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Letter from the Prelate (November 2012)

The first in a series of monthly letters in which the Prelate plans to offer reflections on the Creed for the Year of Faith. The November letter considers God Creator and Father.

11/03/2012

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

The Church, following the voice of Peter's successor, wants all the

faithful to reaffirm our adhesion to Christ, and to meditate more deeply on the truths God has revealed to us. And she asks us to renew our daily eagerness to follow joyfully the path he has marked out for us, and to strive more diligently to make him known to others through our apostolate. Let us give thanks to the Blessed Trinity for the abundant graces which—I am sure—will be poured forth on souls in the coming months; it is only logical that we strive to correspond to these blessings from Heaven.

Each month this year I am planning to focus on a specific point of our Catholic faith, so that each of us may reflect on this topic in God's presence and try to draw out practical consequences. As the Holy Father recommends, let us consider carefully the articles of faith contained in the Creed. Benedict XVI asks, "Where can we find the

essential formula of faith? Where can we find the truths that have been faithfully passed down to us and that constitute the light for our daily life?” [1] And the Pope himself gives us the answer: “in the Creed, in the Profession of Faith or Symbol of Faith, we are reconnected with the original event of the Person and history of Jesus of Nazareth; what the Apostle to the Gentiles said to the Christians of Corinth happens concretely: ‘I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received’ (1 Cor 15:3-4).” [2]

For another Year of Faith, proclaimed in 1967 by Paul VI, St. Josemaría also invited us to go deeply into the content of the Creed. Let us renew periodically our resolution to follow this advice. After reminding us once again that in Opus Dei “we strive always and in everything *sentire cum Ecclesia* , to think in accord with Christ's Church, our Mother,” [3] he

adds: “for that reason I want us to recall now together, in a necessarily brief and summary way, the fundamental truths of the holy Creed of the Church: of the deposit that God, in revealing himself, has entrusted to her.” [4] I insist: we should always, but more especially during this year, carry out an intense apostolate of doctrine. Every day we see this is more necessary, for many people who consider themselves Christians, and even Catholics, are unable to give reasons for their faith to those who still haven’t received the evangelical proclamation, or who have only a deficient knowledge of the truths transmitted by the Apostles, which the Church faithfully conserves.

Benedict XVI has expressed his hope that this year may be of help to everyone for “deepening knowledge of the central truths of our faith, concerning God, man, the Church,

about the whole social and cosmic reality, by meditating and reflecting on the affirmations of the Creed. And I would like it to be clear,” he continued, “that this content or truth of faith (*fides quae*) bears directly on our life; it asks for a conversion of life that gives life to a new way of believing in God (*fides qua*). Knowing God, meeting him, deepening our knowledge of the features of his face is vital for our life so that he may enter into the profound dynamics of the human being.” [5]

These are two inseparable aspects: adhering to the truths of faith with our intellect, and endeavoring with our will to make them fully imbue our actions, even the smallest ones, and especially the duties entailed by each one’s situation in life. As our Founder wrote: “both in the motion and light of grace, as well as in the external setting forth of what one

should believe, we have to obey with a supreme and liberating act of freedom. Obedience to the intimate action of the Holy Spirit in the soul is not fostered by challenging obedience to the external and authorized setting forth of the doctrine of faith.” [6]

The consequence is clear: we have to want and strive to know more and better Christ’s doctrine, and then pass it on to other people. We will do so, with God’s help, if we make an effort to meditate attentively on the articles of faith. A theoretical knowledge is not enough; we need “to discover the deep bond between the truth we profess in the Creed and our daily existence, so that these truths may truly and in practice be—as they have always been—light for our steps through life, water that irrigates the parched stretches on our path, life that gets the better of some arid areas of life today. The

moral life of Christians is grafted on the Creed, on which it is founded and by which it is justified.” [7] Let us pray with piety and meditate on this profession of faith, asking the Paraclete for light to love and grasp better these truths.

Therefore, in our apostolic conversations, as well as in the talks of Christian doctrine for those who draw close to the Prelature’s apostolate, let us not cease having recourse to the study and review of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* or its *Compendium*. And we priests too should make persevering use of those documents in our meditations and talks. Thus all of us will try to confront our daily life with the reference points contained in the *Catechism*. I often recall St. Josemaría’s repeated reading of the catechism of St. Pius V (the present one did not exist then), and also of the catechism of St. Pius X, which he

recommended to people in his conversations.

“I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.” [8]

The first article of the Creed expresses the Church’s faith in the existence of a personal God, creator and conservator of all things, who governs the entire universe, and especially mankind, through his providence. Truly, “when one looks with clean eyes, everything speaks loudly of this God and Creator of ours. Our Lord who rewarded Peter—for his faith—by making him the head of his Holy Church (see *Mt* 16:13-19), will also reward Christian believers with a new clarity. For that which is known of God is manifest to them, to believers, since God has declared it; for from the creation of the world, the invisible things of God, his eternal power and divinity, are known through creatures (see *Rom*

1:20).” [9] As I recently wrote you, I suggest that you recite the Creed with new faith, proclaim it with joy, and take refuge in these truths that are so essential for Christians.

We all know that, as a consequence of original sin, human nature has been deeply wounded, which makes it difficult for men and women to know clearly and without any error the one true God, by the sole force of natural reason. [10] That is why God, in his infinite goodness and mercy, revealed himself progressively throughout the Old Testament until, in Jesus Christ, the fullness of revelation was attained. By sending his Son in the flesh, he has shown us clearly not only the truths sin had obscured, but also the intimacy of his own divine life. In the bosom of the one divine nature, there have subsisted eternally three truly distinct Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, indissolubly

united in a marvelous and inexpressible communion of love. “The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them.” [11] “It is a mystery of faith in the strict sense, one of the ‘mysteries that are hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God’ (First Vatican Council: DZ 3015).” [12]

The revelation of his intimate life, to make us sharers in that treasure through grace, is the most precious gift with which God has favored us. It is a completely gratuitous gift, the fruit exclusively of his goodness. Thus we can understand why our Father recommended: “we should always pray the Creed with a spirit of

adoration, of loving contemplation and praise.” [13]

I ask St. Josemaría that we may strive to say the word *credo* , I believe, with the holy passion with which he repeated it often during the day. He also advised us: “Learn to praise the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Learn to have a special devotion to the Blessed Trinity: I believe in God the Father, I believe in God the Son, I believe in God the Holy Spirit; I hope in God the Father, I hope in God the Son, I hope in God the Holy Spirit; I love God the Father, I love God the Son, I love God the Holy Spirit. I believe, I hope and I love the most Holy Trinity.” [14] And he continued: “this devotion is much needed as a supernatural exercise for the soul, expressed by the movement of the heart, although not always in words.” [15] Are we taking advantage of these recommendations? Do we want to “believe” as God wants us to? Does

belief in our omnipotent and eternal God give us security?

The first article of the Creed is the firm rock on which Christian faith and conduct is grounded. As Benedict XVI said on the eve of inaugurating the Year of Faith, “we should learn the simplest and most fundamental lesson of the [Second Vatican] Council: namely, that Christianity in its essence consists of faith in God which is Trinitarian Love, and in a personal and community encounter with Christ who orients and gives meaning to life. Everything else flows from this . . . The Council reminds us that the Church in all her members, has the task, the mandate of transmitting God’s word of love which saves, so that we may hear and welcome the divine call which contains in itself our eternal beatitude.” [16]

Therefore we need to go more and more deeply into the first article of our faith. *I believe in God!* This first affirmation is shown to us as the most fundamental one. The entire creed speaks about God, and when it also refers to men and the world, it does so because of their relationship to God. The other articles of this profession of faith depend on the first one: they spur us to know God better in his progressive revelation of himself to mankind. Consequently, since it contains something so fundamental, we can't allow any form of weariness to creep in when communicating it to others. As I reminded you at the beginning of this letter, God's help will not be lacking when striving to do so.

During the month of November, the liturgy invites us to consider in a special way the eternal truths. With St. Josemaría I insist: "We must never lose sight of the sublime end to

which we have all been destined. 'For what does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul' (*Mt* 16:26). We have only one final end, which is supernatural, and which takes up, perfects and elevates our natural end, because grace presupposes, takes up, heals, elevates and ennobles nature." [17]

Let us be convinced that by living the Creed, integrating it into our whole life, we will come to understand better and love more our marvelous dependence on God, savoring the incomparable joy of being and knowing ourselves to be his children. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that faith brings immense consequences for our life. It spurs us, in the first place, to recognize the greatness and majesty of God, adoring him; to be ever grateful for his gifts; to treasure the

true dignity of all men and women, created in the image and likeness of God, and therefore worthy of veneration and respect; to use rightly the created goods which God has put at our service; to trust in him in all circumstances, especially in adverse ones. [18]

Before ending, I urge that we expressly increase our prayers for the fruit of the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization, which ended a few days ago. Let us beseech God that throughout the world, from pole to pole, the breath of the Paraclete will be felt moving the hearts of Catholic faithful to take part actively in this new springtime of the faith, which the Pope is insistently fostering.

Pray in a special way for the brothers of yours who will receive the diaconate on the 3rd in St. Eugene's basilica. And let us redouble our acts

of thanksgiving to the Trinity, as we approach November 28, the date on which we will celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the erecting of Opus Dei as a personal prelature. How much spiritual fruit has been produced since then, as our beloved Don Alvaro assured us, when writing to us that the fulfillment of our Father's "special intention" would bring an immense sum of blessings for the Work: *omnia bona pariter cum illa!* [19]

Let us direct our thanksgiving to Heaven through our Lady's hands, going also to St. Josemaría's first successor, who prayed, suffered and worked so much to make a reality of the task our Founder had entrusted to him. And the way to make this gratitude concrete is within the reach of each of us: a solid fidelity to God, beginning and beginning again each day in our effort to get to know him more intimately.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father

+ Javier

Rome, November 1, 2012

Footnotes:

[1] Benedict XVI, Address at a general audience, October 17, 2012.

[2] *Ibid.* [3] St. Josemaría, *Letter of March 19, 1967*, no. 5.

[4] *Ibid.* [5] Benedict XVI, Address at a general audience, October 17, 2012.

[6] St. Josemaría, *Letter of March 19, 1967*, no. 42.

[7] Benedict XVI, Address at a general audience, October 17, 2012.

[8] Roman Missal, *Credo* (Nicæan-Constantinopolitan Creed).

[9] St. Josemaría, *Letter of March 19, 1967*, no. 42.

[10] See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 36-38.

[11] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 234.

[12] *Ibid.* no. 237.

[13] St. Josemaría, *Letter of March 19, 1967*, no. 55.

[14] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 296.

[15] *Ibid.* [16] Benedict XVI, Address at a general audience, October 10, 2012.

[17] St. Josemaría, *Letter of March 19, 1967*, no. 59.

[18] See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 222-227.

[19] *Wis* 7:11. See *Letter* , November 28, 1982, no. 4 (*Family Letters* , vol. II, no. 313).

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