

## Letter from the Prelate (8 June 2018)

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

The upcoming Synod of Bishops on young people and vocational discernment moves me, with these lines, to invite you to renew your dedication to the work of Saint Raphael. As Saint Josemaria used to say, for all of us this apostolic work should be “the apple of our eye,” since the Christian formation of young people is and always will be an apostolic priority in the Church and therefore in the Work.

“*Ite et vos in vineam meam*. You go into the vineyard too.” Our Father used these words of Jesus, from the parable about the workers in the vineyard (cf. *Mt* 20:4), as the heading for the *Instruction for the Work of Saint Raphael*. We realize that they are also addressed to us, since we know that we have been sent to work in the vineyard that our Lord entrusted to our Father and is now in the hands of every one of his daughters and sons.

The immediate goal of this apostolic work is to form the greatest possible number of young people, so that with personal freedom and responsibility, and sharing in the spirit of the Work, they may be—now and throughout their lives—Christian leaven in their families, in their professional work, in all the immense field of human life in the middle of the world. And as another consequence of this apostolate, our Lord will not fail to call those He wants (cf. *Mk* 3:13) to become part of Opus Dei.

Through the apostolic action of these young men and women of Saint Raphael, we want to be, in union with the whole Church, sowers of the joy of the Gospel, which “fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.”<sup>1</sup>

The fact that these young women and men represent a selection among the youth in no way implies a lack of interest in the rest. Out of a hundred souls we are interested in a hundred. Therefore, as our Father also taught us: “Your apostolic work and mine should be directed, I repeat, to all men and women: to relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues, those from our own country and those from other countries; Catholics, separated Christians, and non-Christians. We should always strive to treat everyone with loyal friendship, and *veritatem facientes in caritate*, following and spreading the truth of the Gospel with charity (*Eph* 4:15).”<sup>2</sup>

Although Saint Raphael boys and girls do not have a formal bond with the Work (they are not faithful of the Prelature), they share in its spirit and apostolic dynamism. Therefore they aren’t simply people who receive means of spiritual formation, but rather they see the Work as their own and try to cooperate actively in its apostolic mission.

Let us strive to dedicate thought and time to preparing the activities that are traditional means in this apostolic work (circles, retreats, catechism classes, etc.). Let us carry them out with the human and supernatural tone, with the positive outlook, with the love for God and souls with which they were born in Saint Josemaria’s heart. At the same time, let us never forget that the apostolic fruit depends above all on God’s grace.

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<sup>1</sup> Francis, Apost. Exhort. *Evangelii gaudium*, 24 November 2013, no. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Saint Josemaria, *Instruction*, 8 December 1941, no. 3.

You know very well that these activities are closely tied to personal friendship: “Our Father taught us that these apostolates have to be preceded, accompanied and followed by prayer, mortification and a personal apostolate of friendship and confidence.”<sup>3</sup>

Friendship is a very rich human value, which Jesus himself raised to a divine level: “I have called you friends” (*Jn 15:15*). “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (*Jn 15:13*). Our Lord gives himself completely; let us strive to follow in his footsteps and give our lives for others. Apostolate is the highest expression of friendship. It does not use friendship as an instrument, but rather brings it to its fullness.

True friendship, loyal and sincere,<sup>4</sup> implies going out of ourselves. It means being generous in spending time with the other person, sharing joys, sorrows and hopes, with real interest and mutual affection. The personal apostolate of friendship always offers great possibilities for individual spontaneity and initiative.

There is also a broad panorama for organizing auxiliary activities, in accord with the needs of every place and time. For a large number of young people these activities help to improve their formation humanly, culturally and in other ways. While respecting and defending everyone’s freedom, they also help young people to come closer to the faith or to acquire a stronger Christian formation and life.

When the difficulties we face seem great (as they may be at times), let us turn our eyes to the early years of the Work, when the obstacles were truly imposing, and which years later our Father recalled with these words: “In the face of all this, we had very little to rely on: no human resources and a lot of youthfulness, a lot of inexperience and a lot of naiveté. But we also had everything: prayer, God’s grace, good humor, and work, which have always been and always will be the weapons of *Opus Dei*.”<sup>5</sup>

Let us ask God for light, so that every one of us may see what more we can do and what we can do better in this apostolic work, beginning with the supernatural means: prayer, sacrifice, work turned in to prayer. Each person can also consider how he or she can take part more fully, in accord with their age and personal circumstances, in the various activities of this apostolate with young people.

Your Father blesses you with all his affection,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leonardo".

Rome, 8 June 2018

Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

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<sup>3</sup> Don Javier, *Letter*, 28 November 2002, no. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Saint Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 149.

<sup>5</sup> Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 7 October 1950, no. 12.