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Letter from the Prelate (October 2015)

A new anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei and Pope Francis' call to assist those who have been forced to flee their homeland are the central topics of this month's letter.

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

Tomorrow is a day of special thanksgiving, because it is another anniversary of the founding of the Work. We know that St. Josemaría received this illumination from God while praying and arranging some notes about what our Lord had let him see in his prayer, since first sensing those “inklings” from God. He had spent many years begging God to show him his will: *Domine, ut videam!* Lord, let me see! And asking our Lady: *Domina, ut sit!* My Lady, may what your Son wants of me become a reality.

Therefore, when he finally saw God’s will clearly, his reaction was to fall to his knees, adoring and giving thanks to our Thrice Holy God, while there resounded in his ears the pealing of the bells of the church of Our Lady of the Angels in honor of the Queen of Heaven, on the feast of the Holy Guardian Angels. For each and every one of us, his falling to his knees

should mean for us adoring God for his goodness, and keeping alive the readiness to serve unconditionally.

Our Founder would never forget that pealing of the bells. In a letter written to his children a year before he went to heaven, he said: “I would like this tolling of the bell to forever awaken in your hearts the same joy and vigilant spirit left in my soul by the bells of Our Lady of the Angels, now almost a half century ago. A peal of divine joy, a whistle-call from the Good Shepherd that . . . should awaken in you contrition and, if necessary, a desire for deep interior conversion, a new upraising of the soul: more prayer, more mortification, more spirit of penance, more effort, if possible, to be good children of the Church.”[1]

I want to remind myself and all of you of these recommendations of our Founder, so that we always strive to

put them into practice—in a special way during the month that is now beginning, the month of the Rosary, in which the Synod of Bishops on the family will also be held (for which we have been praying so much, closely united to the Pope’s petition), and in the midst of a Marian Year in the Work. Regarding the value of your prayer and mine, I would like to tell you an anecdote. I went to visit a bishop in Australia, and a few minutes after beginning our conversation he asked me the following question: the Founder, to carry out the Work, prayed a lot, right? I responded affirmatively, adding a few details. Let us ask ourselves: to carry out the Work each day, do we pray a lot?

“Pause for a moment, my children, and consider your own life. Perhaps we have already sensed the tolling of the bell, heaven’s grace, in the depths of our soul. God, with his

unconditional self-giving, shows us that authentic Christian conduct is woven of both divine and human threads: man's will intertwined with God's will."[2]

He tells us with St. Matthew: *Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.*[3] And St. Paul insists: *This is the will of God: your sanctification.*[4] From October 2nd, 1928, realizing that God was determined that Opus Dei become a "small portion" of the People of God at the service of the whole Church, St. Josemaría gave himself unwaveringly to this task; and therefore he wrote with full assurance: "*the Work of God comes to fulfil the Will of God. Therefore have the firm conviction that heaven is determined to see it carried out.*"[5]

Opus Dei was then like a seed that had barely broken through the ground. Therefore those first men and women who faithfully followed

our Father—although they wouldn't arrive for some time—showed great faith in God and in our founder, on seeing his constant self-giving. To them too we direct our gratitude on this anniversary. Now, on seeing how the spirit of the Work has taken root in souls and countries all over the world, I dare to say that *we almost don't need faith*, since the development of the Work is so clear to us. We can touch it with our hands, and we can see how God our Lord is faithful to his promises.

Yes, my daughters and sons: “have the firm conviction that heaven is determined to see” Opus Dei carried out all over the world.^[6] And he calls us to this great adventure in our place of work, in the broad circle of our social relationships, and also in our families. We unite ourselves to the grateful cry of so many souls in heaven and on earth, who praise the Blessed Trinity unceasingly for this

gift of his to the Church and the world. *Holy, Holy, Holy*, we proclaim, knowing that words fall short in expressing God's greatness and making known his mercy.

Let us also recall these words of our Father, addressed to God: "You are who you are: the Supreme Goodness. I am who I am: the least dirty rag in this rotten world. And nevertheless, you look at me, and you seek me out, and you love me. Lord: may my children look at you, and seek you, and love you. Lord: may I seek you, and look at you, and love you." [7]

October 6, anniversary of our Father's canonization, is a good opportunity to redouble our thanksgiving to God and our prayer for the Church, for the Work, for all souls. Let us open our heart wide to people both near and far away, because the impetus of our apostolic zeal has to reach everyone. Christian

families have a special responsibility here that we should try to stir up especially in families where the spirit of Opus Dei has taken root. As St. John Paul II wrote: “To the extent in which the Christian family accepts the Gospel and matures in faith, it becomes an evangelizing community . . . This apostolic mission of the family is rooted in Baptism and receives from the grace of the sacrament of marriage new strength to transmit the faith, to sanctify and transform our present society according to God’s plan.”[8]

In the new evangelization that we need to strive to carry out each day, let us ask the Blessed Trinity to grant us the eagerness to bring the light and salt of Christ’s disciples to every environment. “In this regard everyone, beginning with the Christian family, must feel the responsibility to foster the birth and growth of vocations, both priestly

and religious as well as in the lay state, specifically directed to the missions. This should be done by relying on every appropriate means, but without ever neglecting the privileged means of prayer.”^[9] —

Today we are witnessing the suffering of countless families who are forced to leave their home country for many different reasons: lack of work, poverty, war, persecution for their faith.... And often these people find enormous difficulties in integrating themselves in the place where they hope to live. The Church, called to be the Mother of all men and women, is not indifferent to these situations. Pope Francis is constantly calling us to human and Christian solidarity with these people. As he recently reminded us: “Faced with the tragedy of tens of thousands of refugees who flee death from war and hunger, and who have begun a journey moved by

hope for survival, the Gospel calls us to be ‘neighbors’ of the smallest and the abandoned, and to give them concrete hope. It’s not enough to say, ‘Take heart. Be patient.’ Christian hope has a fighting spirit, with the tenacity of one who goes towards a sure goal.”^[10] —

The Pope has also asked for “a specific gesture in preparation for the Holy Year”^[11] that begins in December. The migration of thousands of citizens, particularly grave now in Europe, is also found in other parts of the world. The Pope is asking everyone to help support this call, remembering “that Mercy is the second name for Love.”^[12] —

What can each of us do in this regard, with personal initiative and responsibility? The first thing is not to let these happenings slide passively off our heart; and therefore to pray and ask ourselves what

specific means are within our reach to alleviate in some way the needs of these people. In many cases it would be opportune, in accord with each one's possibilities, to collaborate with the diocese and the parishes, to whom the Pope is directing his call most immediately, or with organizations trying to offer that help. No one should turn their back on these grave needs of so many men and women, neighbors in whom we have to see Christ himself. Let us beseech the Holy Spirit to grant us his light and spur us to action, while asking others for the opportune advice.

In this way, family and social bonds, strengthened by the experience of faith and God's love, can "counteract the community desertification of the modern city . . . The smile of a family can overcome this desertification of our cities. This is the victory of family love . . . The Babel project

builds lifeless skyscrapers. The Spirit of God instead makes the desert fruitful (cf. *Is* 32:15).”^[13] —

I end by renewing my desire that we intensify this month our prayer for the Pope and for the Synod that begins on the 3rd. Let us go to the intercession of our Lady, Mother of the Church and Queen of the family. Thus our prayers, united to those of so many thousands of people who are praying with us for the same intention, will reach the throne of God more effectively.

I insist: let us put special care into our personal piety, in praying the Holy Rosary and in contemplating each mystery. By immersing ourselves more deeply in the life of Jesus and Mary, our eagerness to be more of a brother or sister to all humanity will increase, with the desire to reach each woman, each man.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father,

+ Javier

Rome, October 1, 2015

[1] St. Josemaría, *Letter*, February 14, 1974, no. 1.

[2] *Ibid.*, no. 3.

[3] *Mt* 5:48.

[4] *1 Thess* 4:3.

[5] St. Josemaría, *Instruction*, March 19, 1934, no. 47.

[6] Cf. *Ibid.*

[7] St. Josemaría, Notes taken from his personal prayer, March 27, 1975.

[8] St. John Paul II, Apost.
Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*,
November 22, 1981, no. 52.

[9] St. John Paul II, Apost.
Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*,
December 30, 1988, no. 35

[10] Pope Francis, Angelus address,
September 6, 2015,

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] Pope Francis, Address to a
general audience, September 2, 2015.