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## "We Won't Be Left Orphans"

An article by the Prelate of Opus Dei published in ABC (Madrid) on Benedict XVI's fruitful service to the Church and our prayerful wait for a new Pope.

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“I won’t leave you orphans” (*Jn* 14:18), Christ told the Apostles. He promised to send them the Holy Spirit, who would make them more fully children of God the Father. “I won’t leave you orphans”: these are

the words that fill my heart as a pontificate is about to end. Benedict XVI is not leaving us orphans. His teaching continues to guide us; he will accompany us with his prayer and fatherly affection, and his stature as Good Shepherd grows stronger every day. And the Holy Spirit will continue to guide his Church with a new Roman Pontiff.

Benedict XVI's rich magisterium shows his extraordinary ability to put profound truths into simple words. He has taken advantage of the apparent "eclipse of God" to invite us to rediscover the meaning of God, Creator and Redeemer, who is always acting in our world.

He has forcefully reminded us of God's infinite love, and therefore the reason for our existence and path in life. In this *Year of Faith* we find a sure reference point for our journey in the *Catechism of the Catholic*

*Church and its Compendium* , grounded in the Second Vatican Council and deeply indebted to Cardinal Ratzinger's work. The new Catechism invites us to see our life in the Church as part of the Communion of Saints, where no baptized person is excluded and where we learn to practice "charity in truth."

In his first homily as successor of Peter, Benedict XVI invited us to seek intimate friendship with the Son of God, which is the key to everything. God speaks to us and answers our questions, and never turns his back on us. I remember how, at the canonization of St. Josemaría, the then Cardinal Ratzinger explained the term "Opus Dei," Work of God: the real meaning of these words is letting God act, since Christian life is principally a matter of letting Christ's grace and charity act in our own life.

Also very relevant is his reflection on the spirit of the liturgy. While stressing the close tie between the Word of God and the Eucharistic Bread, he points to the essential dimension of adoration, thus going right to the heart of the matter and resolving many debates. Our participation in the Eucharist is above all interior, since in the liturgy God takes the initiative: what we live in the Mass is “performative,” always new, because Christ is transforming us there.

At the end of a very tiring workday, a person working alongside John Paul II urged him not to push himself to exhaustion. “After one Pope, another will come,” was his reply. Now we too are serene and full of hope, placing ourselves in the hands of Mary, Mother of God and our Mother: The See of Peter will always be the source and foundation of the Church’s unity, and a firm reference

point for the world. The Pope's free decision, considered carefully in his prayer, is for the good of the Church; therefore we have received this painful news with filial affection and respect. Benedict XVI himself has assured us that he will continue to help us with his prayer, on which all the sons and daughters of the Church can trustingly rest, as we did throughout his Pontificate.

I give thanks to God for the various occasions on which Benedict XVI received me as Prelate of Opus Dei. My heart is moved now on recalling his simplicity and availability, his gracious welcome, his readiness to listen, his interest in news of the Prelature's apostolic expansion. When I happened to mention some academic initiative, he responded as the authentic university teacher that he is, while also showing great interest in a work in service of the terminally ill or other needy persons.

As we saw in television coverage of his audiences, the Pope would often grasp the hand of the person he was speaking to with fatherly affection and encouragement, showing patient attention. Indeed, he is a true father, eager to encourage the work of evangelization that so many Christians are carrying out everywhere.

Some other words of Christ also come to mind spontaneously: “You have sorrow now,” Jesus says, when comforting those he is about to leave. But he also says that soon “your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you” (*Jn 16:22*). As Benedict XVI requested in his Angelus address on February 17, we are praying now for the next Pope. Should we feel like orphans? No! The Holy Spirit continues acting in the Church today. Another Peter will come, with his nets ready for the catch, a new Bishop of Rome and

new Father for the family of God's children. And now, as Pope Benedict XVI hands on to his successor the tiller of the fisherman from Galilee's boat, we tell him with our whole heart: Thank you, Holy Father! Forgive any hesitation in responding to the whistles of the Good Shepherd. And we ask you to continue helping all the people of God with your fruitful thought and prayer.

+ Javier Echevarría

Prelate of Opus Dei

Javier Echevarría, Prelate of  
Opus Dei // ABC (Madrid)

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