

## Letter from the Prelate (June 2010)

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

The Eucharistic Sacrifice, to which Christ calls us each day, introduces us into the heart of the Paschal Mystery. Each time that we celebrate or attend Holy Mass, we participate in the supreme act of love that Christ carried out on the Cross, and to which his whole life was directed. But there are moments and circumstances in which the adoration and thanksgiving, the reparation and supplication that we raise up to God through Christ, in the Holy Mass, acquire a special significance.

Our joy and gratitude to God for such a great gift, which we need to renew each day, is strengthened by the liturgical celebrations of the solemnities that we have celebrated or will celebrate during these days, because they place us in intimate communion with various aspects of the mystery of Christ and communicate special graces to us.

The Acts of the Apostles tell us that, in the early Church, the Holy Spirit manifested himself at Pentecost as a mighty wind and as tongues of fire that came to rest above the heads of the Apostles, filling them with his gifts and granting them the peace that the Master himself had promised them: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.*[1] Through these signs of the coming of the Holy Spirit, our Lord also shows us the effects of the Paraclete's action in the souls of those who open themselves docilely to his grace.

In the mighty wind we discover the divine power capable of overcoming the most formidable obstacles, and also the fresh air that dissipates the toxic clouds that often poison the atmosphere. This symbol, explains Pope Benedict XVI, "makes one think of how precious it is to breathe clean air, physically with the lungs and spiritually with the heart, the healthy air of the Spirit who is love." [2] The tongues of fire speak to us of the burning Love with which he wants to enkindle the hearts of men and women. That flame "descended upon the assembled disciples; it was kindled in them and gave them the new ardor of God. Thus what Jesus had previously said was fulfilled: *I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!* (Lk 12:49). The Apostles, together with the various communities of the faithful, carried this divine flame to the far corners of the earth. In this way they opened a path for humanity, a luminous path, and they collaborated with God, who wants to renew the face of the earth with his fire." [3]

Let us thank our Lady for her constant intercession in making us more sensitive to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, as happened to the Apostles united around her in the Cenacle. I am thinking especially of the gifts she has obtained for us during the month of May, in which we have tried to honor her with true filial piety, and specifically the closeness to Jesus she invites us to foster.

In addition, this past Sunday, the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, has been a new call from heaven to direct our thoughts and hearts to where true joy is found: close to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the one God who fills the universe, who dwells through grace in our hearts and who wants to lead us to definitive communion in his own life in the glory of heaven. How did we pray

the *Trisagium Angelicum* during the days preceding the feast? Did we echo the angels in their constant praise of the Blessed Trinity? And now that the feast has come and gone, are we continuing in our efforts to stay close to each of the divine Persons, distinguishing them without separating them?

I would like to mention an anecdote to you. In the oratory of the Father, in the Roman College of the Holy Cross, on the marble frontal of the baldachin, the words *BENEDICTA SIT SANCTA TRINITAS ATQUE INDIVISA UNITAS* are engraved. St. Josemaría often came there when it was still under construction. He couldn't see very well at that point in his life and, even though he knew the inscription by heart, he would always ask, inviting us to pray: What is written there? May our entire life be transformed into praise for our triune God.

Now we are preparing for the Solemnities of Corpus Christi and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so closely united, not only in time, but because they commemorate two manifestations of God's immense love for mankind. "Love is revealed to us in the incarnation, the redemptive journey which Jesus Christ made on our earth, culminating in the supreme sacrifice of the cross. And on the cross it showed itself through a new sign: *One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water* (*Jn 19:34*). This water and blood of Jesus speak to us of a self-sacrifice brought to the last extreme: "It is finished" (*Jn 19:30*)—everything is achieved, for the sake of love."<sup>[4]</sup>

On the solemnity of the Sacred Heart, June 11, the Year for Priests will end. Let us continue praying and asking others to pray for priestly vocations, for the sanctity of priests and the entire Christian people. I ask our Lord that this forceful prayer, which we have tried to increase during the past months, will never cease in our souls; also in order to quiet those who attack the marvelous gift of the priesthood.

A few days ago I made a pilgrimage to Turin to pray before the Holy Shroud shown for the veneration of the faithful. It is very moving to realize how much suffering we cost our Lord. As John Paul II said, "the Shroud is a mirror of the Gospel. In fact, if we reflect on the sacred Linen, we realize the profound relationship that the image it presents has with what the Gospels tell of Jesus' passion and death, such that every sensitive person feels inwardly moved at beholding it."<sup>[5]</sup>

I went to venerate the Shroud accompanied by all of you—as I always do on my trips—to ask our Lord to enkindle our hearts with the fire of the Holy Spirit. As Benedict XVI said a few weeks ago, on returning from his stay in Turin: "this sacred Cloth can nourish and foster faith and reinvigorate Christian devotion because it spurs us to go to the Face of Christ, to the Body of the Crucified and Risen Christ, to contemplate the Paschal Mystery, the heart of the Christian message."<sup>[6]</sup>

To see God, to contemplate the face of Jesus Christ, to be eternally happy through the vision of the divine glory, is the human being's deepest desire, although millions of people are unaware of this aspiration. There comes to mind our Father's eagerness to contemplate Christ's face. He told us that this desire "is reasonable. People in love long to see each other. Lovers have eyes only for their beloved. Isn't this only natural? The human heart feels these demands. I would be lying if I

denied being deeply moved by the desire to contemplate Christ's face. *Vultum tuum, Domine, requiram* (Ps 26:8); Lord, I long to see your face. I like to close my eyes," he would tell us, especially in the last years of his earthly life, "and think about the moment that will come, whenever God wants, when I will be able to see him *not in a mirror dimly, but...face to face* (I Cor 13:12). Yes, my children: *my soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?* (Ps 42 [41]:3)."[7]

Let us too foster this aspiration, seeking Jesus in the Tabernacle—where he is truly present—and in our soul in grace. Let us try to find him also in the members of the Church, his Mystical Body, especially in the most disadvantaged: the sick, the poor, those who suffer persecution because of their religious convictions, those who are subject to many other kinds of injustice in so many parts of the world. We shouldn't be disinterested in anyone; we are all called to be members of Christ's Body, which rose and continues to work in history: "living members...each in accord with the role, that is, the task the Lord has wished to entrust to us,"[8] through incorporation into Him in baptism.

Our Christian identity is rooted in this sacrament. Our call to holiness and apostolate is made specific in knowing ourselves to be mediators in Christ Jesus for the salvation of the world. How clear are St. Josemaría's words in this regard! "An apostle—that is what a Christian is, when he knows that he has been grafted onto Christ, made one with Christ, in baptism. He has been given the capacity to carry on the battle in Christ's name, through confirmation. He has been called to serve God by his activity in the world, because of the common priesthood of the faithful, which makes him share in some way in the priesthood of Christ. This priesthood—though essentially distinct from the ministerial priesthood—gives him the capacity to take part in the worship of the Church and to help other men in their journey to God, with the witness of his word and his example, through his prayer and work of atonement."[9]

Let us reflect carefully on these considerations now that the Year for Priests is coming to a close, and try to draw out personal consequences. Some words of St. Josemaría from *The Forge* can help us: "Jesus, the Good Sower, takes each of us, his children, and holds us tight in his wounded hand, like wheat. He soaks us in his Blood. He purifies and cleanses us. He fills us with his 'wine'! And then he scatters us generously throughout the world, one by one, for wheat is not sown by the sackful, but grain by grain."[10]

In the first place, our Lord "soaks us in his Blood" through the sacraments, and thus "purifies and cleanses us": he leads us to holiness. But only if we want it, if we let the Paraclete work, for he is the Artist of our identification with Jesus.

We have to seek union with the Most Holy Humanity of our Lord in Penance and in the Eucharist. We need to assimilate his teachings, not only by reading Sacred Scripture and by our eagerness to acquire and improve our doctrinal formation, but by maintaining a sincere dialogue with Him in prayer: imploring that his word penetrate to the deepest corner of our poor self and saturate our feelings and desires. And we have to want Him to lead us: to follow in his footsteps, to learn from his virtues, to identify ourselves ever more closely with his way of feeling, of understanding and of loving.

Once the Holy Spirit carries out these operations in us—or better, while doing so—our Lord “scatters us throughout the world,” as the sower scatters the grains of wheat in the furrow, to produce fruit; we ourselves being the union between God and mankind, thanks to our *priestly soul*. The sacred ministers possess in addition the ministerial priesthood they received in the sacrament of Holy Orders, which enables them to act *in persona Christi Capitis*, so that Christ the Head of the Church may be present in the liturgical celebrations.

In Opus Dei, our Lord has given us a specific call, within the common Christian vocation, that impels us to serve with the spirit that St. Josemaría incarnated since 1928. On the foundation of the baptismal character, the specific grace of the calling to the Work spurs us always to assist Christ in the salvation of souls, but not because we are better than others. Jesus is the only Mediator between God and mankind,[11] but he wants us to help Him in that work.

First we have to join ourselves with deep piety to Christ’s Sacrifice in the Mass. Our entire life, through this linking to the Eucharist, is transformed into an act of adoration, of thanksgiving, and of reparation: it becomes a total self-giving of our person and our actions as instruments of Jesus Christ in the world. By transforming our day “into a Mass,” as our Father used to say, we are truly Eucharistic souls: men and women who strive to imitate the Divine Master in all their behavior.

Thus we can help everyone to receive the fruits of the Redemption; we become Christ’s instruments to teach others his doctrine, to bring them to the source of grace in the sacraments and lead them along paths of eternal life, doing so ourselves in our own daily life. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will accompany closely the footsteps of our Lord, and St. Josemaría’s aspiration will become a reality in our life: “We must give our life for others. That is the only way to live the life of Jesus Christ and to become one and the same with Him.”[12]

Another anniversary of our Father’s passage to heaven is drawing near. Let us go with faith to his intercession in the weeks still remaining before June 26th, so that, following faithfully his example and teaching, we too will learn to conform our lives to Christ’s, becoming one with Him.

On the day before the 26<sup>th</sup> we will recall the ordination of the first three priests of the Work, who have passed on to us a path of such great faithfulness. They were always engaged in “God’s concerns,” and therefore knew how to be completely docile to what our Father asked of them, in order to do Opus Dei faithfully in the service of the Church. People said of them, referring also to our Founder: he ordained them and now he is “killing” them with work. Let us learn from them, priests as well as lay people, how to never say “enough” before the demands of our priestly soul.

Continue being very closely united to my prayer and my intentions. I am depending especially on the sick—who are never lacking in the Work—and on those who are suffering for one reason or another. If they unite their sufferings to the Cross of Christ, joyfully offering their hardships and pains, they can become, in the midst of their weakness, firm pillars who sustain the others.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father

+ Javier

Rome, June 1, 2010

Footnotes:

1. *Jn 14:27*.
2. Benedict XVI, Homily on the Solemnity of Pentecost, May 31, 2009.
3. Benedict XVI, Homily on the Solemnity of Pentecost, May 23, 2010.
4. St. Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 162.
5. John Paul II, Speech at Turin, May 24, 1998.
6. Benedict XVI, Address at a General Audience, May 5, 2010.
7. St. Josemaría, Notes taken in a meditation, December 25, 1973.
8. Benedict XVI, Address at a General Audience, May 5, 2010.
9. St. Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 120.
10. St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 894.
11. Cf. *1 Tim 2:5*.
12. St. Josemaría, *The Way of the Cross*, Fourteenth Station.