

"The beauty of faith comes from abandonment in God's hands"

Homily and gallery of photos from the Mass celebrated in Rome by the Prelate on the first anniversary of the death of Bishop Javier Echevarría, his predecessor at the head of Opus Dei.

12/13/2017

Homily, Mass of the Dead

On the first anniversary of Bishop Javier Echevarría's death

Basilica of Saint Eugene, 12 December 2017

[Readings: *Wis* 3:1-9; *Ps* 129; *Rom* 14:7-9, 10c-12; *Jn* 11:21-27]

The souls of the righteous are in God's hands (see *Wis* 3:1). These words with which we have begun the Liturgy of the Word today lead us to recall with heartfelt gratitude Bishop Javier Echevarría. He lived his life with this firm conviction, and often made it manifest to others. A few days before his death, he was reminded of this by the doctor who had looked after him for many years: “As you yourself have so often told us, Father, we are in God’s hands.”

Gallery of photos

“He who believes in me, even if he dies, shall live,” Jesus says to Martha.

“Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” And our Lord continues: “Do you believe this?” (Jn 11:26-27). Today our Lord addresses this question, as so many others in the Gospel, to each one of us. “Do you believe this?” Do you believe that, not only at the end of your life but at each moment, including now, God is thinking of you and wants you to be close to Him? Do you believe that you are always living in God’s hands, even when it might seem that He has forgotten you?

I am reminded of a story I recently heard, told by a medical doctor who was diagnosed with a grave illness a few months ago. Shortly after his diagnosis, he ran into a colleague in the hospital who asked him, with the frankness with which friends speak to one another: “Tell me, what have you gained by praying so much?” He replied, “Look, by praying I find myself now happy, calm, at peace,

myself and my whole family; we fully trust in God and accept his will.” The friend (a non-believer) looked at him with tears in his eyes, and as they parted he said: “How beautiful it is to have faith in God!”

Yes, how beautiful it is to have faith in God, although this beauty is not an easy consolation, obtained by reading or listening every now and then to some nice ideas, only to return to the crude reality of everyday life with its worries and unexpected setbacks. The beauty of faith comes from abandonment in God, in realizing we are in his hands, an interior attitude that should grow in our hearts each day, with serenity. And it grows especially through prayer, by dedicating some time each day to personal prayer, to dialogue with God. Even when it seems to us we don’t have time for God; even when we think we have nothing to say to Him. By doing so, little by little

we allow ourselves to be won over by God, and learn to abandon ourselves in his hands. We can entrust to Him so many things, even in the midst of traffic, in intense work, in family life, when resting.

“Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love” (*Wis 3:9*). This passage from the Book of Wisdom that we have just heard speaks to us of the righteous who have left this world; but it does so by glancing backward, recapitulating their life. Therefore it is speaking about us, about the path on which we find ourselves. These other words are also very appropriate: “God tested them and found them worthy of himself; like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them” (*Wis 3:5-6*).

Let us pause for a moment at this beautiful image. The lower part of the furnace was called the crucible, where the precious metal separates itself from the dross, so as to become more pure. Purification by fire symbolizes a path marked by two realities: suffering and love.

Suffering that God lovingly allows in our life, in so many different ways. Suffering that is also sometimes caused by our own sins or by our limitations. But it is also a suffering that can serve to stir up love in us, to purify the gold that God has put in our heart. Suffering can purify our love from the dross of selfishness, of pride; the dross of things that we sometimes fail to notice, but that diminish our joy, because they become obstacles between us and God, between us and others. And how does God transform suffering into love? Through the uninterrupted dialogue that He wants to keep up

with us, so long as we also want to open ourselves to Him.

In one of his last pastoral letters, Bishop Echevarría wrote: “Interior peace does not belong to those who think they do everything well, nor to those uninterested in loving: it arises in the person who always, even after falling, returns to God’s hands.”[1] So let us ask our Lord that we allow Him to purify our heart, with trust, even if at times we do not understand his paths (see *Is* 55.8). Let us ask Him now, in these days of preparation for Christmas. Today, feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we entrust this desire to Holy Mary, who also is close to us, as she told Saint Juan Diego and as she made Don Javier realize, especially on his last day here on earth: “Am I not here, I, who am your Mother?”[2]

Praised be Jesus Christ.

[1] Javier Echevarría, *Pastoral letter*, November 2016.

[2] Words of our Lady to Juan Diego, *Nican Mopohua*, 119.

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