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Letter from the Prelate (November 2014)

This month's letter focuses on the solemnity of Christ the King, and Christ's triumph in souls when they are docile to the action of the Holy Spirit.

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

Perhaps I am repeating myself, but I do so on purpose: how much we have to thank God, every day, for the many gifts he is granting us! And I understand very well why our Father would frequently write and say, *semper in laetitia!*, "always joyful," on seeing how Heaven is blessing us.

In the weeks that have gone by since September 27, we have learned of many graces obtained from God through Blessed Alvaro's intercession. We see, once again, how holiness shines forth when the Church attests to it in one of her children. At times we may fail to perceive it, because we are distracted and don't consider the help God is granting. My daughters and sons, let us be convinced that our faith enables us to tread firmly amid the vicissitudes of history. Divine Providence directs everything towards the fullness of God's

kingdom, which Christ established on earth.

It is now the responsibility of us Christians to make present the fruits of the redemption, superabundantly attained by Christ through his life, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. And we ask for this through the intercession of Don Alvaro, when we beseech God to teach us to turn *all the circumstances and events of my life into opportunities to love you and to serve the kingdom of Jesus Christ.*

To spread Christ's kingdom to all the ends of the earth, to the people who are now alive and to those who will come in the future, is the marvelous mission—a truly divine and human adventure—that our Lord entrusted to all Christians, when he instructed the Apostles: *Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.*^[1] How insistently St.

Josemaría had us consider this truth, to engrave it on our hearts! To make this aspiration a reality let us foster the desire to increase our apostolic zeal every day, beseeching our Lord to send his Spirit to all men and women, breaking down any barriers we might place to his action in our souls.

This desire must not be a mere "daydream." We have to make very much our own the longing that beat in our Father's heart right from the start of Opus Dei, "we want Christ to reign," and that Don Alvaro repeated to us. From the moment he met the Work, he drew on the riches of St. Josemaría's interior life, and thus he savored and loved those aspirations our Founder prayed so frequently: *Regnare Christum volumus!; Deo omnis glória!; Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariám!* "We want Christ to reign! All the glory to God! All with Peter to Jesus through Mary!" These

clear and demanding coordinates of action stirred up in Blessed Alvaro's heart the need to let Christ reign there, giving God all the glory, closely united to the Church and the Pope through our Lady's intercession, and accompanying all mankind.

These considerations are very appropriate for this month, as we prepare for the Solemnity of Christ the King. Our Father is asking each and every one of us: "Where then is the King? Where is the Christ whom the Holy Spirit wants to fashion in our souls? He cannot be present in the pride that separates us from God, nor in the lack of charity which cuts us off from others. Christ cannot be there. In that loveless state man is left alone."[2] God wants to reign, above all, in our thoughts, words and deeds. "But how would we reply," our Father continues, "if he asked us: 'How do you go about letting me reign in you?' I would reply that I

need lots of his grace. Only that way can my every heartbeat and breath, my least intense look, my most ordinary word, my most basic feeling, be transformed into a hosanna to Christ my King."[3]

When praying the Our Father, we ask for the coming of God's kingdom: *adveniat regnum tuum.*[4] Although we know it is already present in the world—*regnum Dei intra vos est,*[5] the kingdom of God is within you—it still has to be made manifest in its fullness. In our Lord's words, this kingdom is seen as the seed that grows silently in the field, although alongside the wheat are also the weeds the enemy has sown; and as the leaven that turns the dough into savory bread. With these parables, Jesus explains the characteristics of God's kingdom throughout all the stages of history, ours as well. And because his kingdom is not of this world,[6] it is not made visible with

noise and clamor, although it is found present on earth and will continue growing until its glorious appearance at the end of time.

"Christ's work is always silent, it is not spectacular. The great tree of true life grows in the humility of being Church, of living the Gospel every day. Precisely with these humble beginnings the Lord encourages us so that in the humility of the Church today too, in the poverty of our Christian lives, we may see his presence and thus have the courage to go to meet him and make his love, this force of peace and of true life, present on our earth."[7] Although history is not lacking in events that apparently suggest the contrary, this is God's way of acting, who wants to carry out his plan of salvation "with respect for our freedom, since love, by its nature, cannot be imposed. Therefore the Church is, in Christ, the place for

welcoming and mediating God's love. In this perspective it is clear that the Church's *holiness* and *missionary character* are two sides of the same coin: only because she is holy, that is, filled with divine love, can the Church carry out her mission, and it is precisely in terms of this task that God chose her and sanctified her as his own."[8]

Christ is King of the universe through his incarnation and his triumph on the Cross.[9] The Preface for the Solemnity offers us some characteristics of this kingdom: *a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace.*[10] We find in these words the signs of Christ's triumph, when souls are docile to the action of the Holy Spirit; they can help us prepare for this great feast, when we will renew the consecration of Opus Dei to the Most Sacred and Merciful Heart of Jesus.

A kingdom of truth and life. Jesus told Pilate: I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice.^[11] The Roman procurator did not want to listen to Jesus' words: *Quid est veritas?*^[12] What is truth?, he replied with disdain, turning his back on Jesus. Today the same thing happens in many places. Many people sadly reject the Truth; they refuse to recognize that only Christ is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*^[13] And they remain in the darkness of sin.

Let us make reparation for the greatest evil that can befall creatures: to voluntarily shut themselves off from the Truth and the Life that is Christ, for the heart hardens in evil and impedes the action of the healing grace of the Paraclete. Pope St. John Paul II wrote that the action of the Holy Spirit

"encounters in a person in this condition an interior resistance, as it were an impenetrability of conscience, a state of mind which could be described as fixed by reason of a free choice . . . In our own time this attitude of mind and heart is perhaps reflected in the loss of the sense of sin . . . and this loss goes hand in hand with the 'loss of the sense of God'."[14]

But let us also consider that God's power is infinitely greater than the tyranny of sin. We cannot permit even a flicker of personal discouragement, on seeing around us so much forgetfulness of God and contempt for his commandments. Let us ask the Trinity that this vacuum not affect us. Let us have more diligent recourse to the power of the Holy Spirit, to unmask sin and infuse contrition in hearts. He, as our Lord teaches, *will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and*

judgment.^[15] Our faith assures us that God *sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.*

^[16] Therefore, as St. John Paul II wrote, "convincing about sin and righteousness has as its purpose the salvation of the world, the salvation of men."^[17]

St. Josemaría showed us the right path to help make Christ's kingdom a reality, despite the obstacles: "You all know that there are difficulties in the life of the world and in the life of the Church. And that these difficulties require that we, all of us, behave better, that we be more faithful. In these moments of disloyalty our Lord expects, of each one of you and of me, loyalty, love. We need to remain calm. All the agitated waters will grow quiet; the dregs will fall to the bottom and the water will become clean and drinkable. And the mountains, which seem to be

surrounding us and shutting out the horizon, will fall: *montes sicut cera fluxerunt a facie Domini* (Ps 96[97]:5), Scripture says; the mountains, as though made of wax, will be destroyed by God's will. Because God's will is overflowing with love and mercy. *Misericordia Domini, plena est terra* (Ps 32[33]:5), the earth is full of the mercy of God. Our Lord loves each one of you and me very much, but he will love us more if we love his Church, which is our Mother, and which is afflicted."[18]

A kingdom of holiness and grace. This is another characteristic of God's kingdom, a consequence of adhering closely to Christ, the Truth and the Life. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, in Baptism a Christian becomes a child of God, and in the other sacraments, especially the Eucharist, we are identified more and more closely with Christ, until we can say with St. Paul: *I live, but*

now it is not I that live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life that I live now in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me.[19] This identification respects the particular characteristics of each person: "You have to be different from one another, as the saints in heaven are different, each having their own personal and special characteristics. But also as alike one another as the saints, who would not be saints if each of them had not become identified with Christ."[20]

Today's feast, the Solemnity of All Saints, shows us the wonderful unity and variety proper to Christian life. The beatification of Don Alvaro and that of Paul VI, a few days ago, also make manifest the marvelous action of God, who sanctifies his children, for the glory of God and the good of the Church. "The joy of the Gospel is such that it cannot be taken away

from us by anyone or anything (cf. *Jn* 16:22). The evils of our world—and those of the Church—must not be excuses for diminishing our commitment and our fervor. Let us look upon them as challenges that can help us to grow. With the eyes of faith, we can see the light that the Holy Spirit always radiates in the midst of darkness . . . Our faith is challenged to discern how wine can come from water and how wheat can grow in the midst of weeds. Fifty years after the Second Vatican Council, we are distressed by the troubles of our age and far from naïve optimism; yet the fact that we are more realistic must not mean that we are any less trusting in the Spirit or less generous."[21]

This certitude of faith illuminates the darkness that, at times, seems to be deepening over mankind. God is more powerful! He, in his infinite wisdom and power, is able to draw

good out of evil. Therefore faith lies at the root of the supernatural optimism that is so important, and that has to always be the wellspring for a Christian's actions. The Holy Spirit is truly our "Paraclete," our advocate and defender, which is what the word means.

When the kingdom of God takes root in the depths of our soul, what the preface for the Mass of Christ the King proclaims becomes a reality: through our personal apostolate it is shown as a *kingdom of justice, love and peace*. From the heart of a Christian there flows forth justice and mercy, which spreads to others, and imbues human structures. And the children of God (we are well aware of this gift) become "sowers of peace and joy," in our Founder's words.

Tomorrow we will celebrate the commemoration of the faithful

departed. Let us be generous in our offering of suffrages—above all, the Holy Mass—for the souls in Purgatory, especially for those most in need. I am always moved when I think of how our Father loved and dealt with all those who have preceded us on our earthly journey: his daughters and his sons, his parents and brothers and sisters, and—with the same affection—our own family members, and all the souls in Purgatory, his "good friends." One could sense his certitude that *vita mutatur, non tollitur*^[22]: life is changed, not lost, for those who have followed our Lord.

I am happy to let you know that on the 3rd of this month I will be going to Moscow: starting right now, accompany me on this trip with your prayer. And on Saturday, the 8th, I will administer diaconal ordination to thirty two of your brothers. Let us pray for them, so that they be saints,

and for all the ministers of the Church, from the Pope down to the most recently ordained, loving each one dearly. On the 28th, anniversary of the Work's being erected as a personal prelature, let us especially thank the Most Blessed Trinity for the definitive canonical configuration of Opus Dei, this "little portion of the Church" that we priests and laity form, which so greatly facilitates our service to the whole Church and to souls.

Continue to pray for the fruit of the recent extraordinary Synod of Bishops and for all my other intentions.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father

+ Javier

Rome, November 1, 2014

[1] *Mk* 16:15.

[2] St. Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 31.

[3] *Ibid.*, no. 181.

[4] *Mt* 6:10.

[5] *Lk* 17:21.

[6] See *Jn* 18:36.

[7] Benedict XVI, Homily, June 15, 2008.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] See Pope Pius XI, Encyclical *Quas primas*, December 11, 1925.

[10] Roman Missal, Solemnity of Christ the King, *Preface*.

[11] *Jn* 18:37.

[12] *Jn* 18:38.

[13] *Jn* 14:6.

[14] St. John Paul II, Encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*, May 18, 1986, no. 47.

[15] *Jn* 16:8.

[16] *Jn* 3:17.

[17] St. John Paul II, Encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*, May 18, 1986, no. 27.

[18] St. Josemaría, Notes from a family gathering, November 11, 1972.

[19] *Gal* 2:20.

[20] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 947.

[21] Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium*, November 24, 2013, no. 84.

[22] Roman Missal, First Preface for the dead.

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