Romana is the bulletin of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei. These pages reprint documents of the Holy See directed to the entire Church, as well as those referring specifically to Opus Dei. It also provides news about the activities of the Prelate and the Prelature in the service of the Church and the local dioceses. Brief articles are included about some of the apostolic initiatives fostered by faithful of the Prelature within their profession and in society at large in their endeavor to infuse a Christian spirit into the secular sphere.

The contents of the bulletin do not provide an entire picture of Opus Dei’s activities, since the Prelature’s fundamental apostolate is that which its faithful carry out personally, guided by the Christian formation and spiritual assistance they receive from the Prelature.

This apostolate takes place in the context of each person’s professional, social, and family setting, and its variety and creativity naturally cannot be reduced to a set of statistics.

Romana’s publication fulfills an express desire of St. Josemaría Escrivá. In choosing the title Romana for the future bulletin, St. Josemaría wished to emphasize the catholic and universal character of Opus Dei’s pastoral mission.
SUMMARY
EDITORIAL

- The Great Jubilee, an intensely Eucharistic year

HOLY SEE

The Roman Pontiff

- Address to the participants in the 33rd International University Congress UNIV 2000 (April 17, 2000)
- Address to the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (January 28, 2000)
- Address on the Fifth Anniversary of the publication of the encyclical Evangelium Vitae (February 14, 2000)
- Address during the conclusion of the International Congress on the Implementation of the Second Vatican Council (February 27, 2000)
- Homily at the Mass of the Day of Forgiveness, in St. Peter’s Basilica (March 12, 2000)

Review of Other Documents

- A review of other documents

PRELATE

Activities of the Prelate

- Pastoral Trips
- Establishment of new Centers of the Prelature
- Participation in the beatification ceremony of Francisco and Jacinta Marto
- Priestly Ordinations
- Celebration of the Chrism Mass
- Participation in a public consistory
- Evening Prayer in St. Peter’s Basilica
- Address at the prayer vigil as part of the priests’ Jubilee

Homilies

- On the occasion of the priestly ordination of deacons of the Prelature, in the Basilica of St. Eugene, Rome (March 28, 2000)
• At the administration of Confirmation at the Basilica of St. Eugene, Rome (June 11, 2000)

• At the solemn Eucharistic concelebration on the liturgical Feast of Blessed Josemaria, in the Basilica of St. Eugene, Rome (June 26, 2000)

• On the sixth anniversary of the death of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, preached in the Basilica of St. Eugene, Rome (March 23, 2000)

• At the dedication of the church of the Sedes Sapientiae international priests’ residence, Rome (May 27, 2000)

Addresses

• Words at the prayer vigil celebrated as part of the Jubilee of Priests (May 17, 2000)

• Evening Prayer of the Jubilee, in St. Peter’s Square (April 6, 2000)

Articles and Interviews

• Interview by Miguel Ángel Jimeno and Fernando López Pan, published in the magazine Nuestro Tiempo, Pamplona, Spain (January-February, 2000)

• Interview granted to Vanessa Barahona, published in the newspaper La Nación, San José, Costa Rica (January 30, 2000)

• Interview granted to Miriam Díez i Bosch, published in the magazine Catalunya Cristiana, Barcelona, Spain (May 18, 2000)

• «Davanti alla Porta Santa», article published in Tertium Millennium, publication of the Central Committee for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, Rome (February 1, 2000)

Books published

• A book by Bishop Javier Echevarría

ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA

• New editions of the works of Blessed Josemaria

• Masses for the Feast of Blessed Josemaria

• A commemorative plaque in the cathedral of Caracas

• Dedication of Josemaría Escrivá Plaza in Quito

• Celebration of the 75th anniversary of the priestly ordination of Blessed Josemaria
• Other publications about Blessed Josemaria and Opus Dei
• “A vocation accepted and lived in fidelity to God’s will”
• Commemorative stamps issued

NEWS
• Pilgrims at the Prelatic Church
• Papal appointments of faithful of Opus Dei
• On the sixth anniversary of the death of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo

INITIATIVES
• After the floods in Venezuela
• In Brief

IN PACE
• Suffrages

A STUDY
• The University and Unity of Life: Blessed Josemaria Escriva’s Vision
The Great Jubilee, an intensely Eucharistic year

“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”[1] The history of mankind has known the presence of God made man: a face, a body, feet that walked upon our earth, a heart that beat with love for all men and women. God, who is Love, has loved us to the extent of lowering himself to our level. To pay the ransom for our sins, he even chose to become one of us.

The Eucharist, renewed sacramentally in the sacrifice of the altar and reserved in the tabernacle, reveals the reality of the Redemption in history. As the Pope reminded us recently, “Christ, the one Lord, yesterday, today, and forever, wished to unite his saving presence in the world and in history to the sacrament of the Eucharist.”[2]

Precisely “to emphasize Christ’s living and salvific presence in the Church and in the world,”[3] the Pope convoked an international Eucharistic Congress, celebrated in Rome from the 18th to the 25th of June, in the middle of the Great Jubilee. The Eucharist must hold a privileged place in the celebration of the Holy Year. As the Pope has pointed out from the beginning, the Jubilee Year has to be “an intensely Eucharistic year.”[4] And thus, the acknowledgment of the real presence of the Word incarnate in the Eucharistic species should occupy a central place in the Christian’s life of faith. Jesus is really, truly, and substantially present in the Eucharist, so that we may speak to him, adore him, and receive him. In the words of Blessed Josemaria: “Devotion to the Holy Eucharist has to be our first devotion.”[5]

The Jubilee Year is calling us to rediscover what Love truly is, the charity that is patient and kind, that does not insist on its own way, that rejoices in the truth, that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.[6] St. Paul’s words are an invitation to be generous and faithful in our dedication to Christ. It is a lesson that we can learn in the school of the Eucharist. From the actual site where the Last Supper took place, the Holy Father has renewed his invitation to enter this school in which many “have found the consolation promised by Jesus” on the night of Holy Thursday. They have found “help to endure their sufferings, the food they need to once more take up their path after each
moment of weakness, the interior energy to confirm their own choice of faithfulness.”[7]

The Eucharistic banquet, in which Christ’s death and resurrection are announced and celebrated in expectation of his coming, is “the center of the life of the Church.”[8] It is logical then that the Holy Father invites us to “turn frequently in our hearts to this Cenacle,” seeing ourselves, in a certain sense, as dwellers in that “house” in which Jesus instituted the Eucharist. Thus one will be able to say of us, “in respect to the Cenacle, what the psalmist said of the nations in respect to Jerusalem: ‘The Lord records as he registers the peoples, This one was born there’ (Ps 87[86]:6).”[9]

The Jubilee Year calls us to a new effort in the task of evangelization. Only a strong faith such as that demanded by the mystery of the Eucharist can convince other souls of the need to follow God. The Pope reminded us of this during the days of the Eucharist Congress. “The Church and all believers,” he said, “find in the Eucharist the indispensable strength to proclaim and give witness to all of the Gospel of salvation. The celebration of the Eucharist, the sacrament of the resurrection of the Lord, is in itself a missionary event, which introduces to the world, the fertile seed of a new life.”[10]


[4] Ibid.


HOLY SEE

- The Roman Pontiff
- Review of Other Documents
The Roman Pontiff

Address to the participants in the 33rd International University Congress UNIV 2000 (April 17, 2000)

1. Dear young participants in the UNIV 2000 International University Congress, I greet you all with affection.

Welcome to this meeting, which this year is again taking place shortly before the Easter celebrations. My greeting in this Holy Week of the Jubilee Year has a particular significance: it is a heartfelt invitation to be ever more fully won over by Christ, the Redeemer of man. This is an invitation which, through you, I wish to extend to young people throughout the world. Be deeply convinced that society needs to find in your faithful witness as young Christians an important stimulus for a sound social and spiritual renewal.

2. The theme of the congress invites you to become more clearly aware of your mission as believers at the dawn of the third millennium. It is strikingly put: The image of man 2,000 years later. You are invited, as it were, to weigh up 2,000 years of history. In fact, the central event of human history, the coming of Christ on earth, divides the course of history in two: before and after Christ. For the Christian, however, the centrality of Jesus is not just a question of measuring the passage of time. The Word made flesh is the true protagonist of history, and the redemption, always at work in the often intricate flux of human events, is history’s ultimate hermeneutical key.

We could say that the 2,000 years just ended are not just two millennia after Christ but in a more real sense two millennia of Christ. This is the truth expressed in the theme of the Great Jubilee: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever!” (Heb 13:8). Despite human experience, often made up of failure, war, violence and injustice, Christ has conquered evil once and for all, nailing to the Cross the sentence of our condemnation (cf. Col 2:14). As the Apostle Peter writes: “By his wounds you have been
healed” (I Pet 2:24). This is why every moment of time belongs completely to him.

The Holy Year which we are celebrating underlines in a special way the fact that Christ is the center and the meaning of all that happens, even when, humanly speaking, events seem to elude the rule of his providence. He himself has promised: “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20). Knowing this, we are encouraged to act always with great confidence, because it is Christ who is at work in us, and because we recognize that in him God is bringing to completion his eternal plan of salvation (cf. Eph 3:11).

3. The “fact” of the redemption, dear young people, opens before us in our daily tasks a horizon full of prospects; even in the afflictions that we often experience at the present time, we know we are constantly advancing towards a sure goal. True progress strives for Christ, for that full union with him, holiness, which is also human perfection. St Paul makes this clear in his Letter to the Ephesians, in which he writes that the Lord has established everything “for building up the Body of Christ, until we all attain... to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:12-13). This is the way believers read and interpret history: it is the history of Christ and we live with him and, immersed in him, advance towards him. Bl. Josemaría Escrivá writes: “In the religious order, man continues to be man and God continues to be God. In this field the high point of progress has already been reached: it is Christ, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end” (Christ Is Passing By, 104).

Dear young people of UNIV, be confident in this knowledge: the Christian’s effort is never in vain. The Christian never works alone. Do not forget it! Every believer is an instrument of God and with him Christ acts through the power of the Holy Spirit. Let God act in you and through you. And for this to happen, you are well aware of the means you should use: the sacraments, prayer, the practice of the virtues and the sanctification of work, as well as spiritual direction.

You need Christ, but Christ also needs you to make him known to your peers, with whom you share experiences and hopes. The Church entrusts you with the mission of bringing them the light of Christ’s truth and his
universal message of salvation. Always be ready to think of others, forgetting yourselves in order to bring your brothers and sisters closer to God. In this way you will help build a better and more united world, because the conversion and commitment of each one is a seed of salvation for all.

4. I entrust you, dear young people, and your daily efforts to Mary, Queen of Apostles. Pray to her often and imitate her virtues. She will help you to know Jesus more intimately and to follow him with increasing fidelity and joy. From my heart I warmly wish you and your loved ones a Holy Easter and, as I assure each of you of a remembrance in prayer, I cordially bless you.

Holy Thursday Letter to Priests for the Year 2000 (March 23, 2000)

My Dear Brother Priests!

1. Jesus, “having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end” (Jn 13:1). Here in Jerusalem, in the place where according to tradition Jesus and the Twelve were present for the Passover Meal and the institution of the Eucharist, I am deeply moved as I read once again the words with which the Evangelist John introduces the account of the Last Supper.

I give praise to the Lord for enabling me, in this Jubilee Year of the Incarnation of his Son, to trace the earthly footsteps of Christ, following the paths which he took from his birth in Bethlehem to his death on Golgotha. Yesterday I spent time in Bethlehem, in the cave of the Nativity. In the days to come I will visit various places associated with the life and ministry of the Saviour, from the house of the Annunciation to the Mount of the Beatitudes and the Garden of Olives. Finally on Sunday I will be at Golgotha and the Holy Sepulcher.

Today, this visit to the Upper Room gives me an opportunity to survey the entire mystery of the Redemption. It was here that Christ gave us the
immense gift of the Eucharist. Here too our priesthood was born.

A letter from the Upper Room

2. From this Upper Room I would like to address this letter to you, as I have done for more than twenty years, on Holy Thursday, the day of the Eucharist and “our” day par excellence.

I am indeed writing to you from the Upper Room, thinking back to all that took place within these walls on that evening charged with mystery. Spiritually, I see Jesus and the Apostles seated at table with him. I think of Peter especially: it is as if I can see him, with the other disciples, watching in amazement the Lord’s actions, listening with deep emotion to his words and, for all the burden of his frailty, opening himself to the mystery proclaimed here and soon to be accomplished. These are the hours of the great battle between the love which gives itself without reserve and the mysterium iniquitatis which is imprisoned in hostility. The betrayal of Judas appears emblematic of humanity’s sin. “It was night,” observes the Evangelist John (13:30): the hour of darkness, an hour of separation and of infinite sadness. Yet in the emotion-filled words of Christ the light of dawn already shines forth: “I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you” (Jn 16:22).

3. We must never cease meditating anew on the mystery of that night. We should often return in spirit to this Upper Room, where we priests especially can feel in a sense “at home.” With regard to the Upper Room, it could be said of us what the Psalmist says of the peoples with regard to Jerusalem: “In the register of peoples, the Lord will write: These were born here” (Ps 86:6).

In this holy room I naturally find myself imagining you in all the various parts of the world, with your myriad faces, some younger, some more advanced in years, in all the different emotional states which you are experiencing: for many, thank God, joy and enthusiasm, for others perhaps suffering or weariness or discouragement. In all of you I honor the image of Christ which you received at your consecration, the “character” which marks each of you indelibly. It is a sign of the special love which every priest has come to know and upon which he can always rely, either to move
ahead joyfully or to make a fresh start with renewed enthusiasm, in the hope of ever greater fidelity.

Born of love

4. “Having loved his own who were in the world, Jesus loved them to the end.” In contrast to the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John does not relate the institution of the Eucharist, of which Jesus had already spoken at length in Capernaum (cf. Jn 6:26-65); instead it dwells upon the washing of the feet. Even more than an example of humility offered for our imitation, this action of Jesus, so disconcerting to Peter, is a revelation of the radicalness of God’s condescension towards us. In Christ, God has “stripped himself,” and has taken on “the form of a slave” even to the utter abasement of the Cross (cf. Phil 2:7), so that humanity might have access to the depths of God’s very life. The great speeches which in John’s Gospel follow the washing of the feet and are in some way commentaries upon it, serve as an introduction to the mystery of Trinitarian communion to which we are called by the Father who makes us sharers in Christ by the gift of the Spirit.

This communion must be lived in compliance with the new commandment: “Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34). It is not by chance that the priestly prayer is the culmination of this “mystagogy,” since it shows us Christ in his oneness with the Father, ready to return to him through the sacrifice of himself, and wanting only that the disciples come to share his unity with the Father: “As you, Father, are in me and I in you, may they too be one in us” (Jn 17:21).

5. From the small group of disciples who heard these words the whole Church was formed, growing through time and space as “a people gathered together by the unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (Saint Cyprian, De Orat. Dom., 23). The profound unity of this new people does not mean that there are not different and complementary tasks in its life. Those whose task it is to renew in persona Christi what Jesus did at the Last Supper when he instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice, “the source and summit of the entire Christian life” (Lumen Gentium, 11), are thus linked in a special way to those first Apostles. The sacramental character which distinguishes them
by virtue of their reception of Holy Orders ensures that their presence and ministry are unique, indispensable and irreplaceable.

Almost two thousand years have passed since that moment. How many priests have repeated what Jesus did! Often they were exemplary disciples, saints, martyrs. How can we forget, in this Jubilee Year, the many priests who have witnessed to Christ by their lives, even to the shedding of blood? Such martyrdom has accompanied the entire history of the Church; it has also marked the century just passed, a century characterized by different dictatorial regimes hostile to the Church. From the Upper Room, I wish to thank the Lord for the courage of these priests. Let us look to them and learn to follow them in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd who “lays down his life for his sheep” (Jn 10:11).

A treasure in earthen vessels

6. It is true that in the history of the priesthood, no less than in the history of the whole People of God, the dark presence of sin is also found. Many times, the human frailty of priests has made it hard to see in them the face of Christ. Here in the Upper Room why should this amaze us? Not only did the betrayal of Judas reach its climax here, but Peter himself had to reckon with his weakness as he heard the bitter prediction of his denial. In choosing men like the Twelve, Christ was certainly under no illusions: it was upon this human weakness that he set the sacramental seal of his presence. And Paul shows us why: “We bear this treasure in earthen vessels, so that it might be clear that this extraordinary power comes from God and not from us” (2 Cor 4:7).

For all the frailties of their priests, then, the People of God have not ceased to put their faith in the power of Christ at work through their ministry. How can we fail in this regard to recall the splendid witness of Saint Francis of Assisi? Humility led him not to seek the priesthood, but in his Testament he expressed his faith in the mystery of Christ present in priests, declaring that he would turn to them even if they had persecuted him, taking no account of their sin. “And I do this,” he explained, “because the only thing I see of the flesh of the most high Son of God in this world is his most holy Body and Blood which they alone consecrate and they alone administer to others” (Fonti Francescane, no. 113).
7. From this place where Christ spoke the words instituting the Eucharist, I invite you, dear priests, to rediscover the “gift” and the “mystery” which we have received. To go to the heart of it, we must reflect upon the priesthood of Christ. Certainly, the entire People of God participates in this priesthood by Baptism. But the Second Vatican Council reminds us that, in addition to the participation proper to all the baptized, there exists another specific, ministerial participation which, although intimately linked to the first, nonetheless differs from it in essence (cf. Lumen Gentium, 10).

In the context of the Jubilee of the Incarnation, we can approach the priesthood of Christ from a particular perspective. The Jubilee invites us to contemplate the intimate link between Christ’s priesthood and the mystery of his person. The priesthood of Christ is not “incidental,” a task which he might or might not have assumed: rather, it is integral to his identity as the Son Incarnate, as God-made-man. From now on, the relationship between mankind and God passes wholly through Christ: “No one comes to the Father, except through me” (Jn 14:6). This is why Christ is a priest endowed with an eternal and universal priesthood, of which the priesthood of the first Covenant was a prefigurement and a preparation (cf. Heb 9:9). He has exercised it fully from the moment he took his seat as High Priest “at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven” (Heb 8:1). From that time forth, the very nature of human priesthood changed: now there is but one priesthood, that of Christ, which can be shared and exercised in different ways.

Sacerdos et Hostia

8. At the same time, the meaning of sacrifice, the priestly act par excellence, was brought to perfection. On Golgotha, Christ made his own life an offering of eternal value, a “redemptive” offering which has reopened for ever the path of communion with God which had been blocked by sin.

The Letter to the Hebrews casts light upon this mystery by placing on the lips of Christ the words of Psalm 40: “You desired neither sacrifice nor offering, but instead you prepared a body for me... Here I am... I come to do your will, O God” (Heb 10:5-7; cf. Ps 40:7-9). According to the author of the Letter, these prophetic words were spoken by Christ when he first
came into the world. They express his mystery and his mission. They begin to be accomplished from the very moment of the Incarnation and reach their completion in the sacrifice of Golgotha. From that time forward, every priestly offering is but a re-presenting to the Father of the one offering of Christ, made once for all.

*Sacerdos et Hostia!* Priest and Victim! This sacrificial aspect is a profound mark of the Eucharist; it is also an essential dimension of the priesthood of Christ and, therefore, of our own priesthood. In the light of this, let us read once again the words we speak every day, words which echoed for the first time here in the Upper Room: “Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my Body which will be given up for you... Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my Blood, the Blood of the new and everlasting Covenant which will be shed for you and for all, so that sins may be forgiven.”

These are the words we find in the Evangelists and in Paul, with largely converging redactional forms. They were spoken in this Room in the late evening of Holy Thursday. By giving the Apostles his Body to eat and his Blood to drink, Jesus declared the deepest truth about what he would do shortly thereafter on Golgotha. For in the Bread of the Eucharist is present the very Body born of Mary and offered on the Cross:

*Ave verum Corpus natum de Maria Virgine, Vere passum, immolatum in cruce pro homine.*

9. How can we not return ever anew to this mystery, which contains the entire life of the Church? For two thousand years, this Sacrament has given nourishment to countless believers. It has been the source of great river of grace. How many saints have found in it not only the pledge, but as it were the foretaste of Heaven!

Let us allow ourselves to be carried along by the contemplative impulse, rich in poetry and theology, which inspired Saint Thomas Aquinas to sing of the mystery in the words of the hymn *Pange Lingua.* Today, in this Upper Room, these words come to me as an echo of the voice of so many Christian communities throughout the world, of so many priests, consecrated persons and lay faithful, who each day pause in adoration of the Eucharistic mystery:
Verbum caro, panem verum verbo carnem efficit, fitque sanguis Christi merum, et, si sensus deficit, ad firmandum cor sincerum sola fides sufficit.

Do this in memory of me

10. The mystery of the Eucharist, which proclaims and celebrates the death and resurrection of Christ until he comes again, is the heart of the Church’s life. For us it also has a very special meaning, for it stands at the center of our ministry. Our ministry is not of course limited to celebrating the Eucharist: it is a service which includes the proclamation of the Word, the sanctification of the faithful through the Sacraments, and the leadership of God’s People in communion and service. But the Eucharist is the point from which everything else comes forth and to which it all returns. Our priesthood was born in the Upper Room together with the Eucharist.

“Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19): although addressed to the whole Church, the words of Christ are entrusted as a particular task to those who carry on the ministry of the first Apostles. It is to them that Jesus hands on the action which he has just performed — changing bread into his Body and wine into his Blood — the action in which he appears as Priest and Victim. It is the will of Christ that henceforth his action should also become sacramentally the action of the Church through the hands of priests. In saying “Do this,” he refers not only to the action, but also to the one who is called to act; in other words, he institutes the ministerial priesthood, which thus becomes one of the essential elements of the Church.

11. This action is to be done “in his memory”: these words are important. The Eucharistic action celebrated by priests will make present in every Christian generation, in every corner of the earth, the work accomplished by Christ. Wherever the Eucharist is celebrated, the bloody sacrifice of Calvary will be made present in an unbloody manner; there Christ himself, the Redeemer of the world, will be present.

“Do this in memory of me.” Hearing these words once again within the walls of the Upper Room, it is natural to try to imagine what Christ felt. These were the dramatic hours which preceded the Passion. The Evangelist John evokes the intensity of the Master’s words as he prepares
the Apostles for his departure. What sadness was in their eyes: “Because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts” (Jn 16:6). But Jesus reassures them: “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (Jn 14:18). Although the Paschal Mystery will take him from their sight, he will be more present than ever in their life, “always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20).

A memorial which makes present

12. Christ’s presence will be expressed in many ways. But of these his Eucharistic presence will certainly be supreme: no mere remembrance, but a “memorial” which makes present what it commemorates; not a symbolic evocation of the past, but the living presence of the Lord in the midst of his own. The enduring guarantee of this will be the Holy Spirit, constantly poured out in the Eucharistic celebration so that the bread and wine may become the Body and Blood of Christ. He is the same Spirit who on the evening of Easter, in this Upper Room, was “breathed” upon the Apostles (cf. Jn 20:22), and who found them here still, gathered with Mary, on the day of Pentecost. It was then that he came upon them as a strong wind and fire (cf. Acts 2:1-4), and impelled them to go to the ends of the earth to proclaim the Word and gather together the People of God in the “breaking of the bread” (cf. Acts 2:42).

13. Two thousand years after the birth of Christ, in this Jubilee Year, we especially need to remember and ponder the truth of what we might call his “Eucharistic birth.” The Upper Room is the place of this “birth.” Here began a new presence of Christ for the world, a presence which constantly occurs wherever the Eucharist is celebrated and a priest lends his voice to Christ, repeating the sacred words of institution.

This Eucharistic presence has accompanied the two thousand years of the Church’s history, and it will do so until the end of time. For us it is both a joy and a source of responsibility to be so closely linked to this mystery. Today we want to become more deeply aware of this presence, our hearts filled with wonder and gratitude, and in this spirit to enter the Easter Triduum of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ.

What the Upper Room hands on to us

14. My dear brother priests, who on Holy Thursday gather in the
Cathedrals around your Pastors, just as the presbyters of the Church in Rome gather around the Successor of Peter, please accept these reflections, my meditation in the evocative setting of the Upper Room! It would be hard to find a place better able to stir thoughts of both the Eucharistic mystery and the mystery of our priesthood.

Let us remain faithful to what the Upper Room “hands on” to us, to the great gift of Holy Thursday. May we always celebrate the Holy Eucharist with fervor. May we dwell long and often in adoration before Christ in the Eucharist. May we sit at the “school” of the Eucharist. Through the centuries, countless priests have found in the Eucharist the consolation promised by Jesus on the evening of the Last Supper, the secret to overcoming their solitude, the strength to bear their sufferings, the nourishment to make a new beginning after every discouragement, and the inner energy to bolster their decision to remain faithful. The witness which we give to the People of God in celebrating the Eucharist depends in large part upon our own personal relationship with the Eucharist.

15. Let us rediscover our priesthood in the light of the Eucharist! Let us help our communities to rediscover this treasure in the daily celebration of Holy Mass, and especially in the more solemn Sunday assembly. Through your apostolic labors, may love for Christ present in the Eucharist grow stronger. This is a particularly important goal in this Jubilee Year. I think of the International Eucharistic Congress to be held in Rome from June 18-25, which has as its theme Jesus Christ, the one Saviour of the World, Bread for new Life. It will be a highlight of the Great Jubilee, which is meant to be “an intensely Eucharistic year” (Tertio Millennio Adveniente, 55). The Congress will emphasize the profound link between the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word and the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Christ’s Real Presence.

From the Upper Room, I embrace you in the Eucharist. May the image of Christ surrounded by his own at the Last Supper fill each of us with a vibrant sense of brotherhood and communion. Great painters have employed their finest gifts in depicting the face of Christ among his Apostles in the scene of the Last Supper: how can we forget Leonardo’s masterpiece? But only the Saints, by the intensity of their love, can enter the depths of this mystery, leaning their head, as it were, like John, on the
Lord’s breast (cf. Jn 13:25). Here in fact we come to the height of love: “having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”

16. I would like to conclude these thoughts, which I affectionately entrust to your meditation, with the words of an ancient prayer:

“We thank you, our Father, for the life and the knowledge which you have revealed to us through Jesus, your servant. Glory to you through the ages! As the bread we have broken was scattered far and wide upon the hills, but when harvested becomes one, so may the Church be gathered into your Kingdom from the farthest reaches of the earth... Lord almighty, you created the universe for the glory of your name; you gave men food and drink to strengthen them, that they might give you thanks; but to us you have given spiritual food and drink, and eternal life through your Son... Glory to you through the ages!” (Didache 9:3-4; 10:3-4).

From the Upper Room, dear brother priests, I embrace all of you in spirit and I cordially impart my blessing.

From Jerusalem, 23 March 2000

Joannes Paulus Pp. II

Address to the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (January 28, 2000)

Your Eminences,

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood,

Dear faithful Collaborators,

1. It is a great joy for me to meet you at the end of your plenary assembly. I want to express my gratitude and appreciation for the work that your dicastery accomplishes each day in the service of the Church for the good of souls, in harmony with the Successor of Peter, the first guardian and defender of the sacred deposit of faith.
I thank Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger for the sentiments he has expressed on everyone’s behalf in his address to me, and for explaining the topics that you have carefully considered during your assembly, which was especially dedicated to studying the problem of the uniqueness of Christ and to revising the norms of the so-called “graviora delicta.”

2. I would now like to dwell briefly on the principal topics discussed at your meeting. Your dicastery has considered it timely and necessary to begin studying the themes of the uniqueness and salvific universality of Christ and the Church. The reaffirmation of the Church’s doctrine on these themes is being proposed in order to show “the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor 4: 4) to the world and to refute errors and serious ambiguities that have taken shape and are spreading in various circles.

In recent years a mentality has arisen in theological and ecclesial circles that tends to relativize Christ’s revelation and his unique and universal mediation of salvation, as well as to diminish the need for Christ’s Church as the universal sacrament of salvation.

To remedy this relativistic mentality, the definitive and complete character of Christ’s revelation must first of all be emphasized. Faithful to the word of God, the Second Vatican Council teaches: “The most intimate truth which this revelation gives us about God and the salvation of man shines forth in Christ, who is himself both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation” (Dogmatic Constitution Dei Verbum, no. 2).

For this reason, in the Encyclical Letter Redemptoris Missio I reminded the Church of her duty to proclaim the Gospel as the fullness of truth: “In this definitive Word of his revelation, God has made himself known in the fullest possible way. He has revealed to mankind who he is. This definitive self-revelation of God is the fundamental reason why the Church is missionary by her very nature. She cannot do other than proclaim the Gospel, that is, the fullness of the truth which God has enabled us to know about himself” (no. 5).

3. The theory on the limited nature of Christ’s revelation, which would find its complement in other religions, is thus contrary to the faith of the Church. The underlying reason for this assertion claims to be based on the
fact that the truth about God could not be grasped and manifested in its totality and completeness by any historical religion, and so not even by Christianity or by Jesus Christ. This position, however, contradicts the affirmations of faith that the full and complete revelation of God’s saving mystery is given in Jesus Christ, while the understanding of this infinite mystery is to be explored and deepened in the light of the Spirit of truth, who guides us in the era of the Church “into all the truth” (Jn 16: 13).

The words, works and entire historical event of Jesus, while being limited as human realities, still have the divine Person of the incarnate Word as their source and therefore contain in themselves the definitive and complete revelation of his saving ways and of the divine mystery itself. The truth about God is not abolished or diminished because it is expressed in human language. On the contrary, it remains one, full and complete, because the one who speaks and acts is the incarnate Son of God.

4. Connected with the uniqueness of Christ’s salvific mediation is the uniqueness of the Church he founded. The Lord Jesus, in fact, established his Church as a saving reality: as his Body, through which he himself accomplishes salvation in history. Just as there is only one Christ, so his Body is one alone: “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church” (cf. *Symbolum fidei*, DS 48). The Second Vatican Council says in this regard: “Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, this holy Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim on earth, is necessary for salvation” (Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 14).

It is a mistake, then, to regard the Church as a way of salvation along with those constituted by other religions, which would be complementary to the Church, even if converging with her on the eschatological kingdom of God. Therefore we must reject a certain indifferentist mentality “characterized by a religious relativism which leads to the belief that one religion is as good as another” (cf. Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 36).

It is true that non-Christians — as the Second Vatican Council recalled — can “gain” eternal life “under the influence of grace,” if “they seek God with a sincere heart” (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 16). But in their sincere search for the truth of God, they are in fact “related” to Christ and
to his Body, the Church (cf. ibid.). They nevertheless find themselves in an unsatisfactory situation compared to that of those in the Church who have the fullness of the means of salvation. Understandably, then, in accordance with the Lord’s command (cf. Mt 28: 19-20) and as a requirement of her love for all people, the Church “proclaims, and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is “the Way, the Truth and the Life’ (Jn 14: 6). In him, in whom God reconciled all things to himself, men find the fullness of their religious life” (Declaration Nostra Aetate, no. 2).

5. In the Encyclical Letter Ut Unum Sint, I solemnly confirmed the Catholic Church’s commitment to the “restoration of unity,” in continuity with the great cause of ecumenism which the Second Vatican Council had so much at heart. Together with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, you helped to reach the agreement on fundamental truths of the doctrine of justification that was signed on 31 October last year in Augsburg. Trusting in the help of divine grace, let us go forward on this journey, even if there are difficulties. Our ardent desire to reach the day of full communion with the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities cannot obscure the truth that the Church of Christ is not a utopia to be reconstructed by our human powers from the fragments we find today. The Decree Unitatis Redintegratio spoke explicitly of the unity which “we believe subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time” (no. 4).

Dear Brothers, in the service that your Congregation offers to the Successor of Peter and to the Church’s Magisterium you help to ensure that Christ’s revelation continues to be in history “the true lodestar” of all humanity (cf. Encyclical Letter Fides et Ratio, no. 15).

In congratulating you on your important and valuable ministry, I encourage you to continue with new enthusiasm in your service to the saving truth: Christus heri, hodie et semper!

With these sentiments I cordially give you all a special Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of my affection and gratitude.
Address on the Fifth Anniversary of the publication of the encyclical Evangelium Vitae (February 14, 2000)

Your Eminence,

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I would first like to thank the Pontifical Council for the Family, the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health-Care Workers and the Pontifical Academy for Life for having planned and organized this day commemorating the fifth anniversary of the publication of the Encyclical Evangelium Vitae. It is taking place within the framework of the Jubilee Year celebrations and is meant to be in prayerful harmony with the pilgrimage I will make to the Holy Land next month to venerate the places where “the Word became flesh” (Jn 1: 14).

I greet Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo and thank him for the sentiments he expressed to me in his address. I also greet all of you, participants in this reflection on a document which I consider central to the whole Magisterium of my Pontificate and in thematic continuity with the Encyclical Humanae Vitae of Pope Paul VI of venerable memory.

2. In the Encyclical Evangelium Vitae, whose publication was preceded by an Extraordinary Consistory and a consultation of Bishops, I started from a vision of hope for humanity’s future. I wrote: “To all the members of the Church, the people of life and for life, I make this most urgent appeal, that together we may offer this world of ours new signs of hope, and work to ensure that justice and solidarity will increase and that a new culture of human life will be affirmed, for the building of an authentic civilization of truth and love” (no. 6).

Life, truth, love: words full of stimulating suggestions for human efforts in the world. They are rooted in the message of Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, but they are also impressed upon the hearts and yearnings of every man and woman.

What we have experienced within society, to which the Church has
brought her message with renewed zeal in the past five years, enables us to point out two facts: on the one hand, the persistent difficulty which this message encounters in a world marked by serious signs of violence and decadence; on the other, the unchanging validity of this message and also the possibility of its being accepted in a society where the community of believers, with the concerned involvement of people of good will, courageously and unitedly expresses its commitment.

3. The evidence shows with increasing clarity how policies and laws opposed to life are causing societies to decline, not only morally but demographically and economically. The Encyclical's message can therefore be presented not only as true and authentic guidelines for moral rebirth, but also as a reference point for civil salvation.

Thus, there is no reason for that type of defeatist mentality which claims that laws opposed to the right to life — those which legalize abortion, euthanasia, sterilization and methods of family planning opposed to life and the dignity of marriage — are inevitable and now almost a social necessity. On the contrary, they are a seed of corruption for society and its foundations.

The civil and moral conscience cannot accept this false inevitability, any more than the idea that war or interethnic extermination is inevitable.

4. The chapters of the Encyclical that address the relationship between the civil and moral law deserve great attention because of the growing importance they are destined to have in the restoration of social life. Pastors, the faithful and people of good will, especially if they are lawmakers, are asked for a renewed and united commitment to change unjust laws that legitimize or tolerate such violence.

No effort should be spared to eliminate legalized crime or at least to limit the damage caused by these laws, with the vivid awareness of the radical duty to respect every human being’s right to life from conception until natural death, including the life of the lowliest and the least gifted.

5. However, another extensive area of endeavor in the defense of life is open to the initiative of the believing community: this is the pastoral and educational field which the fourth part of the Encyclical discusses, offering
particular guidelines for building a new culture of life. In the past five years, dioceses and parishes have started many projects, but much remains to be done.

An authentic apostolate of life cannot be simply delegated to specific movements, however praiseworthy, that work in the sociopolitical field. It must always be an integral part of the Church’s pastoral ministry, whose task is to proclaim the “Gospel of life.” For this to be effective, it is important to set up educational programs, as well as services and special structures for guidance and support.

This requires first that pastoral workers be prepared in seminaries and theological institutes; it also calls for the correct and consistent teaching of morals in the various forms of catechesis and of conscience formation; lastly, it should be given practical expression by offering services that will enable anyone in trouble to find the necessary help.

Through joint educational activity in families and schools, efforts should be made so that these services become a “sign” and a message. Just as the community needs places of worship, it should sense the need to organize, especially at the diocesan level, educational and operational services to support human life, services that will be the fruit of charity and a sign of vitality.

6. The changing of laws must be preceded and accompanied by the changing of mentalities and morals on a vast scale, in an extensive and visible way. In this area the Church will spare no effort nor can she accept negligence or guilty silence.

I turn in particular to those young people who are sensitive to the values of our bodily nature and above all to the value of newly conceived life: may they be the first agents and beneficiaries of the work that will be done in the context of the apostolate of life.

I renew the appeal that I made in the Encyclical to the whole Church: to scientists and doctors, to teachers and families, as well as to those who work in the media, and especially to jurists and lawmakers. It will be through everyone’s commitment that the right to life will be concretely applied in this world, which does not lack the necessary goods, if they are properly distributed. Only in this way will we overcome that sort of silent,
cruel selection by which the weakest are unjustly eliminated.

May every person of good will feel called to play an active part in this great cause. May he be sustained by the conviction that every step taken in defending the right to life and in its concrete advancement is a step towards peace and civilization.

As I trust that this commemoration will stir new and zealous efforts to defend human life and to spread the culture of life, I invoke upon you all and upon those who work with you in this sensitive area the intercession of Mary “Dawn of the new world, Mother of the living” (Evangelium Vitae, no. 105), and cordially give you my Apostolic Blessing.

Address during the conclusion of the International Congress on the Implementation of the Second Vatican Council (February 27, 2000)

Your Eminences,

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I am very pleased to meet you at the end of the conference that has been held these days in the Vatican on the truly demanding and stimulating theme of the implementation of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. I greet Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, whom I thank for his address on behalf of you all. My greeting also goes to the Prefects of the dicasteries and the other Cardinals, as well as to the Archbishops and Bishops whose presence highlights the importance of this meeting. Lastly, I greet the experts who have come here from various parts of the world to contribute their own experience and reflections.

The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council has been a gift of the Spirit to his Church. For this reason it remains a fundamental event not only for
understanding the Church’s history at this end of the century, but first and foremost for exploring the abiding presence of the risen Christ beside his Bride in the course of world events. Through the Council Assembly, which saw Bishops come to the See of Peter from all over the world, it was possible to note how the patrimony of 2,000 years of faith has been preserved in its original authenticity.

2. With the Council, the Church first had an experience of faith, as she abandoned herself to God without reserve, as one who trusts and is certain of being loved. It is precisely this act of abandonment to God which stands out from an objective examination of the Acts. Anyone who wished to approach the Council without considering this interpretive key would be unable to penetrate its depths. Only from a faith perspective can we see the Council event as a gift whose still hidden wealth we must know how to mine.

At this juncture the significant words of St Vincent of Lérins come to mind: “The Church of Christ, the concerned and careful guardian of the dogmas entrusted to her, never changes anything in them; she removes nothing and adds nothing; she does not cut what is necessary and does not add what is unnecessary; she never loses what is hers and never appropriates what belongs to others; but with all zeal, she attends faithfully and wisely to the ancient dogmas and desires only to perfect and hone those which had in ancient times been given an initial form and first outline, to strengthen and reinforce those which are already prominent and developed, and to preserve those which have already been confirmed and defined” (Commonitorium, XXIII).

3. The Council Fathers were faced with a real challenge. It involved the effort to understand more deeply, at a time of rapid changes, the nature of the Church and her relationship to the world, in order to provide a suitable “aggiornamento.” We accepted this challenge — I too was a Council Father — and responded to it by seeking a more coherent understanding of the faith. What we achieved at the Council was to show that if contemporary man wants to understand himself completely, he too needs Jesus Christ and his Church, which continues in the world as a sign of unity and communion.
The Church, the People of God journeying on the paths of history, is truly the perennial witness to a prophetic message. While she attests to the newness of the promise, she makes its fulfillment evident. The God who has promised is the faithful God who fulfills the word he has given.

Is this not what the Tradition going back to the Apostles enables us to affirm every day? Are we not a continual process of transmitting the saving Word that offers man, wherever he may be, the meaning of his life? The mission of the Church, as the trustee of the revealed Word, is to proclaim it to everyone.

This prophetic mission means taking responsibility for making visible what the Word proclaims. We must therefore put into effect the visible signs of salvation, so that the message we bring may be understood in its integrity. Christians cannot delegate to others the task of taking the Gospel to the world. It is a mission that involves their own responsibility as believers and followers of Christ! The Council wished to restore this fundamental truth to all believers.

4. In order to mark the first 20 years of the Second Vatican Council, I convoked an Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in 1985. Its goal was to celebrate, examine and further the Council’s teaching. In their analysis the Bishops spoke of the “lights and shadows” that had marked the post-conciliar period. For this reason, I wrote in the Letter Tertio Millennio Adveniente that “an examination of conscience must also consider the reception given to the Council” (no. 36). Today I thank all of you who have come here from many parts of the world to answer that request. The work you have undertaken in these days has shown how present and effective the Council’s teaching is in the life of the Church. Certainly, it requires ever deeper understanding. However, within this dynamic the genuine intention of the Council Fathers must not be lost: indeed, it must be recovered by overcoming biased and partial interpretations which have prevented the newness of the Council’s Magisterium from being expressed as well as possible.

The Church has always known the rules for a correct hermeneutic of the contents of dogma. These rules are set within the fabric of faith and not outside it. To interpret the Council on the supposition that it marks a
break with the past, when in reality it stands in continuity with the faith of all times, is a definite mistake. What has been believed by “everyone, always and everywhere” is the authentic newness that enables every era to perceive the light that comes from the word of God’s Revelation in Jesus Christ.

5. The Council was an act of love: “A great, threefold act of love” — as Pope Paul VI said in his opening address at the Council’s fourth session — an act of love “for God, for the Church, for humanity” (Insegnamenti, vol. III [1965], p. 475). The effectiveness of that act has not been exhausted at all: it continues to work through the rich dynamic of its teachings.

The Dogmatic Constitution Dei Verbum put the Word of God at the heart of the Church’s life with renewed awareness. This centrality stems from a more vivid perception of the unity of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. The Word of God, which is kept alive by the faith of the holy people of believers under the guidance of the Magisterium, also asks each of us to accept our own responsibility for preserving intact the process of transmission.

So that the primacy of the Father’s Revelation to humanity may endure with all the force of its radical newness, theology must first become a coherent tool for understanding it. In the encyclical Fides et Ratio I wrote: “As an understanding of Revelation, theology has always had to respond in different historical moments to the demands of different cultures, in order then to mediate the content of faith to those cultures in a coherent and conceptually clear way. Today, too, theology faces a dual task. On the one hand, it must be increasingly committed to the task entrusted to it by the Second Vatican Council, the task of renewing its specific methods in order to serve evangelization more effectively.... On the other hand, theology must look to the ultimate truth which Revelation entrusts to it, never content to stop short of that goal” (no. 92).

6. What the Church believes is what she makes the object of her prayer. The Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium explained the premises of a liturgical life that would give God the true worship owed him by the people called to exercise the priesthood of the New Covenant. The liturgy must allow every member of the faithful to enter deeply into the mystery,
to grasp the beauty of praising the Triune God. The liturgy, in fact, is an anticipation on earth of the praise that the hosts of the blessed give God in heaven. At every liturgical celebration, therefore, the participants should be given the possibility of a foretaste, albeit under the veil of faith, of some of the sweetness that will flow from contemplating God in paradise. For this reason, every minister, conscious of the responsibility he has to all the people entrusted to him, must faithfully maintain respect for the sacredness of the rite and grow in his understanding of what he celebrates.

7. “The time has come when the truth about the Church of Christ must be explored, set in order and expressed,” Pope Paul VI said in his message at the opening of the Council’s second session (Insegnamenti, vol. I [1963], pp. 173-174). With these words the unforgettable Pontiff identified the Council’s principal task. The Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium was a true hymn of praise to the beauty of Christ’s Bride. In those pages we brought to completion the doctrine expressed by the First Vatican Council and we sealed it for a renewed study of the Church’s mystery.

Communio is the foundation on which the Church’s reality is based. It is a koinonia that has its source in the very mystery of the Triune God and extends to all the baptized, who are therefore called to full unity in Christ. This communion becomes evident in the various institutional forms in which the ecclesial ministry is carried out and in the role of the successor of Peter as the visible sign of the unity of all believers. Everyone knows that the Second Vatican Council enthusiastically made the “ecumenical” yearning its own. The movement of encounter and clarification, which has been carried out with all the baptized brethren, is irreversible. It is the power of the Spirit who calls all believers to obedience, so that unity may be an effective source of evangelization. The communion that the Church lives with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is a sign of how brothers and sisters are called to live together.

8. “The Council, which has given us a rich ecclesiological doctrine, has organically linked its teaching about the Church with its teaching about man’s vocation in Christ”: I said this in my homily for the opening of the Synod of Bishops on 24 November 1985 (Insegnamenti, vol. VIII, 2, p. 1371). The Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes, which dealt with the fundamental questions which every person is called to answer, repeats to us
today words which have lost none of their timeliness: “It is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear” (no. 22). These words are especially dear to me and I wanted to propose them again in the fundamental passages of my Magisterium. Here we find the true synthesis to which the Church must always look in her dialogue with the people of today as with those of every other age: she knows that her message is a fruitful synthesis of the human being’s expectation and of God’s response to him.

In the Incarnation of the Son of God, which this Jubilee is meant to celebrate on the 2,000th anniversary of the event, man’s call becomes obvious. He never loses his dignity when he abandons himself in faith to Christ, because his humanity is then raised to participation in the divine life. Christ is the truth that never fades: in him God reaches out to every human being, and every human being can see God in him (cf. Jn 14: 9-10). No encounter with the world will be fruitful, if the believer ceases to fix his gaze on the mystery of the Incarnation of God’s Son. The emptiness that many people feel as they face the question about the reason for life and death, about human destiny and the meaning of suffering can only be filled by the message of the truth that is Jesus Christ. The human heart will always be “restless” until it can rest in him, the true refreshment for all who “labor and are heavy laden” (Mt 11: 28).

9. The “little seed” which John XXIII planted “with anxious mind and hand” (Apostolic Constitution *Humanae Salutis*, 25 December 1961) in the Basilica of St Paul-Outside-the-Walls on 25 January 1959, when he announced his intention to convvoke the 21st Ecumenical Council in the Church’s history, has grown and become a tree which now spreads its majestic and mighty branches in the Vineyard of the Lord. It has already produced many fruits in its 35 years of life, and it will produce many more in the years to come. A new season is dawning before our eyes: it is time for deep reflection on the Council’s teaching, time to harvest all that the Council Fathers sowed and the generation of recent years has tended and awaited.

The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council was truly a prophetic message for the Church’s life; it will continue to be so for many years in the third millennium which has just begun. The Church, rich in the eternal
truths entrusted to her, will still speak to the world, proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the one true Saviour of the world: yesterday, today and for ever!

Back to Contents

Homily at the Mass of the Day of Forgiveness, in St. Peter’s Basilica (March 12, 2000)

1. “We implore you, in Christ’s name: be reconciled to God! For our sake God made him who did not know sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5: 20-21).

These are words of St. Paul which the Church rereads every year on Ash Wednesday, at the beginning of Lent. In the Lenten season, the Church desires to be particularly united to Christ, who, moved inwardly by the Holy Spirit, began his messianic mission by going into the wilderness and fasting there for 40 days and 40 nights (cf. Mk 1: 12-13).

At the end of that fast he was tempted by Satan, as we are told briefly by the Evangelist Mark in today’s liturgy (cf. 1: 13). Matthew and Luke, on the other hand, deal more amply with Christ’s struggle in the desert and with his definitive victory over the tempter: “Begone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve’” (Mt 4: 10). The One speaking in this way is he “who did not know sin” (2 Cor 5: 21), Jesus, “the Holy One of God” (Mk 1: 24).

2. “He made him who did not know sin to be sin” (2 Cor 5: 21). A few moments ago, in the second reading, we heard this surprising assertion made by the Apostle. What do these words mean? They seem, and in effect are, a paradox. How could God, who is holiness itself, “make” his Only-begotten Son, sent into the world, “to be sin”? Yet this is exactly what we read in the passage from St. Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians. We are in the presence of a mystery: a mystery which at first sight is baffling, but is clearly written in divine Revelation.
Already in the Old Testament, the Book of Isaiah speaks of it with inspired foresight in the fourth song of the Servant of Yahweh: “We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way; but the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all” (Is 53: 6).

Although Christ, the Holy One, was absolutely sinless, he agreed to take our sins upon himself. He agreed to do so in order to redeem us; he agreed to bear our sins to fulfill the mission he had received from the Father, who — as the Evangelist John writes — “so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him... may have eternal life” (Jn 3: 16).

3. Before Christ who, out of love, took our guilt upon himself, we are all invited to make a profound examination of conscience. One of the characteristic elements of the Great Jubilee is what I described as the “purification of memory” (Bull Incarnationis Mysterium, no. 11). As the Successor of Peter, I asked that “in this year of mercy the Church, strong in the holiness which she receives from her Lord, should kneel before God and implore forgiveness for the past and present sins of her sons and daughters” (ibid.). Today, the First Sunday of Lent, seemed to me the right occasion for the Church, gathered spiritually round the Successor of Peter, to implore divine forgiveness for the sins of all believers. Let us forgive and ask for forgiveness!

This appeal has prompted a thorough and fruitful reflection, which led to the publication several days ago of a document of the International Theological Commission, entitled: “Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past.” I thank everyone who helped to prepare this text. It is very useful for correctly understanding and carrying out the authentic request for pardon, based on the objective responsibility which Christians share as members of the Mystical Body, and which spurs today’s faithful to recognize, along with their own sins, the sins of yesterday’s Christians, in the light of careful historical and theological discernment.

Indeed, “because of the bond which unites us to one another in the Mystical Body, all of us, though not personally responsible and without encroaching on the judgement of God who alone knows every heart, bear
the burden of the errors and faults of those who have gone before us” (*Incarnationis Mysterium*, no. 11). The recognition of past wrongs serves to reawaken our consciences to the compromises of the present, opening the way to conversion for everyone.

4. Let us forgive and ask forgiveness! While we praise God who, in his merciful love, has produced in the Church a wonderful harvest of holiness, missionary zeal, total dedication to Christ and neighbor, we cannot fail to recognize the infidelities to the Gospel committed by some of our brethren, especially during the second millennium. Let us ask pardon for the divisions which have occurred among Christians, for the violence some have used in the service of the truth and for the distrustful and hostile attitudes sometimes taken towards the followers of other religions.

Let us confess, even more, our responsibilities as Christians for the evils of today. We must ask ourselves what our responsibilities are regarding atheism, religious indifference, secularism, ethical relativism, the violations of the right to life, disregard for the poor in many countries.

We humbly ask forgiveness for the part which each of us has had in these evils by our own actions, thus helping to disfigure the face of the Church.

At the same time, as we confess our sins, let us forgive the sins committed by others against us. Countless times in the course of history Christians have suffered hardship, oppression and persecution because of their faith. Just as the victims of such abuses forgave them, so let us forgive as well. The Church today feels and has always felt obliged to purify her memory of those sad events from every feeling of rancor or revenge. In this way the Jubilee becomes for everyone a favorable opportunity for a profound conversion to the Gospel. The acceptance of God’s forgiveness leads to the commitment to forgive our brothers and sisters and to be reconciled with them.

5. But what does the word “reconciliation” mean to us? To grasp its precise sense and value, we must first recognize the possibility of division, of separation. Yes, man is the only creature on earth who can have a relationship of communion with his Creator, but he is also the only one
who can separate himself from him. Unfortunately, he has frequently turned away from God.

Fortunately many people, like the prodigal son spoken of in the Gospel of Luke (cf. Lk 15: 13), after leaving their father’s house and squandering their inheritance, reach the very bottom and realize how much they have lost (cf. Lk 15: 13-17). Then they set out to return home: “I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned....’” (Lk 15: 18).

God, clearly represented by the father in the parable, welcomes every prodigal child who returns to him. He welcomes him through Christ, in whom the sinner can once again become “righteous” with the righteousness of God. He welcomes him, because for our sake he made his eternal Son to be sin. Yes, only through Christ can we become the righteousness of God (cf. 2 Cor 5: 21).

6. “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.” Here, in synthesis, is what the mystery of the world’s redemption means! We must fully understand the value of the great gift the Father has given us in Jesus. We must keep the eyes of our soul fixed on Christ — the Christ of Gethsemane, Christ scourged, crowned with thorns, carrying the cross and, finally, crucified. Christ took upon himself the burden of the sins of all people, the burden of our own sins, so that through his saving sacrifice we might be reconciled to God.

Today, Saul of Tarsus who became St Paul, stands before us as a witness: he had an extraordinary experience of the power of the Cross on the way to Damascus. The risen Christ revealed himself to him in all his dazzling power: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?... ‘Who are you, Lord?’... ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting’” (Acts 9: 4-5). Today Paul, who had such a powerful experience of the Cross of Christ, addresses a fervent prayer to us: “We beg you not to receive the grace of God in vain.” This grace is offered to us, St Paul insists, by God himself, who tells us today: “In an acceptable time I have heard you; on a day of salvation I have helped you” (2 Cor 6: 1-2).

Mary, Mother of forgiveness, help us to accept the grace of forgiveness which the Jubilee generously offers us. Make the Lent of this extraordinary
Holy Year an acceptable time, a time of reconciliation, a time of salvation for all believers and for everyone who is searching for God!

Review of Other Documents

A review of other documents

_Apostolic Penitentiary_: “The gift of the indulgence,” a note on the dispositions necessary to fruitfully gain a plenary indulgence (January 29, 2000).

_The International Theological Commission_: “Commemoration and reconciliation: the Church and past faults” (March 8, 2000).
ACTIVITIES OF THE PRELATE

• Activities of the Prelate
• Homilies
• Addresses
• Articles and Interviews
• Books published
Activities of the Prelate

Pastoral Trips

From January 11 to 28, Opus Dei’s Prelate, Bishop Echevarría, made a pastoral trip through Central America, spending time with faithful of the Prelature and many others who take part in the means of formation that Opus Dei imparts. He urged forward the Work’s apostolates in the service of the Church and society in the countries that he visited.

He arrived in San José, Costa Rica’s capital, on the 11th. On the following day, after celebrating Holy Mass, he went to the city of Cartago, a few kilometers from San Jose, to pray at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels, the country’s patroness. That same morning he spent time in some centers of the Prelature and in two middle schools where he spoke briefly with teachers, parents and students. In the evening he met with university students at the Miravalles Residence, encouraging them to set ambitious goals in their spiritual lives and apostolate, and to sanctify their work, which now for them is their studies.

In Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, Bishop Echevarría had a get-together at the Convention Center with more than a thousand people. He urged them to live solidarity with those who suffer and to foster during the Jubilee year their thanksgiving to God and desires for conversion. The Prelate referred a number of times to the catastrophe caused by Hurricane Mitch: “Have a sense of solidarity with those affected by it. It is very important for those who know ourselves to be children of God to practice fraternity, to be concerned about others.”

On the morning of the 14th, the Prelate met with Cardenal Obando y Bravo and later with Bishop Luigi Travaglino, the Papal Nuncio. During his stay in Nicaragua, the Prelate also met with groups of university students and professionals who have been taking part in the means of Christian formation imparted by the prelature.

On the morning of the 15th, he left for Panama, where Opus Dei has been established since 1996. The following day, Bishop Echevarría visited Archbishop José Dimas Cedeño in the morning. Later, in a downtown
hotel, he met with some seven hundred people. The Prelate expressed gratitude for what he was learning during his stay in the country: “I am giving thanks to our Lord, because I have learned a lot since arriving in Panama. I was told, and have now seen for myself, that Panamanians are cheerful and hospitable, and possess a virtue that fills me with joy: the refusal to hold grudges.”

On Monday, the 17th, the Prelate returned to Costa Rica, where he met at noon with Archbishop Roman Arrieta of San José and Auxiliary Bishop Antonio Troyo. In the afternoon he visited the Pedregales Conference Center and the adjacent La Pradera School where he met with some 300 young people who take part in the apostolic work of the Prelature in San José. At midmorning the following day, more than five thousand people gathered on the soccer field of the Miravalles student residence to be with Bishop Echevarría. The Prelate of Opus Dei encouraged them to intensify their prayer during the Octave of Christian unity that the Church was celebrating during those days: “Costa Rica is a country with a universal heart. May you pray constantly for the whole world.”

At noon the Prelate visited the Apostolic Nuntiature at the invitation of Bishop Antonio Sozzo, Nuncio to Costa Rica. That same afternoon he also visited some Centers of the Prelature and had a get-together with about 250 students.

The mayor of Guatemala City received Bishop Echevarría at the airport on January 19, and presented him with the keys of the city. On the following morning he went to the Cathedral to gain the Jubilee indulgence and met with Guatemala’s primate, Archbishop Prospero Penados del Barrio.

On the morning of Friday the 21st, the governing body of the University of the Isthmus, founded by faithful of Opus Dei, bestowed upon him the title of Honorary President in a public ceremony in the college auditorium. That afternoon he met with about a hundred diocesan priests and seminarians from various dioceses of Guatemala. He emphasized the importance of forming themselves well and of struggling to grow in their
life of piety. He also encouraged them to be faithful to God and to live obedience and docility towards their respective bishops.

On Saturday, more than 15 thousand people attended a get-together with the Prelate. One of those present asked him in cakchiquel, a native Guatemalan language, how to confront the ignorance and abandonment of the faith found in many persons. Bishop Echevarría recalled the importance of getting to know Christian doctrine well and of learning how to transmit it in a simple way, perhaps with the help of a brief catechism that summarizes the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

At midday, Bishop Echevarría was in Altavista, a center of formational activities in which Blessed Josemaría had stayed in 1975. The center is built on the slope of Mount Alux, some thirty minutes from the capital.

On Sunday morning, the 23rd, the last day of his stay in Guatemala, more than three thousand persons gathered in Kinal, an apostolic and social development project directed by faithful of the Prelature, for another get-together. Taking part were farmers, workers and craftsmen from the areas of San Juan Sacatepéquez, San Miguel Escobar, San Juan el Obispo, and other parts of the interior. The Prelate emphasized the importance of the family and correspondence to God’s love. In the afternoon, before leaving for El Salvador, he met with some seven hundred young men awaiting him on the campus of the University of the Isthmus. The Prelate spoke to them of the need for personal conversion.

On the 24th, in San Salvador, Bishop Echevarría met with various groups of the Prelature’s faithful. He spoke about Christian unity of life, generosity in one’s commitment to God and others, and study. In the afternoon he met with thousands of persons on the sports fields of Lamatepec student residence. On that occasion he dealt with the family and the need to educate children in the faith, and he encouraged all to ardently seek sanctity.

On the following day he met for a few minutes with the members of the board of directors of the APCE, a parents association that has founded several schools. In the afternoon, the Prelate visited the Archbishop at the Cathedral and prayed with him before the tomb of Archbishop Oscar Romero.
In Honduras, on Wednesday the 26th, he had lunch with Archbishop Oscar Andres Rodriguez of Tegucigalpa, who thanked him for the work of the Prelature in his diocese. In the afternoon he spoke to more than four thousand people on the sports fields of the Antares women’s university residence. He praised the Christian outlook of so many Hondurans who suffered the consequences of Hurricane Mitch. “Although they suffer, they know how to love. Although they suffer, they face their hardships with a real Christian spirit. Although they suffer, they do not lose their joy, since God is taking care of us in all circumstances.” Referring to the Jubilee, he emphasized the need for personal conversion, which brings with it the desire to improve. “Conversion,” Bishop Echevarría pointed out, “is not just the most radical type of conversion: going from sin to the state of grace. It also means going from doing good things to doing better ones.” He spoke of love for the sacrament of Confession and of the Church’s efforts to help all the faithful gain the Holy Year indulgences.

On the morning of the 27th the Prelate met with diocesan priests and seminarians and exhorted them to be very united to their bishops and to accept with joy all the pastoral tasks that the bishop wants to give them. In the evening Bishop Echevarría returned to Guatemala. On the following day, January 28, he left for Rome.

Bishop Echevarría arrived in Paris on the evening of April 23, Easter Sunday.

The next morning, he went to the rue du Bac to pray in the chapel of the Miraculous Medal and to gain the Holy Year indulgence. Later, in the auditorium of the Garnelles student residence, he met with faithful of the Prelature, most of them parents, whom he encouraged to give witness to the Gospel. In the afternoon, in the reception rooms of a downtown hotel he had a get-together with married women.

On the following day he received the priests of the Prelature who live in France and also had a get-together with a group of married couples who promote various apostolic social initiatives.
During his stay in Paris, the Prelate visited the Apostolic Nuncio, Bishop Fortunato Baldelliand. On the 26th he left for Lebanon.

Bishop Echevarría arrived in Beirut on the afternoon of April 26. During his four days in Lebanon, he visited a number of bishops and met with faithful of the Prelature and with persons who take part in Opus Dei’s apostolic work. The Prelate frequently recalled the prayer and sacrifices offered by Blessed Josemaría Escrivá for peace in Lebanon and for the mission of Christians there.

On the 27th Bishop Echevarría made a trip to the Shrine of Notre Dame de Harissa, where he prayed for the Pope and the Church. He also visited the Carmelites of Harrisa, a community which, from the confines of their cloister, has been cooperating intensely with the Prelature’s apostolic work through their prayers. Afterwards he traveled to Jbeil (Biblos), where he was received by Maronite Bishop Bechara Rai. In the evening, on his return to Beirut, the Prelate visited Melkite Archbishop Joseph Kallas of Beirut and Jbeil.

During the following days he visited the residence of the Maronite Patriarch at the invitation of His Beatitude Cardinal Pierre Nasrallah Sfeir and also met with Maronite Archbishop Paul Youssef Matar of Beirut.

Various meetings were held with groups of faithful of the Prelature and with families. On the afternoon of the 29th the Prelate met with more than 250 people in a conference hall in the center of Beirut. Catholic families belonging to six different rites were present as well as a number of Orthodox.

On that occasion someone asked him a question related to the emigration of Lebanese Christians to other countries: “What can we tell our friends to encourage them to remain here and preserve the Christian tradition in this country?” The Prelate answered: “I perfectly understand the concern that you have, because Lebanon has to be built up by Lebanese and by people who love Lebanon as the Lebanese do. We have to realize that sometimes emigration is an economic necessity. And we also have to
consider apostolic migration, because the faith has been spread thanks to
Lebanese colonies in Australia, Canada, Brazil, Mexico, and Europe. They
have acted marvelously, these countrymen of yours! At the same time you
have to love this wonderful country with your whole soul, this country that
has given you life. And this means that sometimes you have to know how
to make sacrifices. Perhaps you could live more comfortably in other places.
But if you leave Lebanon, who is going to build up Lebanon, who is going
to take care of this country? It is necessary to be convinced that you
yourselves are going to make this country great, with your sacrifice, with
your work and with your joy. One has to know how to offer up certain
limitations; if not, the country will not be built up as it should be: with the
contribution of your children. And you who are here, don’t leave this
country if it is merely for reasons of comfort. Strive to make this country
greater. How? With your work that is well-done, with your joy, with your
sincerity, spreading everywhere the joy of being children of God. And you
will see how Lebanon will grow.”

On the 30th the Prelate returned to Rome.

At the invitation of the bishop of Leiria-Fatima, the Prelate of
Opus Dei traveled to Portugal to take part in the beatification ceremony for
the little shepherds of Fatima, Jacinta and Francisco Marto.

Bishop Echevarría stayed in Portugal from May 11 to 14. Besides
taking part in the events at Fatima, he also had the opportunity to visit the
Oratorio do Beato Josemaría Escrivá, in Lisbon. Blessed Josemaría is the first
pilgrim to Fatima who has been raised to the altars.

On the last day of his stay he met with various groups of faithful of the
Prelature. In one of these informal gatherings, the Prelate of Opus Dei
spoke of the Marian piety which is so deep and widespread among the
Portuguese. He also answered questions about the spirit of conversion in
the Holy Year, the sacrament of Penance, children’s love for their parents,
and how to make professional work compatible with dedication to one’s
family.
Another of these family reunions took place in the auditorium of one of the Schools of the University of Lisbon. After referring to the ceremony of beatification of the two little shepherds, he spoke of the apostolic responsibility of women in this moment in history. He emphasized the need for a spirit of personal apostolate in one’s words and conduct and also for an active presence in defending the dignity of women.

Establishment of new Centers of the Prelature

The Vicars of the Prelate have established new Centers of the Prelature in the following locations:

Curitiba (Brazil), Kinshasa-Kimbondo (Democratic Republic of the Congo), León (Mexico), Mexico City, Querétaro (Mexico), San José (Costa Rica), Singapore and Tegucigalpa (Honduras).

Participation in the beatification ceremony of Francisco and Jacinta Marto

Invited by the bishop of Leiria-Fatima, the Prelate of Opus Dei was in Portugal to take part in the ceremony of beatification of the little shepherds of Fatima, Jacinta and Francisco Marto, which was celebrated by His Holiness John Paul II on May 13.

Priestly Ordinations

Bishop Javier Echevarría conferred priestly ordination on eleven deacons of the Prelature on March 28 in Rome, in the Basilica of St.
Eugene. This day also marked the 75th anniversary of the priestly ordination of Blessed Josemaría Escriva. The new priests come from six countries: Brazil, France, Italy, México, The Philippines, and Spain.

To read the full version of Romana, you can subscribe to the print edition.

Celebration of the Chrism Mass

On April 19 the Prelate of Opus Dei celebrated the Chrism Mass in the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, in Rome.

As in previous years, and in accord with provisions of the liturgical regulations, the Chrism Mass was advanced to Wednesday of Holy Week so that the priests taking part would be able to concelebrate the Chrism Mass with the Holy Father on the morning of Holy Thursday in St. Peter’s Basilica.

Participation in a public consistory

Bishop Echevarría, the Prelate of Opus Dei, took part on March 10 in the Ordinary Public Consistory convoked by the Holy Father for the canonization of Agustin Tchao, priest, and other martyrs in China (17th to 20th centuries); Cristobal Magallanes and twenty-four companions, priests and laymen, martyrs; Jose Maria de Yermo y Parres, priest, founder of the Congregation of the Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of the Poor; Maria Josefa of the Heart of Jesus Sancho Guerra, foundress of the Institute of the Servants of Jesus; Katherine Mary Drexel, foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Most Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People; Maria Faustina Kowalska, religious of the Institute of the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy.
Evening Prayer in St. Peter’s Basilica

At 7:30 on the evening of April 6, Bishop Echevarría presided at the “Evening Prayer” held everyday during the Jubilee in the atrium of St. Peter’s Basilica. [1] On the Thursdays in Lent, students from the various universities in Rome took part in this liturgical act, with a radio hookup to another European university.

On this occasion some two thousand students from the University Campus Biomedico of Rome took part, in conjunction with a radio hookup to the International University of Catalonia in Barcelona. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the participants received the Pope’s blessing by radio.


Address at the prayer vigil as part of the priests’ Jubilee

A “Priests’ Jubilee” was held in Rome from May 14 to 18, which ended with a Eucharistic concelebration in St. Peter’s Square in which more than four thousand priests participated. It coincided with the Holy Father’s eightieth birthday.

Among the numerous ceremonies that took place during those days, a prayer vigil was held on May 17th in which persons from all over the world spoke of priestly witness in the 20th Century. Bishop Javier Echevarría spoke about the priestly example of Blessed Josemaría, on the day that marked the eighth anniversary of his beatification. [2]

On the occasion of the priestly ordination of deacons of the Prelature, in the Basilica of St. Eugene, Rome (March 28, 2000)

Dear brothers and sisters.

Beloved candidates to the priesthood.

Our joy overflows today at the priestly ordination of this group of deacons of the Prelature of Opus Dei, a day that marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the ordination of Blessed Josemaría. Let us give thanks to God, asking the Holy Trinity, through the intercession of this holy priest, to send many faithful vocations to the seminaries and to make all priests very holy.

Those of us that are here present have perhaps read how God sowed in the heart of Blessed Josemaría a divine restlessness, inspirations of the Paraclete that moved his soul deeply, and how he responded with an ever-growing generosity. Until finally, when he was sixteen, he decided to tell his parents, and with their consent, he began studying for the priesthood. He didn’t know what God was asking of him, but he understood that the priesthood was the path that would allow him to be totally available for what some day would be clear to him, as he said with all simplicity in 1973: “Why did I become a priest? Because I thought that it would be easier to fulfill God’s will, which I wasn’t sure of yet. For eight years I had sensed that he was asking something of me, but I didn’t know what it was, until 1928 when I learned what it was. That is why I became a priest.”

All men, and in a special way Christians, have before our eyes a path that leads to heaven, a personal path that God has lovingly prepared from all eternity for each one of us. As St. Paul says, God the Father, in Christ Jesus, chose us before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him, in charity. This divine call to holiness, universal and specific at the same time, unfolds for the greater part of men and women within the framework of the normal circumstances of their
ordinary life. Are we conscious of this truth? Are we open to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, who impels us and guides us to identify ourselves with Jesus Christ? Do we show ourselves disposed with deeds, not only with words,[3] to identify our will and our aspirations with the divine Will and with the plans that our heavenly Father has drawn up for us, in order to make us happy?

The Most Holy Trinity, sacramentally configuring Blessed Josemaría with Christ the Priest, planted in his soul a very fruitful seed, that would bear its fruit in the world a few years later with the foundation of Opus Dei. It was then, on October 2, 1928, that he saw clearly his personal vocation and understood that God had been preparing him through his prayer and penance to become the patriarch of this portion of the People of God that would spread from pole to pole, until the end of time, with the mission within the Church of reminding people of the call to holiness. This call is addressed to all men and women, in their professional work and in the fulfillment of their ordinary duties as Christians, and as citizens.

How can we fail to raise fervent acts of thanksgiving to God for the gift of our Father’s priesthood, which has been and will always be so fruitful? Join me in giving thanks. And let us beseech our Lord that there not be lacking in the Church the necessary priests, and that they may be humble, generous: holy!

I now direct myself especially to those who are about to receive the ministerial priesthood, also because you are heirs to the treasure of Blessed Josemaría’s sanctity. Like the other faithful of the Prelature, you are sons of Blessed Josemaría’s priestly heart. But from now on you will also be his sons thanks to a new title. Let us all meditate on those words that our holy Founder wrote so many years ago, referring to the first ordination of priests in Opus Dei: “I prayed with great confidence and fervor, over many years, for your brothers who would be ordained and for those who would later follow their path. I prayed so much that I can affirm that all the priests in Opus Dei are sons of my prayer.”[4]

May you never forget it: you are sons in a special way of the prayer and sacrifice of our Father. He taught us many things about the priesthood. I will limit myself now to comment briefly on some characteristics of the
priestly vocation, making use of notes that our Father took on small pieces of paper that he always carried with him and that he later meditated on with calm in his prayer.

The first of these notes goes directly to the core of what I want to remind you of: “The priestly vocation,” writes Blessed Josemaria, “brings with it the demand of holiness. This holiness is not just any kind of holiness, a common holiness, nor even just an eminent holiness. It requires heroic holiness.”[5] You have to strive to be truly saints. Holiness is the goal that all Christians are called to, but the priest has a special duty to be an example. You will achieve it—I repeat, echoing our Father’s message—if you act at all times as men in love. Never allow routine to enter into the horizon of your life. Fulfil with love all the duties, the joyful duties, of your new condition: act with all the love that your heart is capable of. It will be easy to do so if you strive for a new conversion every day, as any Christian who wants to be consistent with his faith ought to do.

A priest cannot keep for himself the holiness he is called to attain. He must communicate it to those around him. Jesus Christ, when he instituted the Eucharist and the priesthood at the Last Supper, said to the Apostles: “for them do I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.”[6] Blessed Josemaria makes use of these words of our Lord when he writes: “The priest is called to sanctify himself and to sanctify.”[7] And also: “Your work, priest, is not only to save souls, but to sanctify them.”[8]

You have in front of you an immense panorama. There are no borders to the field where the divine Sower sends you out to sow, cultivate and gather in the harvest of souls that our Father God expects.[9] God’s grace is especially abundant during the Holy Year. And you, priests of the year 2000, have to collaborate with all your strength, in union with the lay faithful, in a new flourishing of Christian life in the third millennium. In this context, I invite you to meditate on some considerations of John Paul II in one of his Letters to priests: “In our ministry, especially our liturgical ministry, we must always be aware that we are on a pilgrimage to the Father, guided by the Son in the Holy Spirit. It is precisely to this awareness that we are called by the words with which we conclude every prayer: ‘Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.’”[10]
Authority to announce the Word of God; power to forgive sins and infuse grace through the administration of the sacraments, especially Penance and the Eucharist: these are the fundamental means that the Church confers on you today for the fulfillment of your mission. But in order to obtain lasting fruits, there is no other way than to identify yourselves more and more closely with Christ. The sacrament that you are about to receive—and that will configure you with Christ the Head of the Church—will be exercised especially each time that you pronounce the words of the sacramental absolution in Confession, each time that, in the Mass, you renew the Sacrifice of Calvary. “How could these wondrous words not be at the very heart of every priestly life? Let us repeat them every time as if it were the first! Let us take care that they are never said out of habit. They express the fullest realization of our priesthood.”[11]

Strive to do so each day, sustained by your trust in God’s grace. Thus there will become a reality in each of you that other affirmation of Blessed Josemaria: “A priest ought to continuously be a crucifix.”[12] May all men and women, on seeing your life, on observing how you carry out your sacred ministry, be drawn, by the force of your example, to Christ our Lord. The goal placed before you is high, but not inaccessible. The whole Church is praying for you and for all the priests of the world.

I invite you all to continue praying for the Pope and for the apostolic fruits of his recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land; for all the Bishops of the Church, and in a special way for the Vicar Cardinal of Rome; for all the priests in the world. I extend to your parents and brothers and sisters my congratulations for this gift God is bestowing on your families, and I ask them to pray for you and for all priests.

We entrust these intentions, and those that each one holds in his heart, to Blessed Josemaria, asking him to present them to the Blessed Virgin Mary: Mother of God and Mother of mankind, Mother of all Christians and especially of priests. Holy Mary will intercede before her Son Jesus, who holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.[13] Amen.
At the administration of Confirmation at the Basilica of St. Eugene, Rome (June 11, 2000)

My dear brothers and sisters, and dear young people who are about to receive the sacrament of Confirmation.

“When the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning.”[1] These words addressed by Jesus to the Apostles during the Last Supper could be perfectly applied to each of those about to be confirmed in this celebration. Each of you, my dear young people, will...
receive, from the Father and the Son, the Spirit of Truth, “of comforters the best, the soul’s most welcome guest,” as this solemnity’s liturgy describes him.\[2\] The Holy Spirit will enable you to give witness to the truth and to defend the Christian faith and spread it around you. From now on, you will be stronger and will acquire the Christian maturity that will give you the energy needed for the fight against sin and the courage necessary to be, without complexes, witnesses of Christ in the families that you are in touch with, among your friends, in your classrooms or places of work. You will become “good soldiers of Christ Jesus,” \[3\] as the tradition of the Church assures us and as Blessed Josemaría liked to repeat.

Let us turn our thoughts to the events at Pentecost. While the Apostles were gathered in the Cenacle, “suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”\[4\] Today as well, two thousand years later, the Spirit will descend on each of you and fill you with the fire of his divine love, so that you can announce to the world, as the apostles did, the marvelous works of God.

My dear young people, during the past years you have been preparing to receive this great sacrament, with the help of your families, and the catechists and priests of this parish, who have been solicitously accompanying you on your path. You have grasped more deeply the fundamentals of our faith. You have learned to participate more conscientiously in the liturgical celebrations of the Church, to express your faith in deeds and lead a Christian life consistent with the Gospel. I want to propose for your reflection a few words of Blessed Josemaría, which can provide a reliable point of reference for your whole life:

“God is my Father! If you meditate on it, you will never let go of this consoling thought.

“Jesus is my dear Friend (another thrilling discovery) who loves me with all the divine madness of his Heart.

“The Holy Spirit is my Consoler, who guides my every step along the road.
“Consider this often: you are God’s—and God is yours.”[5]

The sacrament of Confirmation will perfect in you the work begun in Baptism: you will receive “the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.”[6] In a few moments, when I place my hands on your head, I will ask Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to grant to each of you the Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, the spirit of holy fear of God.

The Holy Spirit, who comes to the soul in an invisible but real way, infuses into it God’s charity. He is the one who makes of us a single body, in the unity of the Christian vocation and in the multiplicity of our personal situations. He is the one who sanctifies and unites the Church.

The Holy Spirit will perfect in you your resemblance to Christ and unite you more strongly, as living members, to his Mystical Body, the Church. Having been justified in Baptism, you will now receive “the power of the Holy Spirit”[7] and be marked with the sign of the cross on your forehead. You will thus bring to the world the good witness of Christ crucified and resurrected. As St. Paul reminds us in his letter to the Galatians, you will be able to walk in conformity with the Spirit and you will be strengthened for the battle against the deeds of the flesh. These deeds, as St. Paul tells us, are well known: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, etc. In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. [8] Your life, enriched by these fruits of the Spirit, will give forth, as St. Paul says, the fragrance of Christ,[9] for the spiritual growth of the whole Church.

We are in the year of the great Jubilee, in which we celebrate the two thousandth anniversary of the mystery of the Incarnation. As the Pope reminds us in his letter to Young People for the Fifteenth World Youth Day, the Jubilee is a marvelous occasion for a great spiritual renewal and for an extraordinary celebration of God’s love for humanity.[10]

The Pope writes: God “calls us to be his children, living members of Christ’s Mystical Body, luminous temples of the Spirit of Love. He calls us to be his. He wants us all to be holy. Dear young people, may you truly
aspire to be holy, as He is holy.... Don’t be afraid to be the saints of the new millennium!”[11]

May Pope John Paul II’s ardent words find a generous acceptance today in each of your hearts. Strengthened by the Holy Spirit, have the courage to always say Yes to the demands of Christ’s love, conscious of the marvelous responsibility that God has entrusted to you. Strive to transmit to your friends a credible witness of your faith, by your life of generous and loyal service to all of your brothers and sisters, and, in a special way, to those who are in difficult circumstances or who are suffering physically or spiritually. God’s children, sustained by the strength of the Spirit, should not be afraid to say no to anything that would separate us from God’s friendship, even though others may do those things. I assure you, although it might appear otherwise, that a life lived apart from God is a very sad life. All of us present here will pray with all our heart that the Paraclete will truly make of you the apostles of the new millennium, so that all mankind may know the message of love and truth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You will fulfill this desire if you follow the advice of Blessed Josemaria: “Love the Third Person of the most Blessed Trinity. Listen in the intimacy of your being to the divine motions of encouragement or reproach you receive from him. Walk through the earth in the light that is poured out in your soul. And the God of hope will fill us with all peace, so that this hope may grow in us each day, by the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 15:13).”[12]

Let us turn our eyes to Mary, Mother of the Redeemer and Mother of each of us. We entrust our resolutions today to her, Spouse of God the Holy Spirit, so that through her maternal solicitude they will become a joyful reality in our life. Amen.

[2] Solemnity of Pentecost, Sequence Veni, Sancte Spiritus
Filii sanctorum sumus! We are children of saints, says the Latin text of the book of Tobias. This exclamation arises spontaneously to our lips as we commemorate the 25th anniversary of Blessed Josemaria’s entrance into heaven. We are children of a saint! In presenting the saints for the faithful’s veneration, the Church holds up examples that spur us on to seek the fullness of God’s love, sanctity, each in accord with his or her own Christian vocation. And, at the same time, we are encouraged to entrust ourselves to their intercession in heaven.

On June 26, 1975, our Lord called to himself one who had truly been a father to us. That separation was an unexpected blow. For a few moments we felt like orphans, deprived of the strong and amiable presence of the one who had shown us the paths of sanctity in the world. But we soon realized that his help had become even more constant and efficacious. As Don Alvaro del Portillo, the first successor of Blessed Josemaria at the helm of Opus Dei, helped us see, his intercession now overcomes the barriers of time and space in so many needs both great and small, spiritual and
material. The path of sanctity “in the midst of the bustle of the street,” as he liked to say, which he opened up for us with his steps on earth, had become more attainable now that the Father was supporting the efforts of each one of us from heaven.

In these twenty-five years, his spiritual paternity has notably expanded. Men and women of every race, language, culture and social condition have experienced his solicitude in the most varying circumstances. Like a good father, he hears our pleas and makes them his own, presenting them to our Lord. This reality prevents us from becoming pessimistic about the state of the world, seeing only the negative aspects of contemporary culture, work, and people’s daily behavior. We must not forget that there are many people who pray, many souls who are seeking God. More clearly each day, we see that Blessed Josemaría is one of the instruments chosen by divine providence to nourish, channel and make fruitful this thirst for God. He was an instrument chosen to lead the world to God. What we read in The Way is true: “These world crises are crises of saints.”[2] These words are a vibrant call directed to our Christian consciences that we have to heed. We have to truly desire to become saints. God wants it. Do we also want it? It is not an impossible goal, an excessive burden; rather it is a sign of divine predilection, and therefore an immense privilege. What a grave mistake it would be, and how bitter we would become, if we were to turn our back on this call!

Pope Pius XII, the first Pope who personally met Blessed Josemaría, said of him: “He is a true saint, a man sent by God for our times.”[3] Nor did Pope Paul VI hesitate to highlight “his extraordinary role in the history of the Church.”[4] And the Pontifical decree on the Founder of Opus Dei’s heroic virtues, which concluded the important first step of his path to the altars, stressed how attuned to contemporary needs is his “message of sanctification in and through earthly realities.” “His message is destined to endure as an inexhaustible source of spiritual light regardless of changing epochs and situations.”[5] From year to year his intercession from heaven grows in extension and intensity. We have seen a great number of real miracles, in the full sense of the term, obtained in many countries through Blessed Josemaría’s intercession. As the decree just mentioned points out, “Even during his lifetime, the Servant of God had a reputation for
exceptional holiness. After his death, this reputation spread worldwide. In many countries it has become part of popular piety."[6]

The Apostolic Brief for his beatification describes the influence of his preaching and his priestly activity in the following terms: “He opened up new horizons for a deeper Christianization of society. The Founder of Opus Dei pointed out that the universal nature of the call to full union with Christ means that one can find God in any human activity... [Blessed Josemaria] has highlighted all the redemptive power of the faith, and its capacity to transform both individuals and the social structures in which men and women work out their ideals and their ambitions.”[7]

These “horizons” are still new. Blessed Josemaria’s mission is still far from being completed. The task of collaborating with Christ begins again continually with each person who discovers the footsteps of God in the world and perceives the divine call to follow them. It is our task to take up this mission anew. Jesus addresses to each of us the words that he spoke to Peter at the miraculous catch of fish: “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”[8]

Let us ask Blessed Josemaria to help us to raise our sight above our daily occupations, which frequently lead us to become closed in on ourselves and not to see beyond our own problems. Let us ask him to strengthen our awareness of the apostolic mission to which we have been called by baptism. Father, help us to see around us, in our family, in our professional environment, among our acquaintances and friends, souls who must be led to Christ. Father, help us to cry out, as you taught us: “Jesus, souls! Apostolic souls! They are for you, for your glory. Help us to listen to Christ’s imperative invitation in the Gospel of today’s Mass: “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”

If we meditate on Christ’s life, we will understand that the disciple, that is, every Christian, should put himself at the service of the Master and spread his teachings, as the Father reminds us in The Way: “Bear in mind, my son, that you’re not just a soul who has joined other souls in order to do a good thing. —That’s a lot, but it’s still little. You are the Apostle who is carrying out an imperative command from Christ.”[10]
“I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled.”[11] How often these burning words of Jesus fed Blessed Josemaria’s prayer! In this Jubilee Year divine grace seems to be impelling us towards greater apostolic goals. If we, by our hope-filled words and the eloquent witness of the joy that floods those who encounter God’s forgiveness anew, succeed in getting just one person to approach the sacrament of Confession, we will have attained a marvelous fruit, a result that will compensate us for any sacrifice.

Yesterday the International Eucharistic Congress ended. It has been a series of days of close union by all Catholics with the Holy Father, united around the Blessed Sacrament. We should continue addressing to Jesus, really present among us, our uninterrupted prayer for the Pope and his intentions, for the bishops in communion with Peter, for the whole Church. The Eucharist builds up the Church. Love for souls, apostolic zeal, has its most effective nourishment in union with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Ever living and watching over us, hidden in the “prison of love” that is the Tabernacle, our Lord hears our trusting words, our laments, our sighs, while inviting us to turn our eyes to all those who are suffering around us and who so urgently need to rediscover the light of Christ.

When all is said and done, what is the fundamental lesson that Blessed Josemaria offers us? That we are the Church, and the Church can never stop working for the good of all mankind. That in Christ’s Church we must all give something to others: the witness of a faith lived without complexes, a constant prayer, a charity shown by striving to understand others and offering clear and disinterested advice, firmly correcting them when needed, the solidarity of our discrete fraternal help.

All of this is not too much to ask, because Christ himself acts and speaks in his apostles. Let us ask him to help us. Let us also go confidently to the intercession of Blessed Josemaria. As the Father, he spent every moment of his life for his daughters and sons. He wrote: “I cannot stop raising my heart in thanksgiving to God, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named (Eph 3:15), for having given me this spiritual paternity which, by his grace, I have assumed with the full awareness that I am on earth solely to carry it out. Therefore, I love you with the heart of a father and a mother.”[12] In heaven he continues to be our Father. And the
path that he points out to us to travel safely on our journey is Mary. To her, Queen of the Apostles, we entrust the apostolic yearnings that this anniversary stirs up in our hearts. Amen.


[6] Ibid.


Back to Contents

On the sixth anniversary of the death of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, preached in the Basilica of St. Eugene, Rome (March 23, 2000)

“I know that my Redeemer lives.” The book of Job transmits to us these words, which provide a firm basis for a Christian’s faith and hope: “I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and...I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and
not another.”[1] Our Christian faith gives us the certainty that the souls of the just, as soon as they leave the body, if they are completely purified from all punishment due to sins that have been forgiven, immediately enjoy the vision of God. And after the final judgment, with all the men and women of all times, they will be reunited with their own body, resurrected by God’s almighty power.

In the light of this consoling truth, we commemorate today the sixth anniversary of the death of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. We are offering the Holy Sacrifice for the eternal rest of the chosen soul who for nineteen years was for us in Opus Dei both Father and Shepherd. Those who had the good fortune of knowing him and being alongside him, and many other people, are convinced of the sanctity of his generous life. Therefore, many of those here present—without trying to anticipate the Church’s judgment—are convinced that he already enjoys the beatific vision and intercedes effectively for us before the Blessed Trinity.

Therefore, I am not surprised at how the reputation of sanctity of this “exemplary pastor in the service of the Church and most faithful son and successor to Blessed Josemaria, the Founder of Opus Dei,”[2] as the prayer for private devotion calls him, has extended during these years throughout the whole world. Today I would like to emphasize that Don Alvaro’s exemplary life in the service of the Church and of souls grew daily as a direct consequence of his being Blessed Josemaria’s “most faithful son.”

One of the aspects of Don Alvaro’s life that was noticed most frequently by those who dealt with him was his faithfulness in serving. This virtue saturated every corner of his life: his piety towards God, his work, his relations with other men and women. It showed itself to us as a complete faithfulness, without any blemishes, to a single Christian vocation, the call to personal sanctity and apostolate: first as a layman, later as a priest and, finally, as the Prelate of Opus Dei and as bishop. In the prayer for private devotion we are invited to pray: “Help me to respond faithfully to the demands of my Christian vocation and teach me to turn every moment and circumstance of my life into an occasion of loving You and serving the kingdom of Jesus Christ.”[3]
What was the deepest source of Don Alvaro’s constant loyalty? Undoubtedly it stemmed from his sense of divine filiation in Christ, witness to which is also given by St. Paul’s words in his epistle to the Romans that we have just read: “You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship [in which] we cry: Abba, Father!”[4]

All of us, my sisters and brothers, can and should live this spirit of divine filiation at every moment: “it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”[5] I know that many people in a great variety of circumstances are asking the Blessed Trinity for this gift through to the intercession of this good and faithful servant.[6] As Don Alvaro taught us, above all by his example, the best path for obtaining this grace is devout and loving participation in the Holy Mass, where we strengthen and renew the priestly soul that every Christian receives at baptism. “A priestly soul,” wrote Don Alvaro in one of his pastoral letters, “consists in having the same sentiments as Christ the Priest. It means seeking to fulfill God’s will at every moment and thus offer our whole life to God the Father, in union with Christ, in order to co-redeem with Him thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit.”[7]

“No Christian community is built up,” the Second Vatican Council says succinctly, “which does not grow from and hinge on the celebration of the most holy Eucharist.”[8] From this ever-flowing font there wells forth all the spiritual and apostolic fruitfulness of the Christian. The Eucharistic sacrifice “is therefore the center and root of the whole life”[9] not only of priests, but of all of the members of the People of God, as Blessed Josemaria taught. He liked to say that the Holy Mass puts us “in the presence of the primordial mysteries of the faith, because it is the very gift of the Trinity to the Church. Thus we understand that the Mass is the center and the root of the spiritual life of the Christian. It is the goal of all the sacraments.”[10]

I suggest to you, and to myself in the first place, that we examine our personal dispositions every time that we prepare to celebrate or to assist at Holy Mass. Let us not forget to prepare ourselves, if necessary, with a good confession, to receive Jesus in the Sacred Host. And let us dedicate some minutes after communion to recollection and to giving thanks to our Lord.
I personally witnessed how Don Alvaro strove to prepare himself very well each day for Holy Mass and communion; thus his union with God increased daily throughout the years.

Before ending, I ask you, although I am sure that you are already joyfully doing so, that you pray a lot for the apostolic fruit of the pilgrimage that our Holy Father John Paul II is carrying out in Jesus’ homeland, the Holy Land. The Pope himself has been asking us for our prayers for some time; we cannot fail in this true filial duty. Divine providence has willed that precisely today, according to his schedule, he will be celebrating Holy Mass in the Cenacle in Jerusalem. In the nearby church, Don Alvaro six years ago renewed the Holy Sacrifice of Calvary sacramentally for the last time. When I told this to the Holy Father he was very moved by this final caress that our Lord deigned to give his servant, letting him celebrate his last Mass in the place where Jesus instituted the Eucharist.

This providential coincidence moves me to suggest that you commend all of John Paul II’s intentions to the intercession of Blessed Josemaría and of Bishop del Portillo, so that the desire he expressed in the prayer composed for the Holy Year may become a reality: “By your grace, O Father, may the Jubilee Year be a time of deep conversion and of joyful return to you. May it be a time of reconciliation between people, and of peace restored among nations, a time when swords are beaten into ploughshares and the clash of arms gives way to songs of peace. Father, grant that we may live this Jubilee Year docile to the voice of the Spirit, faithful to the way of Christ, diligent in listening to your word and in approaching the well-springs of grace.”[11]

Within a few days, on March 28th, we will celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the priestly ordination of Blessed Josemaría. On this day I will have the joy of administering the order of the priesthood to a number of deacons of the Prelature of Opus Dei in the Basilica of St. Eugene. I entrust them from this moment to your prayers, so that they be holy, learned and joyful priests, as was Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, following faithfully in the footsteps of Blessed Josemaría.

Let us entrust all our petitions to our Lady’s hands, so that holy Mary, the all-powerful supplicant, may present them before the Father, the Son


[4] Second reading (*Rm* 8:15)


At the dedication of the church of the *Sedes Sapientiæ* international priests’ residence, Rome (May 27, 2000)

*O Come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise.*[1]

My dear teachers and seminarians:

Today there springs from our heart a song of thanksgiving to the Blessed Trinity for the final completion of the *Sedes Sapientiæ* International Seminary’s new home. In dedicating this chapel we see the coronation of years of intense work that began when my beloved predecessor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, initiated this project. We can truly consider today’s solemn ceremony as the laying of “the final stone” of the
new building that houses you and that is destined for the formation of future diocesan priests from all over the world.

The Preface of the Holy Mass reminds us of the reasons for our praise: “We thank you now for this house of prayer in which you bless your family as we come to you on pilgrimage. Here you reveal your presence by sacramental signs, and make us one with you through the unseen bond of grace.”[2] As we dedicate this church, we contemplate the merciful face of God our Father, who has loved us so much that he has established his dwelling place among us and given us his only begotten Son. While we reflect on how He whom heaven and earth cannot contain begins to inhabit in a special way this house built by men’s hands,[3] there arises spontaneously to our lips the prayer with which Solomon dedicated the temple in Jerusalem: Hear, O Lord, our prayers and pardon our sins! Today we want to renew our resolution to dedicate our whole being to your service, so that you yourself will make us a living temple in the Spirit, until that day when we rejoice in you forever in the heavenly Jerusalem. We ask you, O Lord, not to allow our hearts to be hardened,[4] and to make us attentive to your word, the living and efficacious word that penetrates to the joints of the spirit and the soul,[5] the only word that can bring about in us the deep and lasting conversion to which the Great Jubilee exhorts us.

To be converted means, in a certain sense, to be renewed, leaving behind everything that prevents us from faithfully reflecting Christ’s face. This conversion is unobtainable by human strength alone. It is, first of all, a grace, a gift of God. Attentive meditation on the word of Christ along with assiduous and fervent reception of the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist are the chief means to make this grace flow from the depths of our being, as Jesus revealed to the Samaritan woman: Si scires donum Dei! “If you knew the gift of God and who it is who is saying to you, ‘give me a drink,’ you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”[6] This gift of God is the Holy Spirit who dwells in our soul through grace. He is the only one capable of renewing all things, as the book of Revelation reminds us,[7] So let us go to the divine Paraclete and ask him to renew our heart and help us discover the tenderness of Christ’s love, this God-with-us,[8] who has deigned to come to live in our house and to remain there.
I noted earlier that the birth of this international seminary is closely linked to the priestly heart of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. My predecessor wished, in this way, to satisfy a profound aspiration of Blessed Josemaría Escriva: to foster in the souls of all the Christian faithful, both laity and priests, a profound veneration for and sincere union with the person and teachings of the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ and the visible foundation of the Church’s unity. Blessed Josemaría condensed all of this into the expression “to become Roman.” Obviously, since he had such a great love for the variety and richness of the Church’s different rites, he did not mean this in a liturgical or ritual sense, but in a much deeper sense, which goes back to the very roots of the Church founded by Christ. “To be Roman,” he explained, “does not entail any manifestation of provincialism, but rather of authentic ecumenism. It presupposes the desire to enlarge our heart, to open it to all men and women with the redemptive zeal of Christ, who seeks out and welcomes everyone, for he has loved everyone first.”

A great, truly Catholic heart, open to everyone, grows only in a climate of prayer, nourished by untiring contemplation of the goodness of Jesus, who wants to live in our midst. It is in prayer that we learn to “worship God in spirit and in truth.” Prayer is the essential means to attain sanctity. Although the Divine Teacher asks all Christians to pray, this is absolutely indispensable for the priest. As the Holy Father writes: “Constantly in contact with the holiness of God, the priest must himself become holy. His very ministry commits him to a way of life inspired by the radicalism of the Gospel.... From here stems the particular need for prayer in his life. Prayer finds its source in God’s holiness and is at the same time our response to this holiness. I once wrote: ‘Prayer makes the priest and through prayer the priest becomes himself.’ Before all else the priest must indeed be a man of prayer, convinced that time devoted to personal encounter with God is always spent in the best way possible. This not only benefits him; it also benefits his apostolic work.”

To worship God in spirit and in truth also means to learn to love the Cross. “This truth about God,” said the Pope in his Way of the Cross on this past Good Friday, “has been revealed through the cross. Could he not have revealed it in some other way? Perhaps so. Nevertheless, God chose the cross. The Father chose the cross for his Son, and his Son took it upon his
shoulders and carried it to the mount of Calvary, and on it offered his life.... The cross is the symbol of love without limits.”[12]

Prayer and love for the cross are, together with fraternal charity, essential elements in any priestly spirituality.[13] All of these elements flow from the Eucharist. I ask our Lord, through the intercession of Blessed Josemaria, to help all of us, living stones of the Church,[14] to become every more deeply “Eucharistic souls,” men who love the Blessed Sacrament and find there the meaning of their own lives.

Before ending, I would like to remind you that our act of thanksgiving to God for this new facility should be joined to thanksgiving to those who daily make possible, through their prayer and generous material help, the success of this International Seminary. Let us pray to God for all of our benefactors, living and dead, asking that he repay their generosity with eternal life.

Try also to be grateful and loyal to the rector of this seminary, to those in charge of your formation and to your colleagues. Let me insist: collaborate with those who are directing this seminary, because they are at your service and know that to govern is to serve, even when this service requires the courage to correct or set higher goals, if need be. I assure you that all are praying every day that you be faithful to our Lord.

My dear seminarians and professors, you know that in the construction of this church old materials were also used which, reworked and transformed, now look completely new. We too, moved by the breath of the Spirit who renews all things,[15] should constantly renew our intellect and heart to make them a worthy habitation for the Most Blessed Trinity. Let us ask our Mother Holy Mary, Sedes Sapientiae, to teach us to understand the wisdom of the Cross, so that we may become, here in Rome and later throughout the world, worshipers in spirit and in truth, such as the Father is always seeking. Amen.


Addresses

Words at the prayer vigil celebrated as part of the Jubilee of Priests (May 17, 2000)

Evening Prayer of the Jubilee, in St. Peter’s Square (April 6, 2000)
Articles and Interviews

Interview by Miguel Ángel Jimeno and Fernando López Pan, published in the magazine Nuestro Tiempo, Pamplona, Spain (January-February, 2000)

Is the University of Navarre in the year 2000 what its Founder, Blessed Josemaria Escriva, imagined it would be?

Without a doubt, yes. Blessed Josemaria promoted numerous initiatives all over the world. And he conceived of many others that have not yet been born. These were the fruit of his apostolic zeal, of his enterprising, creative, optimistic spirit. He used to make these plans with other persons who also had a creative spirit, who instead of simply complaining about problems sought for ways to solve them. But he never felt that he was the one in charge of those projects; rather, he saw himself as a “sower”—a sower of ideas.

Blessed Josemaria often told us about his “dreams” for the University of Navarre: it would be a place where people could study peacefully, where their freedom would be respected and they could live in harmony, serving one another. I am sure that, if he were alive today, he would greatly enjoy walking around the campus, chatting with the professors, workers and students, as he often did when this adventure was just beginning. But what he would most enjoy would be seeing that the university is being born anew each day from the work, the prayer and the dreams of those who work there.

What should be the role of the university in society today? Which of the university’s traits should be permanent and which can and should be adapted to changing social, economic and cultural circumstances?
The university should not merely “adapt” to new circumstances, but should itself be at the origin of change, to borrow words of Blessed Josemaria which he used in a different context. This innovative approach means appreciating the accomplishments of the past, as well as, of course, the values which cannot change.

The university is the soil where ideas and projects capable of generating social progress are cultivated. In recent years, new institutions devoted to research have been born, and some of these have ample resources to carry out specialized work. But the university continues to be a privileged forum for transmitting wisdom.

A comprehensive vision, awareness of one’s own mission of service, the primacy of the person, an innovative spirit, devoting sufficient time to study and research—these are some of the traits which, in my judgment, the university should preserve if it is to continue being on the cutting edge of progress.

Scientific knowledge is growing so quickly that researchers have to focus on very specialized topics, which means that they run the risk of losing sight of the “big picture.” Do you think it’s possible to combine specialized research with respect for the fundamental truths about man, and could you give some examples of how this can be done?

I think it’s not only possible but essential to do so. I think it’s very important for a university professor not to lose sight of the “big picture”: all work should help us to grow in knowledge about ourselves and about the world and to integrate these convictions into a consistent life-style. In my opinion, professors must give students knowledge that is philosophically sound, which will help them discover the meaning of life. It’s not enough to teach students how to produce, how to show a gain, how to make money. What really matters is that they learn to live rightly.

I realize that it’s not easy to keep sight of the whole. There is little time and much to do. If I had to give a piece of advice (though I would rather ask professors for their advice), I would say, do whatever possible to broaden one’s outlook: read the classics, follow important current events and issues, take a sincere interest in the work and ideas of one’s colleagues, foster communication and dialogue among the different fields of study, be
open to the truth and have the humility needed to correct one's ideas and to begin again as often as necessary.

*What are your expectations as regards the research work of the professors? What would you say to professors and researchers of the University of Navarre?*

I would ask those who work in the university to continue confronting issues that have broad social repercussions. A Christian researcher finds in his faith an incentive and light to penetrate more deeply into the pressing issues of his time: the dignity of the human person, human rights, respect for life, the demands of solidarity, the building of peace and so many other issues that require a new concept of university research, research that is always aware of its mission of service to man.

There comes to mind the Pope’s insistence on the need to study and find ways to solve the public debt of the Third World countries. I think a university like Navarre has to discover and accept the challenges inherent in these kinds of questions, which are very complex and require a high level of specialized knowledge as well as a deep respect for the human person.

*The relationship between the professor and students has lost some of the formality it had in the past. Now the relationship is closer and more fluid. Can this close rapport help sow great ideals in the hearts of students? How can a professor combine a close rapport with his students (which is so helpful for the latter’s formation) with the proper distance and respect?*

That is quite an interesting question, since Blessed Josemaría had it very much in mind when this alma mater was taking its first steps. In this too one can discern what is permanent and what changes over time in the university. Nowadays, university life has outgrown a certain rigidity it had in the past; at the same time, it retains the courtesy that is a sincere sign of respect.

I think the professor-student relationship should strike a balance between these two coordinates: friendship and mutual respect. Such an atmosphere facilitates a dialogue that enriches both parties, because not only the student but also the professor has lessons to learn and ideals to share, which transcend cultural and religious differences. At the same time, common sense dictates that the student remembers that he is a disciple and that he has to know how to listen.
It would seem that at times the academic freedom that characterizes the work of the university professor could give rise to conflicts with the governing body of the university. How can one make the legitimate freedom of the teaching profession compatible with respect for that authority?

Personal freedom is not a threat to the unity of aims and the coordination of work that a university requires.

Evidently, any professor who joins the faculty of a university knows the values, history, spirit and style of that institution. Respect for others is one of the hallmarks of the University of Navarre, which all those working at the University strive to foster. The University does not have a uniform approach to questions that arise in any particular school—and this is true of theological and philosophical issues as well. Anyone is free to adopt the line of thought he thinks best, as long as it fits within the faith and morals taught by the Church. There are many ways to reach the truth, and no one should claim that his is the only way. In this respect, it’s easy to understand that to work at the university presupposes sharing ideals, working together to make a specific project a reality, doing so in an atmosphere of freedom and collaboration. Then, in the day-to-day work, decisions have to be made; particular solutions will need to be adopted which means that other possibilities will have to be dropped, choosing from a wide range of opinions. This way of working—which will always have its share of errors as well as positive results—is quite normal.

I think it’s important to be realistic, to take into account people’s views, to seek what unites and reject what divides, to avoid creating rifts in mutual dealings. Earlier we spoke about the friendship and respect that should characterize professor-student relationships. With much greater reason, friendship and respect should mark the relationship between professors and the governing body of the university.

But what criteria should the governing board of a university follow so as not to infringe upon the legitimate freedom of its professors? What principles should guide the government of a university at different levels?

The founder of the University of Navarre insisted that to govern is to serve. And that is the spirit the University has tried to follow from its beginning. I want to take advantage of this occasion to express my gratitude...
to all those who have helped in the administration of the University in any way, in its schools and departments. For a teacher or researcher to accept a position of administration often means a personal sacrifice, because that new job requires cutting back on the research and teaching he or she normally does and for which one has a professional vocation. I think it’s a duty of justice to acknowledge with gratitude the dedication all these people display, seeing it as a service.

I have had the good fortune of hearing personally a great many suggestions for prudence in government from Blessed Josemaría. I can say that he never failed to mention two qualities: collegiality and trust. When decisions are not made by one person alone and when no one tries to impose his own opinion on the others, then a climate of mutual trust blossoms forth which allows people to work effectively, even though there may be small disagreements from time to time.

What attitudes should university students incarnate, and what should be their primary concerns?

I understand your question, but let me say that I don’t think it’s possible to give a specific answer. Each student is different. Each is a world unto him or herself, with their own personal history, personality, talents, desires and hopes. In any case, one could say that the common trait of any student is that he comes to the university to learn, to be formed. Each student is preparing to undertake a journey, and realizes that he has to decide for himself how to make it.

The University of Navarre seeks to be a suitable environment for the student during those years when one is making these big decisions in planning out one’s life. At the University students are encouraged to ask themselves radical questions, and they are given a reference point to help guide them. They are encouraged to look at Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life—the only one capable of satisfying our deepest desires. Then, each person decides freely and is responsible for his decisions and for his future, which will be good and useful if they conform with the Truth.

Should university courses be taught within the context of the Christian faith, even those that are more practical? Isn’t this a lack of respect for the students’
At the very origin of this University, there was the desire to carry out a deep professional work, in the light of the Truth who has given himself for us: Jesus Christ. That is its *raison d'être* and the meaning of its present and future.

Faith is given to us so that it becomes rooted in the deepest recesses of our minds and hearts. It is a gift of God and a great treasure that imbues our entire life. A Christian lives his faith when he goes to Mass but also when he spends time with his family; when he studies, when he writes and when he prays. Faith is not something accidental, something added on, which one can take off and put on whenever it’s convenient.

If a professor has received the gift of faith, he or she should come across in class not simply as a learned person, but also as a believer, because faith radically transforms all that we have and are. Faith is intensely human. That’s why, for a professor to show his faith—in a way that is, of course, respectful of others—does not condition the student. On the contrary, it is a sign of consistency, and always constitutes a source of freedom.

*How can the university help the spirit of Christianity flourish in society, and how, specifically, can the University of Navarre collaborate in the new evangelization which the Pope is calling for?*

The recent encyclical *Fides et Ratio* attributes the secularization of the West in great part to the mistaken separation of faith from culture. It is there, in the same area where the break has occurred, that the mending must also take place. And this University, like many others where the faith and human sciences are cultivated, can be a good forum for re-opening the dialogue between faith and culture, and for fostering a science and a culture enlivened by the faith.

The great issues that concern contemporary man often lead him to ask fundamental questions about himself. Many of the persons far from God can find no one who understands their questions or who can help them find the answers to those questions. These questions come up in many areas, for example: What are the limits of scientific progress? What is the nature of marriage and the family? What is the rational basis for morality?
What are the causes of poverty and how can one help solve it? We should not be afraid to acknowledge the close tie between faith and reason, and to explore that relationship—building on the foundation of a deep scientific preparation and attitudes that all dialogue requires: respect for others, ability to communicate, a desire to improve.

At the same time, let us not forget that the most important thing is that professors and students strive to follow Christ closely and give their university life an intense Christian meaning. Evangelization is carried out also with the language of deeds, and one of the most convincing arguments in support of the faith is the witness of a life consistent with it. For this reason, the apostolic responsibility the Church entrusts to us cannot be considered an overwhelming weight. We are not asked to do something impossible: what is required of us is authenticity, unity between what we believe, what we think, and the way we live. And here the university has much to contribute in its daily work.

There comes to mind the weeks I spent in the University Clinic some years ago. During those days, so unforgettable for me for many reasons, I was the object of special attention and care on the part of doctors, nurses and other workers. Through many silent gestures, as well as through many kind words, I understood more deeply how attractive such professional service is when it is done with human perfection and love of God.

Whoever views the University from one of the windows of the rooms in the Clinic, sees it in a different way, and understands it better. It's worthwhile learning this lesson, which I have also learned in other departments of the University.

Pope John Paul II inaugurated the Jubilee Year 2000 a few weeks ago in Rome. How should one live the Jubilee at the University and from the University?

There is so much one could say about this! But let me sum it all up in one word: conversion. All the preparation for the Jubilee has really been preparation, with God’s grace, for conversion. And conversion consists above all in a new meeting with Jesus Christ. It means to discover him anew each day, to strive to learn everything that he came to reveal to us, to make him the center of our soul. It means not allowing the many concerns
and sufferings that are part of life to separate us from him, but on the contrary, to find Christ in them. That is the invitation which the Holy Father has been extending to every Christian and to all men and women of good will—to those who are seeking the deepest meaning behind their lives.

In the final analysis, conversion, metanoia, the change the Jubilee invites us to undertake, is nothing more and nothing less than discarding our own spirit and daring to live according to the spirit of Christ, who re-creates a new Life in us: the life of the children of God. I remember with great joy having observed this disposition daily in my predecessors as Grand Chancellor of the University: Blessed Josemaría and Bishop Alvaro del Portillo.

*How can the alumni of the University of Navarre help in this?*

It’s not easy to describe in a few words the rich relationship that exists between the alumni and the university (its professors, administration and everyone who works here). I think that this relationship is a two-way street: the alumni can help the university and the university can continue helping the alumni. To put it in a nutshell, the university must keep its doors open to its alumni: they are always welcome, because in some way they continue to form part of this body. Their ideas and suggestions, their collaboration in the work of teaching and research, their financial help are always welcome. We come back to what I said earlier: this university has been born of professional and apostolic yearnings, and it has taken the form of a common project, open to all: students, alumni and friends. All who share this Christian ideal of the university as a service to society can collaborate.

Of course, those who have passed through the classrooms of the university are in a better position to understand this ideal, and of finding a thousand ways to cooperate, and of thus playing an ever-greater role in this project.
Interview granted to Vanessa Barahona, published in the newspaper La Nación, San José, Costa Rica (January 30, 2000)

*Opus Dei seeks to remind us that holiness is within the reach of everyone. How is this possible in such a turbulent world?*

This turbulent world of ours is also a good world, because it comes from God. The clearest reason why holiness is within the reach of everyone is that God, in his creative plan, invites all those who believe in him to become his daughters and sons.

Holiness means identifying oneself with Jesus: thinking, loving and acting as he did. This is possible if we open our soul to the Gospel. But it’s not an easy path, since this identification takes place through the cross.

*Can one find holiness in one’s work, with one’s family and friends, and in everyday happenings?*

The fullness of Christian life comes to us through living uprightly, treading a path that is usually paved with little things. To identify oneself with Jesus, it’s not necessary to carry out extraordinary deeds. It’s enough to carry out all our activities, even the most ordinary ones, with love for God and others.

Our work, our family and our friendships offer us a thousand opportunities each day to be charitable: during a get-together, a family outing, visiting the bed of a sick friend. All of these daily events offer us an opportunity to be sowers of Christ’s peace and joy.

*Work is a central reality in our life, no matter what our profession. What does this have to do with holiness and the perfecting of the person who carries it out?*

Work is not a way of filling time, of obtaining success or money. It’s a contribution to society, a way of supporting our family, an occasion for getting closer to people. Through our work we fulfill God’s command to transform the earth.
When we look at work from a Christian point of view, facing God and our neighbor, a great panorama opens before us. Work becomes the basic material with which each of us has to carry out, with God’s help, his own work of art. Every upright job is an opportunity of giving glory to God and of serving others.

Each day it seems more difficult for families to remain united, strong and happy. What are the obstacles that have to be confronted and overcome?

It’s important not to get discouraged; we can’t give in to a negative view of these problems. Pessimism is a bad counselor; it usually fosters sadness and ends up making the difficulties even worse. It is becoming more important each day to maintain the atmosphere proper to a family, an atmosphere of trust, of disinterested affection, of joy. In contrast to pessimism, cheerfulness is a good counselor; it knows how to sidestep the difficulties, making them more bearable. We have to discover reasons to be joyful, and savor them within the family. The struggle against selfishness is also important, as selfishness stunts one’s capacity for love, for forgiveness, for understanding, for service, all qualities that enrich one’s personality.

Home and profession are two areas in which many women struggle daily. How can one attain equilibrium and establish priorities here?

The equilibrium between dedication to one’s family and to work outside the home is not a problem exclusive to women. The family should be a shared responsibility, distributing tasks equally between wife and husband. A necessary condition for harmony in the family is the mutual assistance between the spouses, sharing in the desire to raise their children well, transmitting to them their own faith through their word and example.

A husband and wife should be united in confronting obstacles. The two of them should decide together how to distribute the responsibilities in each situation, mutually supporting each other, not as two competitors, but as joint sharers in a holy task.

How can we take advantage of the Jubilee year?

I can answer you in one word: conversion. The Jubilee commemorates the two thousandth anniversary of Christ’s birth. And when it’s a question of those we love, we don’t remember them only on their birthday: they are
in our hearts everyday. Conversion means opening wide the doors of our heart to Jesus, so that he can remove whatever is incompatible with our Christian vocation.

And so that the Holy Year does not remain merely a matter of nice feelings, we have to make use of the sacrament of confession. We need to undergo a conversion, with the resolution to begin a new life: a life that demands a new struggle against whatever separates us from Jesus.

Interview granted to Miriam Díez i Bosch, published in the magazine Catalunya Cristiana, Barcelona, Spain (May 18, 2000)

Opus Dei was born in Spain. How would you describe “the Work” today in its birthplace?

Opus Dei in today’s Spain is a leaven of Christian life. Thanks to God’s help, not through any merits of the prelature’s faithful, hundreds of thousands of persons during the 72 years since its founding have encountered Jesus Christ again or for the first time in their work or through friendship with a woman or man belonging to Opus Dei.

At the same time the Work there is just getting under way. There is a lot of “demand,” so to speak. Many people are attracted by the ideal of following Jesus Christ in their everyday life.

What is the role of the Torreciudad Shrine?

The Torreciudad Shrine, about to mark its 25th anniversary in July, has drawn millions of men and women from all over the world. They have come to pray to our Lady, to receive the sacrament of reconciliation, to renew their Christian life. That’s the purpose of the shrine: to foster, through Holy Mary, a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. Many Spaniards as well as people from other countries have a lot of affection for Torreciudad. They treasure it as a major milestone in their lives.

Is the number of young men preparing for the priesthood growing, shrinking
or about the same?

In not a few countries, the Church is witnessing a growth in priests and seminarians. This news should give rise to joy and thankfulness to the Most Holy Trinity. The data show that following Jesus Christ with a radical dedication, putting oneself completely at his service, is a lifelong ambition attractive to young men from different backgrounds and professions. Christ’s call is always up-to-date.

With respect to Opus Dei, just the other day I conferred priestly ordination on some of the prelature’s faithful; in May and July I will also ordain others. Since becoming a prelate in 1995, I have ordained more than 200 members for the Opus Dei prelature. Yet, considering the needs of the world, I see these as too few. I mention these numbers not out of pride, but to thank our Lord, while continuing to pray for the priests and seminarians throughout the world’s dioceses.

Are you proud of belonging to the world’s only personal prelature?

My feeling consists of continual thanks to heaven. Not a day goes by without praising God more and more for his providence, for the family that welcomed me to the world, for having called me to Opus Dei, a part of the People of God. Later on he called me to the priesthood and to live alongside a saint, Blessed Josemaría Escriva. I’m also thankful for many other reasons that I won’t go into here.

On the other hand, I hope that, with time and in keeping with Vatican II, other personal prelatures will be set up. Whether national or international, such entities would address pastoral needs experienced in the Church today or in the future.

What do you mean when you say that woman holds the key role in the family?

In my view her role is absolutely indispensable. As the radical cell of society, the family represents a joint project dependent on the respective contributions of husband, wife and children. Particularly in today’s world, the father’s role and responsibility cannot be emphasized too much. But if the father holds an essential role, this is also true of the mother.
To deny the mother’s irreplaceable role is equivalent to turning one’s back on reality. I’m not talking here of her aptitude for housekeeping and home-making, but rather of a series of moral qualities that a woman possesses. It’s hard to summarize these in a few words, without the risk of oversimplifying them and thus falling short. Mothers are gifted with a wonderful capacity to express love, to make others happy, loving each person as he or she is, unconditionally and disinterestedly. In my view the family is based and built on feminine wisdom and intuition.

*How would you go about bringing Christianity to civil and secular structures in order to solve problems of social justice?*

To bring the Gospel’s light to society, no one formula or program exists. Moreover, social justice cannot be reduced to assisting the needy or to aiding certain countries or groups of people. Justice encompasses all human relationships.

That’s why “bringing Christianity to secular structures,” as you put it, will always be a fundamental mission of lay people, of men and women living their faith consistently in all walks of life: entrepreneurs and factory hands, politicians, teachers, bureaucrats, lawyers... No one is exempt from this obligation.

Against this background, one can appreciate the great importance of a deep, mature and realistic Christian formation. A solid professional, spiritual and ethical formation is the key to discovering thousands of ways to live justice in one’s work and in all one’s dealings with one’s neighbor. As a bishop, I’m deeply committed to meeting this pastoral challenge.

*What are the Work’s goals in this Jubilee year?*

We are stressing the need for a personal conversion to Jesus Christ, convinced that his “commandments” are proofs of his love. We have to be consistent with our faith and make amends for what we don’t do well. If we were already saints, we would have already departed from this world!

*Do you have in mind an explicit and direct way to echo the Good News?*

We are God’s children; we cannot hide our Christian identity, what we truly are. Christianity dignifies the person. We’re called to bring its message and challenge to every corner of life. We have to spread the Good
News without inhibitions, never hiding the reality that we’re God’s children. The faith is to be lived minute by minute. How could one be a good father or mother and then be dishonest at the office?

*At what stage is the canonization process of Blessed Josemaria Escriva?*

For canonization to take place, there must be a demonstrated miracle, worked through the Blessed’s intercession after his beatification. Since May 17, 1992, when the priest Josemaria Escriva was declared Blessed, documentation has been gathered on several cures that defy scientific explanation.

The investigations into these cases are at various stages; some have been concluded and presented to the Holy See. The ecclesiastical authorities analyze the documentation rigorously and thoroughly. In the meantime, I’m very happy to see how devotion to Blessed Josemaria is spreading to new nations and environments. I have no doubt that his canonization will come at the best possible moment.

«Davanti alla Porta Santa», article published in Tertium Millennium, publication of the Central Committee for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, Rome (February 1, 2000)

The Holy Door is Jesus Christ: “I am the door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture” (*Jn* 10:9). The Jubilee Year places us before that door, before the Son of God made man, so that man can become a child of God. This door is not an escape hatch, but the only entrance to a new life, strengthened by the good pasture of the Word of Christ and his own Body, our nourishment in the Eucharist.

Let us rejoice, because we have all been invited; let us knock at this door (*Lk* 11:9), which opens to those who repent of their sins. He does not reject anyone. God’s mercy invites every man and woman in the world: come, approach the light and the love of Jesus Christ and you will be the
new creature that you desire in the depths of your soul. Don’t put off your conversion a moment longer. Abandon your old life and step through the door of hope.

Back to Contents

Books published

A book by Bishop Javier Echevarría


Opus Dei’s current prelate, Bishop Javier Echevarría, worked alongside the Founder from 1950 right up to the day of his death on June 26, 1975. Bishop Javier Echevarría relied on the collaboration of Salvador Bernal to express his personal memories in interview format. Among other books, Bernal is also the author of Msgr. Josemaría Escriva: A Profile of the Founder of Opus Dei, and of Alvaro del Portillo: Bishop–Prelate of Opus Dei.

The new book consists of four chapters. The first, “A priest who loved the world,” is centered on the struggle of Blessed Josemaría to correspond to God’s grace. Bishop Echevarría describes how Blessed Josemaría endeavored, for the love of God, to identify himself with Christ and to be docile to the action of the Holy Spirit in what was difficult and what was easy, in what was important and in what did not seem to be, while always asking God for pardon for what he considered omissions or negligences. He describes how he confronted work and fatigue, sorrow and joy, times of darkness and moments of dazzling light. Blessed Josemaría referred to his physical sufferings and illnesses as “caresses from God,” a phrase he also employed to describe the intense opposition he went through, especially after the foundation of Opus Dei.

The second chapter, “An attractive personality,” contains a series of recollections about Blessed Josemaría’s strong character, his great heart, his
zeal to sow peace and joy, his way of harmonizing understanding with the ability to call forth greater efforts, his love for justice and his continual defense of the dignity and freedom of the individual.

Basing itself on a verse of St. John of the Cross that was very familiar to the Founder of Opus Dei, the third chapter, “I caught my prey,” deals specifically with his life of prayer. This was centered on fostering a spirit of contemplation in the midst of the world and everyday activities. His sense of divine filiation, his dealing with each of the three divine Persons through union with the holy humanity of Christ, his devotion to our Lady and to St. Joseph, made up Blessed Josemaría’s spiritual life, centered and rooted in the sacrifice of the Mass. Bishop Echevarría provides many details about his preparation each day for celebrating Mass, his act of thanksgiving afterwards, and his efforts to turn his whole day into a “Mass.”

The final chapter, “Like the Gospel, new,” presents some reminiscences that teach us how to live important Christian virtues. It treats of the “unity of life” preached and practised by Blessed Josemaría, of his mission from God to open a path of sanctification in the midst of the world to the faithful of all walks of life, through the diligent fulfillment of one’s professional work and ordinary duties, done out of love for God. It also shows how lay people can practice diligence, humility, poverty, prudence—teachings which today form part of the common patrimony of the Church.

Bishop Javier Echevarría’s book is of great value for grasping more fully Josemaría Escrivá’s example of holiness, an example the Church has held up to the faithful since his elevation to the altars on May 17, 1992.

Back to Contents
ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA
New editions of the works of Blessed Josemaria

The first Slovak edition of The Forge has been issued by Spolku Svätého Vojtecha publishing house in Trnava, Slovakia, with 1500 copies printed.

Keresztút, the first Hungarian edition of The Way of the Cross, was produced by Szent István Társulat publishers in Budapest, with a printing of 1000 copies.

Sventasis Rozinis, the first edition of Holy Rosary in Lithuanian, was made available by Vaga publishers, with a printing of 2000 copies.

A new Italian edition of Cammino (The Way) was issued by Mondadori publishers in the Oscar Mondadori series, with a printing of 2000 copies.

Muih Gwai Ging, an edition of Holy Rosary in classical Chinese characters, has been produced by Spring Publications in Hong Kong, with a printing of 1000 copies.

Masses for the Feast of Blessed Josemaria

Faithful throughout the world attended ceremonies that took place in many countries on the feast of Blessed Josemaria. In many cases, these were presided over by the local bishop or by the Papal Nuncio. Some of these events are noted here.

In the Cathedral of Stockholm, a solemn Eucharistic concelebration was presided over by Bishop Anders Arborelius of Stockholm, vice-president of the Bishops Conference of the Nordic countries. Basing his words on some passages of Furrow, Bishop Arborelius spoke about the teachings of Opus Dei’s Founder on the sanctification of work.

In Budapest, a Mass was celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop András Veres, of Eger, secretary of the Hungarian Bishops’ Conference. In Cologne, Auxiliary Bishop Klaus Dick pointed out in his homily that all of the saints
and blessed call upon us to view our life as a path towards heaven. He noted that Blessed Josemaria had spread the doctrine of the universal call to sanctity since 1928, a teaching that years later was proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council.

In Toulouse, Bishop Émile Marcus referred to some lines which his predecessor as bishop, Cardinal Jean Guyon, had written in 1979: “What caught my attention in the spirituality of the Servant of God was that, both through his word and his example, he did not seek the secret of holiness outside the ordinary actions of human life. Rather he strove to transform those actions by a strong faith, nourished at the fountains of prayer and the sacraments.”

On June 16, a Mass in the Basilica of Notre Dame in Geneva was concelebrated by Auxiliary Bishop Pierre Farine of the Diocese of Fribourg, Lausanne and Geneva, by Archbishop emeritus Robert Dosseh of Togo, by the pastor of the basilica Msgr. Xavier Lingg, and by Revs. Monod and Freitag, priests of the Prelature. Masses were also celebrated in Lausanne, Fribourg, Zürich and Lugano.

In Warsaw, Auxiliary Bishop Marian Dus presided at the commemorative Mass. And in Poznan, Bishop Grzegorz Balcerek encouraged the faithful to continue praying for the canonization of Blessed Josemaria, noting that he himself invoked his intercession every day in his pastoral work.

In Braga, Portugal, where the ceremony was presided over by Archbishop Jorge Ortiga, the faithful were able to venerate a relic *ex ossibus* of Blessed Josemaria which is kept in the cathedral’s Chapel of Relics. This devotion is also followed in other places such as Piura, in Peru, and in Montevideo.

Msgr. Michael Quinlan, Vicar General of the Diocese of Salford, Manchester, England, celebrated a solemn Mass in honor of Blessed Josemaria in the cathedral. In his homily, he spoke of the need to struggle to be saints in the midst of the world as the Founder of Opus Dei untiringly preached.

In Italy the solemnity of the feast of Blessed Josemaria was celebrated in more than thirty localities. In Rome, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop
Javier Echevarría, presided at a Eucharistic concelebration in the Basilica of St. Eugene (The homily can be found in the “From the Prelate” section). In Palermo, the principal celebrant was Cardinal Salvatore De Giorgi; in Verona, Bishop Flavio Roberto Carraro; in Florence Archbishop Cardinal Silvano Piovanelli; in Genoa Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, Archbishop of Genoa and Bobbio.

Particularly noteworthy was the celebration in Sydney Cathedral. Construction of the spires of the towers had been finished on the previous day, thus completing, after one hundred years, the original design of the church. Bishop Philip Wilson of Wollongong was principal celebrant.

The Eucharistic concelebration in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Guatemala City was presided over by Archbishop Primate Próspero Penados del Barrio and included the participation of a number of bishops. In his homily Archbishop Penados del Barrio noted the widespread popular devotion that exists in Guatemala to Blessed Josemaria. Some three thousand five hundred people from all walks of life attended the solemn Mass. The concelebration presided over by Auxiliary Bishop Eugenio Romero in the Cathedral of la Almudena also attracted a large crowd.

In Taipei, Archbishop Joseph Tikang celebrated the Mass in honor of Blessed Josemaria. In the Cathedral of Macao, Bishop Domingos Lam officiated with a congregation of some 200 people. In the Cathedral of Hong Kong, Coadjutor Bishop Joseph Zen presided and more than five hundred people attended the Mass. In his homily Bishop Zen spoke of the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood of all the faithful, a teaching stressed by Blessed Josemaria.

In the Cathedral of Almaty, Kazakhstan, the Apostolic Administrator, Fr. Henry Howaniec OFM, spoke in his homily about the value of professional work as a path to sanctity.

Archbishop Edmundo Abastoflor of La Paz made reference in his homily to the approaching feast of Sts. Peter and Paul: “Blessed Josemaria’s deep devotion and fidelity to the Holy Father,” he said, “should be a stimulus to all of us to imitate him and to pray for His Holiness John Paul II who, at his advanced age, continues to be a witness of strength, of love,
and of closeness to God for all of his people as the Vicar of Christ on earth.”

In Colombia there were Masses in the capital and in Bucaramanga, Medellín, Cali, Santa Marta and Cartagena of the Indies. In Bogotá, in the chapel of the University of La Sabana, Auxiliary Bishop Enrique Sarmiento Angulo presided, while in the parish church of Our Lady of Lourdes there was a concelebration presided over by the Nuncio of His Holiness, Bishop Beniamino Stella.

A commemorative plaque in the cathedral of Caracas

Archbishop Ignacio Velasco of Caracas, after offering Mass in the cathedral on the feast of Blessed Josemaría, unveiled a plaque commemorating the visit of the Founder of Opus Dei to the cathedral in February, 1975. On that occasion Blessed Josemaría came to adore the Blessed Sacrament and to pray for the Church and for all Venezuelans, through the mediation of the Blessed Virgin.

Dedication of Josemaría Escrivá Plaza in Quito

May 17 saw the official dedication of a plaza in Quito, Ecuador, that will bear the name of the Founder of Opus Dei. A monument has also been erected there which commemorates Blessed Josemaría’s visit to that city in August of 1974. This public initiative is an act of gratitude for his love for that country, where many social and educational initiatives have been started by faithful of the Prelature and their friends.
Celebration of the 75th anniversary of the priestly ordination of Blessed Josemaria

March 28th marked the 75th anniversary of Blessed Josemaria’s priestly ordination. A chorus of thanksgiving to God arose from the hearts of his children in Opus Dei, and from numerous other people all over the world, giving thanks for the apostolic fruitfulness with which God blessed his priestly life.

In Rome, on March 28, Bishop Javier Echevarría conferred priestly ordination on eleven faithful of the Prelature. (Cf. “From the Prelate” section) In various parts of the world commemorative acts were also held, a few of which are noted below by way of example.

In the Church of St. Paul in Lyon, Archbishop Louis-Marie Billé of Lyon, president of the French Bishops’ Conference, celebrated a Mass attended by several hundred people. In his homily, the Archbishop underlined the universal significance of the Founder of Opus Dei’s priesthood.

In London and in Oxford, conferences and colloquia were organized to make the Founder of Opus Dei and his message better known, as well as to publicize the various undertakings throughout the world that have resulted from his teachings and efforts. A number of documentary videos were also shown, including “The Joy of Sanctity.”

In Seville, the dean of the University of Navarre’s School of Theology, Francisco Varo Pineda, gave a conference at the Abaydar Executive Secretarial School. A specialist in Sacred Scripture, Professor Varo emphasized the profundity with which Blessed Josemaria contemplated and taught scenes of the life of Christ in the Gospel, placing himself in them as “just one more person.”

Back to Contents

Other publications about Blessed Josemaria and Opus Dei
The Marietti publishing house of Genoa, Italy, has published an anthology of texts by Blessed Josemaría on the subject of divine filiation, edited by Andrea Mardegan. Its title is *Tra le braccia del Padre*. The first edition was published as part of the *I Rombi* collection, in February of this year, with a printing of 2000 copies.

June saw the distribution of the first Polish language edition of François Gondrand’s biography of Blessed Josemaría, *At God’s Pace*. Published by Apostolicum publishers, it had a first printing of 2000 copies.

A book written in Polish entitled *Witnesses of the Twentieth Century*, by Pawel Zuchniewicz, devotes a chapter to the life of Blessed Josemaría. It was published by the Wydawnictwo Ksi Marianów publishing house under the auspices of Radio Plus de Polonia, in an edition of 3,000 copies.

— Back to Contents —

“A vocation accepted and lived in fidelity to God’s will”

In honor of the 75th anniversary of Blessed Josemaría’s priestly ordination, on March 28, 2000, L’Osservatore Romano published the following article by Fr. Antonio Aranda, a professor at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.

Saturday, March 28, 1925. In the church of San Carlos Seminary in Saragossa, Bishop Miguel de los Santos Díaz Gómara ordained to the priesthood ten deacons of the diocese. One of them was a 23-year-old from Aragon, Josemaría Escriva de Balaguer. This was the goal of the path he had set out on seven years earlier, when he had first felt God’s love calling him to his service. He had sensed that God wanted “something” from him, but he did not as yet have a clear idea of what it was. These premonitions led him to the priesthood. “Why did I become a priest?” he said later (in 1973). “Because I thought that it would be easier to fulfill God’s will, which I wasn’t sure of yet. For eight years I had sensed that he was asking something of me, but I didn't know what it was, until 1928 when I learned what he wanted. That is why I became a priest.”
The origin of these premonitions is found in the city of Logroño at the beginning of 1918. One day in winter he saw the footprints in the snow of a bare-footed discalced Carmelite who had gone out to fulfill his pastoral duties in the early morning cold. This event has been fully described in his biographies so there is no need to go into details here. However I would like to stress the consequences of that episode in Josemaria's life and its theological dimensions. I have written “theological dimensions” on purpose. It was precisely here, through an intervention of God—and this is why these events offer a key to a theological reading—that a foundational mission within the Catholic Church with its relevant pastoral and doctrinal consequences took root. A personal experience is the point of departure of the Christian apostolic influence channeled through the spirit and activities of Opus Dei. Josemaria Escriva’s mission has given birth to a reality with broad ecclesial and social repercussions, a new theological and pastoral phenomenon. From that moment on, God’s grace—in an unexpected but unequivocal way—deeply moved his soul and began to trace the path of his life. Where that path would lead, he couldn’t even imagine yet, but he clearly perceived its essential characteristics: a) a powerful force moving him towards an intimate relationship with God and a progressive deepening of his spiritual life; b) a chain of inspirations from God (the “premonitions” that God wanted something), which followed one another without interruption until October 2, 1928; c) the clear voice of a call to the priesthood, specifically to the diocesan priesthood, perceived as God’s will in preparation for something else that he sensed would come later. For ten years, the life of Josemaria unfolded within the context of these three realities, until the moment when he saw clearly the mission for which he had been chosen.

“Without knowing exactly why, I was convinced that God wanted something from me” (Personal Notes, no. 289, September 17, 1931). On March 19, 1975, he said: “I was 14 or 15 when I began to sense the call of Love... I saw clearly that God wanted something, but I didn’t know what it was” (Meditation, March 19, 1975). These two quotes, separated by more than 40 years, show his readiness to fulfill whatever mission God had in store from him. “I didn’t know what God wanted from me, but I had a clear sense that he had chosen me for something” (ibid.). He knew, as he
said on January 9, 1974, that God was asking him for “something specific to further his glory.”

Little by little, he began to realize that what God wanted was linked to his own struggle for sanctity. In Opus Dei’s foundational message, the call to personal sanctity takes on an essential role in the service it is to render to the Church.

Many years later he recalled that our Lord had been preparing him with “apparently innocent things, which he made use of to put into my soul a divine restlessness” (Meditation, February 14, 1964). Josemaria, who was beginning to feel an “insatiable thirst for God,” was gently moved by grace to undertake a path of “daily communion, purification, confession... and penance” (ibid.). That sixteen-year-old lad, who saw himself as of little worth and who was not “inclined to believe in anything extraordinary” (Meditation, October 2, 1971), began to experience the power of persevering and tenacious prayer: “A prerequisite for prayer,” he said on July 25, 1961, “is perseverance, what in Spain we call stubbornness. Things go forward after having prayed for many years. For a long time before the foundation of the Work, when I had inklings that our Lord was asking something of me, and I did not know what it was, I prayed insistently two aspirations: “Domine, ut videam! Domina, ut sit! Lord, let me see. Let what you want but what I don’t yet know, come into existence.”

The power of persevering, trusting, and filial prayer is the hinge of the Christian spiritual tradition, inspired by Christ’s example and words. This is a central point in the life and teachings of Blessed Josemaria, beginning with his search for God’s will, which became clear to him only after years of prayer and penance. His trust in God based on prayer and penance can be seen, for example, in the juridical path of the Work. The Founder had guessed from the beginning that the juridical format would lie in the area of a personal ecclesiastical jurisdiction. He prayed incessantly and asked others to pray, did penance and asked others to do so, worked and had others work trustingly for almost fifty years, so that this intuition would become a reality. God did not grant to him to see it realized on earth. But his untiring prayer over many years now constitutes an indelible sign of how the mission received from God must be put into practice.
God’s will finally became clear to him three years after his priestly ordination, on the morning of October 2, 1928, in Madrid, while he was making a retreat. Rereading some notes he had taken of the interior motions received in those ten long years of prayer and study, he saw clearly and unequivocally the mission that our Lord wanted to entrust to him. That mission consisted in opening a path of sanctification for all the ordinary faithful, in their professional work and in the fulfillment of the ordinary duties of a Christian. At that moment Opus Dei was born.

“Our Lord gave rise to Opus Dei in 1928 to remind Christians that, as we read in the book of Genesis, God created man to work. We have come to call attention once again to the example of Jesus, who spent thirty years in Nazareth working as a carpenter. In his hands, a professional occupation, similar to that carried out by millions of people all over the world, was turned into a divine task. It became a part of our Redemption, a way to salvation.

“The spirit of Opus Dei reflects the marvelous reality (forgotten for centuries by many Christians) that any honest and worthwhile work may be converted into a divine occupation. In God’s service there are no second class jobs, all of them are important.

“To love and serve God, there is no need to do anything strange or unusual. Christ bids all men without exception to be perfect as His heavenly Father is perfect (cf. Mt 4:48). Sanctity, for the vast majority of people, implies sanctifying their work, sanctifying themselves in it, and sanctifying others through it. Thus they can encounter God in the course of their daily lives” (Conversations with Msgr. Escriva, no. 55).

Human work, desired by God as a field of cooperation with creative Wisdom and Love, becomes “in Jesus hands” (and with him in the hands of Christians) a path of personal sanctification and of redirecting all creation to the glory of God. “God did not create us to build a lasting city here on earth (Heb 13:14).... Nevertheless, we children of God ought not to remain aloof from earthly endeavors, for God placed us here to sanctify them, and to make them fruitful with our blessed faith, which alone is capable of bringing true peace and joy to all men wherever they may be. Since 1928 I have constantly preached that we urgently need to
Christianize society. We must imbue all sectors of mankind with a supernatural outlook, and each of us must strive to raise his daily duties, his job or profession, to the order of supernatural grace. In this way all human occupations will be lit up by a new hope that transcends time and the inherent transience of earthly realities” (Friends of God, no. 210).

Work, a reality which is part of the Creator’s plan and which, after the fall of our first parents, has been restored by Christ to its original sanctifying meaning, is now seen to be an instrument of Christianization, a way of carrying out the Christian’s evangelizing witness. “For a Christian, apostolate is something instinctive. It is not something added onto his daily activities and his professional work from the outside. I have repeated it constantly, since the day that our Lord chose for the foundation of Opus Dei! We have to sanctify our ordinary work, we have to sanctify others through the exercise of the particular profession that is proper to each of us, in our own particular state in life” (Christ Is Passing By, no. 122). In these words of Blessed Josemaria, one can see the figure of the Son of God made man. We see the outline of his redemptive life, spent largely in daily work like that of any other ordinary person, carried out in the midst of his fellow men, but done for the glory of the Father, with a burning love for the world that he had come to sanctify.

“On that October day in 1928,” wrote Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, “the founder saw opening before him the horizons to which the Lord was calling him by entrusting him with the establishment of Opus Dei. This was to be a mobilization of Christians in every part of the world, Christians of every social class, who, by carrying out their professional work with freedom and personal responsibility, would seek their own sanctification while sanctifying from within all their temporal activities, in a daring movement of evangelization aimed at bringing all souls to God” (Immersed in God, Scepter, 1996, p. 54.) Blessed Josemaria realized from the beginning the apostolic importance of the mission God had entrusted to him, and he had a clear awareness of the profound repercussions that the light received on October 2, 1928 would have on the history of mankind.

“We are an intravenous injection in the bloodstream of society, so that you, as men and women of God.... may immunize all men and women
from corruption and illuminate every human intellect with Christ’s light” (*Instruction*, March 19, 1934, no. 42).

Today, almost seventy-five years after the reception of the foundational grace, one can appreciate the truth of what he foresaw in the service of the Church. We can cite, by way of example, the following words from the Decree on the heroicity of his virtues: “This message of sanctification *in and from* earthly realities has shown itself providentially timely in the spiritual situation of our era, so solicitous of human values, but also so ready to cede before an immanentist vision that understands the world apart from God. Besides, in inviting the Christian to seek union with God through his or her work, the perennial task and dignity of man on earth, the timeliness of this message is destined to endure, as an inexhaustible font of spiritual light despite changes in times and historical situations.”

The pastoral efficacy of this message is seen not only in the panorama of apostolic initiatives promoted throughout the world by the faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei, but also in the flourishing of priestly vocations at the service of this charism. As we know, the priests who make up the presbyterium of the Prelature come from the lay faithful who form part of it. During Blessed Josemaria’s life, many hundreds of professional men were ordained whom he had called and guided towards holy orders. Precisely today, on the 75th anniversary of his ordination, a group of faithful of the Prelature is being ordained to the priestly ministry in the Basilica of St. Eugene in Valle Giulia, thus witnessing, in a discrete but visible way, to the ecclesial repercussions of those early “premonitions,” received and put into practice with such great fidelity.

**Back to Contents**

**Commemorative stamps issued**

On June 23 a stamp featuring the Founder of Opus Dei was put into circulation in Poland as part of a series entitled “the work ethic.” The stamp shows a portrait of Blessed Josemaria against a background alluding to work. The issue totaled four hundred thousand units.
Three days later, coinciding with the 25th anniversary of the death of Blessed Josemaria, the Spanish Postal Service placed in circulation a stamp dedicated to the Founder of Opus Dei. The presentation of this philatelic issue took place in Madrid on June 26 before a large gathering that included the mayors of Madrid and Barbastro among other officials.

Previous commemorative stamps dedicated to Blessed Josemaria have been issued in Venezuela, Peru, Colombia and Ecuador. In Honduras a commemorative issue took place on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei.
News
Pilgrims at the Prelatic Church

During this Holy Year, the church of Our Lady of Peace, like many other Roman churches, is a place of prayer visited by pilgrims from all over the world coming to Rome to gain the Jubilee indulgence. Moved by their devotion to Blessed Josemaria, they come to the Prelatic Church to seek his intercession and to venerate his relics, interred in a casket under the altar. Faithful of the Prelature, in addition, are able to gain the Jubilee indulgences in the church of Our Lady of Peace itself.[1]

To facilitate the reception of groups of pilgrims, an informative brochure was published to help them find the church and give notice in advance of their arrival. The brochure also contains a list of the places where the Holy Year indulgence can be gained and information on the requirements for gaining it.

Throughout these months there has been a continual arrival of people who come to invoke the intercession of Blessed Josemaria and to ask God for a great variety of graces: the conversion of a friend, reestablishment of family peace, overcoming a problem, curing a sickness. Often the motive for coming is to give thanks to our Lord, who always listens to humble and persevering prayer.


Papal appointments of faithful of Opus Dei

The Holy Father has appointed:

Alejandro Llano

Member of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas
On the sixth anniversary of the death of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo

On March 23, the sixth anniversary of the death of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, the first successor to Blessed Josemaría Escriva, Masses for his soul were celebrated in many churches throughout the world. Many thousands of people participated in these liturgies. In Rome, in the Basilica of St. Eugene, Bishop Javier Echevarría presided over a solemn concelebration in suffrage for his predecessor.[1]

In Cologne, Msgr. Herbert Michael, Vicar General of the Archdiocese, celebrated holy Mass in suffrage for Bishop Alvaro del Portillo in the church of St. Pantaleon. In his homily he stressed Don Alvaro’s goodness and spoke of the need for a profound conversion in the Holy Year through the sacrament of Penance.

Auxiliary Bishop Agustin Otero Largacha of Bogota presided over a Eucharistic concelebration in the parish of Christ the King. In his homily he eulogized both Blessed Josemaría Escriva and Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, whom he referred to as giants of holiness.

In Cameroun, some 300 people took part in a Mass at the Chapelle Saint Laurent in the Mvolyé district of Yaoundé. A group of students from the provincial seminary of Nkolbisson also took part in the liturgy.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, the Mass in suffrage for Bishop Del Portillo took place in the church of St. Joseph of Villa Caparra. Archbishop Roberto Gonzalez Nieves of San Juan presided over the concelebration. In his homily he emphasized some features of Bishop Del Portillo’s life of dedication and humility. He also wanted the congregation to know of his special devotion to the Servant of God. “Four years ago,” he noted, “a priest friend gave me the prayer for private devotion to Bishop Alvaro. Since then, for the past four years, I have included it among my morning prayers.”

In Santo Domingo, Auxiliary Bishop Pablo Cedano, celebrated Mass for the soul of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo in the church of the Good Shepherd. At the end of the ceremony he referred to “a few of the virtues that stood out in his life: friendliness, faithfulness, joy, among others.
Although many people feel certain of his holiness and there is a widespread custom of privately invoking his intercession, we should continue to pray for him with filial affection and ask God that his process of beatification will begin soon.”

In the cathedral of Notre Dame du Congo, the ceremony was presided over by Auxiliary Bishop Danial Nlandu of Kinshasa. At the beginning of Mass he said: “We are preparing to offer this Eucharist for his soul. But, at the same time, we thank him for the example of faithfulness to God and to the Church that he left us by his life, as well as for his prayers for our country at crucial moments.”

[1] Cf. Homily of Bishop Javier Echevarría ("From the Prelate")
INITIATIVES
After the floods in Venezuela

Shortly before Christmas, 1999, Venezuela experienced one of the worst tragedies in its history when huge floods devastated the country, especially the state of Vargas. Tens of thousands of people died and many more lost their homes and possessions. Everyone reacted quickly in the face of the moral need to provide help to families who had been left with nothing.

Many of the victims were taken to Caracas and housed in military establishments, schools, gymnasiums, universities and even churches. In some of these shelters, girls who take part in activities of the Prados Club volunteered to help in such tasks as cleaning, cooking, child-care and direct assistance to the victims. On Christmas eve they collected toys for the children in one of the refugee centers. In addition they set up a collection center where they gathered food, clothing, medicines, household utensils and other supplies which, after being sorted out, were distributed to various shelters.

With the help of cafeteria personnel from the Monteavila University center and students from the Resolana Institute, the young women who frequent the Dairen University Center prepared hot food for many people. All of the food was donated by their families and friends. When news about this initiative was transmitted by radio and television, some of the neighbors of Dairen began to take up a food collection to contribute to this service. The young women from Dairen also visited many families in Vargas, after carefully preparing packages of clothing to distribute to them.

Both in the coastal areas affected by the floods and in the shelters in Caracas, women from the Center for Education on Work and the Family, which is attached to the church of the Holy Family of Nazareth, distributed many parcels of food and other necessities, in some cases items they had made themselves.

The Las Palmas University Center organized students and young professional volunteers who prepared meals and made visits to refugee centers. In one of these centers a permanent assistance program has now
been established. The young women who frequent the Etame residence also volunteered their services, particularly in regard to clean up work.

The girls of Los Campitos School, run by faithful of Opus Dei, as is the case of the other institutions mentioned above, organized a campaign called “el kilo.” It’s object was to collect food for an organization that was providing help to a group of victims. This organization was initiated by a priest of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross who works in a coastal area. The girls of Los Campitos also sold candy during a “friendship week” to raise money for this organization.

In all these efforts, one can see a clear reflection of the Christian spirit of the Venezuelans. Rather than giving in to despair or bitterness, the common reaction was one of accepting God’s will and asking for prayers, while doing everything possible to help those in need.

In Brief

Asuncion, Paraguay

To know in order to love

The Ogarape student center has organized classes to study the Catechism of the Catholic Church in various districts of Asunción, as well as in the neighboring cities of Luque and Lambaré. This effort is in response to the Holy Father’s request that the Jubilee Year be a time for “strengthening the faith and witness of Christians.”[1]

The initiative was well received, and the study groups have multiplied rapidly. Many of those taking part have begun to frequent the sacraments and to approach God more often in prayer. At the same time a greater effort to bring consolation and company to the sick and lonely is apparent.

Dublin, Ireland

Seminar on the communications media

The eighth communications media seminar, held at Cleraun Study Centre on February 12 and 13, offered media professionals another
opportunity to reflect on the ethical quality of the contents of news programming. A number of those attending commented that professionals in the media often have meetings about technical aspects of their profession or about working conditions, but that they rarely had an opportunity to reflect on its ethical aspects.

Speakers included Michael Beattie, director of Ulster Television’s program Insight, who spoke about publicizing the suffering of the victims of the confrontations in Northern Ireland. Thierry Garcin, who works for Radio-France, spoke about the coverage of the international humanitarian efforts in the Balkans, the Middle East and Africa. Adrian Moynes, from Channel 1 of Ireland’s national television network (RTE), discussed the objectives that public service broadcasters should have when presenting information. Maggie O’Kane, a correspondent for the London newspaper The Guardian, spoke about some of the ethical aspects of reporting on military conflicts.

Haus Hardtberg, Germany

Liturgical Worship and Adoration of God

The fourth annual conference for German diocesan priests and seminarians was held from March 20 to 22 at Haus Hardtberg, some 20 miles west of Bonn. The past three years were dedicated to preparing for the Jubilee, in accord with the Encyclical Tertio Millennio Adveniente. This year the focus of attention of the talks and meditations was the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, under the general theme of Liturgical Worship and Adoration of God.

The first talk, by Msgr. Klaus Martin Becker, was entitled “Man’s Fulfillment: True Worship.” A quick review of the history of religions showed the widespread human need to worship God. This was followed by a deeper look at the mystery of the Eucharistic celebration as a divine work. In the Eucharist, it is not man, but God himself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who is acting.

a Force in Modern Society.” An expert in the Church’s social teaching, Bishop Marx emphasized the responsibility of Christians in today’s society.

Under the title “Art and the Holy Eucharist,” Msgr. Franz Ronig from the University of Trier spoke of the Eucharist as the center of the Church’s life. He recalled the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and urged priests to cultivate Eucharistic piety in their personal lives and in their priestly ministry.

As in previous years, the fifty or so participants had an opportunity to exchange pastoral experiences and to deepen their spiritual life. The days of the gathering also provided a healthy opportunity for relaxation for the participants.

Huesca, Spain

The Jubilee at Torreciudad

The Shrine of Our Lady of Torreciudad, by decision of the Bishop of Barbastro, has been named one of the sites where the Jubilee indulgence can be gained. A number of Jubilee conferences have been organized during these months, including one held on March 20 for priests and their relatives, and another on April 29 and 30 dedicated to volunteer work. On May 13 a Eucharistic concelebration for students was presided over by Bishop Juan Jose Asenjo, the secretary general of the Spanish Bishops’ Conference. On the following day, thousands of farm workers took part in another Jubilee conference, including a large group from Aragon. On May 31, many mothers of families came to gain the Jubilee indulgence. And on June 4, married couples filled the shrine.

The shrine is also celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Spanish national television transmitted the Mass celebrated to mark this occasion on Sunday May 7. Included among the commemorative activities was the First Conference on Volunteer Work, at which Bishop Omella of Barbastro-Monzon was one of the speakers.

Nairobi, Kenya

Understanding Love
A conference on engagement and marriage was organized by the alumnae association of Kianda School. It was held at Kianda Residence from April 28 to 30. Seventy young professional women attended, among whom were doctors, lawyers and school teachers.

The conference, entitled “Understanding Love,” was directed at future wives and mothers to help them establish a Christian home, which means a united and cheerful home. They were urged to overcome the difficulties that may arise with the optimism that comes from knowing oneself to be a child of God.

Those taking part found great encouragement in seeing that many others shared their ideals. They decided to meet again to study how to help many more people discover the Christian view of marriage, so needed in today’s society.

Santa Teresa, Australia

Work camp in the Northern Territory

Students from Australia and New Zealand joined Australian aboriginal families to usher in the new millennium in Santa Teresa, a mission community founded in 1929 on the border of the Simpson desert. At present the settlement has a population of 600. The group of students was very well received. The work project involved painting and repair work on the local school, and constructing a playground for the children. A number of unexpected jobs came up in the course of their stay, such as helping a carpenter to recondition a house for a new family and lending a hand in rounding up cattle.

Daily Mass, recitation of the Rosary, and talks on Christian doctrine helped the students to grow in their life of piety and in service to others during the vacation month spent in the “outback.” At the end of the work camp the young men were unanimous in affirming that they themselves had received the most benefit from the weeks spent with the aborigine families.

Toronto, Canada

Philosophical questions for the year 2000
“Philosophical and Ethical Questions for the New Millennium” was the title of a series of conferences organized at Ernescliff College during the first months of this year.

On January 10, Professor John Hartley spoke on “Nietzsche, Marx and Freud: the Hermeneutics of Suspicion.” Professor Hartley emphasized internal contradictions in the thinking of these three philosophers. A week later, Dr. Elmar Kremer, a specialist in modern philosophy and the philosophy of religion at the University of Toronto, spoke about “Philosophical and Religious Responses to the Problem of Evil.” And on the 24th, John Liptay, a resident of Ernescliff who is working towards a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Toronto, spoke on “The Natural Law and the Foundations of Morality.”

The conference on January 31, entitled “Organ Donation and Organ Retrieval,” was given by Professor Barry Brown, philosophy professor at St. Michael’s College, University of Toronto. Professor Brown, a member of the Joint Centre for Bioethics, spoke of his experiences as a participant in the policy discussions in the province of Ontario on such topics as brain death, euthanasia, and artificial means for sustaining life.

The final lecturer was Dr. William Sullivan, a physicist and philosopher, who spoke about euthanasia. Dr. Sullivan is an advisor on ethical subjects in the general hospital of North York and professor of the School of Medicine at the University of Toronto. He centered his presentation on active and voluntary euthanasia, and spoke about recent discussions of the subject in the Canadian Parliament and Supreme Court.

Vilnius, Lithuania

Seminar on bioethics

The Vilnelės Cultural Center held its first Seminar on Bioethics for university women on April 1. The sessions were given by a medical student in Vilnius who is a member of the Bioethical Association of Lithuania and head of the bioethical group at the University of Vilnius.

Among the subjects covered during the sessions were: “The Concept of Human Dignity in Bioethics,” “The Juridical, Anthropological and Biological Status of the Human Embryo,” “The Human Genome Project
and Genetic Engineering,” “Cloning,” “Determination of the Moment of Death,” and “Euthanasia.” The session dedicated to fecundation in vitro occasioned special attention, since during the days of the seminar the Lithuanian parliament was debating a legislative proposal dealing with this question.

The seminar awakened interest among university women from many different professional fields who were given access to information difficult to find outside of a specialized scientific environment and also an opportunity to receive moral guidance on the questions studied. Those in attendance, representing various religions, were introduced to the arguments in defense of life presented by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*.

IN PACE
Suffrages

*In the second half of 1999, 191 faithful of the Prelature and 24 members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross passed away.*

The suffrages stipulated by Blessed Josemaria have been offered for these deceased. As we continue to pray for them, let us thank God for the example that they have left us through their fidelity in striving to transform their professional work and all the ordinary circumstances of their lives into an occasion of loving God and of serving the Church and all souls. Their love for God constitutes the meaning and value of their lives, whether outstanding in the eyes of others or whether quite ordinary, as was true in most cases.

To read the full version of Romana, you can subscribe to the print edition.

Back to Contents
A study
The University and Unity of Life: Blessed Josemaría Escrivá’s Vision

Alejandro Llano
School of Philosophy
The University of Navarre
The University in a Time of Change

In considering the current state and the future of the university, a name that comes to mind quite naturally is that of Etienne Gilson, who studied in depth the philosophical and theological currents that forged the very origin of the European university. Paraphrasing what the great medievalist said about philosophy, we could say that the university buries its gravediggers and is reborn from its ashes like the phoenix. The discussion of the “crisis of the university” has been, for decades, a frequent focus of discussion about the situation of education and culture in the twentieth century. There have even been proposals to replace the unity of the university with a dispersed “multiversity,” or to exchange the buildings and lawns of the university campus for the electronic world of computer networks and data banks. Hardly anyone believes in these technocratic utopias any more. Once again the university has shown itself to be an indispensable social instrument. But this apparent victory does not necessarily give grounds for optimism. The opposite may be the case.

Heidegger used to like to quote Hölderlin’s penetrating words: “Wherever the danger exists, that is where salvation appears.” When the danger isn’t obvious, when one thinks that he is safe, then the need for salvation is also obscured. Where there is no danger neither is there salvation. And this may be the present situation in many universities.

As Robert Spaemann has said, utopias are dead. But what remains when what supposedly had taken the place of religion is shown to have been an illusion? There is either a return to the beginning, a return to the living God, or a radical anti-utopia which denies any transcendental dimension to human thought. Richard Rorty, among other relativistic writers, has sketched out this anti-utopia. It is the dream of a liberal
society, where all of the absolute demands of knowledge, religion and ethics have disappeared, and where only pleasure and pain are considered true, tested according to what Amartya Sen calls a “mental metrics.” Nothing should be taken seriously. We want to feel good, and that’s all that matters. Nietzsche’s heroic nihilism has been replaced by a banal nihilism which, also in the words of Spaeman, calls itself “liberal” and its opponents “fundamentalists.” For this “light” nihilism, freedom means the multiplication of possibilities of choice. But it does not admit of any option for which it is worthwhile renouncing all the others. There is no place for the “treasure hidden in a field,” which impels the finder to sell all that he possesses.

The skeptical relativism of the apparently dominant culture not only implies the spiritual death of the soul, but also of any vital culture. Without this culture, the university itself ends up resembling the funereal description that Ortega y Gasset gave it: “a sad, inert, opaque, practically lifeless thing.” The university that, for eight centuries, has shown itself capable of responding to the challenges arising from without, now appears defenseless against the menace that has arisen within its own walls and that is robbing it of meaning. We are facing the phenomenon sociologists call “implosion,” that is, a dry explosion towards the center, produced by an internal vacuum. This is not merely a functional problem; it represents a decisive institutional crossroads. The university has an excess of organization; what is lacking is life. What it needs is, in the words of Karl Jaspers, “the basic spiritual vigor without which any reform of the university is useless.”

Blessed Josemaría Escriva: a new and radical university vision

Intellectual history reminds us that, in similar periods of darkness, it has often been deep and lucid personalities who have accurately pointed out the direction in which it was necessary to move. Such is the case, in our time, with Blessed Josemaría Escriva, the founder of a number of universities and the inspirer of many other academic initiatives throughout the world. Josemaría Escriva was not only an original thinker and a great academic. He was a holy priest, a man of God. But what is of most interest to our topic is that in him both dimensions, the intellectual and the spiritual, were not separated nor in the least opposed to each other. His
own life was an heroic example of what he never ceased to proclaim: an existential unity imbued with refinement and consistency, in which the different anthropological parameters acquired unsuspected depth by being referred to our Father God. This is the source of the intellectual daring that characterized all of his proposals as a university radical who urged forward the search for truth beyond the frontiers of acquired knowledge.

His transcendent vision of earthly realities led him to realize that the spiritual energy the university needs today cannot be reduced to a vague humanism. This is how he expressed it in an academic discourse given on May 9, 1974: “The university knows that the required scientific objectivity justly rejects all ideological neutrality, all ambiguity, all conformism, all cowardice. The love for truth commits the scientist’s entire life and work and sustains the courage of his honesty in the face of possibly uncomfortable situations, since this committed integrity is not always looked upon favorably by public opinion.”[1] So-called neutrality is becoming a complete fiction, because it ends up leading to intolerance and sectarianism. Blessed Josemaria added on that same occasion: “This world of ours will be saved, let me remind you, not by those who try to deaden awareness of the life of the spirit, reducing everything to a matter of economics or material well-being, but by those who have faith in God and in the eternal destiny of man, and who know how to receive the truth of Christ as a light providing direction for action and conduct. Because the God of our faith is not a far-off being, who contemplates the fate of men and women with indifference. He is a Father who loves his children ardently, a creating God who overflows with affection for his creatures. And he gives man the great privilege of being able to love, thus transcending what is ephemeral and transitory.”[2]

The paradigm of unity of life

Blessed Josemaría Escrivá’s words point to the deep source of the unity and universality of the community of research and learning that is still called the *Universitas Studiorum*, the *Universitas Magistrorum et Alumnorum*. For many academics, a meeting with the founder of Opus Dei resulted in their abandoning a lackadaisical and bourgeois spirit, and committing themselves to the search for truth, a love for freedom and the defense of justice, which transformed their academic vocation. He was a
holy and wise man who helped them to understand that the ultimate mission of the university is to foster the freedom of God’s children. Divine filiation is the secret that frees us from vanity and dispersion. God’s fatherly love opens up the only real possibility that human beings truly come to love one another, and thus bring about a renewal of culture. “The bond of the Gospel with man,” said John Paul II, at the Complutense University of Madrid, “is creative of culture at its very foundation, since it teaches us to love each person’s humanity and singular dignity... The synthesis between culture and faith is not only a requirement of culture but also of faith.... A faith that does not become culture is a faith that has not been fully accepted, nor fully thought through, nor faithfully lived.”[3]

Faith becomes culture because it teaches one to love man in his concrete humanity, in that vital unity made up of matter and spirit, intimacy and transcendence, unrepeatable singularity and an openness to the universal. It is not a contingent historic fact that the university is Christian in its very origin. In fact the very idea of a university becomes dimmed and weakened when one forgets its Christian roots.

Already in the first third of the twentieth century, Max Weber gave us advanced warning of this lost unity. Once faith in the true God is dissipated, what remains is a “polytheism of values.” Modern man finds himself internally torn by a multiplicity of incompatible loyalties that coincide only in excluding the indivisible faithfulness to the unicum necessarium. Each of us can experience in his own flesh these “personal experiences of discontinuity,” which cause one to change one’s costume several times each day. The word “person” has once again regained its etymological meaning of “a mask.” It is often the case that various persons coexist in a single subject, without it being easy to identify oneself with any single one of them. Are we members of a family, professionals, citizens, believers or simply clowns? All and none of these. Max Weber announced that the disenchantment of the world by science, its savage modernization, would necessarily lead to men who would be “specialists without a soul, workers without a heart.” Now they are everywhere. As is that “lack of meaning” which, according to the German sociologist, would be the price that must be paid for the replacement of convictions by conventions.
A new complexity has arisen that is more than a mere increase in the complications which have always accompanied human life. There is still truth in what T.S. Eliot said, “The human race cannot bear very much reality.” But what is happening now is that the new complexity stems not from an excess of reality but from a vacuum of being. The proliferation of personal isolation and alienation and the undesirable affects that the state of perplexity is provoking in us, has its cause in the separation between political and economic structures on the one hand and the real, daily life of individuals on the other. What sociologists call “technostructure” or “technosystem”—the interlacing of the market, the state and the communications media—presents today an “unreal” picture, in Newman's sense of the term: the man in the street is unable to recognize himself in these powerful and spectral figures.

Today’s university cannot take refuge in a bucolic simplicity that possibly never existed and that now is simply impossible to attain. The university, if it still wants to continue being such, finds itself today faced with the challenge of understanding this new complexity and converting it into a human reality.

The rediscovery of everyday life

It is urgent to rediscover a source of forgotten meaning, anterior to all of our constructions and interpretations. This primary source of meaning is found in everyday life, in the ordinary activity where Blessed Josemaria Escriva situates the normal field of sanctification of the Christian who carries out his work in the midst of the world. The original source of meaning, submerged beneath the dense cloaks of chaotic complexity, is nothing other than the unity of human life: the unity of each person in his concrete humanity, whose social nature demands an integration into understandable communities, on a human scale, among which first place is held by the family and the school.

The solution that the university can provide to a disoriented society is not primarily recourse to the abstraction usually referred to as “a change of structures.” The true solution is found right there in the street, in the immediate reality of the lives of men and women, in their ways of living and working, and even more radically, in the directing of the great variety
of human affairs to the single goal of the living God who is always close to us. In a homily given outdoors on the campus of the University of Navarre, Josemaría Escrivá reminded students, professors and administrative employees that “we cannot lead a double life. We cannot be like schizophrenics if we want to be Christians. There is just one life, made of flesh and spirit. And it is this life which has to become, in both soul and body, holy and filled with God. We discover the invisible God in the most visible and material things. There is no other way. Either we learn to find our Lord in ordinary, everyday life, or else we shall never find Him. That is why I can tell you that our age needs to give back to matter and to the most trivial occurrences their noble and original meaning. It needs to restore them to the service of the Kingdom of God, to spiritualize them, turning them into a means and an occasion for a continuous meeting with Jesus Christ.”

The philosophy of creation and the theology of grace combine without confusion to confer on the idea of the university a tremendous transforming energy at this beginning of a new millennium. Dispersion is overcome when we remember that the Holy Spirit is, as St. Thomas Aquinas said, “the primordial gift.” More intimate to me than I am to myself, the light of uncreated Wisdom illuminates all created realities, leading us deeper into the being of things. Because, as Blessed Josemaría Escrivá said, “There is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it.”

The university becomes a passionate adventure of the spirit when it is seen as a vital community in which professors and students come together freely in an effort to “detect the flashes of divine splendor which shine through the commonest everyday realities.”

Sanctification of university work

“Wherever the danger exists, that is where salvation appears.” Human work, which was the focus of the collectivist utopias and which now is the source of the individualistic anti-utopias, is ennobled when it is converted into a means for completing the work of creation, for the service of all mankind, especially the most needy, and for seeking one’s own perfection, personal sanctity in the midst of the world. This is a task that is
transcendent and immanent at the same time, which breaks, both from within and from above, the closed circle of that negative dialectic which has led modern ideologies to the point of death. This is also how a new culture of life can be sketched out, which boldly opposes the old culture of death, to use the fertile expressions of Pope John Paul II.

Irreconcilable division is the seed of death. The harmonious unity of a plurality is the root of life. And the essence of a University is based on the conviction that such an organic unity is possible, that there is a necessary juncture between truth and unity which can be unveiled by the highest human capacity, by the calm contemplation of reality. On the other hand, the opposition between spirit and matter, between truth and efficacy, between humanistic education and professional training, is the unstaunched wound through which the university ideal bleeds to death.

We are seeing the failure of the academic programs of the enlightenment, which tried to join fields of knowledge on the basis of a cold objectivity that was supposedly neutral, setting aside any love of truth. The opposition between love and knowledge, as if they were respectively the irrational and the rational, is a dialectical distortion which ends up by reducing love to physical desire and knowledge to the trivial curiosity that is hidden beneath the hopeless optimism of purposeless erudition. In reality, however, love is the source of all knowledge and the innermost energy which nourishes a community of research and teaching.

The formation of young peoples’ personalities

One can’t, strictly speaking, talk about a university where research and teaching is not based on a passionate love for the world and for our fellow men and women, in whose countenance shines the splendor of subsistent Love. As Blessed Josemaria Escriva pointed out, “There is no university properly speaking if the transmission of knowledge is not joined to the complete formation of the personalities of young people. The humanism of the early Greeks was conscious of the importance of this. But when, in the plenitude of time, Christ revealed for all times the hidden mysteries of our eternal destiny, an order was established that was both human and divine, in the service of which the university attains its highest role.”[7]
The foundation of this integral formation is a solid intellectual preparation, described in a text written years ago by the founder of the University of Navarre:

“Since you want to acquire a Catholic or universal mentality, here are some characteristics you should aim at:

— a breadth of vision and a deepening insight into the things that remain alive and unchanged in Catholic orthodoxy;

— a proper and healthy desire, which should never be frivolous, to present anew the standard teachings of traditional thought in philosophy and the interpretation of history;

— a careful awareness of trends in science and contemporary thought;

— and a positive and open attitude towards the current changes in society and in ways of living.”[8]

Of course, the university should not limit its concerns to an exclusively academic sphere. This would make it lose its contact with life; its knowledge would turn in on itself, becoming narcissistic, and would eventually shrivel up. Blessed Josemaria opened unsuspected perspectives for many in his conception of higher studies. “The university,” he energetically affirmed, “does not live with its back turned to any uncertainty, to any concern, to any of mankind’s need. But in studying these problems with scientific depth, it must also move hearts, fight passivity, awaken sleeping forces, and form citizens desirous of constructing a more just society. In this way it will contribute with its universal work to the lowering of barriers which prevent mutual understanding among men, to the alleviating of fear of an uncertain future, to the fostering, by its love for truth, justice and freedom, of true peace and concord among peoples and nations.”[9]

The main role of the university in history

The great social and cultural upheavals that we have been going through at the end of the 20th century have once more given a surprising topicality to these principles of the university spirit. As in other crucial moments of its now long history, the university needs to rediscover in our time the decisive role it must carry out in the guiding of such deep changes.
The lesson of history tells us that allowing itself to be carried along by the current of external events always amounts to the decline of the university. In contrast, the university flourishes only when it succeeds in being “at the very source of changes,” to use an expression of Josemaría Escrivá.

The change now taking place might be characterized as the transformation of the industrial society into the knowledge society. The collapse of the materialistic interpretation of history is apparent not only in the events in Eastern Europe. It is also seen in the “silent revolution” transforming our way of working and thinking. We know now that the true riches of peoples are not based primarily on their capacity to produce and process raw materials. Our chief resource now consists in the ability to generate new knowledge, and in our agility and versatility in processing and transmitting information.

It seems clear that, in this situation, the demands on the university will be both pressing and difficult to respond to. To measure up to such historic circumstances, to be capable of taking steps to meet the changes with originality and effectiveness, the mentality of university people themselves has to undergo a deep renewal. But the most interesting part of this challenge is based primarily on the fact that the progress that is being asked of us is—in the sense of the Aristotelian praxis teleia—an advance towards ourselves, a new encounter with the genuine tradition of the Universitas Studiorum. The new cultural sensitivity as well as the impressive unfolding of science and technology in recent decades, has broken the watertight compartments of the conventional disciplines and is crying out for a new articulation of knowledge that can once more ground the plurality of sciences in the unity of what is most truly human. It is in this context that the paradigm of unity of life proposed by Blessed Josemaría Escrivá presents an extraordinary fruitfulness.

An Interdisciplinary Dialogue

From this perspective, an interdisciplinary dialogue becomes today an unavoidable demand, because the real problems for which the university should be seeking solutions always include a variety of scientific aspects that cannot be fitted into the web of a rigidly organized system. As the Chancellor of the University of Navarre said recently, “each discipline
contributes in its own way to the perfection of persons and society. This common aspiration leads to a situation where all fields of knowledge can and must become related and interchange their contributions, without in this way losing their own special character and without diluting their own presuppositions and methods. The University of Navarre wants its students, in addition to obtaining a professional training that will allow them to perform a competent service to society, to benefit from the interdisciplinary dialogue, so that, within human limitations, they can attain their own vital synthesis. And our goal is that, saturated with a university and Christian spirit, they attain an authentic ideal of human excellence and are able to follow appropriate examples to live with uprightness and a spirit of service.\footnote{10}

Universities have to open themselves to this dynamic of interdepartmental cooperation. Besides generosity and a big vision, the new situation requires some operative procedures that the university can find in the sciences that study human activity.

But, as was previously pointed out, the change in organizational model would be superficial and ineffective if it was not based on a change in the epistemological and ethical model. As Alasdair MacIntyre has noted, it is a matter of moving from the paradigm of certainty to the paradigm of truth.

Truth and certainty

According to the model of certainty, there is no depth to reality; there is no mystery in the being of things; there are only problems that lend themselves to being resolved with the proper methodology. The objective structures are there, at the disposal of anyone who is persistent enough and uses an adequate methodology. A method, such as the Cartesian one, opens up to us these objective structures: a world that is made accessible regardless of the ethical dispositions of the person, the community of which we form part, or the period of history we are living in. This outlook has led to a dead end, to a series of widespread fictions in scientific and ethical language, to a profound demoralization in broad sectors of society. It is now time to move from the paradigm of certainty to the paradigm of truth.
In accordance with the paradigm of truth, theoretical knowledge and practice has a great deal of “work” in it, almost craftsmanship: this is the classic meaning of the word “savant.” In order to learn it is necessary to become part of a community of learning, which has a dynamic of tradition and progress, which establishes norms to which its members freely link themselves, which encourages intellectual and ethical virtues, without which any advance in knowledge is superficial and illusory. Access to truth requires an exacting preparation, shared values and self-discipline; the same as does the proper exercise of freedom, to which it is closely linked.

The strict pretension of certainty is oriented towards the past, to putting two and two together with a security that guarantees the supremacy of reason. Therefore objectivism is obsessed with justification and providing proofs, to such an extent that it always ends up trying in vain to articulate all the scaffolding of a foundational concept, in which questions of the “point of departure” and the model of inference constitute the central and indeed irresolvable problem.

In contrast, the paradigm of truth is primarily concerned not with mooring its point of departure to a solid support, but with attaining the end of one’s research, which is precisely the truth, understood as a good of the intellect. Hence the beginning of its research is tentative and apparently shaky: it uses dialectics in the Aristotelian sense, looking at the most common opinions about the problem it is trying to elucidate. It progresses by eliminating from consideration the positions that presuppose others, until it reaches a principle which does not imply any other and which itself is implied in various ways by all of the others. It does not consider this principle as a definitive truth, but continually re-examines it, to test its solidity and especially its fruitfulness as a truth. In this way the search for truth meets the fullness of reality, without trying to completely assure the beginning and each of the following steps. One who seeks the truth is not looking for exhaustive knowledge of what he is investigating. On the contrary, he tries to make what is already known vulnerable, for he always aspires to know more and better, while rejoicing in the possible upsetting of his theories, since this implies an advance towards the attainment of truth. And paradoxically, it is this openness towards risk that in a certain sense
makes the person of the seeker invulnerable, since what is in play is not his own interests but his openness to reality.

In contraposing truth to certainty—the “spirit of excellence” to the “spirit of geometry,” according to Pascal’s distinction—it is not necessary to get into the problematic distinction of the two cultures. Of course, it is not that one of the models represents the humanities and the other the experimental sciences. Obviously the paradigm of truth puts into relief aspects of research which for a long time have been hidden or forgotten: that all research is a human activity; that it is necessary to carry it out within the bosom of a community of learning and teaching such as, among others, is the university; that it possesses evident moral aspects and that it does not stand olympically aloof from historical and social conditioning. But this does not mean that the values proper to the model of certainty are eliminated, such as rigor in the obtaining of data, terminological precision or logical validity of argumentation.

Freely loving the truth is the essence of university life. As Pope John Paul II pointed out recently, “the vocation of every university is service to the truth: to discover it and transmit it to others.” And this enables the university, “through the research effort of many scientific disciplines, to gradually approach the supreme Truth. Man transcends the confines of the various disciplines of knowledge to the point of directing them towards that Truth and towards the definitive realization of humanity itself. Here one can speak of the solidarity of the various scientific disciplines at the service of man, called to discover the truth, ever more fully, about himself and about the world around him.”[11]

The role of community in university formation

As Jesus Arellano says, the university gathers up the vital forces that first appear in youth; it tempers them in practical and theoretical habits, and launches them into the directive tasks of social life. Quality teaching is much more than transferring preprocessed knowledge; it is much more than the transmission of information. A quality university education requires the ethical and scientific forging of mature and free personalities, which grow together with their professors and fellow students in a fruitful environment, in a climate of refined companionship, of civic responsibility
and promotion of social justice. A good higher education is made up of an apprenticeship in objective content, but also of an incorporation into innovative methodologies, of the acquisition of a way of relating to others and an increase in creative capacity.

“Here, in this living together, personality takes shape,” said the founder of the University of Navarre. And his faithful successor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, put this fundamental educational thesis into the context of the end of the millennium: “By a singular providence of God, in these last years of the 20th century we have seen the collapse of a great number of the totalitarian regimes which were created by theoretical materialism, and of the ideological currents that served to justify these inhuman systems. But as Pope John Paul II has pointed out time and again, at the origin of those unhappy social and human problems which afflict Europe and the world at the present time, one finds a selfish individualism that stems from practical materialism, ignoring the true dignity of the human person. When one forgets that man is a being with a transcendent destiny and open to the community of his fellow men and women, solidarity loses its foundation and social life becomes subject to a process of degradation with consequences that affect not only the life of nations, but also the international order.” But overcoming any temptation to pessimism, he goes on to say: “In the face of this historic challenge, the university must not surrender comfortably to the dominant forces; rather it must draw from its own intellectual and ethical resources the necessary energy to find solutions for such acute problems.

The Christian identity of the university

According to Blessed Josemaria, the three institutional goals of the university are: to elaborate a synthesis of knowledge, to harmoniously form its students, and to serve the social environment around it. Now at the turn of the century, such goals take on a renewed importance. Today it is possible for Christian wisdom and a humanism with classical roots to join hands with the most advanced scientific findings and cutting edge technology. Professionals are needed who are efficient precisely because they have a unitary and global vision of reality, because they are people of culture. Serving society does not mean giving in to pragmatism; rather it requires a daring anticipation of a more just future.
The fruitfulness of the academic task acquires transcendent perspective when, in a climate of friendship and dialogue, it is inspired by the Christian values present in the original idea of the university. Faith is an illumination and a spur, never a restriction or barrier. Christianity is life that has been freed by Christ, an existence redeemed from vanity and dispersion. As Professor Elisabeth Anscombe said on one occasion, the decisive thing about a university is whether it is known there that God is the Truth.

The university vision of Blessed Josemaria Escriva

Blessed Josemaria’s response to this complex situation is surprising in its immediacy and simplicity. It elegantly evades intellectualized disquisitions. He liked to “hammer nails in by the point.”[14] He went straight ahead, with the simplicity and certainty of someone who sees the goal, going to the very heart of the question. And he proposed a solution that is surprising in its freshness and relevance, in its powerful vigor, in the richness of its levels and shades.

When the founder of Opus Dei received the extraordinary grace with which God made him see his divine will,[15] his faithfulness to that grace and his intellectual clarity led him to discover intuitively, in a sure and penetrating way, that the solution to the social situation lay in everyday life, with its multiplicity of small realities, and above all in their unity in our Father God. Thus it is that his spirit and teaching contain an answer to the problems of our age, and, at the same time, a message that is valid for all times.

As he said one October morning, in that discourse given at the University of Navarre which is known among students and professors as “the campus homily”: “I assure you, my sons and daughters, that when a Christian carries out with love the most insignificant everyday action, that action overflows with the transcendence of God. That is why I have told you repeatedly, and hammered away once and again on the idea, that the Christian vocation consists of making heroic verse out of the prose of each day. Heaven and earth seem to merge, my sons and daughters, on the horizon. But where they really meet is in your hearts, when you sanctify your everyday lives.”[16]
The founder and first Chancellor of the University of Navarre taught these essential truths both with his words and, above all, with his heroic life. In his university addresses, in homilies and in unforgettable get-togethers, he showed how efficiency can be reconciled with mercy and understanding, freedom with dedication, good humor with seriousness, concern for the great problems of life with care for the smallest details. And he did this as “God’s juggler,” without scholarly pretensions, opening up the way with his faith, with a joy and affection that broke down all barriers. In the congenial figure of this holy priest, there appeared a wise man, a great university figure capable of galvanizing enthusiasm in research and teaching around values that are perennial and unmistakably up to date.


[12] *Conversations*, no. 84.


Back to Contents