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Letter from the Prelate (November 2007)

The Prelate calls us to use the liturgical feasts in November to renew our Christian life. These feasts "can help us keep our spiritual life in step with the rhythm marked out by the Church." He also considers the 25th anniversary of the personal Prelature on November 28.

11/05/2007

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

It fills me with joy to tell you how I saw our Father's gratitude and happiness grow when All Saints' Day arrived, the solemnity we are celebrating today. He was also deeply moved by frequently meditating on the hymn to the Cross attributed to the apostle St. Andrew, whose feast we celebrate on the 30th. Lying between those two feasts are other commemorations that can help us place our spiritual life in step with the rhythm marked out for us by the Church in the liturgy, remembering St. Josemaría's advice that our prayer should be liturgical (cf. St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 86).

On today's solemnity, we want to express our gratitude as we reflect on the Communion of Saints: one of the articles of faith that we profess in the Creed. The Church triumphant,

suffering and militant—the one Church founded by Christ, in the various states in which it now finds itself—becomes very present to us today. Let us meditate frequently on this consoling truth: “The saints are not a small caste of chosen souls but an innumerable crowd to which the liturgy urges us to raise our eyes. This multitude not only includes the officially recognized saints, but the baptized of every epoch and nation who sought to carry out the divine will faithfully and lovingly. We are unacquainted with the faces and even the names of many of them, but with the eyes of faith we see them shine in God’s firmament like glorious stars” (Benedict XVI, Homily, November 1, 2006).

No Christian should feel alone, for if he shares in the divine life through grace, he is always in close union with Jesus and his Blessed Mother, with the angels and the blessed who

are enjoying God in heaven; with the holy souls being purified in Purgatory; and with all those who are still journeying on earth, fighting joyfully, as Sacred Scripture tells us, the battles of God (cf. *1 Macc* 3:2). Let us stir up in our soul the fortitude this reality brings, and spread this truth in our conversations with others.

When you pray, work or rest, in the various moments of your day, strive to pray, work and rest close to our Lord, accompanying your brothers and sisters throughout the whole world, especially those who live and work in places where the Church faces more difficulties. How aware are you that people need your fidelity, your fraternity? Does this thought help you to raise your mind to God, to feel the urgency of the new evangelization?

A few days ago I made a quick trip to Kazakhstan, to accompany your sisters and brothers in that country. I went there also in your name, with the desire to bring them the warmth of your affection, your charity, your interest. Thanks be to God, supported by our prayers, they are working with joy and filled with hope. And the fruit is already beginning to appear. The number of men and women interested in the Catholic faith and the spirit of Opus Dei is growing. They dream of the day when the Church, and therefore the Work, will have sunk deep roots in all of Central Asia. Let us accompany them in their apostolic efforts with our prayer and small mortifications, which, through the Communion of Saints, will be very efficacious. Does our zeal for souls lead us each day to travel in our thoughts throughout the world? Do we consider the apostolate being done in every country?

The same can be said of those working in Russia, in South Africa, in India, in the Nordic countries....in so many places throughout the world. Aren't you eager, like St. Josemaría, to travel throughout the whole world in your prayer, to bring the strength of your dedication? Do you try to imbue each day, from morning to night, with the clear awareness that the new evangelization and the apostolic expansion is everyone's task, each in his or her own place? I see that I am asking you and myself many questions, but they are springing forth spontaneously because we have received from the Master this mission: *Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation (Mk 16:15).*

On the 2nd, the commemoration of the faithful departed, we will naturally keep especially present our loved ones—faithful of the Work, members of our respective families,

friends and acquaintances—who have already gone to the other life. On that day priests are allowed to celebrate three Masses offered in suffrage for the dead. In many places, it is also customary for the faithful to visit cemeteries and decorate the graves with flowers. Let us carry out these good traditions with piety, trying to highlight the Christian meaning they contain, and teach others to do likewise.

We will also celebrate two feasts in the middle of the month that should help to strengthen our union with the Roman Pontiff, praying with greater intensity for him and for his intentions, and praying assiduously for those who assist him in the government of the Church. The 9th is the liturgical commemoration of the dedication of the Basilica of St. John Lateran, the cathedral of Rome, *the Mother and Head of all the churches of the city of Rome and of the world,*

as an inscription on its façade says. And on the 18th, we will celebrate the dedication of the Basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul.

Let us beseech God that Catholics may grow in their love for the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, as our Father liked to emphasize. Thus we will show “with exquisite fidelity our union with the Pope, which is union with Peter. Love for the Roman Pontiff,” wrote St. Josemaría, “must be in us a wonderful passion, for in him we see Christ” (St. Josemaría, Homily, *Loyalty to the Church*, June 4, 1972).

At the same time, we should react to the criticisms or failures to obey the Pope’ decisions that we may have witnessed like a child who truly loves his parents: with a firmer union to his indications and teachings, with a more willing obedience and with a greater effort to ensure that those we

are in contact with—and if we have the opportunity, also those who work in the media—show respect and adhesion, in word and in deed, to the Vicar of Christ and the See of Rome. Let us always be optimistic because the word of God cannot fail. As Benedict XVI reminds us: “Our Lord entrusts Peter with the mission of strengthening the brethren through the promise of his prayer. Peter’s mission is anchored in Jesus’ prayer. It is this that gives him the certainty that he will persevere despite all human wretchedness” (Benedict XVI, Homily, June 29, 2006).

On November 21, the feast of the Presentation of Our Lady, we are invited to reflect on Mary’s total dedication to God right from her childhood. It is a good opportunity to make a deep examination: let us desire with all the strength of our soul to be completely God’s. Let us make a greater effort to be very

faithful to the Christian vocation we received in baptism. And in order to do so, let us consider how lovingly we have recourse, with the necessary frequency, to the holy sacrament of Penance. We need to overcome any difficulties, so as to avoid delaying it.

I don't want to fail to mention that on this Marian feast, on the night between the 21st and 22nd of November 1937, seventy years ago now, our Lady wanted to offer St. Josemaría a visible sign that she was accompanying him very closely during those days filled with great hardship of the crossing of the Pyrenees: a gilded wooden rose that had probably adorned one of the altars in a church near where he had spent the night (cf. Andrés Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. II, pp. 140-147). Let us unite ourselves in a special way to our Founder on that significant date, with deep gratitude to God and to

our Mother, for their constant protection of the Church, the Work, and each one of us.

Sunday, the 25th, is the solemnity of Christ the King. Once more we will renew the consecration of Opus Dei to the Most Sacred and Merciful Heart of Jesus, which St. Josemaría did for the first time in October 1952. Then he asked especially for peace in the world, in the Church, in the Work, in souls. This petition continues being timely and urgent, which will always be the case, since humanity easily strays off the path that leads to God and, as a result, men and women lose their peace. On renewing this consecration, ask Jesus to illumine especially the minds of those who govern the various countries, so that they may strive to foster peace, true peace: that which begins in the heart of each person and from there spreads to others.

Pray also for your brothers who will receive diaconal ordination in Rome on the eve of this solemnity. May our Lord make them very holy for us!

Almost at the end of the month, on November 28th, we will have the joy of celebrating the 25th anniversary of the pontifical act by which John Paul II erected Opus Dei as a personal Prelature. How many memories come to my head as I recall the gifts we have received from God during these years! I have very present to me our Father, who joyfully accepted not seeing the fulfillment of his “special intention,” so that it might become a reality during the years of his successor; and the faith and strength of our dearly beloved Don Alvaro, who was supported by the prayer and sacrifice of countless persons throughout the whole world, so that Heaven would grant this to us. I feel the need to remind you that we cannot consider

those times as a “golden age” in the history of the Work, as something that one recalls with gratitude, but that now has passed. These time have to be always very present to us. We will bring this about by our fidelity to the spirit of Opus Dei, by the intensity of our prayer, by our constant apostolic zeal.

You will have heard by now that, with the desire to honor our Lady, whom “we find smiling on all the crossroads of our path” (St. Josemaría, Notes taken in a meditation, October 11, 1964), in commemoration of the establishment of the Prelature and as a preparation for the 80th anniversary of the foundation of the Work, we will live in Opus Dei a *Marian year*, which will last from the upcoming November 28th until the same date in 2008. I can imagine your joy on learning of this decision. I want to follow in the footsteps of our dearly

beloved Don Alvaro (I don't mind repeating that superlative) who in 1978 convoked a *Marian year* in preparation for the golden anniversary of the Work: a period that later, providentially, was extended until the end of 1980. Let us live this new *Marian year* with the spirit transmitted by our Father's first successor, which he had personally contemplated in St. Josemaría. I remind you of this with words taken from the family letter he wrote to us on January 9, 1978.

He told us that on the last day of 1977, when praying before the holy remains of our Founder, and upon considering that the year just beginning would be the golden anniversary of Opus Dei, he asked himself: "What will we do so that our thanksgiving isn't just a passing flash of light, or something expressed only with our lips, but rather the sign of a permanent leap of quality in our

interior struggle, that is to say, of greater union with God in everything?

“The answer came to my mind immediately. I sensed right away (without anything miraculous) a clear suggestion from our Father, to give us specific guidance in the year we are beginning: go by the short-cut that I have taught you, in order to draw closer to God. My daughters and sons, the advice is clear: we will go to the protection of “the Lady of the sweet name, Mary,” as our Father wrote in *Holy Rosary*. We will love our Lady more, and be more attentive to her. We will entrust each day, to the one who is the Daughter, Mother and Spouse of God, and our Mother, the homage of our self-giving, to present it before the Blessed Trinity as a heartfelt sign of thanksgiving. In a word, I reached the conclusion that to live a prolonged and authentic act of

thanksgiving during this time, the best way, the way most pleasing to God, is to make this year a *Marian year*” (Don Alvaro del Portillo, *Family Letters*, vol. II, no. 131).

Let us imitate such a good example, with the eagerness to turn each of our days into Marian days, through the love we show our Mother.

We will end the month of November with the feast of St. Andrew, the brother of the Prince of the Apostles, so venerated by the Eastern Churches. Let us go to his intercession so that all who are honored with the name of Christian may reach full union with St. Peter’s successor.

With all my affection, I bless you and ask for your prayers—as always!

Your Father,

+ Javier

Rome, November 1, 2007

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