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Letter of the Prelate (June 2007)

Letter of Bishop Javier Echevarria to the faithful of Opus Dei. This month's letter touches on the mysteries of the Trinity and the Eucharist.

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In recent days, continuing my pastoral trips on various weekends, I was able to go to Stockholm. Also in those “cold countries in northern Europe” (as St. Josemaría wrote many years ago in *The Way*, no. 315), the spirit of the Work is spreading. I

am sure that he expressed himself in those terms only because he reached those latitudes with the longing he had learned from Jesus: *ignem veni mittere in terram*, “I came to cast fire on the earth” (*Lk* 12:49). I have given a lot of thanks to God, because he is helping us to see Saint Josemaría’s “dreams” made a reality—and to play an active role in their realization, through our prayer and our optimistic and generous mortification, and the fulfillment of each one’s particular duties. Let us always conduct ourselves in this way, closely united to all Christians and among ourselves, assisting in the expansion of the Church throughout the whole world.

The root of supernatural effectiveness, as we well know, is strengthened by a vigorous and deep interior life, fruit of the Holy Spirit’s action in souls. Therefore, how important it is for us to go each day

with more intimacy to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity!

Starting today we will pray the *Trisagium Angelicum*, striving to give voice to the praise and thanksgiving that all mankind has the duty of directing to our thrice-holy God, who created and redeemed us and who is determined to bring about our sanctification. Let us be very intent to take advantage of these days, endeavoring with all our strength to convert the twenty-four hours of each day into a hymn of glory to the Blessed Trinity. Let us often repeat, with our lips or our heart, the words from the liturgy: *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua!* (Roman Missal, Ordinary of the Mass). Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Meditating on the mystery of the Blessed Trinity should be frequent nourishment for Christian souls. Saint Augustine says that “this is our greatest joy: to rejoice in the divine Trinity, in whose image we have been created” (*On the Trinity*, I, 18). As Holy Scripture so graphically puts it, those who try to direct their thoughts and actions to God are like *a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither* (Ps 1:3). With a clear and constant reference to our Triune God, the final goal of our life, all that we do on earth—no matter how trivial it appears to human eyes—takes on great value. Our Lord is interested in everything in our lives; he follows us with the infinite refinement of his Love and his Mercy.

Saint Josemaría, especially during the last years of his earthly life, frequently alluded to this point of

our Catholic faith. “If we are in God’s grace,” he said in 1972, for example, “the Holy Spirit is present in our soul, imparting a supernatural character to all our actions. And with the Holy Spirit are the Father and the Son: the Blessed Trinity, the one God. We are temples of the Trinity, and we can speak with God simply, without doing anything strange, rising above ourselves, stepping on ourselves, as one steps on the grapes in a wine-press, since we are nothing. We address him in the center of our soul, and tell him all that is happening to us: asking, adoring, making reparation, loving” (Notes taken from his preaching, October 12, 1972).

Let us go to the Blessed Trinity in the upcoming days with a deep and strong devotion. This effort will also help prepare us to draw savory fruit from the other great liturgical solemnities this month: Corpus Christi and the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Growing in Eucharistic piety means going deeper into the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, for (as the Pope recalled in his recent apostolic exhortation on the Holy Eucharist) “the first element of Eucharistic faith is the mystery of God himself, Trinitarian love...In the Eucharist Jesus does not give us a ‘thing,’ but himself; he offers his own body and pours out his own blood. He thus gives us the totality of his life and reveals the ultimate origin of this love” (Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhort. *Sacramentum Caritatis*, February 22, 2007, no. 7).

How Saint Josemaría marveled, every day, on contemplating the presence and the action of the Triune God in the prayers of the Mass! He told us in one of his homilies that “the Blessed Trinity’s love for man is made permanent in a sublime way through the Eucharist.... The three divine Persons act together in the

holy sacrifice of the altar” (*Christ Is Passing By*, no. 85). He loved to stop and dwell on the action of the “Great Unknown,” desiring that he cease to be such for Christians. He encouraged everyone to go more frequently and more insistently to each of the divine Persons, distinguishing them without separating them, because “the three divine Persons are present in the sacrifice of the altar. By the will of the Father, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, the Son offers himself in a redemptive sacrifice. We learn how to personalize our relationship with the most Blessed Trinity, one God in three Persons: three divine Persons in the unity of God’s substance, in the unity of his love and of his sanctifying action” (*Ibid.*, no. 86).

Benedict XVI urges us: “We need a renewed awareness of the decisive role played by the Holy Spirit in...the

deepening understanding of the sacred mysteries” (Apostolic Exhort. *Sacramentum Caritatis*, February 22, 2007, no. 12). And the Holy Father continues: “the spiritual life of the faithful can benefit greatly from a better appreciation of the richness of the anaphora: along with the words spoken by Christ at the Last Supper, it contains the epiclesis, the petition to the Father to send down the gift of the Spirit so that the bread and the wine will become the body and blood of Jesus Christ and that ‘the community as a whole will become ever more the body of Christ.’ The Spirit invoked by the celebrant upon the gifts of bread and wine placed on the altar is the same Spirit who gathers the faithful ‘into one body’ and makes of them a spiritual offering pleasing to the Father” (*Ibid.*, no. 13).

How can we take advantage of the divine Life that descends from

heaven to earth at Holy Mass, and gives itself to each of us in sacramental communion? By preparing ourselves as well as possible to receive our Lord and putting great care into our thanksgiving after Mass. Consider how during those few minutes when Jesus is sacramentally present within us, there takes place the most intimate union one can imagine between the Creator and the creature. And this union is later prolonged throughout the day, thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit. Are your genuflections an act of heartfelt adoration? Do acts of faith, hope and love flow from your soul? Let us ask Jesus, as Dismas the good thief did, to remember us and to help us keep him very present. The Eucharist is a sign of God's infinite mercy: not only does he not reject us but, in giving himself to us as food, he identifies us with himself. Let us want this to be our life.

“When you have received communion, and your heart goes out to give thanks to God,” Saint Josemaría taught, “consider the fact that you have received the Most Holy Humanity of Jesus Christ—his Body, his Blood, his Soul—and his Divinity; and, with Jesus, the entire Trinity, because the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit are inseparable. Consider that, as the sacramental species are dissolved, the real presence disappears, but God the Holy Spirit remains in our souls and in our bodies, which are his temple (cf 1 Cor 3:16).

“So God not only passes by; he remains in us. To try to put it into words, he is in the center of our soul in grace, giving a supernatural meaning to our actions, as long as we don’t oppose him and expel him through sin. God is hidden in you and in me, in each of us” (Notes

taken from his preaching, December 8, 1971).

These counsels of Saint Josemaría will help us prepare ourselves for his feast day on the upcoming 26th. Ask him to intercede for each of us so that we may take a decisive step forward in our spiritual life, which is summarized in knowing, speaking with, and loving the Blessed Trinity here on earth, so as to later enjoy God for all eternity.

On another plane, as you know, on the 14th of this month, God willing, I will be 75. The best gift you can offer me is a more intense prayer. Ask our Lord to forgive me for the times I haven't given him the love that he expects; ask that he continue sending me his grace, and that I may deal with greater intimacy with God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and with Holy Mary, our Mother.

My joy was very great last week at the priestly ordination of thirty-eight deacons of the Prelature. Now we have to help them even more, so that they be holy priests of Jesus Christ. The first three priests were very much present in my thoughts. I asked them to help us respond as they did, and that each of us, both the men and women, may seek to strengthen our priestly soul: that is, to deal more closely with the Master, to foster a greater zeal for souls, and to ask for a perseverance that nothing can shake (cf. *The Way*, no. 934).

Continue praying for my intentions; for the Church and the Roman Pontiff, for the holiness of priests and all the faithful, for the growth of the Church throughout the whole world.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father,

+ Javier

Rome, June 1, 2007

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