

Bishop Javier Echevarria speaks of divine filiation

In his most recent book, the Prelate of Opus Dei devotes a chapter to divine filiation, a supernatural reality that is fundamental to the formation given in centers of the Prelature. Here are some selections from that chapter, "The Eucharist and the Christian Life."

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"To all who received Him [the Word made flesh] He gave the power to become sons of God" (Jn 1:12). For a Christian, this is not just a way of speaking, or a designation.

Awareness of divine filiation is rooted in a divine gift that transforms a person from within. St. John puts it this way: "See what love the Father has for us, that He has called us sons of God, and so we are!...We are truly children of God" (1 Jn 3:1-2). St. Josemaria concludes that "whoever is unaware of this is unaware of his innermost truth;" he has not yet discovered the deepest reality of his being, nor the meaning of his existence on this earth.

When he reflects on how God acts in him and in his brothers and sisters in the faith, the Apostle Paul exclaims: "It is the children of God who are led by the Spirit of God. You have not received a spirit that makes you fear

returning to your former slavery; you have received the spirit of adopted sons that cries out Abba, Father! For it is the Spirit himself who gives testimony along with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, also heirs: Together with Christ, God is our inheritance. And so we suffer with Him in order to be glorified with Him" (Rom 8:14-17).

The Fathers of the Church never tire of contemplating this simple, yet extraordinary truth, or of teaching it to the Christian faithful: The Son of God "became precisely a Son of Man so that we might come to be children of God." Ever since the time of the Fathers, Our Lord's followers have lived this reality, trying to assimilate it and discover the infinite wealth of its varied manifestations, as Christ Himself explained it throughout his preaching. Christians pray about this and come to call God the Creator

their Father, expressing so simply their need and embracing so sincerely the divine intention. They express it in a penitential way that boldly but without ostentation fulfills the deep designs of heaven in a loving way that leaves others untroubled. They express it in a charitable way that makes them always see others as brothers and sisters, children of the same Father. They express it in a readiness to pardon every offense as a sign and consequence of knowing that they have been pardoned even greater offenses by the Lord of all. And they express it in a sincere desire to set out once more toward the Father when they have for any reason departed from Him.

Through this gift of divine filiation, Christ completely destroyed the barriers that separate men from one other by bridging the distance between heaven and earth and

between his creatures. God came so close to man as to become one of us. By taking on our nature, the Word joined human and divine in himself. Now, as St. Paul says, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female; you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3: 28). Now God is not distant; He is our Father. And neither are others remote from us; they are our brothers and sisters.

To be transformed into Christ means to become identified with the Son, an absolutely necessary step if we are to reach the end of the road. The goal of human life, as God has planned it, is the loving vision of the Father; men attain it when they become fully identified with his Son. Christ said it explicitly: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and whoever the Son wishes to reveal Him to" (Mt 11:27). "To reveal him"

means to communicate the Word made manifest by the Father. To believe in that revelation requires accepting the Word, which means participating in the Word's own divine Sonship. During our life on earth that Word is received in an imperfect manner by faith; in the life of heaven we will assume it perfectly in the glorious vision St. Paul speaks of: "When perfection comes, the imperfect will disappear.... Now we see as in a mirror, darkly; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in an imperfect way; then I will know as I am known" (1 Cor 13:10,12).

St. John specifically relates this dynamic with the development of divine filiation: "See how great a love the Father has shown for us, that we are called children of God. And so we are! Therefore, the world does not know us because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet appeared

what we shall be. We know that when He appears we will be like Him because we will see Him as He is" (1 Jn 3:1-2). And so we say that a man can see the Father only if he is fully identified with the Son.

That identification begins in the Sacrament of Baptism, the doorway to the Christian's path. But in Baptism, divine filiation is not conferred upon us as life is upon a newborn. It must grow more and more under the impulse of the light of the Paraclete according to the divine disposition and with the man's correspondence to grace. Christ Himself accompanies His disciple along the way. It is for this reason that He remains in the Eucharist as food so that His disciples can participate ever more fully in his divine Sonship. Jesus in the Eucharist is for everyone the Way that leads to our heavenly home; He becomes our Viaticum, the path that leads

progressively to our complete identification with Him--provided that we try to receive Him with the proper dispositions. At the end there awaits us the face to face vision of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

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