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Letter from the Prelate (August 2016)

The Prelate writes about Mary's Assumption and Queenship, and reflects on a spiritual work of mercy: "bearing wrongs patiently."

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

On 15 August 2007, Benedict XVI, referring to the Entrance Antiphon of

the Holy Mass – *A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon beneath her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars* [1] – explained that this woman is “Mary, who lives totally in God, surrounded and penetrated by God’s light. Surrounded by the twelve stars, that is, by the twelve tribes of Israel, by the whole People of God, by the whole Communion of Saints; and at her feet, the moon, the image of death and mortality... Thus, placed in glory after overcoming death, she says to us: take heart, it is love that wins in the end! The message of my life was: ‘I am the handmaid of God.’ My life has been a gift of myself to God and my neighbor. And this life of service now arrives at the true life.”[2] These words of praise for our Lady recall the faith with which Saint Josemaría used to say, from 1951 onwards, having recourse to her intercession: “*Cor Mariæ dulcissimum, iter para tutum!* – Most

sweet Heart of Mary, prepare a safe way!”

A week later, on the feast of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the liturgy presents our Lady in words addressed to Christ: *At your right stands the Queen in robes of gold, finely arrayed.*^[3] These deeply significant words still cannot completely express the greatness of the Mother of God. We are filled with admiration as we contemplate how, in the fifth glorious mystery of the Holy Rosary, “the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit crown her as the rightful Empress of the Universe. And the Angels pay her homage as her subjects... and the patriarchs and prophets and Apostles... and the martyrs and confessors and virgins and all the saints... and all sinners and you and I.”^[4]

Mary, who was *full of grace* from her Immaculate Conception, grew

progressively in holiness through her total self-giving to God, to the point where she is crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth, a Queen of Heaven who is our Mother, and who invites us to fight to respond fully to God, with joy and total generosity. Let's make the most of her powerful intercession! And let's follow our Father's advice: "With the daring of a child, join in this celebration in Heaven. For myself, since I have no precious stones or virtues to offer, I crown the Mother of God and my Mother with my failings, once they have been purified. She is expecting something from you too."[5]

Our Lady has earned the title "Teacher of all virtues." This especially Marian month in the Jubilee Year of Mercy is a good opportunity to ask her to obtain for us from her Son a great increase of the virtue of mercy in our personal behavior. Let's appeal to Mary,

Throne of Grace and Glory, *ut misericordiam consequamur*,[6] that we may achieve mercy in what we do.

The Gospel of the Mass of the Assumption relates an enchanting scene from our Lady's life: her visitation to her cousin St Elizabeth. "These two women meet," said the Holy Father, "and meet with joy. That moment is a real celebration! If we could learn that kind of service, going out to encounter others, how the world would change! Reaching out to others is another Christian sign. Someone who claims to be Christian and is not capable of going out to meet others, is not fully Christian. Both service and reaching out require us to get outside of ourselves; to go out and serve, to go out to meet, to embrace the other person."[7]

In our review of the works of mercy, we can now consider the one that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* expresses as “bearing wrongs patiently”[8] – both those that arise from our own limitations, and those that come to us from outside. Let us maintain full confidence in the mercy of the Lord, who is able to bring forth good from everything that happens. Patience is also one of the richest fruits of charity for our neighbor. St Paul says this in his magnificent hymn to charity: *Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*[9]

Mercy should lead us to live facing others patiently, including at times when they are being unreasonable.

We all have defects, shortcomings in our characters, and, although not on purpose, we often cause friction that hurts others: members of our families, colleagues, friends, or in the encounters that can occur, for instance, in traffic-jams... All these occasions give us an opportunity to make life pleasanter for others by not giving in to bad temper.

Patience impels us not to dramatize other people's failings, not to fall into the temptation of blaming them, or letting off steam by gossiping about them to others. For instance, there would not be much point in keeping quiet about a person's defects, if we afterwards revealed them through some sarcastic remark; or if our displeasure made us treat them coldly; or if we fell into more subtle forms of gossip, harming ourselves, the subject of our gossip, and the people who listened to us. Bearing other people's failings patiently

means trying to ensure that our love for them is not conditioned by those failings; we shouldn't love them *in spite of* their defects, we should love them *with* their defects. This is a grace that we can ask our Lord for: not to hold back, or make excuses for ourselves when we are annoyed by others who displease us, because every single person always has good qualities that outweigh their bad ones. Therefore, when we realize that our heart is not responding, let's place it within our Lord's Heart: *Cor Iesu sacratissimum et misericors, dona nobis pacem* – most Sacred and Merciful Heart of Jesus, grant us peace! He will turn our heart of stone into a heart of flesh.[10]

“Let's put great care, then, into fulfilling all our duties, even those that seem less important. Let's increase our patience in the face of daily annoyances and take care of small details in our work. Our effort

to improve has to be more vigorous. So let's fight in the little struggles in which God awaits us. Why be resentful in the face of the little everyday frictions that naturally arise from distinct characters and temperaments? Let's struggle to conquer ourselves: here is where God awaits us.”[11]

Smiling at people who approach us with harshness, or who respond rudely to our friendly enquiries, shows a wonderful spirit of self-sacrifice. As our Father said, a smile is often the best sign of a spirit of penance. In *The Way*, among the practices of mortification that he suggested back in the 1930s were these: “The appropriate word you left unsaid; the joke you didn't tell; the cheerful smile for those who bother you; that silence when you're unjustly accused; your kind conversation with people you find boring and tactless; the daily effort to

overlook one irritating detail or another in those who live with you... this, with perseverance, is indeed solid interior mortification.”[12]

The World Youth Day which has just ended in Krakow is another reason for thanking God, the Holy Father Pope Francis, and all the many people who have put such generous efforts into organizing it. Let's pray that these days may bear abundant and permanent apostolic fruits, having recourse also to the intercession of St John Paul II, who performed a large part of his service to the Church and the world right here in Krakow, and presided over another World Youth Day in Czestochowa, in which our beloved Don Alvaro also took part.

Like every year, on the feast of the Assumption we will be very united to our Father as we renew the consecration of Opus Dei to the most

sweet Heart of Mary in the Centers of Opus Dei. Meditate on the words Saint Josemaría wrote, and include in your prayer – as you already do – my intentions for the Church, the Pope, the Work, our brothers and sisters who are sick or in difficulties of any kind, so that they may be able to supernaturalize them and unite them to Our Lord's Cross, each relying on the powerful intercession of the Mother of God and our Mother.

A very affectionate blessing from

Your Father

+ Javier

Kracow, August 1, 2016

[1] Roman Missal, The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Entrance Antiphon (cf. *Apoc* 12:1).

[2] Benedict XVI, Homily, August 15, 2007.

[3] Roman Missal, The Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Entrance Antiphon (cf. *Ps* 44(43):10).

[4] St Josemaría, *Holy Rosary*, Fifth Glorious Mystery.

[5] St Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 285.

[6] *Heb* 4:16.

[7] Pope Francis, Homily at Santa Marta, May 31, 2016.

[8] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2447.

[9] 1 *Cor* 13:4-7. Cf. Pope Francis, Apost. Exhort. *Amoris Laetitia*, ch. 4.

[10] Cf. *Ez* 11:19.

[11] St Josemaría, notes taken from a meditation, June 24, 1937; in *Growing on the inside*, p. 123.

[12] St Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 173.

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