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Letter from the Prelate (June 2016)

"Saint Josemaría always taught us that one of the 'dominant passions' that has to guide our conduct is that of spreading Christ's teachings," the Prelate reminds us in his letter this month.

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

Two weeks have now gone by since Jesus' Ascension into Heaven, and his final words on earth still resound in our hearts: *Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.*^[1] We can rely on the assistance of the Holy Spirit, whom our Lord sent to the Apostles in the Cenacle and who continues animating the Church, as in "a new Pentecost."^[2] Jesus had promised: *the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*^[3] And he fulfilled his promise. It is up to us who are his disciples to bring to the whole world, with our words and our example, the message of salvation that he has entrusted to Christians.

"This, and no other, is the aim of the Church: the salvation of souls, one by one. For this reason the Father sent his Son, *and now I am sending you*

out in my turn (Jn 20:21). This is the origin of the command to teach his doctrine and to baptize, so that the Most Blessed Trinity may live in our souls in grace.”[4] Christ’s command found in our Father’s heart, through God’s goodness, a prompt and joyful welcome. And our Founder gracefully passed on to us this apostolic eagerness that knows no boundaries.

Saint Josemaría always taught us that one of the “dominant passions” that has to guide our conduct is that of spreading Christ’s teachings. “The main activity of Opus Dei is offering its members, and other people, the spiritual means they need to live as good Christians in the midst of the world. It helps them to learn Christ’s doctrine and the Church’s teachings. Its spirit moves them to work well for the love of God and as a service to other men. In a word, it helps them to behave like genuine Christians:

being loyal friends, respecting the legitimate freedom of others, and trying to make our world more just.”[5]

This “dominant passion” has special timeliness in this extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, for as Pope Francis said: “when, in the evening of life, it shall be asked of us what we did to feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty, equally shall it be asked of us if we helped people find their way out of doubt, if we were committed to welcoming sinners, admonishing or correcting them, if we were capable of combatting ignorance, especially as regards the Christian faith and how to lead a good life.”[6]

There are many ways of communicating the content of the faith. Saint Josemaría insisted on personal apostolate, face to face, through a friendly conversation that doesn’t try to “give lessons” to

anyone, but that makes known with simplicity what fills our soul and is a source of unfailing happiness.

On other occasions I have reminded you of our Father's advice: "before speaking to souls about God, speak a lot to God about souls."^[7] Personal contact with Jesus in prayer is the source that nourishes our enthusiasm to communicate to everyone the beauty of our faith, to give light where people live in darkness. It is only by being close to God that we can bring light to the world. For as our Father said: "the more within the world we are, the more we must be God's."^[8]

Saint Josemaría passed on to us a positive vision of the world, of noble human efforts. Therefore rather than being defensive, our attitude has to be to try to offer a positive solution. A Christian is not afraid of the truth, of taking on the difficult questions

raised by the cultural environment or by society. For we know that, although we don't always have all of the answers, the Gospel has the light needed to illumine the most difficult dilemmas and problems. This love for the truth leads a Christian to transmit the faith as it is: a strong *yes* to man, to woman, to life, to freedom, to peace, to development, to solidarity, to virtues. If Christ has made us happy, it is only natural that this joy be transmitted in our attitude. For "the force by which the truth imposes itself has to be joy, which is its clearest expression. This is what Christians should rely on for their effectiveness, and with it they should make themselves known to the world."^[9] —

Ask yourself then, my daughter, my son: Am I happy that God has called me to make him known to others? Is my apostolate "a sowing of peace and joy"?^[10] — Do I take the initiative in my

doctrinal formation, in order to give more depth and vigor to my interior life?

Saint Josemaría taught us to give doctrine in a way that would allow all men and women to understand the Gospel message, whatever their cultural level or religious formation. He called this the “gift of tongues,” in analogy to what happened when the Paraclete descended visibly on the Church. In the apostles and first disciples this took the form of *tongues as of fire distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues.*^[11]

The Founder of Opus Dei said that the gift of tongues he asked for from God for all of us means “knowing how to adapt ourselves to the capacity of our hearers . . . We have to give doctrine prudently, with the shrewdness needed for the one who

receives it to digest it. We have to give doctrine to everyone, but without choking people; in reasonable doses, in accord with each person's capacity to assimilate it. This too is part of the gift of tongues. As is also knowing how to renew it: saying the same thing each day with a new gracefulness.”^[12] —

The “gift of tongues” is a grace of the Holy Spirit, who also counts on our initiative. The study and review of theology, carried out with responsibility and apostolic eagerness, enables us to savor the truths of the faith and discover ways of presenting them in all their attractiveness. And in dialogue with our friends and colleagues, in being open to their questions, we will be able to help them confront their concerns. “For this, we must first listen . . . being able to share questions and doubts, to journey side by side, to banish all claims to

absolute power and to put our abilities and gifts at the service of the common good.

“Listening is never easy. Many times it is easier to play deaf. Listening means paying attention, wanting to understand, to value, to respect and to ponder what the other person says. Knowing how to listen is an immense grace, it is a gift which we need to ask for and then make every effort to practice.”^[13] ___

Communicating the faith is not arguing in order to win, but rather dialoguing in order to convince, since “ideas are not imposed, they are proposed.”^[14] ___ Dialoguing leads us to make better known the Truth that decisively illumines our own lives. “Jesus’ entire life is a marvelous dialogue, my children, a wonderful conversation with mankind.”^[15] ___ If we learn to do likewise, we will help, and be helped by others, in our

ordinary and humble life, to make the Gospel for everyone the *light of the world*.^[16]

I'm very happy to remind you that the upcoming 23rd, just a few days before the feast of Saint Josemaría (a solemnity in the Prelature), is the seventieth anniversary of our Father's arrival in Rome. There come to mind the memories—I heard him recount them many times—of his first days in the Eternal City: the intensity of his prayer for the Pope, even on the first night of his stay in the City; the eagerness with which he received a handwritten blessing from Pope Pius XII a few days after his arrival; the faith with which he went to an audience with the Holy Father on July 16.... And the times, in those first weeks, that he went to pray in Saint Peter's Square, so close to the small flat in Città Leonina where he was living.

I can well imagine the faith and love with which he prayed, during those weeks, the aspiration in which—right from the beginning of the Work—he summed up the yearnings in his soul: *Omnes, cum Petro, ad Iesum per Mariam!* All, with Peter, to Jesus through Mary. I invite you to say it frequently, uniting yourself to my prayer for Pope Francis, for those assisting him, for the whole Church. Especially in this month of June, which closes with the solemnity of the apostles Peter and Paul, pillars of the Church and patrons of the Work.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father,

+ Javier

Rome, June 1, 2016

[1] *Mk* 16:15.

[2] Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 213.

[3] *Jn* 14:26.

[4] Saint Josemaría, Homily *The Supernatural Aim of the Church*, May 28, 1972.

[5] Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 27.

[6] Pope Francis, Address to the plenary meeting of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, January 29, 2016.

[7] Saint Josemaría, Notes taken at a family gathering, date unknown (AGP, library, P01, August 1982, p. 88).

[8] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 740.

[9] Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, “What does the ‘Body of the Lord’ mean for

me?” in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 11, part C, XI, 4.

[10] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 105.

[11] *Acts* 2:3-4.

[12] Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, April 30, 1946, no. 70.

[13] Pope Francis, *Message for the 50th World Conference on Social Communications*, January 24, 2016.

[14] Saint John Paul II, Address to young people in Madrid, May 3, 2003.

[15] Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, October 24, 1965, no. 7.

[16] *Mt* 5:14.

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