

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

During this month, as is traditional in the Church, we especially keep in mind in our prayers the deceased. This naturally leads us to reflect on the reality of life after death. The aspects and nuances that each one considers here may vary, depending on our personal circumstances.

In any case, let us frequently renew our faith and hope in the glory our Lord is calling us to and gives us the means to reach. Many of you will remember these words of Saint Josemaría: “Let us think about what Heaven will be like. ‘No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him’ (1 Cor 2:9). Can you imagine what it will be like to arrive there, to be with God and to see all that beauty, that love that pours into our heart, that satisfies without satiating?” (*Instruction, May 1935, 14-IX-1950*, note 127). And on another occasion, he added: “I ask myself many times a day: what will it be like when all the beauty, all the goodness, all the infinite wonder of God is poured into this poor earthen vessel that I am, that we all are? And then I understand better what the Apostle said: no eye has seen, nor ear heard... It is worthwhile, my children, it is worthwhile” (Notes taken in a family gathering, 22 October 1960).

How good it is to foster the hope of Heaven! We can even sense the truth of St. Paul’s words: “For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (*Phil 1:21*) – which does not exclude the desire to live many years in this world serving God and all men and women (cf. *Phil: 1:22-24*).

Let us ask our Lord to increase our hope in eternal life, to lead us to “always look towards that definitive encounter; to always think that the Lord is near us, that death will never ever be victorious!” (Francis, Audience, 8 May 2024). This certainty that God awaits us in Heaven and accompanies us at all times sustains us on our earthly journey, even in the midst of trials: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (*Rom 15:13*).

Continue to pray for the work of adapting the Statutes, now quite far along. Also entrust to our Lord the twenty new deacons who will be ordained on the 23rd of this month.

I am very grateful for your congratulations on my last birthday. Since I have received so many of them, it is impossible for me to respond to each one, as happens to me on other occasions (anniversaries, special celebrations, etc.). Always consider yourselves answered by my prayer, which never fails when reading your letters and messages.

Your Father blesses you with all his affection.

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

Rome, November 8, 2024