

opusdei.org

Letter from the Prelate (June 2009)

The liturgical feast days in June form the thread of the Prelate's monthly letter, in which he urges us to draw closer to God in our ordinary life.

06/03/2009

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

Yesterday we celebrated the solemnity of Pentecost, which this year coincided with the end of the month of May. As at the first

Pentecost, our Lady has helped us prepare for a new outpouring of the Paraclete. Now, as we begin Ordinary Time once more, we can find in this circumstance a new invitation to sanctify our ordinary everyday life, interwoven with hours of work and the multiple relations occasioned by our family and social life. What our Father taught us is once again a reality: the external circumstances of our work do not change, and yet, at the same time, each day our work does change, because of the new love that we put into it!

Our daily life truly marks out for us the field of our struggle, spurred and sustained by grace, to identify ourselves ever more fully with Christ, and thus to be better sons and daughters of God. As St. Josemaría stressed so clearly in one of his homilies: "when a Christian carries out with love the most insignificant everyday action, that action

overflows with the transcendence of God. That is why I have told you repeatedly, and hammered away once and again on the idea that the Christian vocation consists of making heroic verse out of the prose of each day. Heaven and earth seem to merge, my sons and daughters, on the horizon. But where they really meet is in your hearts, when you sanctify your everyday lives." [1] I can still hear the echo of the force with which he spoke the words "hammered away," because our Father was a great teacher both in word and in deed, so that the spirit God had placed in his soul would be deeply engraved in us.

Carrying out our daily actions with love for God and neighbor: that is the secret of the holiness to which God is calling Christians who live and work in the middle of temporal realities. This path is possible for us because, as Sacred Scripture teaches, God has

taken the initiative: *we love him because he loved us first*. [2] It makes me happy to recall this as we begin the month of June, during which—in so many different ways—the liturgy stresses God's love for his creatures. We have considered this carefully in celebrating the principle mysteries of the history of salvation: the Incarnation, Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, his Resurrection and glorious Ascension into heaven. In the coming weeks "the liturgy has us celebrate three feasts that have a 'synthetic' character: the Most Holy Trinity, Corpus Christi and, finally, the Sacred Heart of Jesus." [3] These days, so significant for those who know themselves to be sons and daughters of God, are presented to us as manifestations of God's love for mankind, and thus are a synthesis of all the salvific mysteries.

On Sunday, the seventh, we celebrate the solemnity of the Most Holy

Trinity. With this great feast, the Church invites us to consider the mystery of the intimate life of the one God, who wanted to reveal himself gradually through the prophets and who manifested himself fully in Christ. Already in the Old Testament, before Moses on Mount Sinai, he showed himself to be *a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness*.^[4] This declaration was the first explicit manifestation of the riches contained in the name of Yahweh, revealed earlier to Moses.^[5] At the same time, this ineffable Name continued to be wrapped in veils of mystery. Only in the New Testament was the intimate life of God made present to us with greater clarity. St. John, the beloved disciple of our Lord, who rested his head on the Master's heart at the Last Supper, wrote—inspired by the Holy Spirit—that God's deepest identity can be summed up in a single word:

Love. *Deus caritas est*, God is Love.[6]
And as a clear sign he sent us his
Son: *For God so loved the world that
he gave his only Son.*[7]

Benedict XVI said that this name,
Love, "clearly expresses that the God
of the Bible is not some kind of
'monad' closed in on himself and
satisfied with his own self-
sufficiency. Rather he is life that
wants to communicate itself,
openness, relationship. Words like
'merciful,' 'compassionate,' 'rich in
grace' all speak to us of a
relationship, in particular of a Being
filled with life who offers himself,
who wants to fill every gap, every
shortage, who wants to give and to
forgive, who desires to establish a
solid and lasting bond." [8] Since he is
Love by essence, our God is not a
solitary Being, enclosed in
transcendent distance, foreign to
mankind's concerns. God is a trinity
of Persons, so deeply united and co-

penetrated that they are one single God. "This revelation of God is fully delineated in the New Testament though the word of Christ. Jesus showed us the Face of God, one in Essence and Triune in Persons: God is Love, Father Love, Son Love, Holy Spirit Love." [9]

In revealing to us the mystery of his intimate life, God—to express it in some way—has shown us his face. He has communicated to us that he wants to take us into his friendship, even more, that he wants to make us his sons and daughters, sharers in his own Life. For these reasons, the liturgical solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity celebrates the supreme revelation of divine Love. That is why St. Josemaría recommended that all Christians strive to get to know and converse with each of the divine Persons. "Learn to praise the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Learn to have a special devotion to the Most

Blessed Trinity: I believe in God the Father, I believe in God the Son, I believe in God the Holy Spirit: I believe in the Most Blessed Trinity. I hope in God the Father, I hope in God the Son, I hope in God the Holy Spirit: I hope in the Most Blessed Trinity. I love God the Father, I love God the Son, I love God the Holy Spirit: I love the Most Blessed Trinity. This devotion is needed as a supernatural exercise, expressed in movements of the heart, although not always in words."[10] May we truly strive to deal with our God in this way. How do we seek out his presence throughout the day? Do we frequently consider that we are his children? Do we strive to imitate Jesus, our elder Brother and our Model? Do we invoke the Paraclete with silent cries, asking that he sanctify us and fill us with apostolic zeal? Is our friendship with the Holy Spirit growing?

The solemnity of Corpus Christi, on the 11th (which in some places is moved to the following Sunday, June 14), helps to reinforce these deep aspirations of a Christian soul.

Pointing to the various moments of this liturgical celebration, the Holy Father sums up its fundamental meaning as follows: "First of all we gather around the altar of the Lord, to be together in his presence; secondly, there will be the procession, that is walking with the Lord; and lastly, kneeling before the Lord, adoration, which already begins in the Mass and accompanies the entire procession but culminates in the final moment of the Eucharistic Blessing when we all prostrate ourselves before the One who stooped down to us and gave his life for us." [11]

Benedict XVI suggests an interior path that is valid not only for Corpus Christi but for our whole life. Let us

not slacken in our determination to follow it with greater tenacity in the upcoming weeks, with an efficacious desire to take advantage of the graces that this solemnity brings to our souls, with a hunger to be essentially Eucharistic. Daily participation in the Holy Sacrifice has to be for us a recharging of our spiritual energy, which will spur us to maintain a more habitual and trusting intimacy with the Most Blessed Trinity throughout the day. Visits to the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle will help us to keep alive and vibrant our love for God and neighbor, made tangible in deeds of fraternal concern, perhaps in small points but always very specific: with our family, with our colleagues at work, with our friends, with those we encounter for one reason or another. We know that our Father drew all his strength from the Holy Mass. And therefore, when he had to stay in bed because of sickness, his first concern on the day

he could get up was: "I'm hungry to celebrate Mass!"—a disposition that he fostered every day.

The reference to the Tabernacle has to be for us, above all, a stimulus to nourish our love for God, in just correspondence to God's love for us. We can draw a lot of light from considering the personal experience of St. Josemaría, who, in the midst of the most absorbing work, was always close to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. "Whenever I enter an oratory I pause to tell our Lord: Jesus, I love you. And I praise the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are present in the Blessed Sacrament with Christ's Sacred Humanity. For wherever one divine Person is found, the entire Trinity is also present. And I 'toss' a few affectionate words (as though I were tossing a flower) to my Mother Holy Mary. Then I remember to greet the angels, who are guarding the

tabernacle in a vigil of love, of adoration, of reparation, rendering homage to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. I thank them for being there all day and all night, since I can only be there in my heart: thank you, blessed angels, for always rendering homage and accompanying Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament!"[12]

There's no need to add anything more. I'm sure that seeing our Father open his heart in this way will spur each and every one of us to foster the hunger, the eagerness, the fervent desire to improve in how we treat Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Thus we will arrive very well prepared for the third liturgical solemnity, that of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in which the immensity of God's Love is eloquently manifested to us. "When we talk about the Heart of Jesus," wrote St. Josemaría, "we stress the certainty of God's love and

the truth of his commitment to us." [13] What greater proof could he give us, than to show us his Heart pierced by a lance, open wide as an invitation to rest in him, to find in him our refuge in moments of suffering or tribulation? We want, besides, to make reparation for the sins with which he is offended: our own and those of so many people who fail to recognize the greatness of his sacrifice for every man and woman, without exception.

That day we also begin the "Year for Priests" that Benedict XVI has proclaimed for the universal Church, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the death of the Holy Curé of Ars. Let us try to encourage everyone we can, beginning with the faithful of the Prelature and all who benefit from its apostolates, to be "on the front lines," together with the Pope and the bishops, praying that

the Church never lack many and holy priests.

On June 29, the solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, the Pauline Year will conclude. Throughout these months, in meditating on the life and teachings of the Apostle to the Gentiles, we have learned to love our Lord more, with a love that teaches us the root of true freedom. Saul learned this on the road to Damascus, when he saw the glorified Jesus. From that moment on, "he speaks and acts spurred by the responsibility of love." [14] He feels sovereignly free, with the freedom of love. "In the same spirit," explains the Pope, "Augustine formulated the phrase that later became famous: *Dilige et quod vis fac* (Tract. in 1 Jn 7:7-8), 'love and do what you please.' The one who loves Christ as Paul loved him can truly do as he pleases because his love is united to Christ's will and thus with God's will." [15]

I won't stop to comment on other feasts and anniversaries that fall in this month: the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the anniversary of the ordination of the first priests of the Work, the liturgical feast of St. Josemaría.... Each of these dates can and should be a new impulse to intensify our dedication to God and to others for God, and our apostolic zeal, with specific deeds.

Continue praying for all my intentions, especially for the beginning of the Prelature's stable apostolic work in Indonesia, Romania and Korea.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father

+ Javier

Rome, June 1, 2009

Footnotes

1. St. Josemaría, Homily
"Passionately Loving the World,"
October 8, 1967, in *Conversations*, no.
116.

2. 1 Jn 4:19.

3. Benedict XVI, Homily on the
Solemnity of Corpus Christi, May 22,
2008.

4. Ex 34:6.

5. Cf. Ex 3:14.

6. 1 Jn 4:8, 16.

7. Jn 3:16.

8. Benedict XV, Homily on the Feast
of the Most Blessed Trinity, May 18,
2008.

9. Ibid.

10. St. Josemaría, Notes taken in a
meditation, December 3, 1961.

11. Benedict XVI, Homily on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, May 22, 2008.
12. St. Josemaría, Notes taken at a meditation, December 3, 1961.
13. St. Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 164.
14. Benedict XVI, Homily at the Opening of the Pauline Year, June 28, 2008.
15. Ibid.