

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

Each year in the Work, on February 14, our constant gratitude to God grows even stronger as we recall the foundational dates in 1930 and 1943. This year we will celebrate it with special emphasis, since it is the 90th anniversary of when Saint Josemaria saw that God was also calling women to the mission that began on 2 October 1928.

The sanctity of women always plays a key role in the sanctity of those around them. That is how Saint Josemaria saw it, with the firm conviction that “women are called to bring to the family, to society and to the Church, characteristics which are their own and which they alone can give” (*Conversations*, no. 87).

If we turn to the Gospel, we are reminded that Jesus was “born of a woman” (*Gal* 4:4); this same woman, the Virgin Mary, out of her ardent zeal to serve others, advanced the hour of her Son’s public activity (cf. *Jn* 2:4-5); at the time of Jesus’ abandonment, it was the “daughters of Jerusalem” (*Lk* 23:28) who raised their voices in lamentation to accompany Him; women were standing at the foot of the Cross when our redemption was being carried out (cf. *Jn* 19:25); and a woman was the first witness to our Lord’s Resurrection (cf. *Jn* 20:16), to the Good News that afterwards would spread to every nation.

It brings me great joy, including when I consider the mission of my daughters in the Work, to consider the marvels of God which are brought about by the many fruits of feminine holiness that are found in their service to other persons.

Hence, on this day I invite you to consider especially the words of Saint Josemaria: “*Ut in gratiarum semper actione maneamus*. Let us constantly be giving thanks to our God with acts of thanksgiving that are an act of faith, that are an act of hope, that are an act of love” (*Letter*, 28 March 1973, no. 20).

Let us have a *grateful faith*, grateful for the divinity of our personal Christian vocation and the corresponding apostolic mission that our Lord entrusts to us, and especially when we see the depth and extension of the apostolic efforts of the women of Opus Dei, who are employing all their spiritual and human richness in a dialogue with the people of our day and age. Let us have a *hope-filled gratitude*, since we can face the future with serenity and optimism, despite all the

difficulties, because, over and above our limitations and mistakes, we can always rely on God's love for each of us. Finally, let us have a *grateful love*, since during these ninety years of apostolic work we have seen the mercy which God has shown to us.

I also suggest that, around the 14th of February, you find a personal way—perhaps a pilgrimage—to express your gratitude to God, having recourse to the motherly mediation of our Lady.

With my most affectionate blessing,

Your Father,

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

Rome, 5 February 2020