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Let us give thanks to God for such a good and faithful servant

Letter of bishop Echevarría to
the faithful of the Prelature and
cooperators of Opus Dei.

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May Jesus watch over my daughters
and sons for me!

My dear children: We have been
preparing ourselves for the sad
moment of the death of our beloved
Pope John Paul II, who — more
frequently in these last years and

months — has offered to the whole world the serene and joyful witness of his intimate union with God, through suffering.

Since last Wednesday, when the Pope's health suddenly worsened, the entire Church has gathered around its supreme Shepherd, praying with faith in every corner of the globe. Once more the scene narrated in the Acts of the Apostles, when King Herod had the apostle Peter imprisoned, intending to put him to death, has become a reality: *earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church* (Acts 12:5).

This prayer for the Successor of St. Peter, aside from having been a source of strength for the Pope in recent days, has united us more firmly to Christ and to his beloved Spouse, the Church. It has helped Catholics to discover once more that we form part of the great family of

God's children, who have a common Father on earth. We have also felt the closeness of many other Christians and of countless men and women of good will, who have united themselves to our prayer. Let us give thanks to God for all these gifts, and for such a good and faithful servant, Pope John Paul II!

In the Work, many reasons for thanksgiving join us to John Paul II. Our Father taught us to love the Pope ardently, whoever he might be, for the simple and sublime reason that he is the Vicar of Christ, his visible representative on earth. But our veneration becomes even more pressing on considering how, during these years of his ministry as supreme Shepherd, he has helped Catholics to fulfill our filial duty of faithful adhesion, by the example of his intense spiritual life (one could almost touch it!), his joyful service to souls, his charity towards all men

and women, and also his paternal demands. And he has raised the Work to a Prelature, so that we carry out Opus Dei — this little “portion” of the Church — as God wants.

We know the enormous spiritual and moral prestige that the Holy Father had throughout the whole world, but during the past few days — also on seeing the extensive coverage that the means of communication have dedicated to him — I think that everyone, including non-Catholics, have touched the truth that *ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia*: where Peter is, there the Church is found. And now, after so many years of generous dedication to God, the depth and effectiveness of his ministry as Supreme Shepherd has become even more apparent.

We are filled with the certainty that the Blessed Trinity has opened wide the gate of heaven to him, as a

reward for his constant zeal for souls, his persevering invitation to all men and women to open the doors of their souls to Christ. At the same time, with profound and serene gratitude, let us offer suffrages for the eternal rest of his soul. In addition to those that Saint Josemaria established in Opus Dei for moments such as these, I urge you to be generous in offering suffrages for John Paul II. Have the conviction that these prayers (we are accustomed to seeing this) are “round trip” petitions: they rise up to heaven and God returns them to earth as an abundant torrent of graces.

My daughters and sons: John Paul II, together with our Lord, continues to invite us: **Rise, let us be on our way!** He is asking us to take up with determination, day after day, the path of our Christian life. *Duc in altum!* (Lk 5:4), he is reminding each of us. All Catholics, as faithful

children of the Church, have to launch out into the deep in the great ocean of the world, to carry out — without mediocrity, with full and wholehearted dedication — the mission to co-redeem that Christ has entrusted to us.

When the Conclave of Cardinals, united under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, chooses Peter's new Successor, we will hear the announcement, *habemus Papam!* Let us begin now preparing the path for him. Let us pray to our beloved John Paul II that he intercede before God our Lord so that the new Pope find the furrow open and well-prepared through the abundant prayer and mortification of all Christians. We already love him with all our soul, whoever he might be. And as our Father told us on similar occasions, we offer everything for him and his intentions — even our breathing!

During these days of *sede vacante*, perhaps the aspiration that our Founder suggests in *Furrow* can assist us: ***I thought the comment on loyalty you had written to me was very appropriate...: “I carry with me every day in my heart, in my mind and on my lips, an aspiration: Rome!”*** (no. 344).

With all my affection I bless you.

Your Father,

+ Javier