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
Towards the canonization of Josemaria Escriva

Since 1992, so many thousands of people have said the prayer on the prayer card of Blessed Josemaria that ends with the double request: “Deign to grant the canonization of Blessed Josemaria and, through his intercession, grant me the favor of....” How many people have seen the second part of this petition granted! Blessed Josemaria has obtained from God the help they needed to overcome a family problem, an illness, a conflict at work, spiritual and material needs of all sorts, whether large or small.

The first part of the petition is still pending. But God will soon answer the cry of so many souls who have been beseeching him for Blessed Josemaria’s canonization. The decree on a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Josemaria, which the Pope approved on December 20th, has opened the door to his canonization.

Every miracle, like every saint, is an eloquent sign of God’s active presence in the world. John Paul II has canonized more saints than any other Pope. He clearly wants to present today’s Christians with as many different models of sanctity as possible. But he is also addressing a challenge to a society that in practice has turned away from God, showing it that God has not ceased to act in the world for the benefit of mankind.

God shows himself to his creatures in the “miracle” of nature: in the rhythm of the sun and the seasons, in the beauty of the fields and the forests. But divine action also has extraordinary manifestations that totally transcend the order of nature and the grasp of human reason. These extraordinary interventions of God, miracles properly speaking, only make sense within the logic of faith. Christ only worked miracles where he found faith, and he did so both to help people believe and to increase their faith.[1]

“Yes, this is still the age of miracles. We, too, would work them if we had enough faith!”[2] wrote Blessed Josemaria. Faith can move mountains. It can cure the sick, obtain bread for the hungry, calm storms... But, above all, faith makes saints. “Behold,” Jesus once said to his disciples, “I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless do not
rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”[3]

That the name of Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer will be written in the book of the saints is for everyone a cause of joy. And the fact that this news coincides with the centennial of his birth will help to spread the message of his life and teachings more widely. Thus many more people will be impelled to follow Christ by sanctifying their professional work and daily life.

God asks of all of us what he asked of Blessed Josemaria: holiness. The words our Lord addressed to his apostles are meant for every man and woman: “rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” But all of us, immersed in our daily struggles and concerns, still have a long road to travel. And while traveling through this world the sad possibility always exists of erasing our own name from the list in which we were inscribed by the grace of baptism.

That God has called all men and women to holiness is one of Blessed Josemaria’s central themes. His canonization should spur us to delve more deeply into this truth, to take it up ourselves, and to communicate it with the force and conviction that is born of faith. The celebration of the centennial and canonization of the founder of Opus Dei must go beyond mere externals. What God and the Church, and also Blessed Josemaria from heaven, expect of us on this unique occasion in the history of Opus Dei is the fruit of sanctity and apostolate.

Persevering faithfully to the end of the path of our Christian vocation is itself a great miracle, no less so than the disappearance of an incurable illness. And like every miracle, it is granted by God to those who ask for it with faith. Through Blessed Josemaria’s intercession, this is a good moment to ask God for the miracle of our own sanctity and for abundant apostolic fruit.

 HOLY SEE

• The Roman Pontiff
• The Roman Curia
• Review of Other Documents
1. Dear families of this beloved nation who have gathered in Rome to strengthen your faith and your vocation, I greet you one by one, clasping you in a great embrace. I greet the guest families from Eastern Europe whom I have met. I extend my greeting to Cardinal Camillo Ruini, President of the Italian Bishops’ Conference and to the other Cardinals and Bishops present, as well as to the political and civil authorities.

I welcome you with affection to this square, the heart of the universal Church. This evening it has been transformed, thanks to the festive presence of so many Christian families, into a great domestic Church. I thank you for your warm greeting and for the joy you give me by your heartfelt welcome.

This meeting is a new stage of the journey that saw us gathered here in St Peter's Square last year, with many of you and with many other families from across the world, to celebrate the Great Jubilee. We are here to confirm your journey and to keep our gaze fixed on Jesus Christ, the One who is our “Light, and who calls you to shed the light of your witness on humanity’s way along the paths of the new millennium!” (John Paul II, Address to the Third World Meeting of Families, October 14, 2000, no. 9; L'Osservatore Romano English edition, October 18, 2000, p. 3).

2. For this meeting you have chosen the theme: “Believing in the Family is Building the Future”. This demanding theme invites us to reflect on the truth about the family and, at the same time, on its role for the future of humanity. Certain questions can guide us in this reflection: “Why believe in the family?” and further, “what family should we believe in?” and lastly, “who should believe in the family?” To answer the first question, we must start from an original and fundamental truth: “God firmly believes in the family. From the very first, from the “beginning,” by creating the human
being in his image and likeness, male and female, his intention was to centre his plan on the reality of the love between man and woman (cf. Gen 1:27). The whole story of salvation is an impassioned dialogue between the faithful God, whom the prophets often describe as the betrothed or the bridegroom, and the chosen community, the bride, often tempted by infidelity but always awaited, sought out and reclaimed by her Lord (cf. Is 62:4-5; Hos 1:3). So great and strong is the Father’s confidence in the family that with the family in mind, he also sent his Son, the Bridegroom, who came to redeem his Bride, the Church and in her, every human person and every family (cf. Letter to Families, no. 18). Yes, dear families, “the Bridegroom is with you!” From His presence, welcomed and responded to, flows that special extraordinary sacramental power that makes your intimate union of life an effective sign of love between Christ and the Church and makes you as it were responsible subjects and leaders of ecclesial and social life.

3. The fact that God established the family as the foundation of human coexistence and the paradigm of ecclesial life, calls forth from you a determined and convinced response. In Familiaris Consortio, written 20 years ago this month, I said: “Family, become what you are” (cf. no. 17). Today I add, “Believe in what you are”; believe in your vocation to be a luminous sign of God’s love.

This meeting enables us to thank God for the gifts he has lavished upon his Church and upon families, which in recent years have cherished the teachings of the Council and those of Familiaris Consortio. We must also be grateful to the Church in Italy and to her pastors for having made a crucial contribution to the reflection on marriage and the family, with important documents such as Evangelization and the Sacrament of Marriage which, since 1975, has been a real turning point in family ministry, and especially, the Directory of the Family Apostolate, published in July 1993.

4. The second question leads us to reflect on a very timely aspect, because today such different opinions on the concept of family are being professed that one can be misled into believing that there is no longer any criterion to qualify or define it. As well as a religious dimension, the family also has a social dimension. The family’s value and role are equally obvious from the social point of view. Today, unfortunately, we are witnessing the spread of distorted and particularly dangerous visions of the family, put forth by
relativistic ideologies and universally peddled by the media. In fact, for the good of the State and of society, it is fundamentally important to safeguard the family founded on marriage, accepted as an act that seals the reciprocal commitment, expressed and supervised publicly, the full assumption of responsibility towards the other and to the children with its entitlement to rights and duties, as the primary social nucleus on which the nation founds its life.

If we lose the conviction that the family founded on marriage cannot in any way be equated with other forms of emotional relationship, we undermine the very structure of society and its juridical foundation. The harmonious development and progress of a people depend to a large extent on its ability to invest in the family, by guaranteeing at the legislative, social and cultural level the full and effective realization of its functions and duties.

Dear families, in a democratic system, it becomes fundamentally necessary to formulate the reasons that motivate the defense of the family based on marriage. It is the principal source of hope for the future of humanity, as is expressed well in the second part of the theme chosen for this meeting. Thus we hope that individuals, communities and social entities increasingly believe in the family founded on marriage, a place of love and authentic solidarity.

5. In fact, if we are to look to the future with confidence, it is indispensable that everyone believe in the family, by embracing the responsibilities that correspond to his own role. Thus we responded to the third question with which we started: “who should believe in the family?” First of all I would like to stress that the first to guarantee the good of the family are the spouses themselves, either by living responsibly their daily commitments, joys and efforts or by adding their voice, together with associations or groups and cultural initiatives, to social and legislative petitions capable of sustaining family life. Everyone knows and appreciates the work done in these years by the Forum of Family Associations. I express my appreciation of all they have done and also of the initiative called Family for family, which intends to build up relations of solidarity between Italian families and families in the countries of Eastern Europe.
Politicians and government leaders have a special responsibility. They have to put into effect the norm of the Constitution and seriously consider the solid requests of the people, the majority of whom have families whose union is founded on the bond of matrimony. It is therefore right to anticipate legislation that focuses on the dignity of the human person and on the proper application of the principle of subsidiarity between the State and families, legislation that can lead to the solution of questions that are important and in many ways crucial for the country’s future.

6. It is particularly important and urgent to arrange for a scholastic and educational system that has at heart the family and its freedom to choose. This does not mean, as some people erroneously think, taking from the State schools to give to private schools, but rather it means to overcome an obvious injustice that penalizes all families by preventing their effective freedom of initiative and choice. Thus there are additional burdens for those who desire to exercise their fundamental right to control the educational approach for their children by choosing schools that are carrying out a public service, even if they are not State schools.

A major improvement in the quality of social policy programs would also be desirable because they should increasingly consider the centrality of the family, to sympathize with its needs for choices in the area of residential planning, the organization of work, the determining of salaries and criteria for taxation. Special attention should be paid to the legitimate concern of the many families that report an increasing deterioration in the media which, as a vehicle for violence, vulgarity and pornography, are proving less and less attentive to the presence of minors and their rights. Institutions and social forces cannot leave families unaided in their efforts to guarantee their children a healthy, positive environment that is rich in human and religious values.

7. Dear families, as you face these great challenges, do not despair and do not feel alone: The Lord believes in you; the Church walks with you; people of good will are looking with confidence to you!

You are called to be the moving spirits of the future of humanity, to shape the vision of the new millennium. In this task may the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Mother, guide and assist you; she is present in our midst in one
of her more venerated images. As I invoke her heavenly protection, I entrust your every hope to Our Lady of Loreto, Queen of the Family, who, with her husband Joseph, in the home of Nazareth, experienced the joys and fatigues of family life. Dear husbands and wives, may the Lord strengthen you in the faithfulness you promised with your marriage vows on your wedding day. The Pope and the Church pray for you. I warmly bless you, together with your children!

Homily at the Mass concluding the 10th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (October 27, 2001)

1. “Proclaim His salvation to every people” (Resp. Psalm).

The words of the responsorial Psalm express our inner attitude at the end of the Synod of the Bishops. The prolonged, detailed examination of the theme of the Episcopate renewed in each of us the passionate awareness of the mission entrusted to us by the Lord Jesus Christ. With apostolic fervor, in the name of the entire College of Bishops which we represent, gathered together at the tomb of the apostle Peter, we wish to repeat our common acceptance of the mandate of the Risen Lord: “We shall proclaim the salvation of the Lord to all peoples.” It is a new beginning, as a follow up to the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 and at the beginning of the third Christian millennium. The first reading took us back to the atmosphere of the Jubilee, the Messianic oracle of Isaiah repeated many times during the Holy Year. It is a proclamation full of hope for the poor and the afflicted. It is the beginning of the “year of the mercy of the Lord” (Is 61,2), which found in the Jubilee a wonderful reality. However, it transcends the limits of the calendar to go out to every place touched by the saving presence of Christ and of his Spirit.

Listening to this proclamation once more, we are confirmed in the conviction expressed at the end of the great Jubilee: “to leave more open than before the living door which is Christ for the new generations of the new
millennium” (cf. Novo Millennio Ineunte, no. 59). In fact, Christ is the hope of the world. The mission of the Church, and particularly, of the Apostles and of their successors is to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

2. The exhortation of the Apostle Peter to the “elders”, heard during the second reading, as well as the Gospel passage, just proclaimed, make use of the symbolism of the shepherd and his flock, presenting the ministry of Christ and of his Apostles in a “pastoral” key. “Feed the flock of God which has been entrusted to you”, wrote St Peter, mindful of the mandate he himself received from Christ: “Feed my lambs... feed my sheep” (Jn 21:15, 16, 17). It is even more striking to realize that it is the way the Son of God reveals himself: “I am the Good Shepherd” (Jn 10:11), with the sacrificial designation: “I lay down my life for my sheep” (cf. Jn 10:15).

For this reason, Peter is defined “witness of the sufferings of Christ and partaker of the glory to be revealed” (1 Pet 5:1). In the Church, the Pastor is above all the bearer of the Easter and eschatological witness, that finds its culmination in the celebration of the Eucharist, memorial of the death of the Lord and pledge of his glorious return. The celebration of the Eucharist is the pastoral action par excellence: “Do this in memory of me” includes not just the ritual representation of the Supper, but also, as a consequence, the availability to offer himself for his flock, following the example of what he did during the time of his life and above all at the hour of his death.

3. In these weeks the image of the Good Shepherd was recalled many times in the Synod. In fact, it is the “icon” that inspired many holy bishops down through the centuries, and which better than any other, defines the ministry and life style of the successors of the Apostles. From this point of view, one cannot fail to realize that the Synod was spiritually connected with the Magisterium that the church left us in the course of her history. It should be enough to think, for example, of the Council of Trent, which took place about four and a half centuries ago. Among the reasons for the enormous impact of the Council on the revival of the life of the People of God, there was certainly the representation of the care of souls as the first and primary duty of the bishops, who were called to stable residence with their flock, and to form valid collaborators in the pastoral ministry by the creation of seminaries.
Four hundred years later, the *Second Vatican Council* took up and developed the lesson of Trent, opening it toward the global vistas of the new evangelization. *At the dawn of the third millennium* the Church continues to rely on the ideal figure of the bishop, that of the Pastor who, configured to Christ in holiness of life, expends himself generously for the Church entrusted to him, at the same time carrying in his heart the solicitude for the churches spread over the face of the earth (cf. 2 Cor 11:28).

4. The bishop, the good shepherd, finds light and force for his ministry in the *Word of God*, interpreted in the communion of the church, and announced with courageous fidelity *in season and out of season* (2 Tim 4:2). *Master of the faith*, the bishop promotes whatever is good and positive in the flock entrusted to him, sustains and guides those weak in faith (*Rom* 14:1), intervenes to unmask falsehoods and combat abuses.

It is important that the bishop be aware of the challenges that faith in Christ has to face today on account of the mentality based on human criteria, that at times relativizes the Law and the Plan of God. Above all, he must have the *courage to announce and defend sound doctrine*, even when it entails suffering. In fact, the bishop, in communion with the apostolic college and with the Successor of Peter, has the duty of protecting the faithful from any kind of temptation, showing in a *wholehearted return to the Gospel of Christ* the true solution for the complicated problems that burden humanity. The service the bishops are called to render to the flock will be the source of hope to the extent to which they live an *ecclesiology of communion and mission*. In the Synodal meetings these days, the request for a spirituality of communion was often stated. In line with the Working Document (no. 63) many members repeated the phrase: “*the strength of the church is her communion, her weakness is division and internal opposition.*” Only if a deep and convinced unity of the pastors with the *Successor of Peter* is clearly discernible, and also the unity of the *bishops with their priests*, can we give a credible reply to the challenges that come from the present social and cultural world. In this regard, dear Brothers, Members of the Synod, I wish to express my grateful appreciation for the witness of joyful communion in your solicitude for the humanity of our time that you gave these days.
5. I would like to ask you to bring my greetings to your faithful and, in a special way, to your priests, to whom you will devote special attention, establishing with each of them a direct, confident and cordial relationship. I also know that you make every effort to do it, since you are convinced that a diocese works well only if the clergy are joyfully united around the bishop in fraternal charity.

I ask you to greet the Bishops emeriti, bringing them the expression of my appreciation for the work done for the good of the faithful. I wanted them to be represented in the Synod to reflect on the theme which is new in the Church, since it is the result of the resolution of Vatican II for the good of the particular churches. I trust that each Bishops’ Conference will study how to utilize the Bishops emeriti who are still in good health and full of energy, entrusting to them an ecclesial service and the study of problems for which they have experience and competence, calling upon those who are available to join one or other committee alongside younger colleagues so that they will always feel they are living members of the college of bishops.

I want to send a special greeting to the Bishops of mainland China, whose absence from the Synod has not prevented us from feeling their spiritual closeness in memory and prayer.

6. “When the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of unfading glory” (1 Pet 5:4). At the end of the first Synod of the third millennium, I fondly recall the 22 bishops canonized in the course of the 20th century: Alessandro Maria Sauli, Bishop of Pavia, Robert Bellarmine, Cardinal, Bishop of Capua, Doctor of the Church; Albert the Great, Bishop of Regensburg, Doctor of the Church; John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, Martyr; Antoni Maria Claret, Archbishop of Santiago of Cuba; Vincenzo Maria Strambi, Bishop of Macerata and Tolentino; Antonio Maria Gianelli, Bishop of Bobbio; Gregory Barbarigo, Bishop of Padua; Juan de Ribera, Archbishop of Valencia; Oliver Plunkett, Archbishop of Armagh, Martyr; Justin de Jacobis, Bishop of Nilopolis and Apostolic Vicar of Abyssinia; John Nepomucene Neumann, Bishop of Philadelphia; Jeronimo Hermosilla, Valentino Berrio-Ochoa with six other bishops, Martyrs in Viet Nâm; Ezekiel Moreno y Diaz, Bishop of Pasto, Colombia; Charles Joseph Eugène de Mazenod, Bishop of Marseille. Furthermore, in
less than a month, I will have the joy of proclaiming saint, Giuseppe Marello, Bishop of Acqui.

From this chosen circle of holy Pastors, which could be extended to include the numerous fellowship of the Blessed Servants of God there emerges, as in a mosaic, the face of Christ the Good Shepherd and Missionary of the Father. We fix our eyes on this living icon, at the beginning of the new epoch that Providence has opened up before us, so that with ever greater dedication we may be servants of the Gospel, hope of the world.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Queen of Apostles, assist us in our ministry. At every moment on the horizon of the Church and of the world, she shines as sign of consolation and of sure hope.

Torna ai contenuti

Message for the Celebration of World Peace Day (December 8, 2001)

*No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness*

1. The World Day of Peace this year is being celebrated in the shadow of the dramatic events of 11 September last. On that day, a terrible crime was committed: in a few brief hours thousands of innocent people of many ethnic backgrounds were slaughtered. Since then, people throughout the world have felt a profound personal vulnerability and a new fear for the future. Addressing this state of mind, the Church testifies to her hope, based on the conviction that evil, the *mysterium iniquitatis*, does not have the final word in human affairs. The history of salvation, narrated in Sacred Scripture, sheds clear light on the entire history of the world and shows us that human events are always accompanied by the merciful Providence of God, who knows how to touch even the most hardened of hearts and bring good fruits even from what seems utterly barren soil. This is the hope which sustains the Church at the beginning of 2002: that, by the grace of God, a world in which the power of evil seems once again to have taken the upper hand will in fact be transformed into a world in which the noblest
aspirations of the human heart will triumph, a world in which true peace will prevail.

**Peace: the work of justice and love**

2. Recent events, including the terrible killings just mentioned, move me to return to a theme which often stirs in the depths of my heart when I remember the events of history which have marked my life, especially my youth. The enormous suffering of peoples and individuals, even among my own friends and acquaintances, caused by Nazi and Communist totalitarianism, has never been far from my thoughts and prayers. I have often paused to reflect on the persistent question: *how do we restore the moral and social order subjected to such horrific violence?* My reasoned conviction, confirmed in turn by biblical revelation, is that the shattered order cannot be fully restored except by a response that combines justice with forgiveness. *The pillars of true peace are justice and that form of love which is forgiveness.*

3. But in the present circumstances, how can we speak of justice and forgiveness as the source and condition of peace? *We can and we must,* no matter how difficult this may be; a difficulty which often comes from thinking that justice and forgiveness are irreconcilable. But forgiveness is the opposite of resentment and revenge, not of justice. In fact, true peace is “the work of justice” (*Is* 32:17). As the Second Vatican Council put it, peace is “the fruit of that right ordering of things with which the divine founder has invested human society and which must be actualized by man thirsting for an ever more perfect reign of justice” (Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 78). For more than fifteen hundred years, the Catholic Church has repeated the teaching of Saint Augustine of Hippo on this point. He reminds us that the peace which can and must be built in this world is the peace of right order—*tranquilis ordinis*, the tranquillity of order (cf. *De Civitate Dei*, 19,13). True peace therefore is the fruit of justice, that moral virtue and legal guarantee which ensures full respect for rights and responsibilities, and the just distribution of benefits and burdens. But because human justice is always fragile and imperfect, subject as it is to the limitations and egoism of individuals and groups, it must include and, as it were, be completed by the forgiveness which heals and rebuilds troubled human relations from their foundations. This is true in circumstances great and small, at the personal level or on a wider, even
international scale. Forgiveness is in no way opposed to justice, as if to forgive meant to overlook the need to right the wrong done. It is rather the fullness of justice, leading to that tranquillity of order which is much more than a fragile and temporary cessation of hostilities, involving as it does the deepest healing of the wounds which fester in human hearts. Justice and forgiveness are both essential to such healing. It is these two dimensions of peace that I wish to explore in this message. The World Day of Peace this year offers all humanity, and particularly the leaders of nations, the opportunity to reflect upon the demands of justice and the call to forgiveness in the face of the grave problems which continue to afflict the world, not the least of which is the new level of violence introduced by organized terrorism.

The reality of terrorism

4. It is precisely peace born of justice and forgiveness that is under assault today by international terrorism. In recent years, especially since the end of the Cold War, terrorism has developed into a sophisticated network of political, economic and technical collusion which goes beyond national borders to embrace the whole world. Well-organized terrorist groups can count on huge financial resources and develop wide-ranging strategies, striking innocent people who have nothing to do with the aims pursued by the terrorists. When terrorist organizations use their own followers as weapons to be launched against defenseless and unsuspecting people they show clearly the death-wish that feeds them. Terrorism springs from hatred, and it generates isolation, mistrust and closure. Violence is added to violence in a tragic sequence that exasperates successive generations, each one inheriting the hatred which divided those that went before. Terrorism is built on contempt for human life. For this reason, not only does it commit intolerable crimes, but because it resorts to terror as a political and military means it is itself a true crime against humanity. 5. There exists therefore a right to defend oneself against terrorism, a right which, as always, must be exercised with respect for moral and legal limits in the choice of ends and means. The guilty must be correctly identified, since criminal culpability is always personal and cannot be extended to the nation, ethnic group or religion to which the terrorists may belong. International cooperation in the fight against terrorist activities must also include a courageous and resolute
political, diplomatic and economic commitment to relieving situations of oppression and marginalization which facilitate the designs of terrorists. The recruitment of terrorists in fact is easier in situations where rights are trampled upon and injustices tolerated over a long period of time. Still, it must be firmly stated that the injustices existing in the world can never be used to excuse acts of terrorism, and it should be noted that the victims of the radical breakdown of order which terrorism seeks to achieve include above all the countless millions of men and women who are least well-positioned to withstand a collapse of international solidarity—namely, the people of the developing world, who already live on a thin margin of survival and who would be most grievously affected by global economic and political chaos. The terrorist claim to be acting on behalf of the poor is a patent falsehood.

You shall not kill in God’s name!

6. Those who kill by acts of terrorism actually despair of humanity, of life, of the future. In their view, everything is to be hated and destroyed. Terrorists hold that the truth in which they believe or the suffering that they have undergone are so absolute that their reaction in destroying even innocent lives is justified. Terrorism is often the outcome of that fanatic fundamentalism which springs from the conviction that one’s own vision of the truth must be forced upon everyone else. Instead, even when the truth has been reached—and this can happen only in a limited and imperfect way—it can never be imposed. Respect for a person’s conscience, where the image of God himself is reflected (cf. Gen 1:26-27), means that we can only propose the truth to others, who are then responsible for accepting it. To try to impose on others by violent means what we consider to be the truth is an offense against human dignity, and ultimately an offense against God whose image that person bears. For this reason, what is usually referred to as fundamentalism is an attitude radically opposed to belief in God. Terrorism exploits not just people, it exploits God: it ends by making him an idol to be used for one’s own purposes. 7. Consequently, no religious leader can condone terrorism, and much less preach it. It is a profanation of religion to declare oneself a terrorist in the name of God, to do violence to others in his name. Terrorist violence is a contradiction of faith in God, the Creator of man, who cares for man and loves him. It is altogether contrary to faith
in Christ the Lord, who taught his disciples to pray: “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Mt 6:12). Following the teaching and example of Jesus, Christians hold that to show mercy is to live out the truth of our lives: we can and must be merciful because mercy has been shown us by a God who is Love (cf. 1 Jn 4:7-12). The God who enters into history to redeem us, and through the dramatic events of Good Friday prepares the victory of Easter Sunday, is a God of mercy and forgiveness (cf. Ps 103:3-4, 10-13). Thus Jesus told those who challenged his dining with sinners: “Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mt 9:13). The followers of Christ, baptized into his redeeming Death and Resurrection, must always be men and women of mercy and forgiveness.

**The need for forgiveness**

8. But what does forgiveness actually mean? And why should we forgive? A reflection on forgiveness cannot avoid these questions. Returning to what I wrote in my Message for the 1997 World Day of Peace (“Offer Forgiveness and Receive Peace”), I would reaffirm that forgiveness inhabits people’s hearts before it becomes a social reality. Only to the degree that an ethics and a culture of forgiveness prevail can we hope for a “politics” of forgiveness, expressed in society’s attitudes and laws, so that through them justice takes on a more human character. Forgiveness is above all a personal choice, a decision of the heart to go against the natural instinct to pay back evil with evil. The measure of such a decision is the love of God who draws us to himself in spite of our sin. It has its perfect exemplar in the forgiveness of Christ, who on the Cross prayed: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). Forgiveness therefore has a divine source and criterion. This does not mean that its significance cannot also be grasped in the light of human reasoning; and this, in the first place, on the basis of what people experience when they do wrong. They experience their human weakness, and they want others to deal leniently with them. Why not therefore do towards others what we want them to do towards us? All human beings cherish the hope of being able to start all over again, and not remain for ever shut up in their own mistakes and guilt. They all want to raise their eyes to the future and to discover new possibilities of trust and commitment. 9. Forgiveness therefore, as a fully human act, is above all a
personal initiative. But individuals are essentially social beings, situated within a pattern of relationships through which they express themselves in ways both good and bad. Consequently, society too is absolutely in need of forgiveness. Families, groups, societies, States and the international community itself need forgiveness in order to renew ties that have been sundered, go beyond sterile situations of mutual condemnation and overcome the temptation to discriminate against others without appeal. The ability to forgive lies at the very basis of the idea of a future society marked by justice and solidarity. By contrast, the failure to forgive, especially when it serves to prolong conflict, is extremely costly in terms of human development. Resources are used for weapons rather than for development, peace and justice. What sufferings are inflicted on humanity because of the failure to reconcile! What delays in progress because of the failure to forgive! Peace is essential for development, but true peace is made possible only through forgiveness.

Forgiveness, the high road

10. Forgiveness is not a proposal that can be immediately understood or easily accepted; in many ways it is a paradoxical message. Forgiveness in fact always involves an apparent short-term loss for a real long-term gain. Violence is the exact opposite; opting as it does for an apparent short-term gain, it involves a real and permanent loss. Forgiveness may seem like weakness, but it demands great spiritual strength and moral courage, both in granting it and in accepting it. It may seem in some way to diminish us, but in fact it leads us to a fuller and richer humanity, more radiant with the splendor of the Creator. My ministry at the service of the Gospel obliges me, and at the same time gives me the strength, to insist upon the necessity of forgiveness. I do so again today in the hope of stirring serious and mature thinking on this theme, with a view to a far-reaching resurgence of the human spirit in individual hearts and in relations between the peoples of the world. 11. Reflecting on forgiveness, our minds turn naturally to certain situations of conflict which endlessly feed deep and divisive hatreds and a seemingly unstoppable sequence of personal and collective tragedies. I refer especially to what is happening in the Holy Land, that blessed place of God’s encounter with man, where Jesus, the Prince of Peace, lived, died and rose from the dead. The present troubled international situation
prompts a more intense call to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has now been going on for more than fifty years, with alternate phases of greater or lesser tension. The continuous recourse to acts of terror and war, which aggravate the situation and diminish hope on all sides, must finally give way to a negotiated solution. The rights and demands of each party can be taken into proper account and balanced in an equitable way, if and when there is a will to let justice and reconciliation prevail. Once more I urge the beloved peoples of the Holy Land to work for a new era of mutual respect and constructive accord.

**Interreligious understanding and cooperation**

12. In this whole effort, religious leaders have a weighty responsibility. The various Christian confessions, as well as the world’s great religions, need to work together to eliminate the social and cultural causes of terrorism. They can do this by teaching the greatness and dignity of the human person, and by spreading *a clearer sense of the oneness of the human family*. This is a specific area of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and cooperation, a pressing service which religion can offer to world peace. In particular, I am convinced that Jewish, Christian and Islamic religious leaders must now take the lead in publicly condemning terrorism and in denying terrorists any form of religious or moral legitimacy. 13. In bearing common witness to the truth that the deliberate murder of the innocent is a grave evil always, everywhere, and without exception, the world’s religious leaders will help to form the morally sound public opinion that is essential for building an international civil society capable of pursuing the tranquillity of order in justice and freedom. In undertaking such a commitment, the various religions cannot but pursue *the path of forgiveness*, which opens the way to mutual understanding, respect and trust. The help that religions can give to peace and against terrorism consists precisely in their *teaching forgiveness* for those who forgive and seek forgiveness know that there is a higher Truth, and that by accepting that Truth they can transcend themselves.

**Prayer for peace**

14. Precisely for this reason, prayer for peace is not an afterthought to the work of peace. It is of the very essence of building the peace of order,
justice, and freedom. To pray for peace is to open the human heart to the inroads of God’s power to renew all things. With the life-giving force of his grace, God can create openings for peace where only obstacles and closures are apparent; he can strengthen and enlarge the solidarity of the human family in spite of our endless history of division and conflict. To pray for peace is to pray for justice, for a right-ordering of relations within and among nations and peoples. It is to pray for freedom, especially for the religious freedom that is a basic human and civil right of every individual. To pray for peace is to seek God’s forgiveness, and to implore the courage to forgive those who have trespassed against us. For all these reasons I have invited representatives of the world’s religions to come to Assisi, the town of Saint Francis, on January 24, 2002, to pray for peace. In doing so we will show that genuine religious belief is an inexhaustible wellspring of mutual respect and harmony among peoples; indeed it is the chief antidote to violence and conflict. At this time of great distress, the human family needs to be reminded of our unfailing reasons for hope. It is precisely this hope that we intend to proclaim in Assisi, asking Almighty God—in the beautiful phrase attributed to Saint Francis himself—to make each of us a channel of his peace. 15. No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: this is what in this message I wish to say to believers and non-believers alike, to all men and women of good will who are concerned for the good of the human family and for its future. No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: this is what I wish to say to those responsible for the future of the human community, entreating them to be guided in their weighty and difficult decisions by the light of man’s true good, always with a view to the common good. No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: I shall not tire of repeating this warning to those who, for one reason or another, nourish feelings of hatred, a desire for revenge or the will to destroy. On this World Day of Peace, may a more intense prayer rise from the hearts of all believers for the victims of terrorism, for their families so tragically stricken, for all the peoples who continue to be hurt and convulsed by terrorism and war. May the light of our prayer extend even to those who gravely offend God and man by these pitiless acts, that they may look into their hearts, see the evil of what they do, abandon all violent intentions, and seek forgiveness. In these troubled times, may the whole human family
find true and lasting peace, born of the marriage of justice and mercy! From the Vatican, December 8, 2001

John Paul II

The Roman Curia

Congregation for the Causes of the Saints: Decree on the extraordinary character of a cure attributed to Blessed Josemaría Escrivá (December 20, 2001)

CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM
ROMANA et MATRITENSIS
CANONIZATIONIS BEATI
Iosephmariae Escrivá de Balaguer

SACERDOTIS FUNDATORIS SOCIETATIS SACERDOTALIS SANCTAE CRUCIS ET OPERIS DEI (1902-1975)

DECRETUM SUPER MIRACULO

Etiam post sollemnem beatificationem prodigiosae salutis restitutiones haud paucæ Beati Iosephmariae intercessioni tributæ sunt, quas inter sanatio rapidissima, completa et duratura Doctoris Emmanuelis Nevado Rey, medici traumatologi annorum 60, a morbo quem Collegium Medicorum Congregationis de Causis Sanctorum his verbis descripsit: “cancerizatio radiodermitis chronicae gravis, quae in terto stadio inveniebatur neque in pristinum restitui poterat”, in manibus, per annos triginta progredientem. Idem Collegium statuit morbi prognosim fuisse infaustum, nullumque medicum remedium in casu fuisse adhibitum.


Facta demum de hisce omnibus rebus Summo Pontifici Ioanni Paulo II per subscriptum Cardinalem Praefectum accurata relatione, Sanctitas Sua, vota Congregationis de Causis Sanctorum excipiens rataque habens, mandavit ut decretum de praedicta mira sanatione conscriberetur.

Quod cum rite esset factum, accitis ad Se hodierna die Cardinalibus infrascripto Praefecto necnon Causae Ponente, meque Antistite a Secretis Congregationis ceterisque de more convocandis eisque astantibus,
Beatissimus Pater declaravit: *Constare de miraculo a Deo patrato, intercedente Beato Iosephmaria Escrivá de Balaguer, Sacerdote, Fundatore Societatis Sacerdotalis Sanctae Crucis et Operis Dei, videlicet de rapidissima ac perfecta stabilique sanatione Doctoris Emmanuelis Nevado Rey a “cancerizzazione di radiodermite cronica grave al 3º stadio, in fase di irreversibilità.”*

Voluit autem Sanctitas Sua ut hoc decretum publici iuris fieret et in acta Congregationis de Causis Sanctorum referretur.


IOSEPHUS Card. SARAIVA MARTINS

*Praefectus*

+ EDUARDUS NOWAK

Archiep. tit. Lunensis

*a Secretis*

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**Review of Other Documents**

**A review of other documents**

John Paul II: *Apostolic Letter on the millennium of the baptism of the Hungarian people* (July 25, 2001)

John Paul II: *Post-synodal apostolic exhortation Ecclesia in Oceania* (November 22, 2001)

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Note on the value of the doctrinal decrees with respect to the thought and writings of the priest Antonio Rosmini Serbati* (July 1, 2001)

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Response to a question on the validity of baptism conferred in the “Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”*
PRELATE

• Decrees
• Activities of the Prelate
• Homilies
• Other Presentations
• Articles and Interviews
Decrees

Decree of appointment of the Regional Vicar of Kenya:

Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA
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 Albertum Pampillón Olmedo, ad quinquennium nominamus atque constituisimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Quasi-Regione Keniæ, cum omnibus et singulis iuribus et obligationibus huic officio adnexis.

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

Datum Romæ, ex Aedibus Curæ Prælatæ, die 8 mense septembri, anno 2001.

+ Xaverius Echevarría

Thomas G. Bohlin

Curæ Prælatitiae Cancellarius

Reg. Gen. R. lib. VI pag. 8

Torna ai contenuti

Activities of the Prelate
Pastoral Trips

From July 28 to August 12, the Prelate of Opus Dei made a pastoral trip to three South American countries, Colombia, Venezuela and Trinidad-Tobago. During his stay he met with faithful of the Prelature and with many other people who benefit from the means of formation Opus Dei provides in these countries.

He arrived in Bogota, the capital of Colombia, on July 28, and on the following day lunched with the Apostolic Nuncio, Bishop Beniamino Stella.

On July 30 he was in Cali where he visited Archbishop Isaias Duarte and met with faithful of the Prelature. The largest gathering in Cali took place in the Municipal Theater, where he had a get-together with almost 1500 people. Later in the day, before returning to Bogota, he was honored by the provincial governor.

On Tuesday, July 31, he went to Medellín for two days, where he met with Archbishop Alberto Giraldo, President of the Colombian Bishops’ Conference. On Wednesday, August 1, he had a get-together with more than 5,000 people in the Exposition Palace. He spoke about the reality of the Communion of Saints, pointing out that many people throughout the world were praying for a solution to the conflict in Colombia. In the afternoon he went to Los Alcazares High School, where he received an affectionate welcome from students, teachers and school employees. At the end of his visit he was presented with a copy of a prayer book published on the occasion of the centennial of Blessed Josemaría’s birth.

On August 2, back in Bogota, he dedicated the altar of the oratory in the Hontanar Cultural Center. At midday he went to the Cathedral to pray to our Lady of Topo, before meeting with Cardinal Pedro Rubiano. In the afternoon he had a meeting with some faithful and cooperators of the Prelature. Then he went to Los Cerros High School, where he had a lively get-together with young people.

On Friday, the third, he visited the University of La Sabana and had a meeting with the faculty. He reminded them that science and faith not only move in a parallel direction, but are totally intertwined because God does
not want anything in our life to be separated from our faith. Later he met with students and blessed an image of Our Lady, Mother of Fairest Love, and had a get-together with university employees. He also visited the University Hospital of Puente del Comun, which specializes in rehabilitating the physically handicapped. In the afternoon he visited with Archbishop Ruben Salazar of Barranquilla. On Saturday, the fourth, he was once more at the Sabana University where he met with Bishop Jorge Enrique Jimenez of Zipaquira, President of CELAM.

That same day, a get-together was held at the university with more than 14,000 people. “Jesus has said that we are all called to sanctity,” he reminded those attending, “because he loves us with his whole being and because he came to earth so that we all might share in his life. It makes me very happy to tell you that Opus Dei’s purpose is to spread throughout the whole world the ideal that each person should be a saint right where he or she is: a housewife, with her family; a manual worker, at his job; a politician or economist..., all are called to holiness.”

On August 5, the Prelate of Opus Dei flew to Caracas, and from there, he went to Maracaibo the next day. At the airport of Venezuela’s second largest city he was received by the mayor, who gave him the keys to the city and an image of our Lady as a token of welcome. Then they went to the Palace of Events, where he had a get-together with a large number of people.

On Tuesday, August 7, Bishop Echevarría met with a group of priests and seminarians from various dioceses throughout Venezuela. Among the topics he spoke about were the importance of being recollected before celebrating Holy Mass, the love they should have for their diocese, and obedience to their bishop.

On August 8, the Prelate of Opus Dei went to Trinidad. During his brief stay on this Caribbean island he visited the auxiliary bishop and met with a large group of people in Port of Spain.
Bishop Echevarría spent the next three days in Caracas. On Tuesday morning he presided over an academic ceremony in the newly established Monteavila University, of which he is Honorary President. In the afternoon, after lunch at the nunciature, he had a get-together with a group of young people in a university residence. On Friday, August 10, he received a large group of faithful of the Prelature in the morning, and then celebrated Mass at the Church of the Holy Family of Nazareth, which is entrusted to priests of the Prelature. On the following day a get-together took place with a large number of people at the Los Arcos High School. On Sunday, the 12th, Bishop Echevarría returned to Europe.

On August 30, the Prelate of Opus Dei traveled to the Shrine of Torreciudad, to confer priestly ordination on three faithful of the Prelature, as was mentioned above. Bishop Echevarría remained at the Shrine for four days, where he devoted many hours to talks, classes and other meetings with the future priests.

During his stay at Torreciudad, he visited the bishop of Barbastro-Monzon. In Barbastro, on Friday, August 31, he visited the parish church dedicated to Blessed Josemaría, then still under construction.

In Torreciudad he had meetings with young people from various countries who were taking part in restoration and environmental protection activities promoted by centers of Opus Dei. He also met with families of some faithful of the Prelature and with the people who work full time at the Shrine.

On Monday, September 3, he returned to Rome.

At the end of September, Bishop Javier Echevarría was in Kazakhstan on the occasion of Pope John Paul II’s pastoral trip to that country. The Prelate of Opus Dei arrived in Almaty on Friday, September 21, and the following day went to Astana, where a Eucharistic concelebration with John Paul II took place on Sunday, the 23rd.
On Monday, the 24th, Bishop Echevarría returned to Almaty. During the following days he met on various occasions with the faithful of the Prelature who live in that city and with the diocesan priests of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross who live in Shimkent. There were also get-togethers with people who take part in the means of formation offered by the Prelature. In these gatherings he stressed that when God permits difficulties in the apostolate, he also gives his grace to produce fruit where it seemed impossible.

During his stay in the city, Bishop Echevarría visited the construction site of the Irtysh Language Academy, a women's educational center promoted by faithful of the Prelature that will be inaugurated soon.

Bishop Echevarría once again traveled to Torreciudad on Friday, December 7. On the following day he met in the morning with more than 400 young men who were participating that week in some cultural and sporting activities. The Prelate transmitted to them the Holy Father’s blessing and his request for prayer and penance for peace in the world.

On the afternoon of the 8th, Bishop Echevarría, with the Bishop of Barbastro-Monzon, Juan Jose Omella, and the Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese, Bishop Ambrosio Echebarria, took part in the ceremony of dedication of the new parish of Blessed Josemaria Escriva in Barbastro. Forty priests concelebrated at the solemn Eucharist.

At the end of the day he gave a talk to the participants in a retreat taking place in Torreciudad. On the 9th, early in the morning he celebrated Holy Mass at the Shrine and then left for Barcelona and from there flew to Rome.

Priestly Ordinations
On Sunday, September 2, at the Shrine of Torreciudad, Bishop Javier Echevarría, the Prelate of Opus Dei, ordained three faithful of the Prelature as priests. Over two thousand people were present, among them many relatives and friends of the new priests.

In his homily, the Prelate reminded everyone in words of Blessed Josemaria that “the priesthood requires more than an upright life: it demands a holy life from those who exercise it,” since priests are “mediators between God and men” and “heralds of Christ.” After praying that “priestly vocations may be very abundant everywhere,” Bishop Echevarría stressed that “lay men and women are not second-class citizens,” and asked those attending to be “saints and a leaven of holiness in the events of daily life.” Using words of Pope John Paul II, he reminded them that “the great challenge of the Church in the 21st century is the challenge of holiness, built up day by day in the ordinariness of daily activities.”

On October 6, in the Roman Basilica of Saint Eugene, Bishop Echevarría conferred priestly ordination on 24 members of Opus Dei from thirteen countries. Two thousand friends and relatives of those being ordained took part in the ceremony.

In his homily, the Prelate of Opus Dei spoke of the need for all Christians to be, as Blessed Josemaria liked to say, sowers of the peace and joy that Jesus has brought to us. He referred to the tragic events that had occurred a few weeks earlier (the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States), and invited those present to pray for peace, one of the intentions closest to the Pope’s heart.

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Torna ai contenuti

Participation in the 10th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

Bishop Echevarría took part, by papal appointment, in the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops held from September
30 to October 27, 2001. The theme of the assembly was “The Bishop, servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the hope of the world.” Below we present a summary of his address on October 8, 2001, which was published in *L’Osservatore Romano*:

“The *Instrumentum laboris* (no. 74) refers to the relations between bishops when different churches are present in a territory ‘sui iuris’ or a personal prelature or military ordinariate. Their relations with the local Churches should necessarily express the unity of the Church which is a ‘unity of communion.’ Personal prelatures are situated in this context of communion and should not be considered as *alternative* structures to the particular Churches, but as structures at their service. For in carrying out the special tasks for which they exist, by their very nature they harmoniously converge with the ordinary pastoral work of the local Churches in which they are present and are, therefore, oriented towards the building up of one and the same Church of Christ. This convergence is a reality intrinsic to the ecclesiological nature of these institutions because the faithful of a personal prelature, like those of a military ordinariate are, at the same time, faithful of the local Church in which they live.

The complexity of the contemporary world leads to many situations that transcend a specific region and that require special pastoral responses. When such situations present adequate characteristics, a Bishops’ Conference can propose to the Holy See, in conformity with the desires of the Second Vatican Council, the establishment of a personal prelature of national scope for the purpose of integrating pastoral activity in the dioceses concerned, as is pointed out also in the apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in America.*”

Torna ai contenuti

**Establishment of new Centers of the Prelature**

The Vicars of the Prelate have established new centers of the Prelature in:
Bari (Italy), Cáceres (Spain), Helsinki, Kowloon (Hong Kong, China), Kinshasa, Los Mochis (Mexico), Mérida (Spain), México City, Milán, Montemor-o-Novo (Portugal), Panama City, Rome, Toluca (Mexico), Torreón (Mexico) and Valldoreix (Spain).

Homilies

At the priestly ordination of three deacons of the Prelature at the Shrine of Our Lady of Torreciudad, (September 2, 2001)

Dear brothers and sisters.

My dear deacons.

1. We are moved by the words of the prophet Isaiah when he announces that the Spirit of the Lord will be poured forth on the earth to cure the sick, to console the afflicted, to give freedom to the imprisoned and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.[1] History gives witness to the truth of these gifts, which heaven dispenses in all times and places, thanks to the Church’s salvific action. Indeed, by the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments, the Spouse of Christ goes out to meet all men and women, to offer us the salvation won by Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary, who died, rose and ascended to heaven. Truly, through the Church, God shows constant concern for mankind; he anticipates our desires and guides us by the paths that lead to eternal life. As we prayed in the responsorial psalm: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters, he restores my soul.[2]

God, in his infinite perfection, could have bestowed salvation on us in some other way. Nevertheless, in his infinite wisdom and condescension, he
has wanted to count on the help of human instruments: on us priests. Today we are witnesses to how this divine will continues to be a reality in the Church. When in a few minutes I put my hands over these deacons and invoke upon them the gift of the Holy Spirit in the prayer of consecration, these brothers of ours will become priests of the New Testament. They will receive the power of announcing the Gospel with divine authority; of forgiving sins in the sacrament of Penance; of renewing the Holy Sacrifice of the Cross in an unbloody manner. They will make Christ present on the altar and in the tabernacle, and guide the faithful on the path of holiness. All of this will become a reality thanks to their special sacramental configuration with Christ Jesus, High Priest and Head of the Church, which the Paraclete will confer on them in the sacrament of the Priesthood.

Yes, thanks to the Church’s ordained ministry, each of us can truly say with the psalmist: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff; they comfort me.[3]

2. I direct myself now with all my affection to the three men about to be ordained. My sons, keep in mind that our Lord, when he called you to serve him in this new way, addressed to you the same words that he spoke to the first apostles in the cenacle at Jerusalem: No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.[4]

Jesus has called you friends, and this brings great demands with it. “As heralds of Christ,” wrote Pope John Paul II in his Letter to Priests this year, “you are invited above all to live in intimacy with him: we can’t give to others what we don’t have ourselves.”[5] And what do souls expect of priests, other than that they help them to know God, that they bring them closer to God, that they teach them how to love God? This new divine call obliges you to respond to Christ with the gift of a deeper, more generous friendship, with the eagerness to bring many people to him, so that they too can know and love him. It obliges you to continue to strive to attain the plenitude of charity that is sanctity.
While preparing for today’s ceremony, you frequently considered Blessed Josemaría’s teachings on the priesthood. Learn from his life and writings; draw more deeply from his example. Meditate often on the truth that by virtue of its sacred duties, the priesthood requires more than a morally upright life. It demands sanctity in the men who perform those duties. For they have been constituted mediators between God and men.[6]

While never knowing ourselves fully, each of us who are priests have enough self-knowledge to realize that we are not “at the level” our Lord expects of his priests. As John Paul II reminds us: “When contemplating Christ at the Last Supper, when he makes himself into ‘bread that is broken’ for us, when he stoops over the feet of the apostles in humble service, how can we keep from feeling, as Peter did, the same sense of unworthiness before the greatness of the gift we have received? ‘You shall never wash my feet’ (Jn 13:8). Peter was mistaken in rejecting Christ’s gesture. But he was right in seeing himself as unworthy. It is important, on this day of love par excellence, that we see the grace of the priesthood as a superabundance of mercy.”[7]

As the workers are always few, in comparison with the harvest of souls, let us pray to the Lord of the harvest, as Jesus himself invites us,[8] asking that priestly vocations be abundant everywhere. I invite you to unite yourselves to the prayer of a Christian author of the first centuries: “Let us pray to the Lord of the harvest that he send workers into his harvest: workers who will treat the word of truth correctly; faithful workers who are the light of the world; workers who do not seek the food of the present world, which will perish, but the food that lasts unto eternal life; workers like the apostles; workers who imitate the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, solicitous for the health of all men and women.”[9]

3. Any vocation in the Church is a palpable proof of divine mercy. It is something that far surpasses human qualities, educational preparation, or social position, and cannot be measured in purely natural terms. It stems from the generosity of the heavenly Father and each person’s faithful correspondence to grace. To meditate more deeply on this truth, we can draw abundant light from a few sentences of the Founder of Opus Dei that capture the nucleus of the message God entrusted to him to spread to all mankind.
Blessed Josemaría writes: *By the demands of their common Christian vocation, as something required by the one baptism they have received, the priest and the lay person should aspire equally to holiness, which is a participation in God’s life. The holiness to which they are called is not greater in the priest than in the lay person, because the lay person is not a second-rate Christian. Holiness, both in the priest and in the lay person, is nothing other than the perfection of Christian life, the fullness of divine filiation. In the eyes of our Father God we are all equally his children, whatever the service or ministry to which each of us is assigned... The important thing, the only thing that matters in God’s eyes, is to show our love by deeds of service.*[10]

There is no other solution to humanity’s problems. The remedy for all of the needs of mankind—and let us be very aware of our great daily responsibility—is in the hands of Christians, called to be saints and a leaven of sanctity in the ordinary events of daily life. We all have to strive to put into practice Christ’s words: *This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.*[11]

The Roman Pontiff has proposed an identical program to us for the new period in history that has just begun. The great challenge of the Church in the twenty-first century is *the challenge of holiness*. Not a holiness based on extraordinary events, but a holiness woven with the fibers of love, built day by day in the ordinariness of our daily activities. “It is a duty,” writes the Pope, “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.’”[12]

The Holy Father adds that centering the whole Christian response on the goal of holiness has very specific consequences: “it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity... 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.”[13]
We are all committed to this great enterprise, each from his own place in the Church and in the world: some as priests, others as lay people. To hold back in this task or, much worse, to turn one’s back to it, would mean betraying our Redeemer. On the contrary, following the Holy Father’s invitation, we must launch out into the sea, *duc in altum*,[14] casting Christ’s nets in every corner of the earth, in all the upright professions men and women work in, among all kinds of people.

Before ending, I congratulate with all my heart the relatives and friends of the new priests. Let us all pray for these men, so that they attain the holiness to which God is calling them. Let us pray every day for the Holy Father and for the bishops, today especially for the bishop of this beloved diocese of Barbastro-Monzon, and for the priests and deacons of the whole world. And let us pray with faith: Lord, give us holy priests.

How abundant will be the catch of fish, the divine catch, that we will place at Christ’s feet,[15] if we go to the intercession of our Lady, *Star of the new evangelization*, in this divine and human adventure that is so rewarding. With the combined efforts of all of us, we will bring the world back to God and place Christ at the very summit of all human activities. Amen.

Torna ai contenuti

On the occasion of the priestly ordination of 24 deacons of the Prelature, in the Basilica of Saint Eugene, Rome (October 6, 2001)

Reading Sacred Scripture with a spirit of faith always brings abundant light, because *the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit...and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*[1] Today on the occasion of the priestly ordination of a group of deacons in the Opus Dei Prelature, the liturgy offers us three readings that are rich in teachings relevant for everyone, and in a special way for you who within a few minutes, by the working of the Holy Spirit, will become priests of Jesus Christ forever.[2]
The words of the prophet Isaiah in the first reading are fully fulfilled in Christ. He himself applied them to his mission when preaching for the first time in the synagogue at Nazareth:[3] *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me.*[4] Among the various missions that the Messiah is seen as coming to fulfill, I would like to focus on one that is of great interest not only for priests, but for all Christians. I refer to the fact that each Christian is sent to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor;[5] that is, to become a visible sign of the mercy of our Father God.

From the very fact of being children of God in Christ, it is clear that we are called to participate in Christ’s mission. Bringing the good news to the poor, consoling the afflicted, proclaiming the freedom Christ won for us, giving witness by word and deed to God’s mercy, are all tasks proper to any Christian faithful. How necessary in today’s world are authentic sowers of peace and joy, the peace and joy that Jesus has brought to us,[6] as Blessed Josemaría liked to say. This need has become dramatically evident in recent weeks, after the tragic terrorist acts that have set the world in turmoil and that unfortunately, in different degrees, are repeated in other places where they are no longer news.

Truly there is a great need for men and women who foster peace not only by their words, but above all by their daily conduct. People with a great heart, who carry out a sowing of harmony, not via “slogans” applied to distant lands, but in their immediate environment: in their family, their place of work, their own community. Let us pray, then, for these intentions so close to the Pope’s heart. I remind you that the Holy Father recently asked Catholics to pray the rosary every day during the month of October for peace in the world.

The task of sowing peace is entrusted in a special way to priests, identified with Christ, Head of the Church. My dear deacons, within a few moments the Holy Spirit will bestow on you the power to forgive sins in the sacrament of Reconciliation. In addition, when you celebrate Mass, you will make present the offering of Christ’s unique sacrifice, consummated on Calvary for the remission of sins. In words of our Founder, I remind you that “the administration of these two sacraments has so important a part in the priest’s mission that everything should hinge on it. Other priestly tasks, such as preaching and giving instruction in the faith, would lack solid
foundation if they were not aimed at teaching people to draw close to Christ, to meet Him in the loving tribunal of penance and in the unbloody renewal of the Sacrifice of Calvary, the Mass.”[7]

Many of our contemporaries, weary and filled with fear, are in need of comfort. Citing words of the prophet Isaiah once again, they need to be given “a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.”[8] Priests, as mediators between God and men, have a special duty to spread this supernatural peace and joy throughout the whole world. You do so especially in the sacrament of Penance, where Christ, making use of the priest, bends over each soul to cure and restore peace. Therefore I ask those of you who are about to becoming priest to always make yourselves available to exercise the ministry of reconciliation. May no soul who seeks the mercy of God find the confessional empty, perhaps because you did not find the time to wait there for the prodigal son who returns repentant to his Father’s house.[9]

Meditate often on the example of Blessed Josemaria and his efforts to be a sower of peace and joy precisely through the sacrament of reconciliation. Right from the first steps of his priesthood, thousands of people received God’s forgiveness through his ministry, together with words of consolation and the advice appropriate for their soul’s spiritual growth.

2. In the second reading, St. Paul speaks to us of the unity of the body and the diversity of its members. So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.[10] This image of the Church can without doubt be applied also to the Prelature of Opus Dei, which is part of the Church. As John Paul II has said, the Prelature is “organically structured,” made up of priests and laity who mutually collaborate in the fulfillment of its mission.[11] “The organic way that priests and laity work together,” the Pope said, “is one of the privileged areas where pastoral activity will take on life and be strengthened, marked by the ‘new dynamism’ the Great Jubilee has awoken in all of us.”[12]

As you know, during these days in Rome the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is being held, to study more deeply the bishop’s role as shepherd of the People of God. Listening to the interventions of bishops from all over the world, there frequently comes to
mind the need to be closely united to the Pope and, in each particular Church, to one’s own pastor. All the faithful have to realize the urgent need to collaborate in the building up of the Church in unity, respecting legitimate differences. This is a consequence, perhaps the first in the order of charity, of the sowing of peace that we are all called to foster.

In this area as well, priests, and not only priests, have a specific role as instruments of unity in the Church. Their contribution can have many different manifestations, but above all it is found in unity with the Roman Pontiff and with their own Ordinary; then, in unity with other priests; finally, in unity with all the faithful, to whom they are united by the common priesthood received in Baptism.

A special expression of being instruments of unity is the priestly fraternity that you all have to feel. All of us priests need to feel the real help of our brothers, to experience human manifestations of the deep spiritual bond that unites us. *Frater qui adiuvatur a fratre quasi civitas firma.*[13] Help one another, support one another, lend each other a hand. Then the whole Church will be strengthened by your unity.

3. The Gospel of the Mass offers us the decisive key for grasping how to put all of this into practice. The way to fulfill what the Holy Spirit is expecting of you is clear: follow Christ, our only Model, who in the parable of the Good Shepherd has left sculpted the features of a shepherd of souls. *I am the good shepherd,* he tells us. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.[14] The charity that fills Jesus’ heart is a necessary point of reference for any priest. You, my dear deacons, have to show yourselves ready to give your life for your brothers, day after day, in a constant and voluntary service, in the smallest matters of each day, spending yourselves generously wherever you are sent, independent of personal likes or dislikes, with full availability.

Being priests of Christ, all Christians will be an integral part of your flock, and you have to show yourselves ready to provide spiritual help to anyone who asks you, while centering your pastoral care on the faithful of the Prelature. Like Jesus, you should be able to affirm: *I know my own and my own know me.*[15] Like Christ, do all you can to meet their spiritual needs and to teach everyone the high goals of personal holiness and
apostolate to which God is calling them. Keep present the example of Blessed Josemaria: how many hours of prayer for all men and women, especially for his daughters and sons, considering them one by one in God’s presence. You too, like our Father, should do everything possible, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to know the true spiritual needs of the persons entrusted to you, and to offer them the healthy and abundant food of Catholic doctrine and the spirit of Opus Dei.

4. It is a great joy to have among us the parents, brothers and sisters, and relatives of the new priests. I share in your own joy, because God has chosen a priest from among those dear to you. You too, in various ways, have been God’s instruments in helping the seed of a priestly vocation to mature. Thank our Lord for this gift. At the same time, I ask you, I ask everyone, to continue praying for them, since now they have even greater need of your prayers.

Now is a good moment to formulate sincere resolutions. Every priestly ordination contains so much of God’s grace! The best resolution will be the decision to draw closer to our Lord. Each of you should consider how best to do so in your own personal circumstances: greater faithfulness to your Christian commitments; more generosity in launching out towards new and demanding goals; having recourse to the sacrament of Confession, if need be, to cancel past offenses and begin a new life, one of ardent love for our Lord. Those are the greatest presents that you can offer the new priests.

Before ending, I want to ask you to pray for the Holy Father. I know I am repeating what I already said, but love, friendship, the desire to serve, always speak the same language. Also pray for all the bishops, and in a special way for the cardinal vicar of Rome, and for all priests. Let us beg that everywhere vocations of holy priests may increase, so essential for spreading the kingdom of God throughout the world.

In this month traditionally dedicated to Marian prayer, let us entrust all of these intentions to our Lady, trying to recite devoutly the rosary each day, as the Pope has recommended to us. Amen.
At the blessing of a statue of Blessed Josemaria Escriva at the University of Navarre, Pamplona (June 30, 2001)

My dear brothers and sisters:

Allow me to begin with a small digression. The figure of my illustrious predecessor has been frequently in my thoughts this morning, accompanied by the realization that if anyone should be here by rights, it is our beloved Don Alvaro. He was a faithful son who followed so closely in our Father’s footsteps.

And then a family scene came to mind. (For in Opus Dei we are a family; we don’t stand on protocol. We live with the unity of the first Christians, not only among ourselves but also with all those we meet.) I remember that someone working in Rome came up with a particular decision on a matter of government, and Blessed Josemaria (the Father at that time, who could be very demanding) pointed out that the suggested solution was not the right one. And he wrote on a slip of paper: So-and-so (I won’t mention his name, since he’s already in heaven), where have you put your head?

And this morning, while I was thinking that Don Alvaro was really the one who should be here, it occurred to me that he was saying from heaven: “Where have you put your head? I’m much better off here with our Father.” We have to be very grateful to Don Alvaro, who placed his strong personality and life at God’s service precisely by serving Blessed Josemaria. We can never repay this man of God enough for what he did for us, because in doing it for our Father, he did it for us.

And now, to return to the business at hand.

It is with great joy that I comply with the request the rector has made in your name to bless this statue of Blessed Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, founder of Opus Dei and founder and first chancellor of this university.

I recall the blessing of the first stone for this university on October 25, 1960. In some ways we can consider this work of sculpture as the cornerstone that completes and crowns the material construction of the
university, which should, however, always continue to grow. A new building to house the Center for Biomedical Research is already planned and the definitive site of the university chapel is also being studied. But these new sites will all bear a reference, as do the existing ones, to the person who founded this Alma Mater. These are all good reasons to be grateful to God, through Blessed Josemaria, who was chosen by God also to serve as the foundation for the work at this university, for which he prayed and worked so much and which he so loved.

The exciting task opening up before your eyes makes it is easy to understand why you are dedicating your best efforts to this adventure. The challenges and problems facing humanity at the beginning of this new century are immense. We Catholics, who have experienced God’s love, must give the joyful answer of our faith and hope. “The university,” Blessed Josemaria said at the ceremony granting honorary doctorates in 1972, “does not live with its back turned to any uncertainty, to any concern, to any need of mankind. While studying problems with scientific depth, we must also move hearts, overcome passivity, awaken sleeping powers, and form citizens who are ready to construct a more just society.”[1]

Always be at the vanguard, opening up the way. Don’t forget that each day, by your study, your work, your Christian behavior, your dedication to your students, you are contributing to strengthening the world of tomorrow, the new culture that is being born. But only when a culture makes God its transcendent point of reference does it truly serve the good of all men and women, particularly the most needy. In contrast, when a culture ignores the Creator or sets him aside, man himself is harmed.

Let us never forget that “we are present at the very birth of the upright innovations that take place in the life of society, and we also make our own the progress of each era. Down through the ages our outlook and our activity will always correspond fully to the needs and demands of the moment. We will never cease to identify with the yearnings that attract the minds and hearts of men.”[2]

I ask God that this bronze statue of Blessed Josemaria be for all of you a call and a spur, a living reminder of his life and message, of God’s message, which he passed on to us by his conduct and teaching: the
universal call to sanctity in the middle of the world, in professional work and in the fulfillment of the ordinary duties of the Christian.

In order for this university to serve the Church and society with the spirit its founder inculcated, we all have to strive each day for holiness. As Pope John Paul II insisted at the start of the new millennium, “stressing holiness remains more than ever an urgent pastoral task.”[3]

Many of you know what Blessed Josemaría told Professor Ortiz de Landázuri, when that outstanding doctor mentioned to him that the mission he had given them to found the University of Navarre had now been fulfilled. His reply was quick and clear: “I didn’t ask you to found a university, but to become holy by founding a university.”[4]

Savor frequently the joyous truth of our faith: God calls us to live his holy and blessed life, and wants to have us close to him now and forever. We are his beloved children. Seek the root of your joy here and the impetus for your university work and your apostolic zeal. Entrust yourselves to Blessed Josemaría. Ask him to help us persevere in our daily struggle to respond to God’s call, so that our personal desire for sanctity will grow stronger each day. There will always be obstacles: our own weakness and an environment that is morally lax and distant from its Creator. But we are not isolated and without help in this battle. We also count on the power and energy of the Holy Spirit, who gives himself to us in so many ways, especially in the mysterious but real contact with God offered to us through the sacraments. In the sacrament of Penance, we are cleansed of our sins by the Blood of Christ;[5] and in the Eucharist, we are intimately united to our Lord Jesus Christ and given the pledge of our future glorious resurrection.

We have to be immersed in God, convinced that holiness is what is fruitful. Fruit comes from the effort to fulfill God’s will, from the ardent love for God, and consequently for all creatures, that burned so forcefully in Blessed Josemaría’s life.

Today let us give thanks to God for the great gift of the holy life of the founder of Opus Dei and of this university. Let us go to his paternal intercession, asking that he make us more faithful and solicitous in carrying out God’s will in our lives. May Holy Mary, Mother of Fairest Love, who
protects through her intercession all the work on this campus, accompany us on our way, now and always.

Torna ai contenuti

At the Mass celebrated in the Church of the Holy Family of Nazareth, Caracas (August 10, 2001)

My dear brothers and sisters:

I can’t find words to express my gratitude to God for the opportunity to take part in this celebration of the Eucharist with all of you. So many things come to mind that I want to share with you and that for me are a call to be faithful, because this church of the Holy Family of Nazareth owes its existence to Blessed Josemaría, who had such great love for the people of Venezuela. Go frequently to his intercession. He will certainly listen to you and encourage you to seek out our Lord each day.

My thoughts also turn to Blessed Josemaría’s first successor, whose encouragement was so important in the building of this church. How marvelous is the unity of the communion of saints, which gives us the assurance that we are never separated from one another!

These two outstanding figures of the twentieth century continue to watch over us from heaven, assisting us in our needs and loving us with the charity that reigns there. They taught us that in Opus Dei, in the Prelature of Opus Dei, we have to be men and women who support the Holy Father and his intentions by our lives. Let us always pour out our affection and prayers for the Roman Pontiff, so that our Lord will protect him and strengthen him in the fulfillment of his Petrine ministry. How much the Pope loves Venezuela! How much the Pope expects from each Venezuelan’s struggle for holiness!

I also wish to express my gratitude to Cardinal Ignacio Velasco, shepherd of this diocese. It is through his good will that I find myself here celebrating this Eucharist at which, let us never forget it, the whole Church
is present. May this thought spur all of us to always put great vigilance into how we live as Christians.

In this beautiful church dedicated to the Holy Family, let us consider some words that Blessed Josemaria so liked to repeat: Yes, my children, my brothers and sisters, each of us belongs to that family of Nazareth. We are not strangers there. Our lives, our worries, our sufferings, our joys are entirely shared by Jesus, by Mary, by Joseph. Let us enter into that home to which we all belong, and try to live our own life in accord with what we learn there.

Forgive my insistence, but I learned all I know from this faithful servant who has been enjoying God since 1975. He made us see that in that home one did not speak of “me” but of “you.” What a lesson for each of us: we have to place our entire life at the service of the others. I assure you that this charity will fill your days with a great faithfulness and a happiness that transcends this world; our whole life will have a divine transcendence if we live with Christ.

We belong to that family, and we have to give witness everywhere to the reality of our deep union with Christ. Let us imitate him! He came to earth to open to us the divine path to holiness through ordinary life. This was the seed that he placed in Blessed Josemaria’s heart in 1928, to remind the whole world that Christ has taken on our nature, that he has walked the paths of this earth. Jesus shows us that in our daily life, in our professional work, our family, our friendships, our healthy relaxation, all of us can become saints.

Therefore I ask you, and I ask myself: How close am I to Jesus Christ? Is he my Friend? The One I confide in? My point of reference?

Recall that the Pope has recently cited those words from the Gospel we just read: Duc in altum! With Christ, halfway measures have no place. As Blessed Josemaria stressed once and again: our Lord is constantly urging us to “put out into the deep!” He asks us to launch out onto the marvelous sea of seeking and loving God. Then the wonders of that scene will be repeated among us. If we cast the nets of God’s love wherever we find ourselves, the fruit will be abundant, and many people will join us in our efforts. We have the certainty that with Christ we can reach very far, we can reach sanctity.
Alongside this sowing of charity, my brothers and sisters, we have to be very aware of our own unworthiness, like Peter who tells our Lord, “Depart from me,” while also being certain that He will never abandon us. We can never think that holiness is beyond us, that we aren’t at the right level, even if we are going through difficult circumstances. We can be saints, and we can work miracles of conversion in our own lives and in the lives of others, if we live alongside Christ. We must tell him: “Lord, don’t leave me. Let me take refuge in your love, in your protection.”

May each of us sincerely strive to fulfill God’s will, in order to truly be God’s daughters and sons. What an important role each of you has! Never feel excluded from God’s love or from the responsibility of building up his Church in your home, and wherever you work.

This goal, I repeat, is within our grasp, because God never asks us for what is impossible. Don’t think that holiness is only for the few; it is for all of God’s children. To help us attain this great reality, this church of yours provides us with two marvelous examples: holy Mary, God’s most exalted creature, and the man who was perfect in his search for holiness, St. Joseph. We belong to that Family. Let us look to Mary and contemplate, as the Gospel shows us, how she pondered every act of her Son, who was God, striving to grasp the mystery of the redemption that he had come to bring about. Ask Mary to teach you how to ponder Christ’s teachings, in order to conform our entire life, down to our last breath, to whatever God is asking of us. And do you know what Blessed Josemaría called St. Joseph? “The cheerful saint who knew how to shrug his shoulders,” because he accepted whatever burden God wanted to place on him. He had to confront many hardships, but he always made himself available for God’s plans. Go to Joseph, and learn from his cheerful and fruitful humility.

And I tell you once again, never forget that each and every one of us belongs to that marvelous Family of Nazareth. Let us strive to create the atmosphere we see there wherever we are and bring the good news that we are God’s children to every corner of Venezuela. Love your country very much, it deserves it.

This demands that each of you feels your responsibility to behave in an upright manner. And how do we do so? By loving contrition and
confession. Carry out a constant apostolate of this sacrament of God’s joy and pardon. Don’t be afraid to speak about it. Encourage people to put things right with God. Pray for them, and if necessary, help them understand that Christ’s five wounds remain open for them. They are his credentials of love for us, so that we can find refuge there and obtain his forgiveness, when we have had the misfortune of separating ourselves from him either a little or a lot. Make use of this sacrament, be catechists of this sacrament. Don’t have the false human respect that tries to keep us from speaking about God’s forgiveness. Make this great reality clearly known to everyone, so that all may feel themselves loved, understood, and welcomed in the Family of Nazareth.

May God bless you!

Torna ai contenuti

Other Presentations

Message sent to the conference entitled “Towards a More Fully Human Education: the Thought of Josemaria Escriva,” San Jose, Costa Rica (September 21, 2001)

I extend my warm greetings to all the participants in the Hispanic-American Congress, which will study the impact of Blessed Josemaria Escriva’s teachings in the field of education. This gathering in San Jose, Costa Rica, is one of many events being held throughout the world to commemorate the hundredth anniversary, on January 9, 2002, of the birth of the Founder of Opus Dei. These initiatives are being organized by men and women who want to express their gratitude to this holy priest for having so faithfully followed God’s will. Blessed Josemaria has been a faithful instrument, since 1928, in reminding the Church of the universal
call to sanctity and apostolate through the conscientious fulfillment of one’s professional work and ordinary daily duties.

I want to express my gratitude for the organization of this congress, which will serve to make the holy life and teachings of Blessed Josemaría more widely known. I also feel it’s my duty to add that this is a well-deserved homage. When the organizers of the Congress told me the theme of the gathering and asked me for some introductory words, my first thought was that the best name that could be applied to the Founder of Opus Dei—after the word priest, so fundamental to the accomplishment of his ecclesial mission, was precisely that of teacher. Right from his student days in the Saragossa seminary, when he was named a prefect at the age of twenty, his ability to guide souls became apparent, along with his great capacity to love. Later throughout his life, in his priestly work and in his foundational mission at the head of Opus Dei, he guided thousands of persons along arduous spiritual paths, teaching them how to discern God’s will and conform their conduct to what He was asking of them.

For years, I had the immense good fortune of being at Blessed Josemaría’s side, dealing with him as a son. I recall very well his joy when speaking of those who dedicated themselves to the noble and indispensable task of education at all levels. When recalling those who had contributed to his own human and spiritual growth, he expressed great joy and sincere gratitude. In first place, of course, he thought of his parents. Undoubtedly the first and most important school is one’s own home, the example and instruction of one’s parents, engraved—for good or, unfortunately, for evil—on the impressionable souls of children. Blessed Josemaría would then immediately go on to mention his debt to other teachers: the nun who taught him how to read, the teachers he had in high school and, later, those during his university studies both in the civil and ecclesiastical fields. He preserved an affectionate memory of many of them right to the end of his life, and would recall their guidance in small points that had helped to strengthen human and Christian virtues in his life.

I also recall how on his catechetical trips (as he called those get-togethers with small and large groups of people held in the last years of his life to talk about the concerns of God) he wanted to learn from those he met. He went to those gatherings with the sincere desire to deepen his
formation, with the same eagerness to learn that he had as a child. Even though a consummate teacher, he loved to learn from the example of others.

There is no opposition between the two. What is more, a person can only become a true teacher if he truly wants to grow in his knowledge. A person who fails to cultivate in his soul the disposition, made up of humility and docility, to learn from others, may accumulate an encyclopedic amount of knowledge, and may even become an efficient professor. But he will never be a teacher, in the highest and noblest sense of the term.

Many prestigious figures will take part in the sessions of the Congress. I am sure that their addresses and communications will point to Blessed Josemaría’s important contributions in the field of education, thanks above all to the many initiatives in this area—fruit of his personal impetus and the spirit of Opus Dei—that have taken on life all over the world. But don’t forget the great lesson that he imparted to all of us through his own life—a consequence of his faithfulness to God’s will.

Although from the human point of view he considered himself in debt to many different people, it is no less certain that in the fulfillment of the universal mission that he received in 1928, he considered himself greatly in debt to God. Faced with the immense task Heaven had entrusted to him—to teach men and women how to convert their professional work and their family and social duties into a pathway of holiness, and to facilitate this for them—he used to say that his Teacher here had been the Holy Spirit. And because he showed himself so docile to God’s inspirations from the first moment, he was able to become a teacher of spiritual life for the millions of people who have benefited from his spirit and teachings throughout the whole world.

With the desire that you follow the example of Blessed Josemaría, and appealing to the Blessed Virgin, Sedes Sapientiae, as intercessor, I send you my most affectionate blessing, together with the ardent wish that these meetings may leave a lasting imprint on your souls.
Message to the Congress “The Centennial of the Birth of Josemaría Escriva,” organized by Austral University, Buenos Aires (June 26, 2001)

Message to the Congress “The Centennial of the Birth of Josemaría Escriva,” organized by Austral University

Your Excellency, the Rector of Austral University:

Although unable to be in Buenos Aires during these days, I want to send you this message and unite myself wholeheartedly to your efforts in this congress to foster dialogue and reflection on the Founder of Opus Dei’s work and teachings.

The university forum in which you are meeting has brought together intellectuals from all over South America, and forms part of the preparation for the international Congress that will take place in Rome on and around January 9, 2002, the centennial of Blessed Josemaría’s birth. These hundred years, spanning the entire twentieth century, provide an illuminating historical framework for evaluating the significance of the Founder of Opus Dei’s holy life, in light of God’s plans for the Church and humanity.

The century we have just lived through is filled with stark contrasts. Along with great progress in the fields of science and in the clarification of human rights, it has also been the setting for many heart-rending events, the bitter fruit of sin, which gravely offend the dignity of the human person. No one has synthesized its paradoxical character better than the Roman Pontiff himself. In the universal language of prayer, asking for our Lady’s assistance in the new millennium, Pope John Paul II said: “We are men and women of an extraordinary epoch, as exciting as it is rich in contradictions. Humanity today possesses instruments of unheard-of power: it can transform this world into a garden or reduce it to a pile of rubble. It has attained an extraordinary capacity to intervene in the very sources of life, a capacity it can use for good, within the framework of the moral law, or with the myopic pride of a science that accepts no limits.”[1]
Alongside these objective and undeniable facts, the century we have just lived through presents us with marvelous signs of God’s mercy, which can nurture our Christian hope and overcome any temptation to pessimism. The memory of these divine gifts is already an act of thanksgiving. But above all, these gifts represents a call to our responsibility, because God grants his gifts so that we may make them bear fruit through the good use of our freedom. The graces that the Creator is always granting us mark out for us the direction we must take in this new epoch that is beginning. Although risks and worries abound, it is also an epoch with special divine demands, offered so that we Christians may respond with determination and bring to fulfillment God’s plan for humanity.

Among the gifts the Blessed Trinity has granted the world in the past century we find, undoubtedly, the life of Blessed Josemaría Escriva. As participants in this congress, you have set yourselves the pleasant and enriching task of going more thoroughly into the significance of this great priest’s unique life. I ask the Holy Spirit to bestow his light on the work you are undertaking, or more exactly, continuing, since these sessions have been preceded by a lot of dedicated work and effort. This preparation has centered on topics that illumine all fields of human activity, reflected in the program drawn up for these days.

Blessed Josemaría’s impact on the lives of millions of men and women can only be fully appreciated in the supernatural light of faith. His passage on earth had no other meaning than the faithful fulfillment of God’s will, corresponding with complete dedication to a precise call of God in the service of the Church and of souls, a call that filled every corner of his intellect, will and heart. The work this Congress has undertaken looks above all to the future; for this reason too its interventions can help us to be magnanimous. The treasure of doctrine, spirituality and apostolic impetus carved out by Blessed Josemaría’s life, humanly so attractive and positive, requires that we deepen our insight into its conceptual and practical implications. Thus it will be ever more active and operative, impacting the future with results that transcend anything we can imagine.

Josemaría Escriva’s life can only be fully understood, as I noted above, when seen as a gift of the loving providence of God, who never ceases to bring forth in the Church exemplary persons, holy souls who, docile to the
Spirit’s prompting, extend through time Christ’s mission in the world and bring his inexhaustible vigor to the changing circumstances of history. Therefore the efforts of the saints always have a universal reach and fruitfulness, and their spiritual riches overflow any attempt to encompass them in human studies and analyses, although these also are necessary and useful.

We can never fully fathom the influence of the life and teaching of men of God like Blessed Josemaría, from a scientific and cultural perspective as well. The upcoming commemoration of the centennial of his birth constitutes an opportunity to direct a broader and more penetrating view into the times we have to travel through, the years and decades of the century now beginning. The Pope invited us to do so as we ended the Jubilee, in which we have commemorated the bi-millennium of the incarnation of the Son of God. In the barque of the Church, guided by the firm hand of the successor of the prince of the apostles, we have heard Christ’s words sound out with renewed force: _duc in altum!_ Put out into the deep.[2] Our Lord’s command, so often meditated on and preached by the Founder of Opus Dei, is an imperative invitation to launch ourselves into the immense task of evangelizing the whole world. Stressing the reality of apostolate in ordinary life and in professional work, Blessed Josemaría saw that the participation of the ordinary faithful in the Church’s mission is truly a “sea without shores.” Faced with this immense sea, even the oceans and beautiful pampas of this blessed Argentina, to which he alluded in his paternal benedictions during his pastoral visit to Buenos Aires in 1974, seem small.

In the apostolic Letter _Novo Millennio Ineunte_, recalling the chapter of the Second Vatican Council’s dogmatic constitution on the Church dedicated to the universal call to holiness, Pope John Paul II expressed his thankfulness to God for having been able to beatify and canonize many Christian faithful in the years of his pontificate.[3] One of these is precisely Josemaría Escrivá, venerated on the altars since 1992. It is significant that in the same section of that Apostolic Letter, the Holy Father insists especially on the search for sanctity in ordinary life. “The time has come,” he wrote, “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.”[4]

Here is centered the nucleus of the message that Blessed Josemaria, as an instrument of God’s providence, strove to remind all mankind of. This divine light was made specific in Opus Dei, founded on October 2, 1928. From that date on, Blessed Josemaria affirmed everywhere with great strength and conviction that the Christian vocation consisted in “making heroic verse out of the prose of each day.”[5] In 1967, during the homily in a Mass celebrated in a university environment such as this, the campus of the University of Navarre, he told us: “Heaven and earth seem to merge, my children, on the horizon. But where they really meet is in your hearts, when you sanctify your everyday lives.”[6]

Innumerable persons have made Blessed Josemaria’s program their own and are trying to achieve holiness “in daily work and in the fulfillment of the Christian’s ordinary duties,”[7] as millions of men and women all over the world pray each day as they seek his intercession. In this context, I would like to recall Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, a most faithful son and first successor to Blessed Josemaria in guiding Opus Dei, and first Honorary Rector of Austral University, which he did so much to encourage in the first years of its existence. His memory, unforgettable to all of us, will always be an example and stimulus to undertake and carry out initiatives in the university, filled with a Christian spirit and with broad ramifications for all levels of society. The presentations and papers in this congress all touch in some way upon ordinary life, upon one’s family, professional and social life. Our daily work, and the ordinary events of each day, if we behave as God wants, weave a great tapestry, the tapestry of holiness. The results of this congress will provide rich material to continue penetrating more deeply, in the light of faith, into Blessed Josemaria’s teachings. Your efforts will benefit people all over the world, who will also feel impelled to “launch out in to the deep, as the Pope is urging us.”

Blessed Josemaria always had a deep interest in the university world, and followed closely developments in human culture and knowledge. Above and beyond the academic studies produced by this congress, the principal fruit of these days has to take root in the heart of each of the participants, and from there be passed on to many other men and women.
I thank all those who have worked to make this congress a reality, as well as those who are now about to participate in its sessions. Although physically absent from this meeting, I will not fail to be very much present in spirit, because I am following your efforts very closely and supporting them with my prayers.

Let us commend to Blessed Josemaría the fruit of these days of reflection and study, so that he obtain for us God’s light and grace. And let us place ourselves once more under the protection of our Lady, Ancilla Domini and Sedes Sapientiae, Handmaid of the Lord and Seat of Wisdom.


Letter to the Regional Vicar of the United States on the occasion of the September 11 terrorist attacks, Rome (September 12, 2001)

Rome

September 12, 2001

Dear Arne: May Jesus watch over my sons and daughters in the United States!

We received your fax while we were praying for the United States, and just as I was about to write you to let you know that I am united to your sorrow with all my soul. Be assured that many are praying for that beloved country of yours at this moment, asking our Lord especially for the victims and those, such as their relatives, who are suffering the consequences in a special way. I do not have the slightest doubt that God will heed these prayers. This is a most opportune time, on the one hand, to foster the Communion of Saints (being very close to those who are suffering) and, on the other, to fulfill our duties offered as service to others. I truly wish I could be there with you and help everyone!
Unite yourselves to my petition to Holy Mary, Regina Pacis, so that she may obtain for us from heaven the true peace that comes when divine grace enters into the depths of our souls. Thus we will be able to make known to so many persons the unique happiness of being children of God, also in these sorrowful circumstances.

With all affection, I send you the blessing of Blessed Josemaria and Don Álvaro.

Your Father

+ Javier

Articles and Interviews

“Saints in the World: The Path of the Laity,” interview by Francesco Ognibene published in the newspaper Avvenire, Milan (July 7, 2001)

There is an air of expectation in Opus Dei. In a few months, on January 9, 2002, the hundredth anniversary of the birth of its Founder, Blessed Josemaria Escriva, will be celebrated. He was a pioneer of the sanctification of the laity in their ordinary life, in their work, their family life, their friendships and cultural activities. Opus Dei’s spirit is based on prayer, constant Christian formation, and personal responsibility and apostolate, all lived and carried out with naturalness.

With the centennial approaching, Bishop Javier Echevarría, second successor to Msgr. Escriva as head of what since 1982 has been a personal prelature, granted this exclusive interview to Avvenire at its central headquarters in Rome on the Viale Bruno Buozzi, where the mortal
remains of Msgr. Escriva are interred. In the interview he spoke about Opus Dei and its activities in Italy and throughout the world.

Bishop Echevarría, what does the memory of Blessed Josemaria mean to Opus Dei?

This centennial is not a simple commemoration, but rather an invitation to reflect on the teachings of Opus Dei’s founder and to discover new ways to make them ever more effective in one’s ordinary life. Blessed Josemaria frequently insisted: “Christ is the one we must speak about, not ourselves.” Opus Dei’s founder spent all of his days proclaiming Jesus Christ, reminding us that one can be a loyal disciple of Christ in the midst of the world. This centennial has to echo this radical Christian truth, which fills one’s life with meaning and joy.

*What does it mean in today’s world for a lay Christian to strive to be a saint, as Msgr. Escriva preached? Isn’t imperfection something inherent to the human condition?*

It is precisely because we are imperfect that we need to seek holiness, that is, identification with Jesus Christ. He himself asked us to be holy, and he does not ask for impossible things. Sins and human weaknesses are always with us, but they don’t condemn us to mediocrity. Rather they are an opportunity to be converted to God. Christ has redeemed us. With his grace and our humility, we can follow and imitate him. As children of God who are aware of what the reality of their divine filiation means, we know that Christian life is a path of liberation, an invitation to happiness, not a mass of lifeless rules or restrictions. For lay people, to aspire to holiness means, in the words of the Second Vatican Council, “to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will.”

*Where is the Prelature expanding?*

Thanks be to God, the apostolic work of the Opus Dei Prelature is growing. In countries with a majority of Catholics (Honduras or Poland, for example, to cite two where we have begun more recently), a large number of people come to activities of Christian formation. In other countries, where the baptized are a minority (such as in the Holy Land, Singapore or Kazakhstan), meeting the Prelature often represents for many
people their first contact with the Church through the link of friendship with a Catholic colleague.

What is Opus Dei’s “style”?

The emphasis is on personal Christian formation, not on activities or structures. The faith implies a personal discovery and also a personal response to God who is seeking us. Opus Dei always grows one by one. And “each one,” to the extent that he or she is identified with Christ, gives light, a new light, to many others.

Msgr. Escriva said that Opus Dei “is a great catechesis.” If this is the case, why do some people claim that it is a spiritual and social elite that fosters secrecy?

I invite anyone who considers himself poorly informed about the Prelature to call one of the faithful or a center of the Prelature. You can find the number in the telephone book or the website of the Opus Dei Information Office.

The founder of Opus Dei used to say that to communicate well you need “good explainers” and “good understanders.” The faithful of the Prelature can always improve in their ability to speak clearly. On the other hand, to understand Opus Dei one only has to understand the naturalness of freedom and ordinary Christian life. Not wearing distinctive badges, or publishing joint declarations, or organizing massive meetings, is not the same as being secretive.

What does being in the Prelature mean then?

It means living as ordinary Christians who act the same as any other citizen, personally responsible for their own decisions in the spiritual, social, economic, and cultural spheres. A Christian vocation in Opus Dei requires a call from God. But it is also a choice on the part of each faithful who freely decides to undertake it, without forming part of a closed group, being open to the whole Church.

In the context of the Jubilee, is there a “mea culpa” from Opus Dei?

I think that the contrition to which all have been urged by the Pope’s petition for forgiveness on March 12, 2000 consists above all in the humility of each one recognizing his own personal sins and failings. Each
member of Opus Dei always ends the day, after a personal examination of conscience, by begging God for forgiveness. In Opus Dei, each one strives to convert anew each day, and to ask for pardon from God and from anyone else he may have hurt or offended. Learning to ask for pardon every day is a good resolution from the Jubilee.

Is it true, as some say, that in countries such as Italy, Opus Dei gives priority to intellectuals and those in managerial positions?

Blessed Josemaria, while fostering a very specific concern for the needy, always reminded us that apostolic work with intellectuals is a very important evangelical task. Intellectuals mold society and culture. If Christ has not been proclaimed to them, the consequences for society are obvious. This apostolate will always be important for Opus Dei, always keeping in mind that both priorities are complementary, because material poverty is now paralleled by a great intellectual and cultural poverty in the religious sphere.

In Italy many schools have been started by parents connected with Opus Dei. How do you evaluate this initiative?

It is a great adventure. These schools are based on the principle that parents are the ones primarily responsible for the education of their children. But certainly, as in all adventures, many obstacles exist, among other reasons because the laws do not facilitate these efforts of families in education. The Italian Bishops’ Conference has recently spoken about this. In any case, I think it is worthwhile to risk taking on the exciting task of providing a Christian education for one’s children and the friends of one’s children. This is the most important mission of Christian parents.

Opus Dei has a reputation of being a conservative institution. Why is that?

Opus Dei has no dogmas or morality of its own, nor does it form a “school” of thought. It follows the teaching of the Church in everything. If that means being conservative, you and your readers must judge. The mistake being made here is to apply to the Church political categories that are inappropriate in matters of faith. All Christians, if they are consistent, have in their hearts a great love for their history. At the same time, they cultivate a desire to have a positive influence on the world: to make it more just, more human; to free it of all the burdens that ideologies have imposed
over the centuries. These range, for example, from racism to a lack of “global” concern for the causes of poverty. Blessed Josemaria used to say: “If we Christians took our faith seriously, the greatest revolution in history would take place.” This is a revolution that is still pending, and it is not exactly a conservative one.

We seem to be witnessing a new interest in religion today. What response does the Work offer to this rediscovered interior thirst?

Opus Dei offers a path of formation based on the sacraments—confession, the Eucharist—meditation on Scripture and the magisterium of the Church, the study of Catholic doctrine and professional morality. The Prelature offers means of Christian formation that are always compatible with ordinary life, without leaving one’s work or profession behind. It encourages people to discover the relationship that exists between contemplation and work. One can maintain a profound union with God while one is cooking a dish of pasta, taking care of a sick person, playing a game of soccer, or while doing scientific research. Union with God takes place in the depths of a free heart. It’s a question of love.

Speak to us about belonging to Opus Dei as a married person or in celibacy. Could you explain how it differs from belonging to a group or an association?

I prefer to explain the Prelature, rather than point out differences. Incorporation in Opus Dei is, in the first place, a personal and free response to a divine call, to God who is calling. Anyone being incorporated into the Prelature makes a commitment to two things: to seek identification with Jesus Christ in accordance with the spirit of Opus Dei, a spirit which does not take anyone out of his place or out of the position he occupies; and to remain under the jurisdiction of the Prelate in those aspects of the life of union with Christ and of apostolate which affect the apostolic mission of the Prelature. There is no difference between faithful of the Prelature and others who don’t have a vocation to Opus Dei.

What plans do you have in Italy?

We would like to make it possible for any Italian interested in Opus Dei to be able to have a center nearby. At present there are centers in some twenty-five cities. That leaves a lot to be done.
What do you hope for from the faithful of Opus Dei in Italy?

That they continue trying to give Christian witness in their profession, contributing to the solution of the problems and needs of their own environment. This country has given many saints to the Church. As an Italian (I am one at heart, after spending fifty-one years in Rome), I would very much like to see that tradition continue.

When will Msgr. Escriva be canonized?

I don’t know. We are not in a hurry. It will happen at the best moment, when God wants. The causes of beatification and canonization for lay faithful of Opus Dei in Guatemala, Switzerland and Spain have been opened. And the opening of the cause of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, first successor of the Founder, is being prepared.

You lived close to Msgr. Escriva for twenty-five years. Do you have any memory of him that is particularly united to Italy?

Blessed Josemaría moved to Rome in 1946, and immediately adapted himself to the life and the customs of this country, towards which he felt a deep gratitude. He died here and his remains repose here. He asked us that if he died outside of Rome we should bring his body back to this country, because for him the word “Roman” was synonymous with “universal”.

Interview published in the Colombian magazine Pensamiento y Cultura, Bogota (October 26, 2001)

How is your visit to Colombia going?

I am very happy to be here, and feel at home here. I have been wanting to come here for a long time, and, thanks be to God, this wish has become a reality. I would have liked to stay longer and visit other cities as well such as Barranquilla, Cartagena, Manizales and Bucaramanga. I hope that our Lord will grant me the opportunity to go to these places on another occasion.
I often recall Blessed Josemaría, who on his second catechetical trip to the Americas, in 1974, because of ill-health, was unable even to leave the plane at the Bogota airport. He had so looked forward to seeing many people here, but it wasn’t possible. He offered that sacrifice to our Lord for all the Colombian people, and later had a chance to be with some of them in Venezuela. I am sure that he is now helping Colombia from heaven.

You visited the University of La Sabana in 1983, accompanying Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, who was then Prelate of Opus Dei, on his visit to Colombia. What advice do you have for the faculty and administration after 18 years and in quite different circumstances.

Don Alvaro, the first Chancellor of this University, prayed a lot for La Sabana and encouraged your efforts to obtain this wonderful campus. His help deserves our filial gratitude.

As usually happens in the case of apostolic works promoted by the faithful and cooperators of the Opus Dei Prelature, this university was born with very few financial resources. It has been growing little by little over the years, but the University of La Sabana still has to reach much further in the educational service it renders to society.

The future of Colombia is in the hands of the Colombians. And the university has to courageously collaborate in that future. All of you, from those who are responsible for the physical maintenance of these buildings up to the Rector, are making it possible for this university to turn out people with a spirit of solidarity, who do not shut themselves up in their own interests or turn their backs on the real problems of their fellow men and women, who strive to be well prepared in order to serve their country and the whole world.

Before leaving Rome, I had the opportunity to tell the Pope that I was going to make this trip. His Holiness sent his blessing to everyone I would see and to all the apostolic works that I would visit. The Pope has dedicated himself body and soul to the mission of bringing Christ to all human environments, including the university. May his blessing help you to be loyal workers, to respect one another and to work as a team. May you have a true family spirit, with each department supporting the efforts of all the others, striving to serve Colombia, and from Colombia, many other places.
Our students are bright and enthusiastic young people, and our graduates have attained important positions in the life of the nation and even internationally. But we professors sometimes wish that they were more dedicated to study, more concerned about others, with a clearer focus for their cheerful use of free time, which is also very necessary at this stage in their life.

For these noble ideals to become reality, in the first place one has to turn to God. I recommend that you pray frequently for the students as you walk across the campus. Think of them, seeing them in their future roles, knowing that they are the hope of the world and, if Catholics, the hope of the Church.

Be friends of the students. Blessed Josemaria counseled both parents and teachers that, without losing the required authority and responsibility, they should become friends of young people. Then, in your classes and personal meetings, you will be able to help them grasp the importance of developing good study habits and being concerned about the needs of others.

We know that you follow very closely the news of events in Colombia. The great majority of Colombians are Catholic, and we realize that we have an obligation to contribute to building a just society. What advice do you have for trying to solve the serious conflicts our country is undergoing?

I know that the situation here causes you to suffer, and that everyone in one way or another is suffering the consequences. But at the same time, unconsciously, there may be a bit of resignation. We have to flee from passivity in the face of problems and search untiringly, with hope and a sense of responsibility, for solutions to conflicts. Each person, in his or her own job and place in society, has to find ways to help construct peace. Because peace is like a large river, made up out of a multitude of small streams and tributaries. And each of them is important.

There is a great need for an apostolic sowing of peace, based on prayer, understanding and the collaboration of everyone. When in Rome, I share in your sufferings, and even more so during these days I am spending in Colombia. It’s not just Colombia’s problem, but the whole world’s problem. I am constantly asking our Lady to obtain peace for this country.
The prelatic church of Opus Dei in Rome is dedicated to Our Lady of Peace. At the end of the nave there is a votive candelabra, with candles lit to our heavenly Mother asking that she win from our Lord peace for each one of us and peace for all humanity. I have decided that one of the candles should burn permanently in petition for peace in Colombia. I also advise that you seek out the intercession of Blessed Josemaria, a great friend and promoter of peace, who loved your country so much. I would like many people to ask him to help obtain peace for this wonderful country.

How do you see the role of the University of La Sabana, and of the university in general, in this troubled society?

There comes to mind how Blessed Josemaria responded to a similar question, also in an interview. He said that the university is not foreign to any human problem. The university, he said, is where one can acquire the preparation needed to later contribute to solving society’s great problems and to defending the fundamental rights of the person, always remembering that there is never only one answer to social questions. There are many legitimate proposals on how to solve each specific case. To fulfill its role in society, the university community must foster and respect this freedom.

Pope John Paul II told a group of university students some years ago that “the Church does not promote specific programs for the university or for society, but rather a program for man, for a new man, reborn through grace” (Homily to university faculty and students, June 5, 1979). Therefore the university has to try to ensure that its students receive an integral formation, and that they understand the greatness of this program, that of the new man regenerated through grace. They need to grasp this reality in a vital way, freely undertaking—as we all must do—the path of spiritual renewal, with the always necessary help of the sacraments. For as you well know, science and faith should walk hand in hand. The faith that you profess illuminates your intellectual work. And the science that you teach helps you to go more deeply into the faith.

Sanctification of work holds a central place in what Blessed Josemaria Escriva taught about the call to holiness that is addressed to everyone. How can we convince our children, and our students, that work gives dignity to man, and
that man’s end is not to enrich himself or climb the social ladder but rather to serve others generously?

We all learn above all by example. Students learn to serve when they see their teachers working with a noble intention. Through your classes you can pass on the ideal of serving others joyfully. For at the center of all the arts and sciences, at the heart of all the professions, one always finds man, with his material and spiritual needs. And in the heart of man and of work we discover the presence of God, Creator of the universe and final end of all creatures.

*Today’s culture is the culture of contemporary man, with his technological advances and ease of communication, but also with his many problems. The pluralism of our society at times overwhelms us. How can we construct our future with faith and reason as recommended by John Paul II. How can we be Christians of the 21st century?*

Cultural pluralism is not a problem for Christians, but a reality that we take for granted, as ordinary citizens. The Pope has repeatedly urged us to carry out a new evangelization, of culture as well. We have no right to be afraid. In his letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, the Holy Father said that “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” (no. 55). John Paul II also said recently that globalization “is not *a priori* either good or bad. It is what people make of it. No system is an end in itself, and it is necessary to insist that globalization, like any other system, should be at the service of the human person, of solidarity” (Address to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, April 27, 2001, no. 2).

The real problem is a selfish individualism. The Pope invites us to confront this deviation forcefully. “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” (Apostolic letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, no. 50). Therefore what is needed in today’s world, with the help of science, technology, and the ease of communication, is the “globalization” of charity. And we will not achieve global solidarity without personal solidarity.
Today's society seems to give importance only to one's image, to appearances, while the truth is seen as something secondary and even out of date. Nevertheless, it's clear that without truth our life loses coherence. What can we do to foster truth and to live in accord with it?

You, as university people, have a commitment to search for and transmit the truth. A consistent Christian refuses to compromise with lies and superficiality. Therefore Christians are a spur for people's conscience in a world where only power, money and the trappings of wealth count for anything. Everyone harbors deep in his heart a “nostalgia” for the truth, for the clarity and beauty of truth, for the splendor of truth we could say, making use of the title of one of the Pope's encyclicals.

Don't we all enjoy being with a sincere friend who speaks the truth clearly and selflessly, who helps and corrects if needed? “To speak the truth with charity” is a Christian motto that can satisfy the burning thirst of this world of ours.

*Your book* Pathways of Christian Life, *which was recently published, has had a great success in terms of sales. To what do you attribute this fact, in a society like today's, which sometimes seems so far from ideals? What were the main points you wanted to stress in your book?*

The women and men of today are thirsting for God. The Pope has expressed this beautifully, saying that we are beginning a new Christian springtime. We have just celebrated the great Jubilee of the year 2000, a year of thanksgiving for the incarnation of the Son of God. Christ is, as always, the permanent “newness” towards which all our efforts are aimed, also those of the 21st century, striving to imbue ordinary life with Christian meaning. This is the core of Blessed Josemaria's message. *Pathways of Christian Life* draws heavily on my personal experience of daily life alongside Opus Dei's Founder, from 1950 to 1975: twenty-five years of seeing Blessed Josemaria seek, find and love our Lord Jesus Christ. With this book, I have tried to contribute to the rediscovery of the face of Christ, a goal Pope John Paul II set for us during the Jubilee.

Thank you for your words of encouragement and for sharing your time with us here at the University of La Sabana.

Many thanks to you for your warm welcome. This university is a
family, and as I said before, I feel at home here. I ask you to pray for me. I will certainly pray for you, especially at Holy Mass.
ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA

• The Cause of Canonization
• The Centennial of His Birth
• Other Items
The Cause of Canonization

Approval of a miracle attributed to Blessed Josemaria Escriva

On December 20, 2001, Pope John Paul II approved the decree of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints on a miracle attributed to the founder of Opus Dei.[1] The chronic radiodermitis, an incurable illness, suffered by Doctor Manuel Nevado Rey disappeared in November 1992, after the intercession of Blessed Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer was invoked.

Radiodermitis

Radiodermitis is a condition typical of doctors whose hands have been exposed to high levels of radiation over an extended period. Today the affliction has become rare since it was caused by the type of X-ray machines used back in the 50s and 60s, which lacked adequate protective measures. During those years, various specialists frequently developed radiodermititis on their hands, especially radiologists, pediatricians who held children in their hands while examining them with X-rays, and orthopedic surgeons who worked on fractured bones under X-rays.

This incurable condition progresses inexorably until with the passage of years it causes the development of skin cancers. The only known treatment is surgical (skin grafts and the amputation of the parts of the hands affected).

The intercession of Blessed Josemaria

Doctor Manuel Nevado Rey, who was born in 1932 in Spain, is an orthopedic specialist. For almost fifteen years he treated fractures and other lesions while exposing his hands to X-rays. He received his medical degree in 1955 from the University of Salamanca, and began to carry out this type of surgery in 1956. The first symptoms of the condition began to appear in 1962. The radiodermititis on his hands grew progressively worse until around 1984 he had to limit himself to minor surgery. In the summer of 1992 he had to give up all surgical activity.
In November 1992, Dr. Nevado met Luis Eugenio Bernardo, an agronomist who worked in a Spanish government office. Upon noticing the doctor's hands, he offered Dr. Nevado a prayer card of the founder of Opus Dei, who had been beatified on May 17 of that year. He suggested that he pray for a cure through Blessed Josemaria's intercession.

The cure

After this meeting, Dr. Nevado began praying to Blessed Josemaria. A few days later, he and his wife traveled to Vienna to take part in a medical congress. They visited various churches and found prayer cards of Blessed Josemaria in all of them. “Seeing these prayer cards everywhere,” Doctor Nevado explains, “encouraged me to increase my prayers for a cure.”

From the day he began going to the intercession of Blessed Josemaria, his hands started to improve. In about two weeks, the lesions disappeared completely. In January 1993, Dr. Nevado began carrying out surgical operations again.

[1] See decree on page. 156.

Steps in the acknowledgement of the miracle

The Postulation of the Cause received news of Dr. Nevado's cure through a letter dated March 15, 1993. It was sent by the agronomist Luis Eugenio Bernardo, one of the faithful of the Opus Dei Prelature, who had suggested to Dr. Nevado that he ask for a cure through the intercession of Blessed Josemaria. With Dr. Nevado’s collaboration, documents were collected and an exhaustive study was made of the case.

Once certainty of the extraordinary nature of the cure was determined, on December 30, 1993, the Postulator of the Cause handed over the documentation to the Bishop of Badajoz with a request that he begin the required legal process on the miracle.
The diocesan investigation was carried out in the episcopal tribunal of Badajoz from May 12 to July 4, 1994. After the legal documents were sent to Rome, the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints initiated a formal study of the material. On April 26, 1996, the Congregation certified that the process had been carried out in full accord with the juridical norms and practices in force (decree of validity).

On July 10, 1997, the board of medical consultants of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints agreed unanimously that the cure of Dr. Nevado from “chronic cancerous radiodermatitis in the third, irreversible stage” was “rapid, complete and lasting, and scientifically inexplicable.”

On January 9, 1998, the Theological Consultors of the Congregation were asked to give their opinion on the preternatural character of the cure and on the causal relationship between the invocation of Blessed Josemaria Escriva and the disappearance of the illness. They replied with a unanimous affirmative vote.

On September 21, 2001, the Ordinary Congregation of Cardinals and Bishops who are members of the Congregation, confirmed the miraculous nature of the cure and its attribution to Blessed Josemaria Escriva.

The reading of the relevant decree on the miracle took place on December 20, 2001, in the presence of Pope John Paul II.

The Centennial of His Birth

Throughout Italy

During the final months of the year, the approaching centennial of the founder of Opus Dei gave rise to many different events throughout Italy.
On November 25, a conference was held in Milan’s Colegio Universitario Viscontea to open the academic year 2001-2002. The theme was “The importance of the person in the teachings of Blessed Josemaria Escriva.”

In her brief introductory remarks, the writer Marta Brancatisano highlighted the different activities that were taking place around the world on the occasion of the centennial of Blessed Josemaria Escriva's birth. Among other events, she mentioned the special commemorative stamps being issued by the Italian postal system.

Marco Vigorelli, senior partner in a well-known consulting firm, recalled that as early as 1931, Blessed Josemaria had expressed the desire that Catholic catechisms have a section dedicated to the social doctrine of the Church, so that from childhood Catholics would learn about their obligations to bring about a just society. He also examined various definitions of globalization and economic systems, contrasting conceptions that place man at the service of the economy and those that place the economy at the service of man. “The egocentric search for selfish interests, which creates exclusion and inequality and puts man at the service of the economy,” are marks of the first system. “The just search for the common good, which creates solidarity and puts the economy at the service of man,” is the system most in keeping with human dignity.

Giuseppe de Lucia Lumeno, a business manager, centered his talk on the founder of Opus Dei’s teachings on the sanctification of work. He emphasized that the message Josemaria Escriva received on October 2, 1928, was a divine message that transcended any particular historical milieu. De Lucia pointed out that the founder began speaking about sanctifying work during the time of the 1929 great recession. If this idea had issued solely from one man’s imagination, it would never have outlived the great crisis that afflicted the economy and the world of work for so many years. After examining the social encyclicals of Pope John Paul II and comparing them with the core teaching of Josemaria Escriva—“to sanctify work, sanctify oneself in work, and sanctify others through one’s work”—De Lucia concluded by affirming that the “crux of what God made Escriva see on October 2, 1928 is the redemptive character of daily work. When done with this intention, work transforms Christians, in a real and
not just allegorical way, into \textit{alter Christus, ipse Christus}, that is, into coredeemers with Christ.”

On November 24, a round table discussion on the importance of solidarity and volunteer work in the teachings of Blessed Josemaria was held at the Delle Peschiere Residence in Genoa. Participants included Umberto Farri, founder and president of the Institute for University Cooperation (ICU), and Alberto Michelini, a journalist and deputy in Italy’s parliament.

Umberto Farri gave a brief resumé of the major stages in the history of ICU, which he began in 1967 at a time when there was great agitation among university students. He was spurred to do so by Blessed Josemaria’s teachings on the responsibility of Christians in the construction of a just social order, and specifically the role of the university in this task.

In his talk, Alberto Michelini spoke about a documentary he made for the centennial of Blessed Josemaria’s birth. The video contains a series of testimonies from all over the world from a wide variety of persons, ranging from a butcher in Hong Kong to a New York business man. In the words of Michelini, all of them “strive ‘to turn the prose of daily life into heroic verse,’ as Blessed Josemaria used to say, by sanctifying their daily work and contributing to create an environment of peace and friendship that can truly change the face of the earth.”

The conference concluded with testimonies by young people who have participated over the years in the programs of volunteer work promoted by the residence both in the city of Genoa itself and in other parts of the world.

On November 17, the AEC association sponsored a conference in Turin entitled “Passionately Loving the World,” with more than 400 people taking part. Hernán Fitte, Professor of Moral Theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, gave the opening lecture.
The conference ended with a round table discussion moderated by Gianluca Segre, president of the AEC. Participants included Sergio Benedetto, from the University of Turin, who spoke about teaching as a work of service; Anna Maria Minetti, a business manager, who spoke about working women and their role in society; and Marco Vigorelli, head of an accounting firm, who made some comments on the relationship between work and family, enriched by interesting examples from his own efforts to combines a highly demanding job with a large family.

On October 13, a conference was held in Naple’s Teatro de la Reggia entitled “Blessed Josemaria and the social doctrine of the Church: human and social development.” Taking part among others were Cardinal Michele Giordano, the Archbishop of Naples; Antonio Marzano, Minister of Industry and Commerce; a businessman, Cesare Romiti; and Roberto Panizza, professor of International Economics at the University of Turin.

The meeting began with a brief presentation by Luigi Cuccurullo, president of the Istituto per Ricerche ed Attività Educativa, the organization sponsoring the activity, and a conference by Professor Angel Rodríguez Luño, from the Moral Theology Department of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, who discussed forming one’s conscience in social and political matters.

This was followed by a round table discussion, moderated by journalist Giovanni Minoli, that looked at various social activities promoted by faithful of Opus Dei in the Congo, the Philippines, Peru and Italy.

The Campus Biomedico University in Rome organized a symposium on the meaning of suffering in the teachings of Blessed Josemaria. It was held in the Congress Hall of the National Research Center on November 9, with more than 500 people attending.
Following the opening remarks by the rector, Vincenzo Lorenzelli, various professors from Rome’s universities and representatives from government health agencies exchanged experiences and comments in a round table discussion moderated by journalist Fabrizio del Noce. Professor Paola Binetti opened the discussion with reflections on the human and supernatural perspective with which Blessed Josemaria confronted the question of suffering. The undersecretary of the Ministry of Health, Antonio Guidi, Professor Francesco D’Agostino, and the Regional Health Director of Liguria, Piero Micossi, were among the other participants.

The symposium continued in the afternoon with some personal testimonies from students at the Campus Biomedico University about their contact with suffering. Another moving testimony was that of Antonio Ricciardi, director of the course in health management that the Campus Biomedico organizes together with the Milan Politechnical University. In a prenatal test, he was informed that his sixth daughter was suffering from a serious illness. But thanks to the faith and support of many friends, and the help of medical science, he overcame the anxiety the test results had first elicited. Maria, now a few months old, was brought by her mother to the dais and received the most prolonged applause of the symposium.

From November 9 to 11, a meeting for university professors was held at the Calarossa International Center in Sicily. Its theme was “Work and sanctity in the teachings of Blessed Josemaria Escriva.” About one hundred people took part. Opening day speakers included Giorgio Faro, from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, and Franco Poterzio, from the University of Milan. On the following day, Professor José Luis Illanes, from the University of Navarre in Pamplona, made use of various texts of Blessed Josemaria to show that “work is an exclusively and typically human reality” and that it “is not a punishment, but a gift of God.” He also stressed that it was possible to maintain a constant dialogue with God in the midst of one’s daily occupations.
Inauguration of the “Institute for Industrial Technology,” in Lagos

On October 4, the Institute for Industrial Technology (IIT), in Lagos, Nigeria, was officially inaugurated.

Its director, Darlington Agholor, explained that “Blessed Josemaria Escriva was very interested in helping the neediest members of society to improve their standard of living and obtain the indispensable means for a more dignified life. He encouraged us to start a technical school as soon as possible to give professional formation to the largest possible number of people in Nigeria. The same is true of many other social projects that have sprung up all over the world as a result of his urging.”

“As we approach the centennial of Josemaria Escriva,” Agholor added, “this school is a birthday present, a humble monument that we have begun in his honor. We hope the school will continue to testify for many years to our gratitude and devotion to Blessed Josemaria.”

During the inaugural ceremony, the representative from the Nigerian Ministry of Education, Abimbola Davies, said that the IIT is “an example of how private citizens can exercise their initiative for the benefit of society.” The President of the Board of Directors, Otunba Peter Adegbesan, noted that the school aims to be “an agent for the relief of poverty, since it is aimed specifically at young people from the lowest economic strata of our society.”

The IIT offers its students quality technical and mechanical training to facilitate their entry into the workforce. Among other programs it provides a three year course in electromechanics for young people who have finished secondary school. At the end of their studies, the graduates of IIT will be well versed in the basics of mechanics and electronics. Classes on professional ethics also form an important part of the curriculum.

The IIT uses the “dual” educational system, based on a combination of classes and work experience.

The school is provisionally located in some buildings of the Carnaud Metal Box Company in Lagos, which has made available to IIT its
premises and machinery. Work on construction of the definitive school buildings has already begun.

At Istmo University, Guatemala City

An academic act at Istmo University on June 27 inaugurated a program of activities about Blessed Josemaría that continued throughout the second half of the year and was scheduled to culminate on January 9, 2002.

The inaugural meeting dealt with aspects of the message of Opus Dei’s founder connected with Christian social action and secularity. Guillermo Mata, rector of Istmo University, welcomed those attending (professors, students, representatives of other universities, ambassadors and civil authorities) and gave some brief reflections on Blessed Josemaría’s university spirit.

Father Julio Ortiz read an address by Archbishop Rodolfo Quezada of Guatemala City on “Blessed Josemaría and secularity,” which the prelate could not present in person. The economist José Molina, secretary of the university board of trustees, spoke on “Christian social action in the teaching of Blessed Josemaría.”

Congress at Austral University, Argentina

From June 28 to July 1, a congress on Blessed Josemaría was held at Austral University in Buenos Aires, with over two thousand people taking part. The sixty papers presented at the congress covered various aspects of the life, writings and spirit of the founder of Opus Dei, in preparation for the centennial of his birth on January 9, 2002.

The inaugural session opened with the reading of a message from the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría. Present at the ceremony was
the Apostolic Nuncio to Argentina, Bishop Santos Abril, and a large group of civil and religious authorities.

The three-days congress dealt with a wide range of fields in which the founder of Opus Dei’s message has had special impact, including the world of communications and bioethics.

Among the participants were the theologian Pedro Rodríguez; Rabbi Angel Kreiman; Carlos Alberto Di Franco, editor of the daily newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*; the Assistant Dean of the Campus Biomedico University of Rome, Paola Binetti; and Dr. Abel Albino, founder of an institution helping in the fight against child malnutrition. The congress was brought to a close by the rector of the university, Alejandro Consigli.

Work sessions were held on a number of different topics. In one of these sessions, a professional soccer player spoke about the influence of Blessed Josemaria’s teachings on his life.

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**Church in Barbastro dedicated to Blessed Josemaria**

A new parish has been dedicated to Blessed Josemaria in Barbastro, the city where he was born. The ceremony on December 8 was attended by two thousand faithful, forty priests and three bishops: Bishop Juan Jose Omella, current Bishop of Barbastro-Monzon; Bishop Emeritus Ambrosio Echebarría of that diocese; and Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei. Among the civil authorities present were the mayor of Barbastro and the president of the Huesca provincial government.

“Blessed Josemaria was a universal Barbastran, who followed closely in Christ’s footsteps by proclaiming, and living, our Lord’s universal call to holiness,” said Bishop Omella in his homily.

Relics of St. Raymond, patron of Barbastro, Blessed Florentino Asensio, martyred bishop of the city, and Blessed Josemaria have been placed under the altar stone.
A stone monument to Blessed Josemaria at the Seido Mikawadai School in Nagasaki, Japan

Those who began the Seido Mikawadai School always considered Blessed Josemaria as its founder, since it was he who encouraged them to begin it and who prayed insistently for its success. The very day he went to heaven he spoke of their efforts to get the project underway and asked people to pray for its fruitful outcome. Thanks to his intercession from heaven, little by little all the difficulties were overcome. The government approved the purchase of the required land, and in April 1978 the first phase of construction was completed.

Blessed Josemaria’s presence is very tangible at the school, since he is responsible for the spirit animating it. Although less than one fifth of the students are Catholics, many have great devotion to him and pray to him every day.

In April 2001 everyone in the school began to prepare for the centennial of his birth. The students and staff decided that a stone monument should be placed in a prominent place in the garden in his memory. Thanks to the donation of the parents of a former student, a non-Christian, the project quickly became a reality. A bronze relief of Blessed Josemaria is accompanied by the following words from The Way: “Don’t let your life be sterile. Be useful. Blaze a trail. Shine forth with the light of your faith and of your love.” The monument was blessed on September 30.

Parish Church in Guayaquil, Ecuador

On Tuesday, October 2, 2001, the feast of the Holy Guardian Angels and anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei, Archbishop Juan Larre Holguin consecrated the altar and blessed the new parish church dedicated
to Blessed Josemaria Escriva. The church, situated in a residential zone of Guayaquil that has undergone considerable urban development in recent years, was financed entirely by donations.

“Blessed Josemaría must be very happy in heaven,” said Archbishop Larrea in the homily of the Mass before more than six hundred people, “seeing that in this place, which from now on is holy, God is honored, and the Blessed Virgin, Saint Joseph and all the angels and saints are loved. On this feast of the Holy Guardian Angels, we ask these spirits who unceasingly serve our God to protect this church and its most precious treasure, Jesus’ sacramental presence in the tabernacle. May they intercede for and watch over all those present and their families, as well as for those who have helped to construct this place of prayer, and for all who have generously provided the required financial means.”

“We should especially mention,” added Archbishop Larrea, “the present Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, who has sent us a relic ex ossibus of Blessed Josemaria. It will be venerated on the Blessed Sacrament altar, together with a relic from the Holy Cross of our Redeemer.”

Other Items

Publications about Blessed Josemaria and Opus Dei

The French and German translations of the book The Founder of Opus Dei, by Andres Vazquez de Prada, have recently come out. The French edition is published by Le Laurier publishers, in Paris, and Wilson & Lafleur, in Montreal; the German by Adamas Verlag, in Cologne.
Ares Press in Milan has published a book entitled _Un santo per amico. Testimonianze sul Beato Josemaria Escriva, fondatore dell’Opus Dei_. This is a collection of testimonies from cardinals, bishops and men and women religious about the life and virtues of Opus Dei’s founder.

_Ten to chi wo tsunagu_ (“Uniting heaven and earth”) is the title of a recently published book by Toshim Nakai. It contains a a brief history of the Prelature of Opus Dei in Japan. The book concentrates especially on the story of the beginnings of the work of Opus Dei in that country.

A biography of Maria Ignacia Garcia Escobar, one of the first women in Opus Dei, has been published. Its title is _La paz y la alegria: Maria Ignacia Garcia Escobar 1896-1933_. It was written by Jose Miguel Cejas and published by Editorial Rialp, Madrid.


The Publisher M in Krakow has published a book by Jan O’Dogherty _Rekolekcje z... B. Josemaria_ (“On Retreat with Blessed Josemaria Escriva”). The book collects various writings of the founder of Opus Dei organized around the theme of following closely in Christ’s footsteps. It has been published as part of a collection for people who wish to make a retreat. The prologue is by Cardinal Franciszek Macharski, Archbishop of Krakow.

In November, the book _Prier 15 jours avec Josemaria Escriva_, by Guillaume Derville, was published by Nouvelle Cité in Montrouge. It forms part of a collection entitled _Prier 15 jours_. Three thousand copies were printed.

New editions of Blessed Josemaria’s works

Spring Publications Ltd. has published the book of homilies _In Love_
with the Church in Chinese (in traditional ideograms), with the title Yiht Ngoi Gaau Wuhih. The edition was published in October with a press run of 1000 copies.

In Canada nine homilies from Christ Is Passing By have been published on CD and cassettes in French, with musical intervals by Wilson & Lafleur, Montreal.

In Spain the first cassette edition of the homilies from Friends of God has been published by EDIBESA, Madrid.

In October the first edition of Christ Is Passing By has been published in Russian, with a printing of 2000 copies by Editorial Okeanos Oy, Helsinki.

In December, Distributed Processing Systems in the Philippines published an interactive multimedia CD-ROM entitled The Greatness of Ordinary Life. It contains a biography and the writings of Blessed Josemaria Escriva together with more than 300 photographs, 18 video clips and 14 audio sections, along with information on the Prelature of Opus Dei. Also in the Philippines, under the Scepter label, a thousand cassettes have been produced with four homilies of Blessed Josemaria taken from Christ Is Passing By.

In Mexico, the 13th and 14th editions of Friends of God have been published recently, with a printing of 51,000 copies, as well as the 12th edition of Christ Is Passing By, with 50,000 copies.

Torna ai contenuti
Process of Canonization opened for Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri

The Cardinal Archbishop of Madrid, Antonio María Rouco, presided over the inaugural session of the process of canonization for Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri on November 18, in the Zurbaran student residence. After signing the decree introducing the Cause and appointing a tribunal to collect documentation and the testimony of witnesses, Cardinal Rouco spoke to those attending the ceremony. “The Church wants the saints to be known and recognized,” he said. “She wants those of us who are still pilgrims on earth to know—with names and surnames, with specific faces, with lives that can be depicted in a biography—that the Church is called to this destiny. This is what we seek to recognize in the life of Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri.”

Cardinal Rouco emphasized that the Church and the world need holy lay people. He reminded those present of the message of Opus Dei’s founder, “whose charism was centered on highlighting this essential aspect of the Christian vocation and making it relevant in the life and mission of the Church of the twentieth century, of the present century, and of all centuries to come.”

Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri was born on December 12, 1916 in Madrid and died in Pamplona, with a reputation for sanctity, on July 16, 1975. She met Blessed Josemaría in 1944 and soon saw clearly that God was calling her to form part of Opus Dei, seeking sanctity in ordinary life through its spirit. The founder relied on her to spread the Work, and in 1950, asked her to go and start the apostolic work in Mexico. There she began the Copenhague university residence, and with the help of the women who resided there began various activities for the advancement of women in rural areas in the Mexico City region and in Monterrey, Tacámbaro, Amilpas and other places. After her return to Spain, she worked as a teacher in Madrid. She had a doctorate in chemistry from the University of Madrid. Her students and colleagues praised the quality of her classes, the friendly attention she gave to everyone, her respect for freedom and the Christian view of life that imbued her classes.
Guadalupe’s life, noted the vice-postulator of the Cause, Rev. Benito Badrinas, was that of a Christian woman who sought sanctity by carrying out very small things with love. Guadalupe, the Postulator said, “worked hard for love of God, helped many people to meet him, and showed great concern for the educational and spiritual needs of those around her, acting always with much kindness.”

The Cause of Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri was opened three years after that of her brother Eduardo (1910-1985), an eminent doctor and, like Guadalupe, one of the faithful of the Opus Dei Prelature.

Pontifical appointments

_The Holy Father has appointed:_

Msgr. José Antonio Galera de Echenique,  
_Chaplain to His Holiness;_

Rev. Luis Felipe Navarro,  
_Consultor for the Pontifical Council for the Laity._
INITIATIVES
In brief

Asunción, Paraguay

Work camp in Ybapobó

Puerto Ybapobó, a small village 500 miles north of the Paraguayan capital, was the site of a work camp organized by Ribera Cultural Center in Asunción, from July 13 to 18.

Thirty-seven boys from several high schools traveled by boat up the Paraguay River to the site. Their work included repairs, painting and electrical installations in two schools, the local chapel, and a health facility.

Free medical treatment was offered, with medicines donated by various laboratories in Asunción. The work camp’s chaplain also offered priestly attention to families in the area.

Bogota, Colombia

University solidarity

Students dedicating a Saturday to painting, or spending hours in an improvised consulting office to which hundreds of people come after waiting patiently in line, are some of the activities sponsored by the Office of University Solidarity, a social action program at La Sabana University.

One of the current projects is “Mission Sabana,” which provides assistance to low income districts lacking in basic facilities. This semester, students worked in the village of San Miguel, in Zipaquira, a district not far from the university with many families who have fled from the violence reigning in parts of Colombia.

More than 600 people have benefited from the free legal advice, dental care and health services. Workshops are also offered on family education and micro-businesses.

In the six years since the program began, more than 270 student volunteers have worked in 35 communities and collected donations for 42 social assistance programs in the towns around Bogota and in other regions and countries.

Buenos Aires, Argentina
First Conference of Home Entrepreneurs

Young professional women interested in becoming better wives and mothers gathered on September 20 for the First Conference of Home Entrepreneurs in the auditorium of the Southern Center for Advanced Studies in Buenos Aires. The conference, centered on the social and family teachings of John Paul II and of Blessed Josemaria Escriva, considered, among other topics, questions on housekeeping, nutrition and children’s learning problems.

The participation of Lita Palermo de Lazzari, International President of the Association of Homemakers, and the director of a national television program, ensured that the conference received wide TV coverage.

Gujarat, India

Work camp in Gujarat

A group of eleven university students from New Delhi worked as volunteers from May 20 to June 1 in Gujarat, the area most severely affected by the January 2001 earthquake.

The expedition, organized by Kamet Student Center, was sponsored by local businesses and citizens. Considerable help for the project also came from other countries. The earthquake, which destroyed entire villages in the Kutch region, caused more than 30,000 deaths and left a million families homeless.

The students helped out in the work of rehabilitation being carried out by various national and oversees institutions in the affected area. They also distributed economic help collected for rebuilding homes, so badly needed at present.

The young volunteers worked in three villages, where they inspected homes that had been damaged and helped clear rubble where reconstruction work had already begun.

The average temperature during these days was around 110 degrees, and those left homeless were suffering great hardships from their poor living conditions. The students had an opportunity to spend many hours
with families, who were very grateful for the interest taken in their problems.

The Catholic population in this part of India is quite small. Nevertheless, the Church's presence can be seen in educational and social development institutions working in the area.

Those involved in the work camp took part in Christian doctrine classes in addition to their work. They also tried to intensify their life of piety through daily Mass, the rosary and other devotions.

Upon returning to New Delhi, the students shared their experiences in various forums. All of them said that, despite all the hardships, their best memories were those of the families they visited and the tokens of appreciation from so many people who, far from complaining about their situation, were now preparing to confront the future with new hope.

**Iquique, Chile**

**Social Help Days**

In the village of La Tirana, 1200 miles north of Santiago, over a hundred people received medical assistance from the students of medicine and nursing who took part in the Social Help Days organized by a number of women's cultural centers—Aconcagua in Santiago, Maitenes in Concepción, and Altamar Residence in Viña del Mar.

The students spent four days working intensively at the local health center, which rarely sees a doctor or nurse. Along with providing medical treatment, they saw to it that anyone who requested it also received spiritual attention. “One elderly man,” one of the women said, “asked for the Anointing of the Sick and was assisted by a priest. To our joy, he seems to be coming along well.”

At the same time, some students of Art and Architecture dedicated themselves to repairing and painting the health facility building.

A team of university women gave talks to teenagers in the area on the prevention of alcoholism and drug addiction, while others gave catechism classes and supplementary tutoring in various subjects to grade school children.
**Lima, Peru**

First Communion for Down’s Syndrome girls

On November 24, a group of 15 young girls suffering from Down’s Syndrome received their first Holy Communion and the sacrament of Confirmation after two years of preparation by university women who take part in activities at Ausangate Cultural Center in Lima.

The method used in the classes was based on story-telling, pictures, videos and group dynamics in which the girls related their own experiences. The teaching took place in small groups divided by age, explained Rocio Sanchez, the woman coordinating the project.

The teachers held several preparatory sessions on Saturdays from 10 to 12, where they received the training needed for the special students they would be teaching.

The students came from several universities in Lima.

**Montevideo, Uruguay**

Bicentennial of Cardinal Newman at the University of Montevideo

The bicentennial of the birth of Cardinal John Henry Newman (February 21, 1801 - August 11, 1890) was commemorated by the University of Montevideo's Humanities School. Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, names the great English cardinal as one of the philosophers and theologians who best harmonizes the demands of faith and reason in the search for truth.

After an introductory address in which Father Jaime Fuentes, professor of theology at the University of Montevideo, gave a brief biography of Newman, Professor Nestor Martinez Valls, from the Uruguayan Theology School, described the intellectual path traveled by Newman that led to the forming of the Oxford Movement and eventually his entrance into the Catholic Church.

“Newman’s vision for the university” was the topic developed by Professor Jesús Caño-Guiral, professor of the history of philosophy at the University of Montevideo. The closing address was by Father Fernando Cavaller, rector of the Argentinian Seminary de La Plata, and the founder
and publisher of the magazine “Newmaniana.” He spoke about “Newman’s understanding of faith.”

Moscow, Russia

Work camp in Moscow

For the past few years, Moncloa Student Residence in Madrid has been organizing work camps to provide health services, academic assistance and catechism classes in disadvantaged areas. This year the program took place in Moscow.

At the beginning of July, a group of students spent two weeks a few miles outside the Russian capital, working at an orphan asylum with more than thirty abandoned children. Besides focusing on the human and Christian formation of the children, the students carried out a number of material improvements in the old orphanage.

Upon their return, the young men expressed their joy and gratitude for the opportunity to help the people in Russia and their desire to continue doing so in the future.

Nairobi, Kenya

An historic project

Forty university women from Kenya, Great Britain and Italy took part in a rural development program in Kenya in August. The program was entitled “an historic project.” Fanusi Study Centre in Nairobi, Ashwell House in London and Coniston Hall in Manchester combined forces in organizing the social assistance project, which has become a yearly event. They were joined this year by Italian students from the Viscontea residence in Milan.

The students divided up into three teams. The London group worked at Riara Primary School in Kiambu, while the teams from Manchester and Milan concentrated their efforts at the Ng’ong Township Primary School. The Kenyans helped out at both sites.

In Kenya many rural schools have just a few teachers and a rudimentary supply of books. Thus only a few boys, and even fewer girls, are able to attend high school on a regular basis.
The project’s aim was to give classes and personalized attention to girls in two of these schools. The women taught English, mathematics and sciences. They also painted and decorated the two schools. On the last day of the project the best pupils received prizes and the school was given sports supplies and books donated by the English students and the Kenya National Library Services.

The students also did some repairs at Kimlea Technical Training Centre. Kimlea is an initiative of Kianda Foundation that teaches young women basic skills to help them begin small businesses.

The program also included visits to a home for the elderly, where the students provided company and assistance and helped clean some of the installations. In the nearby villages they gave instruction on hygiene to women with children and helped build a simple house for an elderly woman. They also visited their pupils’ homes and encouraged the parents to send their children to high school.

Cultural activities filled part of the weekends, among them a visit to a museum and an excursion to a nature reserve. One group made a side trip to Mombasa, where there are plans to carry out a similar project in the future.

The English women had prepared for this project through a series of seminars in Ashwell House on rural development. They also participated in conferences organized by the Department for International Development in England, and, in Kenya, in some conferences organized by the United Nations. Those taking part in the program had a opportunity to attend talks on Christian doctrine at Fanusi Study Centre.

**New Delhi, India**

Study and work as service

Vatsalya Study Centre, in New Delhi, held a series of seminars for university women on “Study and work as service.” The series included preparatory meetings and a full-day seminar on November 4.

The preliminary sessions stressed the need to take study and work seriously, in order to acquire the skills needed to contribute to the improvement of society. A key idea insisted on was that work had to be
seen as service to others. The work of mothers of families was held up as a model of this vision of work.

Pamplona, Spain

Polish student volunteers in Pamplona

From September 6 to 18, a group of medical and nursing students from Krakow and Warsaw carried out volunteer work in the Valle del Roncal Center, a facility for the care of persons with severe mental retardation. The group of young women visited the Hospital of the University of Navarre to observe the care provided there for the sick and their families. They also visited the administrative areas of the hospital, including the facilities for preparing meals, laundry and cleaning.

One of the chaplains at the hospital spoke to them about helping the sick to suffer with dignity and to sanctify themselves in their situation. The young women also had an opportunity to reflect on themes related to bioethics in light of “The Letter to Health Workers” of the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Work with Health Workers, and both the apostolic letter Salvifici Dolores and the encyclical Evangelium Vitae of Pope John Paul II.

Pamplona, Spain

Eleven years working with a smile

Students for Social Assistance devotes its attention to the sick, the handicapped, the elderly, and their families. At the start of the new academic year, it carried out a recruiting campaign, with many new people signing up.

The result of the concern of several students at the University of Navarre, Students for Social Assistance began its work in 1990 by providing company for lonely and disabled persons and distributing food to needy families and the unemployed.

As the number of volunteers increased, new programs were started. These include: the program for the sick, which provides company and entertainment for convalescent children and care for their families; the program for the aged, which provides activities and entertainment for the aged and those confined to home; and the program for the handicapped,
which helps take care of the physically and mentally handicapped of all ages.

Teresa Martín Aguado, general coordinator, insists that no specific qualifications are required to work in the program. “All that’s required is concern for others and a real commitment. And you need a smile on your face,” she says. The normal time commitment is two hours a week, although the work varies according to the availability of each volunteer.

Quebec, Canada

Volunteers and philosophy

Girls aged 16-17 took part this summer in a program for volunteers interested in helping elderly people who are hospitalized. It was organized by Trimar Cultural Center in Quebec.

Medical personnel gave classes on the special physical and mental health problems that often affect these sick people. The program also included tutorials and visits to a hospital.

The program was inspired by the message about the human person contained in the Holy Father’s book *Love and Responsibility* and in his apostolic letter *Salvifici Doloris*, and the teachings of Blessed Josemaría Escriva.

The students were also invited to participate in “a philosophical get-together” outside the program of regular meetings. The discussion, run by a woman philosophy professor, focussed on the meaning of the human person in light of Christian anthropology and elicited a lot of interest from those taking part.

Trimar has organized this program for the last 15 years in cooperation with a university hospital in Quebec.

Santiago and Navan (Chile and Ireland)

A culture of peace through service

On October 27, 2001, almost a hundred people took part in the Roman Encounter 2002, organized by the Fontanar Center for Technical Formation, an educational center in Santiago, Chile that offers advanced career training in the service fields.
The conference centered on ways people can contribute, through their daily work, to world peace. Its title was “A culture of peace through service.” The dozen presentations stressed how a well-trained service professional can contribute to the good of society. Among the topics dealt with were: “Food and family life,” “Creative service,” “Volunteering: giving one’s time,” and “Friendliness: an effective communicator.” Frequent reference was made to the importance of Blessed Josemaría’s message on the sanctification of professional work in today’s world.

The conference was inaugurated by Enrique Mendoza, an expert in the employment of human resources; and it was concluded by Gabiela Cuevas, a doctor in Domestic Sciences and professor at the Service Enterprises Management School of the University of the Andes.

A similar activity took place in Ireland, also in October. Organized by the Lismullin Institute and the Lismullin Hospitality Services Centre, the seminar on hospitality was given the name “Fios Fáilte,” an expression in Gaelic which means “the science of welcoming.”

The topic of this first seminar was “Teamwork.” Phil Hanlon, assistant director of the Graduate Business School at the Dublin Institute of Technology gave a number of sessions on the qualities required of a good team leader and the human virtues needed in the working world. He also related his experiences in Vietnam in starting a school for hotel workers.

São José dos Campos, Brazil
Vila Santa Cruz Social Project

In an attempt to help solve the problem of juvenile delinquency, a number of students from the Aeronautical Technical Institute have organized a program of individual tutoring for boys in Vila Santa Cruz, one of the poorest districts in São José dos Campos. The activity was started by students from the Esplanada Cultural Center, whose spiritual direction is entrusted to the Prelature of Opus Dei. At present, some fifteen tutors direct groups of boys between the ages of five and nine.

The program takes place on weekends in nearby classrooms provided by Vale do Paraíba University. The volunteers try to earn the friendship and trust of the boys one by one. Through their example and affection, they try
to transmit Christian truths and virtues to them. Special stress is placed on urging the boys to study and on helping them in their school tasks. There is also time for catechism classes and for sports. In addition, visits are made to the families in the area to seek the collaboration of parents.

Sydney, Australia

The laity, the Church and the world

At Kenthurst Study Centre a seminar was held on November 4 on the role of the ordinary Christian in today’s world. Professionals from various fields such as medicine, law, teaching, etc. gave their practical experiences on the social doctrine of the Church, the responsibilities that family life brings with it and the role of the lay person in the Church. A video on the Prelature of Opus Dei and its activities was also shown.

The activity elicited considerable interest. The numbers attending made it necessary to divide the seminar into two groups, with the conferences being given twice to accommodate everyone.

Singapore

Raise Your Child Right

On June 23 and 24, in the Orchid Country Club in Singapore, the second “Raise Your Child Right” conference was held, organized by the Family Enrichment Society (FES). This non-profit parents organization (which includes members of the Opus Dei Prelature), aims to develop programs to benefit families. After several years of activity, FES has received the direct support of the Singapore Ministry of Social Affairs, which has given it the designation “Ambassador of Family Life.”

The principal message of the conference was that “faith and family, moral values and personality, health and integrity are the keys to raising children in a way that will help them to become successful adults.”

Some 800 people took part, not only from Singapore, but also from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia and the Philippines. In addition to fathers and mothers, many teachers and social workers interested in today’s challenges to the education of young children took part in the conference.
Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Parliamentary Secretary of the Singapore Ministry of Social Affairs, inaugurated the conference with a brief address. The Parliamentary Secretary stressed that the best legacy parents can leave to their children is not a great family business or a healthy bank account, but the investment of their own lives in their future.

The principal speaker at the conference, James B. Stenson, a well-known American consultant on educational topics and author of several books on raising children, spoke about discipline, the formation of a child’s personality and communication within the family.

Patrick and Theresa Fagan, also from the U.S., spoke about guiding children’s decision-making and the special problems of adolescents.

**Tallinn, Estonia**

Spanish-Estonian social project

University women from Spain and Estonia provided assistance to more than 150 people in a summer project organized by the Rävala Cultural Center in the Estonian capital of Tallinn.

Those organizing the program had previously contacted the Department of Social Work at the Tallinn Teachers College, where Professor Tiia Tamm, in charge of volunteer work in Estonia, took up the idea with great interest. She provided the women with information regarding the areas in greatest need of assistance and even got her own students involved in the project.

The volunteers provided assistance at the Hollduste Haigla home in Tallinn and the Diakoonia Hospital in the Nõmme district. The two institutions provide shelter for more than 100 aged people. The students took the patients out for walks in their wheel chairs and assisted the hospital personnel in hygiene services.

The women also went to one of the city orphanages, the Tallinna Imikute ja Puuetega Lastekeskus, which provides care for children under the age of seven, in many cases disabled or suffering from cerebral palsy. The volunteers organized activities and games for them. Finally, they provided assistance to the sick in a cancer hospital in the city.
The Estonians had an opportunity to meet young Catholics and to see the naturalness with which the women lived their faith. The Spaniards, for their part, saw clearly the need for mutual collaboration and the desire to get to know the Catholic faith on the part of many Estonians.

As an aftermath to this project, the Rävala Cultural Center has organized a permanent program of weekly volunteer work to assist aged people in one of these hospitals.

**Tucuman, Argentina**

Youth Congress “Towards the Centennial of the Birth of Blessed Josemaría”

The Cebil University Center sponsored a youth congress from September 20 to 23 under the title “Towards the Centennial of the Birth of Blessed Josemaría.” Over 80 students took part. The goal of the congress was to make the message of Blessed Josemaría better known among young people and give impetus to the Holy Father’s call for a new apostolic sowing in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*.

Central themes from the life and writings of the founder of Opus Dei were discussed by the students in small group sessions: the sanctification of work, forming young people, unity of life and apostolic responsibility in today’s world.

A panel discussion was held with Dr. Roberto Dotta and Father Eduardo Volpacchio, who spoke about the life of Blessed Josemaría, especially his wholehearted response to God’s will. A well-known local sports figure and a high school student also shared their personal experiences regarding the influence of Blessed Josemaría’s teachings in their lives.

In an informal get-together, Father Jose Maria Fontan related some anecdotes about the founder of Opus Dei and described personal meetings with him in Rome. Participants were thus given a taste of the family atmosphere found in Opus Dei.

**Valladolid, Spain**

Fourth Liturgical Conference
On November 9, about a hundred priests and theology professors took part in the Fourth Liturgical Conference at Tordesillas in Valladolid, organized by the Esgueva Center for Priests. The topic of the conference was the role of the liturgy in the life of Blessed Josemaria Escriva.

Father Manuel Garrido Bonaño, a Benedictine expert on liturgy and consultor to the Congregation for Divine Worship, said in his talk that “Blessed Josemaría was one of the great apostles of the liturgy. He recommended that Mass be said not in a hurried way but with care for the small details, reciting the prayers with piety. What love he put into the Holy Mass! It was a reality that filled his whole day.”

The founder of Opus Dei, continued Father Garrido, “not only preached by his word but also by his example. And why were his words so attractive? Because they flowed from his life. He was a precursor and a pioneer, as much for his way of preaching as for his obedience to the liturgical norms. By bringing the liturgy close to the people, he has done a great good for the Church.”

Valladolid’s Archbishop Jose Delicado emphasized the importance Blessed Josemaría gave to the participation of the faithful in the Eucharist. At the same time he encouraged priests to “turn the Mass into a font of salvation.” Bishop Antonio Vilaplana of Leon spoke along similar lines.
IN PACE
Suffrages

In the second half of 2001, 227 faithful of the Prelature and 15 members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross passed away.

The suffrages stipulated by Blessed Josemaria Escriva have been offered for these souls. As we continue to pray for them, let us give thanks to God for the example that they left to us through their efforts to transform their professional work and the ordinary circumstances of their life into an occasion of loving God and of serving the Church and all souls. In their love for God was found the meaning and value of their lives, whether outstanding in men’s eyes, or quite ordinary, as was true in most cases.

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Torna ai contenuti
A study
The Freedom Won by Christ on the Cross

Theological Reflections on Freedom
in Blessed Josemaría’s Teaching

Lluís Clavell

Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

“Our sole goal is spiritual and apostolic, and bears a divine seal, love for the freedom that Christ won for us by dying on the Cross (cf. Gal 4:31).”[1]

Freedom is so central to the life and teachings of Blessed Josemaría Escriva that he often used to tell those who shared his vocation: “I leave you as an inheritance, on the human level, love for freedom and good humor.”[2]

His love of freedom stands out right from the start of the mission he received from God.[3] In the 1932 letter cited above, he called it a “divine seal on the Work.”[4] And thus he viewed it all his life. In the spring of 1974, a year before God called him to himself, in a meeting with young people from many countries, he graphically expressed the same conviction: “In the past century, our grandparents (mine that is, your great grandparents) fought a marvelous fight for personal freedom. They had a romantic enthusiasm, and sacrificed and struggled to attain the democracy they dreamt of, one that combined personal freedom and responsibility. That’s how our love for freedom must be: combined with personal responsibility. I go around like Diogenes with his lantern, seeking freedom, and I don’t find it anywhere. I think I’m the last romantic, because I love the personal freedom of everyone—also that of non-Catholics.”[5]

His teaching was imbued with the conviction that God’s greatest gift, on the human level, is freedom, which is at the core of the human person. But Blessed Josemaría was a teacher of freedom not only on the theoretical level, but above all as someone who lived with a deep freedom himself and who heroically defended the freedom of others. Many people who knew him have borne witness to this reality,[6] particularly his successors at the head of Opus Dei, Bishops Álvaro del Portillo[7] and Javier Echevarría.[8] This love for freedom has also been stressed in the various sketches of his
life published since 1975 and in the biography by Andrés Vázquez de Prada.\textsuperscript{[9]}

Blessed Josemaría’s writings present much more than an abstract theory of freedom; they contain a vision of freedom won in light of his own lived experience.\textsuperscript{[10]} His style is existential and autobiographical rather than speculative, and reveals a singular clarity of vision and depth of intellectual intuition. The Italian philosopher Cornelio Fabro, who called him “a teacher of Christian freedom,”\textsuperscript{[11]} entitled his reflections on Blessed Josemaría’s writings Con el temple de los Padres \textsuperscript{[12]} (“With the Spirit of the Fathers”). In Blessed Josemaría’s writings, as in those of the Fathers of the Church, life and doctrine are closely intertwined. Their reflections stem from their own Christian life, as they strive to faithfully transmit, in the particular circumstances of their own time, the revealed Truth of the Life of Christ that we are all called to share in.

It is perhaps precisely these characteristics of the founder of Opus Dei’s teaching that has merited the attention of theologians, philosophers, jurists, professors of education, etc.\textsuperscript{[13]} In the areas of philosophy and theology, the following authors come to mind, without trying to be exhaustive: the article by Cornelio Fabro already cited, as well as his reflections in El primado existencial de la libertad;\textsuperscript{[14]} Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz’ works on divine filiation,\textsuperscript{[15]} Professor Antonio Aranda’s study;\textsuperscript{[16]} Carlos Cardona’s commentaries on Blessed Josemaría’s works and his own works on freedom; Alejandro Llano;\textsuperscript{[17]} Leonardo Polo;\textsuperscript{[18]} Juan Bautista Torelló;\textsuperscript{[19]} and others.\textsuperscript{[20]}

\textbf{Historical context}

Blessed Josemaría’s defense of freedom often stemmed from specific events in the life of many countries. His Christian vision gave him a deep insight into changes in the culture in which he lived. Therefore we will briefly consider here the gradual strengthening of the value of freedom that can be seen in contemporary culture.

\textit{Progressive appreciation of freedom}

One of the most important values in contemporary culture is undoubtedly freedom, combined with authenticity. This has been
emphasized by Charles Taylor in his ongoing study of modernity, *Sources of the Self*.\[21\]

Recent centuries have given rise to a progressive discovery of the value of freedom. A growing awareness of the dignity of the person and of human rights has been consolidated, at the same time as the autonomy of earthly realities has been affirmed. This growing awareness is reflected in legal texts, in literature and in many other academic fields. On a deeper level, it can be seen as the end result of a long process of the maturing of certain Christian truths that have required centuries of development to produce their fruit.

This growing awareness of the value of freedom has, of course, not been untainted by the dregs of sin. On a speculative level, an anthropocentric outlook closed to the transcendent has led many philosophers to view freedom as an absolute self-standing value, rather than a gift freely bestowed by the Creator. This anthropocentric outlook entails a rejection of metaphysical realism, a deeply human outlook that is reinforced by Christian revelation. In a Christian realism, where being is communicated by God to creatures, the act of being is the font of a creature’s activity. When of a spiritual order, this results in a person, who with free dynamism perfects himself and directs himself towards his full perfection. But when this perspective is lost, we get the strange paradox, so frequent in the contemporary world, of a strong perception of freedom that sadly becomes stunted in various ways. For freedom dies out when its metaphysical foundation is rejected. This can be seen in two important trends in modern thought.

In rationalism, which prefers the subjective clarity of simple essences to the richness of real being, freedom is swallowed up by the system. Reality is seen as an ensemble of essences related by a mathematical system perfectly graspable by human reason. Such a rigidly determined world leaves no place for freedom, which is what happens in the philosophy of Leibniz. Being with all its dynamism is replaced by clear and distinct essences, more easily manageable by man in his efforts to dominate the world.

The same loss of freedom occurs when reality is reduced, not to essences, but to bare existence, a loose collection of events and actions that
lack a subject rooted in being. The world in the end is thus seen as devoid of a source of unity and meaning. Freedom is dissolved into the spontaneity of unconnected and meaningless acts. Having to make a decision, with its attached responsibility, becomes an unbearable weight, a condemnation (as in Sartre). The temporal ceases to be a participation in eternity, and becomes a play of isolated acts.[22] In this case also, the exaltation of freedom leads paradoxically to its loss.

**One-party mentality**

Blessed Josemaria, while always eschewing any specific political stance, defended Christian freedom in the face of what he called a “one-party mentality,” both in the apostolate as well as in the social and political arena.

In the political field, after liberalism's exaltation of personal freedom, the twentieth century has been deeply marked by ideologies and political systems that denied any personal freedom. These freedom-negating systems include both the strict totalitarianism of Communism and Nazism, as well as other political forms of excessive limitation of freedom dominated by a single party. With his Christian sense of freedom, Blessed Josemaria energetically rejected any violation of the human person's freedom and responsibility, echoing the declarations of the Church's magisterium.

**Clericalism and fear of freedom**

Also in the life of the Church, Christian freedom was sometimes undervalued. For example, persons and groups with a one-party mentality in the apostolate and regarding Catholic activity in public life; those who saw themselves with the mission to offer the only Catholic solution to problems in the temporal order; a spiritual direction that was seen as replacing the Christian conscience of each faithful. Such fear of personal freedom and responsibility may at times have arisen as a reaction to the excesses of liberalism in recent centuries.

The founder of Opus Dei clearly perceived how such attitudes deformed the Christian message. Underlying them, he detected a clericalism that consists in the improper meddling of clerics in areas proper to the laity. This leads to a one-party mentality that arises when one tries to offer a single Catholic solution to problems that are contingent and open to
differing opinions. His view of Christian life, which defended the freedom of each person, was radically opposed to the mentality of someone who saw himself as “stepping down from the temple into the world to represent the Church,” or who said that “his solutions are ‘the Catholic solutions’ to the problems. That would be completely inadmissible! That would be clericalism, ‘official Catholicism,’ or whatever you want to call it. In any case, it means doing violence to the very nature of things.”

Opus Dei’s founder had the firm conviction that people affected by such as mentality would be unable to understand the mission he had received from God to make manifest the divine greatness of ordinary life.

*Deepening Catholic appreciation of freedom in the twentieth century*

Throughout the twentieth century, many Catholic theologians and philosophers attained a deeper appreciation for the Christian meaning of freedom. These gains have borne fruit in the doctrinal developments of the Second Vatican Council, reflecting St. Paul’s words, “the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom 8:21). Recent decades have also witnessed the rise of a radically secular liberalism, and its apparent opposite in the “theology of liberation” of a Marxist bent. I say “apparent opposite,” because both share a common basis in centering themselves on man and this world rather than on God and eternity.

Also in the academic world one sees among Christian thinkers a higher valuation of freedom than was usual in the scholastic theology and philosophy of the first half of the twentieth century. The concept of freedom as a property only of the spiritual faculty of the will was seen to be unsatisfactory, and an attempt was made to situate it in the context of the whole human person. As Alejandro Llano writes, “a free decision existentially implicates the human being in a more profound and total way than does knowledge.” Or as Paul Ricoeur points out, when I make a decision, it is I who decide, putting my entire being into that decision.

In their discussions of freedom, many authors, for example, Joseph de Finance and Karol Wojtyla, have emphasized the notions of self-determination and self-transcendence towards perfection and plenitude that is manifested especially in self-giving, a point in which philosophers as
diverse as Leonardo Polo, Carlos Cardona[27] and Robert Spaemann[28] all agree.

Blessed Josemaria Escriva is certainly one of the most influential “teachers of Christian life” in the twentieth century. The great importance he gave to “personal freedom,” to the “freedom of the children of God,” which is a “responsible freedom,” was apparent in all he did and said.

Many factors contributed to his deep appreciation for freedom, including his family upbringing and his own human personality, and probably also his legal training. But I think it was due above all to the foundational light he received from God and to his own experience of Christian life. It certainly didn’t stem from the mentality that reigned in the ecclesiastical environment in which he was educated, since to a large extent he had to go against the current in his defense of freedom. And in the years following the Second Vatican Council, he defended personal Christian freedom in the face of a theology of liberation inspired by Marxism and the reduction of freedom to license, both of which try to detach freedom from the Truth of Christ.

As Cornelio Fabro wrote: “A new man for the new times of the Church of the future, Josemaria Escriva, moved by his own natural inclination and also undoubtedly by the light of grace, has restored the true concept of Christian freedom. Proclaiming the gospel message of freedom understood as liberation from the slavery of sin, he chose to trust the person who believes in Christ. After centuries of Christian spiritualities based on the priority of obedience, he taught that obedience was the consequence and fruit of freedom.”[29]

The freedom of the children of God and the Cross

A central element in Blessed Josemaria’s teaching on freedom is its close tie to the Cross of Christ. This connection is brought out in many of his writings and recorded words. In the spring of 1974 he said in a get-together with his children: “I love others’ freedom, both yours and that of the person now walking down the street outside, because if I didn’t love it, I couldn’t defend my own freedom. But that’s not the main reason. The main reason is something else: Christ died on the Cross to give us freedom,
so that we could enjoy ‘the glorious freedom of the children of God’ (Rom 8:21)’[30]

Blessed Josemaria liked to savor those words, “the freedom of the children of God.” Thus he stressed the relationship between freedom and divine filiation, which God showed him to be the foundation of a Christian’s spiritual life. “Each passing day increases my yearning to proclaim to the four winds this inextinguishable treasure that belongs to Christianity: ‘the glorious freedom of the children of God’ (Rom 8:21).”[31] But equally characteristic is his way of seeing freedom as a divine gift that reaches us by means of the Cross. Thus the divine seal of the Work is precisely “love for the freedom that Christ won for us by dying on the Cross (cf. Gal 4:31).”[32]

At times these two aspects are joined together: “My children, we are a large and diverse family that grows and develops in libertatem gloriae filiorum Dei (Rom 8:21), qua libertate Christus nos liberavit (Gal 4:31), in the glorious freedom Christ Jesus won for us, redeeming us from all slavery. Our spirit is based on personal freedom.”[33]

Underlying his conviction of the tie between freedom and the Cross are his personal prayer and meditation and powerful experiences in his own spiritual life, especially his sense of divine filiation. Thus some of his most incisive texts on this topic are found in writings that relate events in his own encounter with Christ, such as his commentaries on the stations of the Way of the Cross[34] and on the sorrowful mysteries of the Holy Rosary.[35]

*To be on the Cross is to be Christ and, therefore, a child of God.*

This reference to his own spiritual life is seen clearly in some words of Blessed Josemaria from a meditation given on April 28, 1963: “When our Lord dealt me those blows, around the year 1931, I didn’t understand it. And suddenly, in the midst of that great bitterness, came these words: you are my son (Ps 2:7), you are Christ. And I could only stammer: *Abba, Pater! Abba, Pater! Abba! Abba! Abba!* Now I see it with new light, like a new discovery, as one sees, as the years go by, the hand of God, of Divine Wisdom, of the All-Powerful. You, O Lord, have made me understand that to receive the Cross is to find happiness, joy. And the reason, I see it
now more clearly than ever, is this: to have the Cross is to identify oneself with Christ, to be Christ, and, therefore, to be a son of God."[36]

The founder of Opus Dei is referring here to a period of great interior and exterior trials. But it was precisely then that God granted him new light about the mission he had received. One of these occurred on August 7, 1931, with a direct reference to the Cross. During Holy Mass, at the moment of the elevation of the Sacred Host, God placed in his heart those words from the Gospel of St. John: “and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (Jn 12:32). “And I understood that it would be the men and women of God who will lift the cross, with the teachings of Christ, to the summit of all human activities. And I saw our Lord triumph, drawing all things to himself.”[37] Thus he saw vividly that we are called to collaborate through our work with Christ’s redemptive action on the Cross, who draws all men and women to himself and to the Father.[38]

A short time later, on October 16, 1931, the event took place to which he referred in his meditation on April 28, 1963: “I felt God acting, making spring forth in my heart and on my lips, with the force of something imperatively necessary, the tender invocation: Abba! Pater! I was out on the street, in a streetcar... Probably I made that prayer out loud.

“And I walked along the streets of Madrid for an hour, maybe two, I can’t say; time passed without my being aware of it. People must have thought I was crazy. I was contemplating, with lights that weren’t mine, that amazing truth. It was like an ember enkindled in my soul, never to be extinguished.”[39]

The lights received from God were reinforced by the events in his life, leading him to the deep conviction that to be on the Cross is to be Christ and, therefore, a child of God.

This very concise formulation contains great theological depth. Divine filiation is linked closely to identification with Christ, to being ipse Christus.[40] By baptism and the other sacraments, through the action of the Holy Spirit, a Christian becomes Christ; he is conformed to Christ, becoming a member of Christ. The “new creature” [41] formed in Christ is called to grow and manifest himself in all our actions, acting as Christ did,
or better, letting Christ act in us, through our freedom, together with the operative power of the Paraclete.

Therefore, just as the culminating moment of Christ’s obedience to the will of the Father is his sacrifice on the Cross, so also each Christian is most closely identified with Christ when he takes up the Cross. This identification is strengthened each time that, moved by the Holy Spirit, we offer ourselves with Christ in the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which makes present once more in space and time the sacrifice of Calvary. There, sacramentally, a Christian becomes more fully a child of God the Father in the Son; we are sons in the Son, becoming one and the same with Christ.

God let the founder of Opus Dei see clearly the connection between the celebration of the Holy Mass and identification with Christ, making him feel in some way the exhaustion of the Son of God on the Cross: “After so many years, that priest made a marvelous discovery: he came to understand that the Holy Mass is real work: operatio Dei, God’s work. That day, when he celebrated Mass, he experienced pain, joy and tiredness. He felt in his flesh the exhaustion of a divine task. For Christ too it cost a great effort to carry out the first Mass: the Cross.”[42]

He relates in another place: “The celebration of the Holy Sacrifice never cost me so much as on that day, when I felt that the Mass too is Opus Dei. It made me very happy.”[43] God wanted to make him understand with greater depth that identification with Christ, who exercised his freedom by fulfilling the will of his Father and letting himself be nailed to the Cross, takes place most radically in the Holy Mass.

Flowing from the Cross and therefore from the Holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist, our divine filiation is exercised in every act of daily life that is lived in loving obedience to the will of the Father. “You, O Lord, have made me understand that to have the Cross is to find happiness, joy.” A Christian feels the joy of knowing that he is a child of God in Christ; he savors, even in the midst of suffering, the happiness of loving God and others, the joy of knowing that all of his actions, even the most material, are helping to raise the Cross of Christ that will draw everything to Him.

*The freedom of the Only-begotten Son on the Cross*
But where does freedom fit into all this? It is precisely in the happiness and joy found on the Cross, in knowing oneself a child of God and not a slave, that one finds the deepest meaning of freedom.

In the fourth Gospel, Christ speaks of his own freedom: “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have the power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.”[44] As Blessed Josemaria said: “We will never fully understand Jesus’ freedom. It is immense, infinite, as is his love.”[45]

Blessed Josemaria liked to consider how all the mysteries of revelation raise up “a song to freedom.” Creation is “a free squandering of love.” And it is in God’s gratuitous and freely offered love that the redemption is rooted.

His friendship with each of the Divine Persons led him to express his vision of the economy of salvation starting with the intra-Trinitarian life of wisdom and love, and ending in the paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of the Incarnate Word. “God is Love.”[46] “The abyss of malice which sin opens wide has been bridged by his infinite charity. God did not abandon men. His plans foresaw that the sacrifices of the old law would be insufficient to repair our faults and re-establish the unity which had been lost. A man who was God would have to offer himself up. To help us grasp in some measure this unfathomable mystery, we might imagine the Blessed Trinity taking counsel together in its uninterrupted intimate relationship of infinite love. As a result of its eternal decision the only-begotten Son of God the Father takes on our human condition and bears the burden of our wretchedness and sorrows, to end up sewn with nails to a piece of wood.”[47]

The reference to the loving freedom of the Trinitarian life, and to the visible and invisible missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit, is at the core of all his preaching: “The God of our faith is not a distant being who contemplates indifferently the fate of men—their desires, their struggles, their sufferings. He is a Father who loves his children so much that he sends the Word, the Second Person of the most Blessed Trinity, so that by taking on the nature of man he may die to redeem us. He is the loving
Father who now leads us gently to himself, through the action of the Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts.”[48]

The Eucharistic mystery, which makes present Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary where God’s infinite merciful love is revealed, is also viewed by Blessed Josemaria in light of the love and freedom proper to the Trinitarian life: “The Blessed Trinity’s love for man is made permanent in a sublime way through the Eucharist... I was talking to you about the love of the Blessed Trinity for man. And where can we see this more clearly than in the Mass? The three divine Persons act together in the holy sacrifice of the altar.... The three divine Persons 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.”[49]

In Blessed Josemaria’s preaching, Christ’s freedom can only be understood in the context of Trinitarian love. The Son has the same dominion, love and freedom as the Father, because he shares the same nature. His love for the Father leads him to exercise this lordship and dominion by fulfilling the will of the Father, converting his earthly existence into a service and self-giving that is seen right from his birth to his death on the Cross.

Christ’s birth makes manifest this logic of divine freedom. His self-giving and kenosis calls out to the freedom of every man and woman: “God humbled himself to allow us to get near him, so that we could give our love in exchange for his, so that our freedom might bow, not only at the sight of his power, but also before the wonder of his humility.”[50]

This free self-humiliation on the part of the Word contains the fundamental paradox of Christianity. It reaches its culmination on the Cross, where Jesus sublimely exercises his infinite love, submitting with full freedom to the will of the Father through his passion and death, which leads to the victory of the resurrection. The Trinitarian current of love reaches its summit in the passion. “When God’s appointed time comes to save mankind from the slavery of sin, we contemplate Jesus Christ in Gethsemani, suffering in agony to the point of sweating blood (cf. Lk 22:44). He spontaneously and unconditionally accepts the sacrifice which the Father is asking of him.”[51] This acceptance represents the highest
exercise of his freedom and lordship, which manifests itself in the desire to serve all mankind.

Blessed Josemaria’s personal meditation on the passion leads to his deepest reflections on Christ’s freedom as a complete self-giving, and on the revelation of Trinitarian love, which rises above all evil.

Thus in his commentary on the tenth station of the Way of the Cross, he stresses the paradox of Christ’s freedom on the Cross. “When our Lord arrives at Calvary, he is given some wine to drink mixed with gall, as a narcotic to lessen in some way the pain of the crucifixion. But Jesus, after tasting it to show his gratitude for that kind service, has not wanted to drink (cf. Mt 27:34). He gives himself up to death with the full freedom of Love.”

In the eleventh station, which contemplates the death of the God-Man on the Cross, Blessed Josemaria continues to focus on Christ’s free self-giving: “It is Love that has brought Jesus to Calvary. And once on the Cross, all his gestures and all his words are of love, a love both calm and strong. With a gesture befitting an Eternal Priest, without father or mother, without lineage (cf. Heb 7:3), he opens his arms to the whole human race.” At times he would say that it was love, more than nails, that bound Jesus to the Cross.

In his commentary on the fifth sorrowful mystery of the holy Rosary, the Cross appears as the place of triumph: “For Jesus of Nazareth, the throne of triumph is ready. You and I do not see him writhe on being nailed. Suffering all that can be suffered, he spreads his arms in the gesture of an eternal Priest.” Blessed Josemaria seems to echo the presentation of Christ’s passion in the fourth Gospel, where St. John stresses the freedom and dominion of Jesus’ self-giving. He may also have drawn light from the divine illumination referred to earlier: Christ’s exaltation on the Cross in order to draw all men to him, which reveals a new aspect of Jn 12:32. The ignominious cross becomes Christ’s throne: “Through love, the Cross is to become the throne from which he reigns” (second station).

Blessed Josemaria invites us to discover in the loving freedom with which Christ accepted the Cross a model for attaining freedom ourselves. “Learn from him. Jesus carries the Cross for you: you... carry it for Jesus.
But don’t drag the Cross... carry it squarely on your shoulder, because your Cross, if you carry it so, will not be just any Cross... It will be the Holy Cross. Don’t carry your cross with resignation: resignation is not a generous word. Love the Cross. When you really love it, your Cross will be... a Cross without a Cross” (fourth sorrowful mystery of the Holy Rosary). A Christian grows in freedom to the extent that he loves the Cross. For then there takes place in each of us the liberation that Christ has won for us.

Christ’s freedom shows itself in an absolute love—”a madness of love,” the founder of Opus Dei often said—for the Father’s will. This is the “full freedom of love” of the Beloved Son.

Other passages make clear this connection between Jesus’ loving freedom and his filiation to the Father: “Jesus prays in the garden. Pater mi ([Mt 26:39], Abba Pater! ([Mk 14:36]. God is my Father, even though he may send me suffering. He loves me tenderly, even while wounding me. Jesus suffers, to fulfill the Will of the Father... And I, who also wish to fulfill the most holy Will of God, following in the footsteps of the Master, can I complain if I too meet suffering as my traveling companion?

“It will be a sure sign of my sonship, because God is treating me as he treated his own Divine Son. Then I, just as He did, will be able to groan and weep alone in my Gethsemani; but, as I lie prostrate on the ground, acknowledging my nothingness, there will rise up to the Lord a cry from the depths of my soul: Pater mi, Abba, Pater,... fiat!“[52]

The prayer cited above from October 16, 1931 helped him to penetrate more deeply into Jesus’ sorrowful dialogue with his Father in the Garden of Olives. The temptation presented by the repugnance of suffering was overcome by the freedom of love, embracing the will of God the Father in order to serve all mankind, teaching them the deepest meaning of their being free.

After praying in Gethsemani, Jesus freely surrendered himself: “The Arrest: venit hora: ecce Filius hominis tradetur in manus peccatorum ; the hour has come: behold the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners (Mk 14:41). So, the sinful man has his hour? Yes, and God his eternity!... Chains binding Jesus! Chains, which He voluntarily allowed to be put on him, I ask you to bind me, to make me suffer with my Lord, so that this
body of death may be humbled. For—there can be no half measures here—either I reduce it to nothing, or it will degrade me. Better to be a slave of my God than a slave of my flesh.”[53] Once more we see the paradoxical link between chains and freedom. Without these chains, without a commitment of love and service, there is only the slavery to one’s own self.

I have focused on the culminating moment of Christ’s passion and death, inseparable from his resurrection and ascension and the later sending of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. But we should remember that Jesus’ entire life is saturated with the loving freedom of the Son who has no other wish than to show forth the Father’s merciful love.

Here I want to consider just one example, that of the hidden life of the Holy Family in Nazareth, so much loved by Blessed Josemaría. The light he received from God about holiness in ordinary life led him to discover the redemptive value of those long years, which were not just a preparation for the public life but were in themselves salvific. Jesus obeyed Mary and Joseph: “erat subditus illis, He was obedient to them (Lk 2:31). We must especially value obedience in the current environment of disobedience, rebellion and disunity. Freedom is very close to my heart—that is precisely why I so love the Christian virtue of obedience. We should all realize that we are children of God, and should want to fulfill the will of our Father.”[54]

Christ’s freedom shown in obedience to the Father during his whole life is the key to his earthly biography from Nazareth to the Cross, and illuminates the meaning of our own freedom as a loving response to divine freedom.

The freedom of God’s children in self-giving

The freedom of Trinitarian love shown in the life of Jesus has a double efficacy in our regard. On the one hand it reveals to us the most profound and radical meaning of our personal being and our freedom. The Second Vatican Council teaches that Christ fully clarifies the mystery of man,[55] including the meaning of our freedom: “Furthermore, the Lord Jesus, when praying to the Father ‘that they may all be one.... even as we are one’ (Jn 17:21-22), has opened up new horizons closed to human reason by
implying that there is a certain parallel between the union existing among the divine persons and the union of the sons of God in truth and love. It follows, then, that if man is the only creature on earth that God has wanted for its own sake, man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself.”[56]

On the other hand, Christ won for us divine grace. Thus man, who because of sin had found his freedom to love curtailed, was able to recover that freedom thanks to Christ’s free self-giving, from which the love that overcomes all evil and slavery flows.

The freedom that Christ gained for us on the Cross is the great gift of being sons of the Father and of being able to love God, and through him, other persons. Hence we see that freedom is not opposed to dedication, but that it finds in it its raison d'être: “It is absolutely false to oppose freedom and self-surrender, because self-surrender is a consequence of freedom. Look, when a mother sacrifices herself for love of her children, she has made a choice, and the more she loves the greater will be her freedom. If her love is great her freedom will bear much fruit. Her children’s good derives from her blessed freedom, which presupposes self-surrender, and from her blessed self-surrender, which is precisely freedom.”[57]

We are at the core of the human person here. Freedom is ordered towards self-surrender; self-giving is the truest and fullest use of freedom, as Mary’s response upon receiving the announcement of the angel reveals: “Our Mother listens, and asks a question to understand better what the Lord is asking of her. Then she gives her firm reply: Fiat! ‘Be it done unto me according to thy word!’ This is the fruit of the best freedom of all, the freedom of deciding in favor of God.”[58] Once more the paradox: Mary, by declaring herself the slave of the Lord, acquires the maximum self-mastery and freedom.

All of this rests on knowing who we truly are. Knowing ourselves to be children of God allows us to be free. “It is the knowledge that we have come from the hands of God, that the Blessed Trinity looks upon us with predilection, that we are children of so wonderful a Father. I ask my Lord to help us decide to take this truth to heart, to dwell upon it day by day: only then will we be acting as free men. Do not forget: anyone who does
not realize that he is a child of God is unaware of the deepest truth about himself. When he acts he lacks the dominion and self-mastery we find in those who love our Lord above all else.”[59]

Our divine filiation lies at the heart of our freedom. Incorporated into Christ, we somehow form one and the same reality with him. In him, we participate as adoptive children in the eternal intra-Trinitarian processions of the Son and the Holy Spirit. “Sons and daughters in the Son,” we share, in a finite manner, in his dominion, with the freedom of children. We are not slaves or servants, but children and friends who know the secrets of the Father that the Son has communicated to us, participating in the filiation of the Word incarnate. And we love God the Father and all men and women through our participation in the Holy Spirit, the reciprocal Love between the Father and the Son.

“Freedom finds its true meaning when it is put to the service of the truth which redeems, when it is spent in seeking God’s infinite Love which liberates us from all forms of slavery.”[60]

But today’s man or woman is likely to ask: “If I say ‘yes’ to this exclusive Love might I not lose my freedom?”[61] This question arises especially in the face of the suffering that any unconditional love brings with it. But it also arises because the emptying or loss of oneself seems so contrary to the contemporary ideals of freedom and authenticity.

To a certain extent, the answer can only come from the sincere decision to give oneself to that Love: “To love is to cherish one thought, to live for the person loved, not to belong to oneself, happily and freely with one’s heart and soul to be subjected to another will... and at the same time to one’s own.”[62]

Only then does one truly understand and savor one’s own freedom. “A soul in love knows however that when such suffering comes, it is only a fleeting impression; the soul soon finds that the yoke is easy and the burden light, because Jesus is carrying it upon his shoulders as he embraced the wood of the Cross when our eternal happiness was at stake (cf. Mt 11:30).”[63]

Freedom only reveals its full meaning and ceases to be a paradox when it is seen to be a divine gift, through which we can collaborate with God.
This doesn’t prevent us from at times feeling rebellious, failing to understand “that even when God’s Will seems painful and its demands wounding, it coincides perfectly with our freedom, which is only to be found in God and in his plans.” Then is a good moment to recall that the demand of loving with our whole heart is totally in accord with our human nature.\footnote{[65]}

*The freedom of a child of God, work of the Three Divine Persons*

Blessed Josemaría often speaks about the freedom that comes to us from the redemption and from our elevation to the status of God’s sons and daughters. This freedom is attained through the grace won by Christ on the Cross that is infused into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Thus we come to share in the very life of the Trinity.

In the New Testament the term “freedom” (eleutheria) does not signify merely a state or situation opposed to slavery, but the ontological reality of being children of God. This new way of being is the fruit of the action of the Most Blessed Trinity, manifested in the New Testament in reference to all three of the Divine Persons.

We have already seen some of Blessed Josemaría’s numerous texts that discuss the freedom of the children of God primarily in reference to God the Father. However, one should keep in mind that chapter 8 of St. Paul’s letter to the Romans (in libertatem filiorum Dei, cf. Rom 8:21)\footnote{[66]} presupposes the inseparable action of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The Christological dimension is stressed in texts that refer to Galatians 4:31: “the freedom that Christ won for us by dying on the Cross.” And in the passage also cited above: “we are a large and diverse family that grows and develops in libertatem gloriae filiorum Dei (Rom 8:21), qua libertate Christus nos liberavit (Gal 4:31), in the glorious freedom Christ Jesus won for us, redeeming us from all slavery.” God the Father is the source of our freedom through the incarnation of his Only-begotten Son and the sending of the consubstantial Love of the Father and the Son.

References also abound to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. Blessed Josemaría often stresses that the Paraclete acts in a way suited to each soul: “Our diversity is not a problem for the Work. On the contrary, it is a manifestation of good spirit, of a clean corporative life, of respect for the
legitimate freedom of each person. For *ubi autem Spiritus Domini, ibi libertas* (*II Cor* 3:17); where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”[67]

The perspective is always that of the divine revelation of the Tri-personal God, the incarnation of the Word who redeemed us and the sending of the Holy Spirit. In the terminology employed by St. Thomas Aquinas, the history of humanity is profoundly marked by original sin and by personal sins. But through the divine grace obtained by Christ in his death on the Cross and his resurrection, we pass from slavery to our own wretchedness to the freedom of sons and daughters. Man, healed and elevated by grace, is made a sharer in the Word and the Holy Spirit, so as to freely know God truly and love him rightly: *fit particeps divini Verbi et procedentis Amoris, ut possit libere Deum vere cognoscere et recte amare.*[68]

The gratuitous action that God carries out *ad extra* in divinizing human beings has a terminus *ad intra*, since it introduces each Christian into the Trinitarian life as “sons and daughters in the Son.” This action is a new birth *ex Spiritu Sancto* that implies a newness of being, not as an act of the essence, but as an act that is founded on the relation between man and God: a Christian is related to God in the Son and through the Holy Spirit (*esse ad Patrem in Filio per Spiritum Sanctum*). These are not three distinct relations but rather a triple relation directed towards the three divine Persons.[69] A Christian becomes a child of God the Father in Christ and through the Holy Spirit.

**Freedom as God’s gift in the order of creation**

This article has focused on Blessed Josemaría’s theological teaching on “the freedom Christ won for us on the Cross.” Nevertheless, his theological reflections always contains an implicit reference to the natural or “creaturely” dimension of freedom. The dual order of nature and of grace is never lost sight of, nor the deep union of these two planes in Christian life. This is also seen in the importance he places on a Christian’s attaining a “unity of life.”

**The union of nature and grace**

Blessed Josemaría’s unified theological vision, joining the orders of nature and grace, is apparent in the following quote: “This hymn to freedom is echoed in all the mysteries of our Catholic faith. The Blessed
Trinity draws the world and man out of nothing, in a free outpouring of love. The Word comes down from heaven and takes on our flesh, an act which bears the splendid mark of freedom in submission: ‘Behold I have come to do thy Will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.”[70]

This union of nature and grace confronts us with the mystery of human freedom. The reality of moral evil and man’s constant inclination towards it poses deep questions to every man and woman throughout history. Blessed Josemaría expresses the intelligibility proper to mysteries with the term chiaroscuro [“light and shade”]: “We are in a position to give him, or deny him, the glory that is his due as the Author of everything that exists. This possibility makes up the light and shade of human freedom.”[71]

The death of the incarnate Son of God on the Cross, his absolute and unlimited self-giving, is a clear manifestation of the merciful love of the Father, who bestows on us the freedom of being his children. But it also moves us to ask: “Why, my Lord, have you granted me this privilege which I can use to follow in your footsteps, but also to offend you?”[72] This radical question runs through the entire homily entitled “Freedom: a Gift from God.”

This is perhaps the root of Blessed Josemaría’s theology of freedom: freedom is a divine gift, and not something intrinsically opposed to God. Hence his attitude of deep gratitude to God for the gift of freedom: “It is only we men (I am not referring now to the angels) who can unite ourselves to the Creator by using our freedom. We are in a position to give him, or deny him, the glory that is his due as the Author of everything that exists.”[73]

God “takes a risk with our freedom.”[74] He doesn’t coerce us but rather invites us to turn towards the good: “See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you this day, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, then you shall live.... Therefore choose life, that you... may live.”[75] He frequently cited these and other texts in Scripture to explain the joyful reality of our freedom.
Thus he feels impelled to “raise my heart in thanksgiving to my God and Lord, because there was nothing to stop him from creating us impeccable, irresistibly drawn towards the good. Nevertheless, ‘he judged that his servants would be better if they served him freely.’ How great is the love, the mercy of our Father! Whenever I think of his _divine extravagance_ for us his children, I wish I had a thousand tongues, a thousand hearts and more, with which to be constantly praising God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Just think: the Almighty, who through his Providence rules the whole universe, does not want the forced service of slaves; he prefers to have children who are free.” This is the answer to the burning question of why God made us free, with the risk of all the consequences of the permanent struggle between good and evil that flows from it.

Freedom, which for many modern philosophers is seen as an absolute right, an anthropocentric autonomy with no grounding in anything that transcends man, recovers in the teachings of Blessed Josemaria its original theological place, since self-dominion is a consequence of man’s being created in the image and likeness of God.

When speaking of the image of God in man, Thomas Aquinas highlights in several texts the gift of freedom, man’s “dominium sui actus” (for example in the prologue to his _Summa Theologica_ I-II, where he cites St. John Damascus). Certainly the human creature is in the image of God by his intellect. But this ability to grasp the truth of reality is ordained to the dominion and self-determination proper to the transcendence of spiritual dynamism. The image of God in created persons is found above all in freedom. God through love created higher beings like himself: angelic and human persons endowed with a limited self-dynamism, as a participation in the fullness of Being that He is. It is the participation in the perfection of freedom that makes the created person similar to God in an especially clear way.

As the book of Genesis tells us, men and women share in God’s creativity, called to lovingly serve the world and others by means of their work, and with the mission of filling the world by their conjugal love in the family. As St. Thomas Aquinas teaches in regard to the gift of freedom: “This is the supreme degree of the dignity of men: that they are directed
towards the good by themselves and not by others.”[78] “God made man in the beginning and he left him in the power of his own inclination (Sir 15:14). This would not have happened if there were no free will.”[79]

Alejandro Llano observed that this theological perspective, grounded in the Augustinian and Thomistic tradition, enabled Blessed Josemaría to grasp the deepest meaning of human freedom, and to confront the anthropocentric challenge of modernity, denouncing its insufficiencies precisely by developing its overlooked potentialities.[80]

**Man’s freedom as a creature**

Within the theological context of the unity between the supernatural and natural orders, and always respecting their distinction, Blessed Josemaría frequently emphasizes the natural aspect of freedom as God’s greatest gift on the human or “creaturely” plane. “You would not be able to carry out this program of sanctifying your everyday life if you did not enjoy all the freedom which proceeds from your dignity as men and women created in the image of God, and which the Church freely recognizes. Personal freedom is essential to the Christian life.”[81]

His great love for freedom led him to value every true affirmation of freedom no matter where it came from: “In 1939, when the Spanish Civil War had just ended, I gave a retreat near Valencia, in a university residence. It had been used during the war as a communist barracks. In one of the passageways, I came upon a large plaque written by some ‘non-conformist’ which read: *cada caminante siga su camino* (‘let each traveler follow his own path’). They wanted to take it down, but I stopped them: ‘Leave it,’ I told them, ‘I like it, it’s some good advice from the enemy.’ Since then, those words have often served me as a text for preaching. It is absurd and unjust to try to impose a single criterion on everyone in matters in which the doctrine of Christ does not impose any limits.”[82]

But Opus Dei’s founder always viewed this natural anthropological dimension in light of its essential ordination to God: “God made man in the beginning and he left him in the power of his own inclination (Sir 15:14). This could not be so unless man had freedom of choice.”[83] “We are answerable to God for all the actions we freely perform. There is no
room here for anonymity. Each one finds himself face to face with his Lord, and he can decide to live as God’s friend or as his enemy.”[84]

Hence Blessed Josemaria energetically opposed those who seemed disinclined to fully allow freedom and who tried to deprive man of the “space for service” in which a free person comes to maturity.[85] “On some occasions I have witnessed what could be called a general mobilization against those committed to dedicating their whole lives to the service of God and souls. Some people think that our Lord ought to ask their permission before choosing others for his service. Apparently they believe that man is not free to say an unequivocal yes or no to this proposal of Love.”[86]

Blessed Josemaria strongly defends freedom as a natural gift presupposed by the order of grace: “God himself has wanted to be loved and served with freedom and he always respects our personal decisions. Scripture tells us when God ‘created man... he left him in the power of his own inclination’ (Sir 15:14).”[87]

“I have always defended the freedom of individual consciences. I do not understand violence; I do not consider it a proper way either to persuade or to win over. Error is overcome by prayer, by God’s grace, and by study; never by force; always with charity.”[88] He liked to write “freedom of consciences”[89] in the plural, to emphasize that he was referring to the conscience of each and every person and not to conscience as such, which is measured by divine wisdom and love.

In some of the texts referring to freedom, the author’s juridical mentality can be seen: “Both in the apostolic and in the temporal order limitations on the freedom of the children of God, on freedom of consciences or on legitimate initiatives, are arbitrary and unjust. They are limitations that proceed from abuse of authority, from ignorance, or from the error of those who think that they can allow themselves the abuse of discriminating where this is not reasonable at all.”[90]

“God in creating us has run the risk and the adventure of our freedom. He wanted a history that would be a true one, the product of genuine decisions, and not fiction or some sort of game. Each man has to experience
his own personal autonomy with all that it implies: trial and error, guesswork and sometimes uncertainty.”[91]

Blessed Josemaria graphically illustrates the sterility and irrationality of refusing to commit oneself: “You and I have met such people. They let themselves be carried away by childish vanity, by selfish conceit, by sensuality. Their freedom turns out to be barren, or produces fruits which even humanly speaking are ridiculous. A person who does not choose, with complete freedom, an upright code of conduct, sooner or later ends up being manipulated by others. He will lead a lazy, parasitic existence, at the mercy of what others decide. He will let himself be blown to and fro by any wind whatsoever, and it will always be others who make up his mind for him... ‘No one is forcing me!’ they obstinately repeat. No one? Everyone is coercing their make-believe freedom which will not run the risk of accepting responsibility for the consequences of its own free actions. Where there is no love of God, the individual and responsible use of personal freedom becomes impossible. There, despite appearances to the contrary, the individual is coerced at every turn. The indecisive and irresolute person is like putty at the mercy of circumstances. Anyone and anything can mold him according to its whim, and especially his passions and the worst tendencies of his own nature wounded by sin.”[92] This description is quite applicable to our own era, in which so many people have fallen into the false freedom that Blessed Josemaria calls “license.”

In the slavery that comes from saying no to God, one is also acting against reason, as St. Thomas Aquinas teaches: “Man is rational by nature. When he behaves in accordance with reason, he is acting by his own proper motion, as what he is: and this is proper to freedom. When he sins, he acts outside of reason, and lets himself be led by the impetus of another, subject to outside limitations; and therefore the one who opens himself to sin is a slave to sin (Jn 8:34).”[93]

The person who wants to be free, without self-commitment, is a slave of himself and will end up being a slave of others and of many external things that, as a child of God, he is called to exercise dominion over. This is the path that leads to unhappiness here below and afterwards forever. It is license and not freedom.
The capacity to choose has traditionally been called psychological freedom, while moral freedom is the name given to the higher operative capacity that stems from the right exercise of freedom resulting in the formation of good habits.

Contemporary philosophy has also tried to delineate a deeper freedom than the mere capacity for choice. Thus the distinction drawn by Isaiah Berlin between a negative freedom (*freedom from* coercion, interference, impositions) and a positive freedom (*freedom for* something, to develop and commit oneself) resulted in an enrichment of the dialogue among political philosophers. Positive freedom is a higher conception that allows for the creativity proper to the human person, but it still falls far short of the fullness of freedom that Christ brought to the world.

Despite its great paradox, the Cross—with its dimensions of self-surrender, sacrifice, pardon, commitment, apparent failure—finds an intense resonance in the human heart. Even on the human plane the highest level of freedom is shown in a disinterested creative capacity, in a love for the good, regardless of whether it is a good for me, in friendship and love for all men and women by reason of their innate goodness and dignity.

Employing the terminology of Robert Spaemann, man reaches his plenitude and with it his happiness (*Glück*), in good will (*Wohlwollen*) towards others, desiring that they attain the good. Carlos Cardona has made the relationship between being, freedom, and the love of benevolence the nucleus of his most fully developed work, *Metafisica del bien y del mal*. He argues there that freedom is a transcendental property of man’s being. It is the nucleus of every truly human action and makes all of one’s acts human. The first and most fundamental act of freedom consists in deciding, with a love of election, for the good in itself, overcoming the natural love for what is good for me. It entails, therefore, an ecstatic “going out of oneself.”

Alejandro Llano, while appreciating the meaning of *freedom from* and *freedom for* proposed by Isaiah Berlin, thinks that these fail to go far enough. He argues that a third sense is needed, which he calls *freedom in*
itself—an emptying of oneself (kenosis) and a loving opening up to others.\textsuperscript{[95]}

The freedom won by Christ seen in relation to some aspects of contemporary life

We have already noted that Blessed Josemaria did not shrink from the anthropocentric challenge of modernity, but, on the contrary, denounced its insufficiencies at the same time as he developed its overlooked potentialities. This last point can be illustrated by considering his teachings in the context of some aspects of today’s world. I will try to be concise here, since there is already a considerable body of work on the applications of personal freedom according to Josemaria Escriva.

Blessed Josemaria always kept in mind the cultural context in which his readers and hearers lived. Therefore in coming to terms with what one might call the modern discovery of freedom, besides pointing out its deficiencies, he also sought to bring out the Christian and human potentialities of this advance.

Freedom in its deepest sense, according to Opus Dei’s founder, is freedom before God and for God. Therefore it is inseparably united to personal responsibility. In the anonymity proper to mass movements, personal responsibility is stifled. Only individuals remain, dispossessed of their fundamental character as persons. Blessed Josemaria tried to draw people out of the anonymous masses, composed of individuals in a state of loneliness and deprived of an authentically human relationship with God and other persons. As a teacher of Christian life he wanted to form free persons, children of God who struggled to be with Christ on the Cross, who strove to respond to God’s free self-giving and self-humiliation by the free surrender of themselves.

Among the applications of freedom to human and Christian life taught by Blessed Josemaria, there stands out his heroic defense of legitimate differences of opinion in professional life and in the world of political, social, economic, cultural and artistic ideas. A legitimate and healthy pluralism exists that is characteristic of a lay mentality, one of whose central elements is precisely love for freedom. In contrast, clericalism is marked by the failure to respect the autonomy proper to temporal realities, the laws
placed by God in his creatures. “When the value of freedom is fully understood and the divine gift of freedom is passionately loved, the pluralism that freedom brings with it is also loved.”[96]

This potential for pluralism exists even in the area of theology itself. Thus he affirmed that within the framework of Christ’s divine revelation, guarded by the magisterium of the Church, there exists a plurality of possible positions, the manifestation of freedom and personal responsibility.[97] Even in the theological field, there is room for a legitimate variety of positions within a full faithfulness to the magisterium. Thus the indications of the Church’s magisterium are followed faithfully by the Prelature of Opus Dei, but it has no theological school of its own.

His love for freedom led him to do everything possible to provide a very thorough formation, in the theological area also, for each of the Prelature’s faithful, enabling each one to freely undertake the sanctification of their work and apostolic activity, without having to “wait for instructions.” In this area also he was an “innovator,” although without any pretense to originality.

Spiritual direction has as one of its aims that of helping souls to love, to exercise their freedom, seconding the action of the Holy Spirit. Therefore Josemaría Escriva led people to prayer, to the sincere conversation of children with their Father. Decisions then came forth as a response to God’s light, with the help of his grace. On many occasions, when asked a question, he would say: why don’t you ask our Lord about that in your prayer?

Blessed Josemaría defended the gift of freedom for everyone. Like Christ who died on the Cross to win freedom for God’s children, a Christian has to defend the freedom of others and then his own freedom. He loved the freedom of consciences, and used to say that with God’s grace he would give his life to defend the freedom of those who were not Catholics. Hence the apostolic activities of Opus Dei never discriminate on religious grounds.

In this context, education consists above all in teaching people to be free, giving them the criteria they need to move freely in any environment: an education in freedom and for freedom.
But this insistence on personal freedom should not be interpreted in an individualistic sense. He always encouraged people, as a manifestation of responsible freedom, to take part in a great variety of associations, striving to influence the human decisions on which the present and future of society depend. As he once expressed it: “Freely, according to your own interests and talents, you have to take an active, effective part in the wholesome public or private associations of your country, in a way that is full of the Christian spirit. Such organizations never fail to make some difference to people’s temporal or eternal good.”[98]

“We children of God, who are citizens with the same standing as any others, have to take part fearlessly in all honest human activities and organizations, so that Christ may be present in them. Our Lord will ask a strict account of each one of us if through neglect or love of comfort we do not freely strive to play a part in the human developments and decisions on which the present and future of society depend.”[99]

Concluding synthesis

To help summarize all that has been said, it could be useful here to distinguish some of the different meanings of freedom found in this article, at times without an explicit distinction.

The dimensions of freedom

Philosophers distinguish many meanings and dimensions of freedom. Among the more classical ones are the following:[100]

a) Freedom from external coercion. This is the freedom to do, externally, whatever one wishes. It is a negative meaning of freedom. Some philosophers (for example, Locke, Hume, Voltaire) remain at this level, because they deny or are uncertain as to whether our decisions are truly free, that is to say, whether or not they proceed from an unknown internal need or conditioning. In many cases, what the law does is to protect a person from any external coercion, even psychological. This is the area of political freedoms, the consequence of the moral dignity of the person. For example: religious freedom; the right to life and the inviolability of the person; the right to marriage and a family, to the education of one’s own children, to the acquisition of what is necessary to sustain oneself, to property, to political asylum; the right to choose a profession, to develop
one’s personality, to freely express oneself by word, in writing or artistically; the right of association and of participation in the ordering of the social community.

b) Freedom of choice, also called psychological freedom or free will. This is the innate capacity of the person to make his own decisions without any secret interior necessity. These choices, although frequently referring to external realities, also imply a decision about one’s own being (particularly in its moral dimension, but not only there). By these choices each person “makes” himself, deciding what he freely wants to be. The law usually presupposes this psychological freedom, when, for example, it determines the responsibility of a person who has committed an injustice. This freedom is based on the openness of the intellect to all that exists and of the will to all that is good. In their turn, the intellect and will as operative faculties proceed from a spiritual soul that has received its being directly from God. Thus human actions are free because they proceed from a spiritual act of a being that transcends the material and causal chains of the cosmos.

c) Freedom as an ethical task, also called moral freedom. This is the dominion and self-mastery that a person acquires through free acts that lead to the possession of the moral virtues. By the good exercise of psychological freedom, one attains moral freedom, the capacity to act without being impeded by passions or vices. The contrary, which results from the bad exercise of one’s freedom, results in a slavery that is license and not freedom.

The natural elements of freedom according to Blessed Josemaria

These three dimensions of freedom are implicitly present in the teachings of Blessed Josemaria. In his Christian anthropology, elaborated by reason in vital union with faith, man is seen as a creature who receives all that he has from the Creator:

a) Freedom is seen by Blessed Josemaria as the greatest gift that a person receives “on the human level.” In saying “on the human level,” he is referring to the order of nature, leaving room for greater gifts in the supernatural order of grace.

b) Even on the level of human nature or “creaturehood,” everything
that man is endowed with is seen as being a “gift of God.” Thus he calls work a “gift of God;”\textsuperscript{101} the intellect “is like a spark of the divine intellect;”\textsuperscript{102} conjugal love is “a divine gift which is chastely ordered to life, to love, to fruitfulness.”\textsuperscript{103}

c) Freedom as a capacity to choose (psychological freedom) is clearly present in his teaching. It is, to give one example, the central thread of his homily “Freedom, A Gift of God.” At the same time his insistence on responsibility shows that he considered man truly free and that history is not a fiction.

d) This power of choice is exercised especially between good and evil, in reference to God. Freedom in the natural order cannot be separated from its subject, a creature ordered to God.

e) The dimension that some call “moral freedom” is also present, and is what gives meaning to the capacity to choose. Freedom is meant for love, for self-surrender, for service. Only thus is one truly free and not a slave of one’s own passions—a being turned in on oneself.

f) His teachings on freedom underlie all that he says about education and formation. The goal should always be to educate in freedom (in a climate and environment of freedom) and for freedom (as a goal, helping to form free and responsible persons).

g) What is called “freedom from external coercion” finds many expressions in the writings of Blessed Josemaria, especially in his strong defense of personal freedom and the freedom of consciences.

\textit{Theological aspects of freedom}

Turning to the strictly supernatural level, to the redemption that frees us from sin and elevates us to the condition of being children of God, the following points stand out in Blessed Josemaria’s teaching:

a) Freedom is seen as being closely tied to divine filiation. It is the freedom of the children of God. The natural freedom of created persons is based on the full openness of man’s intellect and will to reality and to the good. This openness stems from the spiritual nature of these faculties, and ultimately from a soul that exists thanks to having received its being directly from God. On the supernatural level, the freedom of the children of God is
based on man’s new theological condition, sharing in the life of the Trinity. Becoming children of God means participating in the divine life and no longer being slaves to sin, the devil and death. Freedom is now the dynamism of the children of God, moved by and cooperating with divine grace. But it also means the ontological state itself of being free and not slaves.

b) Freedom is not only a gift of God, but more precisely a gift that Christ has won for us through his death on the Cross and his resurrection. It is based not only on creation, but also on the redemption of mankind that the Trinity carried out through the Incarnation.

c) The capacity of choice is still present in the children of God, but it has been strengthened by being raised to the self-determination of someone who is a child of God the Father in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Being children of God in the Only-begotten Son, the responsibility linked to freedom that we possess becomes a response to the merciful Love of the Father manifested in a sublime way on the Cross. All the actions of a Christian are a fruit of the grace that God freely grants and of our free correspondence, assisted by grace.

d) Christ’s entire existence, especially his salvific sacrifice on the Cross, giving his life for others, is a model of free action that adheres to the will of the Father. Even on the natural plane, the psychological dimensions of freedom are ordered to the moral dimension and, therefore, to love and self-giving. On the supernatural plane, the measure of this self-giving is Christ’s Love, made present in us thanks to the sending of the Holy Spirit. One confronts here the paradox of love without measure, of a “madness” of love, and of a joyful and complete forgiveness of one’s enemies.

e) Blessed Josemaría’s theological teaching on freedom attains a special depth thanks to the divine lights that showed him the connection between being on the Cross—being another Christ, or better, ipse Christus, Christ himself—and being a child of God.


[2] Romana Postulación de la causa de beatificación y canonización del Siervo
In July, 1931, in a schematic enumeration of apostolic activities, he wrote: “a Catholic party, no: diversity of opinions” (Apuntes íntimos, no. 206). And a few months later, in 1932, he wrote: “We are citizens, the same as others: the same duties, equal rights. —The political freedom of the members. For this reason, in human things, a variety of opinions” (Apuntes íntimos, no. 158; both texts cited in Fuenmayor et al., op. cit., p. 40).

The foundational charism is the decisive cause of his delving so deeply into freedom: “Ever since 1928 my preaching has been that sanctity is not reserved for the privileged few and that all the ways of the earth can be divine. The reason is that the spirituality of Opus Dei is based on the sanctification of ordinary work. The prejudice must be rejected that the ordinary faithful can do no more than limit themselves to helping the clergy in ecclesiastical apostolates. It should be remembered that to attain this supernatural end men need to be and to feel personally free with the freedom Christ won for us” (Blessed Josemaria Escriva, Conversations, no. 34). “Because the Work’s aims are exclusively supernatural, its spirit is one of freedom, of love for the personal freedom of all men.” (Ibid., no. 67).


Cf. Álvaro del Portillo, Immersed in God, (an interview with Cesare Cavalleri), Princeton 1996, 252 pages, in which numerous instances of the
defense of freedom by Blessed Josemaría are narrated.


[10] All his works are permeated by a deep conception of freedom and marked by many references to it. Apart from the homily “Freedom, A Gift from God,” which is completely devoted to this question, the subject is present in a special way in *Conversations with Josemaría Escriva*, which contains interviews granted between 1966 and 1968. The questions raised by the journalists about Opus Dei and other contemporary concerns give the author an opportunity to express his thoughts about this fundamental dimension of human life. In addition, at the end of that volume, in the homily “Passionately Loving the World,” the author explicitly discusses a lay mentality whose central features are freedom and responsibility. Other homilies also discuss the meaning of freedom, although not as extensively. For example, the one he gave on the feast of Christ the King in 1970, on November 22, which was published under the title “Christ the King” in the book *Christ Is Passing By*, or that of March 15, 1961, Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent, which was published in that same book under the title “Christian Respect for Persons and their Freedom.” In the homily “Towards Holiness,” from November 26, 1967, published in *Friends of God*, prayer is seen as liberating the soul. These are only a few examples, because, I repeat, the topic comes up continually in all of his works.

[11] Cornelio Fabro, “Nel secondo aniversario della morte. Un maestro di libertà cristiana: Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer,” in *L’Osservatore Romano*, July 2, 1977. The Belgian jurist, W. Onclin, former dean of the School of Canon Law at the University of Louvain, coincides in this view: “One of the things that most moved me in speaking with Monsignor Escriva, apart from his human warmth, his enthusiasm and his supernatural spirit, was his love for freedom, a word he never spoke without adding a


[20] Some professors at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross—including Ramon Garcia de Haro, Ángel Rodríguez Luño and
Ignacio Carrasco—have also dealt with this question.


[31] Blessed Josemaría Escriva, *Friends of God*, no. 27. “I want you to be rebels, free and unfettered, because I want you—it is Christ who wants us!—to be children of God” (Ibid., no. 38).

[32] Cited in note 1. The introductory words of *The Way of the Cross* end by asking our Lady to help us “to relive those bitter hours which your Son wished to spend on earth, so that we, who were made from a handful of clay, may finally live *in libertatem gloriae filiorum Dei*, in the freedom and glory of the children of God.”


Cf. 2 Cor 5:17.

The Way of the Cross, Station XI, point for meditation no. 4.

Articulos del Postulador, no. 385, p. 135.


1Jn 4:8.

Blessed Josemaría Escriva, Christ is Passing By, no. 95.

Ibid., no. 84.

Ibid., nos. 85-86.

Ibid., no. 18.

Friends of God, no. 25.

The Way of the Cross, Station I, first point for meditation.

Ibid., point no. 2.

Christ Is Passing By, no. 17.

Pastoral Const. Gaudium et Spes, no. 22: “In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes
clear. For Adam, the first man, was a type of him who was to come. Christ the Lord, Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling.”

[56] Ibid., no. 24.
[57] Friends of God, no. 30.
[58] Ibid., no. 25.
[59] Ibid., no. 26.
[60] Ibid., no. 27.
[61] Ibid., no. 28.
[63] Friends of God, no. 28.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Cf. Ibid., no. 6. From a psychological point of view, the anthropology of the Jewish psychiatrist Viktor E. Frankl confirms that human aspiration to a complete self-giving.
[66] As can be seen, Blessed Josemaria often condenses the Pauline expression “the glorious freedom of the children of God” into “the freedom of the children of God.”
[70] Friends of God, no. 25; the Biblical text cited is Heb 10:7.
[71] Ibid., no. 24.
[72] Ibid., no. 26.
[73] Ibid., no. 24.
[74] Christ Is Passing By, no. 111.
Deut 30:15-16, 19.

St. Augustine, De vera religione, 14, 27 (PL 34, 134).

Friends of God, no. 33.


Aquinas, Quaestiones disputatae. De Malo, q. VI, a. 1.

Cf. Llano, La libertad radical, p. 97.

Conversations, no. 117.


Thomas Aquinas, Quaestiones disputatae. De Malo, q. VI, a. 1.

Friends of God, no. 36.

I owe this expression to Prof. Paul O’Callaghan, who suggested it to me when reading these pages.

Christ Is Passing By, no. 33.

Conversations, no. 104.

Ibid., no. 44.


Friends of God, no. 29.


In his well-known inaugural lecture as professor of political theory at Oxford University, dedicated to the concept of freedom and published in 1958, Isaiah Berlin revived the debate about this important topic by proposing this distinction.

With a wise psychological observation, he noted that the “key to authenticity of personal love is provided not only by the capacity of feeling a stable love for another person, but above all by being open to allowing oneself to be loved. One who allows himself to be loved is able to understand what it means to be freed from oneself, because he then knows that what he has is not his own, but belongs to the one who loves him” (A. Llano, “Hacia un humanismo de la autenticidad,” in the book Sueño y vigilia de la razón, Eunsa, Pamplona 2001, p. 365). Besides its presence in the whole Christian tradition, in our times this idea of “freedom from oneself” comes from Schelling and has been brought up to date by Fernando Inciarte.

Conversations, no. 98.

Blessed Josemaria often recalled that under special circumstances the Church hierarchy might ask Catholics to take a common position in matters of opinion, although this would not be the normal situation.

Blessed Josemaria Escriva, The Forge, no. 717.

Ibid., no. 715.


Christ Is Passing By, no. 47.
[102] Ibid., no. 24.

[103] Ibid.