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Bishop Javier Echevarria: “Let the Light dispel every shadow in your homes.”

Following is the complete text of the Prelate's homily at the XV Marian Family Day on September 4 at Torreciudad.

09/30/2004

My dear families:

Again this year I thank the Lord for allowing me to celebrate a Marian

Family Day with all of you who have come to this shrine of Our Lady of Torreciudad from so many places in Spain and several neighboring countries.

Here, in “Mary’s house” so imbued with wonderful memories of St. Josemaría, we are bearing witness to the Gospel of the family and of life.

We are here through the grace of the Holy Spirit to glorify God the Father through Jesus Christ, who renews his redemptive sacrifice in the Holy Mass. He is the Lord of heaven and earth who acts ceaselessly in human history through his Church, of which we form a part. In the responsorial psalm we have praised the Lord, in Mary’s words, for the “great things” he has done for men. The greatest one of all is surely the Incarnation of the Son of God. Jesus Christ becomes truly present in the Eucharist, the sacrament of his Body and Blood,

which he has given to us as the bread of life and the drink of salvation “that we might form in Christ one single body and one single spirit.” In other words, “that we might become saints and efficacious promoters of sanctity.”

We have come to Torreciudad today to revive in ourselves these certainties of the faith and to proclaim that marriage too is a “great sacrament,” an efficacious sign of the Lord’s presence in the world, a manifestation of the perfect love with which Christ loves his Church and makes her fruitful. We have come to reaffirm, in the words of Pope John Paul II, that “the Christian view of marriage—the union of a man and a woman—is a reciprocal and complete relationship, unique and indivisible, and that it corresponds to God’s original plan”—a plan which at times throughout history is obscured by “hardness of

heart.” But Christ came to restore it to its original splendor by revealing what God intended “from the beginning” for the well being of his creatures.

Yes, my sisters and brothers, daughters and sons, we are celebrating this Marian Family Day as an unequivocal expression of our commitment “to faithfully promote the truth about marriage and the family,” just as we have received it from God. The Lord has called us together, by means of his Vicar on earth, to vivify society with the perennial teachings of the Church, “for there are many cultural, social, and political factors that are provoking an ever more evident crisis of the family” and even denying “the very idea of the family.”

This isn’t meant to make us sad, but—as the Pope and the Spanish Bishops have stressed—to bring

before us the signs that human dignity and the sanctity of marriage have become obscure in the consciences of so many of our fellow citizens.

In a situation like this, which can influence millions of people in Spain and in the world at large, the theme chosen for this year's Family Day is especially significant: "the Christian family, hope of the world."

Dear families, rejoice in the certainty that this is so: You *are* the hope of the Church and the world. The Lord expects you to be faithful, in union with so many others, in order to illuminate this world. The Lord counts on *you*—in the words of St. Josemaría—"to drown evil in an abundance of good"—and to bring the salvific message of the Gospel to the world once again.

It's not that we consider ourselves better Christians than others, nor

more virtuous. But today, as always, we are called by God's grace to be the salt and light of the world, a leaven within society, so as to revitalize the culture with the love and truth of Christ. The Lord is urging us day after day to be examples for the many who are wavering by showing them the beauty and attractiveness of our faith, the divine meaning of human love, and as a consequence, of faithful and indissoluble marriage; the greatness of the vocation to marriage as a path toward sanctity; the joy of motherhood and fatherhood as a participation in the paternity and maternity of God, through which He enriches and increases the human family. And when God doesn't send children to a couple who desire them ardently, this is other way of blessing them, so that they be open in a special way to a very wide spiritual fatherhood and motherhood.

As I said, this is not a time for lamentation, but for the joyous affirmation of faith, for an apostolic commitment that is continuous and abounding with optimism. “Rejoice, daughter of Zion, for I come to dwell among you,” as we heard in the first reading. This prophecy of Zacharia, which foretells the salvation of the human race, was fulfilled in a home hidden away in Nazareth, but illuminated by Christ and the ordinary holiness of Mary and Joseph. He converted that home—his home on earth—into a model for all families of all times. Here is our model of faithful, chaste, and fruitful love, a spiritual fruitfulness that extends to all generations. “Rejoice, daughter of Zion, for I am coming to dwell among you,” the Lord repeats today, reminding us that he wants to “dwell” among us too, and in every home, so as to extend his mercy to the faithful “from generation to generation.”

I therefore invite you, along with Pope John Paul II, not to close the gates of your life to Christ, nor of your home. Open them wide! Let him enter your souls and your houses, for he is the Light that dispels all shadows. Reflect that “brightness of faith and love” that enables us to bear courageous witness to the truth about marriage and the family, about its unity and indissolubility, about authentic spousal love, always open to life...Don't be afraid of more children! And about mutual fidelity in sorrow and in joy, about generosity and refinement in your relations, about forgetting yourself, about devoting yourself to children and the service of society.... Take into yourselves that divine Light so as to make all those realities—almost always ordinary and without apparent significance—that make up marital and family life. Let that Light shine into your home in all its human and supernatural dimensions

so as to convert it into a true “domestic church”—the fount of holiness and apostolate.

St. Josemaría will help you deepen and enliven these perennial teachings about the family. His preaching is full of examples that summarize the Christian sense and common sense that is valid in every era. I have to permit myself this one spontaneous remark of his: “I wish you well, you married folks, but you mustn’t let your love go dry! Try to be ever youthful, and reserved completely for each other. You have to love even the defects of your spouse, so long as they don’t offend God.”

Another time, he advised a husband to “love your wife a lot, with your whole soul. Try to bring up your children well; try to work for them, both to please God and to do something good for your country. If

you do that, you'll deserve to be called a loyal man, a real Christian. There's no contradiction between those two duties because they are really one and the same—just as the two strands of a cord are entwined in one rope.”

”How have I deserved that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” Yes, beloved brothers and sisters, and children of mine, we too must stand in admiration, as St. Elizabeth did, that our Mother should bring us her Son. In spite of our weakness, prone to error and sin, He came into the world to save us, “to rescue those who were under the Law, that he might receive us as children by adoption,” so that “now you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then also an heir by the will of God.”

Our heritage is Christ himself and the Kingdom of holiness and grace He

initiated when he came into the world. Each one of your homes will be a radiant source of charity, truth, and peace in the middle of the world if you drink from the fountains of that grace, especially the Eucharist and Penance, along with prayer, and make the effort to acquire the necessary formation to “give a reason for our hope.” Your home will be a cradle for new children of God, a seedbed of vocations that will follow Christ and serve the Church in apostolic celibacy. And from your home will come new Christian families who will pass on life and faith to future generations.

If you stay ever closer to Our Lord, He will grant you an “apostolic burden that’s no burden at all,” full of understanding and efficacy, thus to undertake the immense task of the new evangelization of families that the Church must bring about. One by one, family by family, you will reach

thousands of people and homes to show them the human and supernatural greatness of the vocation to marriage.

Let's pray and get others to pray for those essential expressions of human love—marriage and the family. At the same time, each one must consider how to exert a positive influence on one's surroundings by means of a capillary apostolate of friendship and confidence—which is another way of praying! This way we can spread positive and clear ideas in matters of doctrine, always serene and with respect for people who think otherwise; to stand firm is not a breach of charity.

This desire to defend marriage and the family also gives rise to love for one's country, something every good citizen does. This right and duty extends beyond what is strictly religious or spiritual. As you know,

the family—“a community of life and love”—is the basic and essential cell of society. By protecting it, you do great good to your nation and help those who govern and administer it to keep in mind—something they cannot overlook—the legitimate desires of the people they are bound to serve honestly in a sincere quest for the common good that legitimizes their authority.

Let's conclude by invoking once again the Holy Virgin of Torreciudad: *Sub tuum praesidium confugimus:*

“We fly to thy patronage, o Holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities.” Take us into your hands, Blessed Virgin; intercede before God for our families and for all families on earth. Make us faithful apostles of your Son as we work at the evangelization of society closely united to the Pope and all the Shepherds in the Church. And when this life is over, present us to Jesus,

the blessed fruit of your womb.
Amen.

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