

Rome, 5 April 2017

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

Holy Week is drawing near. Let us try to live the coming days intensely, so that we can always once again say with Saint Paul: **mihi vivere Christus est!** For to me to live is Christ! (see *Phil* 1:21). For us our Lord is not just an example. I recall here some words of the Pope: “I am always struck by something Pope Benedict said, that ‘the faith is not a theory, a philosophy, an idea; it is an encounter. An encounter with Jesus.’”<sup>1</sup> For us, to live is Christ. And if at times, because of weakness, exhaustion, or so many other circumstances in life, we lose sight of this reality, Jesus is always waiting for us, and even *goes out to meet those who do not seek Him.*<sup>2</sup>

Reading the Gospel with love helps us to grow in Jesus’ friendship, “on which everything depends”<sup>3</sup>: *seeking him, finding him, getting to know him, loving him.*<sup>4</sup> When contemplating the life of our Lord, God always surprises us with new lights. Although sometimes it might seem that our reading doesn’t leave a trace, afterwards there come to our lips or our thoughts Jesus’ words, his reactions and gestures, which shed light on the ordinary or not so ordinary situations in our life. We need (and it is a gift that I ask God to grant everyone) to “breathe” with the Gospel, with the Word of God. To attain this, we have the help of so many good commentaries on Sacred Scripture, the writings of Saint Josemaría, and also many other works: lives of Christ, writings of the Fathers, etc.

The recent General Congress insisted on the “centrality” of Jesus Christ. We are eager, in this *great catechesis* that is the Work, to see everything focus more clearly on his Person.<sup>5</sup> With this desire to put yourselves more deeply into the Gospel, when giving talks, classes, meditations, or when speaking about the Christian life with your friends, you will transmit more brightly the marvelous news of God’s love for each person. Saint Ambrose said: “Draw out the water of Christ . . . Fill your soul with this water so that your land is well watered; . . . and once filled, you will provide water to others.”<sup>6</sup> I ask our Lady to teach us to keep and ponder in our heart, as she did, all that refers to Jesus (see *Lk* 2:19), so that we tread and help others to tread—each person where God is calling them—along *paths of contemplation*.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, Homily, 28 November 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Saint Josemaría, Homily “A Priest Forever” (13 April 1973), in *In Love with the Church*, no. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Doubleday: 2007, Foreword, p. xii.

<sup>4</sup> Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 300.

<sup>5</sup> See Letter, 14 February 2017, no. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Saint Ambrose, *Epistola* 2, 4 (PL 16, 880).

Although the letter I wrote you with the conclusions of the General Congress is still recent, perhaps you missed having a letter from the Father last month. After considering it calmly and consulting the Central Advisory and General Council, it has seemed opportune to me to communicate with you by alternating letters with briefer messages, which will reach you through the Work's website, now that the Internet is another means for staying united.

During Easter week I will make a brief pastoral visit to Ireland: accompany me with your prayer. And don't forget to pray for the 31 faithful of the Prelature who will receive priestly ordination on the 29<sup>th</sup> of this month. Finally, I want to thank you for the closeness you have shown me with your letters and prayers. My prayers for all of you accompany you always.

Wishing you a happy Easter, your Father blesses you with all his affection,

Fernando