

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

On September 14th we will celebrate the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Among the lessons that we can always learn best by contemplating Jesus on Calvary, I suggest that we look now at one of the seven phrases that our Lord uttered from that height: "I thirst" (*Jn 19:28*).

Christ thirsts for souls, to redeem the world, to bring his word and love to all hearts. This should challenge each of us personally: do I have that same thirst? Do I share in the fire that burns in his heart? Am I consumed by zeal for souls wherever I am? Do I fearlessly strive to enkindle the people I meet, through my prayer and atonement, through my sincere friendship? We can recall St. Josemaría's insistence that our mission is to bring to all souls, in the middle of the world, the fire of our Lord that we harbor in our hearts: "Don't let your life be barren. Be useful. Make yourself felt. Shine forth with the torch of your faith and your love. With your apostolic life, wipe out the trail of filth and slime left by the corrupt sowers of hatred. And set aflame all the ways of the earth with the fire of Christ that you bear in your heart" (*The Way*, no. 1).

To shine forth, wipe out, set aflame. Phrases that will become an ever increasing reality in our lives to the extent that we contemplate the wounded heart of Jesus and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are set aflame by that same fire. I have reminded you on other occasions that *we don't do apostolate, we are apostles*. We Christians are *Christ passing by* along the paths of the earth. And despite our personal littleness, we want, with God's grace, to illumine intellects with clear doctrine, to erase the filth of sin with our own expiation, to enkindle hearts with love.

The Holy Cross speaks to all of us. Let us not be afraid of love, of giving life in abundance, even if it seems that we are losing our life, because that is not the case. Let us not be afraid to make Christ known through our lives, whom so many souls are seeking thirstily, often without knowing it. "We must bring into our life, to make them our own, the life and death of Christ. We must die through mortification and penance, so that Christ may live in us through Love. And then follow in the footsteps of Christ, with a zeal to co-redeem all mankind" (*The Way of the Cross*, XIV Station).

With the desire to bring Jesus everywhere, the sick are an especially effective help. United to the Cross of Christ together with Mary, as we will contemplate on the 15th, you who are sick uphold the world through your suffering and are a source of apostolic fruitfulness.

Let us ask our Lord, for everyone in the Work and in the Church, that the experience of suffering may enkindle in us ever more strongly the light of faith, the assurance of hope and the

fire of charity, and along with them, joy. Yes, also joy in the Cross: *lux in Cruce, requies in Cruce, gaudium in Cruce!*

As I have already told you, in the upcoming days there will be a new meeting of the experts who are studying the possible changes to the Statutes of the Work. Let us continue to accompany this work with our prayer.

Your Father blesses you with all his affection.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leonardo". The script is cursive and fluid.

Rome, September 11, 2024