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.

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EDITORIAL
In the Third Millenium

After the extraordinary experience of the Jubilee, the beginning of the third millennium of the Christian era opens a new chapter in the action of grace in history. The challenges are great and complex. There are no set paths, no «magic formulas»[1] for our mission as Christians in the new millennium. But we have a promise: “I am with you always, to the close of the age.”[2]

It would be naive to ignore the obstacles that oppose the proclaiming of Christ in today’s world. As the Pope pointed out, it is precisely some of the traditionally Christian countries that present dramatic symptoms of “a religious disinterest resulting from the consumer and secularist mentality.”[3] At the same time, nevertheless, a person with faith cannot help but notice powerful reasons for optimism.

Last December 21st, when addressing the Roman curia on the results of the Jubilee Year, the Pope chose to dedicate special attention to the Jubilee for Youth, “not only for its intrinsic dimensions, but above all for the dedication that it demonstrated.”[4] It is not only a question of numbers, but of the spirit the young people showed, the sincerity of their personal witness, their search for Christ. John Paul II saw in today’s youth, who are going to be the first actors on the stage of the third millennium, “young people, whatever their possible ambiguities, [who] have a profound longing for those genuine values which find their fullness in Christ.”[5] Therefore, during World Youth Day, he addressed these challenging words to them: “It is Jesus in fact that you seek when you dream of happiness; he is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; he is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is he who provokes you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is he who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is he who reads in your hearts your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle. It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal.”[6]
John Paul II also wrote, at the conclusion of the Jubilee Year, that “the symbol of the Holy Door now closes behind us, but only in order to leave more fully open the living door which is Christ.”[7] If we Christians are optimistic about the future it is because we trust, above all, in the God and Lord of History, the only guarantee of the future. Only in Christ, “considered in his historical features and in his mystery, Christ known through his manifold presence in the Church and in the world, and confessed as the meaning of history and the light of life’s journey,”[8] can one find the key to read this new millennium which humanity has just entered.

The Jubilee, lived by Christians “not only as a remembrance of the past, but also as a prophecy of the future,”[9] closed as the millennium began. A moment of grace and conversion, it formed a hopeful prologue to the new millennium. The Pope now asks us to keep our fervor enkindled, so that “the fruits of this Year will not be lost and that the seeds of grace will grow to the full measure of the holiness to which we are all called.”[10] Therefore, in his Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte, he invited the bishops and all the faithful, closely united to one another, to heed Christ’s words, duc in altum!, put out into the deep,[11] and to strive, without delay and with complete trust in God, to employ the means needed to obtain the fruit that He desires. The program that the Roman Pontiff is proposing to the Church for welcoming the new millennium is thus the simple yet demanding program of sanctity: in particular the sanctification of ordinary life[12] to which the lay faithful are called by their incorporation into Christ in baptism.

From our first steps in the third millennium, our eyes are directed towards Mary and, through her,[13] towards Jesus. “O Mother, you know the sufferings and hopes of the Church and the world: come to the aid of your children in the daily trials which life brings to each one, and grant that, thanks to the efforts of all, the darkness will not prevail over the light. To you, Dawn of Salvation, we commit our journey through the new Millennium, so that with you as guide all people may know Christ, the light of the world and its only Saviour, who reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.”[14]


[8] Ibid. no. 15.

[9] Ibid. no. 3.


[12] Cf. Ibid. no. 31.


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Address at the Prayer Vigil of World Youth Day (August 19, 2000)

1. “But who do you say that I am?” (Mt 16:15).

Dear young people, it is with great joy that I meet you again at this Prayer Vigil, during which we wish to listen together to Christ whom we feel present among us. It is he who is speaking to us.

“Who do you say that I am?” Jesus asks his disciples this question near Caesarea Philippi. Simon Peter answers: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16). The Master then turns to him with the surprising words: “Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 16:17).

What is the meaning of this dialogue? Why does Jesus want to know what people think about him? Why does he want to know what his disciples think about him?

Jesus wants his disciples to become aware of what is hidden in their own minds and hearts and to give voice to their conviction. At the same time, however, he knows that the judgment they will express will not be theirs alone, because it will reveal what God has poured into their hearts by the grace of faith.

This event which took place near Caesarea Philippi leads us, in a sense, into the “school of faith.” There the mystery of the origin and development of our faith is disclosed. First there is the grace of revelation: an intimate, ineffable self-giving of God to man. There then follows the call to respond. Finally there comes the human response, a response which from that point on must give meaning and shape to one’s entire life.

This is what faith is all about! It is the response of the rational and free human person to the word of the living God. The questions that Jesus asks, the answers given by the Apostles, and finally by Simon Peter, are a kind of examination on the maturity of the faith of those who are closest to
Christ.

2. The conversation near Caesarea Philippi took place during the time leading up to the Passover, that is, before Christ’s passion and resurrection. We should also recall another event, when the Risen Christ checked the maturity of faith of his Apostles. This is the meeting with the Apostle Thomas. He was the only one not there when, after the resurrection, Christ came for the first time into the Upper Room. When the other disciples told him that they had seen the Lord, he would not believe it. He said: “Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe” (Jn 20:25). A week later, the disciples were gathered together again and Thomas was with them. Jesus came through the closed door, and greeted the Apostles with the words: “Peace be with you” (Jn 20:26), and immediately he turned to Thomas: “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing” (Jn 20:27). Thomas then answered: “My Lord and my God!” (Jn 20:28).

The Upper Room in Jerusalem too was a kind of “school of faith” for the Apostles. However, in a sense, what happened to Thomas goes beyond what occurred near Caesarea Philippi. In the Upper Room we see a more radical dialectic of faith and unbelief, and, at the same time, an even deeper confession of the truth about Christ. It was certainly not easy to believe that the One who had been placed in the tomb three days earlier was alive again.

The divine Master had often announced that he would rise from the dead, and in many ways he had shown that he was the Lord of life. Yet the experience of his death was so overwhelming that people needed to meet him directly in order to believe in his resurrection: the Apostles in the Upper Room, the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the holy women beside the tomb… Thomas too needed it. But when his unbelief was directly confronted by the presence of Christ, the doubting Apostle spoke the words which express the deepest core of faith: If this is the case, if you are truly living despite having been killed, this means that you are “my Lord and my God.”
In what happened to Thomas, the “school of faith” is enriched with a new element. Divine revelation, Jesus’ question and man’s response end in the disciple’s personal encounter with the living Christ, with the Risen One. This encounter is the beginning of a new relationship between each one of us and Christ, a relationship in which each of us comes to the vital realization that Christ is Lord and God; not only the Lord and God of the world and of humanity, but the Lord and God of my own individual human life. One day Saint Paul would write: “The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach. Because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom 10:8-9).

3. The readings of today’s Liturgy describe the elements of the “school of faith” from which the Apostles emerged as people fully aware of the truth which God had revealed in Jesus Christ, the truth which would shape their personal lives and the life of the Church throughout history. This gathering in Rome, dear young people, is also a kind of “school of faith” for you, the disciples of today; it is the “school of faith” for all who proclaim Christ at the beginning of the Third Millennium.

You can all sense in yourselves the process of questions and answers that we have just been talking about. You can all measure the difficulties you have in believing, and even feel the temptation not to believe. But at the same time you can also experience a slowly maturing sense and conviction of your commitment in faith. In fact, there is always a meeting between God and the human person in this wonderful school of the human spirit, the school of faith. The Risen Christ always enters the Upper Room of our life and allows each of us to experience his presence and to declare: You, O Christ, you are “my Lord and my God.”

Christ said to Thomas: “Because you have seen me, you have believed: blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (Jn 20:29). There is something of the Apostle Thomas in every human being. Each one is tempted by unbelief and each one asks the basic questions: Is it true that God exists? Is it true that he created the world? Is it true that the Son of God became man, died and rose from the dead? The answer comes as the person experiences God’s presence. We have to open our eyes and our heart to the light of the Holy Spirit. Then the open wounds of the Risen Christ
will speak to each of us: “Because you have seen me, you have believed: blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”

4. Dear friends, to believe in Jesus today, to follow Jesus as Peter, Thomas, and the first Apostles and witnesses did, demands of us, just as it did in the past, that we take a stand for him, almost to the point at times of a new martyrdom: the martyrdom of those who, today as yesterday, are called to go against the tide in order to follow the divine Master, to follow “the Lamb wherever he goes” (Rev 14:4). It is not by chance, dear young people, that I wanted the witnesses to the faith in the twentieth century to be remembered at the Colosseum during this Holy Year.

Perhaps you will not have to shed your blood, but you will certainly be asked to be faithful to Christ! A faithfulness to be lived in the circumstances of everyday life: I am thinking of how difficult it is in today’s world for engaged couples to be faithful to purity before marriage. I think of how the mutual fidelity of young married couples is put to the test. I think of friendships and how easily the temptation to be disloyal creeps in.

I think also of how those who have chosen the path of special consecration have to struggle to persevere in their dedication to God and to their brothers and sisters. I think of those who want to live a life of solidarity and love in a world where the only things that seem to matter are the logic of profit and one’s personal or group interest.

I think too of those who work for peace and who see new outbreaks of war erupt and grow worse in different parts of the world; I think of those who work for human freedom and see people still slaves of themselves and of one another. I think of those who work to ensure love and respect for human life and who see life so often attacked and the respect due to life so often flouted.

5. Dear young people, in such a world is it hard to believe? Is it hard to believe in the Third Millennium? Yes! It is hard. There is no need to hide it. It is hard, but with the help of grace it can be done, as Jesus explained to Peter: “Neither flesh nor blood has revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 16:17).
This evening I will give you the Gospel. It is the Pope’s gift to you at this unforgettable vigil. The word which it contains is the word of Jesus. If you listen to it in silence, in prayer, seeking help in understanding what it means for your life from the wise counsel of your priests and teachers, then you will meet Christ and you will follow him, spending your lives day by day for him!

It is Jesus in fact that you seek when you dream of happiness; he is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; he is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is he who provokes you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is he who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is he who reads in your hearts your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle. It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be grounded down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal.

Dear young people, in these noble undertakings you are not alone. With you there are your families, there are your communities, there are your priests and teachers, there are so many of you who in the depths of your hearts never weary of loving Christ and believing in him. In the struggle against sin you are not alone: so many like you are struggling and through the Lord’s grace are winning!

6. Dear friends, at the dawn of the Third Millennium I see in you the “morning watchmen” (cf. Is 21:11-12). In the course of the century now past young people like you were summoned to huge gatherings to learn the ways of hatred; they were sent to fight against one another. The various godless messianic systems which tried to take the place of Christian hope have shown themselves to be truly horrendous. Today you have come together to declare that in the new century you will not let yourselves be made into tools of violence and destruction; you will defend peace, paying the price in your person if need be. You will not resign yourselves to a world where other human beings die of hunger, remain illiterate and have no work. You will defend life at every moment of its development; you will strive with all your strength to make this earth ever more livable for all people.
Dear young people of the century now beginning, in saying “yes” to Christ, you say “yes” to all your noblest ideals. I pray that he will reign in your hearts and in all of humanity in the new century and the new millennium. Have no fear of entrusting yourselves to him! He will guide you, he will grant you the strength to follow him every day and in every situation.

May Mary most holy, the Virgin who said “yes” to God throughout her whole life, may Saints Peter and Paul and all the saints who have lighted the Church’s journey down the ages, keep you always faithful to this holy resolve!

To each and every one of you I offer my blessing with affection.

Homily at Holy Mass at World Youth Day (August 20, 2000)

1. “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68).

Dear young people of the Fifteenth World Youth Day! These words of Peter, in his conversation with Christ at the end of the discourse on the “bread of life,” affect us personally. In these days we have meditated on John’s statement: “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14). The evangelist has brought us back to the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Son given to us through Mary “when the fullness of time had come” (Gal 4:4).

In his name I greet you all once more with great affection. I greet Cardinal Camillo Ruini, my Vicar for the Diocese of Rome and President of the Italian Episcopal Conference, and I thank him for his words at the beginning of this Mass. I also greet Cardinal James Francis Stafford, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, and the many Cardinals, Bishops and priests gathered here. With gratitude I extend respectful greetings to the President of Italy and the head of the Italian Government, as well as all the civil and religious Authorities who honor us with their
2. We have reached the high point of World Youth Day. Yesterday evening, dear young people, we confirmed our faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God whom the Father sent, as the First Reading reminded us today, “to bring good tidings to the poor... to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound... to comfort all who mourn” (Is 61:1-3).

In today’s Eucharistic celebration, Jesus helps us to come to know a particular aspect of his mystery. In the Gospel, we listened to a part of his discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. In it he reveals himself as the true bread of life, the bread which has come down from heaven to give life to the world (cf. Jn 6:51). These are words that those who hear him do not understand. Their outlook is too material for them to grasp what Christ really means. They are thinking in terms of flesh, which “is of no avail” (Jn 6:63). Jesus’s words, instead, have to do with the unlimited horizons of the spirit: “The words that I have spoken to you — he insists — are spirit and life” (ibid.).

But his hearers are hesitant: “This is a hard saying, who can listen to it?” (Jn 6:60). They consider themselves to be persons of common sense, with their feet on the ground. For this reason they shake their heads and go away muttering, one after another. The initial crowd gradually grows smaller. At the end, only the tiny group of his most faithful disciples remains. But with regard to the “bread of life” Jesus is not prepared to back down. Rather, he is ready to lose even those closest to him: “Will you also go away?” (Jn 6:67).

3. “Will you also?” Christ’s question cuts across the centuries and comes down to us; it challenges us personally and calls for a decision. What is our answer? Dear young people, if we are here today, it is because we identify with the Apostle Peter’s reply: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68).

Around you, you hear all kinds of words. But only Christ speaks words that stand the test of time and remain for all eternity. The time of life that you are living calls for decisive choices on your part: decisions about the direction of your studies, about work, about your role in society and in the
Church. It is important to realize that among the many questions surfacing in your minds, the decisive ones are not about “what.” The basic question is “who”: “who” am I to go to, “who” am I to follow, “to whom” should I entrust my life?

You are thinking about love and the choices it entails, and I imagine that you agree: what is really important in life is the choice of the person who will share it with you. But be careful! Every human person has inevitable limits: even in the most successful of marriages there is always a certain amount of disappointment. So then, dear friends, does not this confirm what we heard the Apostle Peter say? Every human being finds himself sooner or later saying what he said: “To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Only Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God and of Mary, the eternal Word of the Father born two thousand years ago at Bethlehem in Judaea, is capable of satisfying the deepest aspirations of the human heart.

In Peter’s question: “To whom shall we go?” the answer regarding the path to follow is already given. It is the path that leads to Christ. And it is possible to meet the divine Master personally: he is in fact truly present on the altar in the reality of his Body and Blood. In the Eucharistic Sacrifice, we can enter into contact with the person of Jesus in a way that is mysterious but real, drinking at the inexhaustible fountain that is his life as the Risen Lord.

4. This is the stupendous truth, dear friends: the Word, who took flesh two thousand years ago, is present today in the Eucharist. That is why the year of the Great Jubilee, in which we are celebrating the mystery of the Incarnation, had to be an “intensely Eucharistic” year as well (cf. Tertio Millennio Adveniente, 55).

The Eucharist is the sacrament of the presence of Christ, who gives himself to us because he loves us. He loves each one of us in a unique and personal way in our practical daily lives: in our families, among our friends, at study and work, in rest and relaxation. He loves us when he fills our days with freshness, and also when, in times of suffering, he allows trials to weigh upon us: even in the most severe trials, he lets us hear his voice.
Yes, dear friends, Christ loves us and he loves us forever! He loves us even when we disappoint him, when we fail to meet his expectations for us. He never fails to embrace us in his mercy. How can we not be grateful to this God who has redeemed us, going so far as to accept the foolishness of the Cross? To God who has come to be at our side and has stayed with us to the end?

5. To celebrate the Eucharist, “to eat his flesh and drink his blood,” means to accept the wisdom of the Cross and the path of service. It means that we signal our willingness to sacrifice ourselves for others, as Christ has done.

Our society desperately needs this sign, and young people need it even more so, tempted as they often are by the illusion of an easy and comfortable life, by drugs and pleasure-seeking, only to find themselves in a spiral of despair, meaninglessness and violence. It is urgent to change direction and to turn to Christ. This is the way of justice, solidarity and commitment to building a society and a future worthy of the human person.

This is our Eucharist, this is the answer that Christ wants from us, from you young people at the closing of your Jubilee. Jesus is no lover of half measures, and he does not hesitate to pursue us with the question: “Will you also go away?” In the presence of Christ, the Bread of Life, we too want to say today with Peter: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68).

6. Dear friends, when you go back home, set the Eucharist at the center of your personal life and community life: love the Eucharist, adore the Eucharist and celebrate it, especially on Sundays, the Lord’s Day. Live the Eucharist by testifying to God’s love for every person.

I entrust to you, dear friends, this greatest of God’s gifts to us who are pilgrims on the paths of time, but who bear in our hearts a thirst for eternity. May every community always have a priest to celebrate the Eucharist! I ask the Lord therefore to raise up from among you many holy vocations to the priesthood. Today as always the Church needs those who celebrate the Eucharistic Sacrifice with a pure heart. The world must not
be deprived of the gentle and liberating presence of Christ living in the Eucharist!

You yourselves must be fervent witnesses to Christ’s presence on the altar. Let the Eucharist mold your life and the life of the families you will form. Let it guide all life’s choices. May the Eucharist, the true and living presence of the love of the Trinity, inspire in you ideals of solidarity, and may it lead you to live in communion with your brothers and sisters in every part of the world.

In a special way, may sharing in the Eucharist lead to a new flourishing of vocations to the religious life. In this way the Church will have fresh and generous energies for the great task of the new evangelization. If any of you, dear young men and women, hear the Lord’s inner call to give yourselves completely to him in order to love him “with an undivided heart” (cf. 1 Cor 7:34), do not be held back by doubts or fears. Say “yes” with courage and without reserve, trusting him who is faithful to his promises. Did he not assure those who had left everything for his sake that they would have a hundredfold in this life and eternal life hereafter? (cf. Mk 10:29-30).

7. At the end of this World Youth Day, as I look at you now, at your young faces, at your genuine enthusiasm, from the depths of my heart I want to give thanks to God for the gift of youth, which continues to be present in the Church and in the world because of you.

Thank God for the World Youth Days! Thanks be to God for all the young people who have been involved in them in the past sixteen years! Many of them are now adults who continue to live their faith in their homes and work-places. I am sure, dear friends, that you too will be as good as those who preceded you. You will carry the proclamation of Christ into the new millennium. When you return home, do not grow lax. Reinforce and deepen your bond with the Christian communities to which you belong. From Rome, from the City of Peter and Paul, the Pope follows you with affection and, paraphrasing Saint Catherine of Siena’s words, reminds you: “If you are what you should be, you will set the whole world ablaze!” (cf. Letter 368).
I look with confidence to this new humanity which you are now helping to prepare. I look to this Church which in every age is made youthful by the Spirit of Christ and today is made happy by your intentions and commitment. I look to the future and make my own the words of an ancient prayer, which sings the praise of the one gift of Jesus, the Eucharist and the Church:

“I give thanks to you, Father of us all, for the life and the knowledge which you have revealed to us through Jesus your servant. To you be glory in every age!

Just as this bread now broken was wheat scattered far and wide upon the hills and, when harvested, became one bread, so too let your Church be gathered into your kingdom from the far ends of the earth...

You, O Lord almighty, have created the universe to the glory of your name; you have given people food and drink for their comfort, so that they may give you thanks; but to us you have given a spiritual food and drink and eternal life through your Son... Glory be to you forever!” (Didache 9:3-4; 10:3-4)

Amen.

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Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte (January 6, 2001)

To my Brother Bishops, To Priests and Deacons, Men and Women Religious and all the Lay Faithful.

1. At the beginning of the new millennium, and at the close of the Great Jubilee during which we celebrated the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of Jesus and a new stage of the Church’s journey begins, our hearts ring out with the words of Jesus when one day, after speaking to the crowds from Simon’s boat, he invited the Apostle to “put out into the deep” for a catch: “Duc in altum” (Lk 5:4). Peter and his first companions
trusted Christ’s words, and cast the nets. “When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish” (Lk 5:6).

*Duc in altum!* These words ring out for us today, and they invite us to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to look forward to the future with confidence: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever” (Heb 13:8).

The Church’s joy was great this year, as she devoted herself to contemplating the face of her Bridegroom and Lord. She became more than ever a pilgrim people, led by him who is the “the great shepherd of the sheep” (Heb 13:20). With extraordinary energy, involving so many of her members, the People of God here in Rome, as well as in Jerusalem and in all the individual local churches, went through the “Holy Door” that is Christ. To him who is the goal of history and the one Saviour of the world, the Church and the Spirit cried out: “Marana tha — Come, Lord Jesus” (cf. Rev 22:17, 20; 1 Cor 16:22).

It is impossible to take the measure of this event of grace which in the course of the year has touched people’s hearts. But certainly, “a river of living water,” the water that continually flows “from the throne of God and of the Lamb” (cf. Rev 22:1), has been poured out on the Church. This is the water of the Spirit which quenches thirst and brings new life (cf. Jn 4:14). This is the merciful love of the Father which has once again been made known and given to us in Christ. At the end of this year we can repeat with renewed jubilation the ancient words of thanksgiving: “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love endures for ever” (Ps 118:1).

2. For all this, I feel the need to write to you, dearly beloved, to share this song of praise with you. From the beginning of my Pontificate, my thoughts had been on this Holy Year 2000 as an important appointment. I thought of its celebration as a providential opportunity during which the Church, thirty-five years after the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, would examine how far she had renewed herself, in order to be able to take up her evangelizing mission with fresh enthusiasm.

Has the Jubilee succeeded in this aim? Our commitment, with its generous efforts and inevitable failings, is under God’s scrutiny. But we
cannot fail to give thanks for the “marvels” the Lord has worked for us: “Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo” (Ps 89:2).

At the same time, what we have observed demands to be reconsidered, and in a sense “deciphered,” in order to hear what the Spirit has been saying to the Church (cf. Rev 2:7,11,17, etc.) during this most intense year.

3. Dear Brothers and Sisters, it is especially necessary for us to direct our thoughts to the future which lies before us. Often during these months we have looked towards the new millennium which is beginning, as we lived this Jubilee not only as a remembrance of the past, but also as a prophecy of the future. We now need to profit from the grace received, by putting it into practice in resolutions and guidelines for action. This is a task I wish to invite all the local churches to undertake. In each of them, gathered around their Bishop, as they listen to the word and “break bread” in brotherhood (cf. Acts 2:42), the “one holy catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative.”[1] It is above all in the actual situation of each local church that the mystery of the one People of God takes the particular form that fits it to each individual context and culture.

In the final analysis, this rooting of the Church in time and space mirrors the movement of the Incarnation itself. Now is the time for each local Church to assess its fervor and find fresh enthusiasm for its spiritual and pastoral responsibilities, by reflecting on what the Spirit has been saying to the People of God in this special year of grace, and indeed in the longer span of time from the Second Vatican Council to the Great Jubilee. It is with this purpose in mind that I wish to offer in this Letter, at the conclusion of the Jubilee Year, the contribution of my Petrine ministry, so that the Church may shine ever more brightly in the variety of her gifts and in her unity as she journeys on.

I. MEETING CHRIST

The Legacy of the
Great Jubilee

4. “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty” (Rev 11:17). In the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee I expressed the hope that the bimillennial celebration of the mystery of the Incarnation would be lived as “one
unceasing hymn of praise to the Trinity”[2] and also “as a journey of reconciliation and a sign of true hope for all who look to Christ and to his Church.”[3] And this Jubilee Year has been an experience of these essential aspects, reaching moments of intensity which have made us as it were touch with our hands the merciful presence of God, from whom comes “every good endowment and every perfect gift” (Jas 1:17).

My thoughts turn first to the duty of praise. This is the point of departure for every genuine response of faith to the revelation of God in Christ. Christianity is grace, it is the wonder of a God who is not satisfied with creating the world and man, but puts himself on the same level as the creature he has made and, after speaking on various occasions and in different ways through his prophets, “in these last days... has spoken to us by a Son” (Heb 1:1-2).

In these days! Yes, the Jubilee has made us realize that two thousand years of history have passed without diminishing the freshness of that “today,” when the angels proclaimed to the shepherds the marvellous event of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem: “For to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord” (Lk 2:11). Two thousand years have gone by, but Jesus’ proclamation of his mission, when he applied the prophecy of Isaiah to himself before his astonished fellow townspeople in the Synagogue of Nazareth, is as enduring as ever: “Today this scripture had been fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk 4:21). Two thousand years have gone by, but sinners in need of mercy — and who is not? — still experience the consolation of that “today” of salvation which on the Cross opened the gates of the Kingdom of God to the repentant thief: “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Lk 23:43).

The fullness of time

5. The coincidence of this Jubilee with the opening of a new millennium has certainly helped people to become more aware of the mystery of Christ within the great horizon of the history of salvation, without any concession to millenarian fantasies. Christianity is a religion rooted in history! It was in the soil of history that God chose to establish a covenant with Israel and so prepare the birth of the Son from the womb of Mary “in the fullness of time” (Gal 4:4). Understood in his divine and
human mystery, Christ is the foundation and center of history, he is its meaning and ultimate goal. It is in fact through him, the Word and image of the Father, that “all things were made” (Jn 1:3; cf. Col 1:15). His incarnation, culminating in the Paschal Mystery and the gift of the Spirit, is the pulsating heart of time, the mysterious hour in which the Kingdom of God came to us (cf. Mk 1:15), indeed took root in our history, as the seed destined to become a great tree (cf. Mk 4:30-32).

“Glory to you, Jesus Christ, for you reign today and forever.” With this song repeated thousands of times, we have contemplated Christ this year as he is presented in the Book of Revelation: “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Rev 22:13). And contemplating Christ, we have also adored the Father and the Spirit, the one and undivided Trinity, the ineffable mystery in which everything has its origin and its fulfillment.

The purification of memory

6. To purify our vision for the contemplation of the mystery, this Jubilee Year has been strongly marked by the request for forgiveness. This is true not only for individuals, who have examined their own lives in order to ask for mercy and gain the special gift of the indulgence, but for the entire Church, which has decided to recall the infidelities of so many of her children in the course of history, infidelities which have cast a shadow over her countenance as the Bride of Christ.

For a long time we had been preparing ourselves for this examination of conscience, aware that the Church, embracing sinners in her bosom, “is at once holy and always in need of being purified.” Study congresses helped us to identify those aspects in which, during the course of the first two millennia, the Gospel spirit did not always shine forth. How could we forget the moving Liturgy of March 12, 2000 in Saint Peter’s Basilica, at which, looking upon our Crucified Lord, I asked forgiveness in the name of the Church for the sins of all her children? This “purification of memory” has strengthened our steps for the journey towards the future and has made us more humble and vigilant in our acceptance of the Gospel.

Witnesses to the faith

7. This lively sense of repentance, however, has not prevented us from
giving glory to the Lord for what he has done in every century, and in particular during the century which we have just left behind, by granting his Church a great host of saints and martyrs. For some of them the Jubilee year has been the year of their beatification or canonization. Holiness, whether ascribed to Popes well-known to history or to humble lay and religious figures, from one continent to another of the globe, has emerged more clearly as the dimension which expresses best the mystery of the Church. Holiness, a message that convinces without the need for words, is the living reflection of the face of Christ.

On the occasion of the Holy Year much has also been done to gather together the precious memories of the witnesses to the faith in the twentieth century. Together with the representatives of the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, we commemorated them on May 7, 2000 in the evocative setting of the Colosseum, the symbol of the ancient persecutions. This is a heritage which must not be lost; we should always be thankful for it and we should renew our resolve to imitate it.

A pilgrim Church

8. As if following in the footsteps of the Saints, countless sons and daughters of the Church have come in successive waves to Rome, to the Tombs of the Apostles, wanting to profess their faith, confess their sins and receive the mercy that saves. I have been impressed this year by the crowds of people which have filled Saint Peter’s Square at the many celebrations. I have often stopped to look at the long queues of pilgrims waiting patiently to go through the Holy Door. In each of them I tried to imagine the story of a life, made up of joys, worries, sufferings; the story of someone whom Christ had met and who, in dialogue with him, was setting out again on a journey of hope.

As I observed the continuous flow of pilgrims, I saw them as a kind of concrete image of the pilgrim Church, the Church placed, as Saint Augustine says, “amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God.”[5] We have only been able to observe the outer face of this unique event. Who can measure the marvels of grace wrought in human hearts? It is better to be silent and to adore, trusting humbly in the mysterious
workings of God and singing his love without end: “Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo!”

**Young people**

9. The many Jubilee gatherings have brought together the most diverse groups of people, and the level of participation has been truly impressive — at times sorely trying the commitment of organizers and helpers, both ecclesiastical and civil. In this Letter I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone. But apart from the numbers, what has moved me so often was to note the intensity of prayer, reflection and spirit of communion which these meetings have generally showed.

And how could we fail to recall especially the joyful and inspiring gathering of young people? If there is an image of the Jubilee of the Year 2000 that more than any other will live on in memory, it is surely the streams of young people with whom I was able to engage in a sort of very special dialogue, filled with mutual affection and deep understanding. It was like this from the moment I welcomed them in the Square of Saint John Lateran and Saint Peter’s Square. Then I saw them swarming through the city, happy as young people should be, but also thoughtful, eager to pray, seeking “meaning” and true friendship. Neither for them nor for those who saw them will it be easy to forget that week, during which Rome became “young with the young.” It will not be possible to forget the Mass at Tor Vergata.

Yet again, the young have shown themselves to be for Rome and for the Church a special gift of the Spirit of God. Sometimes when we look at the young, with the problems and weaknesses that characterize them in contemporary society, we tend to be pessimistic. The Jubilee of Young People however changed that, telling us that young people, whatever their possible ambiguities, have a profound longing for those genuine values which find their fullness in Christ. Is not Christ the secret of true freedom and profound joy of heart? Is not Christ the supreme friend and the teacher of all genuine friendship? If Christ is presented to young people as he really is, they experience him as an answer that is convincing and they can accept his message, even when it is demanding and bears the mark of the Cross. For this reason, in response to their enthusiasm, I did not
hesitate to ask them to make a radical choice of faith and life and present them with a stupendous task: to become “morning watchmen” (cf. Is 21:11-12) at the dawn of the new millennium.

The variety of the pilgrims

10. Obviously I cannot go into detail about each individual Jubilee event. Each one of them had its own character and has left its message, not only for those who took part directly but also for those who heard about them or took part from afar through the media. But how can we forget the mood of celebration of the first great gathering dedicated to children? In a way, to begin with them meant respecting Christ’s command: “Let the children come to me” (Mk 10:14). Perhaps even more it meant doing what he did when he placed a child in the midst of the disciples and made it the very symbol of the attitude which we should have if we wish to enter the Kingdom of God (cf. Mt 18:2-4).

Thus, in a sense, it was in the footsteps of children that all the different groups of adults came seeking the Jubilee grace: from old people to the sick and handicapped, from workers in factories and fields to sportspeople, from artists to university teachers, from Bishops and priests to people in consecrated life, from politicians to journalists, to the military personnel who came to confirm the meaning of their service as a service to peace.

One of the most notable events was the gathering of workers on May 1, the day traditionally dedicated to the world of work. I asked them to live a spirituality of work in imitation of Saint Joseph and of Jesus himself. That Jubilee gathering also gave me the opportunity to voice a strong call to correct the economic and social imbalances present in the world of work and to make decisive efforts to ensure that the processes of economic globalization give due attention to solidarity and the respect owed to every human person.

Children, with their irrepressible sense of celebration, were again present for the Jubilee of Families, when I held them up to the world as the “springtime of the family and of society.” This was a truly significant gathering in which numberless families from different parts of the world came to draw fresh enthusiasm from the light that Christ sheds on God’s original plan in their regard (cf. Mk 10:6-8; Mt 19:4-6) and to commit
themselves to bringing that light to bear on a culture which, in an ever more disturbing way, is in danger of losing sight of the very meaning of marriage and the family as an institution.

For me one of the more moving meetings was the one with the prisoners at Regina Caeli. In their eyes I saw suffering, but also repentance and hope. For them in a special way the Jubilee was a “year of mercy.”

Finally, in the last days of the year, an enjoyable occasion was the meeting with the world of entertainment, which exercises such a powerful influence on people. I was able to remind all involved of their great responsibility to use entertainment to offer a positive message, one that is morally healthy and able to communicate confidence and love.

**The International Eucharistic Congress**

11. In the spirit of this Jubilee Year the International Eucharistic Congress was intended to have special significance. And it did! Since the Eucharist is the sacrifice of Christ made present among us, how could his real presence not be at the center of the Holy Year dedicated to the Incarnation of the Word? The year was intended, precisely for this reason, to be “intensely Eucharistic,” and that is how we tried to live it. At the same time, along with the memory of the birth of the Son, how could the memory of the Mother be missing? Mary was present in the Jubilee celebration not only as a theme of high-level academic gatherings, but above all in the great Act of Entrustment with which, in the presence of a large part of the world episcopate, I entrusted to her maternal care the lives of the men and women of the new millennium.

**The ecumenical dimension**

12. You will understand that I speak more readily of the Jubilee as seen from the See of Peter. However I am not forgetting that I myself wanted the Jubilee to be celebrated also in the particular churches, and it is there that the majority of the faithful were able to gain its special graces, and particularly the indulgence connected with the Jubilee Year. Nevertheless it is significant that many Dioceses wanted to be present, with large groups of the faithful, here in Rome too. The Eternal City has thus once again shown its providential role as the place where the resources and gifts of each individual church, and indeed of each individual nation and culture,
find their “catholic” harmony, so that the one Church of Christ can show ever more clearly her mystery as the “sacrament of unity.”[7]

I had also asked for special attention to be given in the program of the Jubilee Year to the ecumenical aspect. What occasion could be more suitable for encouraging progress on the path towards full communion than the shared celebration of the birth of Christ? Much work was done with this in mind, and one of the highlights was the ecumenical meeting in Saint Paul’s Basilica on January 18, 2000, when for the first time in history a Holy Door was opened jointly by the Successor of Peter, the Anglican Primate and a Metropolitan of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, in the presence of representatives of Churches and Ecclesial Communities from all over the world. There were also other important meetings with Orthodox Patriarchs and the heads of other Christian denominations. I recall in particular the recent visit of His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians. In addition, very many members of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities took part in the Jubilee meetings organized for various groups. The ecumenical journey is certainly still difficult, and will perhaps be long, but we are encouraged by the hope that comes from being led by the presence of the Risen One and the inexhaustible power of his Spirit, always capable of new surprises.

**Pilgrimage to the Holy Land**

13. And how can I not recall my personal Jubilee along the pathways of the Holy Land? I would have liked to begin that journey at Ur of the Chaldeans, in order to follow, tangibly as it were, in the footsteps of Abraham “our father in faith” (cf. *Rom* 4:11-16). However, I had to be content with a pilgrimage in spirit, on the occasion of the evocative Liturgy of the Word celebrated in the Paul VI Audience Hall on February 23. The actual pilgrimage came almost immediately afterwards, following the stages of salvation history. Thus I had the joy of visiting Mount Sinai, where the gift of the Ten Commandments of the Covenant was given. I set out again a month later, when I reached Mount Nebo, and then went on to the very places where the Redeemer lived and which he made holy. It is difficult to express the emotion I felt in being able to venerate the places of his birth and life, Bethlehem and Nazareth, to celebrate the Eucharist in the Upper
Room, in the very place of its institution, to meditate again on the mystery of the Cross at Golgotha, where he gave his life for us. In those places, still so troubled and again recently afflicted by violence, I received an extraordinary welcome not only from the members of the Church but also from the Israeli and Palestinian communities. Intense emotion surrounded my prayer at the Western Wall and my visit to the Mausoleum of Yad Vashem, with its chilling reminder of the victims of the Nazi death camps. My pilgrimage was a moment of brotherhood and peace, and I like to remember it as one of the most beautiful gifts of the whole Jubilee event. Thinking back to the mood of those days, I cannot but express my deeply felt desire for a prompt and just solution to the still unresolved problems of the Holy Places, cherished by Jews, Christians and Muslims together.

International debt

14. The Jubilee was also a great event of charity — and it could not be otherwise. Already in the years of preparation, I had called for greater and more incisive attention to the problems of poverty which still beset the world. The problem of the international debt of poor countries took on particular significance in this context. A gesture of generosity towards these countries was in the very spirit of the Jubilee, which in its original Biblical setting was precisely a time when the community committed itself to re-establishing justice and solidarity in interpersonal relations, including the return of whatever belonged to others. I am happy to note that recently the Parliaments of many creditor States have voted a substantial remission of the bilateral debt of the poorest and most indebted countries. I hope that the respective Governments will soon implement these parliamentary decisions. The question of multilateral debt contracted by poorer countries with international financial organizations has shown itself to be a rather more problematic issue. It is to be hoped that the member States of these organizations, especially those that have greater decisional powers, will succeed in reaching the necessary consensus in order to arrive at a rapid solution to this question on which the progress of many countries depends, with grave consequences for the economy and the living conditions of so many people.

New energies
15. These are only some of the elements of the Jubilee celebration. It has left us with many memories. But if we ask what is the core of the great legacy it leaves us, I would not hesitate to describe it as the contemplation of the face of Christ: Christ considered in his historical features and in his mystery, Christ known through his manifold presence in the Church and in the world, and confessed as the meaning of history and the light of life’s journey.

Now we must look ahead, we must “put out into the deep,” trusting in Christ’s words: *Duc in altum!* What we have done this year cannot justify a sense of complacency, and still less should it lead us to relax our commitment. On the contrary, the experiences we have had should inspire in us new energy, and impel us to invest in concrete initiatives the enthusiasm which we have felt. Jesus himself warns us: “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (*Lk* 9:62). In the cause of the Kingdom there is no time for looking back, even less for settling into laziness. Much awaits us, and for this reason we must set about drawing up an effective post-Jubilee pastoral plan.

It is important however that what we propose, with the help of God, should be profoundly rooted in contemplation and prayer. Ours is a time of continual movement which often leads to restlessness, with the risk of “doing for the sake of doing.” We must resist this temptation by trying “to be” before trying “to do.” In this regard we should recall how Jesus reproved Martha: “You are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful” (*Lk* 10:41-42). In this spirit, before setting out a number of practical guidelines for your consideration, I wish to share with you some points of meditation on the mystery of Christ, the absolute foundation of all our pastoral activity.

**II. A FACE TO CONTEMPLATE**

16. “We wish to see Jesus” (*Jn* 12:21). This request, addressed to the Apostle Philip by some Greeks who had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover, echoes spiritually in our ears too during this Jubilee Year. Like those pilgrims of two thousand years ago, the men and women of our own day — often perhaps unconsciously — ask believers not only to “speak” of Christ, but in a certain sense to “show” him to them. And is it
not the Church’s task to reflect the light of Christ in every historical period, to make his face shine also before the generations of the new millennium?

Our witness, however, would be hopelessly inadequate if we ourselves had not first contemplated his face. The Great Jubilee has certainly helped us to do this more deeply. At the end of the Jubilee, as we go back to our ordinary routine, storing in our hearts the treasures of this very special time, our gaze is more than ever firmly set on the face of the Lord.

The witness of the Gospels

17. The contemplation of Christ’s face cannot fail to be inspired by all that we are told about him in Sacred Scripture, which from beginning to end is permeated by his mystery, prefigured in a veiled way in the Old Testament and revealed fully in the New, so that Saint Jerome can vigorously affirm: “Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.”[8] Remaining firmly anchored in Scripture, we open ourselves to the action of the Spirit (cf. Jn 15:26) from whom the sacred texts derive their origin, as well as to the witness of the Apostles (cf. Jn 15:27), who had a first-hand experience of Christ, the Word of life: they saw him with their eyes, heard him with their ears, touched him with their hands (cf. 1 Jn 1:1).

What we receive from them is a vision of faith based on precise historical testimony: a true testimony which the Gospels, despite their complex redaction and primarily catechetical purpose, pass on to us in an entirely trustworthy way.[9]

18. The Gospels do not claim to be a complete biography of Jesus in accordance with the canons of modern historical science. From them, nevertheless, the face of the Nazarene emerges with a solid historical foundation. The Evangelists took pains to represent him on the basis of trustworthy testimonies which they gathered (cf. Lk 1:3) and working with documents which were subjected to careful ecclesial scrutiny. It was on the basis of such first-hand testimony that, enlightened by the Holy Spirit’s action, they learned the humanly perplexing fact of Jesus’ virginal birth from Mary, wife of Joseph. From those who had known him during the almost thirty years spent in Nazareth (cf. Lk 3:23) they collected facts
about the life of “the carpenter’s son” (Mt 13:55) who was himself a “carpenter” and whose place within the context of his larger family was well established (cf. Mk 6:3). They recorded his religious fervor, which prompted him to make annual pilgrimages to the Temple in Jerusalem with his family (cf. Lk 2:41), and made him a regular visitor to the synagogue of his own town (cf. Lk 4:16).

Without being complete and detailed, the reports of his public ministry become much fuller, starting at the moment of the young Galilean’s baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan. Strengthened by the witness from on high and aware of being the “beloved son” (Lk 3:22), he begins his preaching of the coming of the Kingdom of God, and explains its demands and its power by words and signs of grace and mercy. The Gospels present him to us as one who travels through towns and villages, accompanied by twelve Apostles whom he has chosen (cf. Mk 3:13-19), by a group of women who assist them (cf. Lk 8:2-3), by crowds that seek him out and follow him, by the sick who cry out for his healing power, by people who listen to him with varying degrees of acceptance of his words.

The Gospel narrative then converges on the growing tension which develops between Jesus and the dominant groups in the religious society of his time, until the final crisis with its dramatic climax on Golgotha. This is the hour of darkness, which is followed by a new, radiant and definitive dawn. The Gospel accounts conclude, in fact, by showing the Nazarene victorious over death. They point to the empty tomb and follow him in the cycle of apparitions in which the disciples — at first perplexed and bewildered, then filled with unspeakable joy — experience his living and glorious presence. From him they receive the gift of the Spirit (cf. Jn 20:22) and the command to proclaim the Gospel to “all nations” (Mt 28:19).

The life of faith

19. “The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord” (Jn 20:20). The face which the Apostles contemplated after the Resurrection was the same face of the Jesus with whom they had lived for almost three years, and who now convinced them of the astonishing truth of his new life by showing them “his hands and his side” (ibid.). Of course it was not easy to believe. The disciples on their way to Emmaus believed only after a long spiritual
journey (cf. Lk 24:13-35). The Apostle Thomas believed only after verifying for himself the marvellous event (cf. Jn 20:24-29). In fact, regardless of how much his body was seen or touched, only faith could fully enter the mystery of that face. This was an experience which the disciples must have already had during the historical life of Christ, in the questions which came to their minds whenever they felt challenged by his actions and his words. One can never really reach Jesus except by the path of faith, on a journey of which the stages seem to be indicated to us by the Gospel itself in the well known scene at Caesarea Philippi (cf. Mt 16:13-20). Engaging in a kind of first evaluation of his mission, Jesus asks his disciples what “people” think of him, and they answer him: “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets” (Mt 16:14). A lofty response to be sure, but still a long way — by far — from the truth. The crowds are able to sense a definitely exceptional religious dimension to this rabbi who speaks in such a spellbinding way, but they are not able to put him above those men of God who had distinguished the history of Israel. Jesus is really far different! It is precisely this further step of awareness, concerning as it does the deeper level of his being, which he expects from those who are close to him: “But who do you say that I am?” (Mt 16:15). Only the faith proclaimed by Peter, and with him by the Church in every age, truly goes to the heart, and touches the depth of the mystery: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16).

20. How had Peter come to this faith? And what is asked of us, if we wish to follow in his footsteps with ever greater conviction? Matthew gives us an enlightening insight in the words with which Jesus accepts Peter’s confession: “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (16:17). The expression “flesh and blood” is a reference to man and the common way of understanding things. In the case of Jesus, this common way is not enough. A grace of “revelation” is needed, which comes from the Father (cf. ibid.). Luke gives us an indication which points in the same direction when he notes that this dialogue with the disciples took place when Jesus “was praying alone” (Lk 9:18). Both indications converge to make it clear that we cannot come to the fullness of contemplation of the Lord’s face by our own efforts alone, but by allowing grace to take us by the hand. Only the experience of silence and prayer
offers the proper setting for the growth and development of a true, faithful and consistent knowledge of that mystery which finds its culminating expression in the solemn proclamation by the Evangelist Saint John: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father” (1:14).

**The depth of the mystery**

21. The Word and the flesh, the divine glory and his dwelling among us! It is in the intimate and inseparable union of these two aspects that Christ’s identity is to be found, in accordance with the classic formula of the Council of Chalcedon (451): “one person in two natures.” The person is that, and that alone, of the Eternal Word, the Son of the Father. The two natures, without any confusion whatsoever, but also without any possible separation, are the divine and the human.[10]

We know that our concepts and our words are limited. The formula, though always human, is nonetheless carefully measured in its doctrinal content, and it enables us, albeit with trepidation, to gaze in some way into the depths of the mystery. Yes, Jesus is true God and true man! Like the Apostle Thomas, the Church is constantly invited by Christ to touch his wounds, to recognize, that is, the fullness of his humanity taken from Mary, given up to death, transfigured by the Resurrection: “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side” (Jn 20:27). Like Thomas, the Church bows down in adoration before the Risen One, clothed in the fullness of his divine splendor, and never ceases to exclaim: “My Lord and my God!” (Jn 20:28).

22. “The Word became flesh” (Jn 1:14). This striking formulation by John of the mystery of Christ is confirmed by the entire New Testament. The Apostle Paul takes this same approach when he affirms that the Son of God was born “of the race of David, according to the flesh” (cf. Rom 1:3; cf. 9:5). If today, because of the rationalism found in so much of contemporary culture, it is above all faith in the divinity of Christ that has become problematic, in other historical and cultural contexts there was a tendency to diminish and do away with the historical concreteness of Jesus’ humanity. But for the Church’s faith it is essential and indispensable to affirm that the Word truly “became flesh” and took on every aspect of
humanity, except sin (cf. *Heb* 4:15). From this perspective, the incarnation is truly a kenosis — a “self-emptying” — on the part of the Son of God of that glory which is his from all eternity (*1Phil* 2:6-8; cf. *1 Pet* 3:18).

On the other hand, this abasement of the Son of God is not an end in itself; it tends rather towards the full glorification of Christ, even in his humanity: “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (*Phil* 2:9-11).

23. “Your face, O Lord, I seek” (*Ps* 27:8). The ancient longing of the Psalmist could receive no fulfillment greater and more surprising than the contemplation of the face of Christ. God has truly blessed us in him and has made “his face to shine upon us” (*Ps* 67:1). At the same time, God and man that he is, he reveals to us also the true face of man, “fully revealing man to man himself.”[11]

Jesus is “the new man” (cf. *Eph* 4:24; *Col* 3:10) who calls redeemed humanity to share in his divine life. The mystery of the Incarnation lays the foundations for an anthropology which, reaching beyond its own limitations and contradictions, moves towards God himself, indeed towards the goal of “divinization.” This occurs through the grafting of the redeemed on to Christ and their admission into the intimacy of the Trinitarian life. The Fathers have laid great stress on this soteriological dimension of the mystery of the Incarnation: it is only because the Son of God truly became man that man, in him and through him, can truly become a child of God.[12]

**The Son’s face**

24. This divine-human identity emerges forcefully from the Gospels, which offer us a range of elements that make it possible for us to enter that “frontier zone” of the mystery, represented by Christ’s self-awareness. The Church has no doubt that the Evangelists in their accounts, and inspired from on high, have correctly understood in the words which Jesus spoke the truth about his person and his awareness of it. Is this not what Luke wishes to tell us when he recounts Jesus’ first recorded words, spoken in the
Temple in Jerusalem when he was barely twelve years old? Already at that time he shows that he is aware of a unique relationship with God, a relationship which properly belongs to a “son.” When his mother tells him how anxiously she and Joseph had been searching for him, Jesus replies without hesitation: “How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s affairs?” (Lk 2:49). It is no wonder therefore that later as a grown man his language authoritatively expresses the depth of his own mystery, as is abundantly clear both in the Synoptic Gospels (cf. Mt 11:27; Lk 10:22) and above all in the Gospel of John. In his self-awareness, Jesus has no doubts: “The Father is in me and I am in the Father” (Jn 10:38).

However valid it may be to maintain that, because of the human condition which made him grow “in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man” (Lk 2:52), his human awareness of his own mystery would also have progressed to its fullest expression in his glorified humanity, there is no doubt that already in his historical existence Jesus was aware of his identity as the Son of God. John emphasizes this to the point of affirming that it was ultimately because of this awareness that Jesus was rejected and condemned: they sought to kill him “because he not only broke the sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with God” (Jn 5:18). In Gethsemane and on Golgotha Jesus’ human awareness will be put to the supreme test. But not even the drama of his Passion and Death will be able to shake his serene certainty of being the Son of the heavenly Father.

**A face of sorrow**

25. In contemplating Christ’s face, we confront the most paradoxical aspect of his mystery, as it emerges in his last hour, on the Cross. The mystery within the mystery, before which we cannot but prostrate ourselves in adoration.

The intensity of the episode of the agony in the Garden of Olives passes before our eyes. Oppressed by foreknowledge of the trials that await him, and alone before the Father, Jesus cries out to him in his habitual and affectionate expression of trust: “Abba, Father.” He asks him to take away, if possible, the cup of suffering (cf. Mk 14:36). But the Father seems not to
want to heed the Son’s cry. In order to bring man back to the Father’s face, Jesus not only had to take on the face of man, but he had to burden himself with the “face” of sin. “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21).

We shall never exhaust the depths of this mystery. All the harshness of the paradox can be heard in Jesus’ seemingly desperate cry of pain on the Cross: “‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” (Mk 15:34). Is it possible to imagine a greater agony, a more impenetrable darkness? In reality, the anguished “why” addressed to the Father in the opening words of the Twenty-second Psalm expresses all the realism of unspeakable pain; but it is also illumined by the meaning of that entire prayer, in which the Psalmist brings together suffering and trust, in a moving blend of emotions. In fact the Psalm continues: “In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you set them free.... Do not leave me alone in my distress, come close, there is none else to help” (Ps 22:5,12).

26. Jesus’ cry on the Cross, dear brothers and sisters, is not the cry of anguish of a man without hope, but the prayer of the Son who offers his life to the Father in love, for the salvation of all. At the very moment when he identifies with our sin, “abandoned” by the Father, he “abandons” himself into the hands of the Father. His eyes remain fixed on the Father. Precisely because of the knowledge and experience of the Father which he alone has, even at this moment of darkness he sees clearly the gravity of sin and suffers because of it. He alone, who sees the Father and rejoices fully in him, can understand completely what it means to resist the Father’s love by sin. More than an experience of physical pain, his Passion is an agonizing suffering of the soul. Theological tradition has not failed to ask how Jesus could possibly experience at one and the same time his profound unity with the Father, by its very nature a source of joy and happiness, and an agony that goes all the way to his final cry of abandonment. The simultaneous presence of these two seemingly irreconcilable aspects is rooted in the fathomless depths of the hypostatic union.

27. Faced with this mystery, we are greatly helped not only by theological investigation but also by that great heritage which is the “lived
theology” of the saints. The saints offer us precious insights which enable us to understand more easily the intuition of faith, thanks to the special enlightenment which some of them have received from the Holy Spirit, or even through their personal experience of those terrible states of trial which the mystical tradition describes as the “dark night.” Not infrequently the saints have undergone something akin to Jesus’ experience on the Cross in the paradoxical blending of bliss and pain. In the Dialogue of Divine Providence, God the Father shows Catherine of Siena how joy and suffering can be present together in holy souls: “Thus the soul is blissful and afflicted: afflicted on account of the sins of its neighbor, blissful on account of the union and the affection of charity which it has inwardly received. These souls imitate the spotless Lamb, my Only-begotten Son, who on the Cross was both blissful and afflicted.”[13] In the same way, Thérèse of Lisieux lived her agony in communion with the agony of Jesus, “experiencing” in herself the very paradox of Jesus’s own bliss and anguish: “In the Garden of Olives our Lord was blessed with all the joys of the Trinity, yet his dying was no less harsh. It is a mystery, but I assure you that, on the basis of what I myself am feeling, I can understand something of it.”[14] What an illuminating testimony! Moreover, the accounts given by the Evangelists themselves provide a basis for this intuition on the part of the Church of Christ’s consciousness when they record that, even in the depths of his pain, he died imploring forgiveness for his executioners (cf. Lk 23:34) and expressing to the Father his ultimate filial abandonment: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Lk 23:46).

The face of the One who is Risen

28. As on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, the Church pauses in contemplation of this bleeding face, which conceals the life of God and offers salvation to the world. But her contemplation of Christ’s face cannot stop at the image of the Crucified One. He is the Risen One! Were this not so, our preaching would be in vain and our faith empty (cf. 1 Cor 15:14). The Resurrection was the Father’s response to Christ’s obedience, as we learn from the Letter to the Hebrews: “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. Son though he was, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being
made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him” (5:7-9).

It is the Risen Christ to whom the Church now looks. And she does so in the footsteps of Peter, who wept for his denial and started out again by confessing, with understandable trepidation, his love of Christ: “You know that I love you” (Jn 21:15-17). She does so in the company of Paul, who encountered the Lord on the road to Damascus and was overwhelmed: “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1:21).

Two thousand years after these events, the Church relives them as if they had happened today. Gazing on the face of Christ, the Bride contemplates her treasure and her joy. “Dulcis Iesus memoria, dans vera cordis gaudia”: how sweet is the memory of Jesus, the source of the heart’s true joy! Heartened by this experience, the Church today sets out once more on her journey, in order to proclaim Christ to the world at the dawn of the Third Millennium: he “is the same yesterday and today and for ever” (Heb 13:8).

III. STARTING AFRESH

FROM CHRIST

29. “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20). This assurance, dear brothers and sisters, has accompanied the Church for two thousand years, and has now been renewed in our hearts by the celebration of the Jubilee. From it we must gain new impetus in Christian living, making it the force which inspires our journey of faith. Conscious of the Risen Lord’s presence among us, we ask ourselves today the same question put to Peter in Jerusalem immediately after his Pentecost speech: “What must we do?” (Acts 2:37).

We put the question with trusting optimism, but without underestimating the problems we face. We are certainly not seduced by the naive expectation that, faced with the great challenges of our time, we shall find some magic formula. No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and the assurance which he gives us: I am with you!

It is not therefore a matter of inventing a “new program.” The program already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living
Tradition, it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its center in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with him transform history until its fulfillment in the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a program which does not change with shifts of times and cultures, even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication. This program for all times is our program for the Third Millennium.

But it must be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community. The Jubilee has given us the extraordinary opportunity to travel together for a number of years on a journey common to the whole Church, a catechetical journey on the theme of the Trinity, accompanied by precise pastoral undertakings designed to ensure that the Jubilee would be a fruitful event. I am grateful for the sincere and widespread acceptance of what I proposed in my Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*. But now it is no longer an immediate goal that we face, but the larger and more demanding challenge of normal pastoral activity. With its universal and indispensable provisions, the program of the Gospel must continue to take root, as it has always done, in the life of the Church everywhere. It is in the local churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified — goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for the necessary resources — which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mold communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture.

I therefore earnestly exhort the Pastors of the particular Churches, with the help of all sectors of God’s People, confidently to plan the stages of the journey ahead, harmonizing the choices of each diocesan community with those of neighboring Churches and of the universal Church.

This harmonization will certainly be facilitated by the collegial work which Bishops now regularly undertake in Episcopal Conferences and Synods. Was this not the point of the continental assemblies of the Synod of Bishops which prepared for the Jubilee, and which forged important directives for the present-day proclamation of the Gospel in so many different settings and cultures? This rich legacy of reflection must not be allowed to disappear, but must be implemented in practical ways.
What awaits us therefore is an exciting work of pastoral revitalization — a work involving all of us. As guidance and encouragement to everyone, I wish to indicate certain pastoral priorities which the experience of the Great Jubilee has, in my view, brought to light.

*Holiness*

30. First of all, I have no hesitation in saying that all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness. Was this not the ultimate meaning of the Jubilee indulgence, as a special grace offered by Christ so that the life of every baptized person could be purified and deeply renewed?

It is my hope that, among those who have taken part in the Jubilee, many will have benefited from this grace, in full awareness of its demands. Once the Jubilee is over, we resume our normal path, but knowing that stressing holiness remains more than ever an urgent pastoral task.

It is necessary therefore to rediscover the full practical significance of Chapter 5 of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, dedicated to the “universal call to holiness.” The Council Fathers laid such stress on this point, not just to embellish ecclesiology with a kind of spiritual veneer, but to make the call to holiness an intrinsic and essential aspect of their teaching on the Church. The rediscovery of the Church as “mystery,” or as a people “gathered together by the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,”[15] was bound to bring with it a rediscovery of the Church’s “holiness,” understood in the basic sense of belonging to him who is in essence the Holy One, the “thrice Holy” (cf. Is 6:3). To profess the Church as holy means to point to her as the Bride of Christ, for whom he gave himself precisely in order to make her holy (cf. Eph 5:25-26). This as it were objective gift of holiness is offered to all the baptized.

But the gift in turn becomes a task, which must shape the whole of Christian life: “This is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Th 4:3). It is a duty which concerns not only certain Christians: “All the Christian faithful, of whatever state or rank, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity.”[16]

31. At first glance, it might seem almost impractical to recall this elementary truth as the foundation of the pastoral planning in which we
are involved at the start of the new millennium. Can holiness ever be “planned”? What might the word “holiness” mean in the context of a pastoral plan?

In fact, to place pastoral planning under the heading of holiness is a choice filled with consequences. It implies the conviction that, since Baptism is a true entry into the holiness of God through incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit, it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity. To ask catechumens: “Do you wish to receive Baptism?” means at the same time to ask them: “Do you wish to become holy?” It means to set before them the radical nature of the Sermon on the Mount: “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48).

As the Council itself explained, this ideal of perfection must not be misunderstood as if it involved some kind of extraordinary existence, possible only for a few “uncommon heroes” of holiness. The ways of holiness are many, according to the vocation of each individual. I thank the Lord that in these years he has enabled me to beatify and canonize a large number of Christians, and among them many lay people who attained holiness in the most ordinary circumstances of life. The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this high standard of ordinary Christian living: the whole life of the Christian community and of Christian families must lead in this direction. It is also clear however that the paths to holiness are personal and call for a genuine “training in holiness,” adapted to people’s needs. This training must integrate the resources offered to everyone with both the traditional forms of individual and group assistance, as well as the more recent forms of support offered in associations and movements recognized by the Church.

Prayer

32. This training in holiness calls for a Christian life distinguished above all in the art of prayer. The Jubilee Year has been a year of more intense prayer, both personal and communal. But we well know that prayer cannot be taken for granted. We have to learn to pray: as it were learning this art ever anew from the lips of the Divine Master himself, like the first disciples: “Lord, teach us to pray!” (Lk 11:1). Prayer develops that
conversation with Christ which makes us his intimate friends: “Abide in me and I in you” (Jn 15:4). This reciprocity is the very substance and soul of the Christian life, and the condition of all true pastoral life. Wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, this reciprocity opens us, through Christ and in Christ, to contemplation of the Father’s face. Learning this Trinitarian shape of Christian prayer and living it fully, above all in the liturgy, the summit and source of the Church’s life, but also in personal experience, is the secret of a truly vital Christianity, which has no reason to fear the future, because it returns continually to the sources and finds in them new life.

33. Is it not one of the “signs of the times” that in today’s world, despite widespread secularization, there is a widespread demand for spirituality, a demand which expresses itself in large part as a renewed need for prayer? Other religions, which are now widely present in ancient Christian lands, offer their own responses to this need, and sometimes they do so in appealing ways. But we who have received the grace of believing in Christ, the revealer of the Father and the Saviour of the world, have a duty to show to what depths the relationship with Christ can lead.

The great mystical tradition of the Church of both East and West has much to say in this regard. It shows how prayer can progress, as a genuine dialogue of love, to the point of rendering the person wholly possessed by the divine Beloved, vibrating at the Spirit’s touch, resting filially within the Father’s heart. This is the lived experience of Christ’s promise: “He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him” (Jn 14:21). It is a journey totally sustained by grace, which nonetheless demands an intense spiritual commitment and is no stranger to painful purifications (the “dark night”). But it leads, in various possible ways, to the ineffable joy experienced by the mystics as “nuptial union.” How can we forget here, among the many shining examples, the teachings of Saint John of the Cross and Saint Teresa of Avila?

Yes, dear brothers and sisters, our Christian communities must become genuine “schools” of prayer, where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly “falls in love.” Intense prayer, yes, but it does not distract us from our commitment
to history: by opening our heart to the love of God it also opens it to the love of our brothers and sisters, and makes us capable of shaping history according to God’s plan.[18]

34. Christians who have received the gift of a vocation to the specially consecrated life are of course called to prayer in a particular way: of its nature, their consecration makes them more open to the experience of contemplation, and it is important that they should cultivate it with special care. But it would be wrong to think that ordinary Christians can be content with a shallow prayer that is unable to fill their whole life. Especially in the face of the many trials to which today’s world subjects faith, they would be not only mediocre Christians but “Christians at risk.” They would run the insidious risk of seeing their faith progressively undermined, and would perhaps end up succumbing to the allure of “substitutes,” accepting alternative religious proposals and even indulging in far-fetched superstitions.

It is therefore essential that education in prayer should become in some way a key-point of all pastoral planning. I myself have decided to dedicate the forthcoming Wednesday catecheses to reflection upon the Psalms, beginning with the Psalms of Morning Prayer with which the public prayer of the Church invites us to consecrate and direct our day. How helpful it would be if not only in religious communities but also in parishes more were done to ensure an all-pervading climate of prayer. With proper discernment, this would require that popular piety be given its proper place, and that people be educated especially in liturgical prayer. Perhaps it is more thinkable than we usually presume for the average day of a Christian community to combine the many forms of pastoral life and witness in the world with the celebration of the Eucharist and even the recitation of Lauds and Vespers. The experience of many committed Christian groups, also those made up largely of lay people, is proof of this.

The Sunday Eucharist

35. It is therefore obvious that our principal attention must be given to the liturgy, “the summit towards which the Church’s action tends and at the same time the source from which comes all her strength.”[19] In the twentieth century, especially since the Council, there has been a great
development in the way the Christian community celebrates the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist. It is necessary to continue in this direction, and to stress particularly the Sunday Eucharist and Sunday itself experienced as a special day of faith, the day of the Risen Lord and of the gift of the Spirit, the true weekly Easter. For two thousand years, Christian time has been measured by the memory of that “first day of the week” (Mk 16:2,9; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1), when the Risen Christ gave the Apostles the gift of peace and of the Spirit (cf. Jn 20:19-23). The truth of Christ’s Resurrection is the original fact upon which Christian faith is based (cf. 1 Cor 15:14), an event set at the center of the mystery of time, prefiguring the last day when Christ will return in glory. We do not know what the new millennium has in store for us, but we are certain that it is safe in the hands of Christ, the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev 19:16); and precisely by celebrating his Passover not just once a year but every Sunday, the Church will continue to show to every generation “the true fulcrum of history, to which the mystery of the world’s origin and its final destiny leads.”

36. Following Dies Domini, I therefore wish to insist that sharing in the Eucharist should really be the heart of Sunday for every baptized person. It is a fundamental duty, to be fulfilled not just in order to observe a precept but as something felt as essential to a truly informed and consistent Christian life. We are entering a millennium which already shows signs of being marked by a profound interweaving of cultures and religions, even in countries which have been Christian for many centuries. In many regions Christians are, or are becoming, a “little flock” (Lk 12:32). This presents them with the challenge, often in isolated and difficult situations, to bear stronger witness to the distinguishing elements of their own identity. The duty to take part in the Eucharist every Sunday is one of these. The Sunday Eucharist which every week gathers Christians together as God’s family round the table of the Word and the Bread of Life, is also the most natural antidote to dispersion. It is the privileged place where communion is ceaselessly proclaimed and nurtured. Precisely through sharing in the Eucharist, the Lord’s Day also becomes the Day of the Church, when she can effectively exercise her role as the sacrament of unity.
The Sacrament of Reconciliation

37. I am also asking for renewed pastoral courage in ensuring that the day-to-day teaching of Christian communities persuasively and effectively presents the practice of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. As you will recall, in 1984 I dealt with this subject in the Post-Synodal Exhortation Reconciliatio et Paenitentia, which synthesized the results of an Assembly of the Synod of Bishops devoted to this question. My invitation then was to make every effort to face the crisis of “the sense of sin” apparent in today’s culture.[23] But I was even more insistent in calling for a rediscovery of Christ as mysterium pietatis, the one in whom God shows us his compassionate heart and reconciles us fully with himself. It is this face of Christ that must be rediscovered through the Sacrament of Penance, which for the faithful is “the ordinary way of obtaining forgiveness and the remission of serious sins committed after Baptism.”[24] When the Synod addressed the problem, the crisis of the Sacrament was there for all to see, especially in some parts of the world. The causes of the crisis have not disappeared in the brief span of time since then. But the Jubilee Year, which has been particularly marked by a return to the Sacrament of Penance, has given us an encouraging message, which should not be ignored: if many people, and among them also many young people, have benefited from approaching this Sacrament, it is probably necessary that Pastors should arm themselves with more confidence, creativity and perseverance in presenting it and leading people to appreciate it. Dear brothers in the priesthood, we must not give in to passing crises! The Lord’s gifts — and the Sacraments are among the most precious — come from the One who well knows the human heart and is the Lord of history.

The primacy of grace

38. If in the planning that awaits us we commit ourselves more confidently to a pastoral activity that gives personal and communal prayer its proper place, we shall be observing an essential principle of the Christian view of life: the primacy of grace. There is a temptation which perennially besets every spiritual journey and pastoral work: that of thinking that the results depend on our ability to act and to plan. God of course asks us really to cooperate with his grace, and therefore invites us to invest all our resources of intelligence and energy in serving the cause of
the Kingdom. But it is fatal to forget that “without Christ we can do nothing” (cf. Jn 15:5).

It is prayer which roots us in this truth. It constantly reminds us of the primacy of Christ and, in union with him, the primacy of the interior life and of holiness. When this principle is not respected, is it any wonder that pastoral plans come to nothing and leave us with a disheartening sense of frustration? We then share the experience of the disciples in the Gospel story of the miraculous catch of fish: “We have toiled all night and caught nothing” (Lk 5:5). This is the moment of faith, of prayer, of conversation with God, in order to open our hearts to the tide of grace and allow the word of Christ to pass through us in all its power: Duc in altum! On that occasion, it was Peter who spoke the word of faith: “At your word I will let down the nets” (ibid.). As this millennium begins, allow the Successor of Peter to invite the whole Church to make this act of faith, which expresses itself in a renewed commitment to prayer.

**Listening to the Word**

39. There is no doubt that this primacy of holiness and prayer is inconceivable without a renewed listening to the word of God. Ever since the Second Vatican Council underlined the pre-eminent role of the word of God in the life of the Church, great progress has certainly been made in devout listening to Sacred Scripture and attentive study of it. Scripture has its rightful place of honor in the public prayer of the Church. Individuals and communities now make extensive use of the Bible, and among lay people there are many who devote themselves to Scripture with the valuable help of theological and biblical studies. But it is above all the work of evangelization and catechesis which is drawing new life from attentiveness to the word of God. Dear brothers and sisters, this development needs to be consolidated and deepened, also by making sure that every family has a Bible. It is especially necessary that listening to the word of God should become a life-giving encounter, in the ancient and ever valid tradition of lectio divina, which draws from the biblical text the living word which questions, directs and shapes our lives.

**Proclaiming the Word**
40. To nourish ourselves with the word in order to be “servants of the word” in the work of evangelization: this is surely a priority for the Church at the dawn of the new millennium. Even in countries evangelized many centuries ago, the reality of a “Christian society” which, amid all the frailties which have always marked human life, measured itself explicitly on Gospel values, is now gone. Today we must courageously face a situation which is becoming increasingly diversified and demanding, in the context of “globalization” and of the consequent new and uncertain mingling of peoples and cultures. Over the years, I have often repeated the summons to the new evangelization. I do so again now, especially in order to insist that we must rekindle in ourselves the impetus of the beginnings and allow ourselves to be filled with the ardor of the apostolic preaching which followed Pentecost. We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1 Cor 9:16).

This passion will not fail to stir in the Church a new sense of mission, which cannot be left to a group of “specialists” but must involve the responsibility of all the members of the People of God. Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him. A new apostolic outreach is needed, which will be lived as the everyday commitment of Christian communities and groups. This should be done however with the respect due to the different paths of different people and with sensitivity to the diversity of cultures in which the Christian message must be planted, in such a way that the particular values of each people will not be rejected but purified and brought to their fullness.

In the Third Millennium, Christianity will have to respond ever more effectively to this need for inculturation. Christianity, while remaining completely true to itself, with unswerving fidelity to the proclamation of the Gospel and the tradition of the Church, will also reflect the different faces of the cultures and peoples in which it is received and takes root. In this Jubilee Year, we have rejoiced in a special way in the beauty of the Church’s varied face. This is perhaps only a beginning, a barely sketched image of the future which the Spirit of God is preparing for us.

Christ must be presented to all people with confidence. We shall
address adults, families, young people, children, without ever hiding the most radical demands of the Gospel message, but taking into account each person's needs in regard to their sensitivity and language, after the example of Paul who declared: "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor 9:22). In making these recommendations, I am thinking especially of the pastoral care of young people. Precisely in regard to young people, as I said earlier, the Jubilee has given us an encouraging testimony of their generous availability. We must learn to interpret that heartening response, by investing that enthusiasm like a new talent (cf. Mt 25:15) which the Lord has put into our hands so that we can make it yield a rich return.

41. May the shining example of the many witnesses to the faith whom we have remembered during the Jubilee sustain and guide us in this confident, enterprising and creative sense of mission. For the Church, the martyrs have always been a seed of life. Sanguis martyrum semen christianorum:[25] this famous "law" formulated by Tertullian has proved true in all the trials of history. Will this not also be the case of the century and millennium now beginning? Perhaps we were too used to thinking of the martyrs in rather distant terms, as though they were a category of the past, associated especially with the first centuries of the Christian era. The Jubilee remembrance has presented us with a surprising vista, showing us that our own time is particularly prolific in witnesses, who in different ways were able to live the Gospel in the midst of hostility and persecution, often to the point of the supreme test of shedding their blood. In them the word of God, sown in good soil, yielded a hundred fold (cf. Mt 13:8, 23). By their example they have shown us, and made smooth for us, so to speak, the path to the future. All that remains for us is, with God’s grace, to follow in their footsteps.

IV. WITNESSES TO LOVE

42. “By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). If we have truly contemplated the face of Christ, dear Brothers and Sisters, our pastoral planning will necessarily be inspired by the “new commandment” which he gave us: “Love one another, as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34).
This is the other important area in which there has to be commitment and planning on the part of the universal Church and the particular Churches: the domain of communion (koinonia), which embodies and reveals the very essence of the mystery of the Church. Communion is the fruit and demonstration of that love which springs from the heart of the Eternal Father and is poured out upon us through the Spirit which Jesus gives us (cf. Rom 5:5), to make us all “one heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32). It is in building this communion of love that the Church appears as “sacrament,” as the “sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the human race.”[26]

The Lord’s words on this point are too precise for us to diminish their import. Many things are necessary for the Church’s journey through history, not least in this new century; but without charity (agape), all will be in vain. It is again the Apostle Paul who in the hymn to love reminds us: even if we speak the tongues of men and of angels, and if we have faith “to move mountains,” but are without love, all will come to “nothing” (cf. 1 Cor 13:2). Love is truly the “heart” of the Church, as was well understood by Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, whom I proclaimed a Doctor of the Church precisely because she is an expert in the scientia amoris: “I understood that the Church had a Heart and that this Heart was aflame with Love. I understood that Love alone stirred the members of the Church to act... I understood that Love encompassed all vocations, that Love was everything.”[27]

_A spirituality of communion_

43. To make the Church the home and the school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God’s plan and respond to the world’s deepest yearnings.

But what does this mean in practice? Here too, our thoughts could run immediately to the action to be undertaken, but that would not be the right impulse to follow. Before making practical plans, we need to promote a spirituality of communion, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons, and pastoral workers are trained, wherever
families and communities are being built up. A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart’s contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us. A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as “those who are a part of me.” This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship. A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a “gift for me.” A spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to “make room” for our brothers and sisters, bearing “each other’s burdens” (Gal 6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy. Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, “masks” of communion rather than its means of expression and growth.

44. Consequently, the new century will have to see us more than ever intent on valuing and developing the forums and structures which, in accordance with the Second Vatican Council’s major directives, serve to ensure and safeguard communion. How can we forget in the first place those specific services to communion which are the Petrine ministry and, closely related to it, episcopal collegiality? These are realities which have their foundation and substance in Christ’s own plan for the Church,[28] but which need to be examined constantly in order to ensure that they follow their genuinely evangelical inspiration.

Much has also been done since the Second Vatican Council for the reform of the Roman Curia, the organization of Synods and the functioning of Episcopal Conferences. But there is certainly much more to be done, in order to realize all the potential of these instruments of communion, which are especially appropriate today in view of the need to respond promptly and effectively to the issues which the Church must face in these rapidly changing times.
45. Communion must be cultivated and extended day by day and at every level in the structures of each Church’s life. There, relations between Bishops, priests and deacons, between pastors and the entire People of God, between clergy and Religious, between associations and ecclesial movements must all be clearly characterized by communion. To this end, the structures of participation envisaged by Canon Law, such as the Council of Priests and the Pastoral Council, must be ever more highly valued. These of course are not governed by the rules of parliamentary democracy, because they are consultative rather than deliberative; yet this does not mean that they are less meaningful and relevant. The theology and spirituality of communion encourage a fruitful dialogue between Pastors and faithful: on the one hand uniting them a priori in all that is essential, and on the other leading them to pondered agreement in matters open to discussion.

To this end, we need to make our own the ancient pastoral wisdom which, without prejudice to their authority, encouraged pastors to listen more widely to the entire People of God. Significant is Saint Benedict’s reminder to the Abbot of a monastery, inviting him to consult even the youngest members of the community: “By the Lord’s inspiration, it is often a younger person who knows what is best.” And Saint Paulinus of Nola urges: “Let us listen to what all the faithful say, because in every one of them the Spirit of God breathes.”

While the wisdom of the law, by providing precise rules for participation, attests to the hierarchical structure of the Church and averts any temptation to arbitrariness or unjustified claims, the spirituality of communion, by prompting a trust and openness wholly in accord with the dignity and responsibility of every member of the People of God, supplies institutional reality with a soul.

**The diversity of vocations**

46. Such a vision of communion is closely linked to the Christian community’s ability to make room for all the gifts of the Spirit. The unity of the Church is not uniformity, but an organic blending of legitimate diversities. It is the reality of many members joined in a single body, the one Body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12:12). Therefore the Church of the Third
Millennium will need to encourage all the baptized and confirmed to be aware of their active responsibility in the Church’s life. Together with the ordained ministry, other ministries, whether formally instituted or simply recognized, can flourish for the good of the whole community, sustaining it in all its many needs: from catechesis to liturgy, from the education of the young to the widest array of charitable works.

Certainly, a generous commitment is needed — above all through insistent prayer to the Lord of the harvest (cf. Mt 9:38) — in promoting vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. This is a question of great relevance for the life of the Church in every part of the world. In some traditionally Christian countries, the situation has become dramatic, due to changed social circumstances and a religious disinterest resulting from the consumer and secularist mentality. There is a pressing need to implement an extensive plan of vocational promotion, based on personal contact and involving parishes, schools and families in the effort to foster a more attentive reflection on life’s essential values. These reach their fulfillment in the response which each person is invited to give to God’s call, particularly when the call implies a total giving of self and of one’s energies to the cause of the Kingdom.

It is in this perspective that we see the value of all other vocations, rooted as they are in the new life received in the Sacrament of Baptism. In a special way it will be necessary to discover ever more fully the specific vocation of the laity, called “to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God”[32] they “have their own role to play in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world... by their work for the evangelization and the sanctification of people.”[33]

Along these same lines, another important aspect of communion is the promotion of forms of association, whether of the more traditional kind or the newer ecclesial movements, which continue to give the Church a vitality that is God’s gift and a true “springtime of the Spirit.” Obviously, associations and movements need to work in full harmony within both the universal Church and the particular Churches, and in obedience to the authoritative directives of the Pastors. But the Apostle’s exacting and decisive warning applies to all: “Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise
prophesying, but test everything and hold fast what is good” (1 Thess 5:19-21).

47. At a time in history like the present, special attention must also be given to the pastoral care of the family, particularly when this fundamental institution is experiencing a radical and widespread crisis. In the Christian view of marriage, the relationship between a man and a woman — a mutual and total bond, unique and indissoluble — is part of God’s original plan, obscured throughout history by our “hardness of heart,” but which Christ came to restore to its pristine splendor, disclosing what had been God’s will “from the beginning” (Mt 19:8). Raised to the dignity of a Sacrament, marriage expresses the “great mystery” of Christ’s nuptial love for his Church (cf. Eph 5:32).

On this point the Church cannot yield to cultural pressures, no matter how widespread and even militant they may be. Instead, it is necessary to ensure that through an ever more complete Gospel formation Christian families show convincingly that it is possible to live marriage fully in keeping with God’s plan and with the true good of the human person — of the spouses, and of the children who are more fragile. Families themselves must become increasingly conscious of the care due to children, and play an active role in the Church and in society in safeguarding their rights.

Ecumenical commitment

48. And what should we say of the urgent task of fostering communion in the delicate area of ecumenism? Unhappily, as we cross the threshold of the new millennium, we take with us the sad heritage of the past. The Jubilee has offered some truly moving and prophetic signs, but there is still a long way to go.

By fixing our gaze on Christ, the Great Jubilee has given us a more vivid sense of the Church as a mystery of unity. “I believe in the one Church”: what we profess in the Creed has its ultimate foundation in Christ, in whom the Church is undivided (cf. 1 Cor 1:11-13). As his Body, in the unity which is the gift of the Spirit, she is indivisible. The reality of division among the Church’s children appears at the level of history, as the result of human weakness in the way we accept the gift which flows endlessly from Christ the Head to his Mystical Body. The prayer of Jesus
in the Upper Room — “as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be one in us” (Jn 17:21) — is both revelation and invocation. It reveals to us the unity of Christ with the Father as the wellspring of the Church’s unity and as the gift which in him she will constantly receive until its mysterious fulfillment at the end of time. This unity is concretely embodied in the Catholic Church, despite the human limitations of her members, and it is at work in varying degrees in all the elements of holiness and truth to be found in the other Churches and ecclesial communities. As gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, these elements lead them continuously towards full unity.[34]

Christ’s prayer reminds us that this gift needs to be received and developed ever more profoundly. The invocation “ut unum sint” is, at one and the same time, a binding imperative, the strength that sustains us, and a salutary rebuke for our slowness and closed-heartedness. It is on Jesus’s prayer and not on our own strength that we base the hope that even within history we shall be able to reach full and visible communion with all Christians.

In the perspective of our renewed post-Jubilee pilgrimage, I look with great hope to the Eastern Churches, and I pray for a full return to that exchange of gifts which enriched the Church of the first millennium. May the memory of the time when the Church breathed with “both lungs” spur Christians of East and West to walk together in unity of faith and with respect for legitimate diversity, accepting and sustaining each other as members of the one Body of Christ.

A similar commitment should lead to the fostering of ecumenical dialogue with our brothers and sisters belonging to the Anglican Communion and the Ecclesial Communities born of the Reformation. Theological discussion on essential points of faith and Christian morality, cooperation in works of charity, and above all the great ecumenism of holiness will not fail, with God’s help, to bring results. In the meantime we confidently continue our pilgrimage, longing for the time when, together with each and every one of Christ’s followers, we shall be able to join wholeheartedly in singing: “How good and how pleasant it is, when brothers live in unity!” (Ps 133:1).
Stake everything on charity

49. Beginning with intra-ecclesial communion, charity of its nature opens out into a service that is universal; it inspires in us a commitment to practical and concrete love for every human being. This too is an aspect which must clearly mark the Christian life, the Church’s whole activity and her pastoral planning. The century and the millennium now beginning will need to see, and hopefully with still greater clarity, to what length of dedication the Christian community can go in charity towards the poorest. If we have truly started out anew from the contemplation of Christ, we must learn to see him especially in the faces of those with whom he himself wished to be identified: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me” (Mt 25:35-37). This Gospel text is not a simple invitation to charity: it is a page of Christology which sheds a ray of light on the mystery of Christ. By these words, no less than by the orthodoxy of her doctrine, the Church measures her fidelity as the Bride of Christ.

Certainly we need to remember that no one can be excluded from our love, since “through his Incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every person.” Yet, as the unequivocal words of the Gospel remind us, there is a special presence of Christ in the poor, and this requires the Church to make a preferential option for them. This option is a testimony to the nature of God’s love, to his providence and mercy; and in some way history is still filled with the seeds of the Kingdom of God which Jesus himself sowed during his earthly life whenever he responded to those who came to him with their spiritual and material needs.

50. In our own time, there are so many needs which demand a compassionate response from Christians. Our world is entering the new millennium burdened by the contradictions of an economic, cultural and technological progress which offers immense possibilities to a fortunate few, while leaving millions of others not only on the margins of progress but in living conditions far below the minimum demanded by human dignity. How can it be that even today there are still people dying of hunger? Condemned to illiteracy? Lacking the most basic medical care? Without a roof over their heads?
The scenario of poverty can extend indefinitely, if in addition to its traditional forms we think of its newer patterns. These latter often affect financially affluent sectors and groups which are nevertheless threatened by despair at the lack of meaning in their lives, by drug addiction, by fear of abandonment in old age or sickness, by marginalization or social discrimination. In this context Christians must learn to make their act of faith in Christ by discerning his voice in the cry for help that rises from this world of poverty. This means carrying on the tradition of charity which has expressed itself in so many different ways in the past two millennia, but which today calls for even greater resourcefulness. Now is the time for a new “creativity” in charity, not only by ensuring that help is effective but also by “getting close” to those who suffer, so that the hand that helps is seen not as a humiliating handout but as a sharing between brothers and sisters.

We must therefore ensure that in every Christian community the poor feel at home. Would not this approach be the greatest and most effective presentation of the good news of the Kingdom? Without this form of evangelization through charity and without the witness of Christian poverty the proclamation of the Gospel, which is itself the prime form of charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words which daily engulfs us in today's society of mass communications. The charity of works ensures an unmistakable efficacy to the charity of words.

**Today's challenges**

51. And how can we remain indifferent to the prospect of an ecological crisis which is making vast areas of our planet uninhabitable and hostile to humanity? Or by the problems of peace, so often threatened by the spectre of catastrophic wars? Or by contempt for the fundamental human rights of so many people, especially children? Countless are the emergencies to which every Christian heart must be sensitive.

A special commitment is needed with regard to certain aspects of the Gospel's radical message which are often less well understood, even to the point of making the Church's presence unpopular, but which nevertheless must be a part of her mission of charity. I am speaking of the duty to be committed to respect for the life of every human being, from conception
until natural death. Likewise, the service of humanity leads us to insist, in
season and out of season, that those using the latest advances of science,
especially in the field of biotechnology, must never disregard fundamental
ethical requirements by invoking a questionable solidarity which eventually
leads to discriminating between one life and another and ignoring the
dignity which belongs to every human being.

For Christian witness to be effective, especially in these delicate and
controversial areas, it is important that special efforts be made to explain
properly the reasons for the Church’s position, stressing that it is not a case
of imposing on non-believers a vision based on faith, but of interpreting
and defending the values rooted in the very nature of the human person. In
this way charity will necessarily become service to culture, politics, the
economy and the family, so that the fundamental principles upon which
depend the destiny of human beings and the future of civilization will be
everywhere respected.

52. Clearly, all this must be done in a specifically Christian way: the
laity especially must be present in these areas in fulfillment of their lay
vocation, without ever yielding to the temptation to turn Christian
communities into mere social agencies. In particular, the Church’s
relationship with civil society should respect the latter’s autonomy and
areas of competence, in accordance with the teachings of the Church’s
social doctrine.

Well known are the efforts made by the Church’s teaching authority,
especially in the twentieth century, to interpret social realities in the light
of the Gospel and to offer in a timely and systematic way its contribution
to the social question, which has now assumed a global dimension.

The ethical and social aspect of the question is an essential element of
Christian witness: we must reject the temptation to offer a privatized and
individualistic spirituality which ill accords with the demands of charity, to
say nothing of the implications of the Incarnation and, in the last analysis,
of Christianity’s eschatological tension. While that tension makes us aware
of the relative character of history, it in no way implies that we withdraw
from “building” history. Here the teaching of the Second Vatican Council
is more timely than ever: “The Christian message does not inhibit men and
women from building up the world, or make them disinterested in the welfare of their fellow human beings: on the contrary it obliges them more fully to do these very things.”[36]

A practical sign

53. In order to give a sign of this commitment to charity and human promotion, rooted in the most basic demands of the Gospel, I have resolved that the Jubilee year, in addition to the great harvest of charity which it has already yielded — here I am thinking in particular of the help given to so many of our poorer brothers and sisters to enable them to take part in the Jubilee — should leave an endowment which would in some way be the fruit and seal of the love sparked by the Jubilee. Many pilgrims have made an offering and many leaders in the financial sector have joined in providing generous assistance which has helped to ensure a fitting celebration of the Jubilee. Once the expenses of this year have been covered, the money saved will be dedicated to charitable purposes. It is important that such a major religious event should be completely dissociated from any semblance of financial gain. Whatever money remains will be used to continue the experience so often repeated since the very beginning of the Church, when the Jerusalem community offered non-Christians the moving sight of a spontaneous exchange of gifts, even to the point of holding all things in common, for the sake of the poor (cf. Acts 2:44-45).

The endowment to be established will be but a small stream flowing into the great river of Christian charity that courses through history. A small but significant stream: because of the Jubilee the world has looked to Rome, the Church “which presides in charity”[37] and has brought its gifts to Peter. Now the charity displayed at the center of Catholicism will in some way flow back to the world through this sign, which is meant to be an enduring legacy and remembrance of the communion experienced during the Jubilee.

Dialogue and mission

54. A new century, a new millennium are opening in the light of Christ. But not everyone can see this light. Ours is the wonderful and demanding task of becoming its “reflection.” This is the mysterium lunae,
which was so much a part of the contemplation of the Fathers of the Church, who employed this image to show the Church’s dependence on Christ, the Sun whose light she reflects. It was a way of expressing what Christ himself said when he called himself the “light of the world” (Jn 8:12) and asked his disciples to be “the light of the world” (Mt 5:14).

This is a daunting task if we consider our human weakness, which so often renders us opaque and full of shadows. But it is a task which we can accomplish if we turn to the light of Christ and open ourselves to the grace which makes us a new creation.

55. It is in this context also that we should consider the great challenge of inter-religious dialogue to which we shall still be committed in the new millennium, in fidelity to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. In the years of preparation for the Great Jubilee the Church has sought to build, not least through a series of highly symbolic meetings, a relationship of openness and dialogue with the followers of other religions. This dialogue must continue. In the climate of increased cultural and religious pluralism which is expected to mark the society of the new millennium, it is obvious that this dialogue will be especially important in establishing a sure basis for peace and warding off the dread spectre of those wars of religion which have so often bloodied human history. The name of the one God must become increasingly what it is: a name of peace and a summons to peace.

56. Dialogue, however, cannot be based on religious indifferentism, and we Christians are in duty bound, while engaging in dialogue, to bear clear witness to the hope that is within us (cf. 1 Pet 3:15). We should not fear that it will be considered an offense to the identity of others what is rather the joyful proclamation of a gift meant for all, and to be offered to all with the greatest respect for the freedom of each one: the gift of the revelation of the God who is Love, the God who “so loved the world that he gave his only Son” (Jn 3:16). As the recent Declaration Dominus Iesus stressed, this cannot be the subject of a dialogue understood as negotiation, as if we considered it a matter of mere opinion: rather, it is a grace which fills us with joy, a message which we have a duty to proclaim.
The Church therefore cannot forgo her missionary activity among the peoples of the world. It is the primary task of the “missio ad gentes” to announce that it is in Christ, “the Way, and the Truth, and the Life” (Jn 14:6), that people find salvation. Interreligious dialogue “cannot simply replace proclamation, but remains oriented towards proclamation.” This missionary duty, moreover, does not prevent us from approaching dialogue with an attitude of profound willingness to listen. We know in fact that, in the presence of the mystery of grace, infinitely full of possibilities and implications for human life and history, the Church herself will never cease putting questions, trusting in the help of the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth (cf. Jn 14:17), whose task it is to guide her “into all the truth” (Jn 16:13).

This is a fundamental principle not only for the endless theological investigation of Christian truth, but also for Christian dialogue with other philosophies, cultures and religions. In the common experience of humanity, for all its contradictions, the Spirit of God, who “blows where he wills” (Jn 3:8), not infrequently reveals signs of his presence which help Christ’s followers to understand more deeply the message which they bear. Was it not with this humble and trust-filled openness that the Second Vatican Council sought to read “the signs of the times”? Even as she engages in an active and watchful discernment aimed at understanding the “genuine signs of the presence or the purpose of God,” the Church acknowledges that she has not only given, but has also “received from the history and from the development of the human race.” This attitude of openness, combined with careful discernment, was adopted by the Council also in relation to other religions. It is our task to follow with great fidelity the Council’s teaching and the path which it has traced.

In the light of the Council

57. What a treasure there is, dear brothers and sisters, in the guidelines offered to us by the Second Vatican Council! For this reason I asked the Church, as a way of preparing for the Great Jubilee, to examine herself on the reception given to the Council. Has this been done? The Congress held here in the Vatican was such a moment of reflection, and I hope that similar efforts have been made in various ways in all the particular Churches. With the passing of the years, the Council documents have lost nothing of their value or brilliance. They need to be read correctly, to be
widely known and taken to heart as important and normative texts of the Magisterium, within the Church’s Tradition. Now that the Jubilee has ended, I feel more than ever in duty bound to point to the Council as the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century: there we find a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning.

**CONCLUSION**

*DUC IN ALTUM!*

58. Let us go forward in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help of Christ. The Son of God, who became incarnate two thousand years ago out of love for humanity, is at work even today: we need discerning eyes to see this and, above all, a generous heart to become the instruments of his work. Did we not celebrate the Jubilee Year in order to refresh our contact with this living source of our hope? Now, the Christ whom we have contemplated and loved bids us to set out once more on our journey: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (*Mt* 28:19). The missionary mandate accompanies us into the Third Millennium and urges us to share the enthusiasm of the very first Christians: we can count on the power of the same Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost and who impels us still today to start out anew, sustained by the hope “which does not disappoint” (*Rom* 5:5).

At the beginning of this new century, our steps must quicken as we travel the highways of the world. Many are the paths on which each one of us and each of our Churches must travel, but there is no distance between those who are united in the same communion, the communion which is daily nourished at the table of the Eucharistic Bread and the Word of Life. Every Sunday, the Risen Christ asks us to meet him as it were once more in the Upper Room where, on the evening of “the first day of the week” (*Jn* 20:19) he appeared to his disciples in order to “breathe” on them his life-giving Spirit and launch them on the great adventure of proclaiming the Gospel.
On this journey we are accompanied by the Blessed Virgin Mary to whom, a few months ago, in the presence of a great number of Bishops assembled in Rome from all parts of the world, I entrusted the Third Millennium. During this year I have often invoked her as the “Star of the New Evangelization.” Now I point to Mary once again as the radiant dawn and sure guide for our steps. Once more, echoing the words of Jesus himself and giving voice to the filial affection of the whole Church, I say to her: “Woman, behold your children” (cf. Jn 19:26).

59. Dear brothers and sisters! The symbol of the Holy Door now closes behind us, but only in order to leave more fully open the living door which is Christ. After the enthusiasm of the Jubilee, it is not to a dull everyday routine that we return. On the contrary, if ours has been a genuine pilgrimage, it will have as it were stretched our legs for the journey still ahead. We need to imitate the zeal of the Apostle Paul: “Straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13-14). Together, we must all imitate the contemplation of Mary, who returned home to Nazareth from her pilgrimage to the Holy City of Jerusalem, treasuring in her heart the mystery of her Son (cf. Lk 2:51).

The Risen Jesus accompanies us on our way and enables us to recognize him, as the disciples of Emmaus did, “in the breaking of the bread” (Lk 24:35). May he find us watchful, ready to recognize his face and run to our brothers and sisters with the good news: “We have seen the Lord!” (Jn 20:25).

This will be the much desired fruit of the Jubilee of the Year 2000, the Jubilee which has vividly set before our eyes once more the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God and the Redeemer of man.

As the Jubilee now comes to a close and points us to a future of hope, may the praise and thanksgiving of the whole Church rise to the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit.

In pledge of this, I impart to all of you my heartfelt Blessing.

From the Vatican, on January 6, the Solemnity of the Epiphany, in the year 2001, the twenty-third of my Pontificate.


[3] Ibid. 4: loc. cit. 133.


[10] “Following the holy Fathers, unanimously, we teach and confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity, true God and true man... one and the same Christ the Lord, the only-begotten, to be recognized in two natures, without confusion, immutable, indivisible, inseparable... he is not divided or separated in two persons, but he is one and the same Son, the only-begotten, God, Word and Lord Jesus Christ”: DS 301-302.


[12] Saint Athanasius observes in this regard: “Man could not become divine remaining united to a creature, if the Son were not true God”: Oratio II contra Arianos, 70: PG 26, 425 B-426 G.


[21] Ibid. 2: loc. cit. 714.

[22] Cf. ibid., 35: loc. cit. 734.


[24] Ibid. 31: loc. cit. 258.


[28] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, Chapter III.

Regula, III, 3: “Ideo autem omnes ad consilium vocari diximus, quia saepe iuniori Dominus revelat quod melius est.”


Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem, 2.

Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 8.

Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes, 22.

Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes, 34.


Thus, for example, Saint Augustine: “Luna intellegitur Ecclesia, quod suum lumen non habeat, sed ab Unigenito Dei Filio, qui multis locis in Sanctis Scripturis allegorice sol appellatus est”: Enarrationes in Psalmos, 10, 3: CCL 38, 42.

Cf. Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions Nostra Aetate.


Ibid. 11.

Ibid. 44.
Homily at the Conclusion of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 (January 6, 2001)

1. “All the peoples of the earth will adore you, O Lord!” This acclamation from the Responsorial Psalm expresses very well the meaning of the Solemnity of the Epiphany which we are celebrating today. It also sheds light on today’s rite of the closing of the Holy Door.

“All the peoples of the earth will adore you, O Lord!” This is a vision which speaks to us of the future, it makes us look far ahead. There is an evocation of the ancient messianic prophecy, which will fully come to pass when Christ the Saviour returns in glory at the end of history. However the prophecy has had a first fulfillment, which is both historical and prophetic, when the Wise Men came to Bethlehem, bearing their gifts. Here was the beginning of the manifestation of Christ — his “epiphany” precisely — to those who represented the peoples of the world.

This is a prophecy which is being fulfilled by degrees in the course of time, according as the Gospel proclamation penetrates the hearts of people and is planted in every part of the world. Was not the Great Jubilee a kind of epiphany? By coming here to Rome or by going on pilgrimage elsewhere in the many Jubilee Churches, countless individuals in a sense set out in the footsteps of the Wise Men in search of Jesus. The Holy Door is simply the symbol of the meeting with him. It is Christ who is the true “Holy Door”; it is he who makes it possible for us to enter the Father’s house and who introduces us into the intimacy of the divine life.

2. “All the peoples of the earth will adore you, O Lord!” Here especially, in the center of Catholicism, the impressive flow of pilgrims from all continents have given us this year a vivid image of the journey of the world’s peoples towards Christ. All kinds of people came, all with the desire to contemplate the face of Christ and to obtain his mercy.
“Christ yesterday and today / the beginning and the end / Alpha and Omega; / all time belongs to him, / and all the ages; / to him be glory and power / through every age forever” (Liturgy of the Easter Vigil). Yes, this is the hymn that the Jubilee, in the evocative context of the transition to the new millennium, wished to raise to Christ, Lord of history, two thousand years after his birth. Today this extraordinary year officially closes, but the spiritual gifts poured out during the year remain; the great “year of the Lord’s favor,” which Christ began in the Synagogue of Nazareth (cf. Lk 4:18-19) and which will endure to the end of time, continues.

While today we close the Holy Door, a “symbol of Christ,” the Heart of Jesus remains more open than ever. He continues to say to a humanity in need of hope and meaning: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28). Apart from the numerous celebrations and initiatives which have marked it, the great legacy which the Jubilee leaves us is the living and consoling experience of “meeting Christ.”

3. Today, I wish to express the gratitude and praise of the whole Church. For this reason, at the end of this celebration, we shall sing a solemn Te Deum of thanksgiving. The Lord has worked marvels for us, he has filled us with his mercy. Today we must make our own the happiness which filled the Wise Men on their journey to Christ: “When they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy” (Mt 2:10). Above all, we must imitate them as they place at the Child’s feet not only their gifts but also their lives.

For the sake of her children and all humanity, the Church has sought in this Jubilee year to be more resolute in fulfilling the role which the star fulfilled in guiding the Wise Men on their journey. The Church lives not for herself, but for Christ. She wants to be the “star,” the point of reference which helps people find the path which leads to him.

The theology of the Fathers loved to speak of the Church as mysterium lunae, in order to emphasize that, like the moon, she shines not with her own light, but reflects Christ, who is her Sun. And I gladly recall that this is how the Second Vatican Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church begins: “Christ is the light of the nations, lumen gentium!” And the
Council Fathers went on to express their burning desire to “enlighten all people with the light of Christ reflected on the face of the Church” (No. 1).

_Mysterium lunae_: the Great Jubilee has enabled the Church to live with special intensity this vocation of hers. It is to Christ that she has pointed in this year of grace, echoing once more the words of Peter: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!” (*Jn* 6:68).

4. “All the peoples of the earth will adore you, O Lord!” The universality of the call of the nations to Christ has been made more strikingly evident this year. People of every continent and language have come together in this Square. Countless voices have been raised here in song, as a symphony of praise and a proclamation of brotherhood.

Of course I cannot mention at this moment all the many different gatherings that have taken place. But I remember the children who opened the Jubilee with their abounding sense of celebration, and the young people who conquered Rome with their enthusiasm and the earnestness of their witness. I think of the families, who presented a message of faithfulness and communion, so necessary in our world, and of the elderly, the sick and the handicapped, who offered such an eloquent testimony of Christian hope. I think of the Jubilee of those in the world of culture and learning who are daily engaged in the search for truth.

The pilgrimage which two thousand years ago led the Wise Men from the East to Bethlehem, in search of the new-born Christ, has been repeated this year by millions and millions of Christ’s disciples, who have come here not with “gold, frankincense and myrrh” but bringing their own hearts, rich in faith and in need of mercy.

5. For this reason the Church rejoices today, exulting in the summons of Isaiah: “Arise, shine forth, for your light has come... And nations shall come to your light” (*Is* 60:1, 3). This sense of joy contains no vain triumphalism. How could we possibly succumb to this temptation, precisely at the end of such an intensely penitential year? The Great Jubilee has offered us an extraordinary opportunity to carry out “the purification of memories,” seeking God’s forgiveness for the infidelities of the Church’s children during these two thousand years.
Before Christ crucified we remembered that, in contrast to the overflowing grace which makes the Church “holy,” we her children are deeply marked by sin, and cast a shadow upon the face of the Bride of Christ: no self-exaltation therefore but a deep sense of our limitations and weaknesses. Yet we cannot but be filled with joy, with that inner joy to which the Prophet calls us, a joy rich in thanksgiving and praise, because it is based on our awareness of the gifts received and our certainty of Christ’s enduring love.

6. Now it is time to look to the future, and the story of the Wise Men can in a certain way give us our spiritual bearings. First of all, they tell us that when we encounter Christ, we must learn to stop and experience deeply the joy of intimacy with him. “When they entered the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and bowing down they worshiped him”: from now on their lives would be forever given to the Child for whom they had endured the rigors of the journey and the deceitfulness of men. Christianity is born, and continually draws new life, from this contemplation of the glory of God shining on the face of Christ.

A face to be contemplated, seeing in his eyes the “features” of the Father and allowing ourselves to be filled with the Spirit’s love. The great Jubilee pilgrimage has reminded us of this fundamental Trinitarian aspect of the Christian life: in Christ we also meet the Father and the Spirit. The Trinity is the origin and the fulfillment. From the Trinity all things come, and to the Trinity all things return.

And yet, as in the case of the Wise Men, this immersion in contemplation of the mystery does not stop us from journeying on, indeed it compels us to start out afresh on a new stage of the journey on which we become proclaimers and heralds. “They returned to their own country by a different way.” The Wise Men were in a sense the first missionaries. Their encounter with Christ did not keep them in Bethlehem, but made them set out anew on the paths of the world. We need to set out anew from Christ and, in so doing, to set out anew from the Trinity.

7. This is precisely what is asked of us, dear Brothers and Sisters, as the fruit of the Jubilee which concludes today.
In connection with this commitment which awaits us, in a short while I will sign the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, in which I offer some reflections which can help the whole Christian community to “set out” with fresh enthusiasm after the Jubilee event. Of course, it is not a question of organizing, in the short term, other major initiatives. We return to our normal activities, but this is something quite different from taking a rest. Rather, we need to draw from the experience of the Jubilee useful lessons which can give inspiration and effective direction to our new commitment.

8. I offer these reflections to the particular Churches, as a sort of “legacy” of the Great Jubilee, so that the Churches can incorporate them in their pastoral planning. There is an urgent need first of all to build on the desire to contemplate Jesus Christ which the experience of this year has given us. In the human face of the Son of Mary we recognize the Word made flesh, in the fullness of his divinity and his humanity. The greatest artists — of East and West — have striven to capture the mystery of that Face. But it is the Spirit, the divine “iconographer,” who etches that Face in the hearts of all who contemplate him and love him. We need to “set out anew from Christ,” with the zeal of Pentecost, with renewed enthusiasm. To set out from him above all in a daily commitment to holiness, with an attitude of prayer and of listening to his word. To set out from him in order to testify to his Love by living a Christian life marked by communion, charity, and witness before the world. This is the program which I suggest in the present Apostolic Letter. It can all be reduced to one word: “Jesus Christ!”

At the very beginning of my Pontificate, and countless times since, I have exclaimed to the sons and daughters of the Church and to the world: “Open wide the doors to Christ.” I wish to do so yet again, at the conclusion of this Jubilee, at the beginning of this new millennium.

9. “All the peoples of the earth will adore you, O Lord!” This prophecy is already fulfilled in the heavenly Jerusalem, where all the just of the world, and especially so the many witnesses to the faith, are mysteriously gathered in that holy city where the sun is no more, since the Lamb is its sun. There above, angels and saints join their voices in singing the praises of God.
The pilgrim Church on earth, in her Liturgy, in her proclamation of the Gospel, in her witness, echoes each day that heavenly song. May the Lord grant that, in the new millennium, the Church will grow ever more in holiness, that she may become in history a true epiphany of the merciful and glorious face of Christ the Lord. Amen!

Homily at the Jubilee of Bishops (October 8, 2000)

1. “Teach us, O God, wisdom of heart” (Responsorial Psalm; Italian Lectionary).

Today St. Peter’s Square is like a great Upper Room: for it is hosting Bishops from every part of the world, who have come to Rome to celebrate their Jubilee. The memory of the Apostle Peter, called to mind by his tomb beneath the altar of the great Vatican Basilica, invites us to return in spirit to the first site of the Apostolic College, to that Upper Room in Jerusalem where I recently had the joy of celebrating Mass during my pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Today a spiritual bridge spanning centuries and continents links the Upper Room with this square, where the successors of those first Apostles of Christ have gathered in the Holy Year 2000. I offer my cordial embrace to you all, dear and venerable Brothers, and I extend it with equal affection to all who have been unable to come but are spiritually united with us in their sees.

Together let us make our own the invocation of the Psalm: “Teach us, O God, wisdom of heart.” In this “sapientia cordis,” which is God’s gift, we can sum up the fruit of our Jubilee gathering. It consists in our interior conformation to Christ, the Wisdom of the Father, through the action of the Holy Spirit. To receive this gift, indispensable if we are to govern the Church well, we, her pastors, must first pass through him, “the door of the sheep” (Jn 10: 7). We must imitate him, the “Good Shepherd” (Jn 10: 11, 14), so that in listening to us the faithful will listen to him, and in
following us they can follow him, the one Saviour, yesterday, today and forever.

2. God gives wisdom of heart through his Word, living, effective and capable of laying bare the depths of man — as the author of the Letter to the Hebrews told us (cf. Heb 4: 12) in the passage just proclaimed. The divine Word, after being spoken “of old in many and various ways to our fathers through the prophets” (Heb 1: 1), has been sent in these last days to men and women in the very person of the Son (cf. Heb 1: 2).

We pastors, by virtue of the munus docendi, are called to be qualified preachers of this Word. “He who hears you hears me” (Lk 10: 16). An exhilarating task, but also a great responsibility! We have been entrusted with a living word: we must therefore proclaim it by our lives even before with our lips. It is a word that coincides with the person of Christ himself, the “Word made flesh” (Jn 14): it is therefore the face of Christ that we must show men; his Cross that we must proclaim, doing so as vigorously as Paul: “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2: 2).

3. “Lo, we have left everything and followed you” (Mk 10: 28). Peter’s statement expresses the radicalness of the choice requested of the apostle. A radicalness which becomes clear in the light of Jesus’ demanding conversation with the rich young man. The Teacher indicated the observance of the commandments to him as a condition for eternal life. To his desire for greater perfection, he answered with a loving look and an unconditional proposal: “Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor; and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (Mk 10: 21). The sadness of refusal fell on these words of Christ like a sudden darkening of the sky. It was then that Jesus spoke one of his severest sayings: “How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” (Mk 10: 24). A saying which he himself mitigated in the face of the Apostles’ dismay: “all things are possible with God” (Mk 10: 27).

Peter’s statement became an expression of the grace by which God transforms man and makes him capable of a total gift. “We have left everything and followed you” (Mk 10: 28). This is how we become apostles. And this is how we also experience the fulfillment of Christ’s
promise about the “hundredfold”: the apostle who has left everything to follow Christ already lives a fulfilled and joyful life on this earth, despite the inevitable trials.

At this moment how can we not express, venerable brothers, our gratitude to the Lord for the gift of our vocation, first to the priesthood and then to its fullness in the episcopate? Looking back over the events of our lives, emotion fills our hearts at seeing the many ways in which the Lord has shown us his love and mercy. Truly, “misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo!” (Ps 89 [88]: 2).

4. The Bishop, a successor of the Apostles, is someone for whom Christ is everything: “For to me to live is Christ...” (Phil 1: 21). He must bear witness to this in all his actions. The Second Vatican Council teaches: “Bishops should devote themselves to their apostolic office as witnesses of Christ to all men” (Decree Christus Dominus, n. 11).

In speaking of the Bishops as witnesses, I cannot fail to recall at this solemn Jubilee celebration the many Bishops who, in the course of two millennia, have borne the supreme witness to Christ of martyrdom, following the apostolic model and making the Church fruitful by the shedding of their blood.

In a particular way, the 20th century has been richly blessed with such witnesses, some of whom I have had the joy of raising to the honors of the altar. A week ago, I enrolled among the saints four Bishops, martyrs in China: Gregory Grassi, Anthony Fantosati, Francis Fogolla and Louis Versiglia. Among the blessed, we venerate Michal Kozal, Antoni Julian Nowowiejski, Leon Wetmanski and Wladyslaw Goral, who died in Nazi concentration camps. In addition to them are Diego Ventaja Milán, Manuel Medina Olmos, Anselmo Polanco and Florentino Asensio Barroso, killed during the Spanish Civil War. And in Eastern Europe the blessed martyrs Vilmos Apor, a Hungarian, Vincent Eugene Bossilkov, a Bulgarian, and Alojzije Stepinac, a Croatian, blossomed in the long winter of Communist totalitarianism.

At the same time, it is beautiful and only right to thank God for all the wise and generous pastors who, down the centuries, have brought honor to the Church by their teaching and example. How many holy and blessed
confessors there are among the Bishops! I am thinking, for example, of shining figures such as Charles Borromeo and Francis de Sales; I am also thinking of Popes Pius IX and John XXIII, whom I recently had the joy of proclaiming blessed.

Dear brothers, “surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12: 1), let us renew our response to the gift of God received with episcopal ordination. “Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus” (Heb 12: 1-2), the Shepherd of shepherds.

5. Reflecting on the mystery of the Church and her mission in the contemporary world, the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council felt the need to devote special attention to the pastoral office of Bishops. Today, on the threshold of the third millennium, the challenge of the new evangelization further emphasizes the episcopal ministry: the Pastor is the first to take responsibility for and to encourage the ecclesial community, both in the requirement of communion and in missionary outreach. Regarding the relativism and subjectivism which mar so much of contemporary culture, Bishops are called to defend and promote the doctrinal unity of their faithful. Concerned for every situation in which the faith has been lost or is unknown, they work with all their strength for evangelization, preparing priests, religious and lay people for this task and making the necessary resources available (cf. Christus Dominus, n. 6).

Mindful of the Council’s teaching (cf. ibid. n. 7), today we would like to express from this square our fraternal solidarity with Bishops who have been persecuted, who are in prison or are prevented from exercising their ministry. And in the name of our sacramental bond, we affectionately extend our remembrance and prayer to our brother priests who are suffering the same trials. The Church is grateful to them for the inestimable good that they bring to the Mystical Body by their prayer and sacrifice.

6. “May the gracious care of the Lord our God be ours; prosper the work of our hands for us! Prosper the work of our hands!” (Ps 90 [89]: 17).

During our Jubilee, dear brothers in the episcopate, the gracious care of the Lord has been given to us in abundance. The light and strength which
come from it will not fail to prosper the “work of our hands,” that is, the work entrusted to us in God’s field which is the Church.

For our support and comfort, we have wished to emphasize during these Jubilee days the presence in our midst of Mary Most Holy, our Mother. We did so yesterday evening by reciting the Rosary as a community; we do so today with the Act of Entrustment, which we will make at the end of Mass. It is an act that we will make in a collegial spirit, while sensing the closeness of the many Bishops who, in their respective sees, are joining in our celebration and making this same Act together with their faithful. May the venerable image of Our Lady of Fatima, which we have the joy of hosting in our midst, help us to relive the experience of the first Apostolic College, gathered in prayer in the Upper Room with Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

Queen of Apostles, pray with us and for us, so that the Holy Spirit will descend in abundance upon the Church, and that she will shine throughout the world ever more united, holy, catholic and apostolic. Amen.

Act of entrustment to Mary

1. “Woman, behold your Son!” (Jn 19:26). As we near the end of this Jubilee Year, when you, O Mother, have offered us Jesus anew, the blessed fruit of your womb most pure, the Word made flesh, the world’s Redeemer, we hear more clearly the sweet echo of his words entrusting us to you, making you our Mother: “Woman, behold your Son!” When he entrusted to you the Apostle John, and with him the children of the Church and all people, Christ did not diminish but affirmed anew the role which is his alone as the Saviour of the world. You are the splendor which in no way dims the light of Christ, for you exist in him and through him. Everything in you is *fiat*: you are the Immaculate One, through you there shines the fullness of grace. Here, then, are your children, gathered before you at the dawn of the new millennium. The Church today, through the voice of the Successor of Peter, in union with so many pastors assembled here from every corner of the world, seeks refuge in your motherly protection and trustingly begs your intercession as she faces the challenges which lie hidden in the future.
2. In this year of grace, countless people have known the overflowing joy of the mercy which the Father has given us in Christ. In the particular Churches throughout the world, and still more in this center of Christianity, the widest array of people have accepted this gift. Here the enthusiasm of the young rang out, here the sick have lifted up their prayer. Here have gathered priests and religious, artists and journalists, workers and people of learning, children and adults, and all have acknowledged in your beloved Son the Word of God made flesh in your womb. O Mother, intercede for us, that the fruits of this Year will not be lost and that the seeds of grace will grow to the full measure of the holiness to which we are all called.

3. Today we wish to entrust to you the future that awaits us, and we ask you to be with us on our way. We are the men and women of an extraordinary time, exhilarating yet full of contradictions. Humanity now has instruments of unprecedented power: we can turn this world into a garden, or reduce it to a pile of rubble. We have devised the astounding capacity to intervene in the very well-springs of life: man can use this power for good, within the bounds of the moral law, or he can succumb to the short-sighted pride of a science which accepts no limits, but tramples on the respect due to every human being. Today as never before in the past, humanity stands at a crossroads. And once again, O Virgin Most Holy, salvation lies fully and uniquely in Jesus, your Son.

4. Therefore, O Mother, like the Apostle John, we wish to take you into our home (cf. Jn 19:27), that we may learn from you to become like your Son. “Woman, behold your son!” Here we stand before you to entrust to your maternal care ourselves, the Church, the entire world. Plead for us with your beloved Son that he may give us in abundance the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth which is the fountain of life. Receive the Spirit for us and with us, as happened in the first community gathered round you in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:14). May the Spirit open our hearts to justice and love, and guide people and nations to mutual understanding and a firm desire for peace. We entrust to you all people, beginning with the weakest: the babies yet unborn, and those born into poverty and suffering, the young in search of meaning, the unemployed, and those suffering hunger and disease. We entrust to you all troubled
families, the elderly with no one to help them, and all who are alone and without hope.

5. O Mother, you know the sufferings and hopes of the Church and the world: come to the aid of your children in the daily trials which life brings to each one, and grant that, thanks to the efforts of all, the darkness will not prevail over the light. To you, Dawn of Salvation, we commit our journey through the new Millennium, so that with you as guide all people may know Christ, the light of the world and its only Saviour, who reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

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Homily at the Jubilee of Families (October 15, 2000)

1. “May the Lord, the source of life, bless us.” The invocation we repeated in the Responsorial Psalm, dear brothers and sisters, sums up well the daily prayer of every Christian family, and today, during this Eucharistic celebration of the Jubilee, it vividly expresses the meaning of our gathering.

You have come here not only as individuals but as families. You have come to Rome from every part of the world, bringing with you the deep conviction that the family is a great gift of God, an original gift, marked by his blessing.

So it is indeed. From the dawn of creation, God has looked upon the family and blessed it. God created man and woman in his image and gave them a specific task for the growth of the human family: “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth’” (Gen 1:28).

Your Jubilee, dear families, is a song of praise for this original blessing. It came upon you, Christian spouses, when, in celebrating your wedding, you pledged everlasting love to each other in God’s sight. It will be received today by the eight couples from various parts of the world who have come to celebrate their wedding in the solemn setting of this Jubilee rite.
Yes, may the Lord, the source of life, bless you! Open yourselves to the ever new flow of this blessing. It brings with it a creative and regenerative power that can banish all weariness and assure lasting freshness to your gift.

2. This original blessing is linked to a precise plan of God, which his word has just recalled: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him” (Gen 2: 18). So it is that in the Book of Genesis the sacred author describes the fundamental requirement on which the marital union of man and woman and, with it, the life of the family that flows from it, is based. It is a requirement of communion. Human beings were not made for solitude; they bear within themselves a relational vocation, rooted in their spiritual nature. Because of this vocation, they grow to the extent that they enter into relationships with others, fully discovering themselves only in “a sincere giving of self” (Gaudium et Spes, n. 24).

Purely functional relationships are not enough for human beings. They need interpersonal relationships that are rich in inner depth, gratuitousness and self-sacrifice. Fundamental among these are the relationships created in the family: between husband and wife, and between them and their children. The whole great network of human relationships flows from and is continuously reborn from that relationship by which a man and a woman recognize that they are made for one another and decide to join their individual lives in a single project of life: “Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen 2: 24).

3. One flesh! How can we not see the power of this expression? The biblical term “flesh” calls to mind not only man’s bodily nature, but his overall identity as body and spirit. What the spouses achieve is not only a joining of bodies, but a true union of their persons. A union which is so deep that it in some way makes them a reflection of the “We” of the three divine Persons in history (cf. Letter to Families, n. 8).

Thus we can understand how much is at stake in Jesus’ discussion with the Pharisees in Mark’s Gospel, proclaimed a few moments ago. Those who were speaking with Jesus considered this a problem of interpretation of the Mosaic law, which permitted a man to put his wife away, leading to
debates on the reasons that could justify it. Jesus rises totally above this legalistic view, going to the heart of God’s plan. In the law of Moses he sees a concession to their “skelerokardia,” their “hardness of heart.” But it is to this hardness that Jesus is not resigned. And how could he be, having come precisely to dispel it and to offer to man, with Redemption, the strength to overcome the resistance due to sin? He is not afraid to remind them of the original plan: “From the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female’” (Mk 10: 6).

4. From the beginning! Only he, Jesus, knows the Father “from the beginning” and also knows man “from the beginning.” He both reveals the Father and reveals man to himself (cf. Gaudium et Spes, n. 22). For this reason, following in his footsteps, the Church has the task of bearing witness in history to this original plan and of showing its truth and feasibility.

In doing so she does not hide the difficulties and tragedies which concrete historical experience records in the life of families. But she also knows that God’s will, wholeheartedly accepted and fulfilled, is not a chain that enslaves, but the condition for a true freedom which achieves its fullness in love. The Church also knows — and our daily experience confirms it — that when this original plan is obscured in consciences, incalculable harm is done to society.

Certainly, there are difficulties. But Jesus provided married couples with sufficient means of grace to overcome them. By his will marriage has acquired, in the baptized, the value and power of a sacramental sign, which strengthens its characteristics and prerogatives. For in sacramental marriage the spouses — as the young couples whose marriages I will bless will shortly be doing — commit themselves to expressing to each other and to bearing witness before the world to the powerful and indissoluble love with which Christ loves the Church. It is a “great mystery,” as the Apostle Paul calls it (cf. Eph 5: 32).

5. “May the Lord, the source of life, bless you!” God’s blessing is at the origin not only of marital communion, but also of a responsible and generous openness to life. Children really are the “springtime of the family and society,” as the motto of your Jubilee says. It is in children that
marriage blossoms: they crown that total partnership of life ("totius vitae consortium": CIC, can. 1055, 1), which makes husband and wife “one flesh”; this is true both of the children born from the natural relationship of the spouses and those desired through adoption. Children are not an “accessory” to the project of married life. They are not an “option,” but a “supreme gift” (Gaudium et Spes, n. 50), inscribed in the very structure of the conjugal union. The Church, as you know, teaches an ethic of respect for this fundamental structure in both its unitive and procreative meaning. In all this, it expresses the proper regard for God’s plan, sketching an image of conjugal relations that are marked by mutual and unreserved acceptance. Above all, it addresses the right of children to be born and to grow in a context of fully human love. In conforming to the word of God, families thus become a school of humanization and true solidarity.

6. Parents and children are called to this task, but, as I already wrote in 1994 for the Year of the Family, “the ‘we’ of the parents, of husband and wife, develops into the ‘we’ of the family, which is grafted on to earlier generations and is open to gradual expansion” (Letter to Families, n. 16). When roles are respected, so that the relationship between husband and wife and between parents and children develops fully and peacefully, it is natural for other relatives such as grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins, also to become significant and important. In these relationships marked by sincere affection and mutual help, the family often plays a truly irreplaceable role, so that persons in difficulty, unmarried people, widows, widowers and orphans can find a place that is warm and welcoming. The family cannot be closed in on itself. The affectionate relationship with relatives is an initial sphere of that necessary openness which orients families to all of society.

7. So dear Christian families, welcome the Jubilee grace which is being poured out abundantly in this Eucharist. Welcome it by taking the family of Nazareth as your example: although called to an incomparable mission, it traveled the same path as you do, amid joys and sufferings, prayer and work, hopes and distressing trials, while always rooted in fidelity to God’s will. May your families continue to grow as true “domestic churches,” offering praise to God every day and spreading a beneficial and regenerating flow of love throughout society.
“May the Lord, the source of life, bless us.” May this Jubilee of Families be a great moment of grace for all of you who are celebrating it. May it also be an invitation for society to reflect on the meaning and value of this great gift which is the family, built according to God’s heart.

May Mary, “Queen of the Family,” always accompany you with her motherly hand.

Homily at the Jubilee of University Professors (September 10, 2000)

1. “He has done all things well; he even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak” (Mk 7:37).

In the Jubilee context of this celebration we are invited in the first place to share in the wonder and praise of those who witnessed the miracle which we have just heard recounted in the Gospel. Like many other episodes of healing, it testifies to the coming of the Kingdom of God in the person of Jesus. In Christ the messianic promises spoken by the prophet Isaiah are fulfilled: “The ears of the deaf shall be unstopped... and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy” (Is 35:5-6). In him, the year of the Lord’s favor has begun for all humanity (cf. Lk 4:17-21).

This year of favor crosses the centuries, it has marked all of history, it is the principle of resurrection and life, which affects not only humanity but creation itself (cf Rom 8:19-22).

We are present here for a renewed experience of this year of favor, at this Jubilee of Universities, at which you — distinguished Rectors, Teachers, Administrators and Chaplains from various countries; and you, dear students from all over the world — are gathered.

I extend cordial greetings to all of you. I thank the concelebrating Cardinals and Bishops for their presence. I also greet the Minister for Universities and the other Authorities present.
2. “Ephphatha, be opened!” (Mk 7:34). The words spoken by Jesus at the healing of the deaf mute ring out once more for us today; they are stimulating words of great symbolic intensity which call us to open ourselves to listening and to bearing witness.

Does not the deaf mute mentioned in the Gospel bring to mind the situation of those who are unable to establish a communication which gives true meaning to life? In a certain way, he reminds us of those who shut themselves up in a presumed autonomy, which leaves them isolated from God and often from their neighbor as well. Jesus turns to this man to restore to him the capacity to open himself to the One who is Other and to others, in an attitude of trust and freely-given love. He offers him the extraordinary opportunity to meet God who is love and who allows himself to be known by those who love. He offers him salvation.

Yes, Christ opens man to a knowledge of both God and himself. He who is truth (cf Jn 14:6) opens man to the truth, touching him from within and thus healing “from within” every human faculty.

For you, dear brothers and sisters engaged in research and study, these words are an appeal to open your spirit to the truth which sets free! At the same time, Christ’s words summon you to become this “Ephphatha” for countless hosts of young people, to become this word which opens the spirit to every aspect of truth in the different fields of learning. Seen in this light, your daily commitment becomes a following of Christ on the path of service to your brothers and sisters in the truth of love.

Christ is the one who “has done all things well” (Mk 7:37). He is the model to whom you must look unceasingly so that your academic activity becomes an effective service of the human longing for an ever fuller knowledge of truth.

3. “Say to those who are of a fearful heart: ‘Be strong, fear not! Behold your God... He will come and save you”’ (Is 35:4).

In these words of Isaiah your mission too, dear university men and women, is well delineated. Every day you are committed to proclaiming, defending and spreading the truth. Often this involves truths concerning the most diverse aspects of the cosmos and of history. The subject material
will not always touch directly on the problem of the ultimate meaning of life and the relationship with God, as in the areas of philosophy and theology. However, this problem abides as the larger context of every thought. Even in research on areas of life which seem quite far from faith there is a hidden desire for truth and meaning which goes beyond the particular and the contingent.

When the human person is not spiritually “deaf and dumb” every area of thought, science and experience also brings a reflection of the Creator and gives rise to a desire for him, a desire often hidden and perhaps also repressed but which cannot be suppressed. This was well understood by Saint Augustine who exclaimed: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you” (Confessions, I, 1).

As scholars and teachers who have opened your hearts to Christ, your vocation is that of living and bearing witness in an effective way to this relationship between the individual branches of knowledge and that supreme “knowledge” which concerns God, and which in a sense coincides with him, with his Word made flesh and with the Spirit of truth given by him. Through your contribution, the University becomes the place of the “Ephphatha” where Christ — at work in you — continues to carry out the miracle of opening ears and lips, bringing about a new capacity for listening and a true communication.

Freedom of research has nothing to fear from this encounter with Christ. Nor does this encounter compromise dialogue and respect for individuals, since Christian truth by its nature is to be proposed, never imposed, and has as its solid point of reference a deep respect for the “sanctuary of conscience” (Redemptoris Missio, 39; cf. Redemptor Hominis, 12; Vatican II, Dignitatis Humanae, 3).

4. Ours is a time of great transformations which also involve the university world. The humanistic character of culture sometimes seems relegated to the periphery, while there is an increased tendency to reduce the horizon of knowledge to what can be measured and to ignore any question touching on the ultimate meaning of reality. We can ask ourselves what kind of men and women are being prepared by the University today.
To meet the challenge of creating a new authentic and integral humanism, the University needs people attentive to the word of the only Teacher; it needs qualified professionals and credible witnesses to Christ. This mission is certainly not easy, it requires constant commitment, it is nourished by prayer and study, and it is expressed in the normal events of everyday life.

This mission is supported by the pastoral care of university students and personnel, which involves both the spiritual care of individuals and effective activity promoting cultural initiatives in which the light of the Gospel directs and humanizes the paths of research, study and teaching methods.

At the heart of such pastoral activity are university chaplaincy centers where teachers, students and staff find support and help for their Christian lives. As significant places in the University setting, they nourish the commitment of each individual according to the forms and ways suggested by the university context: they are places of the spirit, gymnasiums for the Christian virtues, open and inviting houses, dynamic centers which encourage the Christian animation of culture in respectful and honest dialogue, with clear and purposeful direction (cf. 1 Pet 3:15), and with a witness which is both truth-seeking and convincing.

5. Dear friends, it is a great joy for me to celebrate the Jubilee of Universities with you. This large and distinguished gathering is an eloquent sign of the cultural fruitfulness of faith.

Fixing our gaze on the mystery of the Incarnate Word (cf. Bull Incarnationis Mysterium), man discovers himself (cf. Gaudium et Spes, 22). He also experiences an intimate joy which finds expression in the interior style itself of studying and teaching. Knowledge thus overcomes the limits which reduce it to a merely functional and pragmatic process, and so it recovers its dignity as research in the service of man in the whole truth about himself, illuminated and guided by the Gospel.

Dear Teachers and Students, this is your vocation: make the University an environment where knowledge is cultivated, a place where the individual finds direction for the future, knowledge, inspiration for effective service of society.
I entrust your journey to Mary, *Sedes Sapientiae*, whose image I entrust to you today, so that she may be welcomed as a teacher and a pilgrim in the university campuses of the world. Mary supported the Apostles with her prayer at the dawn of evangelization; may she also help you to invigorate the university world with a Christian spirit.

The Roman Curia

**Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: Declaration Dominus Iesus (August 6, 2000)**

*Introduction*

1. The Lord Jesus, before ascending into heaven, commanded his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world and to baptize all nations: “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned” (*Mk* 16:15-16); “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the world” (*Mt* 28:18-20; cf. *Lk* 24:46-48; *Jn* 17:18,20,21; *Acts* 1:8).

The Church’s universal mission is born from the command of Jesus Christ and is fulfilled in the course of the centuries in the proclamation of the mystery of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the mystery of the incarnation of the Son, as saving event for all humanity. The fundamental contents of the profession of the Christian faith are expressed thus: “I believe in one God, the Father, Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of
all that is, seen and unseen. I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation, he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.”[1]

2. In the course of the centuries, the Church has proclaimed and witnessed with fidelity to the Gospel of Jesus. At the close of the second millennium, however, this mission is still far from complete.[2] For that reason, Saint Paul’s words are now more relevant than ever: “Preaching the Gospel is not a reason for me to boast; it is a necessity laid on me: woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16). This explains the Magisterium’s particular attention to giving reasons for and supporting the evangelizing mission of the Church, above all in connection with the religious traditions of the world.[3]

In considering the values which these religions witness to and offer humanity, with an open and positive approach, the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions states: “The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and teachings, which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.”[4] Continuing in this line of thought, the Church’s proclamation of Jesus Christ, “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6), today also makes use of the practice of inter-religious dialogue. Such
dialogue certainly does not replace, but rather accompanies the missio ad gentes, directed toward that “mystery of unity,” from which “it follows that all men and women who are saved share, though differently, in the same mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ through his Spirit.” Inter-religious dialogue, which is part of the Church’s evangelizing mission, requires an attitude of understanding and a relationship of mutual knowledge and reciprocal enrichment, in obedience to the truth and with respect for freedom.

3. In the practice of dialogue between the Christian faith and other religious traditions, as well as in seeking to understand its theoretical basis more deeply, new questions arise that need to be addressed through pursuing new paths of research, advancing proposals, and suggesting ways of acting that call for attentive discernment. In this task, the present Declaration seeks to recall to Bishops, theologians, and all the Catholic faithful, certain indispensable elements of Christian doctrine, which may help theological reflection in developing solutions consistent with the contents of the faith and responsive to the pressing needs of contemporary culture.

The expository language of the Declaration corresponds to its purpose, which is not to treat in a systematic manner the question of the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church, nor to propose solutions to questions that are matters of free theological debate, but rather to set forth again the doctrine of the Catholic faith in these areas, pointing out some fundamental questions that remain open to further development, and refuting specific positions that are erroneous or ambiguous. For this reason, the Declaration takes up what has been taught in previous Magisterial documents, in order to reiterate certain truths that are part of the Church’s faith.

4. The Church’s constant missionary proclamation is endangered today by relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism, not only *de facto* but also *de iure* (or in principle). As a consequence, it is held that certain truths have been superseded; for example, the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the nature of Christian faith as compared with that of belief in other religions, the inspired nature of the books of Sacred Scripture, the personal unity between the Eternal
Word and Jesus of Nazareth, the unity of the economy of the Incarnate Word and the Holy Spirit, the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ, the universal salvific mediation of the Church, the inseparability — while recognizing the distinction — of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the Church, and the subsistence of the one Church of Christ in the Catholic Church.

The roots of these problems are to be found in certain presuppositions of both a philosophical and theological nature, which hinder the understanding and acceptance of the revealed truth. Some of these can be mentioned: the conviction of the elusiveness and inexpressibility of divine truth, even by Christian revelation; relativistic attitudes toward truth itself, according to which what is true for some would not be true for others; the radical opposition posited between the logical mentality of the West and the symbolic mentality of the East; the subjectivism which, by regarding reason as the only source of knowledge, becomes incapable of raising its “gaze to the heights, not daring to rise to the truth of being”;[8] the difficulty in understanding and accepting the presence of definitive and eschatological events in history; the metaphysical emptying of the historical incarnation of the Eternal Logos, reduced to a mere appearing of God in history; the eclecticism of those who, in theological research, uncritically absorb ideas from a variety of philosophical and theological contexts without regard for consistency, systematic connection, or compatibility with Christian truth; finally, the tendency to read and to interpret Sacred Scripture outside the Tradition and Magisterium of the Church.

On the basis of such presuppositions, which may evince different nuances, certain theological proposals are developed — at times presented as assertions, and at times as hypotheses — in which Christian revelation and the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church lose their character of absolute truth and salvific universality, or at least shadows of doubt and uncertainty are cast upon them.

I. The fullness and definitiveness of the revelation of Jesus Christ

5. As a remedy for this relativistic mentality, which is becoming ever more common, it is necessary above all to reassert the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ. In fact, it must be
firmly believed that, in the mystery of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6), the full revelation of divine truth is given: “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him” (Mt 11:27); “No one has ever seen God; God the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has revealed him” (Jn 1:18); “For in Christ the whole fullness of divinity dwells in bodily form” (Col 2:9-10).

Faithful to God’s word, the Second Vatican Council teaches: “By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines forth in Christ, who is at the same time the mediator and the fullness of all revelation.”[9] Furthermore, “Jesus Christ, therefore, the Word made flesh, sent ‘as a man to men,’ ‘speaks the words of God’ (Jn 3:34), and completes the work of salvation which his Father gave him to do (cf. Jn 5:36; 17:4). To see Jesus is to see his Father (cf. Jn 14:9). For this reason, Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling it through his whole work of making himself present and manifesting himself: through his words and deeds, his signs and wonders, but especially through his death and glorious resurrection from the dead and finally with the sending of the Spirit of truth, he completed and perfected revelation and confirmed it with divine testimony... The Christian dispensation, therefore, as the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away, and we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Tim 6:14 and Tit 2:13).”[10]

Thus, the Encyclical Redemptoris Missio calls the Church once again to the task of announcing 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.”[11] Only the revelation of Jesus Christ, therefore, “introduces into our history a universal and ultimate truth which stirs the human mind to ceaseless effort.”[12]

6. Therefore, the theory of the limited, incomplete, or imperfect character of the revelation of Jesus Christ, which would be complementary
to that found in other religions, is contrary to the Church’s faith. Such a position would claim to be based on the notion that the truth about God cannot be grasped and manifested in its globality and completeness by any historical religion, neither by Christianity nor by Jesus Christ.

Such a position is in radical contradiction with the foregoing statements of Catholic faith according to which the full and complete revelation of the salvific mystery of God is given in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the words, deeds, and entire historical event of Jesus, though limited as human realities, have nevertheless the divine Person of the Incarnate Word, “true God and true man” \[13\] as their subject. For this reason, they possess in themselves the definitiveness and completeness of the revelation of God’s salvific ways, even if the depth of the divine mystery in itself remains transcendent and inexhaustible. The truth about God is not abolished or reduced because it is spoken in human language; rather, it is unique, full, and complete, because he who speaks and acts is the Incarnate Son of God. Thus, faith requires us to profess that the Word made flesh, in his entire mystery, who moves from incarnation to glorification, is the source, participated but real, as well as the fulfillment of every salvific revelation of God to humanity, \[14\] and that the Holy Spirit, who is Christ’s Spirit, will teach this “entire truth” (Jn 16:13) to the Apostles and, through them, to the whole Church.

7. The proper response to God’s revelation is “the obedience of faith (Rom 16:26; cf. Rom 1:5; 2 Cor 10:5-6) by which man freely entrusts his entire self to God, offering ‘the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals’ and freely assenting to the revelation given by him.” \[15\] Faith is a gift of grace: “in order to have faith, the grace of God must come first and give assistance; there must also be the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and gives ‘to everyone joy and ease in assenting to and believing in the truth’.” \[16\]

The obedience of faith implies acceptance of the truth of Christ’s revelation, guaranteed by God, who is Truth itself: \[17\] “Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed.” \[18\] Faith, therefore, as “a gift of God” and as “a supernatural virtue infused by him,” \[19\] involves
a dual adherence: to God who reveals and to the truth which he reveals, out of the trust which one has in him who speaks. Thus, “we must believe in no one but God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”[20]

For this reason, the distinction between theological faith and belief in the other religions, must be firmly held. If faith is the acceptance in grace of revealed truth, which “makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it coherently,”[21] then belief, in the other religions, is that sum of experience and thought that constitutes the human treasury of wisdom and religious aspiration, which man in his search for truth has conceived and acted upon in his relationship to God and the Absolute.[22]

This distinction is not always borne in mind in current theological reflection. Thus, theological faith (the acceptance of the truth revealed by the One and Triune God) is often identified with belief in other religions, which is religious experience still in search of the absolute truth and still lacking assent to God who reveals himself. This is one of the reasons why the differences between Christianity and the other religions tend to be reduced at times to the point of disappearance.

8. The hypothesis of the inspired value of the sacred writings of other religions is also put forward. Certainly, it must be recognized that there are some elements in these texts which may be de facto instruments by which countless people throughout the centuries have been and still are able today to nourish and maintain their life-relationship with God. Thus, as noted above, the Second Vatican Council, in considering the customs, precepts, and teachings of the other religions, teaches that “although differing in many ways from her own teaching, these nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.”[23]

The Church’s tradition, however, reserves the designation of inspired texts to the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, since these are inspired by the Holy Spirit.[24] Taking up this tradition, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation of the Second Vatican Council states: “For Holy Mother Church, relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under
the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 20:31; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19-21; 3:15-16), they have God as their author, and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.”[25] These books “firmly, faithfully, and without error, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures.”[26]

Nevertheless, God, who desires to call all peoples to himself in Christ and to communicate to them the fullness of his revelation and love, “does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals, but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression even when they contain ‘gaps, insufficiencies and errors.’”[27] Therefore, the sacred books of other religions, which in actual fact direct and nourish the existence of their followers, receive from the mystery of Christ the elements of goodness and grace which they contain.

II. The incarnate Logos and the Holy Spirit in the work of salvation

9. In contemporary theological reflection there often emerges an approach to Jesus of Nazareth that considers him a particular, finite, historical figure, who reveals the divine not in an exclusive way, but in a way complementary with other revelatory and salvific figures. The Infinite, the Absolute, the Ultimate Mystery of God would thus manifest itself to humanity in many ways and in many historical figures: Jesus of Nazareth would be one of these. More concretely, for some, Jesus would be one of the many faces which the Logos has assumed in the course of time to communicate with humanity in a salvific way.

Furthermore, to justify the universality of Christian salvation as well as the fact of religious pluralism, it has been proposed that there is an economy of the eternal Word that is valid also outside the Church and is unrelated to her, in addition to an economy of the incarnate Word. The first would have a greater universal value than the second, which is limited to Christians, though God’s presence would be more full in the second.

10. These theses are in profound conflict with the Christian faith. The doctrine of faith must be firmly believed which proclaims that Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary, and he alone, is the Son and the Word of the Father. The Word, which “was in the beginning with God” (Jn 1:2) is the
same as he who “became flesh” (Jn 1:14). In Jesus, “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16), “the whole fullness of divinity dwells in bodily form” (Col 2:9). He is the “only begotten Son of the Father, who is in the bosom of the Father” (Jn 1:18), his “beloved Son, in whom we have redemption... In him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him, God was pleased to reconcile all things to himself, on earth and in the heavens, making peace by the blood of his Cross” (Col 1:13-14; 19-20).

Faithful to Sacred Scripture and refuting erroneous and reductive interpretations, the First Council of Nicaea solemnly defined its faith in: “Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten generated from the Father, that is, from the being of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father, through whom all things were made, those in heaven and those on earth. For us men and for our salvation, he came down and became incarnate, was made man, suffered, and rose again on the third day. He ascended to the heavens and shall come again to judge the living and the dead.”[28] Following the teachings of the Fathers of the Church, the Council of Chalcedon also professed: “the one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man..., one in being with the Father according to the divinity and one in being with us according to the humanity..., begotten of the Father before the ages according to the divinity and, in these last days, for us and our salvation, of Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, according to the humanity.”[29]

For this reason, the Second Vatican Council states that Christ “the new Adam... ‘image of the invisible God’ (Col 1:15) is himself the perfect man who has restored that likeness to God in the children of Adam which had been disfigured since the first sin... As an innocent lamb he merited life for us by his blood which he freely shed. In him God reconciled us to himself and to one another, freeing us from the bondage of the devil and of sin, so that each one of us could say with the apostle: the Son of God ‘loved me and gave himself up for me’ (Gal 2:20).”[30]

In this regard, John Paul II has explicitly declared: “To introduce any sort of separation between the Word and Jesus Christ is contrary to the Christian faith... Jesus is the Incarnate Word — a single and indivisible
person... Christ is none other than Jesus of Nazareth; he is the Word of God made man for the salvation of all... In the process of discovering and appreciating the manifold gifts — especially the spiritual treasures — that God has bestowed on every people, we cannot separate those gifts from Jesus Christ, who is at the center of God’s plan of salvation.”[31]

It is likewise contrary to the Catholic faith to introduce a separation between the salvific action of the Word as such and that of the Word made man. With the incarnation, all the salvific actions of the Word of God are always done in unity with the human nature that he has assumed for the salvation of all people. The one subject which operates in the two natures, human and divine, is the single person of the Word.[32]

Therefore, the theory which would attribute, after the incarnation as well, a salvific activity to the Logos as such in his divinity, exercised “in addition to” or “beyond” the humanity of Christ, is not compatible with the Catholic faith.[33]

11. Similarly, the doctrine of faith regarding the unicity of the salvific economy willed by the One and Triune God must be firmly believed, at the source and center of which is the mystery of the incarnation of the Word, mediator of divine grace on the level of creation and redemption (cf. Col 1:15-20), he who recapitulates all things (cf. Eph 1:10), he “whom God has made our wisdom, our righteousness, and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30). In fact, the mystery of Christ has its own intrinsic unity, which extends from the eternal choice in God to the parousia: “he [the Father] chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love” (Eph 1:4); “In Christ we are heirs, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will” (Eph 1:11); “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers; those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Rom 8:29-30).

The Church’s Magisterium, faithful to divine revelation, reasserts that Jesus Christ is the mediator and the universal redeemer: “The Word of
God, through whom all things were made, was made flesh, so that as perfect man he could save all men and sum up all things in himself. The Lord... is he whom the Father raised from the dead, exalted and placed at his right hand, constituting him judge of the living and the dead."[34] This salvific mediation implies also the unicity of the redemptive sacrifice of Christ, eternal high priest (cf. Heb 6:20; 9:11; 10:12-14).

12. There are also those who propose the hypothesis of an economy of the Holy Spirit with a more universal breadth than that of the Incarnate Word, crucified and risen. This position also is contrary to the Catholic faith, which, on the contrary, considers the salvific incarnation of the Word as a trinitarian event. In the New Testament, the mystery of Jesus, the Incarnate Word, constitutes the place of the Holy Spirit’s presence as well as the principle of the Spirit’s effusion on humanity, not only in messianic times (cf. Acts 2:32-36; Jn 7:39, 20:22; 1 Cor 15:45), but also prior to his coming in history (cf. 1 Cor 10:4; 1 Pet 1:10-12).

The Second Vatican Council has recalled to the consciousness of the Church’s faith this fundamental truth. In presenting the Father’s salvific plan for all humanity, the Council closely links the mystery of Christ from its very beginnings with that of the Spirit.[35] The entire work of building the Church by Jesus Christ the Head, in the course of the centuries, is seen as an action which he does in communion with his Spirit.[36]

Furthermore, the salvific action of Jesus Christ, with and through his Spirit, extends beyond the visible boundaries of the Church to all humanity. Speaking of the paschal mystery, in which Christ even now associates the believer to himself in a living manner in the Spirit and gives him the hope of resurrection, the Council states: “All this holds true not only for Christians but also for all men of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly. For since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery.”[37]

Hence, the connection is clear between the salvific mystery of the Incarnate Word and that of the Spirit, who actualizes the salvific efficacy of the Son made man in the lives of all people, called by God to a single
goal, both those who historically preceded the Word made man, and those who live after his coming in history: the Spirit of the Father, bestowed abundantly by the Son, is the animator of all (cf. Jn 3:34).

Thus, the recent Magisterium of the Church has firmly and clearly recalled the truth of a single divine economy: “The Spirit’s presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions... The Risen Christ ‘is now at work in human hearts through the strength of his Spirit’... Again, it is the Spirit who sows the ‘seeds of the word’ present in various customs and cultures, preparing them for full maturity in Christ.”[38] While recognizing the historical-salvific function of the Spirit in the whole universe and in the entire history of humanity,[39] the Magisterium states: “This is the same Spirit who was at work in the incarnation and in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and who is at work in the Church. He is therefore not an alternative to Christ nor does he fill a sort of void which is sometimes suggested as existing between Christ and the Logos. Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions, serves as a preparation for the Gospel and can only be understood in reference to Christ, the Word who took flesh by the power of the Spirit ‘so that as perfectly human he would save all human beings and sum up all things.’”[40]

In conclusion, the action of the Spirit is not outside or parallel to the action of Christ. There is only one salvific economy of the One and Triune God, realized in the mystery of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, actualized with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, and extended in its salvific value to all humanity and to the entire universe: “No one, therefore, can enter into communion with God except through Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit.”[41]

III. Unicity and universality of the salvific mystery of Jesus Christ

13. The thesis which denies the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ is also put forward. Such a position has no biblical foundation. In fact, the truth of Jesus Christ, Son of God, Lord and only Saviour, who through the event of his incarnation, death and resurrection has brought the history of salvation to fulfillment, and which has in him its
fullness and center, must be firmly believed as a constant element of the Church’s faith.

The New Testament attests to this fact with clarity: “The Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world” (1 Jn 4:14); “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29). In his discourse before the Sanhedrin, Peter, in order to justify the healing of a man who was crippled from birth, which was done in the name of Jesus (cf. Acts 3:1-8), proclaims: “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). St. Paul adds, moreover, that Jesus Christ “is Lord of all,” “judge of the living and the dead,” and thus “whoever believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10: 36,42,43).

Paul, addressing himself to the community of Corinth, writes: “Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth — as in fact there are many gods and many lords — yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (1 Cor 8:5-6). Furthermore, John the Apostle states: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him” (Jn 3:16-17). In the New Testament, the universal salvific will of God is closely connected to the sole mediation of Christ: “[God] desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:4-6).

It was in the awareness of the one universal gift of salvation offered by the Father through Jesus Christ in the Spirit (cf. Eph 1:3-14), that the first Christians encountered the Jewish people, showing them the fulfillment of salvation that went beyond the Law and, in the same awareness, they confronted the pagan world of their time, which aspired to salvation through a plurality of saviours. This inheritance of faith has been recalled recently by the Church’s Magisterium: “The Church believes that Christ, who died and was raised for the sake of all (cf. 2 Cor 5:15) can, through his Spirit, give man the light and the strength to be able to respond to his
highest calling, nor is there any other name under heaven given among
men by which they can be saved (cf. *Acts* 4:12). The Church likewise
believes that the key, the center, and the purpose of the whole of man’s
history is to be found in its Lord and Master.”[42]

14. It must therefore be firmly believed as a truth of Catholic faith that
the universal salvific will of the One and Triune God is offered and
accomplished once for all in the mystery of the incarnation, death, and
resurrection of the Son of God.

Bearing in mind this article of faith, theology today, in its reflection on
the existence of other religious experiences and on their meaning in God’s
salvific plan, is invited to explore if and in what way the historical figures
and positive elements of these religions may fall within the divine plan of
salvation. In this undertaking, theological research has a vast field of work
under the guidance of the Church’s Magisterium. The Second Vatican
Council, in fact, has stated that: “the unique mediation of the Redeemer
does not exclude, but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is
but a participation in this one source.”[43] The content of this participated
mediation should be explored more deeply, but must remain always
consistent with the principle of Christ’s unique mediation: “Although
participated forms of mediation of different kinds and degrees are not
excluded, they acquire meaning and value only from Christ’s own
mediation, and they cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to
his.”[44] Hence, those solutions that propose a salvific action of God
beyond the unique mediation of Christ would be contrary to Christian and
Catholic faith. 15. Not infrequently it is proposed that theology should
avoid the use of terms like “unicity,” “universality,” and “absoluteness,”
which give the impression of excessive emphasis on the significance and
value of the salvific event of Jesus Christ in relation to other religions. In
reality, however, such language is simply being faithful to revelation, since
it represents a development of the sources of the faith themselves. From
the beginning, the community of believers has recognized in Jesus a salvific
value such that he alone, as Son of God made man, crucified and risen, by
the mission received from the Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit,
bestows revelation (cf. *Mt* 11:27) and divine life (cf. *Jn* 1:12; 5:25-26; 17:2)
to all humanity and to every person.
In this sense, one can and must say that Jesus Christ has a significance and a value for the human race and its history, which are unique and singular, proper to him alone, exclusive, universal, and absolute. Jesus is, in fact, the Word of God made man for the salvation of all. In expressing this consciousness of faith, the Second Vatican Council teaches: “The Word of God, through whom all things were made, was made flesh, so that as perfect man he could save all men and sum up all things in himself. The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilization, the center of mankind, the joy of all hearts, and the fulfillment of all aspirations. It is he whom the Father raised from the dead, exalted and placed at his right hand, constituting him judge of the living and the dead.”[45] “It is precisely this uniqueness of Christ which gives him an absolute and universal significance whereby, while belonging to history, he remains history’s center and goal: ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end’ (Rev 22:13).”[46]

IV. Unicity and unity of the Church

16. The Lord Jesus, the only Saviour, did not only establish a simple community of disciples, but constituted the Church as a salvific mystery: he himself is in the Church and the Church is in him (cf. Jn 15:1ff.; Gal 3:28; Eph 4:15-16; Acts 9:5). Therefore, the fullness of Christ’s salvific mystery belongs also to the Church, inseparably united to her Lord. Indeed, Jesus Christ continues his presence and his work of salvation in the Church and by means of the Church (cf. Col 1:24-27),[47] which is his body (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-13, 27; Col 1:18).[48] And thus, just as the head and members of a living body, though not identical, are inseparable, so too Christ and the Church can neither be confused nor separated, and constitute a single “whole Christ.”[49] This same inseparability is also expressed in the New Testament by the analogy of the Church as the Bride of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-29; Rev 21:2,9).[50]

Therefore, in connection with the unicity and universality of the salvific mediation of Jesus Christ, the unicity of the Church founded by him must be firmly believed as a truth of Catholic faith. Just as there is one Christ, so there exists a single body of Christ, a single Bride of Christ: “a single Catholic and apostolic Church.”[51] Furthermore, the promises of the Lord that he would not abandon his Church (cf. Mt 16:18; 28:20) and
that he would guide her by his Spirit (cf. Jn 16:13) mean, according to Catholic faith, that the unicity and the unity of the Church — like everything that belongs to the Church’s integrity — will never be lacking.[52]

The Catholic faithful are required to profess that there is an historical continuity — rooted in the apostolic succession[53] — between the Church founded by Christ and the Catholic Church: “This is the single Church of Christ... which our Saviour, after his resurrection, entrusted to Peter’s pastoral care (cf. Jn 21:17), commissioning him and the other Apostles to extend and rule her (cf. Mt 28:18ff.), erected for all ages as ‘the pillar and mainstay of the truth’ (1 Tim 3:15). This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in [subsistit in] the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him.”[54] With the expression subsistit in, the Second Vatican Council sought to harmonize two doctrinal statements: on the one hand, that the Church of Christ, despite the divisions which exist among Christians, continues to exist fully only in the Catholic Church, and on the other hand, that “outside of her structure, many elements can be found of sanctification and truth,”[55] that is, in those Churches and ecclesial communities which are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church.[56] But with respect to these, it needs to be stated that “they derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.”[57]

17. Therefore, there exists a single Church of Christ, which subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him.[58] The Churches which, while not existing in perfect communion with the Catholic Church, remain united to her by means of the closest bonds, that is, by apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist, are true particular Churches.[59] Therefore, the Church of Christ is present and operative also in these Churches, even though they lack full communion with the Catholic Church, since they do not accept the Catholic doctrine of the Primacy, which, according to the will of God, the Bishop of Rome objectively has and exercises over the entire Church.[60]

On the other hand, the ecclesial communities which have not
preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of
the Eucharistic mystery,\[61\] are not Churches in the proper sense; however,
those who are baptized in these communities are, by Baptism, incorporated
in Christ and thus are in a certain communion, albeit imperfect, with the
Church.\[62\] Baptism in fact tends per se toward the full development of life
in Christ, through the integral profession of faith, the Eucharist, and full
communion in the Church.\[63\]

“The Christian faithful are therefore not permitted to imagine that the
Church of Christ is nothing more than a collection — divided, yet in some
way one — of Churches and ecclesial communities; nor are they free to
hold that today the Church of Christ nowhere really exists, and must be
considered only as a goal which all Churches and ecclesial communities
must strive to reach.”\[64\] In fact, “the elements of this already-given Church
exist, joined together in their fullness in the Catholic Church and, without
this fullness, in the other communities.”\[65\] “Therefore, these separated
Churches and communities as such, though we believe they suffer from
defects, have by no means been deprived of significance and importance in
the mystery of salvation. For the spirit of Christ has not refrained from
using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very
fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.”\[66\]

The lack of unity among Christians is certainly a wound for the
Church; not in the sense that she is deprived of her unity, but “in that it
hinders the complete fulfillment of her universality in history.”\[67\]

V. The Church: Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Christ

18. The mission of the Church is “to proclaim and establish among all
peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is on earth, the seed
and the beginning of that kingdom.”\[68\] On the one hand, the Church is “a
sacrament — that is, a sign and instrument of intimate union with God
and of unity of the entire human race.”\[69\] She is therefore the sign and
instrument of the kingdom; she is called to announce and to establish the
kingdom. On the other hand, the Church is the “people gathered by the
unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”;\[70\] she is therefore “the
kingdom of Christ already present in mystery”\[71\] and constitutes its seed
and beginning. The kingdom of God, in fact, has an eschatological
dimension: it is a reality present in time, but its full realization will arrive only with the completion or fulfillment of history.\[72\]

The meaning of the expressions kingdom of heaven, kingdom of God, and kingdom of Christ in Sacred Scripture and the Fathers of the Church, as well as in the documents of the Magisterium, is not always exactly the same, nor is their relationship to the Church, which is a mystery that cannot be totally contained by a human concept. Therefore, there can be various theological explanations of these terms. However, none of these possible explanations can deny or empty in any way the intimate connection between Christ, the kingdom, and the Church. In fact, the kingdom of God which we know from revelation, “cannot be detached either from Christ or from the Church... If the kingdom is separated from Jesus, it is no longer the kingdom of God which he revealed. The result is a distortion of the meaning of the kingdom, which runs the risk of being transformed into a purely human or ideological goal and a distortion of the identity of Christ, who no longer appears as the Lord to whom everything must one day be subjected (cf. 1 Cor 15:27). Likewise, one may not separate the kingdom from the Church. It is true that the Church is not an end unto herself, since she is ordered toward the kingdom of God, of which she is the seed, sign and instrument. Yet, while remaining distinct from Christ and the kingdom, the Church is indissolubly united to both.”\[73\]

19. To state the inseparable relationship between Christ and the kingdom is not to overlook the fact that the kingdom of God — even if considered in its historical phase — is not identified with the Church in her visible and social reality. In fact, “the action of Christ and the Spirit outside the Church’s visible boundaries” must not be excluded.\[74\] Therefore, one must also bear in mind that “the kingdom is the concern of everyone: individuals, society and the world. Working for the kingdom means acknowledging and promoting God’s activity, which is present in human history and transforms it. Building the kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms. In a word, the kingdom of God is the manifestation and the realization of God’s plan of salvation in all its fullness.”\[75\]

In considering the relationship between the kingdom of God, the
kingdom of Christ, and the Church, it is necessary to avoid one-sided
accentuations, as is the case with those “conceptions which deliberately
emphasize the kingdom and which describe themselves as ‘kingdom
centered.’ They stress the image of a Church which is not concerned about
herself, but which is totally concerned with bearing witness to and serving
the kingdom. It is a ‘Church for others,’ just as Christ is the ‘man for
others’... Together with positive aspects, these conceptions often reveal
negative aspects as well. First, they are silent about Christ: the kingdom of
which they speak is ‘theocentrically’ based, since, according to them, Christ
cannot be understood by those who lack Christian faith, whereas different
peoples, cultures, and religions are capable of finding common ground in
the one divine reality, by whatever name it is called. For the same reason,
they put great stress on the mystery of creation, which is reflected in the
diversity of cultures and beliefs, but they keep silent about the mystery of
redemption. Furthermore, the kingdom, as they understand it, ends up
either leaving very little room for the Church or undervaluing the Church
in reaction to a presumed ‘ecclesiocentrism’ of the past and because they
consider the Church herself only a sign, for that matter a sign not without
ambiguity.”[76] These theses are contrary to Catholic faith because they
deny the unicity of the relationship which Christ and the Church have
with the kingdom of God.

VI. The Church and the other religions in relation to salvation

20. From what has been stated above, some points follow that are
necessary for theological reflection as it explores the relationship of the
Church and the other religions to salvation.

Above all else, it must be firmly believed that “the Church, a pilgrim
now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and
the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church.
He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and baptism (cf. Mk
16:16; Jn 3:5), and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the
Church which men enter through baptism as through a door.”[77] This
doctrine must not be set against the universal salvific will of God (cf. 1 Tim
2:4); “it is necessary to keep these two truths together, namely, the real
possibility of salvation in Christ for all mankind and the necessity of the
Church for this salvation.”[78]
The Church is the “universal sacrament of salvation,”[79] since, united always in a mysterious way to the Saviour Jesus Christ, her Head, and subordinated to him, she has, in God’s plan, an indispensable relationship with the salvation of every human being.[80] For those who are not formally and visibly members of the Church, “salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church, but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ; it is the result of his sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit”;[81] it has a relationship with the Church, which “according to the plan of the Father, has her origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit.”[82]

21. With respect to the way in which the salvific grace of God — which is always given by means of Christ in the Spirit and has a mysterious relationship to the Church — comes to individual non-Christians, the Second Vatican Council limited itself to the statement that God bestows it “in ways known to himself.”[83] Theologians are seeking to understand this question more fully. Their work is to be encouraged, since it is certainly useful for understanding better God’s salvific plan and the ways in which it is accomplished. However, from what has been stated above about the mediation of Jesus Christ and the “unique and special relationship”[84] which the Church has with the kingdom of God among men — which in substance is the universal kingdom of Christ the Saviour — it is clear that it would be contrary to the faith to consider the Church as one way of salvation alongside those constituted by the other religions, seen as complementary to the Church or substantially equivalent to her, even if these are said to be converging with the Church toward the eschatological kingdom of God.

Certainly, the various religious traditions contain and offer religious elements which come from God,[85] and which are part of what “the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures, and religions.”[86] Indeed, some prayers and rituals of the other religions may assume a role of preparation for the Gospel, in that they are occasions or pedagogical helps in which the human heart is prompted to be open to the action of God.[87] One cannot attribute to these, however, a divine origin
or an ex opere operato salvific efficacy, which is proper to the Christian sacraments.\cite{88} Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that other rituals, insofar as they depend on superstitions or other errors (cf. 1 Cor 10:20-21), constitute an obstacle to salvation.\cite{89}

22. With the coming of the Saviour Jesus Christ, God has willed that the Church founded by him be the instrument for the salvation of all humanity (cf. Acts 17:30-31).\cite{90} This truth of faith does not lessen the sincere respect which the Church has for the religions of the world, but at the same time, it rules out, in a radical way, that mentality of indifferentism “characterized by a religious relativism which leads to the belief that ‘one religion is as good as another.’”\cite{91} If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that objectively speaking they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation.\cite{92} However, “all the children of the Church should nevertheless remember that their exalted condition results, not from their own merits, but from the grace of Christ. If they fail to respond in thought, word, and deed to that grace, not only shall they not be saved, but they shall be more severely judged.”\cite{93} One understands then that, following 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 (cf. 2 Cor 5:18-19), men find the fullness of their religious life.”\cite{94}

In inter-religious dialogue as well, the mission \textit{ad gentes} “today as always retains its full force and necessity.”\cite{95} “Indeed, God ‘desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth’ (1 Tim 2:4); that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the promptings of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. But the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth. Because she believes in God’s universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary.”\cite{96} Inter-religious dialogue, therefore, as part of her evangelizing mission, is just one of the actions of the Church in her mission \textit{ad gentes}.\cite{97} Equality, which is a presupposition
of inter-religious dialogue, refers to the equal personal dignity of the parties in dialogue, not to doctrinal content, nor even less to the position of Jesus Christ — who is God himself made man — in relation to the founders of the other religions. Indeed, the Church, guided by charity and respect for freedom,[98] must be primarily committed to proclaiming to all people the truth definitively revealed by the Lord, and to announcing the necessity of conversion to Jesus Christ and of adherence to the Church through Baptism and the other sacraments, in order to participate fully in communion with God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus, the certainty of the universal salvific will of God does not diminish, but rather increases the duty and urgency of the proclamation of salvation and of conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Conclusion**

23. The intention of the present Declaration, in reiterating and clarifying certain truths of the faith, has been to follow the example of the Apostle Paul, who wrote to the faithful of Corinth: “I handed on to you as of first importance what I myself received” (1 Cor 15:3). Faced with certain problematic and even erroneous propositions, theological reflection is called to reconfirm the Church’s faith and to give reasons for her hope in a way that is convincing and effective.

In treating the question of the true religion, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council taught: “We believe that this one true religion continues to exist in the Catholic and Apostolic Church, to which the Lord Jesus entrusted the task of spreading it among all people. Thus, he said to the Apostles: ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you’ (Mt 28: 19-20). Especially in those things that concern God and his Church, all persons are required to seek the truth, and when they come to know it, to embrace it and hold fast to it.”[99]

The revelation of Christ will continue to be “the true lodestar”[100] in history for all humanity: “The truth, which is Christ, imposes itself as an all-embracing authority.”[101] The Christian mystery, in fact, overcomes all barriers of time and space, and accomplishes the unity of the human family:
“From their different locations and traditions all are called in Christ to share in the unity of the family of God’s children... Jesus destroys the walls of division and creates unity in a new and unsurpassed way through our sharing in his mystery. This unity is so deep that the Church can say with Saint Paul: ‘You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are saints and members of the household of God’ (Eph 2:19).”[102]

The Sovereign Pontiff John Paul II, at the Audience of June 16, 2000, granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, with sure knowledge and by his apostolic authority, ratified and confirmed this Declaration, adopted in Plenary Session and ordered its publication.

Rome, from the Offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, August 6, 2000, the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord.

+ Joseph Card. Ratzinger

Prefect

+ Tarcisio Bertone, S.D.B.

Archbishop Emeritus of Vercelli

Secretary


Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Dei Verbum, 2.

Ibid. 4.


Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Dei Verbum, 4.

Ibid. 5.

Ibid.

Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 144.

Ibid. 150.

Ibid., 153.

Ibid., 178.


Cf. ibid. 31-32.

Second Vatican Council, Declaration Nostra Aetate, 2; cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree Ad Gentes, 9, where it speaks of the elements of good present “in the particular customs and cultures of peoples”; Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, 16, where it mentions the elements of good and of truth present among non-Christians, which can be considered a preparation for the reception of the Gospel.


[26] Ibid.


[33] Cf. St. Leo the Great, Letter to the Emperor Leo I Promissse me Memini: DS 318:”..in tantam unitatem ab ipso conceptu Virginis deitate et humanitate conserta, ut nec sine homine divina, nec sine Deo agerentur humana.” Cf. also ibid. DS 317.

[34] Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes, 45; cf. also Council of Trent, Decretum de peccato originali, 3: DS 1513.


[36] Cf. ibid. 7; cf. St. Irenaeus, who wrote that it is in the Church “that communion with Christ has been deposited, that is to say: the Holy Spirit” (Adversus Haereses III, 24, 1: SC 211, 472).

[37] Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes, 22.

[38] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Redemptoris Missio, 28. For the “seeds of the Word” cf. also St. Justin Martyr, Second Apology 8, 1-2; 10, 1-3; 13, 3-6: ed. E.J. Goodspeed, 84; 85; 88-89.

[40] Ibid. 29.

[41] Ibid. 5.

[42] Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes, 10. Cf. St. Augustine, who wrote that Christ is the way, which “has never been lacking to mankind... and apart from this way no one has been set free, no one is being set free, no one will be set free,” De Civitate Dei 10, 32, 2: CCSL 47, 312.


[45] Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes, 45. The necessary and absolute singularity of Christ in human history is well expressed by St. Irenaeus in contemplating the preeminence of Jesus as firstborn Son: “In the heavens, as firstborn of the Father’s counsel, the perfect Word governs and legislates all things; on the earth, as firstborn of the Virgin, a man just and holy, reverencing God and pleasing to God, good and perfect in every way, he saves from hell all those who follow him since he is the firstborn from the dead and Author of the life of God” (Demonstratio apostolica, 39: SC 406, 138).


[48] Cf. ibid. 7.

[49] Cf. St. Augustine, Enarratio in Psalmo, Ps. 90, Sermo 2,1: CCSL 39, 1266; St. Gregory the Great, Moralia in Iob, Praefatio, 6, 14: PL 75, 525; St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, III, q. 48, a. 2 ad 1.


[56] The interpretation of those who would derive from the formula subsistit in the thesis that the one Church of Christ could subsist also in non-Catholic Churches and ecclesial communities is therefore contrary to the authentic meaning of Lumen Gentium. “The Council instead chose the word subsistit precisely to clarify that there exists only one ‘subsistence’ of the true Church, while outside her visible structure there only exist elementa Ecclesiae, which — being elements of that same Church — tend and lead toward the Catholic Church” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Notification on the Book “Church: Charism and Power” by Father Leonardo Boff: AAS 77 [1985], 756-762).

[57] Second Vatican Council, Decree Unitatis Redintegratio, 3.


[62] Cf. ibid. 3.
[63] Cf. ibid. 22.

[64] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration Mysterium Ecclesiae, 1.


[69] Ibid. 1.


[72] Cf. ibid. 9; cf. also the prayer addressed to God found in the Didache 9,4: SC 248, 176: “May the Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom” and ibid. 10, 5: SC 248, 180: “Remember, Lord, your Church... and, made holy, gather her together from the four winds into your kingdom which you have prepared for her.”

[73] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Redemptoris Missio, 18; cf. Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Asia, 17: L'Osservatore Romano (November 7, 1999). The kingdom is so inseparable from Christ that, in a certain sense, it is identified with him (cf. Origen, In Mt. Hom., 14, 7: PG 13, 1197; Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem, IV, 33,8: CCSL 1, 634.


[75] Ibid. 15.

[76] Ibid. 17.

[77] Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, 14; cf. Decree Ad Gentes, 7; Decree Unitatis Redintegratio, 3.


[85] These are the seeds of the divine Word (semina Verbi), which the Church recognizes with joy and respect (cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree Ad gentes, 11; Declaration Nostra Aetate, 2).


[87] Cf. ibid.; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 843.

[88] Cf. Council of Trent, Decretum de sacramentis, can. 8, de sacramentis in genere: DS 1608.


Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts: Declaration on not admitting to communion divorced faithful who have remarried (July 6, 2000)

The Code of Canon Law establishes that “Those upon whom the penalty of excommunication or interdict has been imposed or declared, and others who obstinately persist in manifest grave sin, are not to be admitted to Holy Communion” (can. 915). In recent years some authors have sustained, using a variety of arguments, that this canon would not be applicable to faithful who are divorced and remarried. It is acknowledged that paragraph 84 of the Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio, issued in 1981, had reiterated that prohibition in unequivocal terms and that it has been expressly reaffirmed many times, especially in paragraph 1650 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published in 1992, and in the Letter written in 1994 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Annus internationalis Familiae. That notwithstanding, the aforementioned authors offer various interpretations of the above-cited canon that exclude from its application the situation of those who are divorced and remarried. For example, since the text speaks of “grave sin,” it would be necessary to
establish the presence of all the conditions required for the existence of mortal sin, including those which are subjective, necessitating a judgment of a type that a minister of Communion could not make *ab externo*; moreover, given that the text speaks of those who “obstinately” persist in that sin, it would be necessary to verify an attitude of defiance on the part of an individual who had received a legitimate warning from the Pastor.

Given this alleged contrast between the discipline of the 1983 Code and the constant teachings of the Church in this area, this Pontifical Council, in agreement with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and with the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments declares the following:

1. The prohibition found in the cited canon, by its nature, is derived from divine law and transcends the domain of positive ecclesiastical laws: the latter cannot introduce legislative changes which would oppose the doctrine of the Church. The scriptural text on which the ecclesial tradition has always relied is that of St. Paul: “This means that whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily sins against the body and blood of the Lord. A man should examine himself first only then should he eat of the bread and drink of the cup. He who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks a judgment on himself.”

This text concerns in the first place the individual faithful and their moral conscience, a reality that is expressed as well by the Code in can. 916. But the unworthiness that comes from being in a state of sin also poses a serious juridical problem in the Church: indeed the canon of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches that is parallel to can. 915 CIC of the Latin Church makes reference to the term “unworthy”: “Those who are publicly unworthy are forbidden from receiving the Divine Eucharist” (can. 712). In effect, the reception of the Body of Christ when one is publicly unworthy constitutes an objective harm to the ecclesial communion: it is a behavior that affects the rights of the Church and of all the faithful to live in accord with the exigencies of that communion. In the concrete case of the admission to Holy Communion of faithful who are divorced and remarried, the scandal, understood as an action that prompts others towards wrongdoing, affects at the same time both the sacrament of the Eucharist and the indissolubility of marriage. That scandal exists even
if such behavior, unfortunately, no longer arouses surprise: in fact it is precisely with respect to the deformation of the conscience that it becomes more necessary for Pastors to act, with as much patience as firmness, as a protection to the sanctity of the Sacraments and a defense of Christian morality, and for the correct formation of the faithful.

2. Any interpretation of can. 915 that would set itself against the canon’s substantial content, as declared uninterruptedly by the Magisterium and by the discipline of the Church throughout the centuries, is clearly misleading. One cannot confuse respect for the wording of the law (cf. can. 17) with the improper use of the very same wording as an instrument for relativizing the precepts or emptying them of their substance.

The phrase “and others who obstinately persist in manifest grave sin” is clear and must be understood in a manner that does not distort its sense so as to render the norm inapplicable. The three required conditions are:

a) grave sin, understood objectively, being that the minister of Communion would not be able to judge from subjective imputability;

b) obstinate persistence, which means the existence of an objective situation of sin that endures in time and which the will of the individual member of the faithful does not bring to an end, no other requirements (attitude of defiance, prior warning, etc.) being necessary to establish the fundamental gravity of the situation in the Church.

c) the manifest character of the situation of grave habitual sin.

Those faithful who are divorced and remarried would not be considered to be within the situation of serious habitual sin who would not be able, for serious motives —such as, for example, the upbringing of the children—“to satisfy the obligation of separation, assuming the task of living in full continence, that is, abstaining from the acts proper to spouses” (Familiaris Consortio, n. 84), and who on the basis of that intention have received the sacrament of Penance. Given that the fact that these faithful are not living more uxorio is per se occult, while their condition as persons who are divorced and remarried is per se manifest, they will be able to receive Eucharistic Communion only remoto scandalo.
3. Naturally, pastoral prudence would strongly suggest the avoidance of instances of public denial of Holy Communion. Pastors must strive to explain to the concerned faithful the true ecclesial sense of the norm, in such a way that they would be able to understand it or at least respect it. In those situations, however, in which these precautionary measures have not had their effect or in which they were not possible, the minister of Communion must refuse to distribute it to those who are publicly unworthy. They are to do this with extreme charity, and are to look for the opportune moment to explain the reasons that required the refusal. They must, however, do this with firmness, conscious of the value that such signs of strength have for the good of the Church and of souls.

The discernment of cases in which the faithful who find themselves in the described condition are to be excluded from Eucharistic Communion is the responsibility of the Priest who is responsible for the community. They are to give precise instructions to the deacon or to any extraordinary minister regarding the mode of acting in concrete situations.

4. Bearing in mind the nature of the above-cited norm (cf. n. 1), no ecclesiastical authority may dispense the minister of Holy Communion from this obligation in any case, nor may he emanate directives that contradict it.

5. The Church reaffirms her maternal solicitude for the faithful who find themselves in this or other analogous situations that impede them from being admitted to the Eucharistic table. What is presented in this Declaration is not in contradiction with the great desire to encourage the participation of these children in the life of the Church, in the many forms compatible with their situation that are already possible for them. Moreover, the obligation of reiterating this impossibility of admission to the Eucharist is required for genuine pastoral care and for an authentic concern for the well-being of these faithful and of the whole Church, being that it indicates the conditions necessary for the fullness of that conversion to which all are always invited by the Lord, particularly during this Holy Year of the Great Jubilee.

Vatican City, June 24, 2000. Solemnity of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist
+ Julián Herranz

*Titular Archbishop of Vertara*

*President*

+ Bruno Bertagna

*Titular Bishop of Drivasto*

*Secretary*

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**Review of Other Documents**

A review of other documents

John Paul II: *Apostolic letter in the form of a “Motu proprio” on the occasion of the proclamation of Saint Thomas More as Patron of Politicians and Statesmen* (October 3, 2000)

John Paul II: *Message for the World Congress on Peace* (December 8, 2000)

Pontifical Council for the Family: *The Family, Marriage, and “De Facto Unions”* (July 26, 2000)
PRELATE

- New Circumscriptions
- Decrees
- Activities of the Prelate
- Homilies
- Other Presentations
- Addresses
- Articles and Interviews
New Circumscriptions

Establishment of new circumscriptions

On December 28, 2000, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, established the Delegation of Rosario, Argentina.

Decrees

Decree of appointment of the Regional Vicar of India

Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRIA
Dei et Apostolicæ Sedis gratia Prælatus
Sanctæ Crucis et Operis Dei
D E C R E T U M

Præsentibus his litteris te, Rev.dum D.num D.rem Ioseph Dominicum Gabiola Torco, ad quinquennium nominamus atque constituimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Delegatione Indiæ, cum omnibus et singulis iuribus et obligationibus huic officio adnexis.

Dum enixas preces effundimus ut Deus tibi in huiusmodi munere ad suam gloriam et Ecclesiae bonum propitius adsit, Nostram benedictionem in Domino tibi libentissime impertimus.

Datum Romæ, ex Aedibus Curiae Prælatitiae, die 30 mense novembri, anno 2000.

+ Xaverius Echevarría
Thomas G. Bohlin
Decree of appointment of the Regional Vicar of Argentina

Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRIA
Dei et Apostolicæ Sedis gratia Prælatus
Sanctæ Crucis et Operis Dei

DECRETUM

Præsentibus his litteris te, Rev.dum D.num D.rem Patricium Carolum Olmos Newton, ad quinquennium nominamus atque constituimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Regione Argentinæ, cum omnibus et singulis iuribus et obligationibus huic officio adnexis.

Dum enixas preces effundimus ut Deus tibi in huiusmodi munere ad suam gloriam et Ecclesiae bonum propitius adsit, Nostram benedictionem in Domino tibi libentissime impertimus.

Datum Romæ, ex Aedibus Curiæ Prælatitiæ, die 20 mense septembri, anno 2000.

+ Xaverius Echevarría
Thomas G. Bohlin

Curiæ Prælatitiæ Cancellarius
Reg. Gen. R. lib. VI pag. 1

* Cf. decrees of nomination on page 224ff.
Decree of appointment of the Regional Vicar of Austria

Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRIA
Dei et Apostolicae Sedis gratia Prælatus
Sanctæ Crucis et Operis Dei

D E C R E T U M

Præsentibus his litteris te, Rev.dum D.num D.rem Martinum Schlag, ad quinquennium nominamus atque constituimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Quasi-Regione Austriae, cum omnibus et singulis iuribus et obligationibus huic officio adnexis.

Dum enixas preces effundimus ut Deus tibi in huiusmodi munere ad suam gloriam et Ecclesiae bonum propitius adsit, Nostram benedictionem in Domino tibi libentissime impertimus.

Datum Romæ, ex Aedibus Curiae Prælatitiae, die 31 mense octobri, anno 2000.

+ Xaverius Echevarría
Thomas G. Bohlin
Curiae Prælatitiae Cancellarius
Reg. Gen. R. lib. VI pag. 2

Activities of the Prelate

Participation in the Jubilee of Families
The International Theological Congress on the Family was one of the central acts of the Third World Meeting of the Holy Father with families, which took place from October 11 to 13 in preparation for the Jubilee of Families held on October 14 and 15 in St. Peter’s Square.

The Congress had as its title “Children, Springtime of the Family and of Society.” Fifty experts from around the world took part and addressed a number of key topics: children as a gift to the family and to humanity; their rights; present-day dangers; the culture of life; education for love; maternity; evangelization.

Bishop Echevarría intervened in the Congress on Friday the 13th in the evening. In his talk[3] he spoke about the sanctification of family life and explained specifically the educational role of the “Institutes for the Family,” promoted by some of the faithful and cooperators of the Opus Dei Prelature. He pointed out that political initiatives, informational efforts, and cultural efforts are undoubtedly important. “But, I think,” he added, “that the field in which the future of the family is particularly at stake is education. To truly defend the family, we must, above all, educate it.”


Pastoral Trips

Bishop Echevarria arrived in Pamplona on Friday, June 30. On Sunday, July 2, he celebrated Holy Mass in the Goroabe Student Residence at the University of Navarre. In his homily he encouraged his listeners to renew their spirit of conversion and to meditate on the reality that Christ shed all of his blood for each one of us.

On the following day, the Prelate visited various patients in the University Hospital. On his return he visited and blessed the new seat of the Miravalles student residence. In the evening he received various families and held a meeting with students of the Aralar Interregional Center.
On Tuesday, July 4, after celebrating Mass, Bishop Echevarría left for the Shrine of Torreciudad in Huesca, to confer the diaconate on 21 faithful of the Prelature from eight countries. He remained there for six days, and dedicated many hours to the future deacons, between talks, classes and other gatherings. He also visited a photographic exposition commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Shrine.

On July 7, coinciding with the anniversary of Torreciudad, the ordination ceremony took place. In his homily, the Prelate manifested his “thankfulness to God the Father, rich in mercy, because in the course of 25 years he has poured out his pardon abundantly in this Shrine, enabling a multitude of men and women to experience the joy of returning to God.” In the evening he met with the families of the new deacons.

On the next morning, he met with young people who were working on the restoration and upkeep of the surrounding area, brought there through centers of Opus Dei in various countries. He also met with the members of the governing board of the Miraflores Student Residence, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Saragossa residence. He also met with the people who work at the Shrine of Torreciudad on a permanent basis.

On the evening of the 8th he attended a recital of the Donostiarra choral group on the occasion of the Shrine’s 25th anniversary, and he greeted the various officials who had come for the celebration.

On Sunday, July 9, he left for Fombuena, in the province of Saragossa. He prayed at the parish church where Blessed Josemaria had officiated during Holy Week of 1927. From there he went on to Saragossa where he stopped to pray at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar.

In August the Prelate of Opus Dei visited the Republic of Argentina. The principal purpose of this trip was to preside at a formational conference for members of the Regional Councils of the Prelature of various countries, which took place at the Conference Center of “La Chacra,” some twenty miles from the Argentine capital. This was where Blessed Josemaria had stayed in 1974.
While there he took advantage of the opportunity to become more directly acquainted with some of the apostolic initiatives of faithful of Opus Dei in Buenos Aires, and to meet with different groups of faithful of the Prelature. This included a visit to the Madero Institute, a center for the professional formation of workers and technicians. Since 1999, a high school has also formed part of this center.

In the gatherings that he held during these weeks, Bishop Echevarría recalled the audience that he had with the Holy Father before leaving Rome, in which the Pope told him that he “sent his blessing for all of the apostolic works and for each of the persons that he would see.”

The Prelate also visited the campus of Austral University in the community of Pilar, some thirty miles from Buenos Aires. There he had a meeting with the personnel of the University Hospital, which was recently inaugurated, and with the Institute of Advanced Business Studies.

On September 12, Bishop Echevarría traveled to the United States. As soon as he reached New York he went to “Murray Hill Place,” the new regional headquarters of the Opus Dei Prelature in the United States, located in Manhattan.

During his four day stay, he met with various groups of faithful of Opus Dei and persons participating in the formational means given in various cities on the East Coast. Invited by Cardinal Hickey, Bishop Echevarría took part in the blessing of the chapel of the “Catholic Information Center” of the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., which is dedicated to Blessed Josemaría. At the Mass, together with Cardinal Hickey, the concelebrants were Bishop Echevarría, Bishop Loverde of Arlington, Auxiliary Bishop Lori of Washington, and Msgr. Ocariz, Vicar General of Opus Dei.[4]

The operation of the Catholic Information Center was entrusted to priests of the Opus Dei Prelature in 1992 by Cardinal Hickey. The chapel has seating for about one hundred people. Holy Mass is celebrated daily and the sacrament of confession is available for those desiring it.
In Washington, the Prelate visited The Heights School, a school established by faithful of the Prelature in Potomac, Maryland. There he spoke with those involved in running the school, emphasizing the importance of charity as the foundation of all educational efforts and insisting on the habitual practice of fraternal correction as an integral part of that charity. He also visited the Oakcrest School, a school for girls in northern Virginia, at its new campus in the suburban community of McLean.


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**Participation in the Jubilee of university professors**

From September 3 to 10 the World Meeting of University Professors was convoked under the theme “The university for a new humanism.” The program of the meeting included 59 international congresses which took place principally in Italy, the Holy Land and Lebanon, and which concluded in Rome on September 10 with a solemn Eucharistic concelebration in St. Peter’s Square presided over by Pope John Paul II.

Bishops from various countries directed catechetical sessions on the themes of the congresses. The Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, was invited to the catechesis on the 7th, within the framework of the congress on “The Humanization of Care in the Age of Advanced Technology” organized by the Campus Bio-Medico University of Rome, together with other European universities.

In his intervention, Bishop Echevarría referred to the work of the university professor as a continuous service to truth and to the person. “The university was born in the heart of the Christian tradition... to promote the search for truth,” the Prelate of Opus Dei pointed out, and its fruits “have forged our civilization with its light and shadows.” He stressed the crucial role of professors in the formation of the young generations and encouraged them not to be mere “dispensers of information, but true
“The teacher “not only transmits knowledge,” the Prelate noted, “but molds mature personalities, guides them towards the fullness of truth, leads them to the threshold of the mystery of Christ, before which each person freely makes his or her own decision.”[2]

[2] See the full intervention on page 245.

Establishment of new Centers of the Prelature

The Vicars of the Prelate have established new centers of the Prelature in the following places:

Brescia, (Italy, two centers), Cartagena (Colombia, two centers), Las Piñas City (Philippines), Leon (Mexico), Madrid (Spain, two centers), Mexico City, Queretaro (Mexico), Seville (Spain), Taipei (Taiwan), Tucuman (Argentina, two centers), Valencia (Spain), and Vienna (Austria).

Priestly ordinations

Bishop Echevarría conferred priestly ordination on 21 deacons of the Opus Dei Prelature on the evening of September 9 in the Roman Basilica of St. Eugene. The previous Sunday he had conferred it on three other deacons of the Prelature, in the Basilica of St. Michael in Madrid. The new priests are from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Spain, France, Peru, Portugal and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Bishop Echevarria recalled in his homily on September 9,[1] that the Trinitarian and Eucharistic character of the Jubilee Year was “reflected in this celebration” since the “ministerial priesthood is one of the greatest gifts of the Blessed Trinity to mankind..., granted to the Church when Jesus instituted the Eucharist.”
The Prelate asked for a heart like that of Christ’s for the new priests, so that “the awareness of their personal fragility will not separate them from confident dedication to their ministry.” And he asked everyone to pray to the Blessed Trinity for many vocations to the priesthood in the Church.

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Homilies

Rome -- September 9, 2000

At the priestly ordination of deacons of the Prelature, in the Basilica of St. Eugene

Dear brothers and sisters; most dearly beloved deacons:

1. “What shall I render to the Lord for all his bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.”[1]

Our thanksgiving rises to heaven for the gift of these new ministers of Christ, on whom I will soon confer priestly ordination. But let it also rise up for all the graces showered down upon the Church during this Holy Year. The Jubilee of the Incarnation has renewed among the People of God their awareness of the certainty that earthly life is a pilgrimage to the Father’s house, guided by Christ and illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Strengthening the living and effective conviction of the Trinitarian meaning of all Christian life surely represents one of the biggest benefits of this Holy Year. May this central truth of our faith reach the most hidden corner of our being, shaping all our thoughts, words and deeds!
The Holy Father Pope John Paul II desired for this Jubilee year a distinctive feature that would be both Trinitarian and Eucharistic. Those features are evoked in this celebration, since “the mystery of the priesthood begins in the Trinity and, at the same time, is an offshoot of the Incarnation. Becoming man, the only-begotten and eternal Son of the Father is born of a woman, enters into creation and thus becomes priest, the only eternal priest.”[2] May these words of the Pope serve as a backdrop to our reflections today on the priesthood as both gift and mystery.

2. “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me.”[3] Jesus Christ applied to himself these words of the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth.[4] Let them serve as a key to understand aright the life and mission of the Church and of all Christians. The Holy Spirit always accompanied Christ in his earthly mission. He overshadowed the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation, as the Word took on flesh in her womb. He visibly came down on Jesus in the Jordan. He stirred him to preach God’s kingdom throughout Palestine. He helped Christ to perform the miracles that confirmed his divine nature. Finally, he sustained Jesus as he offered himself as a loving holocaust on the altar of the cross for the world’s salvation, and he welcomed to the Father’s glory Christ’s exaltation into heaven. The divine Paraclete, as Christ promised to the apostles, visibly descended on the Church at Pentecost. Since then, he is continually poured out on Christians, especially at baptism and confirmation, making us sharers in Christ’s priesthood and worthy to offer ourselves as a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.[5]

In just a moment I will place my hands on the head of the deacons and recite in the name of the Church the prayer of consecration. Then the Spirit will come upon them in a new way: he will anoint them with his unction and impress on their souls an indelible mark. This character allows them to preach God’s Word with authority, to sanctify mankind with the sacraments—penance and the Eucharist above all—and thus lead them to life eternal.

The Paraclete’s presence and action are indispensable to these new priests to fulfill the mission the Church today entrusts to them. Therefore we invoke him with faith: Holy Spirit, subsistent Love of the Father and the Son, assist these new servants of yours with your grace, fill their hearts
with your gifts and make them docile to your inspirations. You are the “fruit of the cross—as a result of our seeking only his glory and renouncing ourselves completely.”[6] Make them Christ’s ministers who gladly spend their lives in glorifying the Father and serving souls, especially those most directly entrusted to their pastoral care.

3. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ’s mystical Body is formed and articulated into many members—all necessary to carry out the mission entrusted by the Lord to his Church. Indeed, “as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ.... Having gifts that differ.”[7]

The ministerial priesthood is one of the Holy Trinity’s greatest gifts to mankind. It was entrusted in the cenacle to the Church when Jesus Christ instituted the Eucharist, thereby sacramentally anticipating his redemptive death. It is truly distinct from the common priesthood of all the faithful. Yet it is ordered to it in aiming at building up Christ’s mystical body in charity. By means of the ministerial priesthood, the Jesus Christ—invisible present and operative in the Church—makes himself visible amid the Christian community. Before I confer on the deacons this ineffable gift, I invite you to turn to God in fervent prayer.

O Christ, you who surrendered yourself to us in the cenacle and on Calvary, look kindly down upon these sons of yours about to receive the ministerial priesthood. Make them resemble you by power of the Holy Spirit, so that they may be, as Blessed Josemaría desired, “priests one hundred percent,” ministers of your grace at all times and circumstances. And since you have called us friends,[8] grant them the joy of always experiencing your closeness. When they sacramentally renew the divine sacrifice of the cross, may they identify themselves fully with you. May their union with you transform all the day’s moments, so that men and women always see in them your most loving face. Like you, the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep,[9] may they dedicate themselves fully to their ministry, carrying out the pastoral program that Blessed Josemaría established for his sons. Let them “constantly study theology; give spiritual guidance to very many souls, hear many confessions, preach tirelessly and pray a great deal. Their heart must always be focused on the Tabernacle”[10] Give them, Lord, a heart like unto yours,
able truly to pity human wretchedness. With your help, may their awareness of personal weaknesses not diminish trusting dedication to their ministry. Rather let it lead them to seek your support with complete faithfulness to their freely assumed commitments.

4. “Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.”[11] Priesthood comes to us from God the Father. He it is who has chosen these sons of his, calling them to a special participation in his fatherhood. It is the priest’s task to stir up faith by preaching, to engender the faithful in Christ by baptism, to strengthen them by confirmation, to feed their divine life with the Eucharist and to restore it in the sacrament of penance, when destroyed or hindered by sin. The priest accompanies us along our earthly journey to eternity.

The Church rejoices over priestly vocations. Is it not the joy displayed on all of our faces a sign of supernatural rejoicing? To you, parents, siblings, relatives and friends, goes out my most affectionate greeting and wishes. The priest’s mission is essential for the life of both the Church and the world. That’s why it’s a pleasant duty to pray for God’s ministers: first, for the Holy Father and his collaborators, especially for the Cardinal Vicar of Rome; for all the bishops, for all priests and religious, for the holy People of God. I trust that in your prayer you also remember me and my intentions. Let us petition the Most Blessed Trinity that there arise in the Church many vocations, especially many who answer the call to the priesthood. We ask for this, making our own the Pope’s prayer on the golden anniversary of his priesthood: “O Lord of time and history, you have placed us on the threshold of the third Christian millennium to witness to the salvation wrought by you in favor of all mankind. We, the Church pro-claiming your glory, implore you that we never be wanting in holy priests to serve the Good News; may the hymn Veni, Creator Spiritus resound in every cathedral and in every corner of the world. Come, Creating Spirit! Come to raise up new generations of young men, ready to work in the Lord’s vineyard, to spread God’s kingdom to the very ends of the earth.

“And you, Mary, Christ’s Mother, who have welcomed us as favorite children to join the apostle John next to the cross, keep watch over our vocation.”[12] Amen.
Rome -- October 9, 2000

At the Mass inaugurating the academic year of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

*Emitte Spiritum tuum et creabuntur et renovabis faciem terrae.* [1] The words of the Psalm give voice to our prayer, to the intimate longing for conversion and salvation which fills every day of this Jubilee Year with meaning. On the threshold of a new millennium, united to the Vicar of Christ and to all of our brothers and sisters in the faith, we beg the Lord of history to renew this world of ours, and to grant us a firmer faith and a more lively love.

*Emitte Spiritum tuum.* The Paraclete is the One who will give us these graces. It is not the work of our hands that will transform this world but
God’s gift: the frequently mysterious but always fruitful solicitude of his Love for humanity. Nevertheless, our cooperation is also necessary, our ‘yes’ to the divine invitation. *Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*[2] Our task consists in watching, in being always ready to open the door of our soul to Christ who knocks, letting ourselves be guided by the Spirit who breathes within us. Only if each of us responds personally to divine grace, will the world be changed. In order for the new millennium to possess a deeply Christian character, a determined resolution of conversion is needed on the part of each Christian, of each one of us.

From the very first day of the Holy Year, we have been imploring our Lord to grant us the grace of conversion: a real conversion reflected in our daily actions. The goal to which we aspire, and which we will attain if we are humble, is expressed in the words of St. Paul: *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*[3]

Leaving aside for now other aspects of the process of conversion, I would like to pause to look at its specifically intellectual dimension. In every salvific transformation that is produced in the life of man, the will and affectivity intervene in a direct way; but in its origin we always find an act of faith, a more lively awareness of the mystery of God’s love.

Intellectual conversion is a fatiguing task, more arduous than the conversion of the heart. It is a thirst for divine light which commits a person to reshape his own ideas, his own judgments, his criteria for acting and evaluating. This search must be undertaken with humility, since it requires many small but significant corrections in one’s own way of thinking. And this is arduous, since there is nothing to which we are so attached as to our own ideas.

*Emitte Spiritum tuum et creabuntur et renovabis faciem terrae.* We should pray often for this, since only with the help of the Spirit of Truth will our intellect conform itself fully to Christ, our words announce him faithfully, and our actions reveal Him visibly to others.

*Mentes tuorum visita, imple superna gratia, quae tu creasti pectora.* In the words from the liturgical hymn, we ask the Paraclete to enlighten our mind and visit our heart, for only in this way will we welcome in ourselves the
light of Christ and open the door of our soul to the truth he reveals to us: the truth about ourselves, about the meaning of life, about the goal for which we should strive, and about our own fragility. The truth above all about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit who proceeds from both.

The Paraclete wants to lead us to the fullness of the Truth, to a profound understanding of all that Jesus did and said. This fullness, attained by means of a loving knowledge of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, should be the goal of all our efforts, including our intellectual endeavors. Day by day we have to build up a true unity of life between academic research and the search for sanctity. Science should be put at the service of charity. If this unity is weakened and breaks, science ends up serving pride and vanity, as St. Paul taught the Corinthians.4

Here we have, therefore, a very specific dimension of intellectual conversion: orienting the activity of one’s mind, each of its movements, to knowing God, One and Triune, so that the desire to live in intimacy with God grows and love for the Three Divine Persons is enkindled in one’s soul. Using an expression that John Paul II likes to use, we could say that study should “concentrate thematically on the mystery of God, One and Triune.”5 The Holy Year has a decidedly Trinitarian character, for the entire Trinity, in Christ, comes to meet man in history.

I urge you, during these next few months, to discover personally what Blessed Josemaria spoke about in one of his homilies: “Our heart,” he wrote, “now needs to distinguish and adore each one of the divine Persons. The soul is, as it were, making a discovery in the supernatural life, like a little child opening his eyes to the world about him. The soul spends time lovingly with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and readily submits to the work of the life-giving Paraclete.”6 We have to deepen our intimacy with the three divine Persons if we want to help others travel the path that leads to sanctity.

The Holy Father wanted to dedicate the Jubilee Year in a very special way to the adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. It is precisely this adoration that offers us the most direct path to approach the Trinity. Let us listen once again to Blessed Josemaria: “The Three Divine Persons,” he said in a Holy Thursday homily, “are present in the sacrifice of the altar. By
the will of the Father, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, the Son offers himself in a redemptive sacrifice. The Mass is, I insist, an action of God, of the Trinity. It is not a merely human event. The priest who celebrates fulfills the desire of our Lord, lending his body and his voice to the divine action. He acts, not in his own name, but in persona et in nomine Christi: in the Person of Christ and in his name.”[7]

How much spiritual vigilance we need in our participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice, how much faith, hope and charity, in order not to be led astray by the merely exterior appearances, but instead to perceive, each time, the great and amazing mystery being fulfilled before our eyes! “As you attend Mass, you will learn to deepen your friendship with each one of the three divine Persons...Be hungry to receive our Lord in communion, although you may be cold inside, although your emotions may not correspond to your desires. Receive communion with faith, with hope, with burning charity.”[8] I urge you to truly strive each day to participate in, or to celebrate, Holy Mass with these dispositions.

The Church reminds us that to share in the divine life of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, there is no better path than the one chosen by the Trinity for coming to us: Mary, the chosen Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Word Incarnate, Spouse and Temple of the Paraclete. Through her, the woman of silence, given to listening — as the Holy Father calls her in his Bull Incarnationis Mysterium (no. 14) — model of faith and of pilgrimage in faith, we will more easily reach God, One and Triune. For holy Mary never ceases to help her children on this path to the Trinity that is our life.

Rome -- October 26, 2000

At the Mass inaugurating the academic year of the Campus Bio-Medico University

My dear sisters and brothers:

1. Just recently at the Jubilee of Universities, the Pope, in the name of Christ the Redeemer of man, exhorted us to give witness in the academic world to our faith “with energetic thought and a consistent life.” Faith is the work of the Holy Spirit and of grace. In this Mass inaugurating a new year of activity at the Campus Bio-Medico University, I unite myself to all of you, praying for the gift of a stronger faith that is more deeply rooted in our intellect and heart, a faith that will allow us to act, in all circumstances, guided by the supernatural vision of sons and daughters of God.

Our first reading (cf. Acts 2:1-11) has once more shown us the extraordinary moment when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles gathered in prayer in the Cenacle together with Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Their uncertainty and fear disappeared as soon as the fire of God’s love enlightened their intellects and enkindled a new zeal in their wills. Thus began the great epic of evangelization, which will last until the end of time.

In the Bible, fire often symbolizes God’s love: “For the Lord your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God.”[1] The burning love of God for mankind reaches its most elevated expression in the incarnation of the eternal Son of the Father in the virginal womb of Mary of Nazareth. Jesus described his own mission with these words that continue to challenge us “I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!”[2]

An uncontainable longing to transmit this divine fire inspired every step of Christ on earth and led him to give his life for love of mankind. The disciples from Emmaus asked one another after their journey alongside Him: “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?”[3]
I have mentioned the fact that it was in the Cenacle at Jerusalem, twenty centuries ago, that the Church’s mission in the world began. Now it is our turn to continue it as Christians united to the Pope and to the bishops. What are we praying for when we ask the Holy Spirit to enkindle our hearts? What does this mean for us, as disciples of Christ on the threshold of a new millennium? What characteristics must this witness take on for those who form part of the university world? These are questions that I invite you to ask yourselves in the presence of God, ready to accept whole-heartedly the answer that our Lord wants to suggest to you.

2. Allow me to develop these considerations in connection with one of the consequences of charity and justice (among the many that we could choose), which our day and age seems to have special need of: harmony. In this regard, I would also like to ask each of you to intensify your prayer, and the offering of your daily work, for peace in the world, and especially, in the land of Jesus, the Holy Land.

The university was born with the vocation of being a meeting place, a site where knowledge is shared and transmitted in disinterested collaboration. It is a school of fellowship and respect for others. This entails thousands of practical aspects, including teamwork, the exchange of data and information, and reciprocal assistance among all of the members of the academic community and with other institutions. The university thus becomes a leaven of peace and progress in society.

For Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, the cross, in addition to being the instrument for the salvation of mankind, also represents the “plus” sign, a symbol of union. Men tend at times to foster the division sign, to create barriers, to divide into rival groups. They foolishly seek to justify discord, lack of charity, a rejection of the spirit of service, under the pretext of a presumed justice. It is true that justice means giving to each one his due. But, as Blessed Josemaría Escrivá taught, this is not enough. We are obliged to give to each of our fellow men and women more than what is demanded by strict justice (without, of course, injuring the rights of others), “because each single soul is a masterpiece of God’s making.”[4] Let us ask the Paraclete to teach us the path of true charity. Love that is limited to feelings is immature. Sincere love is expressed with deeds. “The best way
of living charity lies in generously outdoing the demands made on us by justice.”[5] This charity usually passes unnoticed, but it is always extraordinarily fruitful both in heaven and on earth.

An ancient pagan author wrote: *Concordia, parvae res crescent; discordia maximee dilabuntur*.[6] (When there is harmony, little things grow greater; but when there is a lack of harmony even the greatest things fall to ruins). Our university, like all human realities, has been born small and is growing gradually. One could say that it is living a marvelous adventure. For you, these are foundational years, comparable to those of childhood and early youth for a human being. These are the years when character is forged and the permanent characteristics that define the deepest identity of an individual are molded. You are taking part in an inspiring enterprise. It is particularly important that you know how to maintain this “harmony,” this unity so wisely desired by the ancient philosopher: unity among the components that make up the university, with each other and with the authorities that govern the various sections, called to exercise their commitment to serving the good of the whole academic community. This means, as your “Statement of Purpose” points out, “knowing how to put one’s own professional prestige at the service of the common good” (Art. 4).

3. For the fire of divine charity to burn within us, we need prayer. Jesus becomes present in the Word and in the Bread, in the pages of Sacred Scripture, and, above all, in the Eucharist. When we approach this fountain of supernatural life with the proper dispositions, He makes us understand the meaning of every event, small or great, private or public, in the light of faith. Therefore, we have an absolute need to dedicate a little time each day to personal prayer, really putting ourselves into the scenes narrated in the Gospel.

Personal prayer is a dialogue with Jesus. As John Paul II said during those unforgettable gatherings of the recent World Youth Day, Christ by his questions introduces us “into the laboratory of faith.” God communicates his will to us and invites us to make a response which gives meaning and Christian value to our life. Prayer makes us capable of turning our whole day into an extended meeting with Christ. Classrooms,
laboratories, university offices become a place where our faith matures and is transmitted to others.

We are aware of the fact that you will encounter obstacles on the path you must take to carry out this program of Christian life. But strengthened by the grace that comes from prayer and from the Eucharist, everything is possible. When you encounter difficulties of this kind unexpectedly, I invite you to pray with Blessed Josemaria: “O Jesus, strengthen our souls, open out the way for us, and, above all, intoxicate us with your Love. Make us into blazing fires to enkindle the earth with the heavenly fire you brought us.”[7]

The fire of God’s infinite Love is the Holy Spirit, who is also “the Spirit of truth,” as we heard in the Gospel (Jn 15:26). He has many things to tell us, since he wants to guide us to eternal life (Jn 16:12-13). We have to open wide our hearts to divine Wisdom, which always makes itself known to those who love. Human knowledge, when enlivened by faith, far from deserting the surroundings of daily life, imbues them with energy and new hope. Even in scientific research that seems far removed from any connection with the faith (although it isn’t), there throbs a thirst for a truth that transcends the particular and contingent.

Let us entrust to our Lady, through the intercession of Blessed Josemaria, the path of the Church in Rome and the activity of our academic community in these final months of the Great Jubilee. We ask our Mother to help us write, all united together, a new page of history, in which the light of the Gospel and a sincere love for the life of each human being will shine forth. Amen.

[5] Ibid.
Madrid -- September 3, 2000

At the priestly ordination of deacons of the Prelature, in the Basilica of St. Michael

My dear brothers and sisters.

My dear sons who are about to receive the sacrament of the priesthood.

1. This is a day of rejoicing for the Prelature of Opus Dei, and therefore, for the Church, which is about to receive from our Lord the gift of new priests. It is an unforgettable day for these future priests, conscious of the special affection that God is showing them through this specific consecration that will destine them to the service of all souls. Vos autem dixi amicos.\[1\] I have called you friends, Jesus has said to you, as he did to the first twelve, from whom you are inheriting the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing the Christian people, as collaborators with the bishops.

The priestly vocation, consecration and mission sink their roots, transcending time and history, in the intimate life of the Blessed Trinity.

The Trinitarian character of priestly ordination is shown clearly in the prayer of consecration that I will pronounce in a few minutes. The Church prays: “All powerful Father, you confer on these your servants the dignity of the priesthood. Renew in their hearts the Spirit of holiness. May they receive from you the second degree of the priesthood and may they be, by their conduct, an example for all.”\[2\]

The entire initiative for man’s salvation comes from God the Father, fount and origin of the Trinity. He sent his eternal Son into the world, making him the one Mediator in the New Covenant.\[3\] Now once again all of the initiative comes from God. He is the Lord of this vineyard of the Church, planted in the world by his Son and conferred to the care of the apostles and their successors under the guidance of the Paraclete. Our heavenly Father wants us to ask for workers so that his field may bear abundant fruit. How can we fail to echo the words of Jesus himself, who
invites us to beg the Lord of heaven and earth that workers never be lacking for his harvest?[4] How can we fail to insist on constant prayer for priestly vocations? God hears the petitions of his sons and daughters. He is always ready to answer fervent prayers whose only interest is the good of the Church and humanity. But our petition has to be persevering. Is that how our prayer is? Do we insist with holy stubbornness, day after day, in our prayer for the Church, for the Pope, for the bishops, for priests, for vocations?

2. In the ordination prayer, we invoke the Trinity to confer on these deacons the dignity of the priesthood, that is to say, the seal and the grace of the ministerial priesthood, so that, configured in a special way with Jesus, they can pronounce with full efficacy — *nomine et in persona Christi*, in the name and in the person of Christ—the words with which the Master conferred the holiest gifts on the Church: “This is my Body, which will be given up for you. This is the cup of my Blood... It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven.” And also those others: “I absolve you from your sins...”

“This is the source of the priest’s incomparable dignity,” exclaimed Blessed Josemaría Escriva, filled with a deep gratitude for God’s condescension towards mankind. And he continued, “It is a greatness which is on loan: it is completely compatible with my own littleness. I pray to God our Lord to give all of us priests the grace to perform holy things in a holy way, to reflect in every aspect of our lives the wonders of the greatness of God.”[5]

What would become of mankind if there were no priests? The Church would cease to exist. The world would be left separated from God. We know through faith that this will never happen. Jesus himself has pledged his word, “Know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.”[6] And, together with the Father, he has sent the Holy Spirit to remain with us eternally.[7] But he is waiting, I repeat, for our insistent prayer. We all have the duty and responsibility to ask for the gift of many holy priestly vocations. Therefore we make our own the burning prayer of the Pope to Christ: “*Pastores dabo vobis.* With these words the whole Church directs itself to you, who are the ‘Lord of the harvest,’ begging for workers for your harvest, which is immense (Cf. *Mt* 9:38). Good Shepherd, you yourself
sent the first workers into your harvest. They were twelve. After almost two millennia, when your voice has reached the ends of the earth, we feel with greater urgency the need to pray, so that there will not be lacking those who, through the ministerial priesthood, build up the Church with the power of the word of God and the sacraments; those who, in your name, are administrators of the Eucharist, through which the Church, which is your Body, continually grows.”

3. The priestly consecration is carried out by the power of the Paraclete himself, who, in the Annunciation, descended upon Mary to form in her the most holy humanity of Jesus, the one and eternal Priest of the New Covenant between God and man, which was to be ratified on Calvary.

Now also the Holy Spirit, while leading the Church on the long path of history, enables her to dispense the new life that Jesus obtained for us. “At the cost of His ‘departure’ through the sacrifice of the Cross on Calvary... Christ remains in the Church: He remains in the power of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit who ‘gives life’ (Jn 6:63). It is the Holy Spirit who ‘gives’ this divine life: a life which revealed itself in Christ’s paschal mystery as stronger than death, a life which entered human history with Christ’s resurrection.

“The priesthood,” explains John Paul II, “is completely at the service of this life: it bears witness to it through the service of the Word; it generates it; it regenerates it and spreads it abroad through the service of the sacraments. Before all else the priest himself lives this life, which is the deepest source of his maturity and also the guarantee of the spiritual fruitfulness of his whole service.”

Within a few minutes, after silently placing my hands on these deacons, I will ask the Spirit of holiness to descend upon them, to renew their hearts and make them partakers of the priesthood of Christ, so that they may act in persona Christi when they preach the word of God and carry out the sacramental actions, and be at every moment an example of Christian life for mankind.

My dear sisters and brothers: pray to the Lord of the harvest—as I will never tire of repeating—that there will always be many holy priests. Pray for our Holy Father John Paul II, for his august person and his intentions;
pray for all my brothers in the episcopate, especially for Cardinal Rouco, the Archbishop of Madrid.

I congratulate with my whole heart all the parents and relatives of the new priests. With words of the founder of Opus Dei, I remind you, and everyone present: “Pray for them, so that they will always be faithful, devout, learned, committed and happy priests. Commend them especially to our Lady. Ask her to take special care of those who will spend their lives serving her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Priest.”[10] Amen.


Rome -- November 29, 2000

At the Mass for the Spanish language participants in the World Congress of the Lay Apostolate

Dear brothers and sisters:

St. Paul’s words to the faithful at Corinth, which were just proclaimed
in the first reading, are about to be fulfilled once more. “Brethren,” the Apostle tells us, “I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’” And after recalling Jesus’ command regarding the new covenant in his Blood, St. Paul adds: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”[1] Echoing St. Paul, as soon as the consecration of the bread and wine takes place, you acclaim, responding to the priest’s invitation: “Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life. Lord Jesus, come in glory.”[2]

The salvific content of the Eucharist is extremely rich. “The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably,” we read in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord’s body and blood” (no. 1382). It is also the sacrament of the real presence of Jesus Christ, hidden beneath the veil of the sacramental species, and reserved in the tabernacle once the Holy Sacrifice is over, to be food for the sick, viaticum for the dying, and consolation for our souls whenever we need it. Finally, it is an anticipation of the eternal life that Jesus promised to those who, well prepared and with good dispositions, receive his Body and Blood in Eucharistic communion: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”[3]

These texts, which point towards the glorious coming of Christ, are in perfect harmony with the liturgical period in which we now find ourselves: the last week of ordinary time. During these days, before the beginning of Advent, the Church recalls with special insistence the last days of man and of the world. Perhaps to the eyes of an observer who knows little of the Catholic faith, this choice might seem unfortunate. Aren’t we celebrating now the apostolate of the laity, that is, of the men and women whose special vocation, as the Second Vatican Council proclaims, consists in “[seeking] the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will?”[4] Why should we be exhorted to consider the last things, which refer to the hereafter, instead of being encouraged to be concerned about what we have in hand right now?
Christians well know that there is nothing incongruous in this invitation to raise one’s eyes to heaven, as long as, at the same time, we keep our feet firmly on the ground. It is, on the contrary, the only consistent attitude in the life of a believer. The Lord who told us not to set our hearts on earthly things, also commanded us to work unceasingly here below: *Negotiamini dum venio*, trade till I come, he said before his Ascension. That is, strive with all your strength to bring fruit from the talents that I have entrusted to you, the spiritual and material qualities that each of you has received. Thus you will help bring about, by your efforts in ordinary life, the full coming of the kingdom of God.

Let us listen once more to the teachings of the last ecumenical council: “The Church was founded to spread the kingdom of Christ over all the earth for the glory of God the Father, to make all men partakers in redemption and salvation, and through them to establish the right relationship of the entire world to Christ. Every activity of the Mystical Body with this in view goes by the name of ‘apostolate.’” The apostolate of the laity is one of the ways in which the Church carries out the mission entrusted to her by her Lord. It is not something added to the life of some of the faithful. “The Christian vocation,” continues the Decree *Apostolicum Actuositatem*, “is, of its nature, a vocation to the apostolate as well.”

The mission to do apostolate, contributing to the *new evangelization* to which the Pope is urging us, is not restricted to a few people. It is the duty of every Christian, by the unique and unrepeatable fact of having received baptism. I remind you of what John Paul II wrote at the beginning of his apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*: “You too must go out. The call is a concern not only of pastors, clergy, and men and women religious. The call is addressed to everyone: lay people as well are personally called by the Lord from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church and the world.” This collaboration of every Christian in the fulfillment of the Church’s mission is so necessary that, as the Second Vatican Council affirms, “a member who does not work at the growth of the body to the extent of his possibilities must be considered useless both to the Church and to himself.”

My sisters and brothers. The last few years there has been a lot of talk about “the hour of the laity” having arrived in the Church. And this is true.
Every one of you is called to take a place on the front lines in the new evangelization of society, precisely through your personal apostolate. I insist on this word “personal,” echoing the urgency that the Holy Father wants to instill in your lives. I also remind you of the message of Blessed Josemaría Escriva, who already towards the end of the twenties began to spread this good news, then almost completely forgotten. In words of the founder of Opus Dei, I would like to remind you that our Lord is inviting us to spread “the divine message, by both teaching and example, to the farthest corners of the earth.” He asks us “as citizens of both ecclesial and civil society,” through fulfilling all of our duties conscientiously, “to be other Christs, sanctifying our everyday work and the responsibilities of our particular walk of life.”[11]

It is wonderful how many different forms of corporate apostolate flourish in the ecclesial community due to the awareness of the commitment that each person has contracted with our Lord, by the very fact of baptism. “The dignity as a Christian, the source of equality for all members of the Church, guarantees and fosters the spirit of communion and fellowship, and, at the same time, becomes the hidden dynamic force in the lay faithful’s apostolate and mission.”[12]

The personal apostolate of example in the exercise of one’s profession, in family life, and in political and social commitments, is essential, acting in full accord with the Catholic faith, as taught by the magisterium of the Church. And joined to this, the apostolate of the word: “Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you.”[13] This means anyone who crosses paths with us on our journey in life, beginning with those who are closest to us: relatives, friends, professional colleagues. If the common daily circumstances of your life in the world were not to constitute the usual place for your Christian struggle and your apostolic zeal, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to attract those who are farther away, to urge on those who are careless in their Christian duties, to be credible witnesses to Jesus Christ in an atmosphere that is frequently hostile to him or at least indifferent.

To attain this unity of Christian life, recourse to prayer and the offering of small sacrifices or mortifications to God is indispensable. These include especially sacrifices that help us perform our professional work
better and to make life more agreeable to those around us. And above all, we need the frequent reception of the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Without a serious effort to have personal contact with our Lord, constantly renewed, one cannot participate effectively in the Church’s mission, nor truly be an apostle of Jesus Christ.

If at the end of this Jubilee, you return to your countries with a resolution to pray more, to go with greater frequency and piety to the sacraments, to take advantage of your contact with your friends and colleagues to bring them closer to God, you will have made very good use of these days spent close to the tombs of the Apostles, so close to the Vicar of Christ. We should be spurred on in this by our hope in the glorious coming of our Lord, which is recalled to us in every Eucharistic celebration. It is what the Church invites us to ask for today: “May this sacrament of love be for us the sign of unity and the bond of charity;”[14] so that “by the body and blood of Christ... all your people [will be joined] in brotherly love.”[15] Thus there will be enkindled in our heart an ardent zeal to bring many souls to God.

We ask for this through the intercession of Holy Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, Queen of Apostles. Amen.

[1] 1 Cor 23-24, 26 (First reading from the votive Mass of the Eucharist).


[8] Ibid.


Blessed Josemaria Escriva, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 150.


1 Pet 3:15.

Prayer over the Gifts of the votive Mass of the Holy Eucharist (formula A).

Prayer after communion of the votive Mass of the Holy Eucharist (formula A).

Vatican City -- October 14, 2000

"The family, treasure of the Church, in the spirit of Opus Dei," is the title of this address at the congress celebrated in Rome, during the Jubilee of Families.

The Pope has frequently highlighted the family as a key factor for society’s future. For example, in his exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (no. 40), he said: “As experience testifies, whole civilizations and the cohesiveness of peoples depend above all on the human quality of their families.” The fulfillment of the Church’s apostolic mission in society also depends in good measure on the quality of Christian families. Therefore pastoral attention to families must be given a central place in the Church’s evangelizing activity. Thanks be to God, this is happening in many places. One example of this are the family institutes that are the topic of this session and that have already yielded abundant fruit. Conscious of this reality, the faithful and Cooperators of the Opus Dei Prelature, besides collaborating joyfully in family institutes sponsored by dioceses, Catholic universities, etc., have also been instrumental in starting up institutes in a number of countries, which I will speak about in more detail in a moment.
Before doing so, I would like to make an observation which, although obvious, is nevertheless important. I refer to a principle that is at the heart of the Second Vatican Council’s teaching on the People of God: the future of the family is in its own hands. Its future depends on those who make it up: spouses, children, relatives... This truth also constitutes a central aspect of the message that God entrusted to Blessed Josemaria Escriva, the Founder of Opus Dei. As he affirmed without ambiguity: “The best and most important way in which lay men and women can participate in the life of the Church, and indeed the way which all other ways presuppose, is by being truly Christians precisely where they are, in the place to which their human vocation has called them” (Conversations with Msgr. Escriva, 112).

This is how Blessed Josemaria saw the family. For a Christian, marriage “is a real supernatural calling...Husband and wife are called to sanctify their married life and to sanctify themselves in it. It would be a serious mistake if they were to exclude family life from their spiritual development. The marriage union, the care and education of children, the effort to provide for the needs of the family as well as for its security and development, the relationships with other persons who make up the community, all these are among the ordinary human situations that Christian couples are called upon to sanctify” (Christ Is Passing By, no. 23). It is these premises that explain why the formative activities carried out by the Opus Dei Prelature give such great importance to the family, helping its own faithful, and many other people who so desire, to sanctify themselves in marriage and through marriage and the family.

Like every form of Christian life, the search for God in family life contains a deeply apostolic dimension. Each one has to strive to carry this out above all in one’s own home, as regards both the material and especially the spiritual well-being of one’s family. But these intrinsic family relationships will not attain Christian maturity if they are limited to the domestic circle. Apostolic zeal is diffusive; it seeks to spread out. While following the channels appropriate to each one’s circumstances, this zeal tends naturally to open itself out and embrace the entire world, reflecting the yearnings in the Heart of Christ. Urged on by this spirit, some of the faithful of Opus Dei foster initiatives designed specifically to promote
family values in society. These include many different types of projects. Those involved are impelled by their own personal and family responsibilities as citizens, as parents and as Christians. They make use of their professional competence in striving to illumine the multiple dimensions of the family with the Church's teaching, without ever trying to act in the Church's name. They channel their efforts through secular structures, which enables them to seek and actively encourage the collaboration of all persons and institutions that truly seek the good of the family. The public, non-religious character of these institutions, besides strongly emphasizing the personal responsibility of their promoters,

facilitates the cooperation of many other people who, even if far from the Christian faith, or not fully sharing in Catholic teaching, maintain in these areas an outlook that fully respects human dignity. In any case, the faithful of Opus Dei who promote or participate in these initiatives do so with a full and unreserved acceptance of Catholic teaching. Not only do they not hide the fact that they are inspired by the Church's doctrine, but they try to make its teachings known everywhere.

One could cite here very positive results in countries all over the world, including those without a Catholic tradition, thanks to family orientation activities for parents, numerous schools started and supported by families, and family books and magazines.

Among the many initiatives undertaken by faithful and Cooperators of Opus Dei in this field, a few are tied to the Prelature as such, including the family institutes that I want to speak about. The Opus Dei Prelature, in conformity with its statutes and reflecting its foundational charism, does not involve itself with any of the human aspects (professional, technical, financial, etc.) of these initiatives, which keep intact their secular nature. Opus Dei has no teaching or strategy of its own in this area, nor in any other sector of human activity. But it does have a well-defined spirit that points to the profound dimensions found in human realities when seen in the light of the Christian faith. This spirit also promotes freedom and legitimate pluralism in whatever is open to opinion among Catholics.

In addition to the personal Christian formation offered to participants, these initiatives connected with the Prelature receive pastoral and doctrinal
assistance and the public guarantee of the conformity of their activities with the doctrine of the Church in matters of faith and morals. In the case of family institutes, the pastoral relevance of this canonical connection with the Prelature, a hierarchical institution of the Church, is clear. But this fact does not reduce the personal responsibility and the scope for legitimate autonomy of those involved. They are acting as citizens directly interested in the good of the family, and as active participants in the community.

The most noteworthy family institutes begun by faithful of Opus Dei are connected with the university. These research and teaching institutes have arisen within existing universities, and over time have developed into academic entities with a life of their own. I would like to note, in this respect, that most of these centers are not called simply “Family Institute,” but rather “Institute for Studies on the Family” or “Institute for the Study of Marriage and the Family,” etc. The academic mentality of those working in these areas is reflected even in the name, thus demonstrating their seriousness in confronting family problems. This rigorous scientific methodology has given these programs prestige in the eyes of the academic world.

The first experience in this field was the “Institute for Studies on the Family” at the University of Navarre in Spain, begun in 1981. With its large number of schools and departments, the University of Navarre offered good prospects for an institute marked by an interdisciplinary approach. There are many different academic disciplines in which one can and should study family problems. At the University of Navarre, these were grouped into three major areas: the biomedical sciences, the social and psychological sciences, and the humanities. All of the disciplines concerned with the family, including ethics and anthropology, civil and canon law, philosophy and theology, contribute with their questions and answers, with their data and methodologies, to casting light on the multiple facets of the reality of the family.

However, an interdisciplinary approach does not imply scattered results. Rather it means working in teams and seeking to attain unity. The university community, when it directs its attention to the family, realizes that it is committed to a work with deep ethical implications. It knows that it has a contribution to make to the subject under study, the family. But it
is also aware that it has to learn certain lessons from the family, lessons needed to provide an adequate channel for its own research, since the progress of society (which is the aim of university research) always passes through the family.

The activities of the “Institute for Studies on the Family” at the University of Navarre are focused around three goals: research, teaching, and counseling. In each area, the constant point of reference is an awareness of the dignity of the family as the primary cell of society and as the first expression of the natural solidarity of all human beings. Careful attention is also paid to changes in society and circumstances of time and place. Thus a prudent distance is kept from both theoretical abstraction and a simplistic phenomenological or descriptive focus.

The family institute of the University of La Sabana, in Colombia, founded on similar principles and methodology, began its work in 1990. Its academic activities have since extended to other countries of Latin America, including Ecuador and Uruguay. In 1994, at Austral University in Buenos Aires, the Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family was inaugurated. Two years later a family institute was opened at the University of the Andes, in Chile. The strong evangelizing effect of these initiatives, even in their beginnings, is a motive of joy for me and of gratitude to God. Students in these institutes have later become active participants in the pastoral care of families in multiple sectors of society, including the parishes; they have developed courses for parents, guidance programs and publications that spread a Christian view of the family. In this way the university family institutes are having a multiplying effect that is difficult to calculate but extraordinarily fruitful.

All of this can only be explained by recognizing the existence of a clear reality: these family institutes are responding to a widespread social demand. The professional training that they provide finds immediate application in areas that, at times, do not seem to be directly related to family problems. The courses of the Institute for Family Studies at the University of the Andes, for example, counts among its students not only family counselors but also teachers, social service workers, and personnel directors of large and small companies. This shows that the family is
coming to be considered, rightly, as a central focus of social relationships that are of great importance in the workplace.

Many significant conclusions can be drawn from the experience of the family institutes. As I noted above, the autonomy that characterizes these organisms, the freedom and responsibility of their respective directors, leaves room for a free evaluation and discussion of methods, instruments, times and strategies. In any case, it seems to me that there is one conclusion about which it is impossible not to be in agreement, and which I therefore want to strongly emphasize. I refer to the decisive role of education. Political battles, informative efforts, cultural commitment are all important for the future of the family. But I think that the field in which the future of the family is particularly at stake is education. To truly defend the family, we must, above all, educate it.

Rome -- September 7, 2000

At the Jubilee of University Professors, in the Church of Blessed Josemaria

In the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, here in the Tabernacle, we are today taking another step in the preparation for the Jubilee of University Professors, which will culminate next Sunday with Holy Mass celebrated by the Pope in St. Peter’s Square.

Led by the Gospel passage that we have just heard, I would like to suggest three points for meditation. To ensure that our reflection not be purely theoretical, but rather closely connected with the problems of our time, let us be guided by some writings from the magisterium of John Paul II and some thoughts taken from the preaching of Blessed Josemaria that reflect the great heart and open and universal mind of this holy priest, who God granted me the grace of being close to for many years.

1. Science has to be illuminated by the Truth

Let us begin our meditation with the question that a doctor of Israel, a learned man of his time, asked of Jesus. Nicodemus went to see Christ moved by a deep unrest. Without yet believing in Him, he saw in his
doctrine something transcendent. He recognized him as Teacher. “This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him’” (Jn 3:2).

The participation of university professors, as a group, in the Jubilee celebrations, has a special meaning that transcends the individuals involved. The desire for interior renewal proper to the Jubilee is extended to academic activity, which is both collective and individual at the same time. Let us invoke, then, first of all the Holy Spirit, so that he help us with his grace to evaluate our mission and thus understand, in the light of Christian revelation, what are the real, the deepest, needs of humanity, to which the university should offer a response. Let us ask him to grant us a truer understanding of culture and art, of science and technology, because these human realities, which are an expression of our dignity, reach their fullness only when they are unreservedly open to the wisdom proceeding from God.

The university as an institution was born from the heart of Christian tradition, from the effort inspired by faith to advance the scientific formation of the intellect. It was born ex corde Ecclesiae, from the heart of the Church,[1] to further the search for truth. Its efforts have molded the history of thought and forged our civilization, with its bright points and its dark ones. Today, as the world emerges exhausted from the crisis of ideologies, science cannot limit itself to seeking partial truths. To avoid falling into the blind abyss of slavery to power, it cannot content itself with the acquisition of verifiable certitudes, but has to always look towards the supreme Truth. Ego sum Veritas. “I am the Truth,” said Jesus (Jn 14:6). No one can prevent these words from resounding within his conscience. A man of culture is not playing the traitor to himself when he takes up the task, the challenge, of investigating the mystery of God and of the person as God’s creature and image.

In his encyclical Fides et Ratio, Pope John Paul II invites us to reflect about the whole truth (cf. no. 6). Not on a truth but on the Truth revealed by God. Our dignity as rational beings imposes upon us the duty of this task. On our courageous response depends the meaning of our life and our work. Man is not just an ensemble of cerebral circuits. He is a person, endowed with consciousness and freedom, because he is the image of God.
Only the conscientious search for harmony with the divine law, a task which is arduous, but which is not in contradiction to the deepest meaning of our life, can make man free: *Veritas liberabit vos* “The truth will make you free” (Jn 8:32).

Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus is an example for us. Would that we too would frequently enter into personal conversation with our Lord, asking him questions and letting ourselves be questioned by him. He will teach us that our knowledge must be open to the “wisdom of holiness,” grounded in the mystery of the Cross and built upon the foundation of humility.

To Nicodemus and to each of us, Christ answers: “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand this?” (Jn 3:10). Let us sincerely recognize that we still have a long way to go before reaching the goal to which our Lord is calling us. But even our first steps must be along the path of humility. Intellectual humility is not an affront to the intellect, because humility is the truth. On the contrary, it enriches study, research and teaching, giving it a new and inexhaustible perspective, in harmony with the wisdom that comes from above, a wisdom that is “radiant and unfading, and...easily discerned by those who love her” (Wis 6:12).

Let us earnestly beseech God, using words from Scripture: “O God of my fathers and Lord of mercy, who hast made all things by thy word, and by thy wisdom has formed man to have dominion over the creatures thou hast made and rule the world in holiness and righteousness, and pronounce judgment in uprightness of soul, give me the wisdom that sits by thy throne, and do not reject me from among thy servants....Send her forth from the holy heavens, and from the throne of thy glory send her, that she may be with me and my toil, and that I may learn what is pleasing to thee. For she knows and understands all things, and she will guide me wisely in my actions and guard me with her glory” (Wis 9:1-4, 10-11).

2. **Responsibility of the university in the service of truth.**

On the occasion of the sixth centenary of the foundation of the university that he attended in his youth, Pope John Paul II stated that “the vocation of every university is to serve the truth, to discover it and transmit it to others.” In that discourse, which I invite you to reread and meditate
on attentively, the Pope made this observation: “Personally, after years have gone by, I see more and more clearly how much I owe to the university: love for the truth, and the guidelines for seeking it.” And he added: “The great professors that I knew played an important role in my life.”[2]

We are now at a crucial point in our reflection: the importance of teachers in the formation of the new generations. There is an enormous difference between someone who acts as a simple “dispenser” of information and someone who acts as a teacher. The latter not only transmits information, but molds mature personalities, guides them towards the fullness of truth, and brings them to the threshold of the mystery of Christ, before which each one freely makes his or her own decision.

By taking on our flesh and coming into the world, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity sanctified all created realities and all upright human activities. Intellectual effort, the work of study and research, receives a new and extraordinary perspective, with a value far superior to that offered by the simple effort of scientific progress, no matter how exciting this may be. When one discovers one’s Christian vocation and lives it in the midst of the fullness of one’s professional work, this task becomes a true salvific mission. Faith and reason meet in a culture, if they have first been united in the life of the university professor. Then his responsibility within the scientific community becomes a responsibility before God, with a true vocational dedication.

We have no right to shirk this responsibility. As John Paul II has written, the university vocation “demands, before anything else, a special solicitude for the development of one’s own humanity, according to the call that we have received from God to be saints. And this implies the duty to cultivate virtues. A mere formal rectitude of thought is not enough. One must strive to live in the spiritual climate of the indispensable moral virtues of sincerity, courage, humility, honesty, combined with a real solicitude for mankind. Thanks to moral sensitivity,” says the Pope, “a very essential link is preserved for science between the true and the good.”[3]
A Christian conception of the university is of special importance in today’s historical context. Today, speaking in general, we have overcome that systematic opposition to the faith that characterized the culture of the Enlightenment. Today another current prevails, even more insidious for the future of truth. Today scientific effort seems to require the support of economic factors or of political expediency within the complex process of globalization. It even, at times, seeks in them the decisive path for its options. Values that cannot be renounced, including the defense of life, respect for human dignity, and the protection of the family, are being deeply threatened by the logic of the market. The university cannot surrender its role of service to society; it cannot delegate its responsibility for the truth and for mankind’s welfare to centers of power outside the university.

Let us recollect ourselves and raise our hearts to God. Lord, before you are gathered this group of men and women who have decided to make their professional lives into an impassioned service to the truth. They have come to Rome, to the chair of St. Peter, because they sincerely desire to drink at the fountain of Wisdom. Grant them, and grant all of us, the clarity of your Word and the breath of your Spirit, so that they never desist from the search for truth with full intellectual honesty. Help them make their scientific work a faithful reflection of the splendor of the Light which came into the world two thousand years ago to enlighten all mankind (cf. Jn 1:9, 14). May they never lose the conviction that “the search for the truth, even when it deals with only a limited part of the world or of mankind, never ends; it always points beyond the immediate topic being studied to questions that open up access to the Mystery.”

3. What does sanctifying university work mean?

I recalled at the beginning that Blessed Josemaria had a special love for the university, since he was always open to the true and the good. On one occasion, speaking to a group of university professors, he said: “In you we see the reality of that human ideal which attracted the praise of divine Wisdom. You are outstanding cultivators of knowledge, in love with the Truth, who are seeking it zealously in order to enjoy the disinterested happiness of contemplating it. You are, in truth, noble servants of science because you have dedicated your lives to the great adventure of unraveling
its riches. But in addition, Christianity’s cultural tradition, which gives your tasks their human fullness, urges you to communicate those riches to your students with an open-handed generosity in the joyful work of teaching, which seeks to forge men and women through the elevation of their spirit.”[5]

These words of Opus Dei’s founder sum up a program of life capable of guiding a professor’s efforts of study and teaching to a completeness that can only proceed from the desire to give a full Christian meaning to one’s work. You will make of the university a true center of culture and formation if you know how to sanctify your academic work, sanctify yourselves in your academic work and sanctify others by means of your academic work.

The fulfillment of this program calls for maintaining a profound unity between research and human relations within the university itself, which is at one and the same time a community of fields of knowledge (universitas scientiarum) and of people (universitas magistrorum et scholarium). A university can never be closed in on itself; it has to relate to and cooperate with other similar communities throughout the whole world, thus mutually enriching one another.

To sanctify academic work means, then, two things:

1) To carry out research, study, write and teach in the light of the integral truth about man and nature, striving to gain an ever deeper understanding of the specific field that each is involved in.

2) To respect the demands of charity and justice in the exercise of one’s professional activity, through the fulfillment of one’s own duties and disinterested service of others.

What are the means that enable one day-after-day to give this direction to one’s work?

• Prayer. Blessed Josemaria reminds us that we have to be “contemplatives in the midst of the world,” which means doing our work in constant filial dialogue with our Father God;

• a continual effort to remain up to date in one’s own field, not out of a desire for personal success, but to give God and others the best of
ourselves;

• an open-mindedness which prevents us from losing sight of the intrinsic limits of our own discipline;

• a constant effort to increase our knowledge of Christian doctrine and morality, with the goal of understanding its intimate relationship with the human sciences each of us specializes in.

This is the wisdom that the Church holds up to scientists in our time. The Holy Father understands that the words of the Second Vatican Council, to which he frequently refers in his meetings with representatives of the academic world, were truly prophetic: “Our age, more than any of the past, needs such wisdom if all that man discovers is to be ennobled through human effort. Indeed the future of the world is in danger unless provision is made for men of greater wisdom.”[6] And the Pope adds: “The great challenge presented to academic institutions in the field of research and teaching consists in forming men and women not only competent in their field or with encyclopedic knowledge, but above all filled with authentic wisdom.”[7]

This is an inexhaustible program. Therefore it is necessary to continuously call upon new forces. A Christian who works in this field becomes an active source of social cohesion. His work contributes to that of many others in an interdisciplinary teamwork, filling out a picture of the world and of man which is informed by the transcendental dimension of the person. In this way, the Christian spirit works towards the creation of a genuinely universal and human culture, open to dialogue with all and a promoter of peace in the world.

Academic work carried out with this spirit effectively furthers the application of the redemption. “This world of ours will be saved,” says Blessed Josemaría, “not by those who try to drug the life of the spirit, reducing everything to financial questions or questions of material welfare, but by those who have faith in God and in the eternal destiny of man, and who open themselves to the truth of Christ as a light providing guidance for action and conduct.”[8]

This is an invitation to hope. Let us ask divine Wisdom to assist all those in academic life, men and women of culture and science, so that,
docile to the action of the Holy Spirit, they will allow themselves to be instructed by the divine Teacher and thus be able, without discriminations of any sort, to teach everyone the truth in charity and freedom: “speaking the truth in love” (Eph 4:15).

Holy Mary, our Mother. You are invoked by Christians as Sedes Sapientiae, Throne of Wisdom, because the Word of God became flesh in your most pure womb. Attain for us an ardent love for Jesus, your Son, so that by fulfilling the command that he entrusted to the Church (cf. Mt 28:20), we may be witnesses and heralds of the Truth that saves. Amen.


[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.


[8] Blessed Josemaria Escriva, Address at the awarding of honorary doctorates by the University of Navarre, May 9, 1974.

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Addresses

Rome -- October 9, 2000
At the opening ceremony for the Academic year 2000–2001 at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

We are preparing to begin a new academic year, undertaking once again the adventure whose aim is not only the search for truth, but also the effort to improve oneself and the world around us. For a university person who loves his work, whether professor or student, this is never something repetitious. The work of studying and teaching always includes the discovery that one can give new meaning to the realities one encounters. Above all, work is never repetitious when it is the place and opportunity for a daily encounter with God, who has called us to follow him precisely along this path.

A month ago, in an address to participants in the “Jubilee of university teachers,” the Holy Father warned those present “not to give in to the relativistic environment that threatens a great part of today’s culture” (no. 3). We who live in the same cultural milieu as our contemporaries, who share their triumphs and failures, who passionately love this world of ours, are not immune to the environment the Holy Father warns us about. But it would be an error to find in this reality motives for discouragement or anxiety. On the contrary, we have to interpret it as a call to a loving and constructive vigilance, because we know that the decisive power in this combat is not ours, but God’s. And we know that God relies on our response. The many invitations by the Master to be vigilant, and also those of St. Peter, are the exact opposite of a strategy of closing in on oneself, or an attempt to create a world made to one’s own measure. One who is vigilant keeps his intellectual faculties attentive to the realities that surround him and tries to understand them. The fact that we share the same atmosphere, and therefore also to a certain extent the same germs that we necessarily breathe in the course of the day, can be converted into an occasion for dialogue, helping us to understand others, their points of view, their difficulties, the reasons that have led them to arrive at conclusions so different from our own. But this dialogue should always be based on the joy and security of our faith in Christ.

The university was born historically as a place of dialogue. This idea should be connatural to us. Nevertheless, there is a widespread view of dialogue as a readiness to dispense with the truth, whereas in reality any
dialogue that begins by renouncing the possibility of reaching port is not even methodologically sustainable. Only a person open to the truth will accept the possibility of being mistaken. Even when the dialogue concerns questions in which we do not have authority to concede anything, as is the case with the truths of faith, the dialogue has to be based on an obvious premise of clarity and loyalty: our role is only to administer that deposit, although expending the effort needed to understand and formulate its contents better.

The recent declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, is itself new evidence of the fact that clarity is an essential element of all communication and of all true dialogue, both as a methodological requisite and as a human corrective. An act such as that contained in this *Declaration* expresses fidelity not only to Catholic doctrine, but also to that of non-Catholics. This example should also illumine your activity of study, teaching and research.

Nevertheless, we must not forget that we find ourselves in the presence of a living reality, and this life, in the economy of grace, possesses a dynamism of its own. Whoever tries to live the life of Christ will find Christ in others as well, and will acquire a clear experience of distance and of community, of what unites and what separates in daily life. And in Christ’s charity he will find the resources to exercise all the virtues. Blessed Josemaria wrote: “Love and practice charity without setting any limits or discriminating between people, for it is the virtue which marks us out as disciples of the Master. Nevertheless, this charity cannot lead you to dampen your faith—for it would then cease to be a virtue. Nor should it blur the clear outlines that define the faith, nor soften it to the point of changing it, as some people try to do, into something amorphous and lacking the strength and power of God.”[3]

The challenge of evangelization thus takes on personal terms for each one of us, and becomes the fascinating challenge of striving for unity of life. Study which is not accompanied by a daily search for union with God in the sacraments and in prayer, work which does not seek to be transformed into contemplation, is more likely to find difficulties in harmonizing Christ’s mandate to evangelize all nations with the equally clear demand to respect others. One should not be surprised that even the concept of
conversion might seem problematical when one has not personally made the effort to convert, with the lights and struggles that this entails. “We cannot preach conversion unless we ourselves are converted anew every day,” as the encyclical Redemptoris Missio stresses (no. 47).

The Holy Spirit will give us the light and grace to find in our work during the upcoming academic year the place for the conversion which each of us, before God, knows that he has to undertake. Undoubtedly one’s own work constitutes the scene for the continual conversion of heart that the Paraclete himself wishes to carry out in us.

With these hopes and invoking for all of us, professors, students and administrative personnel, the intercession of holy Mary, Sedes Sapientiae, it is a joy for me to declare the academic year 2000-2001 inaugurated.

desire to accompany the Holy Father at this historic ceremony, which, as you say, is a motive of joy for all Christians.

Blessed Josemaría’s devotion to our Lady profoundly influenced his own spiritual personality, as has been the case with all the saints, and also the life and spirit of Opus Dei. Any image, invocation or shrine dedicated to our Lady was for him an opportunity to demonstrate this devotion. And Fatima was no exception. Whenever he came to Portugal, and he often came here, Fatima was part of his itinerary; and on more than one occasion, as in 1970, he made that long trip exclusively to place all of his concerns for the Church and for the Work at the feet of Our Lady of Fatima.

In 1944, even before his first visit to Portugal, he had already asked some members of Opus Dei who were studying at Coimbra to go to the Cova da Iria to present his filial love and his intentions to our Lady. Blessed Josemaría always recalled with great affection that his first visit to this beloved country, on February 5, 1945, was owed to Sor Lucia, who asked him to come to Portugal and helped obtain the permits to allow him to cross the border. His friendship with Sor Lucia grew over the years. He went to see her on several occasions at the Carmel of Coimbra.

It would take me too long to recount all the beautiful events that took place on those trips to Fatima. He was greatly moved at seeing the pilgrims walking alongside the roads leading to Fatima. He would bless them and try to learn from them how to love our Lady more.

On his visit in 1970, which I mentioned above, he wanted to imitate the many persons that he saw walking there barefooted. He took off his shoes at the north rotunda and walked barefoot on the path that led to the Capelinha, not an easy thing to do for someone not used to it. We feel very honored to know that our beloved founder was the first pilgrim to Fatima who has been raised to the altars.

One aspect that characterizes Opus Dei is the sanctification of professional work. How is this to be understood? Isn't there a danger of going overboard in dedication to one’s work?

Yes, that danger exists. Unfortunately, in today’s world there are people who cannot find work and, at the same time, many others who are perhaps working more hours than is good for them. They do this either to survive
or out of an excessive desire for personal success. It is painful to see that there are people who neglect their family obligations and put in a workday of twelve or fourteen hours.

Work is not an end, but a means. The end is God. Therefore, sanctifying one’s work doesn’t mean being successful, but rather coming closer to God by means of work, whether this is humble or outstanding.

God has put us in the world to work, as we read in the Book of Genesis. To sanctify one’s work is, in first place, to work with love, that is, to work to give glory to God and to serve others. Work that is done selfishly, no matter how technically perfect it may be and how many hours of effort it might require, is not work that can be sanctified.

You mentioned attention to one’s family. Do you think it’s more difficult today to maintain a Christian spirit in one’s family than it was in former times?

There are certainly new difficulties, but this doesn’t mean that difficulties didn’t exist in earlier times. In any case, I don’t like to speak of difficulties, but of challenges. And challenges should be met in a constructive way.

Educating children is not just a matter of shielding them from dangers and resisting harmful influences in the environment. Rather it means carrying out an exciting, positive task, which our Lord has put into the hands of fathers and mothers.

It is, of course, a difficult task, but God’s help, which is the most important factor, is never lacking to anyone who asks for it in prayer. How often it has been precisely the spur of their responsibility for the education of their children that has led parents to draw closer to God!

Returning to Fatima, how do you view the beatification of the two little shepherd children?

No one can fail to see its great pastoral and theological importance. Besides the recognition that sanctity is accessible and necessary for everyone, of every age and condition, the beatification of Francisco and Jacinta confirms the importance of the Fatima message especially for our times: the need for conversion, for prayer and penance, with complete adherence to the faith of the Church, to the sacraments, especially the
Eucharist and Reconciliation, and to Christian morality.

What are your major concerns in regard to the Church and the world as we begin this new millennium?

More than concerns, I have great hope in God’s mercy and providence, shown in a thousand different ways in our times, beginning with the apparitions at Fatima. But I think the problems presented by culture and the family are fundamental for the re-Christianization and peace of the world, just as priestly formation is fundamental for the rejuvenation of the Church and for evangelization.

Are you satisfied with the expansion of Opus Dei in Portugal and in the world?

How could I fail to be? But even so, it all seems very little to me in relation to the current needs of the Church and the world.

Milan, Italy -- October 1, 2000

Article published in the newspaper “Avvenire” on the occasion of the canonization of Saint Giuseppina Bakhita

“The saints are the supreme expression of beauty.” These words of the Pope, spoken in an informal conversation with journalists during a plane trip to spread the Gospel, seem very appropriate for describing the holy life of Josephine Bakhita.

The saints, through the power of their witness, make up for the violence against man committed in the course of history. They deeply transform, each in his or her own way, all that others suffer. Their importance for the present age is especially timely, in this century of “progress” that nothing defines more starkly than the number of its martyrs. The saints’ patience in the face of injustice displays the vigor of the most refined charity, while their docile suffering illuminates every corner of daily life. By their determination to love always and at all costs, the saints are the ones who create new civilizations.
An outstanding example of this reality is Josephine Bakhita, the Canossian nun who died in Schio, Italy, in 1947. Her life was marked by great suffering. She was kidnapped and enslaved when still a little girl, tortured, and sold several times in the slave markets of El Obeidh and Khartoum (recent documents, including audiovisuals, testify to the continuance of a flourishing slave trade in the Sudan). After being rescued by the Italian consul in 1882, she was taken in by the Canossians of Schio and baptized at the age of 21. At 27 she became a Canossian nun. Her path was truly a difficult one, and her natural goodness was not enough to explain the compassion she showed for those who had made her suffer. Her forgiveness was the expression of a charity that only God can infuse. Thus her life became, to return to the Pope’s image, an expression of what is most truly beautiful in this world.

The entire Bishops’ Conference of the Sudan will be present at Bakhita’s canonization. The bishops, with the daring of faith, point to the message that emanates from her life: a strong message of hope and forgiveness to the Catholics of Sudan, who at this very moment are the object of a cruel persecution that deprives them of even their most basic rights. It is a message for the conscience of all of us, who so often cover over with silence the injustice that crushes those who have no voice to make themselves heard.

In Bakhita we also see the personification of the Christian paradox of freedom. When she finally had the possibility of freely deciding on her own life, she gave herself to another “Master” (as she called God) and handed over to him even the beating of her heart and all of her thoughts. Thus while she carried out the humblest tasks with joy, she spread love to all around her with great simplicity. Bakhita served our Lord for almost fifty years. To renew one’s own Yes to our Lord each day is to point oneself towards eternity. For her, looking to the future did not mean forgetting the past, but rather transfiguring it, redeeming it with the freedom of love.

Bakhita, at the end of her life, expressed in these simple words, hidden behind a smile, the journey of her life: “I travel slowly, one step at a time, because I am carrying two big suitcases. One of them contains my sins, and in the other, which is much heavier, are the infinite merits of Jesus. When I reach heaven I will open the suitcases and say to God: Eternal Father,
now you can judge. And to St. Peter: Close the door, because I’m staying.”

La Madre “Moretta,” as the people of Schio called her, was beatified together with Blessed Josemaria, the founder of Opus Dei, on May 17, 1992. For all of us this was an unforgettable experience. Ever since that day we have felt very close to her. And therefore today is a day of great joy for me. The heroic example of Bakhita, of the Chinese martyrs, of Katherine Drexel and of Maria Josefa of the Heart of Jesus shows to mankind the glorious countenance of Christ, who triumphs in charity. Every canonization is the celebration of the Church’s holiness, of the continuous miracle of the supreme beauty that Christ’s Spouse radiates to the world. And it is always a feast for the whole Church.

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Lisbon, Portugal -- July, 2000

*Interview published in the magazine “Christus”*

In your daily contact with Blessed Josemaria, how did his holiness make itself seen?

Blessed Josemaria's union with God, which he lived in a natural way, could be seen in a thousand details. It was shown, for example, in his devout genuflections before our Lord in the Tabernacle. One could also see it in his smile, in his orderly work, in his constant concern for others, in his kindly look, even when he was tired.

To live with a saint is a privilege, an education, and also a constant cause of joy, because, by his generous struggle to exercise all the Christian virtues, he creates around him an atmosphere of cheerfulness, of prayer, of serenity.

*What characteristics distinguished him from other people? What is his legacy to contemporary society?*

The saints always have something about them that is genuine and human, and at the same time supernatural, which attracts people. They don’t spend their lives adapting to the world around them but in striving to bring the world to God, and thus they seek to identify themselves with
Jesus Christ. In this sense one can say that they are profoundly free, unclassifiable. The saints have also often been a “sign of contradiction” to those who refuse to accept radical truths.

This was true of Blessed Josemaria. He was very normal, cordial, pleasant. He fled from any kind of eccentricity. He also had a deep love for freedom, which stemmed from his passionate love for God. It was one of his distinctive characteristics. He was convinced that a person who loves is truly free.

I think that his principal legacy are the thousands of persons who have come closer to God through his priestly work, who have discovered that they can find our Lord in their work and in the fulfillment of their ordinary duties. I like to think of Blessed Josemaria's legacy as a seed that is spreading to give fruit in every time and place, within the great sowing that is the life of the Church.

Blessed Josemaria’s process of beatification, by its speed, opened up a new chapter in the history of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. Was it the power and influence some say Opus Dei has within the Church and with the Pope that determined the speed of the process? Or was it, as in the case of St. Anthony of Lisbon, popular veneration and devotion that gave impetus to the declaration of his virtues and his beatification?

I would like to make it clear that in the Church’s history, there have been more than a few cases where the sanctity of servants of God have been declared within a few years of their death. During the Second Vatican Council, the council fathers saw the need to present Christians with contemporary persons as models of union with God. I was filled with joy, for example, to see the heroic virtues of Mother Maravillas and of Padre Allegra proclaimed very shortly after our Lord called them to himself. I could mention other names. In citing these and other examples, I have no doubt that their processes have been a great gift of God to the Church.

As far as the process of beatification of the founder of Opus Dei is concerned, it cannot be explained by any supposed power of Opus Dei, which does not exist, nor is it only a matter of popular devotion, which certainly exists. The Church, in this as in all cases, carries out a very careful investigation. As you know, the Holy See, before it declares any person a
blessed or a saint, not only examines in detail whether that person has a reputation for sanctity, but also whether he or she lived the Christian virtues heroically. And it awaits divine endorsement through a miracle that confirms the holiness of life of the person involved before making a declaration.

Also one must keep in mind the influence of the Second Vatican Council’s position, which was put into effect first by Pope Paul VI and, in 1983, by Pope John Paul II, and which has simplified the norms regarding the procedures for the causes of the saints. The new legislation has enabled all of the causes to be investigated in much less time than was formerly the case.

Like John Paul II, Blessed Josemaria had a deep Marian piety and a special devotion to Fatima. One hears rumors that he met with Sister Lucia and that he is the first person beatified who made a pilgrimage to Fatima during his lifetime.

Blessed Josemaria met Sister Lucia in 1945, when she was living in Tuy. The founder of Opus Dei had gone to that city to visit the bishop, who was a friend of his. The bishop introduced him to Sor Lucia, who encouraged him to cross the border and make a pilgrimage to Fatima. She even intervened to solve the problem of getting visas. Blessed Josemaria had other plans at the time, but he accepted Sor Lucia’s suggestion. So one could say that she was directly responsible for Blessed Josemaria’s first trip to Portugal.

Msgr. Escriva was greatly moved by the Portuguese people’s devotion to our Lady. He returned to Portugal on other occasions, and always took advantage of these trips to go and pray at the Capelinha. He frequently spent long periods in the esplanade of the shrine, next to the “little chapel.” He went there to take refuge in our Mother. He wanted to be very Portuguese in this.

As you know, this is the first time that children have been beatified as confessors (witnesses of the faith). It is something quite new in the Church for two shepherds as young as Francisco and Jacinta to be beatified, without being martyrs. While the process was going on, this fact raised some questions about the
legitimacy of the idea that children could practice the Christian virtues to a heroic degree. What is your opinion on this?

I was extremely happy when the pastorinhos [little shepherds] were beatified. I don’t know why, but in some circles children are underrated, including the degree of human maturity and of union with God that they are able to attain. In the Gospel, we find many teachings of our Lord about children. They are God’s favorites, examples of simplicity. And we adults have the grave responsibility of not scandalizing them, but rather of teaching them the path of goodness.

I have seen so many cases of children growing in virtue from their earliest childhood! It is very important to offer them models like Francisco and Jacinta.

But children can be models for adults as well. Let us recall the Gospel’s invitation: we have to learn to become like children. This invitation includes a process of maturing that leads us to recover our simplicity and innocence and to hate evil, sin. Only with a purified heart will we be able to speak with God and to hear him, as in those enchanting conversations between the little shepherds and our mother Mary.

The Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints has said that each beatification has its own originality. Could you make a comparison between the originality of Blessed Josemaria and that of the little shepherds?

I would like to emphasize something that they have in common: their unconditional desire to fulfill the will of God. God’s will was made known to the pastorinhos in an extraordinary manner, through our Lady’s apparitions. Blessed Josemaria came to know it through unexpected lights or in his prayer, after a great deal of asking. God shows each one his path. But it is impressive to see how holiness always consists in placing one’s own life totally at the service of God’s call, of the vocation one has received. In addition, when you come right down to it, the souls of all the saints possess the transparency of a child’s soul. I recall how, on the eve of the golden anniversary of his ordination, Blessed Josemaria said that he saw himself before God as a babbling child.

What are the repercussions of the beatification of the little shepherds and the reality of Fatima for today’s Church? What effect might it have on the pastoral
care of families and on catechesis?

I consider this beatification an important step for many reasons. Its deep meaning stems from being directly related to an intervention by God in the history of mankind, an intervention that took place through small, humble children.

In addition, children’s virtues often reflect the Christian atmosphere of the home in which they were born. I see this beatification, therefore, also as a valuable stimulus for so many parents of families to try to transmit the faith to their children, which is the best gift they can give them, through acts of piety lived in their families in a natural way. Thus, the Pope’s declaration that Francisco and Jacinta can be numbered among the blessed in heaven serves, among other things, as a reminder of the importance of the family for the Church. Families prepare children’s souls to receive God’s grace throughout their whole lives.

I seem to hear the echo of words Blessed Josemaria so often repeated: I bless with both of my priestly hands the human and holy love of married couples.

For some time there has been speculation about the possibility that the Church would declare a new Marian dogma: our Lady, Coredemptrix. Some theologians defend the importance of this dogma while others feel that no formal declaration on the part of the Church is necessary. What is your position?

This question concerns the deepening of our knowledge of the faith. Rightly understood, the concept of “coredemptrix” is undoubtedly applicable to the Blessed Virgin, but declaring it a dogma or not is a matter solely up to the Pope or an ecumenical council.

With regard to John Paul II’s pontificate, what are its fundamental features and what will its legacy be within the Church? And for ecumenical dialogue? And for the relationship between the Church and society?

From the very beginning, John Paul II’s pontificate has revolved around the ideal of opening the doors of the world to Christ. “Do not be afraid!” was the Pope’s message from the first day of his ministry. And throughout these years, guided by his hand, the Church has grasped more fully the promising perspectives opened up by the Second Vatican Council,
so that Christ might truly become present in all of the realities of human life.

This is an enterprise of great scope that should involve all Christians, especially those who know that we are children of God. During this pontificate, thanks be to God, Catholics have responded to the Pope’s constant call for a new evangelization, which involves opening up human hearts and social structures to Christ. We must pray that, in this common effort to illumine the world with Christ’s light, we will follow the path to full unity with all Christians. In recent years there have been very encouraging signs that give one renewed hope.

The document “We are Church” has received thousands of signatures, especially among Catholics from the countries of northern Europe. One of its central themes is the role of women in the Church. What do you think of this paper and how do you view the future?

It is understandable that some people have difficulty in comprehending that the Catholic priesthood is reserved solely to men. But, frankly, I think that the role of women in the life of the Church is much richer and broader. It seems to me that it is a great impoverishment to reduce the discussion on the mission of women in the Church to the ministerial priesthood, a question by the way that has already been definitively clarified by the Church’s magisterium.

The contribution of women to ecclesial life is, in my opinion, a very important topic. It is something that we will see being developed more fully in the future, above all through the life experience of Christian women.

The Church urgently needs women whose life is consistent with their faith at all times, who carry out evangelizing initiatives, who bring their point of view to many questions, who are valiant witnesses to Jesus Christ. I have no doubt that in the years ahead we will see a peaceful mobilization of Christian women. This will be an enterprise of holiness and apostolate, of study and doctrinal training, that will have as its fruit the enrichment of the entire Church.
Vatican City -- September 15, 2000

*Article published in* L'Osservatore Romano *on the occasion of the Jubilee of University Professors*

"Dominus dabit benignitatem, et terra nostra dabit fructum suum." “The Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase” (Ps 85:12).

Haven’t we all, at one time or another, had an opportunity to contemplate streams of water running down from snow-capped mountains?

In the spring of 1256, St. Thomas Aquinas was called upon to give his inaugural lecture as Professor of Theology at the University of Paris. Only thirty-one years old, he felt unworthy of such a prestigious position. In addition, he had difficulty finding an appropriate topic for this event. His biographers say that he was still turning this over in his head when he fell asleep. In his dreams he met an old man who set his mind at rest and invited him to give his lecture on a verse from psalm 104: “From thy lofty abode thou waterest the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy work.”

Thomas, upon waking, decided to give his discourse on these words from the psalm, applying them to the professors. As the rain waters the mountains, forming rivers that make the valleys fruitful, so wisdom comes from God to men through those who teach. We can employ this metaphor inspired by sacred scripture in recalling today the mission and responsibility of professors, on the occasion of the Jubilee.

To fully understand the meaning and value of a university we must go beyond any merely functional statement that considers institutions as pieces of machinery.

The university is not just a mechanism for professional preparation. It cannot be reduced to a bureaucracy for information. Rather it should be the soul of a society, the place where one seeks, accumulates and transmits wisdom. The fields and forests depend in good part on the purity of the water that irrigates the land. In other words, man's life depends on the wisdom that flows from the fountains: true wisdom, inspired by love and destined for service, not a rationalism turned in on itself, blind and empty. Authentic wisdom, which is one, admits of specializations; but it cannot be
separated from a global vision of man, of his origin, his nature and his destiny. Wisdom is respectful of the autonomy of temporal realities and the legitimate opinions of others; but it does not make concessions when faced with the truth and its demands, although it may have to put up with misunderstanding and discrimination. Wisdom is a gift and, at the same time, a conquest of freedom.

On the occasion of an academic ceremony held at the University of Navarre, I had the opportunity of hearing the founder of Opus Dei, Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, say the following: “The university does not live with its back turned to any of the uncertainties, worries, or needs of mankind. Its mission is not to offer immediate solutions. But in studying problems with scientific rigor, it also moves hearts, urges on the passive, awakens sleeping powers, and forms citizens disposed to build a more just society. It thus contributes with its universal work to eliminating barriers that hinder mutual understanding among men. It eases fear before an uncertain future, and fosters—through love for truth, justice and charity—true peace and harmony among individuals and nations” (Academic address, October 7, 1972).

Wisdom at the service of man, imbued with a moral sense; wisdom that breaks down barriers and banishes fear. This is the central task of a university, and it is a responsibility that challenges Christians in a very special way. A university professor who is a disciple of Jesus follows his Master with his faith and with his heart, with his thought and with his whole life. His example and teachings, when they conform to the Gospel, become a sowing of peace. How can we fail to see this as an exciting task?

For everyone, the Jubilee means conversion to Jesus Christ. For those who work in the university, the Jubilee is also concretized in an invitation to consider, anew and in depth, its role in the world and in the Church. It is also a call to renew the desire for Christian consistency, attained through the effort to know and love Jesus, God made man, who gives himself to us in the sacraments, who listens to us and speaks to us in prayer; who comes to meet us in our work. Yes, the work of the intellect also, the fatiguing but incomparable work of examining the truth, in the light of faith, with a desire of loving and serving, can and should be turned into prayer.
When the minds and hearts of intellectuals are open to the light and warmth of God’s love, there descends upon them torrents of wisdom, as the water runs down from the snow-capped peaks, filling the fields with fruit. Our times call out, more than does arid land, for an end to the “drama of the separation of faith and reason” (John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 45). And this work is the task of intellectuals: it depends on their faith and love, on each one’s humble correspondence to God’s grace. Then in our day and age the words of the psalm will be fulfilled: “Dominus dabit benignitatem, et terra nostra dabit fructum suum” (*Ps 85:12*).

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ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA
Historical Testimony

Mi encuentro con el Fundador del Opus Dei [My Encounter with the Founder of Opus Dei], Madrid 1939–1944, a new book about Blessed Josemaria, by Francisco Ponz (Eunsa, Pamplona 2000, 170 pages). The author recounts his youthful recollections of the founder of Opus Dei, whom he met in the postwar years in Spain, and the spread of the apostolic work that Blessed Josemaria inspired in that period.

The first biography in Russian of the Founder of Opus Dei

The Life and Work of Blessed Josemaria Escriva is the title of the first biography of the Founder of Opus Dei in Russian, issued in October with an initial printing of 2000 copies. The author is Evgeny Pazukhin, a writer, philosopher and journalist. A member of the Russian Orthodox Church, he worked for more than twenty years during the Communist era secretly promoting Russian Christian culture through debates, conferences, periodicals and books.

The author wrote the biography because he was deeply moved by Blessed Josemaria’s message, after he chanced to read some of his works. The book, directed to his fellow Russians, is aimed at establishing a dialogue with those who, like himself, have lived in a society devoid of freedom and now find themselves in a period charged with uncertainty and unrest, but also with great hope.

A book about professional work

Giorgio Faro, Il lavoro nell’insegnamento del Beato Josemaria Escriva [Work in the teaching of Blessed Josemaria Escriva], Agrilavoro Edizioni,
Rome, 2000, 174 pages. The author is Professor of Special Ethics at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome. He looks at the treatment of work in the teachings of Opus Dei’s founder, in light of the thirty years Christ spent living in Nazareth. Professor Faro shows the richness and depth of the teachings of Blessed Josemaria, a precursor of the doctrine of the Second Vatican Council on many aspects of the vocation and mission of the laity.

The book consists of five chapters. In the first chapter, he briefly considers an anthropology of work; then he reviews conceptions about work prevalent in the modern world (chapter 2). Next he offers an ethical-religious perspective on work in light of Sacred Scripture (chapter 3). Chapter 4 explains various aspects of the teaching on professional work contained in the spirit of Opus Dei. Finally, he considers in detail some dimensions of the sanctification of work (chapter 5).

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El bullir de la sangre de Cristo, a study of Blessed Josemaria’s theological teachings

The literature on Blessed Josemaria Escriva and his writings is constantly growing. Aside from historical, biographical and spiritual studies, others have appeared that are more expressly theological in their focus. Among these is included the recent monograph by Antonio Aranda, Professor of Dogmatic and Spiritual Theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, who has taken as his title: “El bullir de la sangre de Cristo” [Christ’s Blood Coursing through Your Veins: a Study of the Christocentrism of Blessed Josemaria Escriva] (Rialp, Madrid, 2000, 304 pages).

The title of the book, as the introduction explains, is taken from an expression Blessed Josemaria sometimes used: “I can see Christ’s blood coursing through your veins.” This eloquent expression summarizes his understanding of the Christian vocation in the midst of the world: a call
that God directs to a person to be and to act as “another Christ” among his fellow men.

Professor Aranda’s book analyzes the central Christological focus of Blessed Josemaria’s life and teachings. He first considers some of his writings (chapter 1), then looks at his priestly life and foundational mission (chapters 2 and 3), and finally considers some of the essential elements of his message of sanctification in and through daily life (chapters 4 and 5), a message concretized in the stirring apostolic goal: “to place Christ at the summit of all human activities” (chapter 6).

New editions of the works of Blessed Josemaria

Holy Rosary has been published for the first time in Finnish by Okean publishers. The first edition of The Way in Estonian has also been published.

In December the first edition of Geituk Gong Giuggwo (Christ Is Passing By) was published in Chinese, using traditional ideogram characters, by Spring Publications in Hong Kong.

In August the first Argentinian editions of Furrow and The Forge were published, with printings of 3,000 copies each by Editorial Libreria Cordoba.

In December the two Polish publishing companies Ksiegarnia Sw. Jacka and Apostollicum published the ninth edition of The Way (Droga), the fourth edition of Furrow (Bruzda), and the third edition of The Forge (Kuznia) as a single volume. Five thousand copies were printed.
A plaque commemorating the place where Opus Dei was founded

The Vincentians of the Basilica of La Milagrosa, situated on Garcia de Paredes street in Madrid, have placed a plaque inside the Church commemorating the site where Blessed Josemaría Escriva, in 1928, received the divine inspiration to found Opus Dei.

The text of the plaque reads: “On October 2, 1928, while making a retreat in this residence of the Vincentian Fathers, Blessed Josemaría Escriva de Balaguer received in his heart and mind the divine seed of Opus Dei: ‘I received an illumination about the entire Work. Deeply moved, I knelt down—I was alone in my room—and gave thanks to our Lord; and I recall with emotion the pealing of the bells of Our Lady of the Angels.’”

During those days, Blessed Josemaría was making a retreat, together with other priests, in the Central House of the Vincentian Fathers, a building connected to the Basilica, which at that time was the Church of St. Vincent. God let him “see” Opus Dei when, after celebrating Mass, he was in his room reading some notes in which he had written down inspirations and graces received during the preceding years, which took specific shape on that October 2.

Dedication of a street in Terrasini, Sicily (Italy)

Since October 14, a street in Terrasini, Sicily bears the name “Blessed Josemaría Escriva.” This is in the Sicilian town where the Calarossa International Center and the Mediterranean School of Hotel Administration have been located for the past thirty years. The activities of Christian formation and spiritual assistance in these centers are entrusted to the Opus Dei Prelature.

The ceremony, in which the local authorities participated, began with a
conference in Calarossa. Among those taking part were Carmelo Carrara, mayor of Terrasini; Doctor Giuseppe Rallo, secretary general of the ARCES association which administers the center; and Professor Gaetano Lo Castro, Professor of Canon Law at the La Sapienza University of Rome, who described features of the personality of Blessed Josemaria, summing them up with the expression: “he loved and he worked.” Dr. Rallo, for his part, described the activities that are carried out in the two centers.

Archbishop Luigi Bommarito of Catania, a native of Terrasini, presided over the blessing of the plaque bearing the name of the street.

Terrasini is the fourth city in Italy to dedicate a street to Blessed Josemaria, following Rome, Bari and Palermo.

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A chapel in Washington dedicated to Blessed Josemaria

Cardinal James Hickey, until a few months ago Archbishop of Washington, blessed a chapel dedicated to Blessed Josemaria Escriva, the founder of Opus Dei, during a Mass celebrated on September 14. The chapel is located in the Catholic Information Center of the Washington Archdiocese.

Cardinal Hickey said that the Catholic Information Center is “a place for evangelization, catechesis and spiritual renewal.” He stressed that the work carried out at the center represents “a resource to find the truth in the midst of the city. The people who come here are really seeking information on how to gain salvation and attain holiness.”

Among the participants in the ceremony were the chapel’s architect, Henry H. Menzies, and the artist, Dony MacManus, who sculpted the bronze statues of the founder of Opus Dei and of St. Catherine of Siena located at either side of the altar.
News
Opening of the Cause of Canonization for Dr. Ernesto Cofiño

On July 7, 2000, the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints granted the *nihil obstat* for the opening of Ernesto Guillermo Cofiño’s Cause. On the 31st of the same month, with Guatemala City’s Archbishop Prospero Penados del Barrio presiding, the publication of the Decree of Introduction of the Cause took place in the Archbishop’s residence, along with the opening session of the Process on the Life and Virtues of the Servant of God.

Ernesto Guillermo Cofiño was born in Guatemala City on June 5, 1899, and died with a reputation for sanctity in the same city on October 17, 1991, as a result of cancer. In 1929 he graduated as a surgeon from the University of Paris. He married in 1933 and raised five children. In 1956 he requested admission to Opus Dei.

He dedicated himself fully to the exercise of his profession with an admirable spirit of service that led him to be concerned not only about his patients’ physical health but also their personal problems and concerns. His deep spiritual outlook and rich humanity led him to defend the right and love for life, promoting and carrying out himself many initiatives for the benefit of future mothers, abandoned children and orphans. He founded shelters and social assistance centers for the most needy.

A pioneer in pediatric research in Guatemala, he was the first professor of pediatrics in the University of San Carlos medical school, where he taught for 24 years. He was one of the founders of the Pediatric Association of Guatemala (1945), and presided over it on four different occasions. He was a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the French Language Association of Pediatrics. He was appointed director of *Caritas Guatemala* for three years and delegate for Guatemala to the Interamerican Institute for the Child.

The Postulation for the Cause has received reports of favors attributed to his intercession from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico, the United States, Australia, Peru, France, Poland and Spain.
Thousands of families attend Marian Congress in Torreciudad

On September 16, Archbishop John Patrick Foley, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, presided at the Twelfth Marian Family Conference, held at the Sanctuary of Torreciudad in Huesca, Spain. Fifteen thousand people attended the ceremony, which could also be followed directly by internet. “The family,” said Archbishop Foley in his homily at Mass, “is the intimate space where one can live in a climate of love and human and Christian values that are capable of transforming the world.”

At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, the rector of the shrine, Fr. Javier Mora-Figueroa, read a message from His Holiness John Paul II, in which he invoked “the protection of the Holy Family, an example for all Christian families,” and said that he “would like many people to gain the plenary indulgence of the Holy Year” through this Congress, since Torreciudad is one of the places where the Jubilee indulgence could be gained.

In the evening the families organized a musical festival. Later they prayed the rosary, accompanying Our Lady of Torreciudad, who was carried on a platform around the shrine area. The congress ended with an act of Eucharistic adoration.

The celebration had a special importance in that it coincided with the shrine’s 25th anniversary. It was inaugurated on July 7, 1975, after years of prayer and alms-seeking at the request of Blessed Josemaria Escriva, who wished to spread devotion to our Lady. “In these 25 years, thousands of people have benefited from the spiritual fruit that the founder of Opus Dei hoped for,” said the rector.
Confessions in St. Peter's during the Jubilee

At the beginning of the Holy Year, the Central Committee for the Jubilee asked the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Echevarría, to make available a priest of the Prelature for coordinating the penitential service in the Braccio di Carlo Magno, a building next to St. Peter’s Basilica. Msgr. Flavio Capucci was placed in charge of this, and Fr. Oscar Maixé was named as principal assistant.

More than a hundred priests helped out in this pastoral work, including members of the Roman Curia, and professors and students at pontifical universities. Many of them were priests of the Prelature of Opus Dei and members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross.

The availability of these confessions in the Braccio di Carlo Magno, where eight confessionals were installed, began on January 28, 2000, and ended on the morning of January 6, 2001. Thanks be to God, many thousands of pilgrims from countries all over the world approached the sacrament of penance during these months, especially on the occasion of World Youth Day and other special events of the Jubilee Year.

Pontifical appointments

The Holy Father has appointed Bishop Javier Echevarría as a Member of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signature.

The Holy Father has also made the following appointments:

Rev. Juan Ignacio Arrieta Ochoa de Chinchetru
Consultor of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signature and Judge of the Ecclesiastical Court of Vatican City;

Rev. Mariano Artigas Mayayo
Member of the Pontifical Academy of Saint Thomas Aquinas;

Rafael Tomas Caldera
The Sedes Sapientiae International Seminary begins a new year

The *Sedes Sapientiae* International Seminary was established in Rome by the Holy See on January 9, 1991, for the formation of candidates for the priesthood coming from dioceses throughout the world. The seminary’s direction is entrusted to the Opus Dei Prelature.

On October 21, the opening of the school year was celebrated in its new quarters situated in the district of Trastevere. The remodeling of the building, which provides rooms for one hundred seminarians, was carried out thanks to the generous help of many persons and institutions.

Various officials took part in the ceremony. In his speech, the director for social policies of the Rome municipal council expressed his joy at having students from all over the world become future spreaders of Christian Rome’s culture to all corners of the globe.

The seminary’s rector, Fr. Pedro Huidobro, pointed out that “students come to the eternal city to ‘learn Rome,’ as John Paul II has expressed it. Rome teaches them to be catholic, universal, to have a big heart capable of understanding and loving everyone.”

The students enrolled for the current academic year come from Austria, Brazil, Burma, Cameroun, the Dutch Antilles, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and the United States.
To date, almost one hundred Sedes Sapientiae students, representing twenty-six dioceses, have been ordained to the priesthood.
INITIATIVES

• In Brief
Initiatives

The apostolic initiatives included in this section reflect educational, cultural, and social assistance projects carried out by faithful of the Prelature and cooperators together with many other people, both Catholics and non-Catholics. Those running these activities, with full personal (and financial) responsibility, are striving to provide answers to the needs of their country and society.

The Prelature of Opus Dei, by agreement with the sponsors or by provisions of the statutes of the entity involved, helps provide a Christian outlook to these social initiatives through doctrinal guidelines and priestly attention. This help is always made available with full respect for each one's freedom of conscience and without any discrimination in regard to race, religion or social condition.

In Brief

Pamplona (Spain) -- The Gospel of St. Mark for the whole university

On the occasion of the Jubilee Year celebration, the chaplaincy of the University of Navarre distributed copies of the Gospel according to St. Mark to students, professors and employees in a special pocket edition prepared by the school of theology and published by EUNSA, the university’s press.

The introduction includes two quotations. One of them, from Pope John Paul II, reads: “You need Christ, but Christ also needs you to make him known” (to the Univ 2000 Congress). The other is from the founder of the university, Blessed Josemaria Escriva: “May your behavior and your conversation be such that everyone who sees or hears you can say: This man reads the life of Jesus Christ” (The Way, no. 2).
Managua (Nicaragua) -- In outlying urban districts

From July 26 to August 9 a group of young Canadian women, under the coordination of Fonteneige University Residence in Montreal, traveled to Nicaragua to take part in the project entitled “University Solidarity,” promoted by the La Rivera residence in Nicaragua.

From its beginning in 1995, La Rivera has carried out charitable initiatives in social work and health in the poor outlying areas of Managua such as Nueva Vida, Esquipulas, Diriamba, and Salinas Grande.

This year, the Nicaraguan students with their Canadian colleagues worked in the Esquipulas district and in Diriamba. Their project consisted in painting homes and in coordinating conferences on civics in the 30 public schools of Diriamba. They also helped care for a group of children with Down Syndrome, and visited families of limited resources who had children with this handicap.

Tegucigalpa (Honduras) -- "One on One," initiatives in solidarity

A group of high school students from Club Espavel, in Tegucigalpa, took part in a program of educational and social assistance to 12 and 13-year-old boys from families of limited income in one of the largest poor areas of the city.

The program called “one on one” consists in students in the last year of high school dedicating two hours a week to providing personalized study help to students from the Juan Ramon Molina school. The plan begins with a session assessing the needs of each child in such areas as
mathematics, natural science, Spanish and civics. Afterwards, the boys attend a talk of Christian formation, followed by a session of sports and some refreshments.

In addition to the personal attention, those who work as tutors also make visits to the families of the boys to encourage the parents to take an interest in the activities of their children and to provide some material help.

The administration of the Juan Ramon Molina school has asked that the program be continued during the next school year.

Piura (Peru) -- Jubilee of university students

Many university students were unable to visit Rome to gain the Jubilee indulgence or to take part in the World Youth Day celebrated there in mid-August. But a few weeks later, in Peru, the Jubilee was celebrated in the city of Piura by university students with the same eagerness for conversion. Over ten thousand students took part, many of them from the University of Piura, founded by faithful of the Opus Dei Prelature.

Preparations included a wide distribution of leaflets explaining the Holy Year and the Jubilee, and brief expositions in the halls of the various schools set up by their chaplains, and handing out leaflets explaining the sacrament of penance. The diocesan bishop, Most Rev. Oscar Cantuarias, presided over the opening ceremony and celebrated the final Mass. The opening ceremony took place on the campus of the University of Piura, at the Shrine to the Holy Family. The closing Mass was held on the campus of the National University of Piura; several thousand students took part in both events. Thursday, the 21st, was designated a day of Eucharistic adoration. From early in the morning, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed in the university chapel and a constant stream of people came to pray there. At the same time the sacrament of penance was available in various places throughout the university. Many students took part in preparing the carpet of flowers laid down where the procession with the Blessed Sacrament would pass, from the university chapel to the Shrine of the Holy Family.
When the procession with the monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament began, all of the lights on the campus were turned off and thousands of candles carried by students were lit. Father Vicente Plazos, the head chaplain of the University of Piura, carried the monstrance underneath a canopy held up by students and surrounded by others bearing torches. During the procession he was flanked by university students singing Eucharistic hymns.

After the procession thousands of students walked down the main streets of the city to the front of the cathedral. There the Archbishop addressed them in vibrant tones and gave all of them a blessing with the Blessed Sacrament.

On the following day, Friday, the 22nd, confessions continued at both universities up until the moment of Holy Mass at seven in the evening. Archbishop Cantuarias encouraged them to continue in the same spirit that had led many students to a personal conversion, so that this experience would not be something momentary or passing.

Nairobi (Kenya) -- Kimlea School Medical Camp at Tigoni

For over a year medical attention has been provided on a regular basis to people from the villages around Kimlea Girls’ Technical Training Center. This center offers courses of professional training to students who come from the families of workers on the tea and coffee plantations. The wages these workers receive are barely enough to support themselves, and they cannot afford either medical attention or medicines.

This initiative arose among university women associated with the Women in Science Club, organized by Fanusi Study Center in Nairobi, who wished to dedicate their time to some type of social work. Twenty students from the schools of medicine, pharmacy and nursing at Nairobi University work under the guidance of Dr. Lucy Mungai, Dr. Wangari
Karuru and Dr. Kue Thang’a. Hence was born Kimlea School Medical Camp-Tigoni.

On the third Saturday of each month, Kimlea is converted into a clinic which is visited by some 80 patients. The nursing students perform routine tests while the doctors hold consultations with patients. The medicines that are distributed to those who need them come from donations that the students solicit from pharmaceutical companies during the month.

Kimlea gives the university girls not only the opportunity of offering their services and technical knowledge for the benefit of the most needy but also of providing human and Christian formation in this rural area.
One of the addresses was by Dr. Guy de Teramond, currently Minister of Science and Technology and professor at the University of Stanford, who spoke on the technological and scientific advances of contemporary society and the challenge that this represents for developing countries. Dr. Robert Holden, an American journalist and historian, dealt with the historical antecedents to global integration. Dr. Flory Fernandez, a sociologist at the University of Costa Rica, spoke about local identity and globalization.

On the following days, those taking part gathered in work groups to go deeper into the topics and analyze studies and articles published in regard to globalization.

Sydney (Australia) -- Thirty years at Creston College

“In education the important thing is to incline the students towards the good,” said Imelda Roche, Chancellor of Bond University, during the celebration of the Thirtieth Anniversary of Creston College, a university residence at the University of New South Wales.

In her address Chancellor Roche stressed the educational role of women in society and said that the formation provided at Creston fostered the promotion of justice, human dignity and the priority of the family as the nucleus of society.

Australia’s Prime Minister, John Howard, sent a message of congratulations in which he encouraged those involved to continue their work in fostering women’s education. During the meeting other messages were read from various civil and university authorities throughout the country and from ex-residents from various parts of the world, including the Philippines, Lebanon, Hong Kong, Singapore, Poland and Kenya.
Rome -- Humanizing work

A series of conferences was organized by the Elis association under the title “Work at the beginning of the new century.” The intended audience included especially those involved in providing professional guidance to young people.

The first meeting, on March 20, featured Giuliano Amato, Italian Secretary of the Treasury, and Pier Paolo Donati, Professor of Sociology at the University of Bologna. The topic of the conference was “Work in the Post-Industrial Era.”

Professor Donati explained that “the aim of these meetings is to understand the changes taking place over the medium and long term and to study, with a broad vision, strategies for the promotion of work.”

The second meeting, held on May 23, was on “Professional Formation in the Era of Globalization.” It brought together executives of telecommunications companies, employment agencies and government organizations in this sector, many of which have collaborated in training programs run by Centro Elis, a corporate work of the Opus Dei Prelature.

The third conference was held in early December. Professor Hernan Fitte, a professor of the social teaching of the Church at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, gave a presentation entitled “Work in the Theological Thought of the Twentieth Century.” The series was concluded by Antonio Fazio, Director of the Bank of Italy.

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St. Petersburg (Russia) -- Social work during vacations

Bulevardi Foorumi, the Opus Dei Prelature’s center in Helsinki, organized an international work camp for high school and university students in St. Petersburg. Students coming from Ireland, Sweden and Finland took part.
The work involved cleaning and painting a shelter for invalids in St. Petersburg and the apartments of other disabled people in various parts of the city. The participants also visited a reformatory at Tikhvin, some 150 miles east of St. Petersburg. The visit included playing sports with the young inmates and a cultural activity.

Other activities organized for the students were visits to factories, conferences by university professors and talks by businessmen describing their country’s situation.

Budapest (Hungary) -- Supporters of life

Two social institutions located in the Hungarian capital, the Peteny orphanage and a shelter for the elderly, were the scene of “Project Budapest 2000,” now in its third year. The program of social volunteerism, with its theme “Protagonists of life, for oneself and for others,” was organized by the Italian Riparia Cultural Center of Turin and L’Arengo Cultural Center of Bologna, in collaboration with the Fenyvesliget Kulturalis Kozpont of Hungary.

The Italian and Hungarian college and high school girls provided assistance to the children and the elderly in the two institutions. In the orphanage they assisted three hundred children below the age of three, some of them affected by congenital infirmities. In the home for the aged they helped care for the old people and carried out cleaning and maintenance projects in their rooms.

Bethlehem -- Intercultural crossroad

A group of British, Irish and Arab college women met in Bethlehem this past summer in connection with a cultural activity that has now taken place the last three years. The goal was to foster intercultural dialogue and
facilitate mutual understanding in this part of the world through cultural and social activities uniting members of the different communities.

The project was jointly organized by Biranta Study Center in Jerusalem, Glenalvon Cultural Centre in Glasgow, Scotland, and Glenard University Residence in Dublin, Ireland. This year the program consisted in an intensive course in English and Hebrew for Palestinian girls from Bethlehem. Volunteers from Scotland and Ireland gave the English classes while Arab teachers took charge of the Hebrew classes.

The activities included seminars in philosophy for the British and Irish students organized in Jerusalem by Biranta Study Center. Visits were made to the Holy Places in Galilee and Jerusalem and to other sites of historical and cultural interest. The European volunteers shared lodgings with the Arab teachers and met with Jewish students who had taken part in a similar project in previous years.

The president of the “Arab Women’s Union” of Bethlehem made available the site where the activities were held for the 43 participants. The course included classes of grammar and conversation, and seminars on the need for dialogue and understanding to construct a common future. Excursions were organized to areas not always accessible to the students, including the fertile hills of Ain Karim. An evening for the students’ families was also organized.

For their part, the Arab families offered the volunteers warm hospitality, inviting them to meals and helping them discover their rich local traditions.

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London (Great Britain) -- "Medical research" for students at Ashwell House

Ashwell House, a university residence for women in London, organized its first forum on medical research directed to students of medicine and other sciences, under the title “On the medical research front.”
The forum was part of “Creating Sparks Week,” a national initiative which promotes projects publicizing science. The principal objective of the forum was to make known some current subjects of medical research, considering their human and academic relevance as well as their ethical implications.

The forum was inaugurated on September 11 by Professor Susan Greenfield, a director of the Royal Institute and author of the recently published book *The Private Life of the Brain*. Greenfield dealt with the problem of neurodegeneration and offered an up-to-date view of Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases. She also spoke of her research in the field of the autoconsciousness of the human mind and the importance of adopting a methodology that takes into account the personal dignity of patients.

Christine Growney, professor of anatomy at the University of Glasgow, spoke on “Research and the Person,” explaining certain ethical questions in medical research. Doctor Growney defended the need for research oriented by an understanding of the intrinsic dignity of the person.

Other participants in the conference were Professor John A. Henry, Professor of Emergency Medicine at the Imperial College, London, who spoke on the treatment for drug addiction and on toxicology; Doctor Gill Samuels, who gave her views on current perspectives in pharmacological research for the Genome project; and Dr. Keith Dorrington, of Oxford university, who spoke of the effects of lack of oxygen on the brain.

The students visited Northwick Park Institute for Medical Research, where they attended presentations on molecular biology, immunology, and infant deaths due to asphyxia. Professor Colin Green, the director of the Institute, spoke about the concept of service as an essential factor in medical research.

Participants in the forum also took part in a demonstration of the Doppler echocardiograph at Oxford and visited the laboratory of Professor Rod Hay at the Institute of Dermatology at St. John’s Hospital, as well as the Department of Radiology at Hammersmith Hospital.
In an informal gathering at the Imperial College, Elizabeth Mills, director of the charitable organization “Research into Aging,” dealt with some practical ways for an organization that finances research to transmit values in medical research.

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São Paulo (Brazil) -- International Symposium on Family Medicine

An International Symposium on Family Medicine was held on October 6 and 7 in São Paulo at the University Extension Center, under the sponsorship of the Brazilian Society for Family Medicine.

The Symposium included Brazil’s Minister of Health, Dr. José Serra, and Dr. Joshua Freeman, chairman of the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Texas, as well as other prestigious doctors from various countries. Dr. Pablo Gonzalez Blasco, professor of Family Medicine and a member of the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine, was coordinator of the event. The Symposium was attended by a large number of young doctors and medical students.

The Symposium dealt with the organization of family medicine in Brazil and the role of the university in the training of doctors in this specialty. It also considered the experience of other countries in this area, as a way of humanizing medicine and giving more importance to the patient as a person and his or her family situation. “Knowing the person who is sick,” one of the conclusions states, “is just as or more important than knowing the sickness afflicting the person.”

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Montevideo (Uruguay) -- Educational formation by the C.A.D.I.

For more than ten years the C.A.D.I. (Centro Apoyo para el Desarollo
Integral [Social Center for Integral Development]) has offered the people of “La Cantera” and other outlying sections of Montevideo a day-care service, workshops for women, and consulting services addressing medical, legal, and social problems.

The center provides a program for tutoring girls in the first years of secondary school. This program also provides attention to women who, for various reasons, have had to give up their studies and would like to begin again. Often this is a question of women who, besides taking care of their family, have to work outside the home, which has prevented them from regular attendance at schools for adults. In both cases the C.A.D.I. program helps those attending to carry out their studies at a rate commensurate with their personal circumstances.

This year, a group of university women from the Residencia Del Mar, a corporate work of Opus Dei, took part each Saturday in this activity. Besides planning meetings, the students carried out tests in the nearby districts to evaluate the level of education of the people living there. They also started a program to solicit funds for educational purposes and created a library of books used in the high schools of the area as well as other books of general interest.

The program seeks not simply to impart information, but also to encourage good study habits based on order, punctuality and constancy. The students are helped to discover that study is not only a way of improving academically but also as persons and as Christians.

Rome -- Health center for the aged

On June 11 the first building of the Campus Bio-Medico University was inaugurated in Trigoria, a community to the southeast of Rome. Other buildings will be constructed here in the next few years to form the definitive campus of the new university. At the present time the Campus Bio-Medico and its university hospital are located in provisional quarters
to the east of Rome. The new building will be a Health Center for the Aged.

Some five hundred people attended the inauguration ceremony, among them the mayor of Rome. Many of those present had helped in various ways to make this new center a reality, including the movie actor Alberto Sordi. In the addresses, academic officials reminded those present that the university, of which the new center forms part, is inspired by the teachings of the founder of Opus Dei.
IN PACE
In the second half of 2000, 240 faithful of the Prelature and 16 members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross passed away.

The suffrages stipulated by Blessed Josemaría 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 the ordinary circumstances of their lives into an occasion for loving God and 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.

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