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Mass Celebrated at the Covadonga Shrine

Homily of the Prelate of Opus Dei at the Shrine of Covadonga (Spain), where the Archbishop invited him to join the Marian Jubilee Year of Covadonga commemorating the Canonical Coronation of the Virgin of Covadonga

07/13/2018

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We have just heard in the first reading: "O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice" (Song of Songs 2,14). These words reflect well our desire as Christians when we go on pilgrimage to visit Mary. We come to her House looking for her face, to listen to her voice, because she is our Mother. She responds to our supplication as the beloved of the Song of Songs: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away" (2,13); I am your Mother, at my side you will be well, I will comfort you, and my presence will fill you with peace.

I thank the Archbishop very much for his invitation to come to

Covadonga and the Abbot for his welcome on the occasion of the Marian Jubilee Year, which allows me to kneel today—as St. Josemaría repeatedly did—before the Santina, as you affectionately call her in this land.

For centuries the cave of Our Lady has been surrounded by the love of the Asturians and of so many people from all over the world who come here to meet their Mother.

Thousands of pilgrims have come in these jubilee months to pray before the "Mother and Queen of our mountain" [1], as the Hymn to Our Lady of Covadonga says. The Blessed Virgin is the all-powerful intercessor: she does not cease entreating for her children. Let us thank the Lord for the fruits of this Jubilee Year. Many people have come here seeking forgiveness and protection and have returned to their homes with a renewed heart. How many times

have we experienced that "We go to Jesus—and we 'return' to him—through Mary," as St. Josemaría liked to repeat![2]

As we have read in the Gospel of the Mass, after the angel's visit Mary leaves Nazareth to go to the hill country of Judea. She wants to help her cousin Elizabeth, who is in the last months of pregnancy. Mary does not think about herself, even though she is also waiting for a Son, the Son of God. St. Luke's description of the encounter between the two cousins places us in a scene of blessing and joy. Even John the Baptist leaps for joy in his mother's womb as he feels the closeness of the Savior. This is the joy of having and carrying Christ with us. It is the happiness enjoyed by generous people who are attentive to the needs of others. It is the joy that overflows in hearts that shelter a "fair love"[3].

Mary hurries to the aid of her cousin, without delays or doubts, without slowness. This movement of her heart makes clear—as Pope Francis affirms—that she "is the woman who says 'yes', a 'yes' of surrender to God and, at the same time, a 'yes' of surrender to her brothers and sisters. This is the 'yes' which prompted her to give the best of herself, going forth to meet the others"[4].

The Magnificat is Mary's response to Elizabeth's greeting. It is a song of joy and praise woven from words of Scripture, in which her heart overflows in gratitude and surprise in the face of so many gifts from Heaven. She is fully happy with her vocation and wants to spread happiness to her children. Hence, we call her *Cause of our joy*. When we encounter her, we recover our confidence, if we had lost it. At her side our hope is strengthened and

our love is kindled. When Our Lady is present in our day, our interior climate changes along with the environment in our family or in our workplace: we see things differently.

Isabel says with enthusiasm: "Blessed are you who have believed" (Lk 1:45). Mary is the believer par excellence. She is the first in the long chain of those who believe in Jesus Christ. We can and must learn from their faith. This is a faith that allows us to see "the greatness of the Lord" (Lk 1,46). It gives us certainties and a horizon of hope that fills our life with joy in God, despite the difficulties. It is a faith that impels us to go out to meet others.

The Virgin of Covadonga carries the Child in her left arm. She always puts Jesus before our eyes, lifts him up, and wants to bring us to Him. She did this with the apostles, and now she also does it with us. We come

here following the footsteps of so many pilgrims who, over the centuries, have come to seek consolation in the Holy Cave. Saint John Paul II and Saint John XXIII came to Covadonga. And how can we not recall that here in front of the Santina Saint Pedro Poveda originated the ideal of the Teresian Association? Naturally, I am particularly happy to remember the visits of Saint Josemaría, Blessed Álvaro del Portillo and Bishop Javier Echevarría.

Precisely, the last time Don Javier was in Asturias, in 2008 on the occasion of the Jubilee Year of the Cross of the Angels and of the Victory Cross, he visited the Santa Cueva. There he said some words that can help us today to pray for the fruits of the upcoming Synod on faith and the vocational discernment of young people, so that they might feel the joy of dedicating their lives to God and to

others. "The greatest reason for our life," he said, "is to find Jesus Christ, to follow him very closely, to befriend him and to make him known. ... If we want to find a shortcut to lead us safely to this one path which is Our Lord Jesus Christ, ... we should turn to Mary"[5].

Thank you, Mother, because you always come quickly to our aid; because you teach us to make God great in our souls, with a generous faith. Thank you because with you the Holy Spirit, always comes with his gifts and fruits. Thank you because close to you we learn what deep happiness really is, to feel loved, to feel like a beloved son. Thank you because God does great things for you. Teach us to live the Gospel with joy and to give authentic witness with our Christian life.

Amen.

[1] Anthem of the Virgin of Covadonga.

[2] St. Josemaría, The Way, n. 495.

[3] Alleluia of the Mass.

[4] Homily of Pope Francis at the Basilica of Guadalupe, Feb. 13, 2016.

[5] Words of Javier Echevarría, during a pastoral visit to Asturias on Jul. 5, 2008, in www.opusdei.org.

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