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Letter from the Prelate (October 2014)

The Prelate invites us to pray with Blessed Alvaro: "Thank you, forgive me, help me more." He suggests that we ask especially for peace in the world and for the upcoming Synod on the family.

10/03/2014

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

Ut in gratiarum semper actione maneamus! Let us unite our hearts to St. Josemaría's unceasing thanksgiving in Heaven, especially now for the unity of the Work that we have sensed so visibly with the beatification of our beloved Don Alvaro: the more thanks we give to God, the more closely we will unite ourselves to his most Holy Will always and in everything.

There come to my lips the words of St. Paul: *my joy [is] the joy of all of you.*^[1] A joy that comes from the Holy Spirit, as a fulfillment of Christ's promise to the first Twelve, and in them, to all Christians: *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*^[2]

The life of this good and faithful servant (we have considered this many times) is summed up in a full fidelity to God's plan for himself and his mission on earth. From here stemmed his unfailing peace, the joy that so many of us were witnesses to. On stating that he now shares in the glory of the blessed, and holding him up as an example of a loyal follower of Christ, the Church reminds us of the path we have to follow to attain union with God, to which all of us are called, being happy already here below.

We feel very close to the joy of my beloved predecessor, in 1992, at the beatification of Saint Josemaria. He wrote to us then: "So intimate and deep was that joy, the fruit of the Holy Spirit (see *Gal* 5:22), that we seemed to be immersed in a 'sea of joy,' a clear sign of God's presence in our souls."[3] The same is now happening to all of us. And I ask our

Lord, as Don Alvaro did on that occasion, that this joy may spread to the hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world who have seen the beatification ceremony, and also to those who took part in Masses of thanksgiving in various places. In recognition of our Father's sanctity, now too we beseech God that these days may leave in everyone's heart an indelible mark; that the shower of graces from this event may spur everyone "to pray, to frequent the sacraments, to improve in their life at home or at work; in short, to draw a bit closer to God."[4]

Saint Josemaría always insisted that "joy is a Christian possession which we will have as long as we keep fighting, for it is a consequence of peace."[5] Therefore, a very specific resolution we can draw from these days is to struggle with a sporting spirit to be at each moment closer to God: in work and when resting, at

home and in social life, in the small or great events of each day, let us raise our sight to our Father God, asking him to make us determined to take advantage of Blessed Alvaro's example, loving the teachings of Saint Josemaría. Thus we will always be calm and happy, and sow around us *gaudium cum pace*, the joy and peace of those who walk alongside Christ.

In the Mass on September 27, a letter was read that the Holy Father sent to me for the beatification. Pope Francis reflects on the aspiration that Don Alvaro so frequently had on his lips: *thank you, forgive me, help me more*. We were all moved on hearing these words in that solemn ceremony. They are the same ones that I suggested to you as a motto for the coming months: a specific expression of our gratitude to God, which offer us a channel for that deeper conversion

that God is now asking of each and every one of us.

Thank you! This first exclamation flows forcefully from our heart at these moments. Our gratitude for what we have witnessed is directed *to the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, [to him] be honor and glory for ever and ever.*^[6]

Thank you, Most Holy Trinity, for this gift that you have made to the Church, to Opus Dei, and to all mankind, in highlighting the beloved figure of this servant of yours as a reference point and intercessor. The celebrations in Madrid during the past few days, and those now taking place in the Eternal City and in so many countries, with the Masses of thanksgiving and the thousands of people who have come to pray in the Basilica of St. Eugene before the body of the new blessed, we have to give thanks for all of this with the spirit that Saint Josemaría, right from the

beginning of the Work, condensed into a few brief and intense words: *Deo omnis gloria! Regnare Christum volumus! Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam!* Let us renew our desire to give God all the glory, struggling with determination each day to make Christ's kingdom a reality in society, closely united to the Pope, letting our Lady, our Mother, bring us to Jesus.

Let us beseech God ardently for his grace so that this resolution will yield specific deeds. For as St. Josemaría also told us: "Love means deeds, not sweet words."^[7] Often, despite the good will that we have through God's goodness, our zeal for conversion does not reach far enough, because of our weakness. Then is the moment, with the help of Don Alvaro's words, to seek God's forgiveness, especially in the examination of conscience at the end of each day and each time we approach the holy sacrament of

Penance: *forgive me, help me more.*

Thus even these lost skirmishes will become battles that we win, and divine grace will invite us to begin again our spiritual combat with new vigor.

Let us consider some words of the Pope in his message for the beatification. "Thank you, forgive me, help me! These words express the tenor of a life that is centered on God. It is the life of someone who has been touched by the greatest Love and who lives totally on that love; someone who, while experiencing their own human weakness and limitations, trusts in God's mercy and wants all mankind, their brothers and sisters, to experience it too." [8] And the Holy Father adds: "Blessed Alvaro del Portillo is sending us a very clear message. He is telling us to trust in the Lord, that he is our brother, our friend, who never lets us down and is always at our side. He

is encouraging us not to be afraid to go against the current and suffer for announcing the Gospel. He is also teaching us that in the simplicity and ordinariness of our daily lives we can find a sure path to holiness."[9]

This morning, October 1, those of us who are taking part in the Roman ceremonies for the beatification have gone to the audience with the Holy Father in St. Peter's Square. There I expressed to him again my gratitude and that of all of you and assured him that we will strive to increase our prayer for him and his intentions, as he asked us expressly in the last lines of the letter that he sent me: "I ask all the faithful of the Prelature, priests and lay people, as well as all those who take part in its activities, to please pray for me. At the same time, I give them all my Apostolic Blessing."[10]

Let us consider with joy how in these first days of October we have abundant reasons to give thanks and to pray, to pray a lot, trusting in the goodness of our Father God.

Tomorrow, anniversary of the foundation of the Work, our gratitude has to rise up to Heaven with a new intensity. In the afternoon, after a time of Eucharistic adoration in the Basilica of St. Eugene, and after venerating a relic of the new blessed, we will return the sacred remains of Don Alvaro to the crypt of the prelatic church.

Let us also entrust to Don Alvaro's intercession peace in the world, more specifically in those places where many people are suffering persecution because of their faith, and let us pray for the work of the upcoming extraordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which begins on October 5. May our recourse to our Lady through the praying of the

Holy Rosary take on new vigor, in this month that the Church traditionally dedicates to that Marian devotion. Filled with faith, let us raise up our petitions to Heaven through the intercession of our Mother, asking that the Holy Spirit may enlighten the Synod fathers in setting forth the Church's doctrine about marriage and the family, of capital importance if civil society is to return to walking once again, everywhere, along the paths that God, in his loving providence for mankind, has indicated

Among other reference points for our prayer, I remind you of some teachings that Saint John Paul II set forth clearly in his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, a fruit of the Synod of Bishops celebrated in Rome in 1980. After stressing that Christian marriage, a sacrament of the New Law, is an act of worship of God and a means and

path of holiness for those God calls to this state, the Pope insisted that just as "husbands and wives receive from the sacrament the gift and responsibility of translating into daily living the sanctification bestowed on them, so the same sacrament confers on them the grace and moral obligation of transforming their whole lives into a spiritual sacrifice." [11] And this is only possible, the Holy Pontiff added, if spouses have assiduous recourse to the sacrament of conversion and reconciliation, and to the sacrament of the Eucharist. [12]

Saint John Paul II went on to stress the importance of family prayer (of the spouses, and of parents with their children), which "is both a consequence of and a requirement for the communion bestowed by the sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony . . . Family prayer has for its very own object family life itself,

which in all its varying circumstances is seen as a call from God and lived as a filial response to his call. Joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments, births and birthday celebrations . . . mark God's loving intervention in the family's history. They should be seen as suitable moments for thanksgiving, for petition, for trusting abandonment of the family into the hands of their common Father in heaven."[13]

It seems to me that these points stressed by Saint John Paul II are very timely and can help guide everyone's prayer in the coming weeks. Speak about this with your relatives, friends and acquaintances, so that, closely united to the Holy Father, they will thereby assist the work of the upcoming Synod.

I won't stop to consider the other anniversaries that fall during this month (God's providence in guiding

the Work is so marvelous!). But seek them out yourselves in order to remain very close to Saint Josemaría, to Blessed Alvaro, and to all the women and men who are already contemplating the Most Holy Trinity.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father

+ Javier

Rome, October 1, 2014

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[1] *2 Cor* 2:3.

[2] *Jn* 15:10-11.

[3] Blessed Alvaro, *Letter*, December 1, 1992 (*Family Letters III*, no. 226).

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 105.

[6] *1 Tim* 1:17.

[7] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 933.

[8] Pope Francis, Letter to the Prelate of Opus Dei for the beatification of Alvaro del Portillo, dated June 26, 2014, liturgical feast of Saint Josemaría.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] St. John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, November 22, 1981, no. 56.

[12] See *Ibid.*, nos. 57-58.

[13] *Ibid.*, no. 59.

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