Church, recommended that for three days in the Centers of the Work we pray the *Trisagium Angelicum*, which impels us to participate intimately in the prayer of praise, thanksgiving and glorification that the angels and the blessed souls address incessantly to our triune God. Those of us who had the opportunity of praying it with our Father saw his joy when praising the three divine Persons during the decades of the prayer.

Tibi laus, Tibi Gloria, Tibi gratiarum actio in saecula sempiterna, O Beata Trinitas! We will once again invoke God with these words during this Triduum, directing our prayer to the

Father, Son and Holy Spirit. *To thee the praise, to thee the glory, to thee we give thanks without end, O Most Holy Trinity!* And we will unite ourselves to the song of heaven, while we repeat: *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus exercituum...* Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

It is very significant that, precisely upon once again beginning ordinary liturgical time, the Church invites us to raise our heart, our voice and our eyes to the Most Holy Trinity. This should be the ambition of all men and women while still here on earth, because we were created to know and love God now and to enjoy him afterwards for all eternity. And all of us should also remind those we are in contact with of this truth. In his homily *Towards Holiness*, St. Josemaría sets out the path that leads to this joyful end. After telling us that

the path of Christian life begins with a trusting love for our Lady, who always leads us to Jesus, he teaches us to walk alongside Christ in all of life's circumstances, until we are identified with him on the Cross . Our Founder assures us that our heart will feel the need "to distinguish and adore each one of the divine Persons. The soul is, as it were, making a discovery in the supernatural life, like a little child opening his eyes to the world about him. The soul spends time lovingly with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and readily submits to the work of the life-giving Paraclete, who gives himself to us with no merit on our part, bestowing his gifts and the supernatural virtues!" [2]

We can all now travel along this path towards union with God, which is (I stress) a foretaste of the definitive union in heaven. We do so by putting supernatural meaning into our daily

situations, into the extraordinary and the ordinary, seeking our Lord in everything. Referring to this endeavor to attain holiness, St. Josemaría explained: “I am not talking about extraordinary situations. These are, they may very well be, ordinary happenings within our soul: a loving craziness which, without any fuss or extravagance, teaches us how to suffer and how to live, because God grants us his wisdom. What calm, what peace is ours once we have embarked upon ‘the narrow road that leads on to life’ (Mt 7:14)!” [3]

The path is sketched out with perfect clarity: *per crucem ad lucem!* If we respond loyally to the action of grace, union with Jesus leads us into the heart of the Blessed Trinity. And grace comes to us principally through the sacraments, especially Confession and the Holy Eucharist. “How good Christ was to leave the

Sacraments to his Church! They are the remedy for all our needs.

“Venerate them and be very grateful both to God and to his Church.” [4]

Let us not cease to show our gratitude to heaven every day, by making use of these means to draw closer to God. They are the “footprints of the Incarnate Word,” [5] St. Josemaría said, when inviting us to walk firmly along that path.

With Corpus Christi also drawing near (which we will celebrate on Thursday June 7th or on the following Sunday, in accord with the liturgical guidelines in each place), I would like to speak to you briefly about the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, the compendium of all divine assistance, and the “viaticum” for our earthly pilgrimage. As the liturgy expresses it in the Sequence of the Mass. *Ecce panis angelorum, / factus cibus viatorum; / vere panis*

filiorum, / non mittendus canibus. [6]

Behold the bread of angels which has been made into food for pilgrims, true bread of the children, which is not to be thrown to the dogs. This is the “bread” that remains in the Tabernacle, after the celebration of the Mass. “In the Eucharist Jesus gives us a sure pledge of his presence in our souls; of his power, which supports the whole world; of his promises of salvation, which will help the human family to dwell forever in the house in heaven when time comes to an end. There we shall find God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit: the Blessed Trinity, the one and only God. Our whole faith is brought into play when we believe in Jesus, really present under the appearances of bread and wine.”

[7]

Let us strive to “serenade” Jesus, to show him our love in the upcoming days. Let us take part in the

expositions of the Blessed Sacrament, the Corpus Christi procession, or other manifestations of Eucharistic piety, with the desire of praising Jesus in the Sacred Host and giving him thanks, with an eagerness to make reparation for the sins by which we have offended him and for the offenses he receives in the Most Holy Sacrament. Let us draw close to him filled with trust especially on the feast of the Sacred Heart, on June 15th, placing ourselves in that Heart opened by a lance on the Cross, to show us the immensity of his love for each of us. And let us also go, naturally, to the most Sweet Heart of Mary, the sure path: *iter para tutum!*

The whole month of June is filled with significant dates, for the history of Opus Dei as well: the ordination of the first priests, on June 25, 1944; the arrival of our Father in Rome, on June 23, 1946; the definitive approval of the spirit and norms of the Work

by the Holy See, on June 16, 1950. And, especially, the passage of St. Josemaría to heaven on the 26th of June, 1975. I can assure you that our Founder, right to his final day on earth, wanted and strove to genuflect before the Tabernacle with very special devotion. That 26th of June, he was physically totally exhausted, but despite everything he knelt down in deep adoration to the Blessed Eucharist on returning from Castelgandolfo. Do we also do so? Are we aware of adoring God at those moments? Do we feel the need to greet the Blessed Sacrament on entering and leaving the church or oratory where he is reserved?

When we celebrate the liturgical feast of St. Josemaría, let us ask through his intercession for a great increase in desires for sanctity and apostolate in all the faithful—priests and laity—of the Work, and also in the friends and Cooperators who

benefit from its spirit. Let us pray for the expansion of the apostolic work to so many places where people are awaiting us. And, therefore, let us ask our Lord to grant to many men and women the grace of responding generously to the call he is addressing to them to follow him closely, opening up the divine paths of the earth.

It makes me happy to tell you that I returned with great joy from my recent pastoral trip to Bratislava. I saw at first hand the growth of the apostolic work in those beloved countries of Slovakia and the Czech Republic. While there, I was very close to each and every one of you.

A special place is always reserved in our prayers for petition for the Roman Pontiff and those who assist him in governing the Church, and for the shepherds: the bishops and priests of the whole world. The

solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul, on the 29th, will help us to keep those intentions more clearly in mind. Our Father wanted us to never leave the successor of Peter without support and alone: may he feel our help.

Before ending, I would like to say a few words in regard to my birthday on June 14th. First of all, I ask you to pray for me: how I need it!

For some months now, there has come to my mind the memory of St. Josemaría when he was about to celebrate his seventieth birthday. Our Father asked then for the grace of being a soul of prayer, although he was so immersed in God that his dialogue with our Lord was practically uninterrupted. As he said expressly on January 8, 1972, when celebrating Holy Mass for a small group of his daughters. “This is my resolution on the eve of my ‘seventh’ birthday: to be a soul of prayer, of a

prayer that is never interrupted; to be with my arms uplifted as at the moment of reciting the prayers of the Mass. And I would like this to be your resolution as well: thus you will have good humor, you will be happy and effective.” [8]

At other moments, with different words, he asked for the same grace from our Lord. I specifically recall the toast he made on beginning a new year, a few days before his birthday, surrounded by his sons on the General Council. He told us: “for everyone, joy; for me, compunction.” [9] Therefore I ask that on that anniversary, and every day, you don’t forget this Father of yours, so that he be a man of contrition, of repentance, and be ever more attentive to what our Lord is asking of me each day. And since compunction and joy are fruits of the action of the Holy Spirit, pray that I become a soul of prayer, docile to the

inspirations of the Paraclete, and that I put them into effect. I wish the same for you, for each and every one: that we be men and women who pray, who love mortification and penance, servants of the others, with a constant concern for the apostolate. And doing so in ordinary circumstances and extraordinary ones, if they should ever arise.

I also recall how our beloved Don Alvaro prepared for his eightieth birthday. Deeply engraved on my heart are the accents of gratitude, contrition and petition for help that were linked together in the homily of his Mass on that anniversary. They were words that he always gave voice to whenever special days came around: *thank you, forgive me, help me more* . I try to repeat them frequently, and I suggest that you do likewise, if you wish, for they will give you great peace and serenity.

Two months ago, on his 85th birthday, Benedict XVI spoke some words that I would like to share with you: “I am now facing the last chapter of my life and I do not know what awaits me. I know, however, that the light of God exists, that he is Risen, that his light is stronger than any darkness, that the goodness of God is stronger than any evil in this world. And this helps me to go forward with certainty. May this help all of us to go forward, and now I wholeheartedly thank all those who have continually helped me to perceive the ‘yes’ of God through their faith.” [10]

I ask you once again, for the love of God, that you continue to support me with your prayers, recalling what St. Josemaría so often said about the need we have for one another. “I would like, my children” (and we can each apply this personally), “that wherever you are, wherever you are

working, wherever you are resting, you will be a leaven of unity.” Let us beseech the Holy Spirit that this unity may always be strengthened with our prayer and our sacrifices, with our work and our rest, with our ordinary life, in health and in sickness: at every moment, *semper in laetitia!* I hope that, for the 14th of June, you will help me to present myself before our Lord saying: here I offer you the prayer of my daughters and my sons, and that of so many other people.

I return to the 26th of June, to insist on our Father’s perennial petition: “may you love one another, may you love one another a lot.” He was simply reminding us of the *mandatum novum* [11] that Christ Jesus so solicitously passed on to his own, to each and every one of us.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father,

+ Javier

Rome, June 1, 2012

Footnotes: [1] See *Acts* 1:14.

[2] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 306.

[3] *Ibid* . no. 307.

[4] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 521.

[5] St. Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 115.

[6] Roman Missal, Solemnity of Corpus Christi, Sequence *Lauda, Sion*.

[7] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 153.

[8] St. Josemaría, Notes taken from a homily, January 8, 1972.

[9] St. Josemaría, Words at the beginning of the year, January 1, 1974.

[10] Benedict XVI, Homily at Mass on the occasion of his 85th birthday, April 16, 2012.

[11] See *Jn* 13:34.

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from-the-prelate-june-2012/](https://dev.opusdei.org/en-za/article/letter-from-the-prelate-june-2012/) (08/09/2025)