

## (Letter from the Prelate: June 2011)

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

A few years ago, in a catechesis for children preparing to receive First Holy Communion, Benedict XVI explained what adoring God means. “Adoration,” he said, “is recognizing that Jesus is my Lord, that Jesus shows me the way to take, and that I will live well only if I know the road that Jesus points out and follow the path he shows me. Therefore, adoration means saying: ‘Jesus, I am yours. I will follow you in my life; I never want to lose this friendship, this communion with you.’ I could also say that adoration is essentially an embrace with Jesus in which I say to him: ‘I am yours, and I ask you, please stay with me always.’”<sup>1</sup>

In the simplicity of this response we see the fundamental meaning of the attitude that we, as creatures, owe to our Creator. I think it can also serve as the common thread for the feasts we will celebrate in the coming weeks: a spirit of adoration and gratitude to our Lord, for all the gifts that he has granted and is granting us.

Yesterday was the feast of the Visitation. In the words of St. Elizabeth to the Mother of God, who carried Christ in her most pure womb, we find a deep act of adoration for the incarnate Word. Some months later, Jesus received the homage of simple shepherds, and of learned men who came to Bethlehem to prostrate themselves before the King of the Jews. St. Matthew tells us that when they entered the place where the star came to rest, they found the Child in the arms of his Mother and, kneeling down, *they adored him*.<sup>2</sup>

Men who were great in the world knelt and adored that Child, because the interior light of faith had made them recognize God himself. In contrast, sin—especially mortal sin—is precisely the opposite: not wanting to recognize God as God, not wanting to kneel before him, trying—like Adam and Eve in the earthly Paradise—to be *like God, knowing good and evil*.<sup>3</sup> Our first parents aspired, in their pride, to a complete autonomy from God. Tempted by Satan, they did not want to recognize the supremacy of their Creator nor his fatherly love. This is the greatest misfortune of mankind, of the men and women of all times, as St. Paul recalls in the first lines of his letter to the Romans. For the Apostle, the guilt of those pagans was to *suppress the truth* by their wickedness,<sup>4</sup> failing to recognize God as the Lord and adore him, in spite of so many external signs. After seeing the truth of God in the marvels of creation, *they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened*.<sup>5</sup>

This tragedy is repeated in today’s society, at least in much of the world. I am not trying to exaggerate, nor am I a pessimist; on the contrary, this is a reality that we cannot fail to recognize and that has to encourage us to spread the joy of the Truth. I insist: the sense of adoration has been lost in large sectors of the world, and consistent Christians, with supernatural and human optimism, are called to restore this attitude to those around us, the only attitude that accords with our true condition as creatures. If people fail to adore God, they will adore themselves in the

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, catechetical gathering with First Holy Communion children, October, 15, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> *Mt* 2:11.

<sup>3</sup> *Gen* 3:5.

<sup>4</sup> Cf *Rom* 1:18

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

various ways the history of mankind has shown: power, pleasure, riches, science, beauty.... In doing so, they fail to realize that all of these, detached from their foundation in God, will fade away: “Without the Creator the creature disappears,”<sup>6</sup> the Second Vatican Council said succinctly. Therefore, of primary importance in the new evangelization is helping those alongside us to rediscover the need and meaning of adoration. The upcoming solemnities of the Ascension, Pentecost and Corpus Christi are an invitation “to rediscover the fruitfulness of Eucharistic adoration . . . a prerequisite for bearing much fruit (cf. *Jn* 15: 5). Thus we avoid the reduction of our apostolic action to sterile activism and instead ensure that it bears witness to God’s love.”<sup>7</sup>

“May your prayer always be a real and sincere act of adoration of God,”<sup>8</sup> our Father wrote in *The Forge*. How many moments for adoration we will find throughout the day, if we are truly awake! From the offering of our work in the morning to the examination at night, our entire day can and should be turned into prayer, into homage to our God.

The Holy Mass is, above all, an act of adoration to the Most Holy Trinity, through Jesus Christ and in union with him. In the *Gloria* we give thanks to God *for his great glory*: not for the gifts he grants us, but simply because he is God, because he exists, because he is great. In the *Sanctus*, in chorus with the angels and the blessed in heaven, we proclaim, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts*, which is one of the highest forms of adoring God. On various occasions throughout the day, we direct ourselves to the Trinity praying: *glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit*. And the many genuflections before the Tabernacle—aware of what we are doing, accompanied by an interior act of our heart, as St. Josemaría recommended—are also a marvelous act of adoration.

Each of you, my daughters and sons, has to find a very personal way to be actively in God’s presence throughout the hours of the day, and to show him filial homage. Sometimes this will be an aspiration, perhaps taken from the Psalms or one of the other inspired books, especially the Gospels; at other times, it will be one of the phrases that our holy Founder taught us when—to spur us to be spontaneous in our dealings with God—he opened his heart to us a bit, telling us that we personally have to make an effort to carry on an intimate conversation with God. “Each of you can say what you like. An aspiration is just that: a dart, an affectionate ‘compliment’ as they say where I come from, loving words of praise. If one is in love, you don’t need anyone to teach you what phrases to use: the right words will come at each moment to your heart and your lips.”<sup>9</sup>

This year, in many places the solemnity of Corpus Christi is celebrated on June 26th, the liturgical feast of St. Josemaría. This coincidence fills me with joy, for our Father was madly in love with the Holy Eucharist. I recommend that on that day (or on the previous Thursday in places where Corpus Christi is celebrated on the 23<sup>rd</sup>), and especially if you are able to take part in the Eucharistic procession, that you live this great celebration closely united to our Founder’s way of doing so, who now in heaven permanently adores the Most Holy Humanity of Jesus.

Pope Benedict XVI highlighted one of the key elements of the Eucharistic procession: “kneeling in adoration before the Lord. Adoring the God of Jesus Christ, who out of love made

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<sup>6</sup> Vatican II, Pastoral Const. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 36.

<sup>7</sup> Benedict XVI, Address to the Ecclesial Assembly of the Diocese of Rome, June 15, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 263.

<sup>9</sup> St. Josemaría, Notes taken in a family gathering, March 26, 1972.

himself broken bread, is the most effective and radical remedy against the idolatry of the past and of the present. Kneeling before the Eucharist is a profession of freedom: those who bow to Jesus cannot and must not prostrate themselves before any earthly authority, however powerful. We Christians kneel only before God or before the Most Blessed Sacrament because we know and believe that the one true God is present in it, the God who created the world and so loved it that he gave his Only Begotten Son (cf. *Jn* 3:16).”<sup>10</sup>

“How well we understand the song that Christians of all times have unceasingly sung to the sacred host: ‘Sing, my tongue, the mystery of the glorious body and of the precious blood, that the king of all nations, born of the generous womb of the Virgin, has offered for the redemption of the world’ (Hymn *Pange Lingua*). We must adore devoutly this God of ours, hidden in the Eucharist (cf. Hymn *Adoro te devote*)—it is Jesus himself, born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered and gave his life in the sacrifice of the Cross; Jesus, from whose side, pierced by a lance, flowed water and blood (cf. Hymn *Ave Verum*).”<sup>11</sup>

When we kneel before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament (hidden in the tabernacle or exposed on the altar), we are adoring the Victim of the Sacrifice of Calvary, which is made present at Mass. No opposition at all exists between worship of the Eucharist within and outside of Mass. Rather, there is an intimate harmony and confluence. “In the Eucharist, the Son of God comes to meet us and desires to become one with us; Eucharistic adoration is simply the natural consequence of the Eucharistic celebration, which is itself the Church’s supreme act of adoration . . . The act of adoration outside Mass prolongs and intensifies all that takes place during the liturgical celebration itself.”<sup>12</sup>

Let us put even greater care, then, into our Eucharistic devotion in these next weeks. Let us place our whole heart into listening to the Word of God, meditating on Sacred Scripture, the liturgical songs, the prayers that each of us recites before the Most Blessed Sacrament. And let us strive to fill the moments of silence, which the liturgy recommends, with an authentic interior dialogue with Christ in the Sacred Host, heart to Heart. What a good moment to follow our Founder’s recommendation: “Put more love into the genuflection with which you greet our Lord on entering and leaving the Center. And even though you don’t say anything out loud, go to him in your heart: Jesus, I believe in you, I love you; forgive all your children if we haven’t been faithful. Whatever occurs to you at that moment, with spontaneity. I’m not going to dictate the words to you, as though you were three-year-old children. And if you haven’t done so up till now, you will remember to do so in the future.

“I have spoken to you more than once about personal aspirations, which each of us should try to make up for ourselves. A word of praise, a cry of admiration, of joy, of affection, of enthusiasm, of love!—and that escapes from our soul as though it were an arrow . . . It’s always a matter of affection, of self-giving.”<sup>13</sup>

I won’t hide from you that there frequently comes to mind what I heard St. Josemaría say: “How much glory I’ve stolen from God!” For he thought that he could have been more zealous in his unconditional service to the Most Holy Trinity. Are we nourishing this eagerness to give all

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<sup>10</sup> Benedict XVI, Homily on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, May 22, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> St. Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 84.

<sup>12</sup> Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhort. *Sacramentum Caritatis*, February 22, 2007, no. 66.

<sup>13</sup> St. Josemaría, *Notes taken during a family gathering*, June 1, 1972.

the glory to God: *Deo omnis gloria?* Do we foster a right intention in all our actions? Do we offer God the ordinary and the extraordinary?

On June 25th we will commemorate a new anniversary of the first priestly ordination in Opus Dei. The three sons of our Father who received Holy Orders in 1944—don Álvaro, don José María, don José Luis—had no hesitation in setting aside a very promising present and future in their civil profession, to follow God’s voice, who called them to the priesthood through our Founder. It wasn’t any “sacrifice” for them, in the usual meaning of this term. Rather, with promptness and joy, they responded to this new divine call, knowing that it was *another way* of serving God, the Church and souls, with the same dedication as the other faithful of the Work.

Let us ask God, through the intercession of our Father and of those three first priests, that this spirit will be preserved intact in the Prelature of Opus Dei, so that we may have the priests needed for the development of the apostolic work; and also so that each of us may feel strongly the “holy weight” of our priestly soul. Let us also pray that all over the world, in the whole Church, many young people and also others who are older may follow the path of the priesthood, docile to the voice of the Good Shepherd.

Continue praying for all my intentions. Pray for the Pope’s trip to Croatia in the first days of this month. May we make of our entire life a petition to God to help us fulfill his most holy Will, with a complete self-giving, a constant generosity, convinced that, whenever two or more are united in prayer, our Father God will not fail to hear us.<sup>14</sup>

I also would like, in each letter, to remind you of the various anniversaries of the history of the Work, of our personal history, for we have to remember those words: “When God our Lord plans a work for the good of mankind, he first considers the persons he wants to use as his instruments...and he grants them the necessary graces.”<sup>15</sup>

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father,

+ Javier

Rome, June 1, 2011

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Mt* 18:19.

<sup>15</sup> St. Josemaría, *Instruction*, March 19, 1934, no. 48.