

proclamation of the Gospel, St. Josemaría and his teachings remind us that the power of God has not diminished,¹⁰² “for the Lord has opened up all the divine paths of the earth.”¹⁰³

To close, I would like to recall, in the words of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, that “Opus Dei has never tried to present itself as the final or most perfect development in the history of spirituality. For a person who lives by faith, it is clear that the fullness of time has

already occurred in Christ and that all the spiritualities that maintain their fidelity to the Church and their respective foundational gift are up to date. At times, an ‘historicist’ view of the life of the Church might be inclined to look down on the old and exaggerate the new, or the reverse, for no other reason than mere chronology. Opus Dei loves and venerates all institutions—old and new—that work for Christ in filial adhesion to the Church’s magisterium.”¹⁰⁴

Pastoral Letters

Rome

April 3, 2005

On the death of Pope John Paul II

May Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!

My dear children: We have been preparing ourselves for the sad moment of the death of our beloved Pope John Paul II, who — more frequently in these last years and months — has offered to the whole world the serene and joyful witness of his intimate union with God, through suffering.

Since last Wednesday, when the Pope’s health suddenly worsened, the

entire Church has gathered around its supreme Shepherd, praying with faith in every corner of the globe. Once more the scene narrated in the Acts of the Apostles, when King Herod had the apostle Peter imprisoned, intending to put him to death, has become a reality: earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church (*Acts* 12:5).

This prayer for the Successor of St. Peter, aside from having been a source of strength for the Pope in recent days, has united us more firmly to Christ and to his beloved Spouse, the Church. It has helped Catholics to discover once more that we form part of the great family of God’s children, who have a common Father on earth. We have also felt the closeness of many other Chris-

102. Cf. *Is* 59:1.

103. St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Friends of God*, no. 314.

104. Alvaro del Portillo, “El Camino del Opus Dei,” in idem, *Rendere amabile la verità*, Liberia Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 1995, pp. 256-257.

tians and of countless men and women of good will, who have united themselves to our prayer. Let us give thanks to God for all these gifts, and for such a good and faithful servant, Pope John Paul II!

In the Work, many reasons for thanksgiving join us to John Paul II. Our Father taught us to love the Pope ardently, whoever he might be, for the simple and sublime reason that he is the Vicar of Christ, his visible representative on earth. But our veneration becomes even more pressing on considering how, during these years of his ministry as supreme Shepherd, he has helped Catholics to fulfill our filial duty of faithful adhesion, by the example of his intense spiritual life (one could almost touch it!), his joyful service to souls, his charity towards all men and women, and also his paternal demands. And he has raised the Work to a Prelature, so that we carry out Opus Dei — this little “portion” of the Church — as God wants.

We know the enormous spiritual and moral prestige that the Holy Father had throughout the whole world, but during the past few days — also on seeing the extensive coverage that the means of communication have dedicated to him — I think that everyone, including non-Catholics, have touched the truth that *ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia*: where Peter is, there the Church is found. And now, after so many years of generous dedication to God, the depth and effectiveness of his ministry as Supreme Shepherd has become even more apparent.

We are filled with the certainty that the Blessed Trinity has opened wide the gate of heaven to him, as a reward for his constant zeal for souls, his persevering invitation to all men and women to open the doors of their souls to Christ. At the same time, with profound and serene gratitude, let us offer suffrages for the eternal rest of his soul. In addition to those that Saint Josemaria established in Opus Dei for moments such as these, I urge you to be generous in offering suffrages for John Paul II. Have the conviction that these prayers (we are accustomed to seeing this) are “round trip” petitions: they rise up to heaven and God returns them to earth as an abundant torrent of graces.

My daughters and sons: John Paul II, together with our Lord, continues to invite us: Rise, let us be on our way! He is asking us to take up with determination, day after day, the path of our Christian life. *Duc in altum!* (Lk 5:4), he is reminding each of us. All Catholics, as faithful children of the Church, have to launch out into the deep in the great ocean of the world, to carry out — without mediocrity, with full and wholehearted dedication — the mission to co-redeem that Christ has entrusted to us.

When the Conclave of Cardinals, united under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, chooses Peter’s new Successor, we will hear the announcement, furrow open and well-prepared through the abundant prayer and mortification of all Christians. We already love him with all our soul, whoever he might be. And as our Father

told us on similar occasions, we offer everything for him and his intentions — even our breathing!

During these days of *sede vacante*, perhaps the aspiration that our Founder suggests in *Furrow* can assist us: I thought the comment on loyalty you had written to me was very appropriate...: “I carry with me every day in my heart, in my mind and on my lips, an aspiration: Rome!” (no. 344).

With all my affection I bless you.

Your Father,
✠ Javier

Rome, April 3, 2005.

Rome April 10, 2005

On the occasion of the Conclave

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

I feel the need to write you once again, just a week after my last letter, because of the events we have witnessed during these days, which are a grace from God for his Church. Together with the other shepherds of the People of God, I ask that all of us may deeply assimilate the marvelous unity of the Catholic Church that has been so clearly seen in the spontaneous manifestations of prayer and filiation on the death of John Paul II. I ask God that the experiences of these days

not be just passing sensations, but that they remain in our souls and bring about a conversion, an eagerness to serve God and others, renewed resolutions of generous Christian conduct, of faithful love.

The death of John Paul II has been a new catechesis. The Pope began his fruitful pontificate with an encyclical on Our Lord Jesus Christ, Redeemer of Man. And he ended it, even after the physical loss of the use of his voice, with the same eloquent teaching. Christ is our Savior; whoever follows Christ loves life and does not fear sickness or death, because the dignity of God’s children extends from the beginning to the end of our earthly existence.

A page in the history of the Church and the world has just closed, marked by the singular figure of the one who during this period has been the Father and Supreme Shepherd of the People of God. Our Lord wanted us to be witnesses of these moments, during which we received, I repeat, a grace and a responsibility: that of continuing to proclaim Jesus Christ in accord with the example of Peter’s successor. With the election of the next Pope, in the conclave that begins on the 18th, a new chapter in the firm continuity of the Church’s history will begin. All of us Catholics can participate actively in this event, by uniting ourselves through our prayer to the cardinals and to the whole Church.

During these days I have frequently recalled the two conclaves that I experienced in Rome together with our