

Meditation of the Prelate on the 90th Anniversary of 14 February 1930

We begin our prayer by continuing our thanksgiving. *Gratias tibi Deus, gratias tibi*. We give thanks to God on this 90th anniversary.

On that 14th of February, our Father [Saint Josemaria] received that light in his soul, that impulse to complete the Work that God had already foreseen from all eternity, with the women's section. We know very well that, at the beginning, our Father thought that the Work was going to be only for men, because that was how he had understood it. But Our Lord from the beginning saw it as for everyone. And our Father immediately got to work, wanting God's will to be done, putting the foundations in place, with great effort and many difficulties, of what we already see carried out today throughout the world.

We give thanks to God. We also thank our Blessed Mother through whom all graces come. And we thank our Father, as we pray beside his mortal remains, for his faithfulness and self-giving. Let us also make an act of thanksgiving for each and every one of our brothers and sisters, and for the whole Work. Each of us also gives thanks for our own vocation, but today especially the women and also the priests, who are also celebrating an anniversary. But especially the women, because of the importance of this anniversary. You need to give thanks (we all do) because on that 14 February 1930 each of you was in the mind of God, part of his plans, from all eternity.

This date is very dear to us. It's not something of the past or merely a historical event, but rather a constant influence and presence in our lives, a constant reason to give thanks. We thank Our Lord for what has already been accomplished in the Work. As our Father said to our sisters so many years ago (and he has even more reason to repeat it now from heaven, because the Work is much more developed now): "Join me in thanking God for having wanted the women's section of Opus Dei, which works so wonderfully and with such a deep Christian spirit of service in many countries around the world."

This is already a reality today, and so we give thanks now, Lord, in our prayer, as we think of our sisters on all the continents and in so many countries and cities, with so many apostolic endeavors. We thank you for all that work, all that good being done, all that apostolic fruit, all that happiness that you transmit to so many people. We thank you because everything came and comes from your Will, from your Love for us.

Gratias tibi Deus, gratias tibi. We have already considered these words of our Father, in a letter written in 1973, insisting on the need to be very grateful to God. "*Ut in gratiarum semper actione maneamus*. Let us constantly be giving thanks to our God" (Letter, 28 March 1973, no. 20). Today we are going to try to make this a reality: a continuous act of thanksgiving to our God. "Acts of thanksgiving that are an act of faith, an act of hope, an act of love" (*Ibid.*).

An act of faith that the Work, as our Father wrote, “comes to fulfil the Will of God. Therefore have the firm conviction that heaven is determined to see it carried out” (*Instruction*, 19 March 1934). We need this conviction, and we want you, Lord, to instill it more strongly in our souls today: the conviction – the certainty – that You are committed to making the Work a reality in the whole world and in each one of us: in our souls, in our lives, in our work, our family life, and our rest. May we truly be *Opus Dei*, with the certainty and faith that You are determined to see it carried out, no matter how many difficulties may arise, no matter how great our own personal weaknesses may be. You, Lord, are determined that the Work will be carried out in my soul and in the souls of so many people throughout the world. Give us this conviction, Lord, especially when we find ourselves with more difficulties, so that we may have faith that the Work is yours, that it is You who do it with our hands and our work, with our weakness and our strengths: with the strength that You give us.

Today we join in the thanksgiving of thousands and thousands of our sisters and brothers, and so many other people who know and appreciate the Work throughout the world. As our Father said on Holy Thursday in 1975, directing himself to Our Lord: “They are thanking You all over Europe, and in parts of Asia and Africa, and all over the Americas and in Oceania. Everywhere they are giving You thanks” (*Meditation*, 28 March 1975).

We unite ourselves to the thanksgiving of the whole world, just as the whole world will join us or is already joining us here in our thanksgiving by our Father’s side now. We join in this thanksgiving thinking of the Work in so many places, in so many people, because all of this is also our concern.

With deep conviction, with faith. The Gospel of the Mass today has a scene from the life of Our Lord and Our Lady that we meditate on every day in the mysteries of the Rosary. “Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it” (*Lk* 2:41-43).

We know very well how our Lady and Saint Joseph saw it as completely normal that, at that moment in the journey, our Lord would not be with them: he would be with his friends or with other families. Then three days go by – three days of anguish, without understanding what had happened, with fear and suffering – and when they find Jesus, they tell him: “Why have you done this to us?” They don’t understand it. The Lord Jesus is so peaceful there in the temple, talking and responding to and asking questions. “Why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.” And Our Lord’s response is even more surprising: “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

“But they did not understand what he said to them.” Our Lady and Saint Joseph did not understand God’s plans, because humanly speaking they were incomprehensible. Lord, sometimes we do not understand your plans either: we do not understand why circumstances can

become complicated. Sometimes, we do not even understand simple things, but we need to have the conviction that God's will, God's love, always accompanies us.

This faith of ours must be at the same time both light and darkness: a light-filled darkness. When we do not understand something, let us remember Mary, Our Mother. Mother, you had an immense faith that was proportional to your fullness of grace, and even so you did not understand. Yet, as the Gospel concludes, you kept all these things in your heart, pondering them. May all of this help us to contemplate our Lord: not mulling over whether or not we have understood something, but contemplating his Love for us, whatever the circumstances may be.

We thank you, Lord, for the faith, for the deep conviction that Heaven is committed to seeing the Work carried out in the world, and in my life, my work, my rest, and in all my circumstances.

This is how we must see our work, including the most ordinary and apparently small jobs that can actually be very great with the love we put into them. We can see that with this work, we are always contributing to a greater panorama, to this great mission.

Lord, we ask through the intercession of our Father that you also give us a strong, firm hope. May we realize that nothing we do for the Work is useless: everything is effective, and not just in the small things of our immediate work, but rather for something much greater. Our Father wanted this phrase of Saint Paul engraved on the entrance of a door here in Villa Tevere: *Semper scientes quod labor vester non est inanis in Domino (I Cor 15:58)*. We must always be convinced that our work is never useless before God: it is always effective and always useful.

An act of thanksgiving that is a personal act of hope in our own lives, despite our limitations and our personal mistakes. This hope should also lead us to joy and serenity: to peace, to living *spe gaudentes (Rom 12:12)*, joyful with hope, despite our difficulties and limitations.

Referring specifically to the founding of the women's section and the gratitude that we should have especially on this day, our Father said to his daughters: "The best way to be grateful is to be happy, calm, serene, balanced; praying, working, smiling, and being grateful that in the Work we are never alone."

To be grateful with hope is to be happy. When we get nervous about something, we have to recover our peace. And we recover it by going to Our Lord, thinking about God's will for us and His presence in us. Being grateful that in the Work we are never alone, that we are always in this marvelous reality of the communion of saints. Just as we are helping to bring the Work forward everywhere, with our work, our prayer, and our whole life, on every continent, in every city, all over the world; so all those cities and people are supporting us. More importantly, we are never alone because God is with us: *Si Deus nobiscum quis contra nos? (Rom 8:31)*.

A faithful, sure hope: *Adauge nobis fidem et spem*. Lord, we want what Saint Paul says in the Epistle to the Romans to become a reality in our lives: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in faith, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit"

(Rom 15:13). We ask for the same thing now. May the God of hope (because it is God who gives us hope) fill us with all joy and peace in faith, in this faith filled with joy, in this hope filled with joy, that the Work comes from God. And that we can be sure of victory, despite the defeats we may have personally.

We understand the first reading of today's Mass, which is from the Old Testament, as referring to our Lady as the Mother of holy hope: *spes nostra*. How often we say to her: *Santa Maria spes nostra*, Holy Mary, our hope! Because all our assurance in God's help also comes to us through our Lady. She is our hope, a holy hope: Mother of holy hope.

Hope for each one of us to be saints, in spite of the difficulties, and a hope for the world, an apostolic hope. With a realistic vision of the world's difficulties, which always seems to be moving farther away from God. Our Mother, give us a hope that leads us to work with joy, knowing that God does not lose battles even if it seems that we lose them.

An act of thanksgiving that is an act of love, a grateful love.

In the first reading, we will hear the words *Mater Pulchrae Dilectionis*. This is the liturgical feast that we celebrate today: "Our Lady, Mother of Fair Love." A beautiful love that can coexist with suffering. The old man Simeon, when he took the Child Jesus in his arms in the Temple, told Our Lady that a sword would pierce her soul. Already in today's Gospel, we see that suffering and anguish: "We have been looking for you with great anxiety." Later, we will see Mary at the foot of the cross.

This beautiful love hinges on faith. And this is the love that we want to receive: God's love and the love of Our Lady. We want our correspondence to be a beautiful love, a love that also arises in our soul when we experience that we lack it, and we ask Our Lord: *Adauge nobis fidem, spem et caritatem*. With the joy of our vocation, the joy of God's will for each one of us, which you remember today especially, with all your sisters throughout the world. We are also grateful thinking of the thousands and thousands of women of Opus Dei who are in heaven, having reached the goal.

When our Lord asked Saint Peter, "Simon, do you love me?", Peter answers: *Domine, tu omnia nosti, tu scis quia amo te*. "Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you" (Jn 21:17). We want to tell Our Lord this now, also as an expression of thanksgiving, a thanksgiving that has to be an act of love. Let us tell Him: Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you. Putting into these words (although sometimes they may seem half-hearted to us) all our heart, all our sincerity. We thank you Lord by loving You and loving everything You want for us.

Help us, Lord, to make these words, "you know that I love you," a firmer truth in our lives. May we also know how to love You ever more effectively in others. *Sicut tu dilexisti nos*: as You have loved us (cf. Jn 13:34). Our Lord has loved all of us by giving his life for us. We, Lord, want this thanksgiving today to be very sincere and deep: may it truly be an act of faith, an act of

hope, an act of love. May it be truly an act of love for others through fraternity and apostolic zeal.

Our Father's wonderful words, which are also a reality, that we are never alone must also give us the joy and responsibility of realizing that we truly have the Work in our hands. We have to be truly concerned about the others, to see and take care of them, which is to take care of the Work. To love others is to love Our Lord. May we also see this act of love that is gratitude, as our Father says, in the great perspective of giving ourselves to others. We ask You now in our prayer, Lord, to help us so that our gratitude may grow in the love that our Father asks from us. We need your help to grow in service, in understanding, in giving ourselves to others. May this "loving You as You have loved us" be made true by giving our lives for others.

How can we grow? Every day we are trying to grow in faith, hope, and love, by asking our Lord for help. Another great part of our joyful struggle is to begin again, as our Father taught us: our whole life should be a constant beginning and beginning again. Cheerfully rectifying brings with it the joy of returning, returning to the arms of our Mother and of our Father God.

All this effort to begin again often means asking Our Lord for help, when we realize that deep down we lack the conviction that we are doing God's will in this task or job; when we lack hope because we have become a bit discouraged; when we lack love because we have become angry or irritated. This is the moment not to give in to discouragement, but to return with joy saying: *adauge nobis fidem, spem, caritatem*. With thanksgiving, with a petition that is an act of faith, of hope and of love, imbued with joy.

And for this, we need to be always closely united to Our Lady, because all Our Lord's help and grace comes to us through her motherly mediation. Every day in our personal lives and in the whole Work, we want to make what our Father said, filled with thanksgiving, to be ever more true: we have always been, like Jesus, "holding tight" to his Mother Mary, the Mother of God, who has been the Mother of Opus Dei, the Queen of Opus Dei, our beautiful love.

As we recall these 90 years, we are going to give ardent thanks to Our Lord through Our Lady. Holding tightly to the Mother of God as children, we have not lacked her smile in difficult moments either. Mother, may we also see your smile in our difficult moments, usually in little things. And if we ever experience greater difficulties, may we and all our sisters throughout the world feel your presence. May we not lack the conviction of your smile, because you are truly the Mother of God, our Mother, our Queen, our beautiful love.