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Letter from the Prelate (September 2015)

The Prelate reflects on the close tie between the Cross and joy, and asks us to intensify our prayer for the family and the upcoming Synod.

03/09/2015

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Pamplona, 1st September 2015

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

I am writing to you after my journey to the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, and Colombia, and before going to Torreciudad for the ordination to the priesthood of three sons of mine, Associates of the Prelature, and the Marian Family Day. In the first place, I wish to share with you my joy and gratitude to our Lord for the abundant spiritual fruits I have seen during this trip. I have learnt a lot, and I remembered you every day. As I contemplated the apostolate in those countries I thought about how it was the fruit of the way St Josemaría hid and disappeared, right from the start, and prayed, with solid, constant faith, for those of us who were to come afterwards. You can see how God spurred the expansion of the Work on, and still does, through the

intercession of our Blessed Lady and our Father.

Let's have still more recourse to our Lady during what is left of this Marian Year. Let's intensify our prayer this month, especially for the World Meeting of Families to be held in Philadelphia, which will be attended by the Pope; and also the events in Torreciudad on 5th September. I invite you to appeal particularly to the intercession of our beloved Don Alvaro. On 15th September, the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, we will give thanks for another anniversary of his election to succeed our Father. It is natural for us to rely on his prayers, among other reasons because of the very effective stimulus he provided for apostolate in the sphere of the family.

In September I like to remind you of two cardinal points of Christian

living, which are inseparable from one another and which should take deep root in our personal lives: the Cross and joy. There can be no really deep joy that is not rooted in the self-sacrifice of Jesus on the Wood. The liturgy expresses this through the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on 14th September, reminding us of the fulfilment of our Lord's words: *When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.*

[1]

It was on this feast-day, in 1938, that St Josemaría wrote: ***I asked our Lord, with all the force of my soul, to grant me the grace to exalt the holy Cross in all my faculties and senses... A new life! A seal confirming the authenticity of my mission... Josemaría, onto the Cross! We shall see, we shall see.***^[2]

In union with our Father's plea to God, let's sincerely beg our Lord to grant us the grace to set the Holy

Cross on high in our soul and body, in our faculties and senses – without fear! – because being very close to the Cross, with Christ on the Cross, as St Josemaría often said, fills us with peace and serenity, even though perhaps we may resist a little at first. Then is the time to recall the point in *The Way: Is that what you want, Lord? Then... that's what I want too!*^[3]

Let's do all we can to pass on this aspiration with our words and our behaviour, by loving sacrifice, including when it presents itself unexpectedly, and by seeking it actively in the little things of every day. **In lætitia, nulla dies sine cruce:** Lord, we want no day to go by without the Cross, always with joy and peace.

Let's consider how we try to imbue ourselves with this reality. When our ego rises in revolt, and we see that

we need to deny ourselves, do we do so joyfully? Do we understand that we need that attitude in serving others for God, and that it is a sure sign of true love? Do we understand that in order to follow Jesus closely, we have to overcome, one after another, all the ways in which we think too much about ourselves?

For the Work to come to earth, the Holy Spirit led our Father (as he wants to lead us) along the paths of mortification and penance. Let's not block these divine requests. Let's ask for the grace to let ourselves be conformed to Christ Crucified, which is the way to achieve true happiness. And so I ask you, and I ask myself: Do we love the Cross? Do we seek it in the circumstances of our daily journey? Do we try to foster supernatural joy when Jesus walks at our side and asks us for some renunciation, and are we able to adapt ourselves to what he suggests

to us in our life of piety, our work, and our fraternity?

It is important for us to apply these considerations not only to our personal behaviour, but also in our families, in the homes of the Associates and Supernumeraries, and in all the spheres in which we normally live and work. Living together with other people provides many opportunities of smoothing off the rough edges of our character. I am not referring to the little differences that can arise from time to time, and that are inevitable when we live in daily contact with others. They are solved by apologising. I am talking about the deeper wounds that can be produced within families.

The Holy Father warns us of a danger that is often found at the base of a bad atmosphere in families.

When these hurts, which are still rectifiable, are ignored, they

deepen: they transform into impertinence, hostility and contempt. And at that point they can become deep wounds that divide husband and wife, and induce them to find understanding, support, consolation elsewhere. But often these “supports” do not consider the good of the family!^[4]

The remedy for such situations, to prevent them worsening into virtually incurable wounds, is within everyone's grasp, with God's grace. The Pope has expressed it on different occasions, in three points: **Please, thank you, I'm sorry.**^[5]

Asking for things as a favour, saying “please”, without demanding them or being impatient, is a good “vaccination” against conflicts, not only between husband and wife, but also in relationships with the children and other family members.

There is a Spanish saying, “A thimble of honey achieves more than a barrel of gall”. Furthermore, we should consider that everything in our life is marked by gratuitousness. We did nothing to deserve our life, or the family we grew up in, or the natural and supernatural gifts we have received... So we should give thanks for them. How easy relations with others become when we learn to say “thank you” sincerely for something that may be tiny, but that shows real affection and a generous readiness to serve! And when we have done wrong, out of selfishness, bad manners, or insensitivity, let’s go and ask for forgiveness, which does not involve any kind of humiliation, but just the opposite: it shows greatness of soul.

I am very grateful to God that in the Work we have learnt this spirit from our Father. ***We have to pocket our temper***, he said,***and, for love for***

Christ, smile and make life pleasant for those around us.^[6]

And he gave married couples some advice that can be applied to other interpersonal relationships: ***As you are human, occasionally you will argue; but only a little. And afterwards both of you have to recognise that you are to blame, and say to one another: “Forgive me!” And then give each other a big hug... and on you go! But let people see that you don’t get into an argument again for a long time.***^[7]

I return to what I was saying at the beginning of this letter. We have to be men and women of faith. There are many people who sometimes show that they are lacking in principles, and, therefore, are in need of loving the Cross; and this should not discourage us. Although we may be working in a hidden corner, although we may hardly

move from our place, let's remember that our effort to exalt Christ in our senses and faculties, in our soul and body, has unimaginable repercussions: because it is He who will give life to this world of ours, making use of these poor instruments we each are. Let's not stand aside, my daughters and sons, from this work. It is time, as our Father used to say, to arrive at the Cross every day and ask, forcefully, what St Josemaría often begged our Lord for, kissing the crucifix: ***Lord, come down from the cross; it's time for me to get up onto it.***

May there often come to our mind the thought: What would Jesus do now? How would he surrender himself? I am convinced that our little cross, yours and mine, if we take it with determination and joy, happy to have discovered it, will turn into the means of cauterising the wounds of today's world. There is

nothing pessimistic here: with Christ, we are hungry to give a taste for God to those who are far from him. In that way we will help make society better and heal the family. We pray to our Blessed Lady confidently for this, especially on the 8th September, when we will commemorate her birth.

A very affectionate blessing, asking for your prayers for the forthcoming

Synod too, from

your Father

+ Javier

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[1] *Jn* 12:32.

[2] St Josemaría, Personal notes, no. 1587 (14 Sept 1938); quoted in A.

Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. II, pp. 236-7.

[3] St Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 762.

[4] Pope Francis, General audience, 24 June 2015.

[5] Cf. Pope Francis, General audience, 13 May 2015.

[6] St Josemaría, notes from a family gathering, 4 June 1974.

[7] *Ibid.*