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.

ROMANA, Bulletin of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei Semiannual journal — Year XVIII, Number 35 — July-December 2002 Editor: Rev. Davide Maria Emilio Cito Address: viale Bruno Buozzi 73, 00197 Roma Fax: 06/80896420 — E-mail: redazione@romana.org www.romana.org

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October 6, 2002 is a date that will be forever engraved in the history of Opus Dei. After a cause that lasted twenty-one years, the founder was canonized. Now Saint Josemaría Escrivá belongs to the treasure of the Church. All Christians can now find in his examplary life God's footsteps, and contemplate how our Lord wants to work in our own soul. His message can provide light to anyone who is traveling the paths of the world in search of God.

The canonization of the founder of Opus Dei has been a true “ecclesial event.” Its special note was, above all, its universality. This was apparent to anyone observing the immense multitude of faithful present (among them many non-Catholics), and the number of countries from which they came (more than ninety). It could also be seen in the hundreds of bishops who, to the right of the altar of St. Peter, wanted to make evident the cordial support of the ecclesiastical hierarchy for the Holy Father’s decision, and in the presence of so many representatives from the most varied ecclesiastical institutions.

Every canonization is a sign of the living reality of the Church’s communion, perhaps the most eloquent expression of the mystery of the Church. The Church contains a great variety of charisms, enabling her to reach very different cultures and outlooks. But all these charisms are part of the Church’s common patrimony, and every spirituality reflects an aspect of the infinite riches of the mystery of Christ.

The Church’s unity is a harmony amid variety, a communion amid multiplicity. This is seen clearly in the saints, so different from one another and yet so united in the Holy Spirit. The personal history of each saint is distinct. But there is always the same passion for God and souls, the same burning prayer, the same thirst to share in Christ’s salvific suffering.

Fostering this communion is an essential part of the patrimony that the faithful of the Prelature have received from their founder. Therefore it forms part of the resolution for renewed spiritual commitment that each one has formulated as a sign of gratitude to God for the gift of the canonization. As the Holy Father said on October 7 in his greeting to
participants in the thanksgiving Mass: “St. Josemaría Escrivá spent his life for the service of the Church. In his writings, priests and lay people, men and women religious who follow the most varied paths, find a stimulating source of inspiration.... In imitating him with openness of spirit and heart, with a readiness to serve the local Churches, you contribute to strengthening the ‘spirituality of communion’ which my Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte points out as one of the most important goals of our time.”[1]

In his homily on October 6 and in his address on the following day, the Holy Father highlighted the outstanding features of St. Josemaría and his message, recognizing the timeliness and urgency of his teachings: “St. Josemaría was chosen by the Lord to announce the universal call to holiness and to point out that daily life and ordinary activities are a path to holiness. One could say that he was the saint of ordinary life. In fact, he was convinced that for those who live with a perspective of faith, everything is an opportunity to meet God, everything can be an incentive for prayer. Seen in this light, daily life reveals an unexpected greatness. Holiness is truly within everyone’s reach.”[2]

John Paul II insisted that the struggle by every Christian to attain the fullness of contemplation entails a commitment to the salvation of all mankind: “This supernatural vision of life opens up an extraordinarily rich horizon of salvific perspectives, because, even in the apparently monotonous flow of normal earthly events, God comes close to us and we can cooperate with his plan of salvation.”[3] And further on: “To raise the world to God and transform it from within: this is the ideal your holy founder points out to you.”[4]

Each of us has to make a sincere effort to seek union with Christ and to second the Pope’s call for a new evangelization. The Pope’s words are unequivocal: “Spread in society the consciousness that we are all called to holiness whatever our race, class, society or age. In the first place, struggle to be saints yourselves, cultivating an evangelical style of humility and service, abandonment to Providence and constant attentiveness to the voice of the Spirit. In this way you will be the ‘salt of the earth’ (cf. Mt 5:13).”[5] Personal sanctity, therefore, is indispensable if we are to give effective Christian witness. “St. Josemaría was profoundly convinced that the
Christian life entails a mission and an apostolate; we are in the world to save it with Christ.... Precisely for this reason his teachings have helped so many ordinary members of the faithful to discover the redemptive power of faith, its capacity to transform the earth. This is a message that has abundant and fruitful implications for the evangelizing mission of the Church.”[6]

The Holy Father’s words reveal the hope he places in the faithful of the Prelature: “Josemaría Escrivá understood very clearly that the mission of the baptized consists in raising the Cross of Christ at the summit of all human reality, and he felt burning in his heart the call to evangelize every human setting. He accepted without hesitation Jesus’ invitation to the apostle Peter, which we just heard in this square: Duc in altum! Put out into the deep! And he transmitted it to his entire spiritual family so that they might offer the Church a valid contribution of communion and apostolic service. Today this invitation is extended to all of us.”[7]

Anyone who has discovered, through St. Josemaría’s example and teachings, the lovable face of Christ, can find in these words the path for the generous response that we owe to our Lord. “St. Josemaría was a very human saint. All those who met him, whatever their culture or social status, felt he was a father, totally devoted to serving others, for he was convinced that every soul is a marvelous treasure; indeed, every person is worth all of Christ’s Blood.”[8] His fatherly solicitude and intercession, his diligence in presenting our requests to God, will help us attain the goal of sanctity, even while we experience the distance still to be traveled.

Everyone who comes close to a saint realizes that his “secret” lies in grasping deeply the mystery of God’s holiness. Immersed in God’s life, he is raised to unimaginable heights. One of the truths that shines forth brightly in the writings of Saint Josemaría Escrivá is that God is a Father to us: “The Lord gave him a profound understanding of the gift of our divine sonship. He taught him to contemplate the tender face of a Father in the God who speaks to us through the most varied events of life. A Father who loves us, who follows us step by step, who protects us, understands us and awaits from each of us a response of love. The consideration of this fatherly presence which accompanies the Christian everywhere gives him steadfast confidence; he should trust in the heavenly Father at every moment. He
should never feel lonely or frightened.... The Christian is necessarily optimistic, because he knows he is a son of God in Christ.”[9] The saints help us to trust always in the help of our heavenly Father.

[1] John Paul II, Address to the participants in the canonization of Saint Josemaría (October 7, 2002).

[2] Ibid.


[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.


[8] John Paul II, Address to the participants in the canonization of Saint Josemaría (October 7, 2002).

[9] Ibid.

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DECRETAL LETTERS

Honors of Sainthood are Decreed for Blessed Josemaría Escrivá

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Servant of the Servants of God

for a permanent record of the matter

Domine, ut videam! [Lord, that I might see!] (cf Lk 18:41), Domina, ut sit! [Lady, that it might be!], Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam! [All together with Peter to Jesus through Mary], Regnare Christum volumus! [We want Christ to reign!] (cf 1 Cor 15:25), Deo omnis gloria! [All the glory to God!] (cf Roman Canon, Doxology). In these aspirations one can trace the entire life story of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá. He was barely sixteen when he began to recite the first two aspirations, as soon as he had the first inklings of God's call. They expressed the burning desire of his heart: to see what God was asking of him, so that he might do it without delay, lovingly fulfilling the Lord's will. The third aspiration appears frequently in his writings as a young priest and shows how his zeal to win souls for God went hand in hand with both a firm determination to be faithful to the Church and an ardent devotion to Mary, the Virgin Mother of God. Regnare Christum volumus! [We want Christ to reign!]: these words aptly express his constant pastoral concern to spread among all men and women the call to share, through Christ, in the dignity of God's children. God's sons and daughters should live for the purpose, to serve Him alone: Deo omnis gloria! [All the glory to God!]

He framed this program of Christian holiness in the context of one's normal daily duties and tasks, for which reason he may rightly be called "the saint of ordinary life." Indeed, his life and message have taught countless Christian faithful, particularly laypeople, engaged in the most varied professions, to transform their ordinary work into prayer, service of others, and a path towards holiness.
Blessed Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer was born in Barbastro, Spain, on January 9th, 1902. He was ordained a priest on March 28th, 1925.

On October 2nd, 1928, the Lord gave him the light to see what He had planned for him: on that day, he founded Opus Dei. Thus, a new pathway of life was opened in the Church, so that all men and women —without distinction of race, class or culture — might realize that they are called to the fullness of charity and to the apostolate, each in their own place in the world. Indeed, the ordinary circumstances of life are the place where the Lord calls us and the hinge upon which our loving response turns. Josemaría Escrivá teaches that work, if it is carried out with the help of God’s life-giving grace, is a wellspring of inexhaustible fruitfulness. It is a means of lifting up the Cross and placing it on the summit of all human activity, so that the world is transformed, as it were, from within, according to the Spirit of Christ, and reconciled with God.

Josemaría Escrivá’s work on behalf of priests, both on his own and through the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, which he began on February 14th, 1943, makes him a shining example of concern for priestly holiness and brotherhood.

In 1946, he moved to Rome and there, out of apostolic zeal, he constantly labored to spread the Christian message throughout the world, always fully in union with the Roman Pontiff and desirous of serving all the local churches. He inspired a vast range of initiatives to promote the dignity of the human person, to the great benefit of society and the further advance of the Gospel.

On his many trips to the countries of Europe and Latin America, he carried out a tireless work of catechesis. His reputation for holiness drew many men and women to hear him.

On June 26th, 1975, at noon, he was stricken by a heart attack and rendered his soul to God. His body now lies in the prelatic church of Opus Dei, dedicated to Our Lady of Peace, where faithful from around the world frequently go to pray.

After his death, Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer's reputation for holiness spread, and many scientifically-inexplicable cures, as well as hundreds of
thousands of spiritual and material favors, have been attributed to his intercession.

We ourselves solemnly beatified the Founder of Opus Dei on May 17th, 1992, in St. Peter's Square.

As the number of favors attributed by the faithful to the intercession of Blessed Josemaría continued to grow, the Promoters of the Cause chose one cure and presented it to the Holy See so that, after careful examination, it might permit Blessed Josemaría to be numbered among the saints.

In 1994, a process was initiated regarding this miraculous cure in the Archdiocesan Curia of Badajoz, Spain. On December 20th, 2001, after the customary investigations were concluded in the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints with an affirmative result, the decree on the miracle was promulgated in our Presence. Then, having heard the favorable opinions of the Cardinals and Bishops gathered in Consistory on February 26th, 2002, we established that the rite of Canonization be celebrated on October 6th of the same year.

Therefore, today, in a solemn Mass in St. Peter's Square, before an immense multitude of the faithful, We have pronounced the following formula: *In honor of the Blessed and Undivided Trinity, for the uplifting of Catholic faith and the increase of Christian life, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and that of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul and our own, after careful deliberation, having called frequently upon God's help, and with the advice of many of our brother Bishops, We declare and define Blessed Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer to be a Saint, and We inscribe his name in the catalogue of the Saints, ordaining that, throughout the universal Church, he be devoutly honored among the Saints. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

And what We have declared, We desire to be in force both now and in the future, anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome, at Saint Peter's, the sixth day of October, in the two thousand and second year of our Lord, of our Pontificate the twenty-fourth.

*I, John Paul*

Bishop of the Catholic Church
Events and Homilies

October 8 and 9. Thanksgiving Masses

On the 8th and 9th, there were 27 Masses of thanksgiving in basilicas and churches throughout Rome, celebrated in 18 different languages: Arabic, Chinese, Czech, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swedish. In many cases the celebrants were cardinals and bishops. In their homilies they expressed their joy at the elevation of Saint Josemaría Escrivá to the altars and stressed the universality of his message.

The Church of Trinità dei Monti was the scene of a thanksgiving Mass in the Maronite rite concelebrated by Archbishop Paul Youssef Matar of Beirut and Archbishop Bechara Rai of Byblos. At the end of the Mass, Cardinal Ignace Moussa I Daoud, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, delivered some words to the faithful. He made reference to an incident in Saint Josemaría’s life that gave him joy when he learned of it and which is now a special honor for him: “I was surprised to learn that Josemaría’s first Roman domicile was the top floor of an apartment building situated on the Piazza del Città Leonina, precisely the apartment where I am now living. This is a happy coincidence which imposes a serious obligation on me.” Then he went on to explain in broad terms the development of the work of the Opus Dei Prelature in Lebanon. “May Opus Dei be an element of hope in Lebanon!” he exclaimed at one point.

Some two hundred faithful who had come to Rome from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan participated in the Mass celebrated by Archbishop
Joseph Ti-Kang of Taipei, in the church of San Girolamo della Carità. Archbishop Ti-Kang gave a brief summary of the life of the new saint. He emphasized that “the Far East had been in his heart since his youth,” and also pointed out that “in the spirit of Saint Josemaría there are two aspects which are closely related to the culture of China, sanctification of family life and sanctification of work.”

The Eucharistic thanksgiving for the Japanese-speaking faithful took place in the same church, presided over by Bishop Takaaki Hirayama of Oita, who noted in his homily that the message preached by Saint Josemaría on the need to sanctify ordinary life can help the Japanese to give meaning to their work, which is such an important reality in their scale of values. “Saint Josemaría, whom so many call Father,” said Bishop Hirayama, “used to stress that the parents’ job begins before their children are born and continues throughout their entire life, and even when they reach heaven. We have to ask Saint Josemaría that, like a good father, he intercede for us.”

A Mass of thanksgiving in Dutch was held in the Basilica of St. Apollinare. The celebrant was Msgr. Willem Schnell, Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in the Netherlands. Archbishop François Bacqué, the Papal Nuncio, gave a few words of exhortation at the beginning of the ceremony.

More than nine thousand people took part in the concelebration presided over by Cardinal Antonio Maria Rouco, Archbishop of Madrid, in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls. It was held for people who had come from Spain for the canonization. Concelebrating were a number of archbishops and bishops, among them the Archbishop of Toledo and primate of Spain, Cardinal Francisco Alvarez Martinez, and almost one hundred priests. In his homily Cardinal Rouco noted that Saint Josemaría was a Spanish priest with a universal outlook.

Another Mass in Spanish was held in the Basilica of St. Mary Major on the morning of the 9th for faithful from Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia. More than sixty bishops and priests concelebrated with Cardinal Jorge Maria Mejia. In his homily Cardinal Mejia stressed Saint Josemaría’s love for the Church and the work of evangelizing culture that the faithful of
the Prelature were endeavoring to accomplish through their apostolic initiatives.

The group from Venezuela held their thanksgiving Mass in the parish of Saint Josemaría. Archbishop Baltazar Enrique Porras Cardoso of Mérida urged those present to take a decidedly active part in the mission of the Church, each on his or her own responsibility, from the place that they occupied in the world. “The canonization on Sunday and yesterday’s Mass in St. Peter’s Square, attended by thousands of pilgrims from all corners of the world, have been a very special experience of faith. We could characterize it as a collective and personal Mt. Tabor, since it is an injection of Catholicity, of spiritual life and hope, which can give us new impetus in our vocation as sowers of the Gospel in the midst of the world.”

Some two thousand five hundred Americans took part in a Mass in St. Mary Major on October 8th presided over by Archbishop John Myers of Newark. In his homily, Archbishop Myers encouraged those present to flee a “minimalist” Catholicism, and stressed that sanctity is an invitation that God directs to all Christians. Archbishop Myers added that Opus Dei “is not for elite Catholics, but for ordinary Catholics. The only thing required is availability and a spirit of service.”

In the Church of Sant’Andrea della Valle, Cardinal Saraiva Martins celebrated a thanksgiving Mass in Portuguese at ten in the morning. This is the text of his homily:

Cardinal Saraiva Martins Homily

The three passages from Sacred Scripture that we have just read in this solemn Eucharistic concelebration provide a deep Biblical foundation for the vocation and mission of Saint Josemaría Escrivá. They present us with the great originality of the charism that the Holy Spirit brought forth in him for the benefit of the whole Church.

The first reading, from the book of Genesis, reflects on the origin of the world and humanity. The sacred author tells us that God, after creating heaven and earth, and then man as the crown of his work, planted a garden and entrusted it to man to till it and care for it. This is an allusion to human work as a collaboration with the Creator. To till the garden is to bring about progress in the created world. To care for it, one might say, is to
respect the purposes for which the world was created. It is the opus hominis which is, at the same time, opus Dei. In these times when so much importance is given to work and to the environment, Saint Josemaría Escrivá, led by God, has come to remind us of the dignity of both of these realities. Human work is a noble reality and so is the environment, because the first is a collaboration with the Creator and the second is the work of the Creator himself.

The second reading, from St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, recalls another demand of human work. It should be done with the spirit of God’s children and not of slaves. Man lives and works in this world in intimate union with God. In working, one becomes an heir of God’s riches, in union with Christ. In this spiritual intimacy, even human limitations, which are the cause of suffering, become fertile sources of happiness and future glory. Human work thus becomes a true work of God. Action is transformed into contemplation, a union that marked the life and work of Saint Josemaría Escrivá.

Finally, in the Gospel we read about the calling of the apostles and their immediate response to that call. The passage tells us that anyone who works in this world with the perspective we just described, who understands his activity as a collaboration in the work of God and as a defense of man, and does it with a spirit of faith and in union with God, not only sanctifies himself but also gives fruitful witness. That is, my brethren, one becomes an apostle simply by working: true salt and light for the world, leaven in the mass.

Saint Josemaría Escrivá was not content with seeking sanctity for himself. He founded an eminently apostolic Work, a work so necessary and desired by God that has had an extraordinary development, as we all know. He was an apostle and a generator of apostles.

My dear brothers and sisters: you have come to Rome, with great enthusiasm and energy, for the canonization of Saint Josemaría Escrivá. You participated on Sunday in the solemn ceremony in St. Peter’s Square and today we are assembled once more to praise God, to give thanks for the marvels he has worked in the new saint, who is, undoubtedly, one of the most extraordinary of contemporary saints.
The Church canonizes people not so much to augment their glory and celebrity as to make them our intercessors before God and, above all, models for our own life. It is the inspiration found in the saint’s specific message that is of most interest to the Church when she elevates to the glory of the altars those whom the Spirit has chosen to remind men and women of the importance of specific Gospel values, which we call charisms. The canonized saints belong to the Church and are for the Church. They are not lamps to be hidden under a bushel, but rather lamps that the Church raises on high to give light to all.

The Church, through the voice of her visible head, our Holy Father John Paul II, has highlighted the figure and charism of one of her illustrious sons not only for all her members, but also for the whole world, so that the faithful and all mankind might find in him an inspiration in carrying out their own vocation, their own mission.

I will now comment briefly on points in the Liturgy of the Word to which I referred earlier. They offer us a useful framework for considering the life of the saint and the work he left us as an inheritance.

1) According to the spirit of Opus Dei, work, the professional activity each person carries out in the world, can and should be sanctified, and in so doing become a path of sanctification. This is the reason why Saint Josemaría Escrivá addressed all sectors of society and was heard and followed by all. This is the reason why Opus Dei has spread and grown in such a remarkable way, with people from the most varied branches of human activity.

Saint Josemaría Escrivá and his Work remind all men and women that any honest work, whether humanly important or not, is always an opportunity to give glory to God and to serve others.

The dignity and the sanctification of work—this is the first intuition, the key idea that I would like to emphasize. To work with a perspective of faith, to carry out one’s activities, whether important or humble, in collaboration with the Creator and as a service to one’s brethren. Anyone who works with his eyes fixed on God, necessarily opens himself to his brothers and sisters and does everything with a spirit of service, for their benefit.
Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, the occupations and preoccupations of our daily life should never be seen as isolating us from God or from others, as though falling outside the search for Christian perfection. Rather these are the very matter of our sanctification, if we do everything with a spirit of charity, with a spirit of service, and with the priestly character common to all of the baptized.

Humanity can’t be divided into two categories: the perfect and the imperfect, those called to sanctity and those called only to be saved from condemnation. That would imply our Lord was not speaking to everyone when he said: “You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48).

2) The second aspect that I would like to emphasize is one’s contact with God; in other words, the need for a life of prayer and contemplation which completes and makes fruitful our daily work. Saint Josemaría Escrivá was a man of God, and he was such because God was a very real and all-encompassing part of his life. He was passionately in love with God, and he filled his life not only with action but also with prayer. If this were not the case, all of his projects would have dissolved in dreams.

The saints are above all men and women with an intense interior life, who know they are God’s adopted children, as St. Paul reminds us. They find in God their all, their strength and their inheritance. This is also the message of the second reading.

Saint Josemaría Escrivá gave his work the expressive name Opus Dei—opus, work. But it is God’s work, and therefore it should be carried out with one’s eyes and heart set on God, in prayer, adoration, contemplation.

The Church’s holy founders have been those who best united the active life and the contemplative life, those who best integrated the models of Martha and of Mary.

One of the secrets of the great expansion of the Work founded by Escrivá was undoubtedly the spirituality that he strove to foster in its members. The place and value which the Prelature gives to sacramental life and asceticism in its centers and in its members is well known. The
spiritual life, the interior life, the life of prayer, are a demand lived very seriously in Opus Dei.

3) Finally, and once again with reference to the Liturgy of the Word in the Mass, I would like to make an appeal for apostolate. In Eden, God asked for man’s collaboration. He who had made everything from nothing, wanted man to act. It would be man who would continue creation and defend it. This is a great mystery. God the Almighty chose to need men, to need you and me as his collaborators. In the Gospel passage that we read, we see Jesus evangelizing the multitude; and as he finished his preaching, he asked for the collaboration of a few fishermen present there: Peter, Andrew, James and John. He made them fishers of men, fellow evangelizers. Even more, in the divine plan, it was they who were to gather the fruit of the Good News that he had announced. The great conversions began on the day of Pentecost, through the work of these fishermen who, in addition to being rough fishermen, were also sinners. “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,” said Peter in his first meeting with Jesus. And we know what Jesus’ answer was: he made him a fisher of men, an apostle, and what an apostle!

God needs us in his work of salvation. That is why the Church is a sacrament of salvation, and why there is a universal vocation to sanctity, which is both a vocation and a mission at the same time. Sanctity is not only something personal; it radiates light and draws others to holiness.

Every baptized person, my dear sisters and brothers, has the right, the duty to be an apostle. This is each person’s deepest dignity. This is their vocation, their mission in life and in this world.

Saint Josemaría Escrivá strove to draw his brethren to holiness, regardless of their social position, so that they, by becoming holy, would in turn draw others. Thus by sanctifying their work they would become for everyone, as we said earlier, salt, light and leaven.

The canonization of Josemaría Escrivá is a privileged occasion to recall and renew his charism, which is so important and so timely today.

May the new saint, who is so close to us and so beloved by all of us, help us to sanctify our lives and our daily work, making us an inspiring
example of sanctity for our brothers and sisters, for the Church and for the world. Amen.

A half hour later, Archbishop Edward Nowak, Secretary of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, officiated at a Mass for Polish-speaking faithful in the church of Saint Josemaría Escrivá. The German speakers, for their part, gathered in the Basilica of the Twelve Apostles with Archbishop Fernand Franck of Luxembourg presiding.

Cardinal Paul Poupard, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, told the French-speaking faithful gathered in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere that the universal call to holiness preached by Saint Josemaría invited us to harmonize our interior and exterior life, our life of prayer and the many duties of daily life.

This Mass, which took place on the 8th, was attended by over two thousand people. Two African choirs, one from the Ivory Coast and the other from Cameroon, contributed liturgical songs. On the next day, Cardinal Bernard Agré of Abidjan celebrated another thanksgiving Mass in French in the same church.

There were also two concelebrations in Italian: one on the 8th in the Basilica of the Twelve Apostles, presided over by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, Prefect of the Congregation for the Bishops. Here is his homily:

Cardinal Re's Homily

After the wonderful celebration in St. Peter’s Square on Sunday and yesterday’s audience with the Holy Father, we are here to give thanks to our Lord for having given Saint Josemaría Escrivá to the Church and to all mankind. He was a great teacher, who taught us how to live a deep Christian life in today’s society, marked by ever-increasing progress and well-being and so many possibilities for doing good, but also by so much secularism, permissiveness and materialism. He showed us by his words and by his whole life how to never lose, in the midst of the vicissitudes of daily life, the safe path that the north star of faith marks out for us.
Saint Josemaría’s life gave marvelous testimony to all that he taught, becoming an example of the truth of his message. He sought out and served his brothers and sisters with the strength of evangelical sanctity.

He taught a spirituality accessible to all Christians, whatever their profession or state in life, without separating them from any noble earthly concerns. He understood that the Gospel is not a book only to be read and meditated on, but that it must be lived in the specific circumstances of daily life.

Josemaría Escrivá has left a deep furrow in the Church and in society. In the Church, a shining furrow of sanctity; and in society, a furrow aglow with dedication and faithfulness to one’s own duties and with love for one’s neighbor.

In Novo Millennio Ineunte the Pope pointed out forcefully that, at the beginning of this third millennium, the focus that must guide all pastoral work is that of holiness (no. 30).

Josemaría Escrivá’s canonization has much to tell the world about the topic of holiness, for the great yearning that inspired and sustained his whole life was precisely that of working to make the universal call to holiness an operative conviction in every Christian’s life. An original and attractive feature of his message was his insistence that all men and women should strive for sanctity in their own work, carrying out one’s duties with effort and competence and for the glory of God.

He has illumined the path of the Church in today’s world. “Your Christian vocation requires you to be in God and, at the same time, to be concerned with the things of earth, using them objectively, just as they are: to give them back to Him” (Furrow, 295). Those who knew Saint Josemaría Escrivá well saw how firmly he was convinced that every man and woman, so loved by God that He sent his Only-Begotten Son into the world for them, can and should live for this love. Thus they should give priority each day to their interior life and to a renewed relationship with others, through their professional work and the fulfillment of their family and social duties. This is the life of God’s children. Saint Paul has told us “You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit
himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom 8:15-16).” This need to “cry out” when the Spirit grants us the experience of divine filiation was revealed in a special way to the young Father Josemaría back in 1931. From that day on, he strove to live as a son of God, making divine filiation the foundation of what he sought to transmit to others, always seeing them as sons and daughters of God.

In the past, the image projected by the word “holiness” was generally one of outstanding conduct and courage, proper to an exceptional individual. Although it is true that in each person holiness is always something original, with the originality of love, it is also true that Josemaría Escrivá has led Catholics to vividly grasp that holiness is not something unusual. Holiness is found wherever Christian life is lived integrally, no matter where one encounters it. What makes his faith and his path particularly timely is his conviction that lay people, committed to their family, professional and social responsibilities, can have a deep interior life and union with God.

Many saints in the past insisted that holiness is the only goal of our existence, but the idea of living out the Gospel message in the midst of work and ordinary life was not prominent. The entire life and work of Saint Josemaría since October 2, 1928, the date of the foundation of Opus Dei, was motivated by this mission for the salvation of the world. His charism was based on the certainty that God sent his Son into the world for each and every person. “God,” he said, “also sent his Son to you and to me,” right where we are, where we work, where we interact with our brothers and sisters.

Naturally, we always have to keep in contact with the font of grace, in the sacraments and the liturgy. Our personal encounter with Christ becomes a reality above all in the Holy Eucharist and in the Mass. Saint Josemaría strove with all his strength to make the Eucharistic the center of his life. And he taught by his example and constant preaching that everyone can unite themselves to Christ through prayer and the Eucharist, through “the word and the Bread,” as he liked to say.

For him, Jesus was not an example to imitate from afar, an abstract moral ideal, but his Jesus, a person we should live alongside continuously. One can find a great treasure for all Christians in his vivid way of living the
presence of God throughout the day, offering up one’s work, praying an aspiration when using an instrument, immediately uniting oneself to Christ’s sufferings in the setbacks of the day, giving thanks for everything. He found a spiritual element in every piece of news; every person’s suffering stirred his compassion, while every sin led him to ask for forgiveness and mercy.”

“It’s necessary to be convinced,” he wrote in The Way (no. 267), “that God is always near us. Too often we live as though our Lord were somewhere far off—where the stars shine. We fail to realize that he is also by our side—always.”

And he lived with this conviction at every moment. “Never make a decision without stopping to consider the matter in the presence of God” (no. 266). “Make use of those holy human devices I’ve recommended to keep you from losing the presence of God: ejaculations, acts of love and reparation, spiritual communions, glances at a picture of our Lady” (no. 272). “Make it a habit,” he says, also in The Way (no. 268), “to raise your heart to God, in acts of thanksgiving, many times a day. Because he gives you this and that.... Because someone has despised you.... Because you don’t have what you need, or because you do have it.” He sought to contemplate our Lord in every event and circumstance (cf. The Forge, 96).

It is precisely this living faith in the presence of the risen Christ beside us at every moment that constitutes the core of the mission God entrusted to him in Opus Dei: putting love into one’s work. Only thus will the Christian who lives in the world beset by so many distractions, but also by so many serious responsibilities that weigh on his heart, be able to attain unity and plenitude in his own life.

Saint Josemaría used to say that we have to be in heaven and on earth at the same time. That is, a Christian has to keep his feet well planted on the ground in order to collaborate in the construction of the earthly city, but his eyes should be raised on high, not to escape from the realities of this world but to seek light and strength from heaven to confront the problems of each day.

The Work that God entrusted to Saint Josemaría has been erected by the Roman Pontiff as a Prelature. Thus he has shown how important it is
to make the gifts Jesus entrusted to his Church ever more efficacious in the lives of the faithful who are confronting the problems in the world. Specifically, it helps them to acquire an ever deeper interior life and to maintain the presence of God at every moment of the day, yielding deeds of charity in one’s relationships with others.

The presence of so many cardinals and bishops on the day of the canonization gives testimony to how the formational activity of the Prelature of Opus Dei harmonizes with the pastoral work of the local churches, in a spirit of loyal collaboration.

Saint Josemaría Escrivá often exhorted people to aspire to sanctity in family life, seeking sanctify in the heart of their own families. He always saw the family of Nazareth as a necessary step to reach contemplation of the Trinity. He even called it “the Trinity on earth.”

The example of Mary and of Joseph, living an absolutely normal life in the eyes of everyone, fully reveals the divine richness of daily life. They always lived in Jesus’ presence; they worked for him, while loving one another humanly and supernaturally. Let us go to Mary and Joseph, asking them to help us express our gratitude to God for this canonization and to formulate resolutions to improve in our own lives. Amen.

The celebration on the 9th in the Basilica of St. John Lateran was presided over by the Pope’s vicar for the city of Rome, Cardinal Camillo Ruini. In his homily, Cardinal Ruini described Saint Josemaría as “a contemplative of Christ’s face.” It was his profound union with Christ, the Cardinal stressed, that “explains the irresistible apostolic dynamism in his life.” He ended by commending “to the intercession of Saint Josemaría, who so much loved this Italian land and its Christian roots,” the hopes of the bishops and of all Italian Catholics that the Pope’s words, duc in altum! not fall on deaf ears.
October 10. Thanksgiving Masses and solemn transfer of the relics of Saint Josemaria Escriva

The last two Masses of thanksgiving for the canonization of Saint Josemaria Escriva were celebrated on the 10th, in the Basilica of St. Eugene, before the sacred remains of the new saint: one in the morning presided over by Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Vicar General of the Prelature, and the other in the evening, presided over by the Prelate of Opus Dei, immediately before the transfer of the remains of Saint Josemaria to the church of Our Lady of Peace.

Priests from the various countries in which the Opus Dei Prelature is active concelebrated with Msgr. Ocáriz. In his homily, Msgr. Ocáriz, addressed the following words to the assembly:

**Homily of Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz**

1. The narration of the first miraculous catch of fish, which we have just read in the Gospel of the Mass, culminates with the call of Peter and his companions to leave everything and follow Christ.[1] Saint Josemaría often contemplated this scene, noting among other things that our Lord comes to meet us in the midst of the ordinary circumstances of our life, and especially in our work. In a homily addressed to people of various trades and professions he said: “Your human vocation is a part—and an important part—of your divine vocation. That is the reason you must strive for holiness, contributing at the same time to the sanctification of others, precisely by sanctifying your work and your environment.”[2]

This positive vision of the world, and particularly of work, which the founder of Opus Dei spread everywhere, was rooted in a conviction of the original goodness of creation.[3] Meditating on this reality, he fixed his attention especially on the words from the Book of Genesis found in the first reading of the Mass: God put man in the garden of Eden “to till it and keep it”.[4] He placed him in charge of the earth and made him master of material creatures, to complete, in a sense, the work of creation.[5]
However, this doesn’t mean closing our eyes to reality, or underestimating the presence of sin in the world. “Good and evil,” Saint Josemaría pointed out, “are mixed in human history, and therefore the Christian should be a man of judgment. But this judgment should never bring him to deny the goodness of God’s works. On the contrary it should bring him to recognize God’s hand working through all human actions, even those which betray our fallen nature.”[6]

2. The new saint also insisted that we should be filled with admiration and gratitude when we contemplate the incarnation of the Son of God: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.”[7] If we love God how can we fail to love the world? Let us listen to some other well-known words of Saint Josemaría: “This world of ours... is good, for so it came from God’s hands. It was Adam’s sin, the sin of human pride, which broke the divine harmony of creation. But God the Father, in the fullness of time, sent his only-begotten Son to take flesh in Mary ever Virgin, through the Holy Spirit, and reestablish peace. In this way, by redeeming man from sin, adoptionem filiorum reciperemus (Gal 4:5), we receive adoption as sons. We become capable of sharing the intimacy of God. In this way the new man, the new line of the children of God (see Rom 6:4-5), is enabled to free the whole universe from disorder, restoring all things in Christ (see Eph 1:9-10), as they have been reconciled with God (see Col 1:20).[8]

Our divine filiation does not consist only in the fact (which by itself would be marvelous) that God wants us to deal with him with the trusting intimacy of a child with its father. The Holy Spirit really unites us, identifies us, with God the Son, with Christ; and in Him, as members of his Body, we are truly sons and daughters of God the Father.[9] “We can never exhaust such an immense wonder, nor be sufficiently grateful to our God for having deigned to let us share in the divine life of the Holy Trinity by making us ‘sons in the Son.’ Already here on earth, God wants us to form part of his flock: the Church ‘gathered together in the unity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ (St. Cyprian, De oratione dominica, 23). That is how we should always regard the Church, working
intensely to foster and deepen the fraternity that unites all the members of Christ’s Mystical Body, seeing everything relating to the Church as very much our own concern.”[10]

3. Let us take very seriously the Christian vocation to intimacy with God, to sanctity, seeing it for what it truly is: God’s will for each of us, each called by our name. How Saint Josemaría liked to savor those words of Sacred Scripture: “I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.”[11] This is God’s will for us, as Saint Paul tells us: “This is the will of God, your sanctification.”[12] Thus sanctity is not only a goal towards which we should strive, but above all a goal that God himself has sought to make possible for us. Therefore, there is no room for discouragement in the face of our personal weakness, because we always have God’s strength to assist us if we go assiduously to the throne of grace: to the Eucharist, to penance, to prayer. And with this “fortitude on loan,”[13] we are enabled to sanctify our work and our rest, our family life and social relations, our health and sickness. That is to say, we can overcome our limitations and miseries, and advance on the path that, through the action of the Holy Spirit, leads to definitive identification with Jesus Christ “in the glorious liberty of the children of God.”[14]

Let us absorb these teachings more deeply, striving to make them the foundation for our thoughts and the guideline for our daily behavior. And let us strive to spread them among our relatives, friends and colleagues at work, with a constant personal apostolate, because we should feel ourselves urged to collaborate with Christ in the salvation of all mankind. How marvelous it is to be, as Saint Paul says, “God’s fellow workers.”[15]

4. How high is the goal to which we are all called! To be saints, to reach the fullness of divine filiation. However, as Saint Josemaría has shown us by his example and words, to attain this high goal there is no need to do extraordinary things. The only thing necessary is to love God and our fellow men and women in the fulfillment of our ordinary duties, with the strength that our Lord himself gives us in the sacraments and in prayer.

The canonization of Saint Josemaría has been a great joy for us, but it should also be the stimulus for a more decisive and generous response to our Christian vocation. May each of us learn how to find and love
God—and to serve Him in our neighbor—in the midst of ordinary life: in the family, at work, and in all our social dealings. Let us ask the new saint that we may respond ever more deeply—each day—to the Lord’s call.

At this beginning of the third Millennium, John Paul II invites us “to share the enthusiasm of the very first Christians: we can count on the power of the same Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost and who impels us still today to start out anew, sustained by the hope ‘which does not disappoint’ (Rom 5:5).”[16] Thus we will fulfill the aspiration that, already in those far off years of the thirties, Saint Josemaría spoke of as the goal of all of his efforts: “To get to know Jesus Christ, to make Him known, to bring Him everywhere.”

May this also be the summary of our life: we ask God for this through the intercession of our Lady and the new saint. May this program be carried out faithfully by all Christians, and particularly the faithful of Opus Dei—in spite of our personal weakness—closely united to our Prelate and Father, under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff, and therefore closely united to the whole Church. As our Father so liked to pray: “omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam!” All, with Peter to Jesus through Mary![17]

Torna ai contenuti

October 3: Transference to St. Eugene's

People began arriving in Rome as early as the end of September. Many of these were young people who had volunteered to help out in finalizing preparations for the canonization. Some also came from distant countries, for whom the canonization trip might be their only opportunity to visit the Eternal City. Fiumicino airport saw the constant arrival of people of all races and nationalities, who were met by a team of volunteers. The flow of visitors grew day by day in the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, where the sacred remains of the Founder of Opus Dei repose.

On the morning of October 3, the sacred body of Blessed Josemaría was transferred to the Basilica of Saint Eugene, as also was done in 1992 during the days of the beatification. This large church would provide room
for the thousands of faithful who wanted to pray before the relics of the new saint.

The transfer was preceded by a solemn Mass at which the Prelate of Opus Dei officiated. From its resting place, the casket was carried to the outside door of 75 Viale Bruno Buozzi. A hearse then brought it to the Piazzale delle Belle Arti, the plaza where Viale Bruno Buozzi ends and where St. Eugene’s Basilica is located. The large billboards along Viale Bruno Buozzi carried colorful invitations to take part in the approaching canonization.

The casket was placed in the sanctuary of St. Eugene’s Basilica, in front of the altar. From then on it was constantly accompanied by an ever changing flow of people. Masses in honor of the Founder of Opus Dei followed one another throughout each day at the main altar. In the confessionals dozens of priests administered the sacrament of penance.

That same day, also in the morning, a press conference was held at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross to provide canonization facts to the media. “The ceremony will have a strong international character,” said Marta Manzi, spokesperson for the Organizing Committee. People from 84 different countries were expected to take part. One press release distributed to the journalists noted that “forty percent of the participants are young people who will stay in camp grounds, parish schools and halls, and similar places in and around Rome.” Also present would be people like 99-year-old Father Quirino Glorioso, a priest from the diocese of Laguna, Philippines, who was going to the canonization “because his former parishioners had taken up a collection to pay for his trip,” as the same press release pointed out.

Many civil and church authorities were to part in the ceremony, as well as some well-known figures in the worlds of culture and sports. But as Marta Manzi stressed in her press conference, “for the faithful of Opus Dei, the canonization is an invitation to conversion. It is not a day of exaltation, but one of humility; an ideal moment to renew the desire to seek God in their work and in ordinary life.”

This echoed what the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, Cardinal José Saraiva Martins, had published in L’Osservatore
Romano a few days earlier, on September 21. The Cardinal pointed out that Josemaría Escrivá’s canonization represents a milestone on the Church’s journey “towards the sanctity to which every Christian is called: the personal sanctity of ordinary Christian faithful.”

Bishop Echevarría’s homily on October 10, 2002

Those who were to attend the evening Mass celebrated by Bishop Echevarría filled the basilica of St. Eugene long before five thirty in the afternoon, the time set for it to begin. The concelebrants included bishops and priests from all over the world, some of whom had lived with Saint Josemaría for many years. In addition to many young people, among the congregation were some faithful of Opus Dei who knew and followed the Founder at a moment when the incipient work of Opus Dei was just beginning to open a path in the midst of great difficulties.

The homily by the Prelate of Opus Dei was a call to personal conversion and service to the Church and all mankind. He stressed that these are what should characterize the new stage that the canonization of Saint Josemaría has opened for the Prelature of Opus Dei. Here is the complete text:

Homily by Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei

1. These unforgettable days of the canonization of St. Josemaría Escrivá are about to come to an end. In a few moments, his venerable remains will be placed once again in the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, after having been present for the veneration of the faithful for eight days in this Basilica of Sant’Eugenio. Immediately after that, the “diaspora” will begin— for many, it began right after the canonization—and we will all return to our usual activities: ordinary life, the training ground, as it were, for attaining holiness.

Let us ask ourselves: What resolution can I draw from these days spent in Rome, in which I have experienced the marvelous universality of the Church and of this “little part” of the Church, Opus Dei? What should my
life be like, from now on? What words of St. Josemaría can I bring back to those who were not able to attend the canonization, even though they have certainly been present spiritually during these days?

If I myself were speaking with them, I would remind them of something that my beloved predecessor Don Alvaro said ten years ago in one of the last thanksgiving Masses for the beatification of our Father. He said—and I make his words my own—that there had begun “a new stage in the life of Opus Dei..., in the life of each of its members. A time of more profound love for God, of more constant apostolic effort, of more generous service to the Church and all mankind. An epoch, in short, of greater fidelity to the spirit of sanctification in the middle of the world which our Founder left us as his testament”[1] In other words: a time in which to seek daily personal conversion.

I would like to comment briefly on these three points. May the Lord engrave them in our hearts and help us to put them into practice.

2. “A more profound love for God.” For several months now, as a way of preparing for the canonization, we have struggled to be converted on a daily basis. How many times we have prayed for God’s grace through the intercession of St. Josemaría Escrivá! We know well that the path of holiness consists of many steps and stages. Conversion consists not merely in embracing the true faith, nor in rejecting sin in order to allow grace to work in our souls. Certainly, dwelling in habitual friendship with God is indispensable if we are to become intimate with Him. But this is not enough. We must grow—as our Father did—in this intimacy, progressively identifying ourselves with Christ, until the moment comes when each of us can exclaim with St. Paul: “vivo autem, iam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus” (Gal 2:20), I live now not I, but Christ lives in me, because I try to follow faithfully, in every moment of the day, the footprints which the Lord left on this earth. “Never be content with what you are,” St. Augustine reminds us, “if you want to become what you, as yet, are not. For wherever you feel satisfied, there you will stop. If you say, ‘Enough’, you have perished. Always grow, always go forward, always advance”[2]

In our pilgrimage toward heaven, struggle is necessary to go forward every day, collaborating with the Holy Spirit in the work of our sanctification. This is achieved by dint of one conversion after another,
perhaps in very small points—conversions which are like the concrete and progressive steps of the soul in its journey toward God. It is fitting, then, that, as a consequence of these days, we should renew in the depths of our souls the desire to practice the teachings of the one whom the Lord constituted—by making him see Opus Dei—a herald and teacher of the universal call to holiness and apostolate in the circumstances of ordinary life. Let us ask God the Father, through the intercession of this holy priest, as the Church invites us in the Collect of the Mass, to grant that, “carrying out our daily work in the Spirit of Christ, we may be formed in the likeness of your Son.”[3] We ask you, Lord, that all Christians may deepen their awareness of their divine filiation, with the same eagerness and efficacy with which St. Josemaría did, responding faithfully to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

Although each one of us amounts to very little, our hope is sure: God our Father is determined to lead us to the perfection of charity in Christ by means of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, “those who are guided by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you have not received a spirit of bondage to be once more in fear, but rather you have received a Spirit of sons by adoption, by which we cry out: ‘Abba! Father!’ For the Spirit Himself bears witness along with our spirit that we are God’s children. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, provided that we suffer with Him, in order that we be glorified with Him as well” (Rom 8:14—17).

3 The resolution to love God more, to identify ourselves more fully with Jesus Christ, to respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, must be translated into “a more constant apostolic effort,” as the liturgy urges us, inviting us to ask that, “in union with the Blessed Virgin Mary, we might serve the work of Redemption with an ardent love.”[4]

You are about to return to your countries, your homes, your jobs. Do so determined to be the instruments that the Lord wants to use to spread his word and his grace throughout the world. Take a glance around you. Look at the professional, social and familial circles in which you move, and you will discover many people—sons and daughters of God—who do not fully appreciate the high dignity to which Baptism has raised them, or the great vocation by which the Lord calls them to share in his very Life. Perhaps nobody has spoken to them about God or communicated to them, in a
convincing way, the news that they are destined to Happiness with a capital H, to the eternal happiness to which all human beings aspire and which the things of this world cannot provide.

We must awaken them from their slumber, opening their eyes with the eloquence of our lives and the enthusiasm of our words, and thus lead them toward Jesus. We can count on the powerful help of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, the Guardian Angels, St. Josemaría and all of God’s saints. We are not better than the others, but the Lord, in his infinite Love, has sought us out and invites us go out to the highways and byways and crossroads of the world to meet our brothers and sisters, the men and women all around us.

We will witness once again the miracle which the Gospel recounts today, when the Apostles, faithful to the command of Christ, “caught a great draught of fishes, so many that the nets began to break” (Lk 5:6). As the Founder of Opus Dei said, we too, “recalling our wretchedness, remembering countless failures caused by our pride, before the majesty of God, before Christ the Fisherman, must confess with Saint Peter: Lord, I am a poor sinner” (cf. Lk 5:8). And then, Christ will say to you and to me, as he did to Saint Peter: ‘henceforth you will be a fisher of men’ (Lk 5:10), by divine command, on a divine mission, with divine efficacy.”[5]

4. Our effort to be saints and apostles has only one end: the glory of God, the salvation of souls: “a more generous service to the Church and all humanity,” as Don Alvaro said ten years ago. But let us not forget that we will not know how to serve all those who await us, if we are not striving every day to take care of those we live with. During his earthly life, St. Josemaría Escrivá had no other goal than to serve God, the Church, the Roman Pontiff and all souls. He followed the example of the Master, who “came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28). This holy priest truly loved souls, showing a refined charity for the people around him.

Being a servant of all, our Father rejoiced especially in offering filial service to the Church and the Pope. “Always consider,” he wrote, “that after God and our Mother the Blessed Virgin, in the hierarchy of love and authority, comes the Pope. That’s why I often say: ‘Thank you, my God, for the love for the Pope that you have placed in my heart”[6]
Let us try to imitate this love and veneration for the Pope. His dignity as Vicar of Christ, as “the sweet Christ on earth,” is a more than sufficient reason for us to feel wholeheartedly united to the Roman Pontiff, as a consequence of a genuine filial obligation. But, in addition, it is natural that we should want to show our gratitude to John Paul II, for having been God’s instrument for the canonization of our Founder, and that we should offer for his person and intentions intense prayers, generous mortifications and our daily work carried out with human and supernatural perfection.

Keep the Pope in mind—I tell you now with words of our Father—especially “when the difficulties of your work remind you that you are serving, because to serve for Love is a delight, which fills the soul with peace, even in the face of troubles.”[7] If we follow these suggestions, we will travel with confidence and “joy the path of our vocation.”[8]

Let us entrust these resolutions to the Blessed Virgin, Mother of the Church. She, along with her spouse, St. Joseph, whom we venerate with such affection, the Guardian Angels, all the saints, and, especially, St. Josemaría Escrivá, will present our hearts’ desires before the Blessed Trinity, and God will receive them lovingly, confirm them and grant us the grace to faithfully fulfill them.

When the Mass ended, the casket with the body of the new saint was carried in procession to the door of the basilica. A hearse then brought it to the church of Our Lady of Peace through the crowd lining Viale Bruno Buozzi. The seat of the Prelatic Curia of Opus Dei, within which the church of Our Lady of Peace is located, was decorated with tapestries and lights.

Because of the small size of the Prelatic Church, only a few people were able to enter. However, those present included a representative group of families from different countries and regions. The sister-in-law and nieces and nephews of Saint Josemaría were present, visibly moved.

The casket was placed in the same glass case in which it has been kept since the beatification, in 1992. The plaque on the front of the glass case
has been changed so that it now reads:

SACRVM CORPVS SANCTI
IOSEPHMARIAE
ESCRIVÁ DE BALAGVER
CONDITORIS OPERIS DEI
IX IANVARIII MCMII
XXVI IVNII MCMLXXV

These words inform visitors that the mortal remains of Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer lie before them. Above all, Christians now know with the certainty of faith that his soul is at rest in heaven: enjoying the peace of God, the only true peace, of which our Lady is Queen.

Torna ai contenuti

October 6: The canonization ceremony

In the presence of several hundred thousand persons, the Pope solemnly proclaimed Josemaría Escrivá a saint on October 6, 2002. The canonization Mass in St. Peter’s Square began at 10:00 in the sun—filled morning.

Forty-two cardinals, bishops and priests concelebrated with the Pope. Also taking part in the ceremony were more than four hundred cardinals, archbishops and bishops, 50 of whom were from Africa, 53 from Spain and 55 from Italy. The Archbishop of Moscow was also present as were several Maronite archbishops and one Chaldean archbishop from Lebanon, as well as two Cuban bishops. Numerous representatives from religious orders and apostolic movements also occupied prominent places close to the Papal altar.

The crowd filled St. Peter’s Square and the Via della Conciliazione, and overflowed into the adjacent streets. Nine huge video screens along the Via della Conciliazione and in St. Peter’s Square enabled everyone to follow the ceremonies. Twenty-nine television networks broadcast the ceremony live
throughout the world. Many other television stations and networks broadcast it on a delayed basis. At ten twenty-five, the Pope proclaimed the formula of canonization: “For the honor of the Blessed Trinity, the exaltation of the Catholic faith and the fostering of Christian life, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and our own, after due deliberation and frequent prayers for divine assistance, and having sought the counsel of many of our brethren in the Episcopate, we declare and define that Blessed Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer is a Saint and we enroll him among the Saints, decreeing that he is to be venerated in the whole Church as one of the Saints.” The “amen” intoned by the assembly and the applause raised to heaven from St. Peter’s Square all the way out to Castel Sant’Angelo expressed the crowd’s gratitude for the solemn declaration. Meanwhile, a relic of the new saint was placed next to the altar for the veneration of the Christian people.

After the readings, among them the Gospel in Greek as is customary in these ceremonies, the Holy Father gave his homily:

**Canonization Homily of the Pope**

1. “All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Rom 8:14). These words of the Apostle Paul, which we have just heard, help us understand better the significant message of today’s canonization of Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer. With docility he allowed himself to be led by the Spirit, convinced that only in this way can one fully accomplish God’s will. This fundamental Christian truth was a constant theme in his preaching. Indeed, he never stopped inviting his spiritual children to invoke the Holy Spirit to ensure that their interior life, namely, their life of relationship with God and their family, professional and social life, totally made up of small earthly realities, would not be separated but would form one life that was “holy and full of God.” He wrote, “We find the invisible God in the most visible and material things” (*Conversations with Josemaría Escrivá*, no. 114). This teaching of his is still timely and urgent today. In virtue of the Baptism that incorporates him into Christ, the believer is called to establish with the Lord an uninterrupted and vital relationship. He is called to be holy and to collaborate in the salvation of humanity. 2. “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (Gen 2:15). The Book of Genesis, as we heard in the first reading,
reminds us that the Creator has entrusted the earth to man, to “till” it and “keep” it. Believers acting in the various realities of this world contribute to realize this divine universal plan. Work and any other activity, carried out with the help of grace, is converted into a means of daily sanctification. “The ordinary life of a Christian who has faith,” Josemaría Escrivá used to say, “when he works or rests, when he prays or sleeps, at all times, is a life in which God is always present” (Meditations, March 3, 1954). This supernatural vision of life unfolds an extraordinarily rich horizon of salvific perspectives, because, even in the only apparently monotonous flow of normal earthly events, God comes close to us and we can cooperate with his plan of salvation.

So it is easier to understand what the Second Vatican Council affirmed: “there is no question, then, of the Christian message inhibiting men from building up the world... on the contrary it is an incentive to do these very things” (Gaudium et Spes, no. 34). 3. To raise the world to God and transform it from within: this is the ideal the holy founder points out to you, dear brothers and sisters, who rejoice today to see him raised to the glory of the altars. He continues to remind you of the need not to let yourselves be frightened by a materialist culture that threatens to dissolve the genuine identity of Christ’s disciples. He liked to repeat forcefully that the Christian faith is opposed to conformism and interior inertia. Following in his footsteps, spread in society the consciousness that we are all called to holiness whatever our race, class, society or age. In the first place, struggle to be saints yourselves, cultivating an evangelical style of humility and service, abandonment to Providence and of constant listening to the voice of the Spirit. In this way, you will be the “salt of the earth” (cf. Mt 5:13) and “your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (ibid., 5:16). 4. Those who want to serve the cause of the Gospel faithfully will certainly encounter misunderstandings and difficulties. The Lord purifies and shapes all those he calls to follow him with the mysterious power of the Cross; but “in the Cross,” the new saint repeated, “we find light, peace and joy: Lux in Cruce, requies in Cruce, gaudium in Cruce!” Ever since 7 August 1931 when, during the celebration of holy Mass, the words of Jesus echoed in his soul, “when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all to myself” (Jn 12:32), Josemaría Escrivá understood more clearly that the mission of the baptized
consists in raising the Cross of Christ above all human reality and he felt burning within him the impassioned vocation to evangelize every human setting. Then, without hesitation, he accepted Jesus’ invitation to the Apostle Peter, which we just heard in this square: “Duc in altum!” (“Put out into the deep”). He transmitted it to his entire spiritual family so that they might offer the Church a valid contribution of communion and apostolic service. Today this invitation is extended to all of us: “Put out into the deep,” the divine Teacher says to us, “and let down your nets for a catch” (Lk 5:4). To fulfill such a rigorous mission, one needs constant interior growth nourished by prayer. St. Josemaría was a master in the practice of prayer, which he considered to be an extraordinary “weapon” to redeem the world. He always recommended: “In the first place prayer; then expiation; in the third place, but very much in third place, action” (The Way, no. 82). It is not a paradox but a perennial truth: the fruitfulness of the apostolate lies above all in prayer and in intense and constant sacramental life. This, in essence, is the secret of the holiness and the true success of the saints. May the Lord help you, dear brothers and sisters, to accept this challenging ascetical and missionary instruction. May Mary sustain you, whom the holy founder invoked as “Spes nostra, Sedes Sapientiae, Ancilla Domini!” (“Our Hope, Seat of Wisdom, Handmaid of the Lord”). May Our Lady make everyone an authentic witness of the Gospel, ready everywhere to make a generous contribution to building the Kingdom of Christ! May the example and teaching of Saint Josemaría be an incentive to us so that at the end of the earthly pilgrimage, we too may be able to share in the blessed inheritance of heaven! There, together with the angels and all the saints, we will contemplate the face of God and sing his glory for all eternity.

When the moment for communion arrived, 1040 priests, each accompanied by a young volunteer carrying a white umbrella to make it easier for people to find them, spread out among the faithful to distribute communion.

When the Mass ended, the Holy Father addressed a brief message in various languages to those taking part in the ceremony: Pope’s words after Mass of canonization
1. At the end of this solemn liturgical celebration, I wish to greet cordially all the pilgrims who have come from every part of the world. I direct a special greeting to the government delegation, numerous personalities and pilgrims from Italy, where the new Saint worked everywhere for the good of souls and the spread of the Gospel. 2. I cordially greet the French-speaking delegations and pilgrims who have come to the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá. May they find in the teaching of the new saint the spiritual elements they need to walk in the path of holiness in their daily lives. With affection I bless you.

I invite the members of the various delegations and all of you who have come from English-speaking countries to take to heart the lesson of the new Saint: that Jesus Christ should be the inspiration and goal of every aspect of your daily lives. I commend you and your families to his intercession and invoke abundant blessings on your commitment and apostolate.

Cordial greetings to the German-speaking pilgrims who participate in the celebration of the canonization of the priest Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer. May his word and example encourage you to strive for holiness. Fulfill the small things of every day with great love for God. May the Lord grant you his grace.

I greet all the official delegations and the numerous participants in the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, who have come from Spain and Latin America. Accepting like Peter the invitation of Jesus to put out into the sea, be apostles in the setting of your daily life. On this path may the Virgin Mary and the intercession of the new saint accompany you.

I greet the Portuguese-speaking participants. May Saint Josemaría serve as a model of your dedication to sanctifying your work and your families. Praised be our Lord Jesus Christ.

I cordially greet all the members of Opus Dei, those devoted to Saint Josemaría and all the pilgrims from Poland. May his intercession be for all a pledge of grace and may the charism of his life inspire you on the ways of spiritual progress. God bless you.
3. Love for our Lady is a constant characteristic of the life of Josemaría Escrivá and is an eminent part of the legacy that he left to his spiritual sons and daughters. Let us invoke the humble Servant of the Lord so that, through the intercession of her devoted son, she may grant to all of us the grace to follow her with docility on the challenging path of evangelical perfection.

Finally, I cordially greet the Prelate and all the members of Opus Dei and I thank them for all that they do for the Church.

At the end, turning to the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, he said: “Thank you for all that you are doing for the Church.” He then prayed the Angelus and imparted his apostolic blessing.

The Pope, accompanied by the Prelate of Opus Dei, was then driven through the Square and along the Via della Conciliazione, to greet everyone present. Dozens of small children received a blessing and a kiss on the forehead from the Holy Father.

That afternoon, in the port of Civitavecchia, where eight ships had docked the previous day carrying over ten thousand people from Mediterranean countries who were coming for the canonization, a ceremony took place in which the local authorities dedicated one of the docks of the port to the new saint. The vespers of Saint Josemaría was prayed that evening for the first time in Saint Peter’s Basilica.

A joyous occasion

The canonization of Josemaría Escrivá was accompanied by an outpouring of joy; it was an unrepeatable moment shared by many people and at the same time intimately savored by each one. But above all, Saint Josemaría’s canonization was a solemn act of praise for the Blessed Trinity and a gift for the entire Church. Therefore any description of the days of
the canonization can only reflect in a very limited way its meaning for individuals as well as for the Church as a whole. Nevertheless, a day by day review of its principal events gives us an opportunity to raise our hearts in thanksgiving to God.

October 4: Inauguration of Harambee 2002

The Holy Father had scarcely made public the date for the canonization when an initiative of solidarity with Africa was announced to those planning to attend the ceremony: the Harambee 2002 project. Christian concern for one’s neighbor took on an added motive: the joy of the canonization, lived as a gift from God and understood personally by each one as an opportunity to help someone in need.

In the Kiswahili language, “harambee” means “all together.” It is the cry fishermen make when dragging their nets to the beach. Hence it is the word that naturally comes to mind when undertaking a common task, such as helping a family in need or building a school or a church. Each one provides what he can: his or her own work, gifts in kind or in cash, but “all together.” All give and all receive. In that same spirit, so similar to the teachings of Saint Josemaría, the organizing committee for the canonization set up a network for collecting funds among the participants in the October 6 ceremony. A donation of five Euros was suggested, although each could give whatever he or she wished. The money collected would be made available to all organizations promoting educational programs in sub-Saharan Africa. A group of experts was set up to study the requests for financial assistance and distribute the funds.

On the evening of October 4, the public introduction of the Harambee 2002 project was held in the auditorium of St. Cecilia, close to St. Peter’s Square. The mayor of Rome was present along with other government officials. The event included a musical program with performances by choruses from around the world, intermingled with personal testimonies from doctors, educators, and experts in international cooperation, most of them Africans, and all committed to the cause of human development on
the African continent and animated by the spirit and teachings of the Founder of Opus Dei. The honorary president of the Harambee project, Mama Ngina Kenyatta, the widow of Kenya’s first president, delivered some warm words of gratitude at the conclusion of the event.

Harambee 2002 is not the only solidarity project that the canonization gave rise to. The Laguna Care Center, dedicated to the care of the elderly and the chronically ill in the Latina district of Madrid, and the Aq’on Jay clinic in Chimaltenango, Guatemala, are two other initiatives that resulted from the desire to share the gift of the canonization with those most in need.

October 7. Audience with the Holy Father and Mass of Thanksgiving

On the 7th St. Peter’s Square was once more the scene of an overflowing crowd of faithful. The traditional triduum of thanksgiving which follows every canonization was to begin with a Mass celebrated by the Prelate of Opus Dei, attended by almost everyone who had come for the canonization.

Concelebrating with Bishop Echevarria were Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, the Prelature’s Vicar General, Msgr. Francisco Vives, the Central Vicar Secretary, and all the Regional Vicars.

In his homily Opus Dei’s Prelate encouraged the faithful to express their natural feeling of gratitude for the canonization in deeds of fidelity to God and of service to souls. This is the full text:

_Homily of Bishop Echevarría_

1. _Laudate Dominum omnes gentes_ (Ps 116/117:1). Praise the Lord, all you nations. The invitation of the Responsorial Psalm, which resounded a few moments ago, constitutes an excellent summary of the sentiments that overflow from our hearts today: _Deo omnis gloria!_ To God be all the glory! We want to adore the Thrice-Holy God and give Him thanks for the gift
with which He has enriched the Church and the world: the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, priest, and Founder of Opus Dei, carried out yesterday by our beloved Pope John Paul II.

Our gratitude is addressed also to the Holy Father himself, who has fulfilled the plans of the Blessed Trinity: while preparing ourselves to raise our prayers to heaven, we pray to the Lord for his person and intentions. We know that this prayer pleases Saint Josemaría, who loved the Vicar of Christ on earth with all his soul, to the point of never separating this love for the pope from the love he professed for Jesus Christ and his Blessed Mother. From the very moment that our Lord burst into his soul with the first intimations of Opus Dei, of which, at the time, he had no notion, he began to pray and to work in order to make a reality the prayer that sprang forth from his heart: Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam! All with Peter to Jesus through Mary.

All the participants in this Holy Mass, and the countless souls united with us in spirit throughout the world, recognize joyfully our debt to this new saint whom God has granted the Church. Many of us have obtained graces and favors of all sorts through his intercession. Not a few of us strive to follow in his footsteps of fidelity to the Lord, trying to reproduce in our souls the spirit that he incarnated. Saint Josemaría has shown all of us—by his example and his teachings—a clear way of traveling the road of the Christian vocation, which has sanctity as its destination. For this reason, the canonization of the Founder of Opus Dei has the character of a feast—a feast of this great family of God, which is the Church. For all of this, we wish to give thanks to the Lord in this Eucharistic celebration.

2. Nearly forty years have passed since the Second Vatican Council proclaimed the universal call to holiness and apostolate (cf. Lumen Gentium, Ch. V), but there is still a long road to travel before this truth can be said to illuminate and guide the steps of the men and women of this world. The Roman Pontiff has recalled this explicitly in his Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte, in which he proposed this doctrine as “the foundation of the pastoral program that concerns us at the beginning of the new millennium” (NMI 31).

Everyone in the Church, every shepherd and all of the faithful, are called to commit themselves personally to the daily struggle for personal
holiness and to participate, personally as well, in the fulfillment of the mission which Christ has given us. If the 20th century has been the witness of the “rediscovery” of this universal call to holiness—it was contained in the Gospel from the beginning, and Saint Josemaría was constituted its herald by the personal, divine vocation he received (cf. Mass of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, Collect)—the century in which we are now living should be characterized by a more effective and extensive practice of this teaching. This is one of the great challenges that the Holy Spirit has placed before the men and women of our time.

Saint Josemaría endeavored to awaken this zeal for holiness in all souls. The fact that his canonization has taken place at the dawn of a new century is charged with meaning. His message resounds with special force in today’s world: “We have come to say, with the humility of those who know themselves to be sinners and of little worth—homo peccator sum (Luke 5:8), we say with Peter—but with the faith of those who allow themselves to be guided by the hand of God, that sanctity is not something for a privileged few. The Lord calls all of us. He expects Love from all of us—from everyone, wherever they are; from everyone, whatever their state in life, their profession or job. For the daily life we live, apparently so ordinary, can be a path to sanctity: it is not necessary to abandon one’s place in the world in order to search for God, if the Lord hasn’t given a soul a vocation to the religious life, because all the paths of the earth can be the occasion for an encounter with Christ” (Letter, March 24, 1930, no. 2).

3. In every moment—as the new saint was already saying in the 1930s (cf. The Way, no. 382)—one must look for Christ, find Him and love Him. Only if we strive daily to take these three steps will we arrive at full identification with Christ, becoming alter Christus, ipse Christus. “Perhaps you will say”—I address these words of Saint Josemaría to you now—“that you are still at the first step. Look for him, then, with hunger. If you make this effort, I can guarantee that you have already found him, and that you have begun to deal with him and love him, to hold your conversation in heaven” (cf. Phil 3:20) (Friends of God, no. 300).

We meet Jesus in prayer, in the Eucharist and in the other sacraments of the Church; but also in the faithful fulfillment of our family, professional and social duties. This is an arduous goal, which we only fully achieve when
our earthly pilgrimage has finished. “But don’t lose sight of the fact that saints aren’t born: they are forged from the interplay of divine grace and human correspondence,” wrote Saint Josemaría in one of his homilies, adding: “That’s why I tell you that, if you want to be a coherent Christian, you have to take great care of the little details, because the sanctity that our Lord demands of you is reached by carrying out your work with love for God, fulfilling your everyday obligations, which are almost always made up of little things” (Ibid., no. 7).

Sanctify your work. Sanctify yourself in your work. Sanctify others through your work. With these pithy phrases, the Founder of Opus Dei summed up the nucleus of the message that God had entrusted to him, in order to remind Christians of it. The effort to reach sanctity is inseparably united to the sanctification of one’s own work—carried out with human perfection and rectitude of intention, with a spirit of service—and to the sanctification of others. If one wants to follow the Lord, it is not possible to neglect one’s brothers and sisters, with their spiritual and material needs. “Our vocation as children of God, in the middle of the world, demands that we not seek our own personal sanctity alone, but rather that we travel along the pathways of the world, converting them into roads which, while passing through obstacles, lead other souls to the Lord; that we take part as ordinary citizens in all temporal activities, in order to be leaven (cf. Mt 13:33) which must cause the whole mass to rise (cf. 1 Cor 5:6)” (Christ Is Passing By, no. 120).

4. Divine providence arranged that the earthly life of Saint Josemaría should take place in the 20th century, a time that has seen enormous developments in science and technology, which have not always, unfortunately, been used for mankind’s benefit. It is necessary to recognize that, alongside admirable achievements of the human spirit, there abound in our times torrents of bitter water, which attempt in vain to quench the thirst for happiness in human hearts. Nevertheless, it is certain—as Bishop Alvaro del Portillo wrote—that, with the message of the new Saint, “all the professions, all the classes, all honest social settings have been moved by the Angels of God, like those waters in the Probatic pool that the Gospel speaks of (cf. Jn 5:2 ff), and have acquired healing strength” (Pastoral letter, September 30, 1975, no. 20).
Recalling Don Alvaro, the first successor of our Father, we feel his spiritual presence very keenly in these moments. With him, we can affirm, full of gratitude to God, that thanks to the teaching and spirit of the Founder of Opus Dei, “even from the driest and most unlikely stones have gushed torrents of medicinal water. Human work well done has become a cleansing liquid for the eyes, allowing one to discover God in all the circumstances of life, in all things. And this has occurred precisely in our times, when materialism strives to transform work into a mud that blinds men, and prevents them from looking at God” (Ibid.).

I would like to greet all those who have come to Rome from English-speaking countries to attend the canonization of Saint Josemaría Escrivá. When you return home, bring back with you the teachings of the new saint and try to put them into practice. Ask Saint Josemaría to teach you to convert the prose of each day—your most ordinary occupations—into poetry, into heroic verse: into desires and deeds of holiness and apostolate.

I would remind those of you who come from French-speaking countries of the importance of collaborating in the apostolic mission of the Church, which is a duty of every Christian, endeavoring to impregnate arts and letters, science and technology, with the spirit of the Gospels. Seek the intercession of Saint Josemaría, putting into practice that ideal which God Himself engraved in his soul: placing Christ—through our work, whatever it may be—at the summit of all human activities.

Today the Church venerates the Blessed Virgin with the title of Our Lady of the Rosary. It gives me great joy to think that the canonization of our Father should have taken place on the eve of a feast of Holy Mary; this coincidence is one more sign of her affectionate motherly care. Let us have recourse to her maternal mediation, full of confidence, as we renew our thanksgiving to the Lord for this canonization. Deo omnis gloria! I say once again, as we ask that this desire for personal holiness and apostolate spread with ever greater force among all Christians.

As soon as Mass was over, the Pope arrived in the square by car and the audience with him began.
When the applause died down, the Prelate of Opus Dei, in the name of all present, extended to the Holy Father an affectionate greeting:

Holy Father,

Ten years ago, in this very Square, my predecessor as Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, addressed to Your Holiness heartfelt words of gratitude after the beatification of Josemaría Escrivá. Today, it is my turn and my unmerited honor to express the joy and gratitude of the thousands of faithful and cooperators of the Prelature, and of the countless souls devoted to St. Josemaría Escrivá who, both in Rome and outside of Rome, have participated with jubilation in the canonization ceremony. Thank you, Holy Father.

The solemn recognition of the sanctity of this good and faithful servant, whom God Our Lord chose as a herald of the universal call to holiness and apostolate in the ordinary circumstances of life, is an invitation to all Catholics to meet God in the fulfillment of their own family, professional and social duties.

The canonization of Josemaría Escrivá is, without doubt, a gift for the whole world, because we will always be in need of intercessors before the throne of God. It also provides a new reason for confidence among the lay faithful, who see reaffirmed once more their high calling as God’s children in Jesus Christ, called to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect (cf. Mt 5:48), in the ordinary circumstances of life. As Your Holiness wrote in the Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte: “Now is the time to propose once again to all, with conviction, this ‘high standard’ of the ordinary Christian life” (NMI 31). St. Josemaría Escrivá was ahead of his time, reminding us of the universal call to holiness and apostolate which the Second Vatican Council was to proclaim with such force. He not only spread this teaching throughout the world, reinforced by the example of his cheerful and persevering ascetical struggle, but also opened up within the Church, by God’s will, a way of sanctification “as old and as new as the Gospels,” another eloquent sign of God’s mercy toward men and an efficacious instrument in the service of the Church’s salvific mission.

Millions of people, Holy Father, are rejoicing today all over the world, both within and without the visible walls of the Church. Indeed, many
non-Catholics and non-Christians admire Josemaría Escrivá and have recourse to his teachings as a source of inspiration for their own conduct and for their professional and social activity. These people too have received encouragement in their efforts to improve our world, beset by injustice and, at the same time, hungry for understanding and peace.

In the ten years that have passed since the beatification of Josemaría Escrivá, the apostolic activity of the faithful and cooperators of the Prelature of Opus Dei has grown in intensity and extension in many countries. Sustained by the grace of God, their activities on behalf of all souls, especially the neediest, have multiplied. On the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of St. Josemaría Escrivá, dozens of initiatives for personal and professional formation have begun in developing countries and in the poorer parts of large cities. These activities bear witness that the search for personal holiness—the union of the soul with God—is inseparable from the concern—shown with deeds—for the material and spiritual welfare of our brothers and sisters.

Before ending, I want to assure Your Holiness of the fervent prayers for the Holy Father and his intentions which the faithful and cooperators of Opus Dei throughout the world are continually raising to heaven. I entrust these prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom we honor especially today with the title of Our Lady of the Rosary. Enriched by her maternal intercession before Jesus, these prayers will assist Your Holiness in the joyous fulfillment of the mission of Supreme Pastor.

Holy Father, permit me to thank you once again, with all my heart. As we prepare to receive and meditate upon your words, and to congratulate you, in the name of all, on the upcoming anniversary of your election as Peter’s Successor, I ask of you—on behalf of the faithful and cooperators of the Prelature of Opus Dei, and the countless souls devoted to St. Josemaría, and for myself—the strengthening grace of your Apostolic Blessing.

The Pope responded with the following words:

My dear brothers and sisters:

1. I am happy to greet you cordially, the day after the canonization of the Bl. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer. I thank Archbishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, for his expression of gratitude on your
behalf. With affection I greet the many Cardinals, Bishops and priests who have wanted to take part in this celebration.

This festive gathering brings together a great variety of faithful from many countries belonging to very different social and cultural backgrounds: priests and lay people, men and women, young and old, intellectuals and blue collar workers. This is a sign of the apostolic zeal that burned in the soul of St. Josemaría.

2. In the Founder of Opus Dei, there is an extraordinary love for the will of God. There exists a sure criterion of holiness: fidelity in accomplishing the divine will down to the last consequences. For each of us the Lord has a plan, to each he entrusts a mission on earth. The saint could not even conceive of himself outside of God’s plan. He lived only to achieve it.

St. Josemaría was chosen by the Lord to announce the universal call to holiness and to point out that daily life and ordinary activities are a path to holiness. One could say that he was the saint of ordinary life. In fact, he was convinced that for those who live with a perspective of faith, everything is an opportunity to meet God, everything can be an incentive for prayer. Seen in this light, daily life reveals an unexpected greatness. Holiness is truly within everyone’s reach.

3. St. Escrivá was a very human saint. All those who met him, whatever their culture or social status, felt he was a father, totally devoted to serving others, for he was convinced that every soul is a marvellous treasure; indeed, every person is worth all of Christ’s Blood. This attitude of service is obvious in his dedication to his priestly ministry and in the magnanimity with which he launched so many works of evangelization and human advancement for the poorest persons.

The Lord gave him a profound understanding of the gift of our divine sonship. He taught him to contemplate the tender face of a Father in the God who speaks to us through the most varied events of life. A Father who loves us, who follows us step by step, who protects us, understands us and awaits from each of us a response of love. The consideration of this fatherly presence which accompanies the Christian everywhere gives him steadfast confidence; he must trust in the heavenly Father at every moment. He
should never feel lonely or frightened. When the Cross appears, he should not see it as a punishment, but a mission entrusted by the Lord himself. The Christian is necessarily optimistic, because he knows he is a son of God in Christ.

4. St. Josemaría was profoundly convinced that the Christian life entails a mission and an apostolate: we are in the world to save it with Christ. He loved the world passionately, with a “redemptive love” (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 604). Precisely for this reason his teachings have helped so many ordinary members of the faithful to discover the redemptive power of faith, its capacity to transform the earth.

This is a message that has abundant and fruitful implications for the evangelizing mission of the Church. It fosters the Christianization of the world “from within,” showing there can be no conflict between divine law and the demands of genuine human progress. This saintly priest taught that Christ must be the apex of all human activity (cf. Jn 12:32).

His message impels the Christian to act in places where the future of society is being shaped. From the laity’s active presence in all the professions and at the most advanced frontiers of development, there can only come a positive contribution to the strengthening of that harmony between faith and culture which is one of the greatest needs of our time.

5. St. Josemaría Escrivá spent his life for the service of the Church. In his writings, priests and lay people, men and women religious who follow the most varied paths, find a stimulating source of inspiration. Dear brothers and sisters, in imitating him with openness of spirit and heart, with a readiness to serve the local Churches, you contribute to strengthening the “spirituality of communion” which my Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte points out as one of the most important goals of our time (cf. nos. 42-45).

I welcome the chance to mention today’s liturgical feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. St. Josemaría wrote a beautiful small book called Holy Rosary, which presents spiritual childhood, a real disposition of spirit of those who wish to attain total abandonment to the divine will. I heartily entrust all of you, with your families and your apostolate, to the motherly protection of Mary and I thank you for your presence.
I once again thank everyone present, especially those who have come from afar. Dear brothers and sisters, I invite you to take a visible witness of faith everywhere, in accord with the example and teaching of your holy Founder. I accompany you with my prayer and I warmly bless you, your families and your activities.

Some of the faithful then had the opportunity to approach the altar to greet the Pope. Among them was Doctor Manuel Nevado Rey, whose miraculous cure from chronic radiodermititis through the new saint’s intercession had opened the way to his canonization.

That same day, His Beatitude Patriarch Teoctist of the Rumanian Orthodox Church was beginning a visit to Rome. The Pope received him in St. Peter’s square at the end of the audience. The hundreds of thousands of faithful present in the square responded to the address by Patriarch Teoctist with frequent applause, thus expressing their desire that the day might soon come for achieving full unity among all Christians.

In the afternoon, many people went to the Basilica of St. Eugene to pray before the sacred remains of Saint Josemaria. A photographic exposition on his life and message had been set up in the church patio.
HOLY SEE

• The Roman Pontiff
The Roman Pontiff

Homily at the Mass of consecration of the Shrine of Divine Mercy, Poland (August 17, 2002)

"O inconceivable and unfathomable Mercy of God,
Who can worthily adore you and sing your praises?
O greatest attribute of God Almighty,
You are the sweet hope of sinners"
(Diary, 951).

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. Today I repeat these simple and straightforward words of Saint Faustina, in order to join her and all of you in adoring the inconceivable and unfathomable mystery of God’s mercy. Like Saint Faustina, we wish to proclaim that apart from the mercy of God there is no other source of hope for mankind. We desire to repeat with faith: Jesus, I trust in you!

This proclamation, this confession of trust in the all-powerful love of God, is especially needed in our own time, when mankind is experiencing bewilderment in the face of many manifestations of evil. The invocation of God’s mercy needs to rise up from the depth of hearts filled with suffering, apprehension and uncertainty, and at the same time yearning for an infallible source of hope. That is why we have come here today, to this Shrine of Łagiewniki, in order to glimpse once more in Christ the face of the Father: "the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation" (2 Cor 1:3). With the eyes of our soul, we long to look into the eyes of the merciful Jesus, in order to find deep within his gaze the reflection of his inner life, as well as the light of grace which we have already received so often, and which God holds out to us anew each day and on the last day.

2. We are about to dedicate this new church to the Mercy of God. Before doing so, I wish to offer heartfelt thanks to those who contributed to its construction. In a special way I thank Cardinal Franciszek, who has put
so much effort into this undertaking as a sign of his personal devotion to
the Divine Mercy. My thoughts turn with affection to the Sisters of the
Merciful Mother of God, whom I thank for their work in spreading the
message left behind by Saint Sister Faustina. I greet the Cardinals and
Bishops of Poland, headed by the Cardinal Primate, as well as the Bishops
coming from various parts of the world. I rejoice in the presence of the
diocesan and religious priests, and the seminarians.

My cordial greeting goes to all those taking part in this celebration,
especially the representatives of the Foundation of the Shrine of Divine
Mercy who oversaw the work of construction, as well as the builders
involved in the various projects. I know that many of those present offered
generous material support to the work of construction. I pray that God will
reward their magnanimity and their commitment by his blessing!

3. Brothers and Sisters! As we dedicate this new church, we too can ask
the question which troubled King Solomon when he consecrated the
Temple of Jerusalem as the house of God: "But will God indeed dwell on
the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how
much less this house which I have built!" (1 Kg 8:27). Yes, at first glance,
to bind certain "places" to God’s presence might seem inappropriate. We
can never forget that time and space belong to God in their entirety. Yet
even though time and the entire world may be considered his "temple",
God has chosen certain times and places to enable people to experience in a
special way his presence and his grace. Impelled by their sense of faith,
people journey to these places, confident that there they will truly find
themselves in the presence of God.

In this same spirit of faith I have come to Łagiewniki to dedicate this
new church. I am convinced that this is the special place chosen by God to
sow the grace of his mercy. I pray that this church will always be a place
where the message of God’s merciful love is proclaimed; a place of
conversion and repentance; a place for the celebration of the Eucharist; a
fountain of mercy; a place of prayer and of constant appeals for mercy for
ourselves and for the whole world. I pray in the words of Solomon: "Have
regard to the prayer of your servant and to his supplication, O Lord my
God, hearkening to the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prays before
you this day; that your eyes may be open night and day towards this
house... Hearken to the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray in this place. Hear in heaven, your dwelling place; and when you hear, forgive" (1 Kg 8:28-30).

4. "But the hour is coming, and now is, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him" (Jn 4:23). When we read these words of the Lord Jesus here in the Shrine of Divine Mercy, we are particularly aware that no one can come here except in Spirit and truth. It is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter and the Spirit of Truth, who guides us along the ways of Divine Mercy. By convincing the world "concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (Jn 16:8), he also makes known the fullness of salvation in Christ. This "convincing" concerning sin is doubly related to the Cross of Christ. On the one hand, the Holy Spirit enables us, through Christ’s Cross, to acknowledge sin, every sin, in the full dimension of evil which it contains and inwardly conceals. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit permits us, again through the Christ’s Cross, to see sin in the light of the mysterium pietatis, that is, of the merciful and forgiving love of God (cf. Dominum et vivificantem, 32).

Consequently, this "convincing concerning sin" also becomes a conviction that sin can be laid aside and that man can be restored to his dignity as a son beloved of God. Indeed, the Cross "is the most profound condescension of God to man [...]. The Cross is like a touch of eternal love upon the most painful wounds of man’s earthly existence" (Dives in misericordia, 8). The cornerstone of this Shrine will always be a reminder of this truth, for it was brought here from Mount Calvary, as if from beneath the Cross on which Jesus Christ triumphed over sin and death.

I firmly believe that this new church will always be a place where people will come before God in Spirit and truth. They will come with the trust which accompanies all those who humbly open their hearts to the working of God’s merciful love, to that love which is stronger than even the greatest sin. Here, in the fire of divine love, human hearts will burn with desire for conversion, and whoever looks for hope will find comfort.

5. "Eternal Father, I offer to you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, for our sins and those of the whole world; by the sufferings of his Passion, have mercy upon us and upon the whole world" (Diary, 476). Upon us and upon the whole
world... How greatly today’s world needs God’s mercy! In every continent, from the depth of human suffering, a cry for mercy seems to rise up. Where hatred and the thirst for revenge dominate, where war brings suffering and death to the innocent, there the grace of mercy is needed in order to settle human minds and hearts and to bring about peace. Wherever respect for life and human dignity are lacking, there is need of God’s merciful love, in whose light we see the inexpressible value of every human being. Mercy is needed in order to ensure that every injustice in the world will come to an end in the splendour of truth.

Today, therefore, in this Shine, I wish solemnly to entrust the world to Divine Mercy. I do so with the burning desire that the message of God’s merciful love, proclaimed here through Saint Faustina, may be made known to all the peoples of the earth and fill their hearts with hope. May this message radiate from this place to our beloved homeland and throughout the world. May the binding promise of the Lord Jesus be fulfilled: from here there must go forth "the spark which will prepare the world for his final coming" (cf. Diary, 1732).

This spark needs to be lighted by the grace of God. This fire of mercy needs to be passed on to the world. In the mercy of God the world will find peace and mankind will find happiness! I entrust this task to you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to the Church in Kraków and Poland, and to all the votaries of Divine Mercy who will come here from Poland and from throughout the world. May you be witnesses to mercy!

6. God, merciful Father,
in your Son, Jesus Christ, you have revealed your love
and poured it out upon us in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter,
We entrust to you today the destiny of the world and of every man and woman.

Bend down to us sinners,
heal our weakness,
conquer all evil,
and grant that all the peoples of the earth
may experience your mercy.
In You, the Triune God,
may they ever find the source of hope.
Eternal Father,
by the Passion and Resurrection of your Son,
have mercy on us and upon the whole world!
Amen.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Rosary of the Virgin Mary, which gradually took form in the second millennium under the guidance of the Spirit of God, is a prayer loved by countless Saints and encouraged by the Magisterium. Simple yet profound, it still remains, at the dawn of this third millennium, a prayer of great significance, destined to bring forth a harvest of holiness. It blends easily into the spiritual journey of the Christian life, which, after two thousand years, has lost none of the freshness of its beginnings and feels drawn by the Spirit of God to “set out into the deep” (duc in altum!) in order once more to proclaim, and even cry out, before the world that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour, “the way, and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6), “the goal of human history and the point on which the desires of history and civilization turn.”[1]

The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer. In the sobriety of its elements, it has all the depth of the Gospel message in its entirety, of which it can be said to be a compendium.[2] It is an echo of the prayer of Mary, her perennial Magnificat for the work of the redemptive Incarnation which began in her virginal womb. With the Rosary, the Christian people sits at the school of
Mary and is led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love. Through the Rosary the faithful receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer.

The Popes and the Rosary

2. Numerous predecessors of mine attributed great importance to this prayer. Worthy of special note in this regard is Pope Leo XIII who on 1 September 1883 promulgated the Encyclical *Supremi Apostolatus Officio* a document of great worth, the first of his many statements about this prayer, in which he proposed the Rosary as an effective spiritual weapon against the evils afflicting society. Among the more recent Popes who, from the time of the Second Vatican Council, have distinguished themselves in promoting the Rosary I would mention Blessed John XXIII and above all Pope Paul VI, who in his Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* emphasized, in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, the Rosary's evangelical character and its Christocentric inspiration. I myself have often encouraged the frequent recitation of the Rosary. From my youthful years this prayer has held an important place in my spiritual life. I was powerfully reminded of this during my recent visit to Poland, and in particular at the Shrine of Kalwaria. The Rosary has accompanied me in moments of joy and in moments of difficulty. To it I have entrusted any number of concerns; in it I have always found comfort. Twenty-four years ago, on 29 October 1978, scarcely two weeks after my election to the See of Peter, I frankly admitted: “The Rosary is my favorite prayer. A marvelous prayer! Marvelous in its simplicity and its depth. It can be said that the Rosary is, in some sense, a prayer-commentary on the final chapter of the Vatican II Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, a chapter which discusses the wondrous presence of the Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and the Church. Against the background of the words *Ave Maria* the principal events of the life of Jesus Christ pass before the eyes of the soul. They take shape in the complete series of the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries, and they put us in living communion with Jesus through — we might say — the heart of his Mother. At the same time our heart can embrace in the decades of the Rosary all the events that make up the lives of individuals, families, nations, the Church, and all mankind. Our personal concerns and those of our
neighbor, especially those who are closest to us, who are dearest to us. Thus the simple prayer of the Rosary marks the rhythm of human life.[5]

With these words, dear brothers and sisters, I set the first year of my Pontificate within the daily rhythm of the Rosary. Today, as I begin the twenty-fifth year of my service as the Successor of Peter, I wish to do the same. How many graces have I received in these years from the Blessed Virgin through the Rosary: Magnificat anima mea Dominum! I wish to lift up my thanks to the Lord in the words of his Most Holy Mother, under whose protection I have placed my Petrine ministry: Totus Tuus!

**October 2002 - October 2003: The Year of the Rosary**

3. Therefore, in continuity with my reflection in the Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte, in which, after the experience of the Jubilee, I invited the people of God to “start afresh from Christ,”[6] I have felt drawn to offer a reflection on the Rosary, as a kind of Marian complement to that Letter and an exhortation to contemplate the face of Christ in union with, and at the school of, his Most Holy Mother. To recite the Rosary is nothing other than to contemplate with Mary the face of Christ. As a way of highlighting this invitation, prompted by the forthcoming 120th anniversary of the aforementioned Encyclical of Leo XIII, I desire that during the course of this year the Rosary should be especially emphasized and promoted in the various Christian communities. I therefore proclaim the year from October 2002 to October 2003 the Year of the Rosary.

I leave this pastoral proposal to the initiative of each ecclesial community. It is not my intention to encumber but rather to complete and consolidate pastoral programs of the Particular Churches. I am confident that the proposal will find a ready and generous reception. The Rosary, reclaimed in its full meaning, goes to the very heart of Christian life; it offers a familiar yet fruitful spiritual and educational opportunity for personal contemplation, the formation of the People of God, and the new evangelization. I am pleased to reaffirm this also in the joyful remembrance of another anniversary: the fortieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council on October 11, 1962, the “great grace” disposed by the Spirit of God for the Church in our time.[7]

*Objections to the Rosary*
4. The timeliness of this proposal is evident from a number of considerations. First, the urgent need to counter a certain crisis of the Rosary, which in the present historical and theological context can risk being wrongly devalued, and therefore no longer taught to the younger generation. There are some who think that the centrality of the Liturgy, rightly stressed by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, necessarily entails giving lesser importance to the Rosary. Yet, as Pope Paul VI made clear, not only does this prayer not conflict with the Liturgy, it sustains it, since it serves as an excellent introduction and a faithful echo of the Liturgy, enabling people to participate fully and interiorly in it and to reap its fruits in their daily lives.

Perhaps too, there are some who fear that the Rosary is somehow unecumenical because of its distinctly Marian character. Yet the Rosary clearly belongs to the kind of veneration of the Mother of God described by the Council: a devotion directed to the Christological center of the Christian faith, in such a way that “when the Mother is honored, the Son... is duly known, loved and glorified.” If properly revitalized, the Rosary is an aid and certainly not a hindrance to ecumenism!

*A path of contemplation*

5. But the most important reason for strongly encouraging the practice of the Rosary is that it represents a most effective means of fostering among the faithful that commitment to the contemplation of the Christian mystery which I have proposed in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* as a genuine “training in holiness”: “What is needed is a Christian life distinguished above all in the *art of prayer.*” Inasmuch as contemporary culture, even amid so many indications to the contrary, has witnessed the flowering of a new call for spirituality, due also to the influence of other religions, it is more urgent than ever that our Christian communities should become “genuine schools of prayer.”

The Rosary belongs among the finest and most praiseworthy traditions of Christian contemplation. Developed in the West, it is a typically meditative prayer, corresponding in some way to the “prayer of the heart” or “Jesus prayer” which took root in the soil of the Christian East.

*Prayer for peace and for the family*
6. A number of historical circumstances also make a revival of the Rosary quite timely. First of all, the need to implore from God the gift of peace. The Rosary has many times been proposed by my predecessors and myself as a prayer for peace. At the start of a millennium which began with the terrifying attacks of 11 September 2001, a millennium which witnesses every day in numerous parts of the world fresh scenes of bloodshed and violence, to rediscover the Rosary means to immerse oneself in contemplation of the mystery of Christ who “is our peace”, since he made “the two of us one, and broke down the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph 2:14).

Consequently, one cannot recite the Rosary without feeling caught up in a clear commitment to advancing peace, especially in the land of Jesus, still so sorely afflicted and so close to the heart of every Christian.

A similar need for commitment and prayer arises in relation to another critical contemporary issue: the family, the primary cell of society, increasingly menaced by forces of disintegration on both the ideological and practical planes, so as to make us fear for the future of this fundamental and indispensable institution and, with it, for the future of society as a whole. The revival of the Rosary in Christian families, within the context of a broader pastoral ministry to the family, will be an effective aid to countering the devastating effects of this crisis typical of our age.

“Behold, your Mother!” (Jn 19:27)

7. Many signs indicate that still today the Blessed Virgin desires to exercise through this same prayer that maternal concern to which the dying Redeemer entrusted, in the person of the beloved disciple, all the sons and daughters of the Church: “Woman, behold your son!” (Jn 19:26). Well-known are the occasions in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries on which the Mother of Christ made her presence felt and her voice heard, in order to exhort the People of God to this form of contemplative prayer. I would mention in particular, on account of their great influence on the lives of Christians and the authoritative recognition they have received from the Church, the apparitions of Lourdes and of Fatima;[11] these shrines continue to be visited by great numbers of pilgrims seeking comfort and hope.
Following the witnesses

8. It would be impossible to name all the many Saints who discovered in the Rosary a genuine path to growth in holiness. We need but mention Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, the author of an excellent work on the Rosary,[12] and, closer to ourselves, Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, whom I recently had the joy of canonizing. As a true apostle of the Rosary, Blessed Bartolo Longo had a special charism. His path to holiness rested on an inspiration heard in the depths of his heart: “Whoever spreads the Rosary is saved!”[13] As a result, he felt called to build a Church dedicated to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Pompei, against the background of the ruins of the ancient city, which scarcely heard the proclamation of Christ before being buried in 79 AD during an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, only to emerge centuries later from its ashes as a witness to the lights and shadows of classical civilization. By his whole life’s work and especially by the practice of the “Fifteen Saturdays”, Bartolo Longo promoted the Christocentric and contemplative heart of the Rosary, and received great encouragement and support from Leo XIII, the “Pope of the Rosary.”

CHAPTER I

CONTEMPLATING CHRIST WITH MARY

A face radiant as the sun

9. “And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun” (Mt 17:2). The Gospel scene of Christ's transfiguration, in which the three Apostles Peter, James and John appear entranced by the beauty of the Redeemer, can be seen as an icon of Christian contemplation. To look upon the face of Christ, to recognize its mystery amid the daily events and the sufferings of his human life, and then to grasp the divine splendor definitively revealed in the Risen Lord, seated in glory at the right hand of the Father: this is the task of every follower of Christ and therefore the task of each one of us. In contemplating Christ's face we become open to receiving the mystery of Trinitarian life, experiencing ever anew the love of the Father and delighting in the joy of the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul's words can then be applied to us: “Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are being changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2Cor 3:18).
Mary, model of contemplation

10. The contemplation of Christ has an incomparable model in Mary. In a unique way the face of the Son belongs to Mary. It was in her womb that Christ was formed, receiving from her a human resemblance which points to an even greater spiritual closeness. No one has ever devoted himself to the contemplation of the face of Christ as faithfully as Mary. The eyes of her heart already turned to him at the Annunciation, when she conceived him by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the months that followed she began to sense his presence and to picture his features. When at last she gave birth to him in Bethlehem, her eyes were able to gaze tenderly on the face of her Son, as she “wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger” (Lk 2:7).

Thereafter Mary's gaze, ever filled with adoration and wonder, would never leave him. At times it would be a questioning look, as in the episode of the finding in the Temple: “Son, why have you treated us so?” (Lk 2:48); it would always be a penetrating gaze, one capable of deeply understanding Jesus, even to the point of perceiving his hidden feelings and anticipating his decisions, as at Cana (cf. Jn 2:5). At other times it would be a look of sorrow, especially beneath the Cross, where her vision would still be that of a mother giving birth, for Mary not only shared the passion and death of her Son, she also received the new son given to her in the beloved disciple (cf. Jn 19:26-27). On the morning of Easter hers would be a gaze radiant with the joy of the Resurrection, and finally, on the day of Pentecost, a gaze afire with the outpouring of the Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14).

Mary's memories

11. Mary lived with her eyes fixed on Christ, treasuring his every word: “She kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” (Lk 2:19; cf. 2:51). The memories of Jesus, impressed upon her heart, were always with her, leading her to reflect on the various moments of her life at her Son's side. In a way those memories were to be the “rosary” which she recited uninterruptedly throughout her earthly life.

Even now, amid the joyful songs of the heavenly Jerusalem, the reasons for her thanksgiving and praise remain unchanged. They inspire her maternal concern for the pilgrim Church, in which she continues to relate
her personal account of the Gospel. Mary constantly sets before the faithful the “mysteries” of her Son, with the desire that the contemplation of those mysteries will release all their saving power. In the recitation of the Rosary, the Christian community enters into contact with the memories and the contemplative gaze of Mary.

**The Rosary, a contemplative prayer**

12. The Rosary, precisely because it starts with Mary’s own experience, is an exquisitely contemplative prayer. Without this contemplative dimension, it would lose its meaning, as Pope Paul VI clearly pointed out: “Without contemplation, the Rosary is a body without a soul, and its recitation runs the risk of becoming a mechanical repetition of formulas, in violation of the admonition of Christ: ‘In praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think they will be heard for their many words’ (Mt 6:7). By its nature the recitation of the Rosary calls for a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace, helping the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord’s life as seen through the eyes of her who was closest to the Lord. In this way the unfathomable riches of these mysteries are disclosed.”[14]

It is worth pausing to consider this profound insight of Paul VI, in order to bring out certain aspects of the Rosary which show that it is really a form of Christocentric contemplation.

**Remembering Christ with Mary**

13. Mary’s contemplation is above all a remembering. We need to understand this word in the biblical sense of remembrance (zakar) as a making present of the works brought about by God in the history of salvation. The Bible is an account of saving events culminating in Christ himself. These events not only belong to “yesterday”; they are also part of the “today” of salvation. This making present comes about above all in the Liturgy: what God accomplished centuries ago did not only affect the direct witnesses of those events; it continues to affect people in every age with its gift of grace. To some extent this is also true of every other devout approach to those events: to “remember” them in a spirit of faith and love is to be open to the grace which Christ won for us by the mysteries of his life, death and resurrection.
Consequently, while it must be reaffirmed with the Second Vatican Council that the Liturgy, as the exercise of the priestly office of Christ and an act of public worship, is “the summit to which the activity of the Church is directed and the font from which all its power flows,”[15] it is also necessary to recall that the spiritual life “is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy. Christians, while they are called to prayer in common, must also go to their own rooms to pray to their Father in secret (cf. Mt 6:6); indeed, according to the teaching of the Apostle, they must pray without ceasing (cf. 1Thess 5:17).”[16] The Rosary, in its own particular way, is part of this varied panorama of “ceaseless” prayer. If the Liturgy, as the activity of Christ and the Church, is a saving action par excellence, the Rosary too, as a “meditation” with Mary on Christ, is a salutary contemplation. By immersing us in the mysteries of the Redeemer’s life, it ensures that what he has done and what the liturgy makes present is profoundly assimilated and shapes our existence.

**Learning Christ from Mary**

14. Christ is the supreme Teacher, the revealer and the one revealed. It is not just a question of learning what he taught but of “learning him.” In this regard could we have any better teacher than Mary? From the divine standpoint, the Spirit is the interior teacher who leads us to the full truth of Christ (cf. Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:13). But among creatures no one knows Christ better than Mary; no one can introduce us to a profound knowledge of his mystery better than his Mother.

The first of the “signs” worked by Jesus — the changing of water into wine at the marriage in Cana — clearly presents Mary in the guise of a teacher, as she urges the servants to do what Jesus commands (cf. Jn 2:5). We can imagine that she would have done likewise for the disciples after Jesus’ Ascension, when she joined them in awaiting the Holy Spirit and supported them in their first mission. Contemplating the scenes of the Rosary in union with Mary is a means of learning from her to “read” Christ, to discover his secrets and to understand his message.

This school of Mary is all the more effective if we consider that she teaches by obtaining for us in abundance the gifts of the Holy Spirit, even as she offers us the incomparable example of her own “pilgrimage of
As we contemplate each mystery of her Son's life, she invites us to do as she did at the Annunciation: to ask humbly the questions which open us to the light, in order to end with the obedience of faith: “Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38).

**Being conformed to Christ with Mary**

15. Christian spirituality is distinguished by the disciple's commitment to become conformed ever more fully to his Master (cf. Rom 8:29; Phil 3:10,12). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Baptism grafts the believer like a branch onto the vine which is Christ (cf. Jn 15:5) and makes him a member of Christ's mystical Body (cf. Cor. 12:12; Rom 12:5). This initial unity, however, calls for a growing assimilation which will increasingly shape the conduct of the disciple in accordance with the “mind” of Christ: “Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5). In the words of the Apostle, we are called “to put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27).

In the spiritual journey of the Rosary, based on the constant contemplation — in Mary's company — of the face of Christ, this demanding ideal of being conformed to him is pursued through an association which could be described in terms of friendship. We are thereby enabled to enter naturally into Christ's life and as it were to share his deepest feelings. In this regard Blessed Bartolo Longo has written: “Just as two friends, frequently in each other's company, tend to develop similar habits, so too, by holding familiar converse with Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, by meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary and by living the same life in Holy Communion, we can become, to the extent of our lowliness, similar to them and can learn from these supreme models a life of humility, poverty, hiddenness, patience and perfection.”

In this process of being conformed to Christ in the Rosary, we entrust ourselves in a special way to the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin. She who is both the Mother of Christ and a member of the Church, indeed her “pre-eminent and altogether singular member,” is at the same time the “Mother of the Church.” As such, she continually brings to birth children for the mystical Body of her Son. She does so through her intercession,
imploring upon them the inexhaustible outpouring of the Spirit. Mary is the perfect icon of the motherhood of the Church.

The Rosary mystically transports us to Mary's side as she is busy watching over the human growth of Christ in the home of Nazareth. This enables her to train us and to mold us with the same care, until Christ is “fully formed” in us (cf. Gal 4:19). This role of Mary, totally grounded in that of Christ and radically subordinated to it, “in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power.”[20] This is the luminous principle expressed by the Second Vatican Council which I have so powerfully experienced in my own life and have made the basis of my episcopal motto: Totus Tuus.[21] The motto is of course inspired by the teaching of Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, who explained in the following words Mary's role in the process of our configuration to Christ: “Our entire perfection consists in being conformed, united and consecrated to Jesus Christ. Hence the most perfect of all devotions is undoubtedly that which conforms, unites and consecrates us most perfectly to Jesus Christ. Now, since Mary is of all creatures the one most conformed to Jesus Christ, it follows that among all devotions that which most consecrates and conforms a soul to our Lord is devotion to Mary, his Holy Mother, and that the more a soul is consecrated to her the more will it be consecrated to Jesus Christ.”[22] Never as in the Rosary do the life of Jesus and that of Mary appear so deeply joined. Mary lives only in Christ and for Christ!

Praying to Christ with Mary

16. Jesus invited us to turn to God with insistence and the confidence that we will be heard: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Mt 7:7). The basis for this power of prayer is the goodness of the Father, but also the mediation of Christ himself (cf. 1Jn 2:1) and the working of the Holy Spirit who “intercedes for us” according to the will of God (cf. Rom 8:26-27). For “we do not know how to pray as we ought” (Rom 8:26), and at times we are not heard “because we ask wrongly” (cf. Jas 4:2-3).

In support of the prayer which Christ and the Spirit cause to rise in our hearts, Mary intervenes with her maternal intercession. “The prayer of the Church is sustained by the prayer of Mary.”[23] If Jesus, the one Mediator,
is the Way of our prayer, then Mary, his purest and most transparent
reflection, shows us the Way. “Beginning with Mary's unique cooperation
with the working of the Holy Spirit, the Churches developed their prayer to
the Holy Mother of God, centering it on the person of Christ manifested
in his mysteries.” At the wedding of Cana the Gospel clearly shows the
power of Mary's intercession as she makes known to Jesus the needs of
others: “They have no wine” (Jn 2:3).

The Rosary is both meditation and supplication. Insistent prayer to the
Mother of God is based on confidence that her maternal intercession can
obtain all things from the heart of her Son. She is “all-powerful by grace”,
to use the bold expression, which needs to be properly understood, of
Blessed Bartolo Longo in his *Supplication to Our Lady.*

This is a conviction which, beginning with the Gospel, has grown ever more firm in
the experience of the Christian people. The supreme poet Dante expresses
it marvelously in the lines sung by Saint Bernard: “Lady, thou art so great
and so powerful, that whoever desires grace yet does not turn to thee, would
have his desire fly without wings.” When in the Rosary we plead with
Mary, the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Lk* 1:35), she intercedes for us
before the Father who filled her with grace and before the Son born of her
womb, praying with us and for us.

*Proclaiming Christ with Mary*

17. The Rosary is also a path of proclamation and increasing
knowledge, in which the mystery of Christ is presented again and again at
different levels of the Christian experience. Its form is that of a prayerful
and contemplative presentation, capable of forming Christians according to
the heart of Christ. When the recitation of the Rosary combines all the
elements needed for an effective meditation, especially in its communal
celebration in parishes and shrines, it can present a significant catechetical
opportunity which pastors should use to advantage. In this way too Our
Lady of the Rosary continues her work of proclaiming Christ. The history
of the Rosary shows how this prayer was used in particular by the
Dominicans at a difficult time for the Church due to the spread of heresy.
Today we are facing new challenges. Why should we not once more have
recourse to the Rosary, with the same faith as those who have gone before
us? The Rosary retains all its power and continues to be a valuable pastoral resource for every good evangelizer.

CHAPTER II

MYSTERIES OF CHRIST -
MYSTERIES OF HIS MOTHER

The Rosary, “a compendium of the Gospel”

18. The only way to approach the contemplation of Christ’s face is by listening in the Spirit to the Father's voice, since “no one knows the Son except the Father” (Mt 11:27). In the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus responded to Peter's confession of faith by indicating the source of that clear intuition of his identity: “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 16:17). What is needed, then, is a revelation from above. In order to receive that revelation, attentive listening is indispensable: “Only the experience of silence and prayer offers the proper setting for the growth and development of a true, faithful and consistent knowledge of that mystery.”[27]

The Rosary is one of the traditional paths of Christian prayer directed to the contemplation of Christ's face. Pope Paul VI described it in these words: “As a Gospel prayer, centered on the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation, the Rosary is a prayer with a clearly Christological orientation. Its most characteristic element, in fact, the litany- like succession of Hail Marys, becomes in itself an unceasing praise of Christ, who is the ultimate object both of the Angel's announcement and of the greeting of the Mother of John the Baptist: 'Blessed is the fruit of your womb' (Lk 1:42). We would go further and say that the succession of Hail Marys constitutes the warp on which is woven the contemplation of the mysteries. The Jesus that each Hail Mary recalls is the same Jesus whom the succession of mysteries proposes to us now as the Son of God, now as the Son of the Virgin.”[28]

A proposed addition to the traditional pattern

19. Of the many mysteries of Christ's life, only a few are indicated by the Rosary in the form that has become generally established with the seal of the Church's approval. The selection was determined by the origin of the
prayer, which was based on the number 150, the number of the Psalms in the Psalter.

I believe, however, that to bring out fully the Christological depth of the Rosary it would be suitable to make an addition to the traditional pattern which, while left to the freedom of individuals and communities, could broaden it to include the mysteries of Christ's public ministry between his Baptism and his Passion. In the course of those mysteries we contemplate important aspects of the person of Christ as the definitive revelation of God. Declared the beloved Son of the Father at the Baptism in the Jordan, Christ is the one who announces the coming of the Kingdom, bears witness to it in his works and proclaims its demands. It is during the years of his public ministry that the mystery of Christ is most evidently a mystery of light: “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (Jn 9:5).

Consequently, for the Rosary to become more fully a “compendium of the Gospel”, it is fitting to add, following reflection on the Incarnation and the hidden life of Christ (the joyful mysteries) and before focusing on the sufferings of his Passion (the sorrowful mysteries) and the triumph of his Resurrection (the glorious mysteries), a meditation on certain particularly significant moments in his public ministry (the mysteries of light). This addition of these new mysteries, without prejudice to any essential aspect of the prayer's traditional format, is meant to give it fresh life and to enkindle renewed interest in the Rosary's place within Christian spirituality as a true doorway to the depths of the Heart of Christ, ocean of joy and of light, of suffering and of glory.

**The Joyful Mysteries**

20. The first five decades, the “joyful mysteries”, are marked by the joy radiating from the event of the Incarnation. This is clear from the very first mystery, the Annunciation, where Gabriel's greeting to the Virgin of Nazareth is linked to an invitation to messianic joy: “Rejoice, Mary.” The whole of salvation history, in some sense the entire history of the world, has led up to this greeting. If it is the Father's plan to unite all things in Christ (cf. Eph 1:10), then the whole of the universe is in some way touched by the divine favor with which the Father looks upon Mary and makes her the Mother of his Son. The whole of humanity, in turn, is embraced by the _fiat_
with which she readily agrees to the will of God.

Exultation is the keynote of the encounter with Elizabeth, where the sound of Mary's voice and the presence of Christ in her womb cause John to “leap for joy” (cf. Lk 1:44). Gladness also fills the scene in Bethlehem, when the birth of the divine Child, the Saviour of the world, is announced by the song of the angels and proclaimed to the shepherds as “news of great joy” (Lk 2:10).

The final two mysteries, while preserving this climate of joy, already point to the drama yet to come. The Presentation in the Temple not only expresses the joy of the Child's consecration and the ecstasy of the aged Simeon; it also records the prophecy that Christ will be a “sign of contradiction” for Israel and that a sword will pierce his mother's heart (cf Lk 2:34-35). Joy mixed with drama marks the fifth mystery, the finding of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple. Here he appears in his divine wisdom as he listens and raises questions, already in effect one who “teaches.” The revelation of his mystery as the Son wholly dedicated to his Father's affairs proclaims the radical nature of the Gospel, in which even the closest of human relationships are challenged by the absolute demands of the Kingdom. Mary and Joseph, fearful and anxious, “did not understand” his words (Lk 2:50).

To meditate upon the “joyful” mysteries, then, is to enter into the ultimate causes and the deepest meaning of Christian joy. It is to focus on the realism of the mystery of the Incarnation and on the obscure foreshadowing of the mystery of the saving Passion. Mary leads us to discover the secret of Christian joy, reminding us that Christianity is, first and foremost, euan gelion, “good news”, which has as its heart and its whole content the person of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, the one Saviour of the world.

The Mysteries of Light

21. Moving on from the infancy and the hidden life in Nazareth to the public life of Jesus, our contemplation brings us to those mysteries which may be called in a special way “mysteries of light.” Certainly the whole mystery of Christ is a mystery of light. He is the “light of the world” (Jn 8:12). Yet this truth emerges in a special way during the years of his public
life, when he proclaims the Gospel of the Kingdom. In proposing to the Christian community five significant moments — “luminous” mysteries — during this phase of Christ’s life, I think that the following can be fittingly singled out: (1) his Baptism in the Jordan, (2) his self-manifestation at the wedding of Cana, (3) his proclamation of the Kingdom of God, with his call to conversion, (4) his Transfiguration, and finally, (5) his institution of the Eucharist, as the sacramental expression of the Paschal Mystery.

Each of these mysteries is a revelation of the Kingdom now present in the very person of Jesus. The Baptism in the Jordan is first of all a mystery of light. Here, as Christ descends into the waters, the innocent one who became “sin” for our sake (cf. 2Cor 5:21), the heavens open wide and the voice of the Father declares him the beloved Son (cf. Mt 3:17 and parallels), while the Spirit descends on him to invest him with the mission which he is to carry out. Another mystery of light is the first of the signs, given at Cana (cf. Jn 2:1-12), when Christ changes water into wine and opens the hearts of the disciples to faith, thanks to the intervention of Mary, the first among believers. Another mystery of light is the preaching by which Jesus proclaims the coming of the Kingdom of God, calls to conversion (cf. Mk 1:15) and forgives the sins of all who draw near to him in humble trust (cf. Mk 2:3-13; Lk 7:47-48): the inauguration of that ministry of mercy which he continues to exercise until the end of the world, particularly through the Sacrament of Reconciliation which he has entrusted to his Church (cf. Jn 20:22-23). The mystery of light par excellence is the Transfiguration, traditionally believed to have taken place on Mount Tabor. The glory of the Godhead shines forth from the face of Christ as the Father commands the astonished Apostles to “listen to him” (cf. Lk 9:35 and parallels) and to prepare to experience with him the agony of the Passion, so as to come with him to the joy of the Resurrection and a life transfigured by the Holy Spirit. A final mystery of light is the institution of the Eucharist, in which Christ offers his body and blood as food under the signs of bread and wine, and testifies “to the end” his love for humanity (Jn 13:1), for whose salvation he will offer himself in sacrifice.

In these mysteries, apart from the miracle at Cana, the presence of Mary remains in the background. The Gospels make only the briefest reference to her occasional presence at one moment or other during the
preaching of Jesus (cf. *Mk* 3:31-5; *Jn* 2:12), and they give no indication that she was present at the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist. Yet the role she assumed at Cana in some way accompanies Christ throughout his ministry. The revelation made directly by the Father at the Baptism in the Jordan and echoed by John the Baptist is placed upon Mary's lips at Cana, and it becomes the great maternal counsel which Mary addresses to the Church of every age: “Do whatever he tells you” (*Jn* 2:5). This counsel is a fitting introduction to the words and signs of Christ’s public ministry and it forms the Marian foundation of all the “mysteries of light.”

*The Sorrowful Mysteries*

22. The Gospels give great prominence to the sorrowful mysteries of Christ. From the beginning Christian piety, especially during the Lenten devotion of the *Way of the Cross*, has focused on the individual moments of the Passion, realizing that here is found the culmination of the revelation of God's love and the source of our salvation. The Rosary selects certain moments from the Passion, inviting the faithful to contemplate them in their hearts and to relive them. The sequence of meditations begins with Gethsemane, where Christ experiences a moment of great anguish before the will of the Father, against which the weakness of the flesh would be tempted to rebel. There Jesus encounters all the temptations and confronts all the sins of humanity, in order to say to the Father: “Not my will but yours be done” (*Lk* 22:42 and parallels). This “Yes” of Christ reverses the “No” of our first parents in the Garden of Eden.

And the cost of this faithfulness to the Father's will is made clear in the following mysteries; by his scourging, his crowning with thorns, his carrying the Cross and his death on the Cross, the Lord is cast into the most abject suffering: *Ecce homo!*

This abject suffering reveals not only the love of God but also the meaning of man himself.

*Ecce homo*: the meaning, origin and fulfillment of man is to be found in Christ, the God who humbles himself out of love “even unto death, death on a cross” (*Phil* 2:8). The sorrowful mysteries help the believer to relive the death of Jesus, to stand at the foot of the Cross beside Mary, to enter
with her into the depths of God's love for man and to experience all its life-giving power.

**The Glorious Mysteries**

23. “The contemplation of Christ's face cannot stop at the image of the Crucified One. He is the Risen One!”[29] The Rosary has always expressed this knowledge born of faith and invited the believer to pass beyond the darkness of the Passion in order to gaze upon Christ's glory in the Resurrection and Ascension. Contemplating the Risen One, Christians rediscover the reasons for their own faith (cf. 1Cor 15:14) and relive the joy not only of those to whom Christ appeared — the Apostles, Mary Magdalene and the disciples on the road to Emmaus — but also the joy of Mary, who must have had an equally intense experience of the new life of her glorified Son. In the Ascension, Christ was raised in glory to the right hand of the Father, while Mary herself would be raised to that same glory in the Assumption, enjoying beforehand, by a unique privilege, the destiny reserved for all the just at the resurrection of the dead. Crowned in glory — as she appears in the last glorious mystery — Mary shines forth as Queen of the Angels and Saints, the anticipation and the supreme realization of the eschatological state of the Church.

At the center of this unfolding sequence of the glory of the Son and the Mother, the Rosary sets before us the third glorious mystery, Pentecost, which reveals the face of the Church as a family gathered together with Mary, enlivened by the powerful outpouring of the Spirit and ready for the mission of evangelization. The contemplation of this scene, like that of the other glorious mysteries, ought to lead the faithful to an ever greater appreciation of their new life in Christ, lived in the heart of the Church, a life of which the scene of Pentecost itself is the great “icon.” The glorious mysteries thus lead the faithful to greater hope for the eschatological goal towards which they journey as members of the pilgrim People of God in history. This can only impel them to bear courageous witness to that “good news” which gives meaning to their entire existence.

**From “mysteries” to the “Mystery”: Mary's way**

24. The cycles of meditation proposed by the Holy Rosary are by no means exhaustive, but they do bring to mind what is essential and they
awaken in the soul a thirst for a knowledge of Christ continually nourished by the pure source of the Gospel. Every individual event in the life of Christ, as narrated by the Evangelists, is resplendent with the Mystery that surpasses all understanding (cf. Eph 3:19): the Mystery of the Word made flesh, in whom “all the fullness of God dwells bodily” (Col 2:9). For this reason the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* places great emphasis on the mysteries of Christ, pointing out that “everything in the life of Jesus is a sign of his Mystery.” The “duc in altum” of the Church of the third millennium will be determined by the ability of Christians to enter into the “perfect knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:2-3). The Letter to the Ephesians makes this heartfelt prayer for all the baptized: “May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, so that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power... to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (3:17-19).

The Rosary is at the service of this ideal; it offers the “secret” which leads easily to a profound and inward knowledge of Christ. We might call it Mary's way. It is the way of the example of the Virgin of Nazareth, a woman of faith, of silence, of attentive listening. It is also the way of a Marian devotion inspired by knowledge of the inseparable bond between Christ and his Blessed Mother: the mysteries of Christ are also in some sense the mysteries of his Mother, even when they do not involve her directly, for she lives from him and through him. By making our own the words of the Angel Gabriel and Saint Elizabeth contained in the Hail Mary, we find ourselves constantly drawn to seek out afresh in Mary, in her arms and in her heart, the “blessed fruit of her womb” (cf Lk 1:42).

*Mystery of Christ, mystery of man*

25. In my testimony of 1978 mentioned above, where I described the Rosary as my favorite prayer, I used an idea to which I would like to return. I said then that “the simple prayer of the Rosary marks the rhythm of human life.”

In the light of what has been said so far on the mysteries of Christ, it is not difficult to go deeper into this anthropological significance of the Rosary, which is far deeper than may appear at first sight. Anyone who contemplates Christ through the various stages of his life cannot fail to
perceive in him the truth about man. This is the great affirmation of the Second Vatican Council which I have so often discussed in my own teaching since the Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* “it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man is seen in its true light.”[32] The Rosary helps to open up the way to this light. Following in the path of Christ, in whom man's path is “recapitulated,”[33] revealed and redeemed, believers come face to face with the image of the true man. Contemplating Christ's birth, they learn of the sanctity of life; seeing the household of Nazareth, they learn the original truth of the family according to God's plan; listening to the Master in the mysteries of his public ministry, they find the light which leads them to enter the Kingdom of God; and following him on the way to Calvary, they learn the meaning of salvific suffering. Finally, contemplating Christ and his Blessed Mother in glory, they see the goal towards which each of us is called, if we allow ourselves to be healed and transformed by the Holy Spirit. It could be said that each mystery of the Rosary, carefully meditated, sheds light on the mystery of man.

At the same time, it becomes natural to bring to this encounter with the sacred humanity of the Redeemer all the problems, anxieties, labors and endeavors which go to make up our lives. “Cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you” (Ps 55:23). To pray the Rosary is to hand over our burdens to the merciful hearts of Christ and his Mother. Twenty-five years later, thinking back over the difficulties which have also been part of my exercise of the Petrine ministry, I feel the need to say once more, as a warm invitation to everyone to experience it personally: the Rosary does indeed “mark the rhythm of human life”, bringing it into harmony with the “rhythm” of God's own life, in the joyful communion of the Holy Trinity, our life's destiny and deepest longing.

**CHAPTER III**

“FOR ME, TO LIVE IS CHRIST”

*The Rosary, a way of assimilating the mystery*

26. Meditation on the mysteries of Christ is proposed in the Rosary by means of a method designed to assist in their assimilation. It is a method based on repetition. This applies above all to the Hail Mary, repeated ten
times in each mystery. If this repetition is considered superficially, there could be a temptation to see the Rosary as a dry and boring exercise. It is quite another thing, however, when the Rosary is thought of as an outpouring of that love which tirelessly returns to the person loved with expressions similar in their content but ever fresh in terms of the feeling pervading them.

In Christ, God has truly assumed a “heart of flesh.” Not only does God have a divine heart, rich in mercy and in forgiveness, but also a human heart, capable of all the stirrings of affection. If we needed evidence for this from the Gospel, we could easily find it in the touching dialogue between Christ and Peter after the Resurrection: “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Three times this question is put to Peter, and three times he gives the reply: “Lord, you know that I love you” (cf. Jn 21:15-17). Over and above the specific meaning of this passage, so important for Peter's mission, none can fail to recognize the beauty of this triple repetition, in which the insistent request and the corresponding reply are expressed in terms familiar from the universal experience of human love. To understand the Rosary, one has to enter into the psychological dynamic proper to love.

One thing is clear: although the repeated Hail Mary is addressed directly to Mary, it is to Jesus that the act of love is ultimately directed, with her and through her. The repetition is nourished by the desire to be conformed ever more completely to Christ, the true program of the Christian life. Saint Paul expressed this project with words of fire: “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil 1:21). And again: “It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20). The Rosary helps us to be conformed ever more closely to Christ until we attain true holiness.

A valid method...

27. We should not be surprised that our relationship with Christ makes use of a method. God communicates himself to us respecting our human nature and its vital rhythms. Hence, while Christian spirituality is familiar with the most sublime forms of mystical silence in which images, words and gestures are all, so to speak, superseded by an intense and ineffable union with God, it normally engages the whole person in all his complex psychological, physical and relational reality.
This becomes apparent in the Liturgy. Sacraments and sacramentals are structured as a series of rites which bring into play all the dimensions of the person. The same applies to non-liturgical prayer. This is confirmed by the fact that, in the East, the most characteristic prayer of Christological meditation, centered on the words “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner”\(^{[34]}\) is traditionally linked to the rhythm of breathing; while this practice favors perseverance in the prayer, it also in some way embodies the desire for Christ to become the breath, the soul and the “all” of one’s life.

... which can nevertheless be improved

28. I mentioned in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* that the West is now experiencing a renewed demand for meditation, which at times leads to a keen interest in aspects of other religions.\(^{[35]}\) Some Christians, limited in their knowledge of the Christian contemplative tradition, are attracted by those forms of prayer. While the latter contain many elements which are positive and at times compatible with Christian experience, they are often based on ultimately unacceptable premises. Much in vogue among these approaches are methods aimed at attaining a high level of spiritual concentration by using techniques of a psychophysical, repetitive and symbolic nature. The Rosary is situated within this broad gamut of religious phenomena, but it is distinguished by characteristics of its own which correspond to specifically Christian requirements.

In effect, the Rosary is simply a *method of contemplation*. As a method, it serves as a means to an end and cannot become an end in itself. All the same, as the fruit of centuries of experience, this method should not be undervalued. In its favor one could cite the experience of countless Saints. This is not to say, however, that the method cannot be improved. Such is the intent of the addition of the new series of *mysteria lucis* to the overall cycle of mysteries and of the few suggestions which I am proposing in this Letter regarding its manner of recitation. These suggestions, while respecting the well-established structure of this prayer, are intended to help the faithful to understand it in the richness of its symbolism and in harmony with the demands of daily life. Otherwise there is a risk that the Rosary would not only fail to produce the intended spiritual effects, but even that the beads, with which it is usually said, could come to be regarded
as some kind of amulet or magic object, thereby radically distorting their meaning and function.

**Announcing each mystery**

29. Announcing each mystery, and perhaps even using a suitable icon to portray it, is as it were to open up a scenario on which to focus our attention. The words direct the imagination and the mind towards a particular episode or moment in the life of Christ. In the Church's traditional spirituality, the veneration of icons and the many devotions appealing to the senses, as well as the method of prayer proposed by Saint Ignatius of Loyola in the Spiritual Exercises, make use of visual and imaginative elements (the *compositio loci*), judged to be of great help in concentrating the mind on the particular mystery. This is a methodology, moreover, which corresponds to the inner logic of the Incarnation: in Jesus, God wanted to take on human features. It is through his bodily reality that we are led into contact with the mystery of his divinity.

This need for concreteness finds further expression in the announcement of the various mysteries of the Rosary. Obviously these mysteries neither replace the Gospel nor exhaust its content. The Rosary, therefore, is no substitute for *lectio divina*; on the contrary, it presupposes and promotes it. Yet, even though the mysteries contemplated in the Rosary, even with the addition of the *mysteria lucis*, do no more than outline the fundamental elements of the life of Christ, they easily draw the mind to a more expansive reflection on the rest of the Gospel, especially when the Rosary is prayed in a setting of prolonged recollection.

**Listening to the word of God**

30. In order to supply a Biblical foundation and greater depth to our meditation, it is helpful to follow the announcement of the mystery with the proclamation of a related Biblical passage, long or short, depending on the circumstances. No other words can ever match the efficacy of the inspired word. As we listen, we are certain that this is the word of God, spoken for today and spoken “for me.”

If received in this way, the word of God can become part of the Rosary's methodology of repetition without giving rise to the ennui derived from the simple recollection of something already well known. It is not a
matter of recalling information but of allowing God to speak. In certain solemn communal celebrations, this word can be appropriately illustrated by a brief commentary.

Silence

31. Listening and meditation are nourished by silence. After the announcement of the mystery and the proclamation of the word, it is fitting to pause and focus one's attention for a suitable period of time on the mystery concerned, before moving into vocal prayer. A discovery of the importance of silence is one of the secrets of practicing contemplation and meditation. One drawback of a society dominated by technology and the mass media is the fact that silence becomes increasingly difficult to achieve. Just as moments of silence are recommended in the Liturgy, so too in the recitation of the Rosary it is fitting to pause briefly after listening to the word of God, while the mind focuses on the content of a particular mystery.

The “Our Father”

32. After listening to the word and focusing on the mystery, it is natural for the mind to be lifted up towards the Father. In each of his mysteries, Jesus always leads us to the Father, for as he rests in the Father's bosom (cf. Jn 1:18) he is continually turned towards him. He wants us to share in his intimacy with the Father, so that we can say with him: “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). By virtue of his relationship to the Father he makes us brothers and sisters of himself and of one another, communicating to us the Spirit which is both his and the Father's. Acting as a kind of foundation for the Christological and Marian meditation which unfolds in the repetition of the Hail Mary, the Our Father makes meditation upon the mystery, even when carried out in solitude, an ecclesial experience.

The ten “Hail Marys”

33. This is the most substantial element in the Rosary and also the one which makes it a Marian prayer par excellence. Yet when the Hail Mary is properly understood, we come to see clearly that its Marian character is not opposed to its Christological character, but that it actually emphasizes and increases it. The first part of the Hail Mary, drawn from the words spoken
to Mary by the Angel Gabriel and by Saint Elizabeth, is a contemplation in adoration of the mystery accomplished in the Virgin of Nazareth. These words express, so to speak, the wonder of heaven and earth; they could be said to give us a glimpse of God's own wonderment as he contemplates his “masterpiece” — the Incarnation of the Son in the womb of the Virgin Mary. If we recall how, in the Book of Genesis, God “saw all that he had made” (Gen 1:31), we can find here an echo of that “pathos with which God, at the dawn of creation, looked upon the work of his hands.”[36] The repetition of the Hail Mary in the Rosary gives us a share in God's own wonder and pleasure: in jubilant amazement we acknowledge the greatest miracle of history. Mary's prophecy here finds its fulfillment: “Henceforth all generations will call me blessed” (Lk 1:48).

The center of gravity in the Hail Mary, the hinge as it were which joins its two parts, is the name of Jesus. Sometimes, in hurried recitation, this center of gravity can be overlooked, and with it the connection to the mystery of Christ being contemplated. Yet it is precisely the emphasis given to the name of Jesus and to his mystery that is the sign of a meaningful and fruitful recitation of the Rosary. Pope Paul VI drew attention, in his Apostolic Exhortation Marialis Cultus, to the custom in certain regions of highlighting the name of Christ by the addition of a clause referring to the mystery being contemplated.[37] This is a praiseworthy custom, especially during public recitation. It gives forceful expression to our faith in Christ, directed to the different moments of the Redeemer's life. It is at once a profession of faith and an aid in concentrating our meditation, since it facilitates the process of assimilation to the mystery of Christ inherent in the repetition of the Hail Mary. When we repeat the name of Jesus — the only name given to us by which we may hope for salvation (cf. Acts 4:12) — in close association with the name of his Blessed Mother, almost as if it were done at her suggestion, we set out on a path of assimilation meant to help us enter more deeply into the life of Christ.

From Mary's uniquely privileged relationship with Christ, which makes her the Mother of God, Theotókos, derives the forcefulness of the appeal we make to her in the second half of the prayer, as we entrust to her maternal intercession our lives and the hour of our death.

The “Gloria”
34. Trinitarian doxology is the goal of all Christian contemplation. For Christ is the way that leads us to the Father in the Spirit. If we travel this way to the end, we repeatedly encounter the mystery of the three divine Persons, to whom all praise, worship and thanksgiving are due. It is important that the Gloria, the high-point of contemplation, be given due prominence in the Rosary. In public recitation it could be sung, as a way of giving proper emphasis to the essentially Trinitarian structure of all Christian prayer.

To the extent that meditation on the mystery is attentive and profound, and to the extent that it is enlivened — from one Hail Mary to another — by love for Christ and for Mary, the glorification of the Trinity at the end of each decade, far from being a perfunctory conclusion, takes on its proper contemplative tone, raising the mind as it were to the heights of heaven and enabling us in some way to relive the experience of Tabor, a foretaste of the contemplation yet to come: “It is good for us to be here!” (Lk 9:33).

*The concluding short prayer*

35. In current practice, the Trinitarian doxology is followed by a brief concluding prayer which varies according to local custom. Without in any way diminishing the value of such invocations, it is worthwhile to note that the contemplation of the mysteries could better express their full spiritual fruitfulness if an effort were made to conclude each mystery with a prayer for the fruits specific to that particular mystery. In this way the Rosary would better express its connection with the Christian life. One fine liturgical prayer suggests as much, inviting us to pray that, by meditation on the mysteries of the Rosary, we may come to “imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise.”[38]

Such a final prayer could take on a legitimate variety of forms, as indeed it already does. In this way the Rosary can be better adapted to different spiritual traditions and different Christian communities. It is to be hoped, then, that appropriate formulas will be widely circulated, after due pastoral discernment and possibly after experimental use in centers and shrines particularly devoted to the Rosary, so that the People of God may benefit from an abundance of authentic spiritual riches and find
nourishment for their personal contemplation.

**The Rosary beads**

36. The traditional aid used for the recitation of the Rosary is the set of beads. At the most superficial level, the beads often become a simple counting mechanism to mark the succession of Hail Marys. Yet they can also take on a symbolism which can give added depth to contemplation.

Here the first thing to note is the way the beads converge upon the Crucifix, which both opens and closes the unfolding sequence of prayer. The life and prayer of believers is centered upon Christ. Everything begins from him, everything leads towards him, everything, through him, in the Holy Spirit, attains to the Father.

As a counting mechanism, marking the progress of the prayer, the beads evoke the unending path of contemplation and of Christian perfection. Blessed Bartolo Longo saw them also as a “chain” which links us to God. A chain, yes, but a sweet chain; for sweet indeed is the bond to God who is also our Father. A “filial” chain which puts us in tune with Mary, the “handmaid of the Lord” (*Lk* 1:38) and, most of all, with Christ himself, who, though he was in the form of God, made himself a “servant” out of love for us (*Phil* 2:7).

A fine way to expand the symbolism of the beads is to let them remind us of our many relationships, of the bond of communion and fraternity which unites us all in Christ.

**The opening and closing**

37 At present, in different parts of the Church, there are many ways to introduce the Rosary. In some places, it is customary to begin with the opening words of Psalm 70: “O God, come to my aid; O Lord, make haste to help me”, as if to nourish in those who are praying a humble awareness of their own insufficiency. In other places, the Rosary begins with the recitation of the Creed, as if to make the profession of faith the basis of the contemplative journey about to be undertaken. These and similar customs, to the extent that they prepare the mind for contemplation, are all equally legitimate. The Rosary is then ended with a prayer for the intentions of the Pope, as if to expand the vision of the one praying to embrace all the needs
of the Church. It is precisely in order to encourage this ecclesial dimension of the Rosary that the Church has seen fit to grant indulgences to those who recite it with the required dispositions.

If prayed in this way, the Rosary truly becomes a spiritual itinerary in which Mary acts as Mother, Teacher and Guide, sustaining the faithful by her powerful intercession. Is it any wonder, then, that the soul feels the need, after saying this prayer and experiencing so profoundly the motherhood of Mary, to burst forth in praise of the Blessed Virgin, either in that splendid prayer the *Salve Regina* or in the *Litany of Loreto*? This is the crowning moment of an inner journey which has brought the faithful into living contact with the mystery of Christ and his Blessed Mother.

*Distribution over time*

38. The Rosary can be recited in full every day, and there are those who most laudably do so. In this way it fills with prayer the days of many a contemplative, or keeps company with the sick and the elderly who have abundant time at their disposal. Yet it is clear — and this applies all the more if the new series of mysteria lucis is included — that many people will not be able to recite more than a part of the Rosary, according to a certain weekly pattern. This weekly distribution has the effect of giving the different days of the week a certain spiritual “color”, by analogy with the way in which the Liturgy colors the different seasons of the liturgical year.

According to current practice, Monday and Thursday are dedicated to the “joyful mysteries”, Tuesday and Friday to the “sorrowful mysteries”, and Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday to the “glorious mysteries.” Where might the “mysteries of light” be inserted? If we consider that the “glorious mysteries” are said on both Saturday and Sunday, and that Saturday has always had a special Marian flavor, the second weekly meditation on the “joyful mysteries”, mysteries in which Mary’s presence is especially pronounced, could be moved to Saturday. Thursday would then be free for meditating on the “mysteries of light.”

This indication is not intended to limit a rightful freedom in personal and community prayer, where account needs to be taken of spiritual and pastoral needs and of the occurrence of particular liturgical celebrations which might call for suitable adaptations. What is really important is that
the Rosary should always be seen and experienced as a path of contemplation. In the Rosary, in a way similar to what takes place in the Liturgy, the Christian week, centered on Sunday, the day of Resurrection, becomes a journey through the mysteries of the life of Christ, and he is revealed in the lives of his disciples as the Lord of time and of history.

CONCLUSION

“Blessed Rosary of Mary, sweet chain linking us to God”

39. What has been said so far makes abundantly clear the richness of this traditional prayer, which has the simplicity of a popular devotion but also the theological depth of a prayer suited to those who feel the need for deeper contemplation.

The Church has always attributed particular efficacy to this prayer, entrusting to the Rosary, to its choral recitation and to its constant practice, the most difficult problems. At times when Christianity itself seemed under threat, its deliverance was attributed to the power of this prayer, and Our Lady of the Rosary was acclaimed as the one whose intercession brought salvation.

Today I willingly entrust to the power of this prayer — as I mentioned at the beginning — the cause of peace in the world and the cause of the family.

Peace

40. The grave challenges confronting the world at the start of this new Millennium lead us to think that only an intervention from on high, capable of guiding the hearts of those living in situations of conflict and those governing the destinies of nations, can give reason to hope for a brighter future.

The Rosary is by its nature a prayer for peace, since it consists in the contemplation of Christ, the Prince of Peace, the one who is “our peace” (Eph 2:14). Anyone who assimilates the mystery of Christ — and this is clearly the goal of the Rosary — learns the secret of peace and makes it his life’s project. Moreover, by virtue of its meditative character, with the tranquil succession of Hail Marys, the Rosary has a peaceful effect on those who pray it, disposing them to receive and experience in their innermost
depths, and to spread around them, that true peace which is the special gift of the Risen Lord (cf. Jn 14:27; 20.21).

The Rosary is also a prayer for peace because of the fruits of charity which it produces. When prayed well in a truly meditative way, the Rosary leads to an encounter with Christ in his mysteries and so cannot fail to draw attention to the face of Christ in others, especially in the most afflicted. How could one possibly contemplate the mystery of the Child of Bethlehem, in the joyful mysteries, without experiencing the desire to welcome, defend and promote life, and to shoulder the burdens of suffering children all over the world?

How could one possibly follow in the footsteps of Christ the Revealer, in the mysteries of light, without resolving to bear witness to his “Beatitudes” in daily life? And how could one contemplate Christ carrying the Cross and Christ Crucified, without feeling the need to act as a “Simon of Cyrene” for our brothers and sisters weighed down by grief or crushed by despair? Finally, how could one possibly gaze upon the glory of the Risen Christ or of Mary Queen of Heaven, without yearning to make this world more beautiful, more just, more closely conformed to God's plan?

In a word, by focusing our eyes on Christ, the Rosary also makes us peacemakers in the world. By its nature as an insistent choral petition in harmony with Christ’s invitation to “pray ceaselessly” (Lk 18:1), the Rosary allows us to hope that, even today, the difficult “battle” for peace can be won. Far from offering an escape from the problems of the world, the Rosary obliges us to see them with responsible and generous eyes, and obtains for us the strength to face them with the certainty of God’s help and the firm intention of bearing witness in every situation to “love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col 3:14).

The family: parents...

41. As a prayer for peace, the Rosary is also, and always has been, a prayer of and for the family. At one time this prayer was particularly dear to Christian families, and it certainly brought them closer together. It is important not to lose this precious inheritance. We need to return to the practice of family prayer and prayer for families, continuing to use the Rosary.
In my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, I encouraged the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours by the lay faithful in the ordinary life of parish communities and Christian groups. I now wish to do the same for the Rosary. These two paths of Christian contemplation are not mutually exclusive; they complement one another. I would therefore ask those who devote themselves to the pastoral care of families to recommend heartily the recitation of the Rosary.

“The family that prays together stays together.” The Holy Rosary, by age-old tradition, has shown itself particularly effective as a prayer which brings the family together. Individual family members, in turning their eyes towards Jesus, also regain the ability to look one another in the eye, to communicate, to show solidarity, to forgive one another and to see their covenant of love renewed in the Spirit of God.

Many of the problems facing contemporary families, especially in economically developed societies, result from their increasing difficulty in communicating. Families seldom manage to come together, and the rare occasions when they do are often taken up with watching television. To return to the recitation of the family Rosary means filling daily life with very different images, images of the mystery of salvation: the image of the Redeemer, the image of his most Blessed Mother. The family that recites the Rosary together reproduces something of the atmosphere of the household of Nazareth: its members place Jesus at the center, they share his joys and sorrows, they place their needs and their plans in his hands, they draw from him the hope and the strength to go on.

... and children

42. It is also beautiful and fruitful to entrust to this prayer the growth and development of children. Does the Rosary not follow the life of Christ, from his conception to his death, and then to his Resurrection and his glory? Parents are finding it ever more difficult to follow the lives of their children as they grow to maturity. In a society of advanced technology, of mass communications and globalization, everything has become hurried, and the cultural distance between generations is growing ever greater. The most diverse messages and the most unpredictable experiences rapidly make their way into the lives of children and adolescents, and parents can become
quite anxious about the dangers their children face. At times parents suffer acute disappointment at the failure of their children to resist the seductions of the drug culture, the lure of an unbridled hedonism, the temptation to violence, and the manifold expressions of meaninglessness and despair.

To pray the Rosary for children, and even more, with children, training them from their earliest years to experience this daily “pause for prayer” with the family, is admittedly not the solution to every problem, but it is a spiritual aid which should not be underestimated. It could be objected that the Rosary seems hardly suited to the taste of children and young people of today. But perhaps the objection is directed to an impoverished method of praying it. Furthermore, without prejudice to the Rosary's basic structure, there is nothing to stop children and young people from praying it — either within the family or in groups — with appropriate symbolic and practical aids to understanding and appreciation. Why not try it? With God’s help, a pastoral approach to youth which is positive, impassioned and creative — as shown by the World Youth Days! — is capable of achieving quite remarkable results. If the Rosary is well presented, I am sure that young people will once more surprise adults by the way they make this prayer their own and recite it with the enthusiasm typical of their age group.

The Rosary, a treasure to be rediscovered

43. Dear brothers and sisters! A prayer so easy and yet so rich truly deserves to be rediscovered by the Christian community. Let us do so, especially this year, as a means of confirming the direction outlined in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* from which the pastoral plans of so many particular Churches have drawn inspiration as they look to the immediate future.

I turn particularly to you, my dear Brother Bishops, priests and deacons, and to you, pastoral agents in your different ministries: through your own personal experience of the beauty of the Rosary, may you come to promote it with conviction.

I also place my trust in you, theologians: by your sage and rigorous reflection, rooted in the word of God and sensitive to the lived experience of the Christian people, may you help them to discover the Biblical
foundations, the spiritual riches and the pastoral value of this traditional prayer.

I count on you, consecrated men and women, called in a particular way to contemplate the face of Christ at the school of Mary.

I look to all of you, brothers and sisters of every state of life, to you, Christian families, to you, the sick and elderly, and to you, young people: confidently take up the Rosary once again. Rediscover the Rosary in the light of Scripture, in harmony with the Liturgy, and in the context of your daily lives.

May this appeal of mine not go unheard! At the start of the twenty-fifth year of my Pontificate, I entrust this Apostolic Letter to the loving hands of the Virgin Mary, prostrating myself in spirit before her image in the splendid Shrine built for her by Blessed Bartolo Longo, the apostle of the Rosary. I willingly make my own the touching words with which he concluded his well-known Supplication to the Queen of the Holy Rosary: “O Blessed Rosary of Mary, sweet chain which unites us to God, bond of love which unites us to the angels, tower of salvation against the assaults of Hell, safe port in our universal shipwreck, we will never abandon you. You will be our comfort in the hour of death: yours our final kiss as life ebbs away. And the last word from our lips will be your sweet name, O Queen of the Rosary of Pompei, O dearest Mother, O Refuge of Sinners, O Sovereign Consoler of the Afflicted. May you be everywhere blessed, today and always, on earth and in heaven.”

From the Vatican, on the 16th day of October in the year 2002, the beginning of the twenty-fifth year of my Pontificate.

JOHN PAUL II


[10] 10 =Ibid.,

33: loc. cit., 289.

[11] 11 It is well-known and bears repeating that private revelations are not the same as public revelation, which is binding on the whole Church. It is the task of the Magisterium to discern and recognize the authenticity and value of private revelations for the piety of the faithful.


[16] 16 Ibid., 12.


22 =Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

23 =Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2679.

24 =Ibid.

, 2675.

25 The *Supplication to the Queen of the Holy Rosary* was composed by Blessed Bartolo Longo in 1883 in response to the appeal of Pope Leo XIII, made in his first Encyclical on the Rosary, for the spiritual commitment of all Catholics in combating social ills. It is solemnly recited twice yearly, in May and October.

26 =Divina Commedia,

Paradiso XXXIII, 13–15.


30 No. 515.


34 =Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2616.
Christmas greeting address to the Roman Curia (December 21, 2002)

Your Eminences,

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,

Men and Women Religious and Lay People of the Roman Curia,

1. *Cum Maria contemplemur Christi vultum* (With Mary let us contemplate the face of Christ)! The meeting which gathers us today in accordance with a beautiful custom has a marked family atmosphere. We want to exchange good wishes in the imminence of Holy Night, on which we will pause to contemplate the face of Christ with Mary. I thank Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the new Dean of the College of Cardinals, for the thoughts and sentiments he has expressed with noble words on behalf of you all. On this occasion, I would also like to extend an affectionate greeting and good wishes to the Dean emeritus, Cardinal Bernardin Gantin, and to express deep gratitude to him for all his work at the service of this Apostolic See.
This is a particularly important Christmas for me, because it falls in the 25th year of my Pontificate. This particular circumstance impels me to share with you my "gratitude" to the Lord for the gifts he has lavished upon me in this long period spent at the service of the universal Church.

I would also like to say a very cordial "thank you" to you who are especially close to me, day after day, with your competent and affectionate collaboration. Without you, my ministry could not be satisfactorily carried out. I ask the Lord to reward you for this service to the Successor of Peter and to enable you to derive deep joy and spiritual comfort from it.

2. The Year of the Rosary in which our meeting takes place makes it special. This year aims to revive in the Christian community a prayer that is more effective than ever, also in the light of the theological and spiritual directives outlined by the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, it is a Marian prayer with a distinctly Christological heart.

On this occasion, in reviewing, as is our custom, the principal events that have marked my ministry in recent months, I would like to do so in the perspective which the Rosary suggests: with a contemplative gaze that brings to the fore the sign of Christ's presence in the events themselves. In this sense, in the Apostolic Letter Rosarium Virginis Mariae, I underlined the anthropological significance of this prayer (cf. n. 25); by training us to contemplate Christ, it guides us to see humanity and history in the light of his Gospel.

3. How can we forget, first of all, that the face of Christ continues to have a truly passionate, sorrowful expression because of the conflicts that are bathing so many regions of the world in blood, or threatening to break out with new virulence? The situation of the Holy Land continues to be emblematic, but other "forgotten" wars are equally devastating. Then terrorism continues to reap victims and to widen breaches.

In the face of this panorama streaked with blood, the Church does not cease to make her voice heard and, above all, she continues to raise her prayer. This is what she did in particular last 24 January on the World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi, when with representatives of the other religions, we witnessed to the mission of peace which is a special duty for all who believe in God. We must continue to cry out loudly: "religions are

I also reaffirmed this truth in my Message for Peace for the coming 1 January, commemorating Pacem in Terris, the great Encyclical of Blessed John XXIII, who, on 11 April 1963 - almost 40 years have passed since then! - raised his voice at a difficult time in history to point out truth, justice, love and freedom as the "pillars" of true peace.

4. The face of Christ! If we look around us with a contemplative gaze, it will not be difficult to discern a ray of his splendor in the beauties of creation. But we will be forced at the same time to regret the devastation that human carelessness can cause the environment, every day inflicting wounds on nature that turn against man himself. I am therefore glad that I have been able to witness this year too, on various occasions, to the Church's commitment in the context of ecology.

Moreover, in this regard, doubly significant, since it is a result of collaboration between the Churches, is the Declaration that I signed on 10 June with His Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I who was in Venice, by means of a special video link. We told the world that everyone must have a new "ecological awareness" for the future of humanity and with special concern for children, as an expression of responsibility towards self, towards others and towards creation.

5. Let us then look at all I have been granted to do with regard to relations with the States. I have reminded everyone of the urgent need to make the dignity of the human person and the service of the common good the focus of national and international policies. It is to announce this that the Church participates, in her own capacity, in international organizations. This is the reason for the agreements she stipulates, with a view not only to the expectations of believers but also to the good of all citizens.

In the address I gave to the Parliament of the Italian Republic on 14 November last, I underlined that the great challenge of a democratic State is its ability to found itself on the principle of the recognition of the inalienable rights of man, and on the generous, solid cooperation of all in building the common good of the nation.
It is only right to recall that my Venerable Predecessor, Pius XII referred to these values 60 years ago, in his *Radio Message of 24 December 1942*. Mentioning with deep feeling "the stream of tears and sorrows" and the "accumulation of suffering and torment" that derive from the "devastating, terrible conflict" (*AAS*, 35 [1943], 24), the great Pontiff clearly outlined the universal and indispensable principals according to which, once the "dreadful catastrophe" of the war (*AAS*, *loc. cit.*, p. 18) was over, it would be necessary to build the "new national and international order so ardently desired by all peoples" (*AAS*, *loc. cit.*, p. 10).

The years that have passed since then have only confirmed the farsighted wisdom of those lessons. How can we fail to hope that hearts, *especially the hearts of the young*, will open to accept these values in order to build a future of true and lasting peace?

6. Speaking of the young, our thoughts turn to the unforgettable experiences of *World Youth Day*, celebrated in July in Toronto. A meeting with young people is always an involving, and I would say "regenerating" event. This year the theme reminded them of their missionary commitment on the basis of Christ's mandate: to be the "light of the world" and "salt of the earth". It is wonderful to see that once again the young people did not let us down. Despite difficulties, vast numbers came to take part.

The presence of so many young people at the meeting with the Gospel and with the Pope should certainly not make us forget all the others who remain on the fringes or have fallen away, allured by other messages or confused by a thousand contradictory suggestions. It is up to the young people to become the evangelizers of their peers. If pastoral care can involve them, young people will not disappoint the Church, because the Gospel is "young" and can speak to the hearts of the young.

7. I then recall, with especially heartfelt gratitude to the Lord, the headway that the ecumenical process has made this year too. In fact there have also been plenty of reasons for dismay.

However, we must look at the light parts rather than at the shadows.

Among the light patches, in addition to the Declaration signed with Patriarch Bartholomew I, already mentioned, I would like above all to recall the meeting with the Delegation of the Orthodox Church of Greece, which
came to visit me on 11 March, bringing a message from His Beatitude Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece. Thus I was able to relive, in a certain way, the atmosphere I experienced last year during my visit to Greece in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul. Although some causes for distance still remain, this attitude of reciprocal openness is certainly a ray of hope.

The same should be said with regard to the visit paid to me by the Orthodox Patriarch Teoctist of Romania with whom I signed a Common Declaration last October. When will the Lord at last give us the joy of full communion with our Orthodox brethren? The answer remains shrouded in the mystery of divine Providence. However, trust in God does not dispense us from personal commitment. This requires that we intensify above all the ecumenism of prayer and of holiness.

8. In this overview, I would like lastly to single out holiness as the highest "peak" in the ecclesial "landscape", since this year too I had the joy of raising to the honors of the altar so many of the Church’s children who distinguished themselves in fidelity to the Gospel. *Cum Maria contemplemur Christi vultum!* It is in the saints that "God shows to men, in a vivid way, his presence and his face" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 50).

I praise God for the beatifications and canonizations that took place during my Apostolic Visit to Guatemala City and to Mexico City. Further, how can I fail to mention the canonizations of St. Pio of Pietrelcina and of St. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, which moved public opinion?

My apostolic journey to Poland for the dedication of the Shrine of Divine Mercy in Kraków-Łagiewniki also took place in the sign of holiness. On that occasion I could once again remind our world, tempted to feel discouraged in the face of so many unsolved problems and the unknown threats of the future, that God is "rich in mercy". For those who trust in him nothing is ever lost for good; everything can be pieced together again.

9. *Cum Maria contemplemur Christi vultum!*

Dear co-workers of the Roman Curia, dear brothers and sisters, it is with this invitation that I offer you my very best wishes for Christmas, close at hand. *"Natus est vobis bodie Salvator, qui est Christus Dominus"* (today a Saviour has been born to you; who is Christ the Lord) (Lk 2,11).
May this announcement bring joy to your hearts and give you enthusiasm in your daily work for the Holy See.

On the day of his Birth, may Christ find us with hearts that are ready to greet him and may Mary, Queen of the Holy Rosary, guide us in a motherly way to contemplate his face. Happy Christmas to all of you!

Homily at the Concluding Mass of the 17th World Youth Day, Canada (July 28, 2002)

Dear Young People of the Seventeenth World Youth Day,

Chers Frères et Soeurs,

1. On a hillside near the lake of Galilee, Jesus's disciples listened to his gentle and urgent voice; as gentle as the landscape of Galilee itself, as urgent as a call to choose between life and death, between truth and falsehood. The Lord spoke words of life that would echo for ever in the hearts of his followers.

Today he is speaking the same words to you, the young people of Toronto and Ontario, of the whole of Canada, of the United States, of the Caribbean, of Spanish-speaking America and Portuguese-speaking America, of Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania. Listen to the voice of Jesus in the depths of your hearts! His words tell you who you are as Christians. They tell you what you must do to remain in his love.

2. But Jesus offers one thing, and the "spirit of the world" offers another. In today's Reading from the Letter to the Ephesians, Saint Paul tells us that Jesus leads us from darkness into light (cf. Eph 5,8). Perhaps the great Apostle is thinking of the light that blinded him, the persecutor of Christians, on the road to Damascus. When later he recovered his sight, nothing was as before. He had been born anew and nothing would ever take his new-found joy away from him.

You too are called to be transformed. "Awake, O sleeper, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light" (Eph 5, 14), says Saint Paul.
The "spirit of the world" offers many false illusions and parodies of happiness. There is perhaps no darkness deeper than the darkness that enters young people’s souls when false prophets extinguish in them the light of faith and hope and love. The greatest deception, and the deepest source of unhappiness, is the illusion of finding life by excluding God, of finding freedom by excluding moral truths and personal responsibility.

3. The Lord is calling you to choose between these two voices competing for your souls. That decision is the substance and challenge of World Youth Day. Why have you come together from all parts of the world? To say in your hearts: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Who has the words of eternal life? "You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6,68). Jesus - the intimate friend of every young person - has the words of life.

The world you are inheriting is a world which desperately needs a new sense of brotherhood and human solidarity. It is a world which needs to be touched and healed by the beauty and richness of God's love. It needs witnesses to that love. The world needs salt. It needs you - to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

4. Salt is used to preserve and keep. As apostles for the Third Millennium, your task is to preserve and keep alive the awareness of the presence of our Savior Jesus Christ, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, the memorial of his saving death and glorious resurrection. You must keep alive the memory of the words of life which he spoke, the marvellous works of mercy and goodness which he performed. You must constantly remind the world of the "power of the Gospel to save" (Rom 1, 16)!

Salt seasons and improves the flavour of food. Following Jesus, you have to change and improve the "taste" of human history. With your faith, hope and love, with your intelligence, courage and perseverance, you have to humanize the world we live in, in the way that today's Reading from Isaiah indicates: "loose the bonds of injustice... share your bread with the hungry... remove the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil.... Then your light shall rise in the darkness" (Is 58,6-10).

5. Even a tiny flame lifts the heavy lid of night. How much more light will you make, all together, if you bond as one in the communion of the
Church! If you love Jesus, love the Church! Do not be discouraged by the sins and failings of some of her members. The harm done by some priests and religious to the young and vulnerable fills us all with a deep sense of sadness and shame. But think of the vast majority of dedicated and generous priests and religious whose only wish is to serve and do good! There are many priests, seminarians and consecrated persons here today; be close to them and support them! And if, in the depths of your hearts, you feel the same call to the priesthood or consecrated life, do not be afraid to follow Christ on the royal road of the Cross! At difficult moments in the Church’s life, the pursuit of holiness becomes even more urgent. And holiness is not a question of age; it is a matter of living in the Holy Spirit, just as Kateri Tekakwitha did here in America and so many other young people have done.

You are young, and the Pope is old, 82 or 83 years of life is not the same as 22 or 23. But the Pope still fully identifies with your hopes and aspirations. Although I have lived through much darkness, under harsh totalitarian regimes, I have seen enough evidence to be unshakably convinced that no difficulty, no fear is so great that it can completely suffocate the hope that springs eternal in the hearts of the young. You are our hope, the young are our hope.

Do not let that hope die! Stake your lives on it! We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures; we are the sum of the Father’s love for us and our real capacity to become the image of his Son.

6. I finish with a prayer. O Lord Jesus Christ, keep these young people in your love. Let them hear your voice and believe what you say, for you alone have the words of life.

Teach them how to profess their faith, bestow their love, and impart their hope to others.

Make them convincing witnesses to your Gospel in a world so much in need of your saving grace.

Make them the new people of the Beatitudes, that they may be the salt of the earth and the light of the world at the beginning of the Third Christian Millennium!
Mary, Mother of the Church, protect and guide these young men and women of the Twenty-first Century. Keep us all close to your maternal heart. Amen.
GENERAL
CONGRESS
Seventh Ordinary General Congress of Opus Dei

Since eight years had passed since the last General Congress of the Prelature (the elective congress following the death of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo), the Seventh Ordinary General Congress of Opus Dei was convoked by the Prelate for October 2002. It was held in Rome between October 11 and 22, directly following the canonization of Saint Josemaría. Participating were 250 men and women from almost all the countries in which the Prelature carries out its apostolic work.

As established by the Prelature’s Statutes (cf. no. 133), a General Congress is to take place every eight years for the purpose of studying the situation of the Prelature and issuing whatever directives seem necessary. The Congress also renews appointments for members of the General Council and the Central Advisory of the Prelature. The nomination of representatives to the Congress takes place with the consultative vote of the Regional Commission or Regional Advisories and the other Regional representatives and with the deliberative vote of the General Council and the Central Advisory. To be a representative in the Congress one must be at least thirty-two years old and have been definitively incorporated in the Prelature for at least nine years. Appointment is for life (cf. Statutes, nos. 130 and 133).

The General Congress began on the evening of October 11. On the morning of the 12th, a Mass of the Holy Spirit was celebrated by the Prelate in the Church of Our Lady of Peace. For the women delegates, who began their work a few days after the men, another Mass of the Holy Spirit was celebrated in the Prelatic Church on the 18th.

The required working committees were set up in accord with the different topics to be studied. Suggestions put forward in the committee sessions were later discussed in the plenary sessions and the conclusions of the Congress were approved.

The balance of the eight years since the previous Congress presented, above all, reasons for gratitude to God: the Jubilee of the year 2000; Pope John Paul II’s program for the Church set forth in his Apostolic Letter
Novo Millennio Ineunte, with its emphasis on communion; the striking growth of appreciation for the Holy Father in public opinion during these years. For the Prelature, and for the entire Church, another reason for gratitude to God and to the Pope was the canonization of Saint Josemaría Escrivá. In these years Opus Dei has taken root in seven new countries: Estonia, Slovakia, Lebanon, Panama, Uganda, Kazakhstan, and South Africa. In Kazakhstan, besides the priests and laity of the Prelature who have gone there, members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross from the diocesan clergy have begun working in a corner of the country far from the capital.

The death of several of the first faithful of the Prelature, who knew Saint Josemaría in the early thirties, has represented the end of an epoch, so to speak. The example of their life remains as a glowing ember for those still struggling here on earth, along with the example of many others who in these years have also entrusted their soul to God in a holy way. In this regard, another reason for joy since the last Congress has been the opening of the causes of beatification of a number of faithful in the Prelature.

The development of the Prelature’s work also clearly shows us the need to put ever greater care into the formation of all who take part in the apostolates of Opus Dei, and first of all the faithful of the Prelature themselves. “The Congress has strongly stressed that even greater effort should be put into the five aspects of our formation: the human, spiritual, doctrinal-religious, apostolic, and professional aspects,” the Prelate noted in a letter sent to all of the faithful of the Prelature transmitting to them the conclusions of the Congress (Letter, November 28, 2002, no. 4).

The General Congress also insisted on the importance of apostolate, and in particular on the Christianization of the social environment in which the faithful of the Prelature, ordinary citizens like everyone else, live and work: family and customs, dignity of the woman, communication, peace, solidarity. These are values that the world today stands in great need of, and that the pastoral work of the Prelature and the whole Church must strive to bring about.

In this Seventh General Congress of Opus Dei, as envisioned in the Prelature’s Statutes (no. 140), the Prelate proceeded to renew the positions on the General Council and the Central Advisory, the two organs that
assist the Prelate in his task of government. The corresponding section of this edition of *Romana* lists the appointments made.
PRELATE

- Decrees
- Activities of the Prelate
- Homilies
- Addresses
- Articles and Interviews
Announcement of a Marian year of thanksgiving

JAVIER ECHEVARRÍA,
By the grace of God and of the Apostolic See
Prelate of Opus Dei

DECREE

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Omnes cum Petro, ad Iesum per Mariam! Lead all souls to Jesus, through the mediation of Blessed Mary, in union with the successor of Peter, the visible head of the universal Church, and with the bishops of the whole world, was an intimate aspiration of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, who by the grace of God and the Holy Father John Paul II has been solemnly inscribed in the catalog of the saints.

To realize this aspiration with the spirit of Saint Josemaría—seeking the sanctification of professional work and of family and social life, and thus fulfilling the apostolic mission of the children of God—we go to the mediation of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, the most excellent model of holiness from Nazareth to the sacrifice of Calvary, who participated in an incomparable way in the work of our redemption, giving us an example of the love with which those who cooperate in the apostolic mission of the Church should be animated (cf. Lumen Gentium, no. 65).

Let us beseech the powerful intercession of our Lady, invoking Saint Joseph, our Father and Lord, Saint Josemaría, and all the saints who have given witness to the faith throughout the centuries: especially that large group of early Christians who gathered with the apostles and Mary in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 1:145) and who then spread out all over to propagate the Gospel with the force of the Holy Spirit, and to those who gave their
lives for Christ in this city of Rome, together with Peter and Paul, and who lighted up society with the fire of their faith and their love.

That this request for help from our Mother might rise perseveringly to heaven, we wish, with a unanimous desire in the hearts of all of us, that the time of thanksgiving for the canonization of Saint Josemaría be a Marian time, dedicated especially to the Most Holy Virgin Mary.

In accord with the advice of my predecessor as Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, most faithful son of Saint Josemaría, we want our devotion to our Lady to be more present each day, in everything and for everything, during this Marian period of time. Let us show her our love by putting great care into the prayer of the Holy Rosary and the other practices of Marian piety that our beloved Founder indicated to us. Let us spread the love of the Most Holy Virgin in our apostolic work. This is a sure path to reach Jesus, especially in the Eucharist and in Penance, and we ask her that society learn to respect life, the dignity and freedom of the human person and of the family. And so that our piety and apostolate be nourished by doctrine, let us frequently meditate in this Marian time on the teachings of the Church’s magisterium in regard to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.

For this purpose, having heard the views of the General Council and the Central Advisory,

I decree

for the Prelature of Opus Dei a Marian Year of thanksgiving, which will begin on October 16, 2002 and end on October 16, 2003, the 25th anniversary of the election of John Paul II as successor of Peter.

During this Marian Year

1. In the Centers of the Prelature, the Mass of Our Lady is to be celebrated on every Saturday in which this is permitted by the Liturgical Calendar, and I ask that on this day each one offer the prayer of a part of the Holy Rosary for the Roman Pontiff and his intentions.

2. I also wish that in addition to the Marian pilgrimage that the faithful of the Prelature habitually make in the month of May, that they also go to a
Marian Shrine, saying the complete Rosary in thanksgiving, in February and in October of 2003.

Omnes cum Petro, ad Iesum per Mariam!

Issued in Rome on October 2, 2002, the day of the solemn canonization of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, at the beginning of the 75th year of the foundation of Opus Dei.

+ Javier Echevarría

Fernando Ocáriz, Vicar General

Reg. Gen. R. lib. VI pag. 11

The Cause of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo

JAVIER ECHEVARRÍA

By the grace of God and of the Apostolic See

Prelate of Opus Dei

EDICT

Most Rev. Javier Echevarría Rodriguez, Prelate, to all the faithful of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei.

You will remember that, immediately after his death in Rome at the seat of the Prelatic Curia, on March 23, 1994, there began to be seen clear signs of the solid and widespread reputation for holiness enjoyed by Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei. Desiring to document in a sufficiently ample way his exemplary Christian life, on May 23, 1994, the Vicar General, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, sent out a questionnaire with 252 questions about Bishop del Portillo.

From the testimonies we received, we felt compelled to continue the investigation. After having fulfilled the steps required by the current norms, we have reached the conclusion that conditions exist for the introduction of the cause of canonization of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. I therefore direct myself to all of the faithful of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei and invite those who feel that they have information useful in
relation to the cause, whether in favor or against it, as well as writings of Bishop del Portillo, or documents concerning him and his work, asking them to make them known with complete freedom, thus allowing the investigation to attain its end and the truth to be fully revealed.

Rome, December 6, 2002.

+ Javier Echevarría

Francisco Vives, Chancellor of the Prelatic Curia

Reg. Gen. R. lib. VI pag. 12

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**Activities of the Prelate**

**Pastoral trips**

During the first days of July, the Prelate of Opus Dei, accompanied by Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Vicar General of the Prelature, visited the Marian shrines of Lourdes and Torreciudad. The few hours spent in each place were periods of intense prayer. As on other occasions, Bishop Echevarría addressed words of gratitude to those who live and carry out their professional work at the Shrine of Torreciudad.

A few days later, on July 24, he traveled to Einsiedeln, Switzerland, to pray before the statue of our Lady that is venerated there. That same evening, in a meeting with faithful of the Prelature in Zurich, he said he went to Einsiedeln “following the footsteps of Blessed Josemaría, who went there frequently and prayed so intensely there.”

Bishop Echevarría was back in Spain again at the end of August to confer priestly ordination on two groups of faithful of the Prelature.
He reached Pamplona on Monday, the 26th. That same day he went to the chapel of the University Hospital to pray before the body of Rosario Orbegozo, one of the first women of the Work, who had died that same day, and on the 27th he took part in the funeral celebrated by the Vicar of the Delegation of Pamplona. In the afternoon he had a get-together with several hundred people in Belagua Student Residence.

On the 29th, the ceremony of ordination took place in the parish of Saint Michael. After the ordinations, Bishop Echevarria traveled to Torreciudad, where he remained until September 2.

During his stay in Torreciudad, he dedicated a good part of his time to the future priests and had various get-togethers with faithful, cooperators, friends, and young people who take part in the work of Opus Dei. He received a number of families, including two who were celebrating their golden wedding anniversary. He also had meetings with those who work at the shrine. On the 30th, he celebrated Mass in the Entrearcos Cultural Center, in Barbastro, which was constructed on the site of the Founder's birthplace.

On the 31st, the Mayor of Barbastro and the President of the Provincial Assembly of Huesca gave a reception for the Prelate which took place in the same room of the City Hall where Saint Josemaría received the city’s golden medal on May 25, 1975. At the presiding table, together with the city officials, were the Bishop of Barbastro-Monzon, the Rector of the University of Saragossa, and the Vicar General of the Prelature.

During those day, Bishop Echevarría also participated in some of the ceremonies of the shrine, such as the Eucharistic Expositions celebrated on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. On the 1st, 37 priests of the Prelature were ordained.

The Prelate of Opus Dei was in Barcelona on September 2 and 3. On the evening of his arrival he went to pray before the statue of Our Lady of Ransom.

On Tuesday, September 3, he visited Pineda School, a corporate work of Opus Dei for girls. He greeted the teachers and the non-teaching personnel of the school. Later he made a similar visit to Xaloc high school, a corporate work of the Prelature for boys in L’Hospitalet.
Before leaving for Rome, he visited a number of faithful of the Prelature in various hospitals of the city.

Bishop Echevarría went to Granada from November 15 to 17, invited by the city’s archbishop, Most Rev. Antonio Cañizares, to inaugurate a chapel dedicated to Saint Josemaría Escrivá in the parish of Saint Ildefonso and to participate in a Eucharistic concelebration in thanksgiving for the canonization of Saint Josemaría.

On Saturday, November 16, the Archbishop of Granada and Opus Dei’s Prelate blessed the chapel dedicated to Saint Josemaría in a ceremony attended by many of the parishioners. The new chapel has a large painting by the artist Armando Pareja, which shows Saint Josemaría praying to Our Lady of Sorrows, in memory of the first visit that he made to the patroness of Granada, in April 1945.

That same day, in the Cathedral of Granada a concelebrated Mass of Thanksgiving for the canonization of Saint Josemaría took place at 8:00 in the evening. Granada’s archbishop presided over the ceremony and the Prelate of Opus Dei preached the homily.

During those days, Bishop Echevarría had the opportunity to get together with numerous faithful of the Prelature who live in Granada, Malaga, Jaén and Almeria. In these encounters he expressed his joy over the recent canonization of the Founder of Opus Dei, pointing out that this is a point of departure for a new conversion and encouraging his listeners to show their gratitude to God by their renewed apostolic zeal.

Priestly ordinations

On Thursday, August 29, Bishop Echevarría conferred priestly ordination on three deacons of the Prelature, in the Church of St. Michael, situated in a downtown area of Pamplona, Spain.
Three days later, on September 1, Opus Dei’s Prelate conferred priestly ordination on another 37 faithful of the Prelature in a ceremony celebrated at the Shrine of Torreciudad.

The new priests are from Argentina, Ecuador, France, Italy, Mexico, Nigeria, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, the Philippines, Portugal, Spain, the United States, and Venezuela.

In his homily on the 1st, the Prelate stressed that the ordination was taking place in the year of the centennial of Josemaría Escrivá’s birth and with his canonization rapidly approaching. “He had you very especially in mind, when he prayed for the holiness of his priest sons and for all the world’s priests.” At the end of his homily, he asked for their daily prayers that there be “many vocations of priests with a hunger for sanctity, which is indispensable for the administering of God’s forgiveness, and for satisfying the needs of all souls with the bread of God’s word and the Eucharistic bread.”

In the evening the Prelate held a get-together with the families and friends of the new priests, to whom he transmitted the Pope’s blessing.

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Homilies

At the Thanksgiving Mass for the canonization of the Founder of Opus Dei, at the parish of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, Rome (October 27, 2002)

My dear brothers and sisters
1. It is a great joy for me to be here after the canonization of Saint Josemaría Escrivá and to celebrate—for you and with you—the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar. Once more I want to express my profound gratitude to God, who has made use of the Holy Father John Paul II to elevate to the glory of the altars this exemplary priest, who from his youth felt himself very “Roman.” Let us try to show our gratitude by uniting ourselves to the Pope in this the twenty-fifth year of his pontificate (as the Cardinal Vicariate has asked all of the faithful in the diocese of Rome to do) through the daily recitation of the Rosary, following the recommendations in the recent apostolic letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*.

The scenes of Saint Josemaría’s canonization are still fresh in our memory. Once again I recall that vast crowd of people from many different countries that filled Rome in those days of celebration for the whole Church. They were not (you were not) an anonymous crowd, but rather persons the new Saint is closely accompanying and helping in many different ways. I would like to do the same in my prayer, with God’s help, which, I am sure, will not fail me.

Many of you have witnessed the deep devotion that men and women of all races and walks of life have for Saint Josemaría, and that has brought them to this far corner of Rome to honor the patron saint of your parish. I have prayed for and followed closely, right from the beginning, the pastoral activities that have sprung up here. I am well of the progress that has been made since 1993, when, even before the construction of the church, the first activities were begun. Let us give thanks to God for the blessings he has bestowed on you. But you on your part also have to correspond to these gifts, through your effort to give example as consistent Christians and through your personal apostolate. I am certain that Saint Josemaría’s canonization will result in a greater abundance of heavenly graces for you, for your families and for the entire neighborhood.

2. Among the texts from the liturgy in honor of Saint Josemaría, we find the passage from St. Luke’s gospel that recounts the story of the miraculous catch of fish on the Lake of Tiberias, at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. Once more we have heard Christ’s words *duc in altum!, “put out into the deep,”* which surprised Simon the fisherman and so radically changed his life, making him into a “fisher of men” (Lk 5:4, 10).
Christ’s command continues to be addressed to Christians of all centuries, exhorting them to undertake, with the daring of faith, the duty of witnessing to the Gospel.

This invitation is more timely than ever, as Pope John Paul II stressed in his apostolic letter Novo Millennio Ineunte,[1] and which he later repeated to everyone on the day of Saint Josemaría’s canonization. The Holy Father told us on that day: “Ever since August 7, 1931, when, during the celebration of holy Mass, the words of Jesus echoed in his soul: ‘when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all to myself’ (Jn 12:32), Josemaría Escrivá understood more clearly that the mission of the baptized consists in raising the Cross of Christ above all human realities. And he felt burning within him the impassioned vocation to evangelize every human setting. Then without hesitation, he accepted Jesus invitation to the Apostle Peter: Duc in altum! He transmitted it to his entire spiritual family so that they might offer the Church a valid contribution of communion and apostolic service. Today this invitation,” concluded John Paul II, “is extended to all of us: ‘Put out into the deep,’ the divine Teacher says to us, ‘and let down your nets for a catch’ (Lk 5:4).”[2]

For twenty-five years I was a witness to the profound echo that those words duc in altum! stirred up in the heart of Saint Josemaría. When I met him, he had already borne the burden of many years of generous and difficult pastoral work. Nevertheless, I saw him take up each day with renewed apostolic zeal the tasks of his ministry. Referring to the Gospel text that we have just read, he said in a homily: “Jesus wants us to remain wide awake, so that we are convinced of his power and can hear once more his promise: venite post me, et faciam vos fieri piscatores hominum. ‘Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men’;[3] you will be effective and attract souls to God. We should therefore trust our Lord’s words: get into the boat, take the oars, hoist the sails and launch out into this sea of the world which Christ gives us as an inheritance. Duc in altum et laxate retia in capturam. ‘Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.’[4] The apostolic zeal which Christ has put in our hearts must not be diminished or extinguished by a false humility.”[5]

Faith is the decisive resource to be able to lead men to an encounter with Christ. It was faith in the words of Christ that persuaded the
fisherman Simon to overlook all of the human reasons that were opposed to Jesus’ request. “We toiled all night and took nothing” (Lk 5:5). His years of experience led Pedro to see the situation realistically and to conclude that it would be a waste of time to make another attempt.

We too are confronting a cultural, social and religious situation that, after two thousand years of Christianity, could lead us to a certain skepticism regarding the possibility of success in any new attempt to announce the Gospel. More than a few environments in our society, particularly in Western society, show themselves to be out of step with, when not completely opposed to, the forceful demands of Christian faith and morality. Facing this panorama we could, like Peter did that day, hesitate to “put out into the deep” (Lk 5:4). We could try to shirk Christ’s command to announce the Gospel and the radical demands entailed by the universal vocation to holiness. Let us remember then Peter’s faith-filled response, by which he overcame a purely human logic: “at your word I will let down the nets” (Lk 5:5). And the fish came in great numbers into the net, which was now no longer the crude instrument of a poor fisherman, but the net of Christ.

We can allow no room for doubt. Today also men and women are waiting to hear Christ’s word. They are seeking someone who can show them his true face—not a face deformed by prejudice or ignorance, but the marvelous face that we come to know through prayer: Jesus Christ, perfect God and perfect Man. When the Gospel is proclaimed in all its strength and beauty, when one strives to truly put it into practice, it is not we, but Christ himself, who goes out to meet souls and brings them to the Father.

But witnesses are needed who are credible because of their consistent lives, men and women who in all circumstances rely on the “primacy of grace,”[6] and therefore on the sacraments, and who are also well prepared doctrinally, able to explain to everyone the integral truth of the faith. Therefore, catechism and theology classes for adults are of vital importance, as well as the specific formation that is needed to carry out one’s own profession with a Christian spirit.

3. Jesus’ challenge *duc in altum!* usually doesn’t require exceptional undertakings of us. Our Lord, however, does ask us to fulfill our daily duties with generosity, without shirking our responsibility or complaining
about the difficulties, or thinking that we have already done enough.

We have to vigorously combat the idea that Christianity is incompatible with a full commitment to temporal realities, or that it is far removed from the problems of ordinary life. Here also I would like to highlight Saint Josemaría’s teachings. As you know, at the start of this year an international congress took place here in Rome to commemorate the centennial of his birth. The congress had as its theme “The Greatness of Ordinary Life.” Experiences were exchanged from many different countries, and various aspects of this message were gone into more deeply. If you truly want to seek and find God in the ordinary circumstances of your life, frequent the school of Saint Josemaría. It is not for nothing that Pope John Paul II has held him up to the Church as “the saint of the ordinary.”

Let us strive to serve the other members of our own family better, as well as our friends and co-workers. Let us remember that God comes to meet us in all the happenings of ordinary life, especially when we strive to help others by serving them.

What did Jesus asked Peter to do? He asked him to take up once more his ordinary work as a fisherman, which for so many reasons he might have considered as already ended that morning. How often the struggle for holiness involves a renewed generosity, refusing to say “enough,” and continuing in the fulfillment of one’s duties. That is when the rich fruit comes, the great catch of fish. Our life takes on supernatural value; the Kingdom of God becomes a reality in us and around us. We experiencing and spread the joy and peace of God’s children.

It was precisely his awareness of being a son of God that gave Saint Josemaría the spiritual strength needed to carry out the immense task that God had entrusted to him. The sense of one’s divine filiation is central to a Christian’s spiritual life, as we are reminded in one of the reading that we have just heard: “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,” writes Saint Paul in his letter to the Romans, “but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom 8:15-16).
Let us renew, then, our resolution to allow ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit, who places on our lips, and even more, in our heart, the tender invocation: Abba, Daddy. As Saint Josemaría advises us, let us turn to God the Father with the holy daring of one who knows he is his child. And in order to respond with faith to the our Lord’s command duc in altum!, let us also entrust ourselves to our Lady. It was her unreserved dedication to God’s plans that brought us the Incarnate Word, who transforms us, by the work of the Holy Spirit, into God’s children. Amen.


At the Thanksgiving Mass for the canonization of the Founder of Opus Dei, at the Cathedral of Granada, Spain (November 16, 2002)

My beloved and esteemed Archbishop Cañizares,

My dear brothers in the priesthood,

My dear brothers and sisters:
1. Allow me to make a short digression before beginning the homily. In the Eucharist that we are celebrating, my mind has been drawn to memories of that unique day, October 6. At the end of that ceremony, during which one could sense the active presence of the entire Church (for that is what the Eucharist is), my eyes met the friendly look of our beloved Archbishop of Granada. He spontaneously told me, as something coming deep from his heart, that we had to fix a date for coming to Granada and celebrating this Mass of thanksgiving.

I thanked him with my whole soul for his invitation. Such was his expression of affection, and I say this with all sincerity, that I neither could nor wanted to refuse. I feel very honored to be here with this brother who has served the Church so effectively, who has given such honor to the Church in Spain. The homily I have prepared also contains words of thanks. There is a Latin proverb that goes: when things are said with sincerity they are never repetitive. Rather they are clear manifestations of friendship, of affection, of the fraternity that the children of God should live with those in the Church and with everyone.

2. Accepting the cordial invitation of my beloved brother, Archbishop Cañizares, I have come to Granada to take part in this Mass of thanksgiving for the canonization of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, and to assist in the dedication of a chapel to the new saint in the Church of Saint Ildefonso, entrusted to the pastoral care of priests of the Prelature of Opus Dei. I wholeheartedly thank Archbishop Cañizares for this fraternal gesture and I wish him much spiritual fruit in the fulfillment of the new pastoral charge that the Holy Father has entrusted to him in giving him the care of the Primatial See of Spain. I know that you are going to miss him deeply, although he will be keeping you in mind in a very special way.

My visit to this city brings to mind the beginning of the apostolic work by the faithful of Opus Dei in Granada, which I often heard the founder speak about. It was this zealous priest who personally laid the foundation for Opus Dei’s service to souls in this city, and he followed its early steps very closely, preceded and accompanied by a lot of prayer and generous sacrifice. After many years, almost at the end of his earthly life, he recalled with great affection his first trip in 1945: “Granada is very beautiful,” he said. “It’s a marvelous city, one that I love a lot. I can imagine myself now
being up in Albayzin, in the “Marvelous Manor,” from which you can see the city, the bull ring, the gypsies on Sacromonte.”[1]

During Holy Week in 1945, he made a long and tiring journey through all of Andalucia, to consolidate the apostolic work of Opus Dei that was already being done in Seville, and to explore the possibility of beginning in other cities. He arrived in Granada on April 2, Easter Monday, and went to greet Archbishop Agustín Parrado. He spoke to the Archbishop about his desire to start a student residence here. Archbishop Agustín liked the idea very much and encouraged him to begin as soon as possible. He also said he was pleasantly surprised that the first steps would be taken in Albayzin, one of the poorer sections of the city.

Thus there began a cordial and fruitful relationship between the Diocese of Granada and what is now the Prelature of Opus Dei, which has continued down to our own times. Since that time, how many graces God has showered upon people here, through the spirit and teachings of St. Josemaría! We thank him for this today in this Eucharistic Sacrifice and ask him that, through the mediation of our Mother, our Lady of Sorrows, he continue showing his benevolence to all men and women.

3. The liturgy of the Mass in honor of this saintly priest offers abundant material for our meditation. The proper prayers contain a summary of the spirit that he spread throughout his life. This includes the universal call to holiness and apostolate, professional work and ordinary life as the place for one’s encounter with God, a lively awareness of divine filiation as the basis of a Christian’s dignity and actions. I would like to consider for a moment the miraculous catch of fish recounted by St. Luke in the Gospel, which Saint Josemaría frequently meditated on and used in his preaching.

The Gospel account shows us the zeal for the salvation of souls that burned in Christ’s heart. It is easy to imagine the crowd, hungry for the truth, that “pressed upon him to hear the word of God” (Lk 5:1) This scene is renewed in our own times. Today also countless persons, and I cite words written by the founder of Opus Dei, “want to hear God’s message, even though outwardly they may not show it. Some perhaps have forgotten Christ’s teachings. Others, through no fault of their own, have never known them and they think that religion is something odd. But of this we can be sure, that in every man’s life there comes a time sooner or later when his
soul draws the line. He has had enough of the usual explanations. The lies of the false prophets no longer satisfy. Even though they may not admit it at the time, such people are longing to quench their thirst with the teachings of our Lord.”[2]

Saint Josemaría Escrivá was constantly spurred by the zeal for souls, the desire that everyone, especially ordinary Christians, would find Jesus and follow him closely. This was the reason for his trip to Granada in 1945, and on other occasions. This longing spurred him to bring Christ’s doctrine everywhere, teaching Christians to seek sanctity in the midst of the ordinary circumstances of their life: in their family, their work, their friendships, their social relations.

All of you listening to me have often meditated on these ideas. You know that God is calling you to be saints—yes, saints, not simply good people—saints in your state and profession, in your specific situation in the middle of the world. I invite you to ask yourself, at the same time as I examine my own conscience: How am I responding to this divine call? Do I keep in mind always that our Lord is awaiting me precisely in my place of work, in my home, amid all the relationships that make up my life? Do I renew each day my decision to follow Jesus closely? Do I make an effort to get to know him better and to make him known to others? Do I keep away from the things that keep me away from God, even though others are not avoiding them? Am I faithful to the magisterium of the Church?

4. But let us continue considering the Gospel scene, led by the hand of Saint Josemaría. When our Lord “ceased speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch’ (Lk 5:4). Christ is the master of this boat. He it is that prepares the fishing. It is for this that he has come into the world, to do all he can so that his brothers may find the way to glory and to the love of the Father. It is not we who have invented the Christian apostolate. If anything, we get in its way, through our clumsiness and lack of faith.”[3]

How clear these words are! We need more faith. Certainly, Christians will encounter many obstacles in striving to sanctify the world and earthly realities. Secular society is very distant from God. The prevailing environment is cold, when not frankly hostile to the teachings of the
Church. So many people are only concerned about satisfying their material ambitions. All this is true, but it cannot act as a brake on the apostolic zeal of Christ’s followers. The history of the Church shows us clearly that in so many epochs (always, in fact) the Church has had to go against the current, as our Lord foretold. The life and example of the new saint confirms this. He assured us that “works of apostolate never fail to go ahead through a lack of means; they fail though a lack of spirit.”[4] This is a very powerful truth: when the Christian spirit is alive in a person, in a family, in a society, things go forward. **It’s a question of faith!,** as this holy priest would say.

We can also savor another teaching in the Gospel passage that we are considering. When Christ asks Simon to cast off into the deep and let out his nets, the Galilean fisherman reacts with human outlook: “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing” (Lk 5:5). He was relying on his own proven experience. But he added immediately: “at your word I will let down the nets (Ibid.).” I will set out fishing again trusting in you, and not in my own judgment. And the result was evident. “They enclosed a great shoal of fish; and… their nets were breaking (Lk 5:6).

We have to trust in our Lord! We have to ask him to grant us an operative faith. This is the great “challenge” that the Vicar of Christ on earth, our beloved John Paul II, directed at all Christians on the threshold of this new century: *duc in altum!* Cast off into the deep, impelled and sustained by the strength of Christ’s word. As he said at the end of his Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte,* “Let us go forward in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help of Christ. The Son of God, who became incarnate two thousand years ago out of love for humanity, is at work even today: we need discerning eyes to see this and, above all, a generous heart to become the instruments of his work.”[5]

Put out into the deep! It’s a question of faith, of hope and of love. The Holy Father repeated this challenge a little more than a month ago, in St. Peter’s Square filled with people from all over the world, during the canonization for which we are now celebrating this Mass of thanksgiving. Recalling how Christ’s command always resounded in the soul of the founder of Opus Dei, the Pope concluded: “He transmitted it to his entire spiritual family so that they might offer the Church a valid contribution of
communion and apostolic service. Today this invitation is extended to all of us: ‘Put out into the deep,’ the divine Teacher says to us, ‘and let down your nets for a catch’ (Lk 5:4).”[6]

Let us go to Saint Josemaría. The collect of the Mass in his honor urges us to ask God that “By his example and prayers, grant that in faithfully carrying out our daily work in the Spirit of Christ, we may be formed in the likeness of your Son, and together with the most Blessed Virgin Mary, serve the work of redemption with an ardent love.”[7]

[3] Ibid.

At the priestly ordination of deacons of the Prelature, Pamplona, Spain (August 29, 2002)

1. "Do this in my memory."[1] With these words, Jesus ordained the apostles to perpetuate the Eucharistic Sacrifice and conferred on them the fullness of the priestly power, so that they and their successors, the bishops, would be able to transmit this gift to others—“so that they might be appointed in the order of the priesthood and be co-workers of the episcopal
order for the proper fulfillment of the apostolic mission that had been entrusted to it by Christ.”

Today in Pamplona, and within a few days in the Shrine of Our Lady of Torreciudad, this great marvel will be repeated. Let us not become used to this manifestation of God’s mercy, who calls some men to the path of the priesthood and makes possible their generous response. We ask him to grant this gift to many men, because, as the Pope says in one of his catechetical addresses to the faithful, priestly vocations “are fundamental for the Church, for the faith, for the future of the faith in this world.”

The priesthood certainly is a divine gift for the one who receives it and for the whole Church; but it is a gift that requires the full correspondence of those who are chosen. In addition to the person’s own struggle to be faithful, the insistent prayer of all Catholics is also very important. Let all of us here present consider what we personally have done, through our prayer and sacrifice, to win from the Lord of the harvest a new flourishing of holy and faithful priestly vocations in the Church.

2. We have listened to the announcement of the prophet Isaïah: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me.” These words refer to Jesus Christ, but Christians can make them their own, because all of us are, by Baptism and Confirmation, “other Christs;” or, as Blessed Josemaría used to say, ipse Christus, “Christ himself.” Today, however, the liturgy applies them in a specific way to these brothers of ours who are going to receive the sacrament of Orders. “The priestly ministry, before being a function, is a mystery of grace. It is the mystery of a special call, by which a member of the People of God is invited to dedicate his whole life to the cause of the Kingdom, being marked by the sacrament of Orders with a special character identifying him with Christ the Priest.”

My dear ordinands: our Lord has destined you for something truly extraordinary. You are to “bring good tidings to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor... to comfort all who mourn.” You must bring God to souls and souls to God. “The sacrament of Orders,” says Blessed Josemaría, “equips the priest to lend our Lord his voice, his hands, his whole being.... This is the source of the priest’s incomparable dignity. It is a greatness which is on loan: it is
completely compatible with my own littleness. I pray to God our Lord,” he continued, “to give all of us priests the grace to perform holy things in a holy way, to reflect in every aspect of our lives the wonders of the greatness of God.”[8]

This task far surpasses our human strength. Therefore we all have to feel the responsibility of praying for priests every day, beginning with the Holy Father and the bishops, upon whom falls the sweet but heavy burden of the Church’s pastoral care. I beg you to pray for my intentions and, of course, for those of my beloved brother in the episcopate, Archbishop Fernando Sebastián of Pamplona.

3. We are celebrating the centennial year of the founder of Opus Dei’s birth, and today only 38 days remain until the solemn ceremony of his canonization. These new priests are sons of his priestly heart. During these months, recalling various aspects of Blessed Josemaría’s life, perhaps we have stopped to consider his incessant effort to bring the good news to all sectors of the world. God gave him great qualities: intelligence, likeableness, a capacity to attract others, eloquence in words. He had a splendid training in a variety of human disciplines, in law and literature, in theology and history. But he always assured us that his only concern, as a priest, was “to speak about God, and only about God.” And how well he did so! During his fruitful life, he spread far and wide coins of gold, of God’s love, to great crowds, to small groups, to individuals, in a tireless catechesis moved by his zeal to satisfy the spiritual hunger of hearts. How many souls, prisoners of sin, were freed through his dedication to administering the sacrament of Penance, especially in the early years of his ministry! How many tears he dried and how many hearts he consoled with his fatherly words! How many lights he enkindled in the souls of countless people, leading them to discover the specific consequences of their dignity as God’s children!

For you, new priests, configured today with Christ the Shepherd and Head of the Church, I pray that you may be fully available to sacrifice yourselves joyfully for all souls. First of all for the other faithful of Opus Dei and for the people who come to the Prelature’s means of formation.
Also here the founder of Opus Dei’s heroic life offers us very useful lessons. Our model, of course, is always Jesus. But if in the course of your years of priesthood, you make an effort to meditate on how Blessed Josemaría exercised his mission as Good Shepherd, and try to apply his example to your care for your priestly ministry, you can be sure that you will end up identifying yourself with Jesus Christ in your daily activity. You will discover so many examples of his untiring dedication to souls and his complete self-forgetfulness; you will see the total priority he gave to pastoral concerns over his own tastes and preferences, and the mortifications and sacrifices he offered to assist the path of purification of those who came to his confessional. Go also to the intercession of his successor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, and you will find your faithfulness as men of God strengthened.

Meditate on the life of Blessed Josemaría and draw from it practical lessons for your priestly ministry. And may all of us allow ourselves to be touched by God’s grace, which reaches us through the sacraments. May all of us, with faith and humility, have recourse to Confession and to the Eucharist; may we all receive periodic spiritual direction. You will be surprised at the good these means can do for your souls.

I also thank you, parents and brothers and sisters of those about to be ordained, for your prayers and the good example you have given them, which has done so much to help prepare their souls, perhaps without your even realizing it, to receive the divine gift of the priesthood.

Let us finish, as always, by invoking our Lady. Let us ask Holy Mary that these new priests may be priests to the measure of the heart of Christ, worthy sons of the priestly spirit of Blessed Josemaría. Amen.

At the Mass inaugurating the academic year of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome (October 24, 2002)

The joy and gratitude that we have experienced during these past few days for the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei, is renewed at today’s Mass. We have taken part in an event that, even visibly, has manifested to us the perennial reality of Pentecost, the sanctifying action that the Holy Spirit alone can carry out.

Therefore it is only logical that we go to the Paraclete to discover what God’s will is for each of us in the academic year that we are about to begin. And we also look to the example of Saint Josemaría, to his great love for the Church, and to the fidelity of his first successor in Opus Dei, Bishop del Portillo, which was the foundation God used to raise up the University of the Holy Cross.

What would Saint Josemaría advise us on a day like today? I think that he would tell us, or better yet that he is telling us, many things, and at the same time just one thing: You have to be a saint, an apostle of Christ in the place where divine providence has placed you. And we have to respond to this call, which God addresses to us unceasingly, with a sense of urgency, making it a reality in our life.

Among the numerous texts illustrating the richness of this message, I will cite here only the first point of The Way, which the Holy Spirit has used to bring about so many conversions, both great and small, in countless people. “Don't let your life be barren. Be useful. Leave a mark. Shine forth with the torch of your faith and your love. With your apostolic life, wipe out the trail of filth and slime left by the corrupt sowers of hatred. And set
aflame all the ways of the earth with the fire of Christ that you bear in your heart.”[1]

If we contrast this challenge with the actual level of our Christian life, we will immediately see our own limitations. Nevertheless, we can’t use this to justify a passive or resigned attitude. The secret to making this program a reality is based on true humility, which takes into account both our personal smallness and the goodness and omnipotence of God, who wants to make us holy. For the true source of holiness and apostolic efficacy is “the fire of Christ that you carry in your heart,” the same fire that descended visibly on the apostles gathered together in Jerusalem.[2]

How often Saint Josemaría meditated on and repeated Christ’s words: “I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!”[3] This fire is the intimate warmth of the Sanctifier, which is rarely spread through extraordinary and conspicuous means. Rather it is poured out primarily in the ordinary lives of persons and institutions.

The work that each of you carries out, as professors, students or staff members, is your field of sanctification, the way you personally participate in the mission of Christ and his Church. I advise you to take to heart, as I also try to do, Saint Josemaría’s teaching on unity of life, which is central to his message. This is a high goal: being useful, leaving a mark, shedding light with every corner of our life, striving to make our life as authentic as possible, since it belongs entirely to God our Father.

We know by experience the distance that lies between merely understanding the concept of unity of life and actually putting it into practice. All of us feel the tug of temptations that try to introduce disintegration into our life. At times we may seek to be self-sufficient, which leads us to undervalue certain tasks that we don’t find pleasant, or that we consider unsuited to our abilities or expectations, convinced that our true self-realization is to be found elsewhere. Or, as the other side of the coin, we may perhaps dedicate ourselves with great enthusiasm to activities that fail to lead us towards our Lord, because we are primarily moved by selfishness rather than by love for God.

The concept of unity of life, applicable to all human existence, becomes even more meaningful when it is a question of activities directly linked to
supernatural realities. This is the case with sacred studies, which by their very nature are inseparable from divine revelation, from the gift of theological faith and fidelity to the magisterium of the Church. It is essential that those working in this field strive to truly be united to Christ, to pray and mortify themselves. Thus they will be protected from the danger of falling into lukewarmness and compromising the supernatural fruit of all their effort, which depends on a living faith.

Indeed, without a deep and mature faith, which strives to become incarnate in one’s own life, it is impossible to acquire a theological formation worthy of the name or attain valid results in the scientific disciplines related to the divinely revealed deposit of faith. One could perhaps become erudite, or even outstanding in one’s specialty, furthering one’s self-affirmation. But the true substance of theology and of the other sacred disciplines would remain inaccessible.

Moreover, the acquisition of specialized knowledge in these fields, if separated from a life of piety—a deep and lived adhesion to the truth of Christ taught by the Church—could become an instrument for doctrinal and practical deviations. In contrast, a knowledge informed by faith and piety, combined with each one’s human gifts and unflagging work, will produce abundant fruit. In this way, our daily faithfulness will contribute to enriching a university community that, in turn, will encourage many others to strive to acquire a unity of life. Let us try to never lose this apostolic horizon in our own lives.

We entrust our resolution to seek sanctity in university work to our Lady’s maternal protection, especially through the recitation of the Holy Rosary, in accord with the Holy Father’s recent indications. Let us invoke our Lady with the aspiration Sedes Sapientiae, Seat of Wisdom, asking her to lead us to a deep union with the Most Blessed Trinity. Amen.


[3] Lk 12:49 (see, for example The Way, no. 801).
At the priestly ordination of deacons of the Prelature, Torreciudad, Spain (September 1, 2002)

1. From time immemorial, the Christian people have viewed Marian shrines as the “home of their Mother,” places where the children of God lovingly go to honor our Lady, to entrust their needs to her and to thank her for the gifts they have obtained through her intercession. These shrine are also, as Pope John Paul II said, “authentic Cenacles, where faithful from all walks of life can seek a recollected atmosphere in intense prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus.”[1]

These words of the Holy Father are fulfilled in a special way today here in the Shrine of Torreciudad, the setting for this priestly ordination of a group of deacons of the Prelature of Opus Dei. By his words “do this in memory of me,”[2] pronounced during the Last Supper in the Cenacle at Jerusalem, Jesus Christ instituted the priesthood and ordained the apostles, who would transmit this gift, together with the Sacrament of the Eucharist, to other men, right to the end of time.

Tradition doesn’t place our Lady in the upper room of that house in Jerusalem, where Jesus was gathered with his closest disciples to celebrate the Passover. But we can well imagine that she was nearby. Both piety and historical realism authorize us to find our Lady silently and discreetly nearby, in the very moment when the priestly ministry was born. Her presence becomes evident a few hours later when our Lord, Priest and Victim, consummates his bloody sacrifice on the altar of the Cross.[3]

Our Lady is not unrelated to the priesthood of the Church, as she is not foreign to any reality of the supernatural order. God wanted all the graces merited by Jesus to reach us through Mary. In addition, the divine maternity of our Lady and Christ’s priesthood are closely related. “By assuming human nature in the Incarnation, the eternal Son of God fulfilled the necessary condition to become, through his death and resurrection, the one Priest of all humanity...There is an intimate connection between the maternity of Mary and Christ’s priesthood. Hence a special bond also exists between the ministerial priesthood and Mary Most Holy.”[4]
Let us keep this reality very present in our lives, especially those of you who are about to be ordained priests of Jesus Christ. Go to our Lady in all your needs. Strive to discover her maternal presence in all the different circumstances in your life, and particularly when you carry out the acts proper to the ministerial priesthood. In those moments, and most especially in the administration of the sacrament of Penance and at Holy Mass, it is not you but Christ himself who is directly and immediately acting in souls, using you as instruments. Therefore I advise you to frequently meditate on those words of that holy priest, Blessed Josemaría: “All of us Christians can and should be not just other Christs, *alter Christus*, but Christ himself: ipse Christus! But in the priest this happens in a direct way, by virtue of the sacrament.”[5]

My dear ordinands, let me remind you of two circumstances that are part of the plans of divine Providence. You are receiving the priesthood in the centennial year of Blessed Josemaría’s birth and in the year of his canonization. Therefore yours is a special responsibility to follow in his footsteps. He prayed especially for you when he prayed for the holiness of his priest sons and for all the priests in the world.

2. The founder of Opus Dei said that “the primary Marian devotion...is the Holy Mass.” Well anchored in the Church’s tradition, he wrote: “Each day, when he comes down into the priest’s hands, Christ renews his real presence among us, with his Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity: the same Body and Blood that he took in the womb of the Virgin Mary. During the sacrifice of the Altar, our Lady’s participation evokes her silent reserve when accompanying her Son throughout Palestine. The Mass is an act of the Blessed Trinity. By the will of the Father, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, the Son offers himself in a redeeming sacrifice. Within this unfathomable mystery we can make out, as though veiled, the most pure face of Mary, Daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son, Spouse of God the Holy Spirit.”[6]

This reality has importance consequences for our spiritual life. “The encounter with Jesus, in the Sacrifice of the Altar, necessarily brings with it an encounter with Mary, his Mother.”[7] Likewise, Marian devotion necessarily leads us to Jesus, to the Mass, to the Tabernacle. “At the root of the Eucharist lies Mary’s virginal and maternal life, her overflowing
experience of God, her path of faith and love,” the Pope tells us. And he adds: “If the Body that we eat and the Blood that we drink are the Lord’s inestimable gift for us wayfarers, this gift also bring with it, like fragrant Bread, the savor and perfume of the Virgin Mother.”[8]

Let us strive then to prepare for Mass, to “live it,” and to give thanks after communion, in close union with Holy Mary. In this way, our celebration or assistance at the Holy Sacrifice will bring us an extraordinary supernatural efficacy, because we will be walking very close to our Mother, who teaches us to unite ourselves fully to the Sacrifice of her Son. John Paul II tells us that in Mary’s consent to the Incarnation of the Word, “one can see an adhesion to the substantial truth of the priesthood of Christ and the acceptance of a call to cooperate in its realization in the world.”[9]

3. Every holy priest, down through the centuries, has sensed Mary’s special intervention in the history of his own vocation. The same can be said of lay saints. Blessed Josemaría always attributed a primary role to our Lady in the process of his call to the priesthood, a condition desired by God for the birth and development of the Work in the bosom of the Church. So clear was his awareness of the special intervention of our Mother and the Mother of God that he did not hesitate to affirm that he recalled “many tangible proofs of the help of the Mother of God. I declare this openly,” he wrote shortly before his passage to heaven, “as a notary signs a document to give testimony, so that my thankfulness will be on record, testifying to events that would not have taken place except for God’s grace, which always comes to us through the intercession of his Mother.”[10]

Let us keep this ineffable reality very much in mind and act accordingly. And especially, let us go to our Lady as we prepare for October 6th, when the Holy Father will inscribe Blessed Josemaría in the list of the saints. Our Mother in heaven plays a central role in the daily conversion that we need to undertake in order to receive God’s grace fruitfully. Let us ask her to win this grace for each and every one who will attend the canonization in Rome, and for those who will unite themselves spiritually to this act in their homes. We ask especially for these gifts here in these shrine, where our Lady draws so many souls to Jesus by means of Penance
and the Eucharist. Let us take advantage of the abundant gifts that Our Lady of Torreciudad wants to win for us.

Before ending, I would like to cordially congratulate the parents, brothers and sisters and friends of the new priests. Commend them to the protection of the Mother of God, so that the ministry that the Church today entrusts to them will bear abundant fruit. Let us pray that they be, as Blessed Josemaría desired, “pious, learned, faithful and cheerful, with a sporting spirit both in the supernatural and the human terrains.”[11] Let us pray for the Holy Father John Paul II and for all the bishops, priests and deacons, and in a special way, here, for my beloved brother in the episcopate, the Bishop of Barbastro. Let us not fail to pray daily for many vocations of priests with a hunger for holiness. They are indispensable for administering God’s forgiveness and for satisfying the needs of all souls with the bread of God’s word and with the Eucharistic Bread.

Thus, through our personal struggle and apostolate, through teaching the Church’s doctrine and the grace of the sacraments, we will help many people to identify themselves with Jesus, despite the weaknesses and miseries intrinsic to our human condition. Our Lady will help us fulfill this mission, because “the divinization that grace confers on us is now the consequence of the fact that the Word has assumed human nature, in the most pure womb of Holy Mary.”[12]

[6] Ibid.
[8] John Paul II, Address to a general audience, June 30, 1993
Addresses

At the inauguration of the academic year of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome (October 24, 2002)

Your excellencies,

My dear professors, students and staff of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross,

Ladies and gentlemen:

Allow me to begin by recalling once again the recent canonization of Saint Josemaría Escrivá. I have no need to emphasize the great joy of that day in St. Peter’s Square (because I am sure that many of you had the same experience as I did) when the Holy Father inscribed Blessed Josemaría among the number of the saints. To borrow an expression from my predecessor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, that day, so long and prayerfully awaited, was like “drowning in a sea of joy.”

But it is not my intention to describe my gratitude to God and to our Holy Father John Paul II, but rather to reflect with you on the significance that this event should have for us, as persons closely related to this university. I am certain that, just as for the Prelature of Opus Dei, the canonization of its founder will always remain a decisive moment in the history of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, born from the spirit of Saint Josemaría.
These recent days remind us once again that sanctity is the only worthwhile goal for our life, the only objective able to fill it with meaning. This was the untiring refrain of the preaching of Saint Josemaría, recognized by the Holy Father on the morning of October 7 as “the saint of the ordinary.”[1]

The congress celebrated last January on the occasion of the centennial of Saint Josemaría’s birth, entitled “The Greatness of Ordinary Life,” helped us to go deeper into the beauty and fruitfulness of his message, always old and always new, like the Gospel itself on which it is based. Whatever the work that occupies us, in whatever circumstances, God calls us to holiness. The tasks and jobs that we carry out in this world, in the most diverse situations, should always be understood in reference to the goal of growing in intimacy with God. Otherwise we have missed the right path. As the Holy Father said in his greeting to the participants in that congress: “If a person fails to welcome the grace of God within him, if he fails to pray, if he fails to receive the sacraments frequently, if he does not strive for sanctity, he loses the very meaning of his earthly pilgrimage.”[2]

Therefore, I do not hesitate to tell you, with all the strength that characterized Saint Josemaría’s preaching, that if your work of research, or study, or duties in this university don’t help you to grow in holiness, if they don’t help you to mature in your vocation as children of God, then they are of very little worth. In connection with this, there comes to mind an episode in the life of Saint Josemaría on the occasion of his visit to another university born of his apostolic zeal: the University of Navarre. In the course of that visit, a professor in the School of Medicine referred to their intense years of work in starting the university: “Father, you asked us to start a university—and we’ve done it!” Although he knew well the brief history of that university and appreciated the sacrifice and effort of all those who had worked there, when he heard these words Saint Josemaría answered: “I didn’t ask you to start a university, but to become holy by starting a university.”

My desire and my petition to God, through the intercession of Saint Josemaría, is that this deep truth resound always in the corridors, classrooms and offices of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. In the intimacy of your hearts may you never cease to hear his demanding and
affectionate words: “We have to become saints, as they say in my part of the world, ‘down, to the last whisker,’ Christians who are truly and genuinely such, the kind that could be canonized. If not, we shall have failed as disciples of the one and only Master.”[3]

Let us never forget that what the Church and the world truly need are persons deeply determined to become saints: Christians from every walk of life who seek intimacy with God in all the circumstances of their lives. If we see sanctity as the only true goal of our existence, I am sure that we will attain all our other goals, even the most pressing ones that we confront each day.

Christian hope, as Saint Josemaría’s life and preaching teach us, is the most solid foundation for all our human hopes. God’s grace makes use of the efforts of everyone to construct, day by day, a university capable of responding ever more effectively to the needs of the Church in its evangelizing mission.

The expression used by that beloved professor, “to start a university,” reminds me of the discomfort you may have to put up with during the next few years, while this edifice is being renovated. While I hope this provisional situation will be as brief as possible, all of us for some time will feel ourselves very much involved in the task of “constructing a university.” The need for this restoration work is evident to everyone, in order to prepare a more suitable site for you and for the students who will come here to study. We should try to show our gratitude to the construction workers, praying for them and for their families. Your patience and sacrifices will benefit many people in the future, and also yourselves, if you never forget to seek, before all else, the glory of God. Besides, as Saint Josemaría used to say, how beautiful it is to plant trees whose shade others will enjoy!

Invoking for everyone the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sedes Sapientiae and Queen of the Rosary, and the intercession of Saint Josemaría, I declare the Academic Year 2002-2003 opened.
At the ceremony in honor of Saint Josemaría in Barbastro (August 31, 2002)

Commissioner Callizo, Mayor and Assembly President Cosculluela, Your Excellency Bishop Omella, esteemed members of the Municipal Council, Barbastrans and friends.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude before visiting the exposition on Blessed Josemaría Escrivá’s life and teachings, organized by the Government of Aragon with the assistance of the Municipal Council of Barbastro, the UNED, and the Provincial Assembly of Huesca. We are celebrating the centennial year of his birth, and now only a few weeks remain before the Holy Father canonizes him and the universal Church venerates him as one of her saints.

Although Blessed Josemaría had to leave Barbastro at the age of thirteen, he was always deeply united to his birthplace. He made frequent reference to his love for this city to people he was in contact with here, a love that is reflected in many of his letters. He often called to mind the places where he grew up and where his personality first developed.

He would think of his beloved parents, José and Dolores, who instilled in him a vibrant faith and a great love for the Blessed Trinity. He never hid his gratitude to God for letting him be born, as he put it, “in a Christian home, as was customary in my country, with exemplary parents who practiced and lived their faith.” He prayed for the people of Barbastro each day throughout his whole life, making reference to this expressly in his conversations.

He never forgot the Piarist school he attended, and he remembered with affection Father Manuel Laborda of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, who taught him a prayer for spiritual communions when preparing him for his first Holy Communion, and Father Enrique Labrador de Santa Lucia, to whom he made his first confession.

Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, in his book Immersed in God, noted the striking fact that Blessed Josemaría remembered these names, since not many people could do so. His successor asked many people if they
remembered the name of the priest who baptized them or to whom they made their first confession, and the response was always negative.

He saw in Blessed Josemaría’s conduct a sign of his sincere affection for those who had helped him take his first steps as a Christian in his childhood and adolescence.

Msgr. Escrivá wrote the mayor of this city in 1971: “I am very Barbastran, and try to be a good son of my parents. Let me assure you that my father and mother, although they had to leave this land, instilled in us, along with faith and piety, a great love for the banks of the Vero and the Cinca.” In this noble and rugged land, where people sometimes hide their hearts, you realized that Msgr. Josemaría Escrivá would be averse to receiving any form of public homage and expression of gratitude. So you were very astute in awarding him in 1947 the title of “Favorite Son” without even consulting him or saying anything in advance. It was another reason why this city was so dear to his heart, although, with his good Aragonese stubbornness, he managed to avoid attending the public ceremony.

His attitude was in accord with his motto: “Mine is to hide and disappear, so that only Jesus shines forth.” The founder, who loved you so deeply, saw himself, in the eyes of God and of men, as a poor sinner, and felt that he should not accept any public recognition. But finally, as there is no need to remind you, you overcame his resistance and got what you wanted. In 1974 the full Assembly decided unanimously to present him with the city’s Gold Medal “in recognition,” as the text said, “of the merits of his universal example, and his unfailing attention and concern for the people of Barbastro.”

You had the refinement and delicacy needed when dealing with saints, who reject any form of public acclamation. Many of you recall the last visit by the founder of Opus Dei to Barbastro, in May 1975. His health by then was very poor, having consumed his life in the service of God and all mankind.

During that 1975 ceremony, on top of the emotion occasioned by your sincere affection, his heart was also agitated by the news of the death of a member of Opus Dei. In his speech of thanks, he told you: “Excuse me. I
am very moved, for a double reason: first by your affection; and then, because late last night I received a message from Rome informing me that one of the first persons that I sent to Italy to do Opus Dei had died. A clean soul, a lofty intelligence....”

Now, from heaven, Blessed Josemaría is following your steps closely and offers you his constant help: in your work, in your suffering and sickness, in your joys and sorrows, in your difficulties. If you seek his intercession, this saint, who is your fellow citizen, will transmit to you his love for God, his enthusiasm and joy, and also his holy zeal, which is so necessary on the path of sanctity.

Entrust yourself to this universal Barbastran. Go to him in friendship, especially when you feel yourself weakening on the road towards heaven and in your love for Jesus. He will always sustain you, and encourage you to take hold of the gentle and powerful hand of Our Lady of Torreciudad. “To Jesus,” he wrote in The Way, “we always go, and to him we always return, through Mary.”

Articles and Interviews

Interview with MISNA News Agency
(October 3, 2002)

1. Africa is present in the news above all because of its great human tragedies: its millions of refugees, the widespread AIDS crisis, the endless wars, especially in the tropical areas. Opus Dei will soon celebrate the canonization of its founder. What initiatives is it promoting to give rise to new hope in the African countries with the most problems? How can solidarity be fostered between the northern and southern hemispheres?
The most important work of the Prelature is that which each of its faithful carries out personally, with freedom and responsibility, in his own surroundings and circumstances. The African faithful of Opus Dei, who thanks be to God already number several thousand, try first of all (like the Asians, the Americans, the Europeans) to live their faith fully. Part of this effort involves promoting, shoulder to shoulder with their colleagues and friends, projects aimed at solving the material and spiritual needs of those they live alongside. They are very aware of the suffering caused by AIDS, by poverty, by tribal rivalries, and they are trying to do everything possible to alleviate it. As Christians they see themselves called to seek sanctity in the midst of the world. And their world is the world of Africa, with all its good points and bad.

In addition to this personal effort, the Prelature of Opus Dei has started numerous activities in Africa, principally health and educational facilities: hospitals, universities, schools, centers of professional formation for women.

Since 1957 a good number of faithful of Opus Dei from various countries have moved to Africa to exercise their professions there and to serve their fellow citizens as doctors, veterinarians, nurses, teachers, agronomists. They have spread the spirit that animates Opus Dei, the sanctification of professional work. Today there are also many Africans who are serving their fellow citizens in this way. And, in my view, it is the professional and apostolic work of the Africans themselves, not that of those coming from abroad, which is the true measure of the hopes of a continent where the horizons are so broad and promising.

I would like to add that Africans have much to offer Europe: their openness to supernatural realities; their joy in daily life, even amid great difficulties; their ability to communicate; their esteem for the values of family and friendship; their nobility, which stems from respect for human dignity.

2. As Prelate of Opus Dei, you work within the framework marked out by the Founder and by his first successor. What are the most important recent initiatives you can point to, especially in the mission countries in the southern hemisphere?
As Msgr. Escrivá used to say, the whole world is mission territory. Therefore the Church is called to carry out an intense apostolic activity everywhere. In Africa, the faithful of Opus Dei, together with many other people, including non-Christians, have started many projects in the forty five years they have been present on the continent. I would like to mention especially the Monkole Medical Center, in Kinshasa, a hospital that provides medical attention to people who lack the most basic necessities. This medical center now also has a number of subsidiary clinics in the Congo. I would also like to mention the Lagos Business School in Nigeria, which is dedicated to the training of African entrepreneurs, providing them with a solid preparation in business management, while also fostering their concern for the needs of their community. To bring about human development and to combat poverty and corruption, a good moral formation is required, along with knowledge of the Church's social doctrine, in addition to a solid training in management.

With the canonization of Blessed Josemaría so near, I cannot fail to mention the Harambee 2002 project. The money raised through donations from faithful who are attending the canonization and from other people will be used to support educational programs in Africa. Harambee 2002 is a reminder of what I have just emphasized. It is the Africans themselves who have to be the key force in Africa's advancement. And education is indispensable for human development, since it opens the doors to work and to progress, both material and spiritual. Education is a path, if I may use the expression, to sow hope. The Harambee 2002 project wants to make a small contribution to this immense collective effort.

In this context, it seems only right that we recall with gratitude the thousands of missionaries who for centuries have dedicated themselves generously to educational activities, spending their whole lives in service to others. How great has been their love for Africa, and how greatly the Africans love them!

3. How will the southern hemisphere be present at the canonization on October 6?

I am very happy to say that the southern hemisphere will have a substantial presence there. People are coming to Rome from 84 countries.
Many of them from Africa, after making great sacrifices. I know of people who scrimped and saved for a long time to be able to pay for the trip. There will be a number of African choirs in St. Peter’s Square on October 6.

But the majority of people from countries in the southern hemisphere who want to come, cannot do so. Therefore the Organizing Committee for the Canonization is doing everything possible for those who could not come. Thanks to the inestimable help of the Vatican, of Italian institutions, and of the media, in many countries of the world millions of people will be able to follow the ceremony on television, by radio and Internet. I would like to take this opportunity to express my wholehearted gratitude for the generous help of so many people, also on behalf of those who are far away and will not have an opportunity to express their own gratitude. It is impossible to mention all of them here, because the list would be too long. But I can give them my assurance that I am praying for every one of them.

Interview in Corriere della Sera, Rome
(October 5, 2002)

1. **The Church is about to proclaim the holiness of your Founder to the entire Church. Aside from obvious advantages, isn’t there a danger of falling into self-esteem and self-congratulation?**

I don’t believe that any such danger exists, because canonizing the founder of Opus Dei is clearly not the same as canonizing the faithful of the Prelature. Moreover, the contrast between Josemaría Escrivá’s sanctity and the reality of the personal life of each one of us will now be more evident, and this will spur us to strive to overcome our own defects. I have been a member of Opus Dei since 1948, and it has always been brought home to me that the life of a Christian is one of conversion.

2. **What significance will Escrivá have now, outside of Opus Dei?**

A short while ago, a German Cardinal said that the canonization meant the “deprivatization” of Josemaría Escrivá, who from now on belongs to the entire Church. The teachings of this priest on the sanctification of work
and ordinary life have already spread far beyond the confines of the prelature. They belong to the entire Church, as Pope Paul VI, of venerable memory, told my predecessor when he received him for the first time. And this has meant for many people the rediscovery of the joy of being Christians in the middle of the world.

3. And outside the Church? That is, for the world?

Blessed Josemaría Escrivá insisted that the world was not foreign to religion, opposed to spiritual realities. He used to say that “the world is good, because it has come forth from God’s hands.” And he encouraged people to become “contemplatives in the middle of the world.” He loved the world passionately, without being naive or falling into worldliness. He wanted to properly value everything in this world of ours, both what is positive and what is negative. Thus the Christian, to use an analogy from sports, is always “playing on his home field.” He never feels that he is an “outsider” in the world, and therefore forced to be on the defensive. And he finds innumerable points of contact with all men and women of good will who, even without having received the gift of faith, share many of his own human and social values. The cross of Christ, Escrivá used to say, is the “plus sign” in the world. It unites, rather than separates.

4. The cause for Padre Pio’s canonization lasted 19 years, that of your founder barely two years longer. These have been the most rapid canonizations in recent times. But one might claim that Padre Pio became a saint by popular acclamation. How did Escrivá’s “reputation for sanctity” manifest itself?

In a very normal way. As an expression of the faith and the prayers of ordinary people, who sought out Josemaría Escrivá’s help, perhaps quietly, asking God for a spiritual conversion, for the cure of an illness, or for a job to support their family.

During these years the office of postulation received medical documentation on 48 unexplainable cures. But in my view, even more significant than these were the more than 100,000 “ordinary” favors reported, which were equally real. It is not for nothing that Josemaría Escrivá preached untiringly about the value of ordinary life. In any case, I am sure that many of those who sought out Josemaría Escrivá’s intercession had also sought the help of the holy friar from Pietrelcina, and vice versa.
5. *Opus Dei* stresses its Founder modernity. Nevertheless, *The Way* contains this maxim: “When a layman sets himself up as an expert on morals he often goes astray: laymen can only be disciples.” How do you explain this?

I don’t know if you are familiar with the critical edition of *The Way* that was recently published. There it explains that this point was written by Josemaría Escrivá in 1931, when he was 29, and that he was following an idea of his spiritual director. Certainly, in those days, moral theology was closely linked to sacramental confession, and therefore, to confessors. This is the context in which that point should be interpreted.

On the other hand, the author of *The Way* is the same person who throughout his life made it possible for thousands of lay people, both men and women, to study dogmatic, moral, and spiritual theology at a rigorous level.

6. *If you could preserve only one of Escrivá’s maxims, which would you choose?*

You are really putting me on the spot—the dilemma of choosing! I have never even considered that question, nor will I spend much time thinking about it now, since I think all of them are useful and valid. I will tell you the first thing that comes to mind: “A saying of a soul of prayer: in intentions, may Jesus be our aim; in affections, our Love; in conversation, our theme; in actions, our model.”

7. *At this moment the Work is rejoicing. But there is a time to rejoice and a time to do penance. When the Pope invited the “children” of the Church to publicly acknowledge their sins, did the children of Escrivá find anything to criticize in themselves?*

This certainly is a moment of rejoicing for the faithful of the Prelature, but not of exaltation. As I said before, the canonization has enkindled in us the desire for conversion, seeking to be more generous with God and with all men and women.

The faithful of Opus Dei have taken deeply to heart, as I am sure the rest of the Church has also done, John Paul II’s invitation to ask others for forgiveness. Moreover, following Blessed Escrivá’s advice, we try to understand this petition for forgiveness not as something extraordinary or
exceptional, just as our mistakes unfortunately are not very exceptional either. Self-criticism is not reserved for only a few special moments. Therefore, and I want to speak now in the first person, I try to ask for forgiveness every day, for my offenses against God and against others, especially those around me. The ability to recognize one’s own mistakes goes hand in hand with the ability to forgive, which the Pope is continually urging all Christians to foster. The sacrament of Confession is an essential part of the life of the Church, and is given great importance in the spirit of Opus Dei. It is impossible to attain this ability to forgive without a sincere repentance for one’s own fault. Can there be a greater self-critique than this?

Besides asking for forgiveness for the sins others have committed, we do much good to the Church by asking for forgiveness every day for our own faults and forgiving others whenever necessary. Thus no one in the future will have to ask for forgiveness for our own blindness or hardness of heart.

Torna ai contenuti

Interview in the newspaper ABC, Madrid (October 6, 2002)

Bishop Echevarría, what are your feelings now that the Church is about to render homage to the founder of Opus Dei and ratify his message?

I am very happy, because of my love for the one I still call “Father.” At the same time I know he never liked to call attention to himself, to be in the limelight. “To hide and disappear, so that only Jesus shines forth,” was his constant motto. Now, from heaven, he continues telling us: “all the glory for God.”

In any case, tomorrow he won’t be able to hide.

That’s true, but canonizations are not an act of homage. They represent, certainly, the confirmation of an exemplary life, and they give testimony, above all, to the recognition of the action of divine grace in a soul. In addition, they are an opportunity for us to renew our desires for
conversion, to be faithful to Christ. This desire for a daily conversion, which should continue after October 6, has been my most ardent concern since learning the date of the canonization.

*World interest is enormous. Does Opus Dei consider this a moment of triumph?*

Absolutely not. That would only diminish Opus Dei, and each of us personally as well. Look, a Christian is not on this earth to triumph but to work, using his professional prestige to serve the Church, society and souls. Our founder used to say that the glory of Opus Dei is to have no human glory; its only glory is to serve all souls, without discrimination of any kind. The canonization of the founder is not a moment for triumph but for humility.

*Why humility?*

Because it is a good moment to compare our own lives with the ideal that he taught us and, above all, that he incarnated in his own life. The distance will be even clearer when, with the passage of time, his own greatness is better understood. We have to be very humble. Josemaría Escrivá tried to hide and disappear so that the Work would be more clearly seen to be God’s. He considered himself “an inept and deaf instrument.” Thus we learn that the greatness of the human person is in letting God work in one’s own soul, and in cooperating responsibly.

*Mgr. Escrivá “democratized” holiness, and now the Pope holds him up as an example for the whole Church. But how can a priest be imitated by ordinary men and women whose life is very different and who confront very distinct problems?*

Blessed Josemaría repeated with great insistence that he was not a model for anyone to imitate. The only model is Christ and the sculptor is the Holy Spirit, he used to say. In this case, as in every canonization, the Church invites us not so much to imitate the personality of a particular saint, as to learn, by looking at that saint, to imitate Christ. And Blessed Josemaría, a secular priest who loved the world and secularity, invites us to imitate Christ at every moment and in every place, in all the circumstances of ordinary life.
I am convinced that Saint Josemaría’s life will always be very relevant to each day and age. The best answer to your question will be St. Peter’s Square tomorrow during the canonization ceremony. Tens of thousands of ordinary people will be present there, people who never appear in the newspapers, who find it hard to make their income stretch to the end of the month, whose happiness stems from striving to be close to Christ every day. They have wanted to come to Rome to thank God for the gift of this saint, who has helped them discover the greatness of their Christian vocation.

Could you describe the battle Josemaría Escrivá had to fight to get the Holy See to accept the idea of allowing non-Catholics and even non-Christians to become cooperators of Opus Dei?

I think the word “battle” in this context is not very appropriate. The request that he made, in the forties, to have non-Catholic Christians and even non-Christians admitted as cooperators of Opus Dei was very new in the Church. Therefore it was not accepted right away. But our founder refused to get discouraged and persevered in his request. The struggle was a respectful one that in no way lessened the reciprocal esteem between the founder of Opus Dei and those he was speaking with. Finally, in 1950, the Holy See accepted Josemaría Escrivá’s demand, seeing in it his openness, his bigness of heart, and his respect for the freedom of people’s consciences.

So, it was “respectful,” but a struggle...

This episode seems significant for me, because it sums up Blessed Josemaría’s basic attitude in the whole foundational process, and at the same time reflects the wise prudence of the Holy See. Msgr. Escrivá realized he was raising questions that were new in the Church. But he always wanted to act in accord with the Pope and the bishops, with love and respect for the Church’s authority.

During the international congress last January on the occasion of the centennial, the vice-president of the World Council of Synagogues, Rabbi Angel Kreiman, pointed out that the founder of Opus Dei had set forth, in practical terms, a theology God’s creation and its perfecting by man, a theology that lies at the core of the Old Testament. Could the sanctification of work be a meeting place with our “elder brothers and sisters”?

I remember with great pleasure my meeting with Rabbi Kreiman. I
assured him of my affection for the Jewish people, while I also had the opportunity to greet Hindu and Muslim participants in the congress.

Christians share with the Jewish people faith in the true God and in creation, and an appreciation for work. The founder of Opus Dei often stressed the importance of some words from Genesis, which is the first book in the Old Testament: God placed man on earth so he could subdue it through his work and make it bear fruit for his benefit and that of others. So there are many reason for reciprocal esteem and for collaboration.

The biography written by Andrés Vázquez de Prada cites some notes from the personal journal of Josemaría Escrivá where he recounts his vivid realization of his divine filiation on October 16, 1931. This happened while he was traveling on a Madrid trolley car, reading the ABC newspaper. Could this “very elevated prayer,” as he described it in his notes, have been occasioned by some of the news of that day? Did he remember it for the rest of his life?

Indeed, the note indicates that he was reading the ABC newspaper, but it doesn’t say anything more than that. The notes don’t say anything about whether his prayer was connected with what he had just read there or not. He often recalled his prayer that day. He assured us that he grasped with new light the fundamental Christian truth of God’s fatherly love. God is never indifferent to the fate of men and women. He is a Father who, in a phrase from The Way, loves each of us more than all the mothers in the world love their children.

You must have experienced other moments of great spiritual intensity living alongside the founder. What is your most vivid memory?

Although he never hid the state of his soul, he didn’t like to speak in detail about the relationship with God that filled his days. I recall one day in November 1973 when he told us something that had happened to him the evening before. During his prayer, he felt moved to write some words in Latin: Tenui eum, nec dimittam, “I’ve caught hold of him and I’ll never let him go.” These words gave expression to his immense love, his desire to be united with God and to be faithful until death. And he told us: “This refrain was gnawing at me for two days. These aren’t locutions from God. They are a restlessness that he places in the soul, which finds itself uneasy until they are brought to light.”
And what about more personal memories? What was it like living beside the founder of Opus Dei?

I met him in 1948. Msgr. Escrivá was spending a few days in Madrid, and I went with other members of Opus Dei to a get-together with him. He spoke to us very forcefully about fidelity to the Christian vocation we had received from God. Afterwards he invited three of us to accompany him on a quick trip to Segovia, where he had some matters to look after. I remember it very well: he was singing, joking, laughing, and also making very supernatural remarks. That day it became very clear to me that Opus Dei is a family, and its founder a father to all of us.

Josemaría Escrivá liked to bless the last stones of buildings rather than the first ones. Is the canonization his last stone? Do you consider it a point of arrival or a point of departure?

It all depends on your perspective. In a certain sense, the lives of the saints are extended throughout the history of the Church, through their intercession and example. For the faithful of the Prelature, the canonization is a new point of departure, a hope-filled new beginning, a call to conversion. The point of arrival that all of us should be seeking is the Kingdom of Heaven.

A collection is being taken up, among those who have come to the canonization, to promote educational programs in Africa, the continent of affliction. Does Opus Dei have a predilection for Africa?

Blessed Josemaría never had an opportunity to visit Africa, but he showed a great regard for it. I was impressed by the ardor with which he urged forward the apostolic work of Opus Dei on that continent, and his great interest in the news that arrived from there. I have had the opportunity to go to Africa on various occasions, accompanying Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, the first successor of Msgr. Escrivá, and later as Prelate of Opus Dei. Together with the obvious difficulties the continent is undergoing, I have always experienced the deep joy of meeting so many people filled with faith and with the desire to help construct the future of their people. There is a lot we can give Africa, but also a lot to learn and to receive from Africa.
The Harambee 2002 project seeks to be a grain of sand in this endeavor. At this joyful moment of the canonization, it is a way of remembering with deeds those who are in need. The word harambee in Swahili expresses a reality and a hope: that all united together we can overcome the obstacles. It is perhaps for this reason that Africa holds a special place in the hearts of all Catholics and of many other people of good will.

People who lived alongside Msgr. Escrivá have told me that, while they are very happy, these days are bringing back memories and a certain nostalgia, that they are “homesick,” so to speak.

The physical separation, back in 1975, was very hard for all of us. But for me, at least, I am happy about the joy that he has received, the prize of contemplating the presence of God. I feel “homesick” only in the sense that, although he continues helping us with his intercession from heaven, at important moments I would like to have the security of his explicit advice. But we must also take into account that he never wanted to be indispensable. And when he told us that the moment would come when we would have to take his place, he said this with great sincerity. This is why he wanted us to realize that we are responsible, through our own lives, not only for doing Opus Dei, but for being Opus Dei.

Torna ai contenuti

Article in the periodical, La Razon, Madrid (October 6, 2002)

I met Josemaría Escrivá on November 2, 1948, in Madrid. He was surrounded by university students, in a family style get-together. I was a young student at the time, and I was surprised at his cheerfulness, his enthusiasm and his good humor. He spoke about various topics of ordinary life, and also about the need for Christians to pray and to be faithful to their status as God’s children. And he encouraged us to convert our daily life into a sowing of holiness and apostolate.

When the get-together ended, he asked three of us if we would like to take a ride with him to Molinoviejo, a retreat house near Segovia. At one
point during the trip, after having spoken about many different things, he began to sing, with the naturalness one would find in a family. I recall that I was quite surprised. The songs were popular love songs, like those heard on the radio. One that I'll never forget went: “I have a love that fills my heart with joy....” Between the songs he would ask questions and make comments.

He told us that we should always be very happy, since we are children of God. And he encouraged us to speak with God with these songs of human love, directing them to our Lord and to our Lady.

Two years later, in Rome, when our paths crossed one day, he asked me for something that caught my attention. I saw his constant effort to keep the presence of God, his eagerness to live united to the Heart of Christ while working, resting or chatting with us.

Nevertheless, for a soul so deeply in love as his, as for anyone with a clean human love, this seemed insufficient to him. He wanted to love God with all the strength of his soul. “My lack of piety today makes me ashamed,” he confided to me with simplicity. (I wasn’t even twenty at the time!) “Help me to make reparation.”

Our prayer, our praise for God, he taught us, has to be raised to heaven constantly, “like the beating of our heart.” He suggested that we treat God with the ardent love that we saw in many of our friends who thought constantly about the girl they love and did everything possible to please her. He said that “it shouldn't bother us when, as often as necessary, we act like the prodigal son, asking for forgiveness with sincere sorrow and returning. This pleases our Father God because he knows the poor material we are made of. Therefore always return, and return with love, because God is waiting for us.”

At times people ask me how this holy priest managed to carry out the immense task that God asked of him, spreading the message of the universal call to holiness to the far reaches of the globe. For it is obvious that God blessed his faithfulness with abundant fruit. Thousands of souls on every continent, from every social group and profession, healthy and sick, young and old, have begun to live their Christian life with new vigor and to participate more assiduously in the means of grace thanks to his
preaching. His teachings have helped stir people’s consciences in many cultural, artistic, educational and social environments throughout the world.

His message on the sanctification of work has opened up inspiring horizons to so many people. His priestly zeal has helped countless priests, religious and lay people to respond more generously to God, to collaborate actively in the needs of their parishes, to support the teachings of the Pope and the bishops, to defend the culture of life, and to foster justice and charity towards the most needy. He taught people to work well, with responsibility, with the conviction that work can and should be prayer, conversation with the Blessed Trinity and service to mankind.

How was he able to do all this? Through his abandonment to God the Father, through his trust in grace and his constant dialogue with our Lord, and recourse to the intercession of the Mother of God, the all-powerful supplicant. And through his union with the Cross, and his continuous struggle in little things that led him to begin and begin again day after day: a smile, an act of love, a small service, a door closed carefully, the determination to rise above, time and again, the small annoyances that crop up every day.

And together with this, his joyful acceptance of illness—he suffered for years from a severe case of diabetes—and of the suffering that comes from being misunderstood. I am not idealizing his life, because I have witnessed his struggle, his exhaustion, his first reactions of anger at times when confronted by something that pained him. But he always strove to convert these incidents of daily life alongside others into an epic poem, into heroic verse that he directed towards God.

Some words of his, as I reread them now in a new light, especially console me: “I will always pray for you.” And he continued: “Let us serve God, who has so few people serving him. Let us serve him in the middle of the street, each one in his own activities, loving everyone, giving clear doctrine and knowing how to forgive, because God is continually forgiving each one of us. And to learn how to forgive, go to confession, with love, with devotion, and there you will find peace, the strength needed to win out in your struggles and to love.”
“I will always pray for you.” During these days I haven’t stopped giving thanks to God and asking the Holy Spirit that his canonization might move the hearts of thousands of people, Christians and non-Christians, believers and non-believers, urging them to undertake an interior conversion that will bring about a new sowing of justice and peace.

Yes, this is the miracle that I am asking from him: the miracle of peace, peace among nations, in social relationships, in families, in each soul. Above all, peace with God, because otherwise peace will never take root in man’s life.

And I also ask Saint Josemaría to help us to keep carrying out, shoulder to shoulder with so many people of good will, a joyful sowing of holiness and apostolate, just as he smilingly encouraged us on that day back in 1948, a day that seems so recent in my memory, when I first met him.

**Article in L'Osservatore Romano (October 6, 2002)**

Saint Josemaría Escrivá... As soon as the canonization takes place, it will be very moving to put the adjective “Saint” for the first time in front of the name of the person to whom I owe more than anyone else on earth. Our Lord granted me the grace of being a witness to his holy life, day after day, for twenty-five years.

Among the characteristics that best describe Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, I would like to consider here just one: “unity of life.” Spiritual theology employs this expression to describe the ideal, found in so many of the Fathers of the Church, of uniting the examples of both Martha and Mary, fusing action and contemplation, prayer and work. I use the term “work” here in a broad sense, including professional, family and civic duties. Unity of life stems from the Holy Spirit’s action in a soul. It is much more than a purely human goal, the result of an ordered mind or efficient organization. In a certain sense, it is a synonym for holiness, and therefore, a goal for all Christians.
The apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici* underlines its importance in the context of the sanctification of ordinary life (see no. 17). It is only when our daily duties are lived in the light of such unity that they reveal themselves as so many occasions for union with God, as transfigured by grace. However, when we let ourselves be absorbed by the horizontal dimension of life, our daily activity (among other reasons, because of the rhythm imposed by the very tasks that make it up) leads to dispersion. We find ourselves overcome by hurry and distraction, by the urgent need to find solutions to problems so pressing that they leave no space for other thoughts. The duties of the workplace try to rob time from family life. The examples of a consumer society seek to extinguish an ideal that calls for austerity and sacrifice. Economic needs absorb all of one’s energies to the detriment of higher duties. Thus man’s heart, exposed to such formidable pressures, runs the risk of being torn to pieces. On the contrary, when unity of life is present, the tensions to which we are exposed every day are brought into harmony, leaving our heart free to seek God.

To live alongside Josemaría Escrivá was for me a constant lesson in unity of life. All of his gestures and words and undertakings were explicitly directed towards God. They were born from faith and nourished by hope in God’s help, seeking only to serve Him. In Msgr. Escrivá one could see incarnated the goal expressed by these words from *The Way*: “A saying of a soul of prayer: in intentions, may Jesus be our aim; in affections, our Love; in conversation, our theme; in actions, our model.” Josemaría Escrivá stressed that, just as the human and the divine were united in Jesus, so should they be united in the life of each Christian, called to be another Christ, Christ himself: alter Christus, ipse Christus.

**Consistency between faith and deeds**

Besides his personal experience, constant reflection led him to grasp deeply the implications of unity of life. This unity entails above all consistency between faith and deeds, respecting the moral law without compromises in all the situations (family, professional, etc.) in which the Christian finds himself called to act. Deeply aware of the importance of the example of such conduct, the founder of Opus Dei saw in this consistency the key contribution that all the faithful are called upon to make to the building up of the Kingdom of God on earth. Precisely in this context,
Christifideles Laici (no. 59) recalls the Council’s clear invitation to the laity to overcome any split between faith and conduct, “guided by the Spirit of the Gospel” in the fulfillment of their earthly duties (Pastoral const. Gaudium et Spes, no. 43).

Hence one can better understand why the founder of Opus Dei insisted that the primary condition for sanctifying work is to work well, that is, not only diligently, but above all with a sense of justice and charity towards one’s neighbors, whether colleagues or clients, subordinates or superiors. “We have to work a lot on this earth and we must do our work well, since it is our daily tasks that we have to sanctify” (Friends of God, no. 202). An activity carried out with improvisation or superficiality is of no benefit to the common good, not only because of its intrinsic lack of worth, but above all because it can’t be offered to God. The search for perfection in work is inseparable from an expressly supernatural intention: “Let us never forget to do everything for God’s sake. If we were to do it for ourselves, out of pride, we would produce nothing but leaves; and no matter how luxuriant they were, neither God nor our fellow men would find any good in them.”

True unity between the various spheres in our life is restored when these are elevated, in actu, to the order of grace, that is, when they are referred here and now to God. “We Christians cannot resign ourselves” this holy priest wrote, “to leading a double life—our life must be a strong and simple unity into which all our actions converge” (Christ Is Passing By, no. 126). For Saint Josemaría, attaining such a unity represented “an essential condition for those who are trying to sanctify themselves in the midst of the ordinary situations of their work and of their family and social relationships. Jesus does not allow any division here” (Friends of God, no. 165).

*A fusion of work, apostolate and prayer*

“Uniting professional work with ascetical struggle and with contemplation—something which might seem impossible but which, nevertheless, is necessary in order to contribute to reconciling the world with God—and transforming ordinary work into an instrument of personal sanctification and apostolate. Is not this a noble and great ideal for which it is worthwhile giving one’s life?” This passage, from one of the founder of Opus Dei’s earliest writings, shows the enormous distance that separates his vision of human life from a subjective search for one’s own perfection.
This distance is especially clear in the emphasis he places on apostolate, on reconciling the world with God. The active participation in Christ’s redemptive mission, proper to every baptized person and therefore intrinsic to each of one’s actions, should not only coexist with prayer and one’s normal daily occupations, but should tend to unite itself with them. Perhaps one could say that these three dimensions, taken together, help to define the notion of secularity, a specific characteristic of the role of the laity in the Church’s mission. Secularity cannot be reduced to the laity’s presence in the world through professional work. In Josemaría Escrivá’s message, work (understood, I repeat, in a broad sense) is joined to apostolate, providing constant opportunities for personal apostolate. And the fusion of both these realities is strengthened by uniting them to ascetical struggle and prayer.

**Transforming all one’s activity into prayer**

I would like to pause here to consider a vital point: the effective desire to transform all one’s activities and concerns into an encounter with God, into prayer. Without this effort, a Christian’s work become indistinguishable from that of a person who is seeking only to obtain efficient results or to fulfill a duty. And it will fail to bear any apostolic fruit: “All that exterior activity is a waste of time, if you lack Love. It’s like sewing with a needle and no thread” (*The Way*, no. 967). Josemaría Escrivá helps us see the need to work with our feet firmly planted on the ground, but with our eyes raised to heaven (cf. *Friends of God*, no. 75).

From here stems the emergence of the contemplative dimension as the truly determining factor in the Christian’s action in the world. Work and apostolate acquire their true meaning through prayer. Their fruitfulness to help make the Kingdom of God a reality on earth depends on the fact that they are rooted in prayer and sustained by it: *ut cuncta nostra oratio et operatio a te semper incipiat, et per te coepta finiatur*. Moreover, the very structure of Christian activity requires that these realities be turned into prayer at every moment.

Therefore work and apostolate are prayer. And prayer, in turn, is apostolate and work.

Prayer is apostolate. “Opus Dei’s weapon,” he insisted, “is not work,
but prayer” (Alvaro del Portillo, *Immersed in God*). How much Blessed Josemaría prayed during his life! How much persevering supplication to God for the Church, the Pope, the bishops and priests of the world, for the religious, the seminaries, for all souls. Even reading the paper was for him an occasion to pray continually for the persons and countries mentioned in the various articles. He sowed the highways of Europe with Hail Marys. Whenever he met anyone, he had the custom of first directing a silent greeting to that person’s guardian angel. We read in one of his homilies: “Apostolate is love for God that overflows and communicates itself to others...And apostolate is the precise and necessary outward manifestation of interior life. When one tastes the love of God, one feels burdened with the weight of souls” (*Christ Is Passing By*, no. 122). In his prayer, adoration was interwoven with invocations for the salvation of souls, with acts of thanksgiving for so many divine interventions in human events, and with contrition for what he considered his own ineptitude.

Prayer, then, is work. I have pointed out already how far his view of Christian life is from any form of subjectivity or sentimentalism. This is especially so in prayer. Prayer has nothing to do with a momentary feeling of pleasant emotions. Effort and fatigue are inseparable from the life of prayer. Josemaría Escrivá was very aware of carrying within him, like all the rest of us, the “old man,” and he fought to resist its insinuations. At times he felt that his response had not been completely generous, and he would start over again through an act of contrition, aware that he could always grow in his love. He never gave into discouragement when he “touched” with his hands, as he used to say, his own nothingness.

The urgent need to seek out Christ is found in all of Saint Josemaría’s writings. A point in *The Way* reads: “When I made you a present of that Life of Jesus, I wrote as an inscription. May you seek Christ: may you find Christ: may you love Christ” (no. 382). And in his homily Towards Sanctity: “I have distinguished as it were four stages in our effort to identify ourselves with Christ: seeking him, finding him, getting to know him, loving him. It may seem clear to you that you are only at the first stage. Seek him then, hungrily; seek him within yourselves with all your strength. If you act with determination, I am ready to guarantee that you have
already found him, and have begun to get to know him and to love him, and to hold your conversation in heaven” (*Friends of God*, no. 300).

Many more quotes could be included here. But enough has been said to show that unity of life (like everything that is marked by simplicity, harmony, absence of disintegration) carries with it a reflection of the divine, for God is unity. Therefore unity of life is central to the spiritual life. And in the message of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, this converges on contemplation in the midst of the world. I ask him to help all of us, during these days of grace, to take a decided step forward in our interior life.

**Torna ai contenuti**

**Article in the newspaper La Vanguardia, Barcelona (October 6, 2002)**

People from all walks of life have come to Rome to be with Pope John Paul II during the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá. I must confess that I find this very moving. During these weeks I have heard many stories of generosity, of service, of help offered to those who are sick or poor. I have heard of indigenous people from Cañete, in Peru, farmers from Nigeria and Cameroon, non-Christian families from Hong Kong; people of all social levels and from all parts of the world, who have felt personally called to come to Rome. Their number and diversity, reflecting those who could not come, show that this priest, whom the Pope has now decided to solemnly proclaim a saint, is a living and active model of holiness. He is one of the gifts granted by the Spirit to the Church in our time.

I met Saint Josemaría on November 2, 1948, in Madrid. I was sixteen years old at the time. We were in a family get-together, and he invited me and two others to accompany him by car to visit a conference and retreat house that was being renovated, near Segovia. The trip was a joyful and pleasant conversation with him. He told us that we should always be joyful, since we are sons of God. I was surprised by his cheerfulness and naturalness. At one point, I got car-sick. He came to my assistance as though we had known each other for a long time, like a father who is not disgusted by something that happens to one of his children.
Later God willed that I should live and work at his side for twenty-five years, from 1950 until his death in 1975. I am very thankful for this great gift. His daily life taught me that being close to God fills one’s soul with joy. From the first moment, I realized that he truly loved God at every moment, without waiting for special occasions. I was surprised at how his love seemed to grow each day. I saw in his reactions (and his life contained abundant suffering, sickness and lacks of understanding) that he found God’s mercy at every moment. I think God wanted to make use of Saint Josemaría to remind the world with new emphasis of this consoling truth of the Christian faith: that God is our Father. This conviction, which fills one’s soul and leads it along paths of peace and interior freedom, was the foundation of his daily life, lived minute by minute. He strove, and at times it cost him real effort, to have a constant dealing with God that was filled with tenderness. This direct and simple relationship is at the antipodes of the false idea, as common today as in the past, of an abstract, distant God. His constant concern was that everyone might freely experience the joy of God’s fatherly embrace, and in a special way in the sacrament of forgiveness. Every week I saw him kneeling before his confessor, Father Alvaro del Portillo, filled with compunction.

At the beginning of this year I was asked to give an address on “The Greatness of Ordinary Life” at the international congress held in Rome to mark the centennial of the birth of the then Blessed Josemaría. I decided to center it on his “human and supernatural profile.” His strong personality was evident in living alongside him. His parents had passed on to him an open and realistic approach to life that strengthened his lively temperament. (By the way, I recall that he once told Don Alvaro and myself that, as a young child, he would entertain himself at home by reading La Vanguardia and ABC, the newspapers that his father, José Escrivá, subscribed to before his financial setbacks.)

From October 2, 1928 on, with the foundation of Opus Dei, our Lord let him see that the full meaning of his life was to spread throughout the whole world the call to holiness in ordinary life. Saint Teresa wrote that God was also to be found among the cooking pots. Saint Josemaría, who loved this saint a lot, used to speak of “a Christian materialism.” God is not far off, “where the stars are shining.” We can find him in our ordinary life,
our daily family and professional life, if we seek him. For this holy priest, Christianity is not a sum of external duties that are added on to our ordinary human life and that restrict it. It is just the opposite. God’s grace heals, restores and elevates human nature.

When I contemplate such a great diversity of men and women here in Rome for his canonization, I understand the extraordinary efficacy of his trust in human freedom. His greatest ambition was to help God’s light to reach every man and woman, the light of the Gospel, the light of God’s saving grace. That was the heart of his mission. He loved the capacity each person has to freely commit oneself, and he had a great respect for each one’s spontaneity, which he always saw as a great force for good. I spent many hours of my life at his side and I can assure you that he not only respected but truly loved pluralism in so many of its manifestations, the majority of them, where differences are perfectly legitimate among Christians. And he hoped everyone would share this outlook, since it brings people closer to one another.

His respect for the legitimate autonomy of temporal realities had its roots in the dedication of his whole life to his mission of being a priest and only a priest, putting himself at the service of everyone. From the time of his priestly ordination, he was always aware of his obligation to make Christ present among men. He especially aware of his union with Christ when he celebrated the Eucharist. It was impossible to get used to being with him at the altar. One sensed that each day the Mass meant something different for his soul. But it was always an ardent and loving conversation with the Holy Trinity. Each day he freely renewed his self-giving; the only meaning of his life was to be Christ on the Cross, with his arms open wide to embrace all mankind. He never spoke about politics and he showed great respect for people’s opinions. He often said that he was an “anticlerical” priest, precisely because of his love for the priesthood, because he rejected every undue meddling—and I emphasize the word undue—of the priest in political questions. Thus he defended people’s legitimate autonomy in temporal matters, but also the very high mission of the priest: the dispenser of God’s extraordinary nearness to every man and woman.

During these days, seeing so many people here in Rome from all over the globe, I can only give thanks to God for the fruitfulness of this holy
priest. This gift is a call to all of us, reminding us that sanctity is not something for a privileged few, that Jesus wants everyone to love him: “Everyone,” these are words of Saint Josemaría, “whatever his personal situation, his social position, his work. Ordinary life is something of great value. All the ways of the earth can be an opportunity to meet Christ, who calls us to identify ourselves with him and carry out his divine mission—right where he finds us” (Christ Is Passing By, no. 110).
ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA

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The Centennial of His Birth

Family and education in the teachings of the Founder of Opus Dei

Family and education in the teachings of the founder of Opus Dei

In Chile, the first International Congress on the Family and Education, organized by the Fundación Hacer Familia [Becoming a Family Foundation], took place on August 9 and 10 in honor of the centennial of the birth of Josemaría Escrivá. The six hundred people attending discussed specific proposals connected with the family, education, marriage and work,

As the chairman of the congress, Jorge Montes, reported: “We were truly impressed by the response of so many Chilean families, from Arica in the far north, to Punta Arenas in the south, and representatives from more than a hundred schools throughout the country, who have seen this Congress as an exceptional opportunity to learn and to improve as persons.” The conference showed, he added, “that a broad sector of society in Chile is concerned about these topics.”

Over the course of the two days, seven plenary conferences, twenty reports and ten pro-family activities were presented.

Prominent among the panelists was the Spaniard, Rafael Pich, founder of the International Foundation for the Family, who said that in spite of the fact that today the concept of the family is often ridiculed and discredited, the family is actually stronger than ever. A growing movement among families in various parts of the world to take simple measures and to work together as a team among parents and children, allows one to be optimistic in the face of the “denaturing” of the family that is seen in various trends in today’s world.

A British speaker, Victoria Gillick, gave some strong advice for defending the family in Chilean society. She pointed out specific signs for recognizing when public policies and legislative initiatives are harmful to the family. “The great paradox of our ‘culture of death,’” she said, “is that life is rejected in the very act of embracing it.”
Legislation about divorce, a very timely topic in Chile, formed the subject of a talk by an American family expert, Patrick Fagan. In his address, he pointed out that since divorce was made easily available in the United States forty years ago, there has been “a veritable explosion in the number” of divorces, and that today “more than a million children each year undergo the trauma of seeing their parents’ obtain a divorce.”

Mr. Fagan added that there is a high correlation between divorce and “criminality, abuse, abandonment and drug addiction.” He also mentioned that in the U.S. some quite liberal newspapers are beginning to publish editorials about the need to reduce the high number of divorces taking place each year.

Among the Chilean participants was the well-known poet and theologian Fr. José Miguel Ibañez, who presented the large audience with five points that can help ensure a marriage that lasts “until death do us part.” Another speaker was Cristian Zegers, publisher of the periodical La Segunda, who spoke on “the influence of the family in the communications media.”

The closing address was given by Juan Enrique Zegers, President of the Fundación Hacer Familia. He announced the establishment of the Association of Friends of the Foundation, whose purpose is to develop an Institute for Studies on the Family and a Center for Family Assistance, which will provide free help to poor families.

Symposium in Boston

Despite predictions of a snow storm, 400 people attended a symposium on the teachings of Saint Josemaría at Bentley College, near Boston, on November 16. The two principal talks were by Dr. Laura Garcia of Boston College and Dr. Michael Pakaluk of Clark University. Between the sessions, round tables were offered on work, education, the family and culture.
The event began with welcoming remarks sent by the Prelate of Opus Dei. “Your symposium,” he said in his greeting, “only weeks after the canonization of Saint Josemaría, reaffirms the universality of his message of finding God in ordinary life.” The Prelate also recalled the invitation of Pope John Paul II to “learn the lesson of the new saint: Jesus should be the inspiration and goal of every aspect in your daily life.” This invitation was voiced by the Pope when closing the canonization ceremony in St. Peter’s Square.

Dr. Garcia spoke about the culture of family life. “We devote the greater part of our lives to relationships with family members and friends. These relationships help us to grow in holiness and to take on the likeness of Christ,” she said. Central to family life is the relationship between husband and wife: “For married persons, dedication to God is realized in and through one’s commitment to one’s spouse.”

This was followed by the four round tables on specific aspects of Saint Josemaría’s teachings. The panel moderators were Frank McNamara, a lawyer; Karen Bohlin, Executive Director of the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, at Boston University; Paul Swope, Director of The Caring Foundation; and Rosemary Cook, a teacher and mother of nine.

Afterwards, Father Richard Rieman spoke of his four years spent in Rome living alongside Saint Josemaría back in the fifties. He recalled especially his good humor and cheerfulness: “He was always smiling, and would sing when traveling by car. His joy-filled spirit was a constant reminder of the importance of cheerfulness for Christians.”

Finally Professor Pakaluk spoke about the tie between personalism and friendship. He noted that Saint Josemaría and Pope John Paul II shared the conviction that all Christians should cultivate a close personal relationship with Christ. In this context, he cited a phrase of Saint Josemaría: “Get to know the Sacred Humanity of Jesus. And He will place in your soul an insatiable hunger, an ‘uncontrollable’ yearning to contemplate his Face.”

He also stressed that the relationship between Christ and Christians should be modeled after the relationships between the three Persons in the Blessed Trinity: “There are three important points in our reciprocal
relationship with Christ. First, it implies shared knowledge. Second, it requires a real union with him. And third, insofar as we are really cooperating with him, we become co-redeemers.” It is precisely this intimacy with Christ that was the root of Saint Josemaría’s spiritual life.

Congress in Peru on the University of Piura's first Chancellor

From November 7 to 9 Piura was the site of a university congress entitled “Teaching values in the family and the university,” celebrating the centennial of the birth of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, the first Chancellor of the University of Piura. The purpose of the congress was to study the contribution of the new saint’s message to the formation of values, and to help provide possible solutions to the current crisis of values in society.

Values and their relationship to human life was the focus of both the lectures and the panels. The family was discussed as the cradle of values and virtues, particularly freedom and friendship as the foundations of an integral personality.

There were three addresses on Thursday, the 7th. The first, by Dr. Rafael Alvira, director of the Institute of Business and the Humanities at the University of Navarre, focused on “Unity of life and Christian consistency.” The second, by Dr. Genara Castillo, a member of the faculty of the School of Sciences and Humanities at the University of Piura, dealt with “Values and virtues in human life.” The third, by Dr. Liliana Mayo, director and foundress of the Ann Sullivan Center in Peru, was on “Solidarity and human development.” Panel discussions were also offered on “Values in the family,” “Women and values,” and “Youth and values.”

On Friday the 8th, there were an address on “Freedom and responsibility” by Dr. Antono Fontan, president and editor of the Spanish magazine Nueva Revista de Politica, Cultura y Arte. Dr. Ana Maria Araujo, titular professor at the University of La Sabana, Colombia, spoke on “The family: a school of virtues.” While Dr. Pablo Ferreiro, pro-Rector
of the University of Piura, spoke on “The primordial value of friendship.”
The panels dealt with “Values in university life,” “Values and the media”
and “The values of the citizen.”

At the end of the afternoon there was a Mass of thanksgiving for the
recent canonization of Saint Josemaría, presided over by Cardinal Juan Luis
Cipriani Thorne, Archbishop of Lima and Primate of Peru. Concelebrating
were Archbishop Oscar Cantuarias of Piura, the Regional Vicar of
Opus Dei in Peru, Msgr. Jose Luis Lopez-Jurado, and ten other priests.
More than a thousand people attended the Mass.

On the last day, Dr. Pablo Perez, dean of the School of Educational
Science at the University of Piura gave an address on “Love for the truth.”
Dr. José Agustin de la Puente, president of the Peruvian National Academy
of History, spoke on “Virtues and civic values,” and Dr. Jose María Sesé,
dean of the School of Sciences and Humanities at the University of Piura,
spoke on “A more human world.”

Saint Josemaría and an exhibit of
contemporary art

Agustín Redondela, Venancio Blanco, Fernando Pagola, Ernest
Peshkov and Reinhardt Fritz are some of the sixty-five artists from 14
countries who displayed their works in an exposition entitled “Creativity,
work and the world.” It was inspired by the thought of Saint Josemaría
Escrivá, whose centennial was the occasion of the exposition, organized by
the Mainel Foundation in the museum of the city of Madrid.

Joaquin Sapena, president of the Mainel Foundation, explained that the
celebration was an opportunity to invite artists from all over the world to
undertake “a dialogue, based on their own aesthetic ideas and techniques,
with this universal Spaniard’s message.” Saint Josemaría, he said, was noted
for “his deep love for the created world, his open and receptive attitude, and
his ability to appreciate every manifestation of human creativity.”
At the end of the exposition, artists who so desired donated their works to raise funds for the Mainel Foundation, to be used for development projects in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Mainel is a social and cultural foundation established in 1990 to promote art and culture, especially among the young. It also funds social welfare and development projects in a number of different countries.

Holiness and the World

On November 16, in Oporto, Portugal, the Antonio Cupertino de Miranda Foundation held a symposium entitled “Holiness and the world.” The President of the Supreme Court, Aragão Seia, opened the symposium, whose purpose was to reflect on the message of Saint Josemaría with regard to the role of Christians in sanctifying the world from within.

Maria Luísa Couto Soares, professor of philosophy at the New University of Lisbon, spoke on Josemaría Escrivá's high valuation of the world and ordinary life. In her address “Sanctity and ordinary life,” she pointed out that “in opposition to the boredom syndrome that Chateaubriand called the evil of the century, Saint Josemaría told us that there is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each of us to discover it.”

Fr. Jorge Margarido Correia, a theologian, took up the topic of divine filiation in relation to the meaning that today’s culture gives to paternity. Jose Maria André, a professor at the Institute of Technology, pointed out that in Saint Josemaría’s message “one can speak of a Christian materialism that is opposed to materialisms contrary to the spirit, because the invisible God manifests himself in the most visible and material things.” He also stressed how important it was that this period in history “give to matter and to the most common daily situations their original noble meaning.”

The symposium ended with an address on “Freedom and responsibility” by Eduardo Lucas Coelho, the associate Procurator General.
He emphasized that “responsible freedom is a concept closely tied to values, and requires following the dictates of a rightly-formed conscience.”

Commemorative stamps of the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua

Some 50,000 stamps have been put into circulation in the Dominican Republic on the occasion of the centennial of Saint Josemaría’s birth. The presentation ceremony took place in Santo Domingo in the headquarters of the Dominican Postal Institute on August 29; among those attending was Cardinal Nicolas de Jesus Lopez Rodriguez. After the opening words and the singing of the national anthem, the director of the Institute gave a brief address. In his talk he noted that “just a few days before his canonization, it is an honor for the institution that I represent to be able to introduce a commemorative stamp of the founder of Opus Dei in the year of his centennial.” At the end he unveiled a large-sized silk screen reproduction of the stamp.

In Nicaragua, on November 28, in Managua’s National Palace of Culture, there was a presentation and launching of a postage stamp to commemorate the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá. The stamp has a photograph of the founder of Opus Dei and a handwritten message that reads “Get to know Jesus, make him known, bring him everywhere.” The print run for the 2.50 cordoba stamp is 100,000 units.

Paris: Seminar at UNESCO

The seat of UNESCO in Paris was the setting for a university seminar on November 30 centered on the theme of “The Two Cities: the Earthly City and the Heavenly City.” Its purpose was to study the relationship between Christian faith and personal freedom in the message of Saint Josemaría Escriva.
The topic was considered in a broad historical perspective, right from the early Christians and the thought of Saint Augustine, through the Middle Ages and the modern era, including the writings of the founder of Opus Dei.

Ruedi Imbach, a professor at the Sorbonne, spoke on the thought of Saint Augustine and “political Augustinianism.” The philosopher Blandine Knegel also discussed the thought of Saint Augustine in her talk, showing its widespread influence throughout history. Marie-Françoise Baslez, professor of ancient history in Paris, spoke on the spiritual and apostolic dynamism of the early Christians. Citing the well-known Epistle to Diognetus, she illustrated the timeliness of being “leaven for the multitude,” which the early Christians did so well. Pierre Manent, professor of political philosophy, discussed the tensions and conflicts the Church has had to confront in the last two centuries in the movement towards secularization in the western world.

Finally Cyrille Michon, titular professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne, gave a presentation based on one of the last books of François-Xavier Guerra, professor of contemporary history at the same university and one of the organizers of the seminar, who had died just twenty days earlier. His presentation focussed on one of the central themes in the writing and preaching of Saint Josemaría Escrivá: the freedom a Christian enjoys before God. A Christian is called to flee from anonymity and assume responsibility for his decisions and initiatives, being a citizen of both cities and becoming “leaven in the mass” through his professional work.

Symposium on work and human values

About sixty people from various professions took part in a symposium organized by Warrane College, in Sydney, to commemorate the centennial of the birth of the founder of Opus Dei. The symposium, held on August 24 in the Science Conference Center at the University of New South Wales, was entitled “Work and Human Values.”
Co-chairmen were Dr. Jess Estanislao, former Secretary of Finance in the Philippine Government, who presently heads the Philippines President’s Governance Advisory Council, and Dr. Carlos Cavallé, professor and former president of the IESE Graduate School of Business in Barcelona.

Among the participants were the Federal Minister of Employment and Workplace Relations, Tony Abbott; the Australian National Secretary of the Allied Employees' Association, Joe de Bruyn; and the Chancellor of Bond University (Gold Coast), Imelda Roche. Also participating were Dr. Jessica Milner Davis, the Pro-Chancellor of the University of New South Wales; Angela Shannahan, a journalist with The Australian; and Judge Ron Purvis, Vice-president of the Australian Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Dr. Estanislao urged participants to further the just treatment of employees in the workplace. He stressed that the founder of Opus Dei encouraged all men and women to seek Christian perfection in their work, and to find in social relationships the basis for solving the problems that arise in the workplace.

Dr. Cavallé spoke on “Business and the Common Good.” He stressed the importance of carrying out one’s work with professional competence and an attitude of service.

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**Inauguration of Msgr. Josemaría Escrivá Public School**

“Since his days as a young priest, Josemaría Escrivá gave himself, generously and untiringly, to the integral formation and spiritual attention of children and young people. He dedicated thousands of joyful and self-sacrificing hours to working with children and adolescents in the poorest neighborhoods of Madrid.” These are words spoken by the Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Brazil, Msgr. Vicente Ancona Lopez, during the July 1
ceremony inaugurating the Msgr. Josemaría Escrivá school in Londrina, the most important city in the northern part of the state of Paraná.

Attending the inauguration were many dignitaries, including the Governor of the State of Paraná, the Mayor of Londrina, council members and other civil, military and religious authorities. In their addresses, many references were made to the importance of Saint Josemaría as a model and intercessor for young people.

The Governor of Paraná, who officially inaugurated the school, said that the students were very fortunate to have the opportunity to study in a school with such a patron. “I want to express my gratitude for the presence of all the authorities, parents, and teachers gathered here. Following the example that we see in Msgr. Escriva’s life,” she continued, “all of us here can be sowers of a new seed, a seed that is already beginning to bloom in these students, who show a great desire to learn and to become better persons, attaining their true dignity.”

The mayor, Nedson Michelletti, emphasized the special opportunity that all the teachers, staff and students at the school will have "to get to know the life of Msgr. Escriva more deeply," assuring them that “they will certainly grow to admire him more and more.” “I pray that Josemaría Escriva will intercede before God for our city, for the teachers and staff, and for all the young people who will pass through the halls of this school.”

The school, located in a working class neighborhood, has about 400 students, from 7 to 14 years of age.

Suffering in the teachings of Saint Josemaría

A conference on human suffering in the teachings of Saint Josemaría was held in December at the Monkole Medical Center in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The gathering was part of the celebration of the centennial of the birth of the founder of Opus Dei.

The conference was opened by Msgr. Daniel Nladu, representing Cardinal Etsou, Archbishop of Kinshasa. Three conferences were held in
the morning and a round table in the afternoon.

Dr. Leon Tshilolo, director of Monkole Medical Center, introduced the three speakers, who addressed the role of suffering in the family, in society, and in the training of medical personnel.

Catlyne Williamson, a Belgian sociologist, saw “pain and sickness as a challenge that each family must confront in a positive manner. Saint Josemaría taught that a sick person represents a treasure for a family, by making possible a greater love. Sickness, in addition, often demands the decision to be faithful in love.”

Giovanni Motini, a member of the Ethics Committee of the Campus Bio-Medico University in Rome, used writings of Saint Josemaría to highlight the importance of solidarity with those who are suffering, especially in a society that is going through trying or tense moments. The example of the new saint in his apostolic work with the sick in the hospitals of Madrid back in the early 30’s teaches us that a commitment to solidarity demands the solid foundation of love, Mottini stressed.

Paola Binetti, director of the Department of Medical Education at the Campus Bio-Medico University, presented a summary of Saint Josemaría’s teachings on suffering and sickness. “Suffering is a school of solidarity,” Dr. Binetti said, “and a specific opportunity to live reciprocal love.” She concluded by saying that the best way to confront it is to unite oneself to God’s will, because he is a Father who loves us.

In the evening the round table included the morning’s lecturers, along with the child psychologist Espérance Kashala and the secretary of the school of Nursing, Dr. Tshiswaka. Msgr. Xavier Hervas, Vicar of the Prelate of Opus Dei in the Congo, closed the conference.

Torna ai contenuti

Other Items
New editions and printings of the works of Saint Josemaría

On October 6, 2002, printing was completed on the first bilingual Spanish-Guarani edition of The Way, in Asunción, Paraguay. Entitled Tape, it has a first run of 3,000 copies.

The publishing companies Apostolicum, in Warsaw, and Ksiêgarnia oew. Jacka, in Katowice, have published the books Holy Rosary (fourth Polish edition) and The Way of the Cross (second Polish edition) in a single volume, with a run of five thousand copies. The same publishers have also issued the eleventh printing of Droga (The Way) which has now reached a total of 100,000 copies in Polish.

Logos Publishers in Tallinn has brought out the first edition of The Way of the Cross in Estonian, entitled Ristitee.

In the United States, Scepter Publishers is making available a new commemorative edition of all the published works of Saint Josemaría.

Other publications about the founder of Opus Dei

The French translation of a book by Flavio Capucci on cures attributed to Saint Josemaría has been published jointly by Wilson & Lafleur of Montreal and Le Laurier of París under the title Un monde de miracles.

In Italy, a number of different books have been published in connection with the canonization. Giorno per Giorno con San Josemaría is an anthology of quotes from the saint’s writings for each day of the year, edited by Michele Dolz (Ed. Ares, Milan, 2002). A biography of the new saint, written by Andrea Tornielli, was published with the title Escrivá, fondatore dell’Opus Dei (Piemme, Casale Monferrato 2002).

In December, Ares publishers in Milan republished the biography of Saint Josemaría by Michele Dolz that was offered in seven languages on the
occasion of the canonization of Opus Dei’s founder.

Città Nuova published an Italian edition of a book by Guillaume Derville with the title *Emmaus è il mondo. Pregare con Josemaría Escrivá*, (Rome, 2002). The book has also been published in Spanish as *15 días con Josemaría Escrivá*.

In Germany, Adamas Verlag published the book by Pedro Casciaro, *Nicht einmal im Traum*. Its English title is *Dream and Your Dreams Will Fall Short*.

With the title *Mestre de bom humor*, Quadrante publisher of São Paulo brought out a Portuguese translation of José Luis Soria’s book *Maestro de buen humor*. It presents many examples of the new saint’s marvelous sense of humor.

In Portugal, Edições DIEL of Lisbon published in December a book of photographs and texts entitled *Josemaría Escrivá, Fundador do Opus Dei. Peregrino de Fátima*, by Manuel Martínez, which describes the visits of Saint Josemaría to the famous Marian shrine.

In Spain a number of books have been published during this six month period. Three of them are historical guides:

*Josemaría Escrivá en las calles de Madrid* (Rialp), by Ignacio Fernández Zavala, is a short guide to sites in Spain’s capital connected with the founder of Opus Dei. Another guide is *Josemaría Escrivá en la catedral de la Almudena* (Rialp), by José Miguel Cejas. *La Valencia que conoció San Josemaría Escrivá, Fundador del Opus Dei*, published by Carena Editors and written by Juan Luis Corbín Ferrer, includes numerous illustrations in color and black and white recalling the most important moments spent by the founder of Opus Dei in Valencia.

Two biographies of Saint Josemaría for children have also been made available. Edibesa publisher has edited a comic book, by Pedro and Pilar de la Herran, with pictures by Pilarin Bayes, which is entitled *Josemaría Escrivá*. Meanwhile Magisterio Casals has published, in its collection of biographies for young people, *La aventura de ser santo*, by Miguel Ángel Cárceles.

Other books published in Spain during this period include the Spanish translation of John Coverdale’s *Uncommon Faith: the Early Years of Opus Dei*. The Spanish edition by Ariel publishers is entitled *La fundación del Opus Dei*. And Monte Carmelo publishers issued the biography *San Josemaría Escrivá. Un sembrador de paz*, by José Miguel Cejas.

In the Philippines a video entitled *Gintong Yaman sa Ordinaryong Buhay* [*The Greatness of Ordinary Life*] has been made available. It shows the widespread devotion to Saint Josemaría throughout the country, while also presenting various apostolic initiatives and social projects promoted by faithful of Opus Dei. The video was transmitted by the national television network on October 6.

Another video published during these months is *La Joie de la Sainteté*, the French translation of *La alegría de la santidad*, a short biography of the founder of Opus Dei.

Scepter Publishers, New York, has published *To Africa with a Dream*, by Olga Marlin. The book describes the growth of the apostolic work of Opus Dei in Africa since 1960, when the author arrived in Kenya.

Many of the first women in Kenya helped start Opus Dei’s apostolic work all over Africa. “From Kenya, women of Opus Dei went to start the apostolic activities of the Work in Nigeria, the Ivory Coast, the Congo, Cameroon, Uganda and South Africa.”

Verbinum publishers of Warsaw has issued *O chlopcu, który powiedział “Tak.”* This is a Polish translation of the illustrated children’s book *Historia de un sí [Yes: The Life of Saint Josemaría for Young Readers]*, by Miguel Angel Carceles and Isabel Torra. In Guatemala City, the Spanish edition of the book was printed as a special insert in the newspaper La Prensa Libre, in its daily edition for October 6. One hundred thousand copies were distributed.
Spring Publications of Hong Kong has published *Muhk Yuhk choi Jyu dik Cheun Fung Leuih* (Immersed in the Breeze of God), the first Chinese edition of the interview with Bishop Alvaro del Portillo about Saint Josemaría that was entitled Immersed in God in its English translation.

At the end of the year, Ares publishers of Milan issued a photographic volume on the canonization of Saint Josemaría entitled *6 ottobre 2002: La canonizzazione di Josemaría Escrivá, Fondatore dell’Opus Dei*. It also contains the homilies delivered during those days, both at the Mass of canonization and at the many Masses of thanksgiving that took place in Rome.

**God and Daring the life of a man of prayer**

The historian Andrés Vázquez de Prada has published in Spain the second volume of *The Founder of Opus Dei*, the most extensive biography of Josemaría Escrivá to date. It covers the period from 1936 to 1946.

These were years of intense work and suffering for Josemaría Escrivá and the first men and women of Opus Dei. After the harsh years of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Saint Josemaría strove to faithfully transmit the spirit he had received from God, opening up centers in a number of cities throughout Spain.

Vázquez de Prada presents the reader with numerous extracts from the saint writings that reflect his constant interior struggle and his effort to identify himself with God’s will. Especially abundant are quotes from the correspondence of Saint Josemaría. These letters eloquently reveal the priestly concern and love for the Church that filled his soul.

_His interior life: the connecting thread_

The author finds the connecting thread uniting every moment of Saint Josemaría’s life in his life of prayer and apostolate, a manifestation of his love for God and souls.

In the chapters dedicated to the civil war, Vázquez de Prada shows that Saint Josemaría saw the years of the war as a privileged opportunity to seek
purification and to make reparation for the offenses being committed against God. His letters rarely mention external circumstances of the war or victories. Rather they focus on spiritual and priestly considerations, especially the need to pray for peace and to be ready to forgive.

Also given emphasis in this volume is the founder’s apostolic work with women, which was especially important during these years in view of the future growth of Opus Dei.

Torna ai contenuti
News
Granting of honorary doctorates by the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

The Pontifical University of the Holy Cross has, for the first time in its brief history, granted honorary doctorates. The honorees were Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi (Theology), Prof. Javier Hervada (Canon Law) and Prof. John M. Rist (Philosophy).

The academic ceremony took place on November 26 in the Cardinal Höffner Hall at the university. Participants included the rectors of other universities in Rome, members of the diplomatic corps and colleagues of the three recipients of the honorary doctorates.

In his initial greeting, Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei and Chancellor of the University of the Holy Cross, emphasized the mission of the university as “a living seed preparing new generations of men and women consciously dedicated to serving the common good through the fostering of knowledge.” He also made reference to the example and teachings of Saint Josemaría Escriva, who was the inspiring force behind this university, where the search for knowledge and spiritual life would always be closely united.

“Anyone who has felt the call to make the university the place of his own work,” Bishop Echevarría said, “is conscious of having accepted a great and inspiring responsibility, both before God and mankind. To effectively confront this responsibility, intellectual effort is no less important than the spiritual one. If we want to form minds capable of orienting themselves towards the truth, we must form souls thirsting for God.”

The first doctorate was awarded to Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, Archbishop of Milan, who gave a presentation on “Timeliness of the encyclical Veritatis Splendor: the relationship between truth and freedom.” The Cardinal noted that history has shown that freedom alone, uprooted from all objectivity, is unable to satisfactorily distinguish good and evil. He spoke of the need for freedom and truth to be illuminated by the light of faith brought by the announcement of the Gospel. The archbishop said that “the life of the believer, especially the life of sanctity, which is the fulfillment of the dynamism proper to moral existence, becomes the most
eloquent example of the truth, beauty, and happiness that are the characterizing notes of a morally good life.”

The second honoree was Dr. Javier Hervada, professor of Canon Law and Natural Law at the University of Navarre. In his address, which he entitled “Confessions of a Canonist,” he outlined his own academic history and stressed the key role that the virtue of justice plays in canon law.

The philosopher John M. Rist, professor emeritus of “Classics and Philosophy” at the University of Toronto, was the third honoree. Professor Rist is a member of the Royal Society of Canada and of Clare Hall in Cambridge. In his lectio magistralis, he analyzed the concept of fundamentalism both historically and etymologically. He postulated that one of the defining characteristic of fundamentalism is that it represents a form of “voluntary ignorance,” since it requires a “radical choice of life that is often both harsh and inflexible.”

Between the presentations of the doctorates a small choir directed by Msgr. Pablo Colino sang a number of musical pieces accompanied by the quartet “Gli amici dell’Armonia.”

The rector of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Prof. Mariano Fazio, noted that “these first three honorary doctors incarnate, each in their own milieu, a model of the outstanding researcher, not only because of their undeniable scientific merits, but also because of their generous service to the academic community. They provide us with as a sure point of reference for our work in the university.” Referring to the service to truth exemplified by these three doctors, he added, “This is the spirit that animates the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross: to humbly seek the truth in order to place it at the disposition of other men and women.”

Torna ai contenuti

Cause of canonization of Dr. Educardo Ortiz de Landazuri
The first step in the cause of canonization of Doctor Eduardo Ortiz de Landázuri, a doctor of internal medicine and professor at the University of Navarre, has ended. Archbishop Fernando Sebastián of Pamplona presided over the concluding ceremony of the process on his life and virtues.

After his death in 1985, Doctor Ortiz de Landázuri's reputation for sanctity spread among people of all walks of life: colleagues, trainees, students, patients, etc. Thirteen years later, on March 19, 1998, the postulator of the Cause presented to the Archbishop of Pamplona the documentation needed for the initiation of the canonical process, the first phase of which has now been concluded.

Establishment of new Centers of the Prelature

The Prelate's vicars in their respective regions have established Centers of the Prelature in:

Barcelona (Spain), Bucaramanga (Colombia, two centers), Celaya (Mexico), Guadix (Spain), La Plata (Argentina), Las Palmas (Spain), León Guanajuato (Mexico), Madrid (Spain), Mazatlán (Mexico), Mendoza (Argentina), Miami (United States), Paraná (Argentina), Pozuelo de Alarcón (Spain), Puebla (Mexico), Salta (Argentina), Veracruz (Mexico) and Verona (Italy).
INITIATIVES
Netherhall celebrates its 50th anniversary

Netherhall House, a student residence in London inspired by St. Josemaría Escrivá, reached the half-century mark this past summer. Its 100 residents were joined for a weekend celebration by friends, patrons and about 200 alumni from around the globe. Students and ex-residents watched videos of some of the more important moments in Netherhall’s history, including the day the Queen Mother came to visit. But more than the historical highlights, the abiding pleasure for the former residents was coming back to their home in London and exchanging reminiscences.

An international residence

Netherhall was acquired as a residence hall for students at London University and other higher education institutions in 1952. At first it occupied one house and accommodated just 25 students, but it swiftly expanded to include the house next door.

Netherhall held a special place in the heart of the founder of Opus Dei, Saint Josemaría Escrivá, who visited it during his summer stays in London from 1958 to 1962.

The residence hall has always had a very international make-up. In the academic year 2001-2002 only a quarter of the residents were British, with 30 different countries represented. Over its entire fifty-year existence, more than half of the 3,000 residents who have lived there for a year or more have come from outside Europe.

According to Jim Mirabal, director during the mid-1970s, it is Netherhall’s atmosphere that makes it special. “There were a hundred people here, and so well did we get on that it reminded one of what Saint Josemaría said about there being only one race, the race of the children of God. One appreciates this later in life.”

Kevin Dalton, a student living during the late 1960s, agrees. In 1968, he says, “Netherhall was free of student rioting — perhaps the only place in London that was. There was too much of a family feel for that.” On its fiftieth anniversary Netherhall extends right round one side of the block, with a four-story specially-built residence inaugurated in 1966 by the
One of the June weekend visitors was the Bishop of Nottingham, Malcolm McMahon. He celebrated Mass in Netherhall Oratory. In his homily he told a packed congregation the story of how he had come to know the original Netherhall House as a schoolboy in 1965:

“I was introduced to The Way, written by Saint Josemaría, when I attended a retreat given here at Netherhall House…. The saying of Saint Josemaría that stayed with me — as did my copy of The Way — is the one that goes, 'You have to be a man of God, a man of interior life, a man of prayer and sacrifice. Your apostolate must be the overflow of your life within.’”

There was a second fiftieth anniversary celebration on September 7. The response was once again overwhelming. Many past residents came for a second time, their numbers swelled by others who had been unable to attend the celebrations in June. A surprise visitor was the archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor

Not everyone was able to get to Netherhall the second time round. Sir Bernard Audley, Chairman of the Patrons and for so long a key supporter, with his wife Lady Audley, sent a letter instead: “We both feel that Netherhall has enriched our lives, as it has that of so many others.” And Augustine J. Chong, a resident in 1960, who became Professor of Physics at the University of Singapore, writes: “I was a foreigner from a tiny country, and yet I felt I was part of a big family at Netherhall.” Buildings come and go, but the spirit remains.

Torna ai contenuti

French course in Nazareth

*Nazareth, Israel*

From June 27 to July 3, 2002, a French course was given in Nazareth for high school boys from various schools in Jerusalem. The language study alternated with visits to places of cultural interest and time for sports. The
participants especially enjoyed their visit to a museum that tried to recapture ordinary life in Nazareth in the times of Jesus. For the boys who so desired, classes of Christian formation were given.

The week spent in a quiet part of the country was an opportunity to teach the boys, in a practical way, the need to learn to live peacefully with everyone and to understand them.

Central American work camp

Diriamba, Nicaragua

Ten students from Netherhall House in London joined volunteer groups from Italy, Spain, Germany and Costa Rica for a work camp in Nicaragua. The project was sponsored by a local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that promotes the spread of farming technology and the advancement of women in rural areas. A generous benefactor from Los Guerreros, a village near the city of Diramba, some thirty miles south of Managua, donated land to the NGO. If the current fund-raising effort is successful, there are plans to construct on this land buildings for these activities in the future.

Under the direction of engineers and construction workers from the area, the university students helped build a school and dug a well and sanitary facilities.

When the project was first discussed at Netherhall House the residents were eager to take part. British collaboration included two aspects, medical assistance and manual work. Kevin, a dentist, with two medical students as his assistants, went each morning to a hospital in Diramba to offer free dental treatment. The hospital lacked the required equipment, but with material brought from England and dental apparatus borrowed from another hospital, it was possible to take care of about 150 patients in the two week program.

Other students undertook a project that involved repairing a roof and painting a community center in Los Guerreros. They also collected the
funds needed to construct a slide for children in the area.

The participants in the work camp are eager to return next year.

Work camp with Australian college students

Mexico City

Warrane College in Sydney, Australia, organized a volunteer work camp in Mexico during July in which 13 college students participated.

The project took place at the Atoyac School in Mexico City. It had two purposes: teaching English to high school students and painting some of the school rooms. Those taking part also had the opportunity to pray at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, located not far from the school, and to visit other cultural and religious sites.

The project, in which Mexicans and Australians worked side by side, provided an opportunity to make new friends and to live a practical spirit of service. Afterwards, the students attended the World Youth Day in Toronto.

A new dimension in work, the family, and education

Vancouver, Canadá

On June 15, over 200 people gathered for a conference on the teachings of Saint Josemaria on work, family life and education, in the foothills of the mountains west of Vancouver. The activity was held at the Hollyburn Country Club, under the auspices of Headford Cultural Club.

The master of ceremonies was David Neima, ophthalmologist and promoter of health and educational initiatives in the third world, who presented Cecilia and Thomas Royals, from Chevy Chase, Maryland. The
Royals spoke on the need to distribute one’s time between professional and family life, and shared their own experiences in facing the challenges of modern life.

Cecilia Royals, president of the National Institute of Womanhood, has worked in national and international forums to foster the care and welfare of women. In her talk she emphasized the advantages of the woman being the “creator of the home,” rather than a passive “wife at home.” The creation of a home, she said, includes the care for all its members, but extends out from the family, the fundamental cell in society, to society as a whole. Her husband, who is Assistant Headmaster of the Heights School, a high school for boys in Washington, D.C., spoke of the importance of the role of fathers in the education of their children.

The next speaker was Theresa Tomory. She and her husband were part of the group of parents who founded Hawthorn School, a girls’ school in Toronto. Mrs. Tomory explained the teachings of Saint Josemaría about the obligations and responsibilities of parents in the education of their children and emphasized that education begins in the family. In this regard she recalled that Saint Josemaría encouraged married couples to start schools. She closed her talk with a description of the beginnings of Hawthorn, and its objectives and guiding principles.

Another couple, Kathleen and John Higgins, spoke about family communication and explained how Saint Josemaría had helped them to be better parents and to win the friendship of their children.

In the course of the conference, the video “The Joy of Sanctity” was shown, which reflects the teachings of Josemaría Escrivá, and an exposition on his life and work was offered. All of his published works were also available for purchase by the participants.
From September 2 to 5, the Casa do Moinho Professional Training Center held its first “Hotel Week.” More than a hundred people took part. The speakers underlined the importance of always applying a professional mentality to work in the service sector, whether this involves hotel guests, the kitchen of a student residence, the laundry services in a hospital, etc. Among those participating was Mara Sueli Nunes Silveira, representing the Department of Education of Cotia, the municipality in which Casa do Moinho is located.

In collaboration with the local government, the center has initiated a program entitled “Apprenticeship in Tourism and Hospitality” aimed at the public schools in the city. One of the objectives of the project is to help girls in the area learn to appreciate, from an early age, the importance of jobs in the service sector and to see them as a possible field of work and personal fulfillment.

University students in a refugee center

Stockholm, Sweden

Every two weeks a group of young men from the Lärkstadens Studiecentrum visit refugees in “Förvaret,” a center for persons who have come to Sweden in search of asylum but who, for various reasons, are to be returned to their country of origin or sent to another country. While awaiting law court judgments and the papers needed to travel, they are not allowed to leave the center.

The young men from Lärkstad spend a few hours there with the refugees, speaking with them about their problems, or simply entertaining the children with games. The ethnic diversity of the students has facilitated visiting people from many countries. The students taking part come from various religious denominations. The visits are sponsored by Caritas Stockholm and other Swedish NGO’s.
From Australia to Mexico

*Atlacomulco, México*

From July 8 to 21, a group of Australian university girls traveled to Mexico to work in the villages of Manto del Río and Potland, near the Toshi Hacienda, a training center for women in Atlacomulco, Mexico. The project involved refurbishing a church in each locality and teaching the villagers how to organize the recycling of trash. In Manto del Río the girls also taught catechism to the village children.

The students made daily visits to families to help in various housekeeping tasks. Those studying medicine and nursing helped out in a mobile medical clinic.

One of the girls taking part commented afterwards: “I thought I was going there to give something to the people, but now I realize how much I myself learned from them. The experience has strengthened my faith and taught me that there is more joy in giving than in receiving.”

The high point of the trip was the visit to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in Mexico City, where the students experienced the deep Marian devotion of the Mexican people and commended their intentions to the Blessed Virgin.

The group, organized by Eremeran Hills Study Centre in Sydney, worked in collaboration with students at the Panamerican University. Both Mexicans and Australians learned from the values of each other’s culture and formed lasting friendships with one another.

Torna ai contenuti

Ordinary life

*Zonnewende, The Netherlands*

Ordinary life and culture and Ordinary life and science were the topics of two conferences in Zonnewende Conference Center, as part of a series held during the centennial of Saint Josemaría Escrivá.
The first of these, on Sunday, September 22, began with a talk by a former juvenile court judge, C. J. Laurentius-Kooter, currently vice-president of the Amsterdam court. The title of his talk was Law and Justice, allies or enemies. The presentation included a brief historical review of the philosophy of law and the legislative role in the administration of justice. The other two presentations were by Dr. Gerard Van den Aardweg, a psychotherapist, and A. Smeets, an educator. The titles of their respective talks were "Psychological reactions to suffering" and "Education, a joint project of teachers, parents and students."

Two photographic expositions were presented: "Friendship translated into cooperation," which focused on work camps in Poland and Central America, and "Solidarity through Photo-journalism," which featured photographs that have received awards in the World Press Photo competition.

In the second conference, held on November 17, Professor A. Boons, from the School of Business Science at the University of Rotterdam, and Dr. C. Beenakker, professor of physics at the University of Leiden, spoke respectively about the social doctrine of the Church in regard to economic structures and on the relationship between science and faith.

The first speaker began with citations from the Old Testament, and went on to consider documents from recent Popes, starting with Pope Leo XIII. In the second talk, Professor Beenakker pointed out that truth, even for a physicist, is unchanging and is not affected by cultural variations.

Finally Ben Tax, director of the Rijk Zwaan company and coordinator of the round table, spoke about the vision of work as a means of sanctification and apostolate in the teachings of Saint Josemaría Escrivá.

To serve the neediest

_Bogotá, Colombia_

On November 23, 78 volunteers from the University of Sabana participated in the fifth Sabana Mission Day, which provided help to 300
families in the neighborhoods of Bojacá, Fonquetá, Mercedes de Calahorra and Las Delicias, all part of the township of Chía, a community close to the university.

Sabana Mission is a project of the University Solidarity and Welfare office. This office provides various services such as medical consultations, free legal assistance, vaccinations, distribution of clothes, and even the distribution of a type of candy typical of the area known as “obleas,” which the poor cannot afford very often. The children of the area also join the volunteers in sports and other recreational activities.

“The satisfaction of helping others and a child’s smile can dispel any fatigue or discouragement,” says Maria Gutierrez, the director of the office. This social assistance work is financed by donations from students, families, businesses and administrative personnel at the university.

A conference on the life and teachings of Saint Josemaría

_A conference was held on November 16 in the Meritus Negara Hotel, Singapore, to commemorate the canonization of Saint Josemaría. Two hundred people participated in the conference, which was entitled “The Greatness of Ordinary Life.”

The first talk, given by Margaret Teo, a lawyer, was a half-hour presentation on the life and work of the Founder of Opus Dei. The second address was by Father Alfred Chang, a diocesan priest of Singapore who spoke on the role of the laity in the Church in the light of the Second Vatican Council. After the first two talks, a question and answer period was held, in which a number of people expressed their interest in the activities of the Opus Dei Prelature.

The third lecture, on the sanctification of ordinary life, was given by Monica Lim, a mother of six and director of Parents for Education, an
in institution promoted by faithful of Opus Dei and Cooperators. This was followed by a talk by Joann and John Ooi, also the parents of six children. They discussed their experience in balancing an intense Christian life, care for a large family, and a demanding professional work.

The conference ended with the projection of the video “The Joy of Holiness,” a biographical documentary on Saint Josemaría Escrivá.

Philosophy brings young people to God

Sydney, Australia

As in many parts of the world, young people in Australia search eagerly for truth during their university years. But the lack of guides they can trust and role models often leaves them alone in the face of a life-style that scorches religion and promotes hedonism as a path to personal fulfillment. In this environment, Creston College has undertaken to offer courses and activities for university women that help them to consider the fundamental problems of life from a philosophical perspective.

This year a conference of seven sessions was organized, in which small groups of students analyzed in depth such topics as love, truth, freedom, and the “big bang” theory of the origin of the universe. The participants, some of them non-Catholics and others non-practicing Catholics, discussed the existence of God, the reality of the human soul, the natural law in relation to human nature, and the need for commitment to protect and foster true love.

The students used texts from Saint Thomas Aquinas to cast light on contemporary questions, seeking to overcome relativism with well-reasoned arguments. At the end of the conference, the students said they were grateful for the emphasis given to the possibility of knowing the truth of objective reality and the moral law.
IN PACE
Suffrages for the deceased

In the second half of 2002, 242 faithful of the Prelature and 15 members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross passed away.

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

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A study
Passionately Loving the Word: The Use of Sacred Scripture in the Writings of Saint Josemaría

By Scott Hahn

The world knows Josemaría Escrivá (1902-75) best as the founder of Opus Dei and the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross. Members of the Catholic Church know him best for his personal holiness and intercessory power, and so, on October 6, 2002, Pope John Paul II canonized Josemaría Escrivá, declaring him worthy all over the world of public veneration and imitation.

In a certain sense we can fully understand the accomplishments of St. Josemaría, or the graces he received, when we come to understand his use of the Scriptures. For, in Opus Dei, he worked out a thoroughly biblical spirituality; and he himself saw the institution as built on solidly scriptural foundations. In perhaps the most powerful precis of his spirituality, the homily “Passionately Loving the World,” St. Josemaría repeatedly claims the Bible as his primary witness: “This doctrine of Sacred Scripture, as you know, is to be found in the very core of the spirit of Opus Dei” (Conversations, nos. 116 and 114). “This I have been teaching all the time, using words from Holy Scripture” (no. 52).

Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the Bible always served as St. Josemaría’s primary referential language. Though he was steeped in the teachings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, though he was fluent in scholastic theology, and though he kept current with trends in contemporary theology, it was to Scripture that he returned again and again in his preaching and writing, and it was to Scripture that he directed his spiritual children in Opus Dei.

He saw clearly the unity of the two testaments, the Old and the New. The Old Testament oracles did not lose relevance for St. Josemaría just because they had been fulfilled in the New. Rather, they shone with a new and more brilliant light. He did not hesitate to hold up the patriarchs and prophets of Israel as spiritual exemplars for Christians today:
When you receive Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, thank Him from the bottom of your heart for being so good as to be with you.

Have you ever stopped to consider that it took centuries and centuries before the Messiah came? All those patriarchs and prophets praying together with the whole people of Israel: Come, Lord, the land is parched!

If only your loving expectation were like this. (*The Forge*, no. 991)

He quoted frequently from both the Old and New Testaments, but especially from the Gospels, to which Tradition has assigned a pre-eminent place (see *Dei Verbum* 18). Perhaps no phrases appear so often in his writings and homilies as those that invoke the sacred page: “as the Gospel tells us”; “as the Gospel advises...,” “Sacred Scripture tells us...,” “the Gospels relate...,” “Remember the Gospel story...”

According to Bishop Álvaro del Portillo — who was St. Josemaría’s most loyal son, confessor, and successor in the direction of Opus Dei: “I was myself always impressed with the facility with which he could cite from memory exact phrases from the Holy Bible. Even during everyday conversations, he would often take a starting point from some pertinent text in order to inspire us to a more profound prayer. He lived on the word of God.”[1]

**Scripture as a Measure**

The founding of Opus Dei took place on October 2, 1928, when St. Josemaría “saw “the Work of God (as yet unnamed) as a way of sanctification in daily work and in the fulfillment of the Christian’s ordinary duties.

What did Opus Dei look like at that moment? We do not know the visual details, but we can glimpse the Work incarnate in the later writings of the founder. There, he spoke of the Scriptures as a reliable measure of his way of life, which was “as old as the Gospel but, like the Gospel, ever new” (*In love with the Church*, no. 26). At the beginning of his seminal work, *The Way*, he wrote: “How I wish your bearing and conversation were such that, on seeing or hearing you, people would say: This man reads the life of Jesus Christ” (*The Way*, no. 2). Conversely, in discussing those who
do not live Christian charity, St. Josemaría said, “They seem not to have read the Gospel” (Furrow, no. 26).

His own reading of the Gospel and of Scripture in general, was illuminated by his particular foundational charism, which led him to develop ideas that had been passed over in previous theology. He is notable for his novel or renewed emphasis on certain notions found in the Scriptures: the universal call to holiness, for example, and the sanctification of ordinary life. Again and again, he was drawn to contemplate the Gospels’ tantalizing allusions to Jesus’ thirty years of hidden life. Even in these relative silences he found a model for the “hidden life” of ordinary people working in the world

Study of the Scripture, then, was essential to his personal spirituality and to the program he developed for members of Opus Dei. He assumed that Scripture not only enabled readers to know Jesus, but also empowered them to imitate him. “In our own life we must reproduce Christ’s life. We need to come to know him by reading and meditating on Scripture” (Christ Is Passing By, no. 14).

His Method

St. Josemaría practiced and preached a particular way to approach the Scriptures in prayer. His way is intensive rather than exhaustive. Bishop del Portillo recalled that the founder: “gave constant proof of an extraordinary veneration for Sacred Scripture. The Holy Bible, together with the tradition of the Church, was the source from which he ceaselessly drew for his personal prayer and preaching. Every day he read some pages — about a chapter — of Scripture, generally from the New Testament.”[2]

This practice of daily study of the New Testament — about five minutes’ time — St. Josemaría prescribed to all those whom he directed. He urged them, when they read, to enter imaginatively into the biblical scenes, assuming the role of one of the characters or a bystander. “I advised you to read the New Testament and to enter into each scene and take part in it, as one more of the characters. The minutes you spend in this way each day enable you to incarnate the Gospel, reflect it in your life and help others to reflect it” (Furrow, no. 672; see also Friends of God, no. 222).
Elsewhere, he developed the idea further, again emphasizing the imaginative effort as an almost sensory experience:

Make it a habit to mingle with the characters who appear in the New Testament. Capture the flavor of those moving scenes where the Master performs works that are both divine and human, and tells us, with human and divine touches, the wonderful story of his pardon for us and his enduring Love for his children. Those foretastes of Heaven are renewed today, for the Gospel is always true: we can feel, we can sense, we can even say we touch God’s protection with our own hands” (*Friends of God*, no. 216).

*The Power to Transform*

Though his actual reading took only five minutes per day, we must not confine St. Josemaría’s meditation on Scripture to those few moments. He also prayed the Scriptures in his daily Mass and in his recitation of the Divine Office. He frequently used biblical commentaries of the Fathers of the Church for spiritual reading. Indeed, he insisted that a Christian’s personal meditation on Scripture must feed his mental prayer as well as the spontaneous prayer that fills his entire day. “For we do need to know it well, to have it in our heart and mind, so that at any time, without any book, we can close our eyes and contemplate [Christ’s] life, watching it like a movie. In this way the words and actions of our Lord will come to mind in all the different circumstances of our life” (*Christ Is Passing By*, no. 89).

With the reading of Scripture, then, comes the grace of transformation, of conversion. Reading the Bible is not a passive act, but an active seeking and finding. “If we do this without holding back, Christ’s words will enter deep into our soul and will really change us. For ‘the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of the soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart’ (*Heb* 4:12)” (*Christ Is Passing By*, no. 89).

*Divine Filiation and the Revealed Word*

At the heart of Opus Dei is a single idea. Said St. Josemaría: “divine filiation is the basis of the spirit of Opus Dei. All men are children of God” (*Christ Is Passing By*, no. 64). St. Josemaría experienced his own divine sonship mystically, one day in 1931, while riding a streetcar in Madrid. At
that moment, he felt “in an explicit, clear, definitive way, the reality” of being a child of God, and he left the streetcar babbling “Abba, Pater! Abba, Pater!” (cf. Gal 4:6).[3]

That experience had a profound influence on his subsequent thinking, preaching, writing, and prayer. All Christian doctrine, he believed, can and should be considered in light of this truth. But we find a most powerful example of God’s fatherly care when we contemplate that Salvation history is the story of God’s fatherly plan for bestowing divine sonship on all men.

Many Fathers of the Church, most notably St. John Chrysostom, spoke of God’s revelation in terms of “accommodation” and “condescension,” which Chrysostom understood as fatherly actions. In order to reveal himself, God accommodates himself to man, just as a human father stoops down to look his children in the eye. As a human father will sometimes resort to “baby talk,” God sometimes communicates by condescension — that is, he speaks as humans would speak, in the language of humans, as if he had the same passions and weaknesses. Thus, in Scripture, we read of God “repenting” his decisions, when surely God is never in need of repentance.

Yet human fathers do not only stoop down to their children’s level. They also raise their children up to function on an adult level. In a similar way, God also, at times, communicates by elevation — that is, he lifts his children up to a divine level, endowing merely human words with divine power (as in the case of the prophets).

Relying on God’s fatherly care, St. Josemaría trusted the word of Scripture as he would trust the words of his father. His filial confidence is exemplary of the timeless Christian belief that “the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author.... Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully, and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation.” (Dei Verbum 11).
Bishop del Portillo recalled that St. Josemaría exuded confidence in the divine origin of the holy Scriptures, not only when he preached and wrote, but also in his everyday conversation. “One sign of his reverence for Sacred Scripture was his habit of introducing his quotations with the words ‘The Holy Spirit says...’ It was not just a manner of speaking; it was a heartfelt act of faith which helped us really feel the eternal validity of, and the solid weight of truth behind, expressions which might otherwise have sounded overly familiar.”[4]

**Literal and Spiritual Senses**

St. Josemaría placed tremendous emphasis on the imaginative assimilation of small details of the Gospel narratives. No word was superfluous for him; no detail so small as to lack significance. In his view, the Holy Spirit did not waste words.

Yet his care for the literal-historical sense did not render him blind to the Scripture’s “spiritual sense”. For the Church has traditionally interpreted the biblical texts as both literally true and as spiritual signs of Christ, of heaven, or of moral truths (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 115-117). Indeed, though St. Josemaría never himself employed the terminology of “literal exegesis” or “spiritual exegesis,” he stands as one of the great spiritual exegetes of his time. I agree with Cardinal Parente, who observed that St. Josemaría’s commentaries on Sacred Scripture reflected a “profundity and immediacy often superior even to that found in the works of the Fathers of the Church.”[5].

Here, I could multiply examples. Consider this compact teaching from *The Way*: “Like the good sons of Noah, throw the mantle of charity over the defects you see in your father, the Priest” (no. 75). St. Josemaría evokes the scene of Noah’s shameful drunkenness (*Gen 9:20-23*) and draws out a stunning moral teaching for contemporary life in the Church. This is spiritual exegesis at its most concise and incisive. In a single line, we learn from our Old Testament ancestors why we should never spread scandal about the clergy, whom in faith we call “Father”.

We see another striking example of the founder’s spiritual exegesis when he compares the sins of Christians to the biblical Esau’s willingness to exchange his birthright for a bowl of lentils (*Gen 25:29-34*). For a
moment’s pleasure, such Christians are willing to alienate themselves from God and even forsake heaven altogether. (He uses this image of Esau in several places. See, e.g., Friends of God, no. 13.)

St. Josemaría did not hesitate to actualize the biblical text by applying it to contemporary life, and here he stands in the line of great exegetes from Sts. Augustine and John Chrysostom to St. Anthony of Padua and Jacques Bossuet. Scholars call this extensive interpretation the “accommodated spiritual sense.”

Still, none of these spiritual insights supersedes the literal-historical truth of the biblical text, which St. Josemaría revered. In the words of St. Thomas Aquinas, “All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal.”

Thus, to lay a firm foundation, St. Josemaría made careful studies of what biblical science had to say about the cultural milieu of ancient Israel and the Roman Empire in the time of Jesus. His preaching on Christ’s passion, for example, shows that he was familiar with historical scholarship on Roman methods of crucifixion. His homilies on St. Joseph display a keen interest not only in philology, but also in the customs of ancient Jewish family life and labor.

Occasionally, St. Josemaría received extraordinary, divine illuminations revealing a particular spiritual sense of a biblical text. He reported that, on the feast of the Transfiguration in 1931, while saying Mass:

“When I raised the host there was another voice, without the sound of speech. A voice, perfectly clear as always, said, Et ego, si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad me ipsum! [“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself” I Jn 12:32]. ‘And here is what I mean by this: I am not saying it in the sense in which it is said in Scripture. I say it to you meaning that you should put me at the pinnacle of all human activities, so that in every place in the world there will be Christians with a dedication that is personal and totally free — Christians who will be other Christs.’”

This sudden insight had a profound influence on the subsequent development of Opus Dei. Surely, it came from God. But here as always, grace builds on nature and perfects it. What St. Josemaría describes is
clearly an instance of infused contemplation — but one that is firmly based on a sustained and disciplined life of biblical meditation.

I can think of few anecdotes that so perfectly illustrate a principle sketched out by the Pontifical Biblical Commission in its 1993 document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*: “it is above all through the liturgy that Christians come into contact with Scripture... In principle, the liturgy, and especially the sacramental liturgy, the high point of which is the eucharistic celebration, brings about the most perfect actualization of the biblical texts... Christ is then ‘present in his word, because it is he himself who speaks when sacred Scripture is read in the Church’ (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7). Written text thus becomes living word.”[8]

**Text and Context**

St. Josemaría studied the Scriptures earnestly. He knew, however, that the Bible was not a self-evident or self-interpreting text. And, though God sometimes gave him supernatural lights, the founder knew that these were extraordinary phenomena — certainly not the usual way of coming to understand a text.

If he could not rely on his own lights, nor depend exclusively on mystical phenomena, where did he habitually turn in the ordinary course of his biblical studies? He looked to the Church and her living tradition, to which the ancient Fathers are “always timely witnesses” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 688). A cursory glance at any volume of his homilies will reveal his intimate familiarity with the works of St. Jerome, St. Basil, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas.

St. Josemaría tested all his scriptural insights — even those he believed to be divinely inspired — against the witness of the Fathers and the papal and conciliar magisterium. For he well knew the dangers that lurked in an over-reliance on private interpretation of the Scriptures. Indeed, he found a clear warning on the matter — in the pages of the Scriptures! On the first Sunday of Lent, 1952, he reflected on the subtle ways Satan tempted Jesus in the desert:

It’s worth thinking about the method Satan uses with our Lord Jesus Christ: he argues with texts from the sacred books, twisting and distorting their meaning in a blasphemous way. Jesus doesn’t let himself be deceived:
the Word made flesh knows well the divine word, written for the salvation of men — not their confusion and downfall.

So, we can conclude that anyone who is united to Jesus Christ through Love will never be deceived by manipulation of the holy Scripture, for he knows that it is typical of the devil to try to confuse the Christian conscience, juggling with the very words of eternal wisdom, trying to turn light into darkness. (*Christ is Passing By*, no. 63)

We may conclude from the current Babel of conflicting biblical interpretations that Satan’s methods have not changed much over the millennia. Amid such confusion, St. Josemaría stands out as a model of intelligent yet childlike faith. While many Christian exegetes spent the twentieth century retreating into agnosticism and irrelevance, St. Josemaría thrived on a complete and critically informed confidence in the Bible and in the Church as its infallible interpreter.

We can see, touch, and study his legacy in the Navarre Bible project, which he inspired. Initiated in the early 1970s at the University of Navarre in Spain, the Navarre Bible offers a reliable and beautiful translation of the Scriptures, supplemented by ample quotations from the Church councils, Fathers, and Doctors. This project has done much to enable non-theologians and non-ecclesiastics to enjoy the Bible as St. Josemaría did, and to be enriched by it as he was.

*The Place of the Bible*

St. Josemaría’s most profound encounters with Sacred Scripture came not in his study or even in his oratory pew, but in the liturgy. Like the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, he saw the Mass as the encounter *par excellence* with Jesus Christ in “bread and word” (see, e.g., *Christ Is Passing By*, nn. 116, 118, 122; *The Forge*, no. 437). The Holy Mass, within which is found the Liturgy of the Word, is, for St. Josemaría, the “root and center” of interior life.

His homilies — which are saturated with quotations and allusions from both testaments of the Bible — always find their focus in the liturgical season, and specifically in the readings of the day. Indeed, he saw the Mass as the supernatural habitat of his homilies: “You have just been listening to the solemn reading of the two texts of Sacred Scripture for the Mass of the
twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost. Having heard the Word of God you are already in the right atmosphere for the words I want to address to you: words of a priest, spoken to a large family of the children of God in his Holy Church. Words, therefore, which are intended to be supernatural, proclaiming the greatness of God and his mercies towards men; words to prepare you for today’s great celebration of the Eucharist” (Conversations, no. 112).

Like the Fathers of the Church and the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, St. Josemaría looked upon the Mass as a particularly graced moment for receiving the word of God. The inspirations received in the Liturgy of the Word should be profound and lasting: “We now listen to the word of Scripture, the epistle and the Gospel — light from the Holy Spirit, who speaks through human voices so as to make our intellect come to know and contemplate, to strengthen our will and make our desire for action effective” (Christ Is Passing By, no. 89).

The Virtuous Interpreter

In canonizing Josemaría Escrivá, the Church has held him up as worthy of imitation. There can be no doubt that such imitation must include intensive study of the Scriptures, meditative reading of the Scriptures, and disciplined prayer of the Scriptures. His own daily program witnessed to this. The “norms of piety“he followed — and which he bequeathed to his children in Opus Dei — are saturated in biblical quotations.

What is clearly central for him, however, is the encounter with Jesus Christ, the identification with Jesus Christ, to the point of becoming “ipse Christus,“Christ himself. This goal must be attained through certain determinate means, among them the meditative reading of the Gospels. Thus, one cannot understand or live the vocation to Opus Dei without at least aspiring to a high degree of biblical fluency.

Though he lived most of his life before the Second Vatican Council, St. Josemaría anticipated much of its teaching — certainly, at least, its emphasis on the universal call to holiness and apostolate, which had been a hallmark of Opus Dei since 1928. I believe, however, that he was especially attuned to the Church’s doctrines on Sacred Scripture — its truth,
authority, inspiration, and inerrancy — which found such robust expression in the council’s Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum.*

As many laymen tend to see their wives’ best qualities described in the “virtuous woman” of Proverbs 31, so I tend to see St. Josemaría, who is a spiritual father to me, in the words of *Dei Verbum* 25. There, the Council Fathers offer their vision of the ideal priest. As I conclude, I would be so bold as to adapt their word to describe St. Josemaría and so many of the priests who have followed him in Opus Dei and in the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross.

They “hold fast to Sacred Scriptures through diligent sacred reading and careful study.”

They take care “so that none of them will become an empty preacher of the word of God outwardly, who is not a listener to it inwardly.”

They “share the abundant wealth of the divine word with the faithful committed to them, especially in the sacred liturgy.”

They “learn by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures the ‘excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ’ (*Phil 3:8*).”

They “gladly put themselves in touch with the sacred text itself, whether it be through the liturgy, rich in the divine word, or through devotional reading, or through instruction.”

And they “remember that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that God and man may talk together”; for, in the words of St. Ambrose, “we speak to him when we pray; we hear him when we read the divine saying.”


