

ceived me as Prelate of Opus Dei. I am moved now as I remember his simplicity and availability, his warm welcome, his capacity for listening, and his keen interest in news of the Prelature's apostolic expansion. I experienced his attentiveness—that of a true university professor—when one spoke to him about intellectual-type projects, but equally, about works of service to the terminally sick, or people in other kinds of difficulties.

As can be seen in his filmed audiences, the Pope did not hesitate to take one of your hands between his own in a fatherly clasp when you were speaking to him, transmitting encouragement, love and support, attentively and patiently. He really was a father, who rejoiced intensely at the evangelization being done by Christians all over the world.

Some other words of Christ come spontaneously to my mind: “Now you are sad,” says Jesus as he comforts those whom he is about to leave, but, he prophesies, “your hearts will rejoice, and no-one will take your joy from you” (*Jn* 16:22). Following the invitation issued by Benedict XVI in his February 17 Angelus address, we are already praying for the next Pope. Do we feel like orphans? No! The Holy Spirit is acting in his Church right now. Another Peter will come, shouldering his nets, a new Bishop of Rome and a new Father for the family of God's children. And to

Pope Benedict XVI, who is about to pass on the helm of the boat of St. Peter to his successor, we say from the bottom of our hearts: “Thank you, Holy Father! Forgive us for the times we have ignored your calls as Good Shepherd! We beg you not to stop helping the whole People of God with the fruitfulness of your thought and prayers!”

Words on the Occasion of the election of Pope Francis (March 13, 2013)

This is a moment of great joy for Catholics all over the world. Pope Francis is the 265th successor of Peter. From the moment the white smoke was first seen we have welcomed him with great thanks. And now, following the example of Benedict XVI, we express to him our unconditional reverence and obedience. And also our affection and prayer, continuing the prayers that we shared with the Pope during his first appearance on the balcony of the Hall of Blessings in Saint Peter's Basilica.

In this moment filled with emotion, when the Church's universality is vividly sensed, I reaffirm to the new Roman Pontiff complete adhesion to his person

and ministry, with the certainty that I am expressing the sentiments of the faithful, both priests and laity, of the Prelature of Opus Dei. We all entrust ourselves to the prayers of His Holiness, in order to contribute effectively, with joyful availability, to the work of evangelization that the Pope has mentioned in his first greeting to the Church.

During these weeks of serene waiting, much has been said about the burden that weighs on the shoulders of the Holy Father. But let us not forget that the Pope relies on God's help, on the assistance of the Holy Spirit and the affection and prayers of all Catholics, and of millions of other men and women of good will.

As Saint Josemaría Escrivá always advised, I ask our Lord today very especially that all of us Catholics may share "one will, one heart, one spirit, so that *omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam*—so that we may all go to Jesus, closely united to the Pope, through Mary" (*The Forge*, 647).

✠ Javier Echevarría
Prelate of Opus Dei

Interview granted to *La Razon*, Spain (March 24, 2013)

How did you receive the news that we had a new Pope? What sensations went through your heart at that moment?

Great joy. As Catholics, we need to have a common father on earth, the vicar of Christ in the universal Church. When we saw the white smoke I knelt down and prayed for him, without yet even knowing who he was. I renewed my inner desire to be a good son to the Roman Pontiff.

When the newly-elected Pope Francis spoke from the Balcony of Blessings, he mentioned all people of good will. And I thought about how, as well as Catholics, the Pope carries the burden of the joys and sorrows of all mankind. So, as well as joy, I also felt an intense desire for all of us to pray for the successor of St. Peter, and I experienced a filial ambition to invite people to love the Roman Pontiff.

Of the things he has been saying during these first days of his pontificate, what do you recall? What struck you, what attracted your attention?

"Christ is the center," he told the journalists in the audience of March 16. It reminded me of what St. Josemaría often used to say: "It is Christ we have to talk about, not ourselves." That points us straight