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Letter from the Prelate (August 2009)

The Prelate, writing from Mexico, speaks about the Marian feasts that are celebrated in August and through them encourages us to imitate Mary's ordinary life and her closeness to her son Jesus.

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Mexico, August 1, 2009

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

*Assumpta est Maria in Caelum,
gaudet exercitus angelorum!* [1] Mary
has been taken up to Heaven, body
and soul, and the angels share in the
rejoicing. All Christians are also filled
with joy, because our Lady lives
eternally in the fullness of God. Mary
contemplates and loves the Blessed
Trinity in the glory of Heaven.

As the solemnity of August 15, the
Assumption of our Lady, approaches,
I wish to remind you that this great
feast impels us to lift our gaze to
Heaven; not to a heaven consisting of
abstract ideas or even an imaginary
heaven created by art, but the
Heaven of true reality which is God
himself. God is Heaven. He is our
destination, the destination and the
eternal dwelling place from which
we come and for which we are
striving.... It is an opportunity to rise
with Mary to the heights of the spirit
where one breathes the pure air of
supernatural life and contemplates

the most authentic beauty, the beauty of holiness.[2] How, and how frequently, do we appeal to our Lady to help us act supernaturally always and in everything? Do we ask our Mother to make the spirit of contemplation grow in our souls?

Pope Benedict's words, which I have just quoted, are an effective introduction to the mystery of faith which we are preparing to savor anew. As St. Josemaría wrote, *We face here a mystery of love. Human reason barely begins to comprehend. Only faith can shed some light on how a creature can be raised to such great heights, becoming a loving target for the delights of the Trinity. We know this is a divine secret. Yet because our Mother is involved, we feel we can understand it more—if we are entitled to speak this way—than other truths of our faith.*[3] Let's turn to our Father, who enjoys face-to-face contemplation of God and the

Blessed Humanity of Jesus Christ, of our Lady, the angels and the other saints, asking him expressly to obtain light from God for us to penetrate more deeply into this truth of faith and this way of loving and admiring our Blessed Lady more.

I suggest to you, in the first place, that we can take an in-depth look at our Lady's daily response, and in our personal meditation, dwell on the passages in Sacred Scripture which speak to us about her. Although there are few of them, those texts contain all the *magnalia*, the great things that the Holy Spirit has chosen to reveal to us about the Mother of God and our Mother: an immense treasure which it is up to each of us to discover, always under the guidance of the Church's Magisterium. I advise you also to go over some treatise on mariology and make an effort, by means of meditative and profound reading, to

enter deeply into the things that were wrought in the Blessed Virgin by God, who is almighty and whose name is holy.[4] The canticle of the Magnificat, which broke forth from Mary's lips and heart under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is the best school for us to get to know, talk to, listen to, and imitate our Mother. It is a portrait of Mary, a true icon in which we can see her exactly as she is.[5]

Let's concentrate especially on her life of prayer. That is how we discover her as we contemplate the first joyful mystery of the Rosary. *The Lady of the sweet name, Mary, is absorbed in prayer. You, in that house, are whatever you want to be: a friend, a servant, an onlooker, a neighbor...*

[6] Let's get inside this scene, perseveringly, to accept our Father's invitation in all seriousness. Let's do all we can, each of us, to find our place, as every day we go over this

key event in the history of our salvation, and also in praying the Angelus and the Rosary. We can think about our Lady, who maintains her conversation with God constantly, and is found like that when the Archangel brings her the divine message. The same is true in the second luminous mystery. The confident petition contained in our Lady's simple statement at the wedding feast at Cana brings about the first miracle worked by Jesus, somehow bringing forward *his hour*; it also brings it about that her Son's first followers receive the gift of faith, as the Evangelist notes briefly: *his disciples believed in Him.*[7]

It is St. John, the beloved disciple, who gives us this information. He reveals to us that our Blessed Lady, who until then had looked after her Son during the years of hidden life in Nazareth, is called to continue co-operating directly in the mystery of

the Redemption. This divine plan is implied in Christ's reply to his Mother's petition: *O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.*[8] Our Lord is referring to the sacrifice of the Cross. When that moment arrives, he will want (both humanly and supernaturally) to have his Mother with him, as the new Eve, to co-operate in restoring supernatural life to souls. St. John relates this too: *Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.*[9]

I was reminding you, in the Pope's words, that the solemnity of the Assumption invites us to raise our

eyes to Heaven, the final dwelling towards which we are journeying, but without forgetting—this is another lesson from Mary—that before being taken up body and soul into glory, our Lady accompanied Christ closely in his redemptive Passion and Death. The new Eve followed the new Adam in suffering, in the Passion, and so too in definitive joy. Christ is the first-fruits, but his risen flesh is inseparable from that of his earthly Mother, Mary. In Mary all humanity is involved in the Assumption to God, and together with her all creation (...). Thus are born the new Heaven and the new earth in which death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more (cf. *Rev* 21: 1-4).[10]

Our Lady's co-operation in the Sacrifice of the Cross was unique. This is the reason why the Church honors her with "the titles of

Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix,” in such a way that this “neither takes away anything from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator.”[11] This supremely close co-operation in the work of the Redemption also gives rise to the title *Woman of the Eucharist*, bestowed on her by Pope John Paul II in his last encyclical. The Blessed Eucharist is the sacramental making-present of the sacrifice of the Cross, because what was fulfilled on Calvary becomes present in the Holy Mass. And it cannot be overlooked that on Golgotha our Lord showed our Lady her new motherhood. “Jesus’ words,” said John Paul II, “acquire their most authentic meaning in the context of his saving mission. Spoken at the moment of the redemptive sacrifice, they draw their loftiest value precisely from this sublime circumstance. In fact, after Jesus’ statements to his Mother, the

Evangelist adds a significant clause: 'Jesus, knowing that all was now finished....' (Jn 19:28), as if he wished to stress that he had brought his sacrifice to completion by entrusting his Mother to John, and in him to all men, whose Mother she becomes in the work of salvation." [12]

In each Holy Mass our Lady is mysteriously present at the altar where the Sacrifice of the Cross is being offered in an unbloody way. *In this unfathomable mystery, wrote our Father, can be glimpsed as though through a veil the most pure face of Mary: daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son, Spouse of God the Holy Spirit.* [13] This is the Church's firm conviction, expressed in one of the prayers that the liturgy recommends to priests to help them prepare better to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice: *Mother of mercy and love, blessed Virgin Mary, (...) I turn to you in confidence and love. You stood by*

your Son as he hung dying on the cross. Stand also by me, a poor sinner, and by all the faithful who, here and throughout the entire Church, will take part in that divine sacrifice today.[14] Do you appeal to her as her son or daughter, every day, before celebrating or taking part in the Holy Mass?

Our Blessed Lady, from Bethlehem to Golgotha, showed Christ to her Son's disciples—both men and women—and led them to Christ. If, as the Gospel tells us, John, Mary Magdalene, Salome and the other women persevered firmly by the Cross of Jesus and were afterwards witnesses of his Resurrection, it is because they did not desert Mary in those hours; they “took her into their house”—into the whole space of their spiritual journeying—from the indescribable moment when Christ entrusted them to his Mother on Calvary.

My daughters and sons: she who is totally God's, Woman of the Eucharist and Teacher of prayer, wants us to talk to her, to ask her to teach us to fall in love with Jesus Christ with all our heart, with all our soul, so as to respond to him with total fidelity in all the different moments and circumstances. A great mystery of love is set before us on the feast of our Lady's Assumption: Christ triumphed over death with the omnipotence of his love. Love alone is omnipotent. This love impelled Christ to die for us and thus to overcome death. Yes, love alone gives access to the Kingdom of life! And Mary entered after her Son, associated with his Glory, after being associated with his Passion. She entered it with an uncontainable force, keeping the way behind her open to us all. And for this reason we invoke her today as "Gate of Heaven," "Queen of Angels" and "Refuge of sinners." [15]

Let's concentrate on and savor the litany and the other Marian prayers—the Hail Mary, the Salve, the Rosary and the aspirations that filial affection suggests to us—with lovingly attentive devotion and the piety of children, because *Mary, Virgin without stain, has made up for the fall of Eve: and she has crushed the head of hell's serpent with her immaculate heel.*[16] United to that great lover of our Lady that our Father was and is, let's admire still more the way *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost crown her as the rightful Empress of the Universe. And the Angels render her homage as her subjects... and the patriarchs and the prophets and the Apostles... and the martyrs and the confessors and the virgins and all the saints... and all sinners and you and I.*[17] Is that how we ourselves act?

St. Josemaría used to sign his family letters and documents with the name

Mariano. Let's go to the *school of Mariano*, then, imitating our Father in his tender devotion to our Blessed Lady, like little children who know that they need their Mother's care at every moment.

Our Lady, moreover, has always been a Mother to Opus Dei from its birth, and the Work has developed in the shelter of her mantle. She has gone before us, accompanied us and followed us in all the steps of our family history and personal journey. In the month of August we recall some of those moments: the Consecration of the Work to the most sweet Heart of Mary in Loreto on August 15, 1951, which we renew every year; the invitation to have recourse to divine mercy through the *Throne of glory* which is Mary, on August 23, 1971... And so many other interventions by the Queen of Heaven and earth that it is not possible to list now.

At present I am in Mexico, where I have come to take part in the dedication of the church built in honor of St. Josemaría in Mexico City. With each and every one of you I also give thanks to God, because this event has enabled me to pray before Our Lady of Guadalupe in the *Villa*, remembering the footsteps of our Father in 1970. Some of the intentions that filled our founder's heart then are still very pressing; others have already been fulfilled, thanks to our Mother's intercession. I have come, I stress, in the name of everyone—those of us who are in the Work now, and those who will come in the course of centuries—to pray for the Church, for the Pope and his collaborators, for the Bishops and priests of the whole world—especially in this Year for Priests—, for Opus Dei and all the Christian people; for our personal daily falling in love with Jesus Christ. I have very vividly in my memory that locution

which so stirred our Father and which he told us about straight away, visibly moved, in August 1970. We could see how he felt strongly urged to act as a persevering *man of prayer*. Our Lord imprinted on his soul the words *clama, ne cesses!* [18]—cry aloud, spare not!—which I want us to incorporate into our piety and all that we do.

Accompany me in my petitions, especially on August 15, when we renew the consecration to the most sweet Heart of our Lady. And let's take up again in depth this recommendation by St. Josemaría: *adeamus cum fiducia ad thronum gloriae, ut misericordiam consequamur (cf. Heb4:16)*. *Keep that very much in mind right now, and also later. I would say that it is a desire of God's: that we set our own interior life within those words I have just quoted. Sometimes you'll hear them quite*

*silently in the intimacy of your soul,
when you least expect it.*

*Adeamus cum fiducia: go, I repeat,
with confidence, to the Most Sweet
Heart of Mary, who is our Mother and
the Mother of Jesus. And with her,
who is the Mediatrix of all graces, go
to the Most Sacred and Merciful Heart
of Jesus Christ. With confidence too,
and offering him reparation for so
many offences. May you never lack a
word of affection for him: when you
are working, when you are praying,
when you are resting, and also in the
activities that seem least important:
when you're relaxing, telling some
little story, doing sport... in short,
with your whole life. Give everything a
supernatural basis, an intimate
conversation with God.[19]*

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father

+Javier

Notes

[1] Roman Missal, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Gospel acclamation.

[2] Benedict XVI, Homily on the solemnity of the Assumption, August 15, 2008.

[3] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 171.

[4] Lk 1:49.

[5] Benedict XVI, Homily on the solemnity of the Assumption, August 15, 2005.

[6] St. Josemaría, *Holy Rosary*, first joyful mystery.

[7] *Jn* 2:11.

[8] *Jn* 2:4.

[9] *Jn* 19:25-27.

[10] Benedict XVI, Homily on the solemnity of the Assumption, August 15, 2008.

[11] Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 62.

[12] John Paul II, General audience, April 23, 1997.

[13] St. Josemaría, “La Virgen del Pilar,” published in *El Libro de Aragón*, Saragossa, 1976.

[14] Roman Missal, Prayers before Mass.

[15] Benedict XVI, Homily on the solemnity of the Assumption, August 15, 2008.

[16] St. Josemaría, *Holy Rosary*, fifth glorious mystery.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Is* 58:1.

[19] St. Josemaría, notes taken from a get-together, September 9, 1971.

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