

(Letter from the Prelate: April 2013)

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

The moments of great importance in the Church's life that we have been witnesses to are still very recent: the election of a new Roman Pontiff. As always happens when such events take place, we have experienced the action of the Paraclete and seen the truth of Benedict XVI's words at the beginning of his Petrine ministry: "the Church is alive—this is the wonderful experience of these days . . . And the Church is young. She holds within herself the future of the world and therefore shows each of us the way towards the future. The Church is alive and we are seeing it: we are experiencing the joy that the Risen Lord promised his followers."¹

United to the whole Church, all of us in the Work have welcomed with great joy the election of Pope Francis, who has brought with him a bracing gust of spirituality, an eagerness to improve. The feast of St. Joseph, the day on which the new Roman Pontiff solemnly inaugurated his ministry as supreme Pastor of the universal Church, has brought home to us with special force the truth that our Lord, his Blessed Mother and the Holy Patriarch are watching over the Church at every moment—that the Spouse of Christ never finds herself alone amid the ups and downs in the course of her existence.

"How does Joseph respond to his calling to be the protector of Mary, Jesus and the Church?" asked Pope Francis. "By being constantly attentive to God, open to the signs of God's presence and receptive to God's plans, and not simply to his own. This is what God asked of David . . . God does not want a house built by men, but faithfulness to his word, to his plan. It is God himself who builds the house, but from living stones sealed by his Spirit. Joseph is a 'protector' because he is able to hear God's voice and be guided by his will; and for this reason he is all the more sensitive to the persons entrusted to his safekeeping. He can look at things realistically, he is in touch with his surroundings, he can make truly wise decisions."² As I told you before the election, and later reiterated to you (following our Father's example in everything), we already love the new Pope with immense supernatural and human affection, while also striving—by abundant prayer and mortification—to support the first steps of his ministry, which are always important.

Yesterday Easter time began. The *alleluia* filled with a jubilation that rises from earth to heaven in all corners of the world, gives voice to the unbreakable faith of the Church in its Lord. Through his ignominious death on the Cross, Jesus received from God the Father, through the Holy Spirit, a new life—a glorified life in his Most Holy Humanity—as we profess each Sunday in one of the articles of the Creed. The same Jesus, *perfectus homo*, perfect man, who suffered death under Pontius Pilate and was buried, the same who *on the third day . . . rose again in fulfillment of the scriptures*,³ never to die again and as a pledge of our future resurrection and our hope of eternal life. Let us say then with the Church: *It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, at all times to acclaim you, O Lord, but in this time above all to laud you yet more gloriously, when Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. For he is the true Lamb who has taken*

¹ Benedict XVI, Homily at the Mass for the beginning of his Petrine ministry, April 24, 2005.

² Pope Francis, Homily at the Mass for the beginning of his Petrine ministry, March 19, 2013.

³ Roman Missal, Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

*away the sins of the world; by dying he has destroyed our death, and by rising, restored our life.*⁴

Let us try to go more deeply, with the Paraclete's help, into this great mystery of faith, upon which rests—like a building on its foundation—the whole Christian life. “The mystery of Christ's resurrection,” the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, “is a real event, with manifestations that were historically verified, as the New Testament bears witness.”⁵ St. Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth. *I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.*⁶

The totally exceptional character of Christ's resurrection is shown in the fact that his Most Holy Humanity, united once again in soul and body by the power of the Holy Spirit, is completely transfigured in the glory of God the Father. It is an historical fact testified to by fully credible witnesses; but at the same time and above all, it is a fundamental point of Christian faith. Our Lord, “in his risen body . . . passes from the state of death to another life beyond time and space. At Jesus' resurrection his body is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: he shares the divine life in his glorious state, so that St. Paul can say that Christ is ‘the man of heaven’ (cf. *1 Cor 15:35-50*)”⁷

Let us meditate on St. Josemaría's words in one of his homilies: “Christ is alive. Jesus is the Emmanuel: God with us. His resurrection shows us that God does not abandon his own. . . .

“Christ is alive in his Church. I tell you the truth: *it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you (Jn 16:7)*. That was what God planned: Jesus, dying on the cross, gave us the Spirit of truth and life. Christ stays in his Church, its sacraments, its liturgy, its preaching—in all that it does.

“In a special way Christ stays with us in the daily offering of the holy Eucharist. That is why the Mass is the center and source of Christian life. In each and every Mass the complete Christ, head and body, is present. *Per Ipsum et cum Ipso et in Ipso*. For Christ is the Way; he is the Mediator; in him we find everything. Outside of him our life is empty. In Jesus Christ, and taught by him, *we dare to say: Our Father*. We dare to call the Lord of heaven and earth our Father.

“The presence of the living Christ in the host is the guarantee, the source and the culmination of his presence in the world.”⁸

The risen Jesus is also the Lord of the world, the Lord of history: nothing happens unless he wants or permits it in view of God's saving plans. St. John presents him to us in all his glory in the Apocalypse: *in the midst of the lamp stands [I saw] one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast; his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters; in his right hand he*

⁴ Roman Missal, Preface I of Easter.

⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 639.

⁶ *1 Cor 15:3-5*.

⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 646.

⁸ St. Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 102.

*held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.*⁹

Our Lord's sovereignty over the world and all of history requires that we his disciples strive with all our strength to build up his kingdom on earth. This effort demands not only loving God with our whole heart and soul, but also loving each of our fellow men with an affective and effective charity, *in deed and in truth*,¹⁰ especially those who are most in need. Therefore it is easy to understand, writes St. Josemaría, "the impatience, anxiety, and uneasiness of people whose naturally Christian soul (cf. Tertullian, *Apology*, 17), stimulates them to fight the personal and social injustice which the human heart can create. So many centuries of men living side by side and still so much hate, so much destruction, so much fanaticism stored up in eyes that do not want to see and in hearts that do not want to love!"¹¹

As you know, this is one of the concerns that the new Pope has shown from the first moments of his pontificate. Prompted by the example and teachings of our Father, let us continue making an effort to bring the charity of Christ, spiritual and material concern for others, to the environment in which each of us works; doing so personally, but also seeking and urging the assistance of others who have a concern for the needy. Let us never forget that Opus Dei was born and found strength, by God's will, among the poor and sick of the most neglected neighborhoods of Madrid, and that our Founder dedicated himself to them with generosity and heroism, with a great expenditure of time, in the first years of the Work. In 1941 he wrote: "I don't need to remind you, because you are living it, that Opus Dei was born among the poor of Madrid, in the hospitals and the most wretched districts: and we continue attending to the poor, to children, and to the sick. This is a tradition that will never be interrupted in the Work."¹²

A few years later, St. Josemaría amplified this teaching with other very clear words which, despite the time that has gone by, are still very timely. "In these times of confusion," he wrote, "it is hard to know what is right, or center, or left in political and social matters. But if by left one understands attaining well-being for the poor, so that all can share the right to live with a minimum of comfort, to work, to be well cared for if sick, to have sufficient rest and relaxation, to have children and to educate them, to be taken care of when old, then I am more on the left than anyone. Naturally, within the social doctrine of the Church, and without compromises with Marxism or atheistic materialism; nor with anti-Christian class struggle, because in these things we cannot compromise."¹³

It especially saddened our Founder to see that a lack of love and charity towards the indigent was found also at times among Christians. "The good things of the earth, monopolized by a handful of people; the culture of the world, confined to cliques. And, on the outside, hunger for bread and education. Human lives—holy, because they come from God—treated as mere things, as statistics. I understand and share this impatience. It stirs me to look at Christ, who is continually inviting us to put his new commandment of love into practice.

⁹ Rev 1:13-16.

¹⁰ 1 Jn 3:18.

¹¹ St. Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 111.

¹² St. Josemaría, *Instruction*, December 8, 1941, no. 57.

¹³ St. Josemaría, *Instruction*, May-1935/ September 14, 1950, note 146.

“All the circumstances in which life places us bring a divine message, asking us to respond with love and service to others.”¹⁴

My daughters and sons, let us meditate on these words and make them resound in the ears of many people, so that the *new commandment* of charity may shine forth in the life of all men and women and be, as Jesus wanted, the distinctive sign of all his disciples.¹⁵ I would like us to take to heart the words of the Gospel, after the resurrection of Jesus: *gavisī sunt discipuli viso Domino*,¹⁶ the disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord. Let us also recall that the Master is always following us closely, and we have to discover him, to see him, in the extraordinary and ordinary circumstances of daily life, convinced of what St. Josemaría said: either we find him there or we will never find him. Therefore, with Christ’s triumph, with the certainty that he is counting on us, have we given a new impetus to our *gaudium cum pace*, to our joy filled with peace? Does it have supernatural and human content?

Throughout this month, together with the Church’s joy for Easter and for having once again a successor of Peter on earth, in our case there are new reasons for joy: especially the anniversaries of St. Josemaría’s First Communion and Confirmation on the 23rd. What a good opportunity to ask God through his intercession, in the upcoming weeks, to grant the Holy Spirit’s abundant light and strength, for Pope Francis, for the Holy Church, for all humanity! I won’t hide from you that I enjoy going over the history of Opus Dei, the “history of God’s mercies,” and I ask the Blessed Trinity that the same be true of each and every one of you: we don’t live on memories, but on the joy of seeing God’s hand in the steps of the Work, in the life of St. Josemaría.

Your Father,

+ Javier

Rome, April 1, 2013

¹⁴ St. Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 111.

¹⁵ Cf. *Jn* 13:34-35.

¹⁶ *Jn* 20:20