

Rome, 14 February 2018

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

I am writing to you briefly, still having fresh in my memory the days I spent in Brazil, where I was able once again to touch the vitality of the Church and the Work with my own hands. In my encounters with very many people, families, and so many young people, their joy and desire to work for God was plainly visible. Let us thank God, because all of it belongs to him.

This feeling of gratitude wells up especially today, the 75th anniversary of 14th February 1943, when St Josemaría received a new foundational light on the Work: the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross. On this anniversary I want to pass on to you, my priest sons who are incardinated in the Prelature or in different dioceses, the gratitude of everyone in the Work for your generous dedication to the service of souls. Fill yourselves with joy, once again, at being “one hundred per cent priests”, as our Father used to say.

Additionally, today’s date points to 1930, when Our Lord enabled St Josemaría to see that he also wanted women in his Work. My daughters: looking back, seeing the apostolic panorama that you have unfolded up until now and that will continue growing; also seeing the fruits of your zest and your projects within the totality of the Work, one finds oneself saying spontaneously: “How well God does things, making use of our littleness!”

Finally, Lent begins today. In his Message for Lent this year, the Pope warns us energetically against false prophets, against the many ephemeral promises of happiness that leave the soul empty and make it incapable of perceiving and passing on God’s joy. The Holy Father encourages us to “learn to look closely, beneath the surface, and to recognize what leaves a good and lasting mark on our hearts, because it comes from God and is truly for our benefit.” So as we begin this Lent, let’s think, “This activity, these surroundings: are they leading me to God or away from him?” And also, “How can I bring all of this to God?” Let us set out together along this path of conversion leading to Easter.

As usual at this time of year, I shall shortly be beginning my retreat, at the same time as the Holy Father does his. Don’t forget to pray for the Pope, and accompany me with your prayer too.

A very affectionate blessing from  
your Father

*Lemaudo*