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

The contents of the bulletin do not provide an entire picture of Opus Dei's activities, since the Prelature’s fundamental apostolate is that which its faithful carry out personally, guided by the Christian formation and spiritual assistance they receive from the Prelature. This apostolate takes place in the context of each person’s professional, social, and family setting, and its variety and creativity naturally cannot be reduced to a set of statistics.

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

At the close of the Great Jubilee, John Paul II wished to set out a program to guide the Church’s mission in the third millennium. He sought to give a new impetus to the Church’s pastoral activity by stressing the need for a true pedagogy of sanctity. The guidelines offered by the Pope can be summarized in one phrase, *contemplating Christ’s face*, words that are rich in meaning for all who have set out on the way of prayer.

Since then the Holy Father has published two important documents that indicate the path along which the Church’s Shepherd, who walks ahead of his flock, wants to guide her steps so as to attain this goal. First, in the Apostolic Letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (October 16, 2002), he invited the Church to draw close to the “school of Mary,” in order to learn from her how “to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and experience the depths of his love” (no.1). Then the Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, dated Holy Thursday (April 17, 2003). In it we read: “By proclaiming the year of the Rosary, I wish to put this, my twenty-fifth anniversary, under the aegis of the contemplation of Christ at the school of Mary. Consequently, I cannot let this Holy Thursday 2003 pass without halting before the ‘Eucharistic face’ of Christ and pointing out with new force to the Church the centrality of the Eucharist. From it the Church draws her life. From this ‘living bread’ she draws her nourishment. How could I not feel the need to urge everyone to experience it ever anew?” (no. 7)

In this document, the Pope reiterates the fundamental points of the Church’s doctrine on the Eucharist: the sacrificial value of the Mass (nos. 11-13); the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar (nos. 14-16); the “unifying power” of communion (nos. 21-25); the irreplaceable role of the ministerial priesthood (nos. 26-33). Of particular pastoral interest today is the stress placed on the dispositions needed to approach the Eucharistic banquet fruitfully (nos. 36-39), as well as the reflections on the need to care for due decorum in liturgical celebrations (nos. 47-52). The beautiful chapter on Mary, “Woman of the Eucharist” (nos. 53-58), calls for deep meditation.
In the encyclical, the Eucharist is seen as “source and summit of the Christian life” (no. 1), the apex of the sacramental economy, a reality which “stands at the center of the Church’s life” (no. 3). The Pope quotes no. 14 of the Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, where it states that the Eucharistic Sacrifice constitutes “the center and root of the whole priestly life” (no. 31). How could one not recall here the teaching of St. Josemaría, who anticipates the terminology of the Council? “Keep struggling, so that the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar really becomes the center and the root of your interior life, and so your whole day will turn into an act of worship—an extension of the Mass you have attended and a preparation for the next. Your whole day will then be an act of worship that overflows in aspirations, visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the offering up of your professional work and your family life.”

In the Eucharist God gives us the food essential for nourishing our struggle for holiness, our search for union with Christ, in order to dedicate ourselves fully to the will of the Father. Each of us is called to make an offering of his own life, in union with Christ’s sacrifice (cf. no. 13). “It is pleasant to spend time with him, to lie close to his breast like the beloved Disciple (cf. Jn 13:25) and to feel the infinite love present in his heart. If in our time Christians must be distinguished above all by the ‘art of prayer,’ how can we not feel a renewed need to spend time in spiritual converse, in silent adoration, in heartfelt love before Christ present in the Most Holy Sacrament?” (no. 25). Only from Him and with Him will we learn to make our lives a spiritual sacrifice pleasing to God (cf. Rom. 12:1).

In this context, there comes to mind a frequently quoted passage from St. Josemaría about the common priesthood of the faithful: “The Christian is obliged to be *alter Christus, ipse Christus*: another Christ, Christ himself. Through baptism all of us have been made priests of our own lives, ‘to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.’ Everything we do can be an expression of our obedience to God’s will and so perpetuate the mission of the God-man.” Therefore Eucharistic communion stands out as the most effective force for sustaining our participation in the Church’s redemptive mission and our collaboration in the sanctification of the world.
A small section of the encyclical, where the Holy Father describes what he defines as the “cosmic” character of the Eucharist, deserves careful consideration: “Yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world. It unites heaven and earth. It embraces and permeates all creation. The Son of God became man in order to restore all creation, in one supreme act of praise, to the One who made it from nothing. He, the Eternal High Priest who by the blood of his Cross entered the eternal sanctuary, thus gives back to the Creator and Father all creation redeemed” (no. 8).

The Eucharist “spurs us on our journey through history and plants a seed of living hope in our daily commitment to the work before us” (no. 20). Thus the faithful feel “more obliged than ever not to neglect their duties as a citizen in this world... contributing with the light of the Gospel to the building of a more human world, a world fully in harmony with God’s plan” (Ibid.).

On October 23, 1966, after many years of exemplary exercise of his priestly ministry, St. Josemaria received a special light from God while celebrating Mass. He always strove to immerse himself, with all the faculties of his soul, in the mystery of Christ’s Sacrifice, fully identified with the mission he had received: that of reminding ordinary Christians of their call to sanctify themselves in the world and to sanctify the world through their work. But on that day he saw everything with new clarity. “At sixty-five years of age, I have made a marvelous discovery. I love celebrating Holy Mass, but yesterday it cost me tremendous effort. What an effort! I saw that the Mass was truly Opus Dei, work, like the first Mass was work for Jesus Christ: the Cross. I saw that the job of the priest, the celebration of the Holy Mass, is the work of confecting the Eucharist. There one experiences pain, joy, and fatigue. I felt in my flesh the exhaustion of a divine work.”

The Holy Mass, as the Holy Father reminds us, “is the sacrifice of the Cross perpetuated down the ages” (no. 11). Each time that it is celebrated, in any corner of the world, “the work of redemption is carried out” (Ibid.). All of God’s omnipotent love enters into the action of each Mass, ensuring its fruitfulness. If we humbly ask our Lord to help us tear out the obstacles
raised up our wretchedness, each Mass will bear abundant fruit, both for our own soul and for the world.

Torna ai contenuti
HOLY SEE

- The Roman Pontiff
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The Roman Pontiff

Address to participants in the Fourth World Conference of Families (January 25, 2003)

1. My thoughts and prayers are with you, dear families of the Philippines and from throughout the world, as you gather in Manila for your Fourth World Meeting. With great affection I greet all of you in the name of the Lord!

On this occasion I also offer a prayerful greeting to all the families of the world which you represent: “Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (1 Tim 1:2).

I thank the Papal Legate, Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo, for the kind words which he addressed to me on your behalf. To him and to the staff of the Pontifical Council for the Family I express my gratitude for the time and effort spent in preparing this Meeting. I am likewise grateful to Cardinal Jaime Sin, the Archbishop of Manila, who is generously hosting you during these days.

2. In the theological-pastoral session just concluded you discussed the theme: “The Christian Family: Good News for the Third Millennium.” I chose these words with your World Meeting in mind, in order to highlight the sublime mission of the family. By embracing the Gospel and walking in its light, families are given the demanding responsibility of bearing witness to its message.

Dear Christian families, proclaim joyfully to the whole world the wonderful treasure which you, as domestic churches, possess! Christian couples, in your communion of life and love, in your mutual self-giving and in your generous openness to children, become, in Christ, the light of the world. The Lord asks you daily to be like a lamp which does not remain hidden, but is put “on a stand, and... gives light to all in the house” (Mt 5:15).

3. Above all, be “good news” for the third millennium by remaining faithful to your vocation. Whether you were married recently or many years
ago, the Sacrament of Matrimony continues to be your own special way of being disciples of Jesus, contributing to the spread of the Kingdom of God and growing in the holiness to which all Christians are called. As the Second Vatican Council noted, Christian couples, in the fulfilment of their marital and family responsibilities, “increasingly advance their own perfection and their mutual sanctification” (Gaudium et Spes, 48).

Accept fully and without reserve the love which, in the Sacrament of Matrimony, God first gave to you, and through which he enables you to love others in turn (cf. 1 Jn 4:19). Stand firm in the one conviction which can give meaning, strength and joy to your life: Christ’s love will never abandon you, his covenant of peace with you will never fail (cf. Is 54:10). God’s gifts and call are irrevocable (cf. Rom 11:29). He has written your name on the palm of his hand (cf. Is 49:16).

4. The grace which you received in marriage remains with you through the years. Its source is in the pierced heart of the Redeemer, who sacrificed himself on the altar of the Cross for the sake of the Church, his Spouse, accepting death for the salvation of the world.

This grace remains ever close to that source: it is the grace of a self-sacrificing love, a love which both gives and forgives. It is the grace of a selfless love which forgets the hurt it has suffered, a love faithful unto death, a love bursting with new life. It is the grace of a generous love, which believes all things, bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things, a love which has no end, a love which is greater than all else (cf. 1 Cor 13:7-8).

Such a love is not always easy. Daily life is full of pitfalls, tensions, suffering and even fatigue. But on this journey you are not alone. Jesus is always present at your side, just as he was for the newlyweds at Cana in Galilee during a moment of difficulty. The Second Vatican Council reminds us that the Saviour remains close to Christian couples and offers them help, so that, just as he loved the Church and gave himself up for her, they too might always love each other faithfully and with constant mutual concern (cf. Gaudium et Spes, 48).

5. Christian couples, be “good news for the third millennium” by bearing convincing and consistent witness to the truth about the family.
The family founded on marriage is a patrimony of humanity, a great good of priceless value, necessary for the life, development and the future of peoples. According to the plan of creation established in the beginning (cf. Mt 19: 4.8), the family is the setting in which the human person, made in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26), is conceived and born, grows and matures. The family, as the primary school in which the human person is formed (cf. Familiaris Consortio, 19-27), is indispensable for a true “human ecology” (Centesimus Annus, 39).

I am grateful for the testimonies which you have given this evening, and which I have carefully followed. They bring to mind my own experiences as a priest, as Archbishop of Krakow and in the nearly twenty-five years of my papacy. As I have often said, the future of humanity passes by way of the family (cf. Familiaris Consortio, 86).

I urge you, dear Christian families, to show by your daily lives that despite numerous difficulties and obstacles marriage is able to be fully lived out as a meaningful experience and as “good news” for the men and women of today. Be leaders in the Church and in the world: this is a responsibility flowing from your celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony, from your being a domestic church, and from the marital mission which is yours as the primary cells of society (cf. Apostolicam Actuositatem, 11).

Finally, dear Christian couples, if you wish to be “good news for the third millennium,” do not forget that family prayer is a sure way to remain united in a way of life in harmony with God’s will.

When I proclaimed the Year of the Rosary several months ago, I recommended this Marian devotion as a prayer of the family and for the family. By reciting the Rosary, families “place Jesus at the centre, 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” (Rosarium Virginis Mariae, 42).

I entrust all of you to Mary, Queen of the Family; may she accompany and sustain your life as families. I am also pleased to announce that the Fourth World Meeting of Families will be held in Valencia, Spain, in 2006.

As I now impart to all of you my Apostolic Blessing, I leave you with a final charge: with God’s help, make the Gospel the guiding principle of your
Address to participants in the UNIV'2003 congress (April 14, 2003)

Dear Young People,

1. I am pleased again this year to welcome all of you who are involved in the Christian formation activities promoted by the Prelature of Opus Dei in many countries of the world. You have gathered to spend Holy Week in Rome and to take part in the international meeting of UNIV. I cordially greet you and I hope these days in Rome will give you the opportunity for a renewed encounter with Jesus and a strong experience of Church.

For your University Congress you have chosen the theme: “Building peace in the 21st century.” This is a particularly timely topic in these months in which we have been anxious about the many hotbeds of violence and war, in addition to the situation in Iraq, which have flared up also on other continents. All this makes the need for a true education in peace more urgent.

2. For believers, the first and fundamental pro-peace action is prayer, since peace is a gift of the love of God.

Yesterday, Palm Sunday, World Youth Day was celebrated in all dioceses. In my Message to young people for that occasion, I asked them, in this time endangered by violence, hatred and war, to endeavour to witness that it is Jesus who can give true peace to human hearts, to families and to the peoples of the earth.

The four pillars on which peace must rest are truth, justice, love and freedom, as Blessed John XXIII taught in his Encyclical Pacem in Terris, whose 40th anniversary we celebrated a few days ago (cf. n. 35 [1963]).

3. To build peace, it is necessary first of all to live in truth. May you, young people, have the courage to question yourselves seriously on the meaning of life; train yourselves to think and act clearly and rightly, with
respect for and in dialogue with others. Make your priority that true relationship with God which demands personal conversion and openness to his mystery. The human person understands himself only in relation to God, who is the fullness of truth, beauty and goodness.

St. Josemaría Escrivá notes: “Some people try to build peace in the world without putting love of God into their own hearts. How could they possibly achieve peace in that way? The peace of Christ is the peace of the kingdom of Christ; and our Lord’s kingdom has to be based on a desire for holiness, a humble readiness to receive grace, an effort to establish justice, a divine outpouring of love” (Christ Is Passing By, 182).

4. Justice should be combined with truth and with respect for the dignity of every person. We know, however, that without sincere and disinterested love, justice itself would not be able to guarantee peace to the world. Indeed, true peace blossoms when hatred, resentment and envy are uprooted from the heart, when one says “no” to selfishness and to all that drives the human being to withdraw into himself and defend his own interests.

If love, the distinctive sign of Christ’s disciples, is expressed in gestures of free and disinterested service, in words of understanding and forgiveness, the peace-bringing wave of love expands until it embraces the entire human community. It is then also easier to understand the fourth pillar of peace, that is, freedom, the recognition of the rights of persons and of peoples and the free gift of self in responsible fulfilment of the duties incumbent on each person in his or her own state of life.

5. Dear young people of UNIV! If you seek to follow this path, you will be able to make an effective contribution to building a “pacified” and “pacifying” world. Your holy Founder writes: “The task for a Christian is to drown evil in an abundance of good. It is not a question of negative campaigns, or of being anti anything. On the contrary, we should live positively, full of optimism, with youthfulness, joy and peace. We should be understanding with everybody” (Furrow, 864).

Follow this teaching, accept the peace that Christ gives to those who open their hearts to him and spread it in every walk of life.
May Mary, Regina Pacis (Queen of Peace), watch over you, your aspirations and your plans, and over your families and the countries from which you come. May your holy Founder and your heavenly Patrons help you. I hope that you will prepare yourselves to celebrate Easter with faith, and I bless you all from the heart.

Address to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota (January 30, 2003)

1. The solemn inauguration of the Judicial Year of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota offers me the chance to express again my appreciation and gratitude for your work, dear Prelate Auditors, Promoters of Justice, Defenders of the Bond, Officials and Advocates. I cordially thank the Dean, Mons. Funghini, for the sentiments expressed on your behalf and for the well-developed reflections on the nature and goals of your work.

   The activity of your Tribunal has always been appreciated by my Venerable Predecessors who never failed to stress that the administration of justice by the Roman Rota constitutes a direct participation in an important aspect of their service as Pastor of the universal church.

   For this reason, your decisions, accordingly have a special value for the Church, since, as I affirmed in Pastor Bonus, they constitute a sure and concrete point of reference for the administration of justice in the church (cf. art. 126).

2. Given the overwhelming prevalence of cases concerning the nullity of marriage before the Rota, the Dean stressed the profound crisis that currently affects marriage and the family. A relevant fact that emerges from the study of the cases is the diminishing awareness among the partners of the significance in the celebration of Christian marriage of its sacramentality, a dimension that today is all too often disregarded in its intimate meaning, its intrinsic supernatural value and its positive effects on conjugal life.
After having dealt in past years with the natural dimension of marriage, I would like today to call your attention to the special relationship that the marriage of the baptized has with the mystery of God, a relationship that, in the new and definitive covenant in Christ, assumes the dignity of a sacrament.

The natural dimension and relationship with God are not two juxtaposed aspects: rather, they are intimately connected as are the truth of the human person and the truth of God. This topic is especially close to my heart: I return to it in this context, also because the perspective of the communion of the human person with God is so useful, even necessary, for the work of judges, advocates and all those who deal with the law of the Church.

3. The link between secularization and the crisis of marriage and of the family is only too clear. The crisis concerning the meaning of God and that concerning moral good and evil has succeeded in diminishing an acquaintance with the fundamentals of marriage and of the family which is rooted in marriage. For an effective recovery of the truth in this field, it is necessary to rediscover the transcendent dimension that is intrinsic to the full truth of marriage and the family, overcoming every dichotomy that tends to separate the profane aspects from the religious as if there were two marriages: one profane and another sacred.

“God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen 1,27). The image of God is found in the duality of man and woman and in their interpersonal communion. For this reason, transcendence is inherent in the existence of marriage, right from the start, because it belongs to the natural distinction between man and woman in the order of creation. In their being “one flesh” (Gn 2,24), the man and the woman, in their mutual assistance and fruitfulness, participate in something sacred and religious, as the Encyclical Arcanum Divinæ Sapientiæ of my Predecessor Leo XIII emphasized, pointing to the understanding of marriage held in ancient civilizations (10 February 1880, Leonis XIII P.M. Acta, vol. II, p. 22). In this regard, he observed that marriage “from the very beginning was a figure (adumbratio) of the Incarnation of the Word of God” (ibid.). In the state of original innocence, Adam and Eve already had the supernatural gift of grace. In this
way, before the Incarnation of the Word took place historically, its effective holiness was already being bestowed on humanity.

4. Unfortunately, on account of the effects of original sin, what was natural in the relationship between man and woman risks being lived in a way that is not in conformity with the plan and will of God and distancing oneself from God necessarily implies a proportionate dehumanizing of all family relationships. But in the “fullness of time,” Jesus himself restored the primordial design of marriage (cf. Mt 19,1-12) and so, in the state of redeemed nature, the union between man and woman not only regains its original holiness, freed from sin, but is really inserted into the very mystery of the covenant of Christ with the Church.

The Letter of St Paul to the Ephesians directly connects the account of Genesis with that mystery: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh (Gen 2,24). This is a great mystery; and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church” (Eph 5,31-32). The intrinsic link, between marriage, established at the beginning [of creation], and the union of the Word Incarnate with the Church is shown in its salvific efficacy by means of the concept of sacrament. The Second Vatican Council expressed this truth of our faith from the point of view of the married persons themselves: “Christian spouses, in virtue of the sacrament of matrimony, signify and partake of the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and His Church (cf. Eph 5,32). The spouses thereby help each other to attain to holiness in their married life and by the acceptance and education of their children. And so, in their state and way of life, they have their own special gift among the People of God” (Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, n. 11). The close link of the natural and the supernatural orders is immediately thereafter presented by the Council with reference to the family, that is inseparable from marriage and seen as a “domestic church” (cf. ibid.).

5. Christian life and reflection find in this truth an inexhaustible fountain of light. In fact, the sacramentality of marriage is a fruitful way to investigate more deeply the mystery of the relationship between human nature and grace. In the fact that the marriage of old became in the NT the sign and instrument of the grace of Christ, one sees the evidence of the constitutive transcendence of all that belongs to the being of the human
person and in particular to his natural relationality according to the distinction and complementarity of man and woman. The human and the divine are interwoven in a wonderful way.

Today’s strongly secularized mentality tends to affirm the human values of the institution of the family while detaching them from religious values and proclaiming them as fully independent of God. Influenced as it is by models of life that are too often presented by the mass-media, today’s mentality asks, “Why must one spouse always be faithful to the other?” and this question is transformed into an existential doubt in situations of crisis. Marital difficulties can take various forms, but in the end they all amount to a problem of love. For this reason, the preceding question can be reformulated in this way: why it is always necessary to love the other spouse even when so many apparently justifying reasons, would lead one to leave?

Many replies can be given; among them the very powerful ones are the good of the children and the good of the entire society, but the most fundamental reply comes through the recognition of the objectivity of being spouses, seen as a reciprocal gift, made possible and guaranteed by God himself. The ultimate reason, therefore, for the duty of faithful love is none other than what is the basis of the divine covenant with the human person: God is faithful. To make possible the fidelity of heart to one’s spouse, even in the hardest cases, one must have recourse to God in the certainty of receiving assistance. The way of mutual fidelity passes, moreover, through an openness to Christ’s charity, which “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor 13,7). In every marriage the mystery of redemption becomes present, brought about by a real participation in the Cross of the Saviour, accepting the Christian paradox that joins happiness with the bearing of suffering in the spirit of faith.

6. From these principles one can draw many practical consequences of a pastoral, moral and juridical nature. I will mention a few that are connected in a special way with your judicial activity. Above all, you can never forget that you have in your hands that great mystery St Paul spoke of (cf. Eph 5,32), both when you deal with a sacramental marriage in the strict sense and also when the marriage bears in itself the primordial sacred character, that is called to become a sacrament through the baptism of the spouses. The consideration of the sacramentality highlights the transcendence of
your function, the bond that links it to the economy of salvation. The religious dimension should for this reason permeate all your work. From handling scientific studies on marriage to the daily activity of the administration of justice, there is no room in the Church for a vision of marriage that is merely immanent and profane, simply because such a vision is not true theologically and juridically.

7. In this perspective, for example, it is necessary to take seriously the obligation imposed on the judge by canon 1676 to favor and to seek actively the possible convalidation and reconciliation of the marriage. Naturally the same attitude of support for marriage and the family must prevail before turning to the tribunal. In pastoral assistance consciences must be patiently enlightened with the truth concerning the transcendent duty of fidelity presented in an attractive and favorable way. Working towards a positive overcoming of marital conflicts and in providing assistance to the faithful who are in an irregular marital situation, it is necessary to create a synergy that involves everyone in the church: pastors of souls, jurists, experts in the psychological and psychiatric sciences, other laity, especially those who are married and have life experience. All must keep in mind that they are dealing with a sacred reality and with a question that touches on the salvation of souls.

8. The importance of the sacramentality of marriage, and the need of faith for knowing and living fully this dimension, could give rise to some misunderstandings either regarding the admission to the celebration of marriage or judgments about the validity of marriage. The church does not refuse to celebrate a marriage for the person who is well disposed, even if he is imperfectly prepared from the supernatural point of view, provided the person has the right intention to marry according to the natural reality of marriage. In fact, alongside natural marriage, one cannot describe another model of Christian marriage with specific supernatural requisites.

This truth should not be forgotten when determining the boundaries of the exclusion of sacramentality (cf. can. 1101 §2) and “the determining error about the sacramental dignity” (cf. can. 1099) as possible grounds of nullity. In both instances it is crucial to keep in mind that an attitude on the part of those getting married that does not take into account the supernatural dimension of marriage can render it null and void only if it
undermines its validity on the natural level on which the sacramental sign itself takes place. The Catholic Church has always recognized marriages between the non-baptized that become a Christian sacrament through the baptism of the spouses, nor does she have doubts about the validity of the marriage of a Catholic with a non-baptized person if it is celebrated with the necessary dispensation.

9. At the end of this gathering, my thoughts go to spouses and families to beg for them the protection of Our Lady. On this occasion I am pleased to repeat the exhortation that I made in the Apostolic Letter *The Rosary of the Virgin Mary*: “The family that prays together stays together. The Holy Rosary, by ancient tradition, has shown itself particularly effective as a prayer which brings the family together” (n. 41).

To all of you, dear Prelate Auditors, Officials and Advocates of the Roman Rota, I affectionately impart my Blessing.

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**Message for the 18th World Youth Day**  
(March 8, 2003)

“Behold, your mother!” (*Jn* 19:27)

My dear young people!

1. It always gives me great joy to address a special message to you on the occasion of World Youth Day. It is also a way to show you the extent of my affection for you. The vivid recollection of my experiences during our World Youth Day meetings is impressed on my memory: young people and the Pope together, and a large gathering of bishops and priests, all with our gaze on Christ, light of the world, invoking him and proclaiming him to the entire human family. While I give thanks to God for the witness of faith that you have given once again recently in Toronto, I renew the invitation I made to you on the banks of Lake Ontario: “the Church today looks to you with confidence and expects you to be the people of the Beatitudes!” (Exhibition Place, 25 July 2002).

For the 18th World Youth Day that will be celebrated in dioceses all
over the world, I have chosen a theme related to the Year of the Rosary: “Behold, your mother!” (Jn 19:27). Before his death, Jesus entrusted to the apostle John what was most precious to him: his Mother, Mary. These are the final words of the Redeemer, and therefore they take on a solemn nature and could be regarded as his spiritual testimony.

2. The angel Gabriel’s words in Nazareth: “Hail, full of grace” (Lk 1:28) also cast light on the scene at Calvary. The Annunciation comes at the beginning, the Cross signals the fulfilment. At the Annunciation, Mary gives human nature to the Son of God within her womb; at the foot of the Cross, she welcomes the whole of humanity within her heart in the person of John. She was Mother of God from the first moments of the Incarnation, and she became the Mother of humanity during the final moments of the life of her Son Jesus on earth. She, who was without sin, on Calvary “experienced” within her own being the suffering of sin that her Son had taken upon himself to save humankind. At the foot of the Cross on which was dying the One whom she had conceived at the moment of her “yes” at the Annunciation, Mary received, as it were, a “second annunciation”: “Woman, behold, your son!” (Jn 19:26).

The Son upon the Cross can pour out his suffering into his Mother’s heart. Every child who suffers experiences that need. You too, my dear young people, are faced with suffering: loneliness, failures and disappointments in your personal lives; difficulties in inserting yourselves in the adult world and in professional life: the separations and losses in your families; the violence of war and the death of the innocent. Know, however, that in difficult times, which everyone experiences, you are not alone: like John at the foot of the Cross, Jesus also gives his Mother to you so that she will comfort you with her tenderness.

3. It says in the Gospel that “from that hour the disciple took her to his own home (Jn 19:27). This statement, the subject of many commentaries since early Christian times, does not simply point out the place where John lived. Beyond the material aspect, it evokes the spiritual dimension of this welcome and of the new bond established between Mary and John.

My dear young people, you are more or less the same age as John and you have the same desire to be with Jesus. Today, it is you whom Jesus
expressly asks to receive Mary “into your home” and to welcome her “as one of yours”; to learn from her the one who “kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” (Lk 2:19) that inner disposition to listen and the attitude of humility and generosity that singled her out as God’s first collaborator in the work of salvation. She will discharge her ministry as a mother and train you and mould you until Christ is fully formed in you (cf. Rosarium Virginis Mariæ, n. 15).

4. This is why I now wish to repeat the motto of my episcopal and pontifical service: “Totus tuus”. Throughout my life I have experienced the loving and forceful presence of the Mother of Our Lord. Mary accompanies me every day in the fulfilment of my mission as Successor of Peter.

Mary is Mother of divine grace, because she is the Mother of the Author of grace. Entrust yourselves to her with complete confidence! You will be radiant with the beauty of Christ. Open up to the breath of the Spirit, and you will become courageous apostles, capable of spreading the fire of charity and the light of truth all around you. In Mary’s school, you will discover the specific commitment that Christ expects of you, and you will learn to put Christ first in your lives, and to direct your thoughts and actions to him.

Dear young people, you know that Christianity is not an opinion nor does it consist of empty words. Christianity is Christ! It is a Person, a Living Person! To meet Jesus, to love him and make him loved: this is the Christian vocation. Mary was given to you to help you enter into a more authentic and more personal relationship with Jesus. Through her example, Mary teaches you to gaze on him with love, for He has loved us first. Through her intercession, she forms in you a disciple’s heart able to listen to her Son, who reveals the face of his Father and the true dignity of the human person.

5. On 16 October 2002 I proclaimed the “Year of the Rosary”, and I invited all the children of the Church to make of this ancient Marian prayer a simple and profound exercise in contemplation of the face of Christ. To recite the Rosary means to learn to gaze on Jesus with his Mother’s eyes, and to love Jesus with his Mother’s heart. Today, my dear young people, I am also, in spirit, handing you the Rosary beads. Through prayer and meditation on the mysteries, Mary leads you safely towards her Son! Do
not be ashamed to recite the Rosary alone, while you walk along the streets
to school, to the university or to work, or as you commute by public
transport. Adopt the habit of reciting it among yourselves, in your groups,
movements and associations. Do not hesitate to suggest that it be recited at
home by your parents and brothers and sisters, because it rekindles and
strengthens the bonds between family members. This prayer will help you
to be strong in your faith, constant in charity, joyful and persevering in
hope.

With Mary, the handmaiden of the Lord, you will discover the joy and
fruitfulness of the hidden life. With her, disciple of the Master, you will
follow Jesus along the streets of Palestine, becoming witnesses of his
preaching and his miracles. With her, the sorrowful Mother, you will
accompany Jesus in his passion and death. With her, Virgin of hope, you
will welcome the festive Easter proclamation and the priceless gift of the
Holy Spirit.

6. My dear young people, only Jesus knows what is in your hearts and
your deepest desires. Only He, who has loved you to the end (cf. Jn
13:1),
can fulfil your aspirations. His are words of eternal life, words that give
meaning to life. No one apart from Christ can give you true happiness. By
following the example of Mary, you should know how to give Him your
unconditional “yes”. There is no place in your lives for selfishness or
laziness. Now more than ever it is crucial that you be “watchers of the
dawn”, the lookouts who announce the light of dawn and the new
springtime of the Gospel of which the buds can already be seen. Humanity
is in urgent need of the witness of free and courageous young people who
dare to go against the tide and proclaim with vigour and enthusiasm their
personal faith in God, Lord and Saviour.

You are also aware, my dear friends, that this mission is not easy. It
becomes absolutely impossible if one counts only on oneself. But “what is
impossible with men is possible for God” (Lk 18:27; 1:37).

True disciples of Christ are conscious of their own weakness. For this
reason they put all their trust in the grace of God and they accept it with
undivided hearts, convinced that without Him they can do nothing (cf. Jn
15:5). What characterises them and distinguishes them from others is not
their talents or natural gifts. It is their firm determination to proceed as
followers of Jesus. May you be imitators of them as they were of Christ! “May the eyes of your heart be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe, in accord with the exercise of his great might” (Eph 1:18-19).

7. My dear young people, the next World Meeting will be held, as you know, in Germany in 2005 in the city and diocese of Cologne. The road is still long, but the two years that separate us from that appointment can serve as a time of intense preparation. To help you on this path, I have chosen the following themes for you:

- 2004: 19th World Youth Day: “We wish to see Jesus” (Jn 12:21);
- 2005: 20th World Youth Day: “We have come to worship him” (Mt 2:2).

Meanwhile, you will meet in your local Church on Palm Sunday: live this experience with commitment, in prayer, in attentive listening and joyful sharing in these opportunities for “ongoing learning”, and showing your lively devout faith! Like the Magi, you too should be pilgrims stimulated by the desire to find the Messiah and to adore Him! Courageously proclaim that Christ, who died and is risen, has vanquished evil and death!

In these times threatened by violence, hatred and war, you must witness that he and he alone can give true peace to the heart of individuals, families and peoples on this earth. Commit yourselves to seeking and promoting peace, justice and fellowship. Do not forget the words of the Gospel: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Mt 5:9).

As I entrust you to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church, I accompany you with a special Apostolic Blessing, sign of my trust and demonstration of my affection for you all.

*From the Vatican, March 8, 2003.*
Encyclical Ecclesia de Eucharistia (April 17, 2003)

Introduction

1. The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates the heart of the mystery of the Church. In a variety of ways she joyfully experiences the constant fulfillment of the promise: “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20), but in the Holy Eucharist, through the changing of bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord, she rejoices in this presence with unique intensity. Ever since Pentecost, when the Church, the People of the New Covenant, began her pilgrim journey towards her heavenly homeland, the Divine Sacrament has continued to mark the passing of her days, filling them with confident hope.

The Second Vatican Council rightly proclaimed that the Eucharistic sacrifice is “the source and summit of the Christian life.” For the most holy Eucharist contains the Church’s entire spiritual wealth: Christ himself, our Passover and living bread. Through his own flesh, now made living and life-giving by the Holy Spirit, he offers life to men.” Consequently the gaze of the Church is constantly turned to her Lord, present in the Sacrament of the Altar, in which she discovers the full manifestation of his boundless love.

2. During the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 I had an opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist in the Cenacle of Jerusalem where, according to tradition, it was first celebrated by Jesus himself. The Upper Room was where this most holy Sacrament was instituted. It is there that Christ took bread, broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: “Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body which will be given up for you” (cf. Mk 26:26; Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24). Then he took the cup of wine and said to them: “Take this, all of you and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all, so that sins may be forgiven” (cf. Mt 14:24; Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25). I am grateful to the Lord Jesus for allowing me to repeat in that same place, in obedience to his command: “Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19), the words which he spoke two thousand years ago.
Did the Apostles who took part in the Last Supper understand the meaning of the words spoken by Christ? Perhaps not. Those words would only be fully clear at the end of the Triduum sacrum, the time from Thursday evening to Sunday morning. Those days embrace the mysterium paschale; they also embrace the mysterium eucharisticum.

3. The Church was born of the paschal mystery. For this very reason the Eucharist, which is in an outstanding way the sacrament of the paschal mystery, stands at the center of the Church’s life. This is already clear from the earliest images of the Church found in the Acts of the Apostles: “They devoted themselves to the Apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (2:42). The “breaking of the bread” refers to the Eucharist. Two thousand years later, we continue to relive that primordial image of the Church. At every celebration of the Eucharist, we are spiritually brought back to the paschal Triduum: to the events of the evening of Holy Thursday, to the Last Supper and to what followed it. The institution of the Eucharist sacramentally anticipated the events which were about to take place, beginning with the agony in Gethsemane. Once again we see Jesus as he leaves the Upper Room, descends with his disciples to the Kidron valley and goes to the Garden of Olives. Even today that Garden shelters some very ancient olive trees. Perhaps they witnessed what happened beneath their shade that evening, when Christ in prayer was filled with anguish “and his sweat became like drops of blood falling down upon the ground” (cf. Lk 22:44). The blood which shortly before he had given to the Church as the drink of salvation in the sacrament of the Eucharist, began to be shed; its outpouring would then be completed on Golgotha to become the means of our redemption: “Christ... as high priest of the good things to come..., entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption” (Heb 9:11-12).

4. The hour of our redemption. Although deeply troubled, Jesus does not flee before his “hour.” “And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ No, for this purpose I have come to this hour” (Jn 12:27). He wanted his disciples to keep him company, yet he had to experience loneliness and abandonment: “So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation” (Mt 26:40-41). Only John would
remain at the foot of the Cross, at the side of Mary and the faithful women. The agony in Gethsemane was the introduction to the agony of the Cross on Good Friday. *The holy hour*, the hour of the redemption of the world. Whenever the Eucharist is celebrated at the tomb of Jesus in Jerusalem, there is an almost tangible return to his “hour,” the hour of his Cross and glorification. Every priest who celebrates Holy Mass, together with the Christian community which takes part in it, is led back in spirit to that place and that hour.

“He was crucified, he suffered death and was buried; he descended to the dead; on the third day he rose again.” The words of the profession of faith are echoed by the words of contemplation and proclamation: “This is the wood of the Cross, on which hung the Saviour of the world. Come, let us worship.” This is the invitation which the Church extends to all in the afternoon hours of Good Friday. She then takes up her song during the Easter season in order to proclaim: “The Lord is risen from the tomb; for our sake he hung on the Cross, Alleluia.”

5. “*Mysterium fidei!* — The Mystery of Faith!” When the priest recites or chants these words, all present acclaim: “We announce your death, O Lord, and we proclaim your resurrection, until you come in glory.”

In these or similar words the Church, while pointing to Christ in the mystery of his passion, also reveals her own mystery: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. By the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the Church was born and set out upon the pathways of the world, yet a decisive moment in her taking shape was certainly the institution of the Eucharist in the Upper Room. Her foundation and wellspring is the whole *Triduum paschale*, but this is as it were gathered up, foreshadowed and “concentrated” for ever in the gift of the Eucharist. In this gift Jesus Christ entrusted to his Church the perennial making present of the paschal mystery. With it he brought about a mysterious “oneness in time” between that *Triduum* and the passage of the centuries.

The thought of this leads us to profound amazement and gratitude. In the paschal event and the Eucharist which makes it present throughout the centuries, there is a truly enormous “capacity” which embraces all of history as the recipient of the grace of the redemption. This amazement should always fill the Church assembled for the celebration of the Eucharist. But
in a special way it should fill the minister of the Eucharist. For it is he who, by the authority given him in the sacrament of priestly ordination, effects the consecration. It is he who says with the power coming to him from Christ in the Upper Room: “This is my body which will be given up for you. This is the cup of my blood, poured out for you....” The priest says these words, or rather he puts his voice at the disposal of the One who spoke these words in the Upper Room and who desires that they should be repeated in every generation by all those who in the Church ministerially share in his priesthood.

6. I would like to rekindle this Eucharistic “amazement” by the present Encyclical Letter, in continuity with the Jubilee heritage which I have left to the Church in the Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte and its Marian crowning, Rosarium Virginis Marie. To contemplate the face of Christ, and to contemplate it with Mary, is the “program” which I have set before the Church at the dawn of the third millennium, summoning her to put out into the deep on the sea of history with the enthusiasm of the new evangelization. To contemplate Christ involves being able to recognize him wherever he manifests himself, in his many forms of presence, but above all in the living sacrament of his body and his blood. The Church draws her life from Christ in the Eucharist; by him she is fed and by him she is enlightened. The Eucharist is both a mystery of faith and a “mystery of light.” Whenever the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the faithful can in some way relive the experience of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: “their eyes were opened and they recognized him” (Lk 24:31).

7. From the time I began my ministry as the Successor of Peter, I have always marked Holy Thursday, the day of the Eucharist and of the priesthood, by sending a letter to all the priests of the world. This year, the twenty-fifth of my Pontificate, I wish to involve the whole Church more fully in this Eucharistic reflection, also as a way of thanking the Lord for the gift of the Eucharist and the priesthood: “Gift and Mystery.” By proclaiming the Year of the Rosary, I wish to put this, my twenty-fifth anniversary, under the aegis of the contemplation of Christ at the school of Mary. Consequently, I cannot let this Holy Thursday 2003 pass without halting before the “Eucharistic face” of Christ and pointing out with new force to the Church the centrality of the Eucharist.
From it the Church draws her life. From this “living bread” she draws her nourishment. How could I not feel the need to urge everyone to experience it ever anew?

8. When I think of the Eucharist, and look at my life as a priest, as a Bishop and as the Successor of Peter, I naturally recall the many times and places in which I was able to celebrate it. I remember the parish church of Niegowiaæ, where I had my first pastoral assignment, the collegiate church of Saint Florian in Krakow, Wawel Cathedral, Saint Peter’s Basilica and so many basilicas and churches in Rome and throughout the world. I have been able to celebrate Holy Mass in chapels built along mountain paths, on lakeshores and seacoasts; I have celebrated it on altars built in stadiums and in city squares... This varied scenario of celebrations of the Eucharist has given me a powerful experience of its universal and, so to speak, cosmic character. Yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world. It unites heaven and earth. It embraces and permeates all creation. The Son of God became man in order to restore all creation, in one supreme act of praise, to the One who made it from nothing. He, the Eternal High Priest who by the blood of his Cross entered the eternal sanctuary, thus gives back to the Creator and Father all creation redeemed. He does so through the priestly ministry of the Church, to the glory of the Most Holy Trinity. Truly this is the mysterium fidei which is accomplished in the Eucharist: the world which came forth from the hands of God the Creator now returns to him redeemed by Christ.

9. The Eucharist, as Christ’s saving presence in the community of the faithful and its spiritual food, is the most precious possession which the Church can have in her journey through history. This explains the lively concern which she has always shown for the Eucharistic mystery, a concern which finds authoritative expression in the work of the Councils and the Popes. How can we not admire the doctrinal expositions of the Decrees on the Most Holy Eucharist and on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass promulgated by the Council of Trent? For centuries those Decrees guided theology and catechesis, and they are still a dogmatic reference-point for the continual renewal and growth of God’s People in faith and in love for the Eucharist. In times closer to our own, three Encyclical Letters should
be mentioned: the Encyclical *Mirae Caritatis* of Leo XIII (28 May 1902), the Encyclical *Mediator Dei* of Pius XII (20 November 1947) and the Encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* of Paul VI (3 September 1965).

The Second Vatican Council, while not issuing a specific document on the Eucharistic mystery, considered its various aspects throughout its documents, especially the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* and the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

I myself, in the first years of my apostolic ministry in the Chair of Peter, wrote the Apostolic Letter *Dominicæ Cenæ* (24 February 1980), in which I discussed some aspects of the Eucharistic mystery and its importance for the life of those who are its ministers. Today I take up anew the thread of that argument, with even greater emotion and gratitude in my heart, echoing as it were the word of the Psalmist: “What shall I render to the Lord for all his bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord” (*Ps 116*:12-13).

10. The Magisterium’s commitment to proclaiming the Eucharistic mystery has been matched by interior growth within the Christian community. Certainly the liturgical reform inaugurated by the Council has greatly contributed to a more conscious, active and fruitful participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar on the part of the faithful. In many places, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is also an important daily practice and becomes an inexhaustible source of holiness. The devout participation of the faithful in the Eucharistic procession on the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ is a grace from the Lord which yearly brings joy to those who take part in it.

Other positive signs of Eucharistic faith and love might also be mentioned.

Unfortunately, alongside these lights, there are also shadows. In some places the practice of Eucharistic adoration has been almost completely abandoned. In various parts of the Church abuses have occurred, leading to confusion with regard to sound faith and Catholic doctrine concerning this wonderful sacrament. At times one encounters an extremely reductive understanding of the Eucharistic mystery. Stripped of its sacrificial
meaning, it is celebrated as if it were simply a fraternal banquet. Furthermore, the necessity of the ministerial priesthood, grounded in apostolic succession, is at times obscured and the sacramental nature of the Eucharist is reduced to its mere effectiveness as a form of proclamation. This has led here and there to ecumenical initiatives which, albeit well-intentioned, indulge in Eucharistic practices contrary to the discipline by which the Church expresses her faith. How can we not express profound grief at all this? The Eucharist is too great a gift to tolerate ambiguity and depreciation.

It is my hope that the present Encyclical Letter will effectively help to banish the dark clouds of unacceptable doctrine and practice, so that the Eucharist will continue to shine forth in all its radiant mystery.

Chapter One

The Mystery of Faith

11. “The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed” (1 Cor 11:23) instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his body and his blood. The words of the Apostle Paul bring us back to the dramatic setting in which the Eucharist was born. The Eucharist is indelibly marked by the event of the Lord’s passion and death, of which it is not only a reminder but the sacramental re-presentation. It is the sacrifice of the Cross perpetuated down the ages. This truth is well expressed by the words with which the assembly in the Latin rite responds to the priest’s proclamation of the “Mystery of Faith”: “We announce your death, O Lord.”

The Church has received the Eucharist from Christ her Lord not as one gift — however precious — among so many others, but as the gift par excellence, for it is the gift of himself, of his person in his sacred humanity, as well as the gift of his saving work. Nor does it remain confined to the past, since “all that Christ is — all that he did and suffered for all men — participates in the divine eternity, and so transcends all times.”

When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of her Lord’s death and resurrection, this central event of salvation becomes really present and “the work of our redemption is carried out.” This sacrifice is so decisive for the salvation of the human race that Jesus Christ offered it and returned to the Father only after he had left us a means of sharing in it as if we had
been present there. Each member of the faithful can thus take part in it and inexhaustibly gain its fruits. This is the faith from which generations of Christians down the ages have lived. The Church’s Magisterium has constantly reaffirmed this faith with joyful gratitude for its inestimable gift. I wish once more to recall this truth and to join you, my dear brothers and sisters, in adoration before this mystery: a great mystery, a mystery of mercy. What more could Jesus have done for us? Truly, in the Eucharist, he shows us a love which goes “to the end” (cf. Jn 13:1), a love which knows no measure.

12. This aspect of the universal charity of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is based on the words of the Saviour himself. In instituting it, he did not merely say: “This is my body,” “this is my blood,” but went on to add: “which is given for you,” “which is poured out for you” (Lk 22:19-20). Jesus did not simply state that what he was giving them to eat and drink was his body and his blood; he also expressed its sacrificial meaning and made sacramentally present his sacrifice which would soon be offered on the Cross for the salvation of all. “The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord’s body and blood.”

The Church constantly draws her life from the redeeming sacrifice; she approaches it not only through faith-filled remembrance, but also through a real contact, since this sacrifice is made present ever anew, sacramentally perpetuated, in every community which offers it at the hands of the consecrated minister. The Eucharist thus applies to men and women today the reconciliation won once for all by Christ for mankind in every age. “The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice.” Saint John Chrysostom put it well: “We always offer the same Lamb, not one today and another tomorrow, but always the same one. For this reason the sacrifice is always only one... Even now we offer that victim who was once offered and who will never be consumed.”

The Mass makes present the sacrifice of the Cross; it does not add to that sacrifice nor does it multiply it. What is repeated is its memorial celebration, its “commemorative representation” (memorialis demonstratio), which makes Christ’s one, definitive redemptive sacrifice always present in
time. The sacrificial nature of the Eucharistic mystery cannot therefore be understood as something separate, independent of the Cross or only indirectly referring to the sacrifice of Calvary.

13. By virtue of its close relationship to the sacrifice of Golgotha, the Eucharist is a sacrifice in the strict sense, and not only in a general way, as if it were simply a matter of Christ’s offering himself to the faithful as their spiritual food. The gift of his love and obedience to the point of giving his life (cf. Jn 10:17-18) is in the first place a gift to his Father. Certainly it is a gift given for our sake, and indeed that of all humanity (cf. Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20; Jn 10:15), yet it is first and foremost a gift to the Father: “a sacrifice that the Father accepted, giving, in return for this total self-giving by his Son, who ‘became obedient unto death’ (Phil 2:8), his own paternal gift, that is to say the grant of new immortal life in the resurrection.”

In giving his sacrifice to the Church, Christ has also made his own the spiritual sacrifice of the Church, which is called to offer herself in union with the sacrifice of Christ. This is the teaching of the Second Vatican Council concerning all the faithful: “Taking part in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which is the source and summit of the whole Christian life, they offer the divine victim to God, and offer themselves along with it.”

14. Christ’s passover includes not only his passion and death, but also his resurrection. This is recalled by the assembly’s acclamation following the consecration: “We proclaim your resurrection.” The Eucharistic Sacrifice makes present not only the mystery of the Saviour’s passion and death, but also the mystery of the resurrection which crowned his sacrifice. It is as the living and risen One that Christ can become in the Eucharist the “bread of life” (Jn 6:35, 48), the “living bread” (Jn 6:51). Saint Ambrose reminded the newly-initiated that the Eucharist applies the event of the resurrection to their lives: “Today Christ is yours, yet each day he rises again for you.” Saint Cyril of Alexandria also makes clear that sharing in the sacred mysteries “is a true confession and a remembrance that the Lord died and returned to life for us and on our behalf.”

15. The sacramental re-presentation of Christ’s sacrifice, crowned by the resurrection, in the Mass involves a most special presence which — in the words of Paul VI — “is called ‘real’ not as a way of excluding all other types of presence as if they were ‘not real,’ but because it is a presence in the
fullest sense: a substantial presence whereby Christ, the God-Man, is wholly and entirely present.” This sets forth once more the perennially valid teaching of the Council of Trent: “the consecration of the bread and wine effects the change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. And the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called this change transubstantiation.” Truly the Eucharist is a *mysterium fidei*, a mystery which surpasses our understanding and can only be received in faith, as is often brought out in the catechesis of the Church Fathers regarding this divine sacrament: “Do not see — Saint Cyril of Jerusalem exhorts — in the bread and wine merely natural elements, because the Lord has expressly said that they are his body and his blood: faith assures you of this, though your senses suggest otherwise.”

*Adoro te devote, latens Deitas*, we shall continue to sing with the Angelic Doctor. Before this mystery of love, human reason fully experiences its limitations. One understands how, down the centuries, this truth has stimulated theology to strive to understand it ever more deeply.

These are praiseworthy efforts, which are all the more helpful and insightful to the extent that they are able to join critical thinking to the “living faith” of the Church, as grasped especially by the Magisterium’s “sure charism of truth” and the “intimate sense of spiritual realities” which is attained above all by the saints. There remains the boundary indicated by Paul VI: “Every theological explanation which seeks some understanding of this mystery, in order to be in accord with Catholic faith, must firmly maintain that in objective reality, independently of our mind, the bread and wine have ceased to exist after the consecration, so that the adorable body and blood of the Lord Jesus from that moment on are really before us under the sacramental species of bread and wine.”

16. The saving efficacy of the sacrifice is fully realized when the Lord’s body and blood are received in communion. The Eucharistic Sacrifice is intrinsically directed to the inward union of the faithful with Christ through communion; we receive the very One who offered himself for us, we receive his body which he gave up for us on the Cross and his blood which he “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (*Mt 26:28*). We are reminded of his words: “As the living Father sent me, and I live because
of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me” (Jn 6:57). Jesus himself reassures us that this union, which he compares to that of the life of the Trinity, is truly realized. The Eucharist is a true banquet, in which Christ offers himself as our nourishment. When for the first time Jesus spoke of this food, his listeners were astonished and bewildered, which forced the Master to emphasize the objective truth of his words: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life within you” (Jn 6:53). This is no metaphorical food: “My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed” (Jn 6:55).

17. Through our communion in his body and blood, Christ also grants us his Spirit. Saint Ephrem writes: “He called the bread his living body and he filled it with himself and his Spirit... He who eats it with faith, eats Fire and Spirit... Take and eat this, all of you, and eat with it the Holy Spirit. For it is truly my body and whoever eats it will have eternal life.” The Church implores this divine Gift, the source of every other gift, in the Eucharistic epiclesis. In the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, for example, we find the prayer: “We beseech, implore and beg you: send your Holy Spirit upon us all and upon these gifts... that those who partake of them may be purified in soul, receive the forgiveness of their sins, and share in the Holy Spirit.” And in the Roman Missal the celebrant prays: “grant that we who are nourished by his body and blood may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ.” Thus by the gift of his body and blood Christ increases within us the gift of his Spirit, already poured out in Baptism and bestowed as a “seal” in the sacrament of Confirmation.

18. The acclamation of the assembly following the consecration appropriately ends by expressing the eschatological thrust which marks the celebration of the Eucharist (cf. 1 Cor 11:26): “until you come in glory.” The Eucharist is a straining towards the goal, a foretaste of the fullness of joy promised by Christ (cf. Jn 15:11); it is in some way the anticipation of heaven, the “pledge of future glory.” In the Eucharist, everything speaks of confident waiting “in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.” Those who feed on Christ in the Eucharist need not wait until the hereafter to receive eternal life: they already possess it on earth, as the first-fruits of a future fullness which will embrace man in his totality. For in the
Eucharist we also receive the pledge of our bodily resurrection at the end of the world: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jn 6:54). This pledge of the future resurrection comes from the fact that the flesh of the Son of Man, given as food, is his body in its glorious state after the resurrection. With the Eucharist we digest, as it were, the “secret” of the resurrection. For this reason Saint Ignatius of Antioch rightly defined the Eucharistic Bread as “a medicine of immortality, an antidote to death.”

19. The eschatological tension kindled by the Eucharist expresses and reinforces our communion with the Church in heaven. It is not by chance that the Eastern Anaphoras and the Latin Eucharistic Prayers honor Mary, the ever-Virgin Mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God, the angels, the holy apostles, the glorious martyrs and all the saints. This is an aspect of the Eucharist which merits greater attention: in celebrating the sacrifice of the Lamb, we are united to the heavenly “liturgy” and become part of that great multitude which cries out: “Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Rev 7:10). The Eucharist is truly a glimpse of heaven appearing on earth. It is a glorious ray of the heavenly Jerusalem which pierces the clouds of our history and lights up our journey.

20. A significant consequence of the eschatological tension inherent in the Eucharist is also the fact that it spurs us on our journey through history and plants a seed of living hope in our daily commitment to the work before us. Certainly the Christian vision leads to the expectation of “new heavens” and “a new earth” (Rev 21:1), but this increases, rather than lessens, our sense of responsibility for the world today. I wish to reaffirm this forcefully at the beginning of the new millennium, so that Christians will feel more obliged than ever not to neglect their duties as citizens in this world. Theirs is the task of contributing with the light of the Gospel to the building of a more human world, a world fully in harmony with God’s plan.

Many problems darken the horizon of our time. We need but think of the urgent need to work for peace, to base relationships between peoples on solid premises of justice and solidarity, and to defend human life from conception to its natural end. And what should we say of the thousand inconsistencies of a “globalized” world where the weakest, the most powerless and the poorest appear to have so little hope! It is in this world
that Christian hope must shine forth! For this reason too, the Lord wished to remain with us in the Eucharist, making his presence in meal and sacrifice the promise of a humanity renewed by his love. Significantly, in their account of the Last Supper, the Synoptics recount the institution of the Eucharist, while the Gospel of John relates, as a way of bringing out its profound meaning, the account of the “washing of the feet,” in which Jesus appears as the teacher of communion and of service (cf. Jn 13:1-20). The Apostle Paul, for his part, says that it is “unworthy” of a Christian community to partake of the Lord’s Supper amid division and indifference towards the poor (cf. 1 Cor 11:17-22, 27-34).

Proclaiming the death of the Lord “until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26) entails that all who take part in the Eucharist be committed to changing their lives and making them in a certain way completely “Eucharistic.” It is this fruit of a transfigured existence and a commitment to transforming the world in accordance with the Gospel which splendidly illustrates the eschatological tension inherent in the celebration of the Eucharist and in the Christian life as a whole: “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:20).

**Chapter Two**

**The Eucharist Builds the Church**

21. The Second Vatican Council teaches that the celebration of the Eucharist is at the center of the process of the Church’s growth. After stating that “the Church, as the Kingdom of Christ already present in mystery, grows visibly in the world through the power of God,” then, as if in answer to the question: “How does the Church grow?,” the Council adds: “as often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which ‘Christ our pasch is sacrificed’ (1 Cor 5:7) is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out. At the same time in the sacrament of the Eucharistic bread, the unity of the faithful, who form one body in Christ (cf. 1 Cor 10:17), is both expressed and brought about.”

*A causal influence of the Eucharist* is present at the Church’s very origins. The Evangelists specify that it was the Twelve, the Apostles, who gathered with Jesus at the Last Supper (cf. Mt 26:20; Mk 14:17; Lk 22:14). This is a detail of notable importance, for the Apostles “were both the seeds of the new Israel and the beginning of the sacred hierarchy.” By offering them his
body and his blood as food, Christ mysteriously involved them in the sacrifice which would be completed later on Calvary. By analogy with the Covenant of Mount Sinai, sealed by sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood, the actions and words of Jesus at the Last Supper laid the foundations of the new messianic community, the People of the New Covenant.

The Apostles, by accepting in the Upper Room Jesus' invitation: “Take, eat,” “Drink of it, all of you” (Mt 26:26-27), entered for the first time into sacramental communion with him. From that time forward, until the end of the age, the Church is built up through sacramental communion with the Son of God who was sacrificed for our sake: “Do this is remembrance of me... Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me” (1 Cor 11:24-25; cf. Lk 22:19).

22. Incorporation into Christ, which is brought about by Baptism, is constantly renewed and consolidated by sharing in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, especially by that full sharing which takes place in sacramental communion. We can say not only that each of us receives Christ, but also that Christ receives each of us. He enters into friendship with us: “You are my friends” (Jn 15:14). Indeed, it is because of him that we have life: “He who eats me will live because of me” (Jn 6:57). Eucharistic communion brings about in a sublime way the mutual “abiding” of Christ and each of his followers: “Abide in me, and I in you” (Jn 15:4).

By its union with Christ, the People of the New Covenant, far from closing in upon itself, becomes a “sacrament” for humanity, a sign and instrument of the salvation achieved by Christ, the light of the world and the salt of the earth (cf. Mt 5:13-16), for the redemption of all. The Church’s mission stands in continuity with the mission of Christ: “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (Jn 20:21). From the perpetuation of the sacrifice of the Cross and her communion with the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, the Church draws the spiritual power needed to carry out her mission. The Eucharist thus appears as both the source and the summit of all evangelization, since its goal is the communion of mankind with Christ and in him with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

23. Eucharistic communion also confirms the Church in her unity as the body of Christ. Saint Paul refers to this unifying power of participation in the banquet of the Eucharist when he writes to the Corinthians: “The
bread which we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor 10:16-17). Saint John Chrysostom’s commentary on these words is profound and perceptive: “For what is the bread? It is the body of Christ. And what do those who receive it become? The Body of Christ — not many bodies but one body. For as bread is completely one, though made of up many grains of wheat, and these, albeit unseen, remain nonetheless present, in such a way that their difference is not apparent since they have been made a perfect whole, so too are we mutually joined to one another and together united with Christ.” The argument is compelling: our union with Christ, which is a gift and grace for each of us, makes it possible for us, in him, to share in the unity of his body which is the Church. The Eucharist reinforces the incorporation into Christ which took place in Baptism though the gift of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12:13, 27).

The joint and inseparable activity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, which is at the origin of the Church, of her consolidation and her continued life, is at work in the Eucharist. This was clearly evident to the author of the Liturgy of Saint James: in the epiclesis of the Anaphora, God the Father is asked to send the Holy Spirit upon the faithful and upon the offerings, so that the body and blood of Christ “may be a help to all those who partake of it... for the sanctification of their souls and bodies.” The Church is fortified by the divine Paraclete through the sanctification of the faithful in the Eucharist.

24. The gift of Christ and his Spirit which we receive in Eucharistic communion superabundantly fulfils the yearning for fraternal unity deeply rooted in the human heart; at the same time it elevates the experience of fraternity already present in our common sharing at the same Eucharistic table to a degree which far surpasses that of the simple human experience of sharing a meal. Through her communion with the body of Christ the Church comes to be ever more profoundly “in Christ in the nature of a sacrament, that is, a sign and instrument of intimate unity with God and of the unity of the whole human race.”

The seeds of disunity, which daily experience shows to be so deeply rooted in humanity as a result of sin, are countered by the unifying power of
the body of Christ. The Eucharist, precisely by building up the Church, creates human community.

25. The worship of the Eucharist outside of the Mass is of inestimable value for the life of the Church. This worship is strictly linked to the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. The presence of Christ under the sacred species reserved after Mass — a presence which lasts as long as the species of bread and of wine remain — derives from the celebration of the sacrifice and is directed towards communion, both sacramental and spiritual. It is the responsibility of Pastors to encourage, also by their personal witness, the practice of Eucharistic adoration, and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in particular, as well as prayer of adoration before Christ present under the Eucharistic species.

It is pleasant to spend time with him, to lie close to his breast like the Beloved Disciple (cf. Jn 13:25) and to feel the infinite love present in his heart. If in our time Christians must be distinguished above all by the “art of prayer,” how can we not feel a renewed need to spend time in spiritual converse, in silent adoration, in heartfelt love before Christ present in the Most Holy Sacrament? How often, dear brother and sisters, have I experienced this, and drawn from it strength, consolation and support!

This practice, repeatedly praised and recommended by the Magisterium, is supported by the example of many saints. Particularly outstanding in this regard was Saint Alphonsus Liguori, who wrote: “Of all devotions, that of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest after the sacraments, the one dearest to God and the one most helpful to us.” The Eucharist is a priceless treasure: by not only celebrating it but also by praying before it outside of Mass we are enabled to make contact with the very wellspring of grace. A Christian community desirous of contemplating the face of Christ in the spirit which I proposed in the Apostolic Letters Novo Millennio Ineunte and Rosarium Virginis Mariae cannot fail also to develop this aspect of Eucharistic worship, which prolongs and increases the fruits of our communion in the body and blood of the Lord.

Chapter Three

The apostolicity of the Eucharist and of the Church
26. If, as I have said, the Eucharist builds the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist, it follows that there is a profound relationship between the two, so much so that we can apply to the Eucharistic mystery the very words with which, in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, we profess the Church to be “one, holy, catholic and apostolic.” The Eucharist too is one and catholic. It is also holy, indeed, the Most Holy Sacrament. But it is above all its apostolicity that we must now consider.

27. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in explaining how the Church is apostolic — founded on the Apostles — sees *three meanings* in this expression. First, “she was and remains built on ‘the foundation of the Apostles’ (*Eph* 2:20), the witnesses chosen and sent on mission by Christ himself.” The Eucharist too has its foundation in the Apostles, not in the sense that it did not originate in Christ himself, but because it was entrusted by Jesus to the Apostles and has been handed down to us by them and by their successors. It is in continuity with the practice of the Apostles, in obedience to the Lord’s command, that the Church has celebrated the Eucharist down the centuries.

The second sense in which the Church is apostolic, as the *Catechism* points out, is that “with the help of the Spirit dwelling in her, the Church keeps and hands on the teaching, the ‘good deposit,’ the salutary words she has heard from the Apostles.” Here too the Eucharist is apostolic, for it is celebrated in conformity with the faith of the Apostles. At various times in the two-thousand-year history of the People of the New Covenant, the Church’s Magisterium has more precisely defined her teaching on the Eucharist, including its proper terminology, precisely in order to safeguard the apostolic faith with regard to this sublime mystery. This faith remains unchanged and it is essential for the Church that it remain unchanged.

28. Lastly, the Church is apostolic in the sense that she “continues to be taught, sanctified and guided by the Apostles until Christ’s return, through their successors in pastoral office: the college of Bishops assisted by priests, in union with the Successor of Peter, the Church’s supreme pastor.” Succession to the Apostles in the pastoral mission necessarily entails the sacrament of Holy Orders, that is, the uninterrupted sequence, from the very beginning, of valid episcopal ordinations. This succession is essential for the Church to exist in a proper and full sense.
The Eucharist also expresses this sense of apostolicity. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, “the faithful join in the offering of the Eucharist by virtue of their royal priesthood,” yet it is the ordained priest who, “acting in the person of Christ, brings about the Eucharistic Sacrifice and offers it to God in the name of all the people.” For this reason, the Roman Missal prescribes that only the priest should recite the Eucharistic Prayer, while the people participate in faith and in silence.

29. The expression repeatedly employed by the Second Vatican Council, according to which “the ministerial priest, acting in the person of Christ, brings about the Eucharistic Sacrifice,” was already firmly rooted in papal teaching. As I have pointed out on other occasions, the phrase *in persona Christi* “means more than offering ‘in the name of’ or ‘in the place of’ Christ. *In persona* means in specific sacramental identification with the eternal High Priest who is the author and principal subject of this sacrifice of his, a sacrifice in which, in truth, nobody can take his place.” The ministry of priests who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders, in the economy of salvation chosen by Christ, makes clear that the Eucharist which they celebrate is a gift which radically transcends the power of the assembly and is in any event essential for validly linking the Eucharistic consecration to the sacrifice of the Cross and to the Last Supper. The assembly gathered together for the celebration of the Eucharist, if it is to be a truly Eucharistic assembly, absolutely requires the presence of an ordained priest as its president. On the other hand, the community is by itself incapable of providing an ordained minister. This minister is a gift which the assembly receives through episcopal succession going back to the Apostles. It is the Bishop who, through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, makes a new presbyter by conferring upon him the power to consecrate the Eucharist. Consequently, “the Eucharistic mystery cannot be celebrated in any community except by an ordained priest, as the Fourth Lateran Council expressly taught.”

30. The Catholic Church’s teaching on the relationship between priestly ministry and the Eucharist and her teaching on the Eucharistic Sacrifice have both been the subject in recent decades of a fruitful dialogue in the area of ecumenism. We must give thanks to the Blessed Trinity for the significant progress and convergence achieved in this regard, which lead us
to hope one day for a full sharing of faith. Nonetheless, the observations of
the Council concerning the Ecclesial Communities which arose in the
West from the sixteenth century onwards and are separated from the
Catholic Church remain fully pertinent: “The Ecclesial Communities
separated from us lack that fullness of unity with us which should flow from
Baptism, and we believe that especially because of the lack of the sacrament
of Orders they have not preserved the genuine and total reality of the
Eucharistic mystery. Nevertheless, when they commemorate the Lord’s
death and resurrection in the Holy Supper, they profess that it signifies life
in communion with Christ and they await his coming in glory.”

The Catholic faithful, therefore, while respecting the religious
convictions of these separated brethren, must refrain from receiving the
communion distributed in their celebrations, so as not to condone an
ambiguity about the nature of the Eucharist and, consequently, to fail in
their duty to bear clear witness to the truth. This would result in slowing
the progress being made towards full visible unity. Similarly, it is
unthinkable to substitute for Sunday Mass ecumenical celebrations of the
word or services of common prayer with Christians from the
aforementioned Ecclesial Communities, or even participation in their own
liturgical services. Such celebrations and services, however praiseworthy in
certain situations, prepare for the goal of full communion, including
Eucharistic communion, but they cannot replace it.

The fact that the power of consecrating the Eucharist has been
entrusted only to Bishops and priests does not represent any kind of
belittlement of the rest of the People of God, for in the communion of the
one body of Christ which is the Church this gift redounds to the benefit of
all.

31. If the Eucharist is the center and summit of the Church’s life, it is
likewise the center and summit of priestly ministry. For this reason, with a
heart filled with gratitude to our Lord Jesus Christ, I repeat that the
Eucharist “is the principal and central raison d’être of the sacrament of
priesthood, which effectively came into being at the moment of the
institution of the Eucharist.”

Priests are engaged in a wide variety of pastoral activities. If we also
consider the social and cultural conditions of the modern world it is easy to
understand how priests face the very real risk of losing their focus amid such a great number of different tasks. The Second Vatican Council saw in pastoral charity the bond which gives unity to the priest’s life and work. This, the Council adds, “flows mainly from the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which is therefore the center and root of the whole priestly life.” We can understand, then, how important it is for the spiritual life of the priest, as well as for the good of the Church and the world, that priests follow the Council’s recommendation to celebrate the Eucharist daily: “for even if the faithful are unable to be present, it is an act of Christ and the Church.” In this way priests will be able to counteract the daily tensions which lead to a lack of focus and they will find in the Eucharistic Sacrifice — the true center of their lives and ministry — the spiritual strength needed to deal with their different pastoral responsibilities. Their daily activity will thus become truly Eucharistic.

The centrality of the Eucharist in the life and ministry of priests is the basis of its centrality in the pastoral promotion of priestly vocations. It is in the Eucharist that prayer for vocations is most closely united to the prayer of Christ the Eternal High Priest. At the same time the diligence of priests in carrying out their Eucharistic ministry, together with the conscious, active and fruitful participation of the faithful in the Eucharist, provides young men with a powerful example and incentive for responding generously to God’s call. Often it is the example of a priest’s fervent pastoral charity which the Lord uses to sow and to bring to fruition in a young man’s heart the seed of a priestly calling.

32. All of this shows how distressing and irregular is the situation of a Christian community which, despite having sufficient numbers and variety of faithful to form a parish, does not have a priest to lead it. Parishes are communities of the baptized who express and affirm their identity above all through the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. But this requires the presence of a presbyter, who alone is qualified to offer the Eucharist in persona Christi. When a community lacks a priest, attempts are rightly made somehow to remedy the situation so that it can continue its Sunday celebrations, and those religious and laity who lead their brothers and sisters in prayer exercise in a praiseworthy way the common priesthood of
all the faithful based on the grace of Baptism. But such solutions must be considered merely temporary, while the community awaits a priest.

The sacramental incompleteness of these celebrations should above all inspire the whole community to pray with greater fervor that the Lord will send laborers into his harvest (cf. Mt 9:38). It should also be an incentive to mobilize all the resources needed for an adequate pastoral promotion of vocations, without yielding to the temptation to seek solutions which lower the moral and formative standards demanded of candidates for the priesthood.

33. When, due to the scarcity of priests, non-ordained members of the faithful are entrusted with a share in the pastoral care of a parish, they should bear in mind that — as the Second Vatican Council teaches — “no Christian community can be built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist.” They have a responsibility, therefore, to keep alive in the community a genuine “hunger” for the Eucharist, so that no opportunity for the celebration of Mass will ever be missed, also taking advantage of the occasional presence of a priest who is not impeded by Church law from celebrating Mass.

Chapter Four

The Eucharist and Ecclesial Communion

34. The Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1985 saw in the concept of an “ecclesiology of communion” the central and fundamental idea of the documents of the Second Vatican Council. The Church is called during her earthly pilgrimage to maintain and promote communion with the Triune God and communion among the faithful. For this purpose she possesses the word and the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, by which she “constantly lives and grows” and in which she expresses her very nature. It is not by chance that the term communion has become one of the names given to this sublime sacrament.

The Eucharist thus appears as the culmination of all the sacraments in perfecting our communion with God the Father by identification with his only-begotten Son through the working of the Holy Spirit. With discerning faith a distinguished writer of the Byzantine tradition voiced this truth: in the Eucharist “unlike any other sacrament, the mystery [of communion] is
so perfect that it brings us to the heights of every good thing: here is the ultimate goal of every human desire, because here we attain God and God joins himself to us in the most perfect union.” Precisely for this reason it is good to cultivate in our hearts a constant desire for the sacrament of the Eucharist. This was the origin of the practice of “spiritual communion,” which has happily been established in the Church for centuries and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life. Saint Teresa of Jesus wrote: “When you do not receive communion and you do not attend Mass, you can make a spiritual communion, which is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of God will be greatly impressed on you.”

35. The celebration of the Eucharist, however, cannot be the starting-point for communion; it presupposes that communion already exists, a communion which it seeks to consolidate and bring to perfection. The sacrament is an expression of this bond of communion both in its invisible dimension, which, in Christ and through the working of the Holy Spirit, unites us to the Father and among ourselves, and in its visible dimension, which entails communion in the teaching of the Apostles, in the sacraments and in the Church’s hierarchical order. The profound relationship between the invisible and the visible elements of ecclesial communion is constitutive of the Church as the sacrament of salvation. Only in this context can there be a legitimate celebration of the Eucharist and true participation in it. Consequently it is an intrinsic requirement of the Eucharist that it should be celebrated in communion, and specifically maintaining the various bonds of that communion intact.

36. Invisible communion, though by its nature always growing, presupposes the life of grace, by which we become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4), and the practice of the virtues of faith, hope and love. Only in this way do we have true communion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Nor is faith sufficient; we must persevere in sanctifying grace and love, remaining within the Church “bodily” as well as “in our heart”; what is required, in the words of Saint Paul, is “faith working through love” (Gal 5:6).

Keeping these invisible bonds intact is a specific moral duty incumbent upon Christians who wish to participate fully in the Eucharist by receiving the body and blood of Christ. The Apostle Paul appeals to this duty when
he warns: “Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup” (1 Cor 11:28). Saint John Chrysostom, with his stirring eloquence, exhorted the faithful: “I too raise my voice, I beseech, beg and implore that no one draw near to this sacred table with a sullied and corrupt conscience. Such an act, in fact, can never be called ‘communion,’ not even were we to touch the Lord’s body a thousand times over, but ‘condemnation,’ ‘torment’ and ‘increase of punishment.’”

Along these same lines, the Catechism of the Catholic Church rightly stipulates that “anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion.” I therefore desire to reaffirm that in the Church there remains in force, now and in the future, the rule by which the Council of Trent gave concrete expression to the Apostle Paul’s stern warning when it affirmed that, in order to receive the Eucharist in a worthy manner, “one must first confess one’s sins, when one is aware of mortal sin.”

37. The two sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance are very closely connected. Because the Eucharist makes present the redeeming sacrifice of the Cross, perpetuating it sacramentally, it naturally gives rise to a continuous need for conversion, for a personal response to the appeal made by Saint Paul to the Christians of Corinth: “We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20). If a Christian’s conscience is burdened by serious sin, then the path of penance through the sacrament of Reconciliation becomes necessary for full participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

The judgment of one’s state of grace obviously belongs only to the person involved, since it is a question of examining one’s conscience. However, in cases of outward conduct which is seriously, clearly and steadfastly contrary to the moral norm, the Church, in her pastoral concern for the good order of the community and out of respect for the sacrament, cannot fail to feel directly involved. The Code of Canon Law refers to this situation of a manifest lack of proper moral disposition when it states that those who “obstinately persist in manifest grave sin” are not to be admitted to Eucharistic communion.

38. Ecclesial communion, as I have said, is likewise visible, and finds expression in the series of “bonds” listed by the Council when it teaches:
“They are fully incorporated into the society of the Church who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept her whole structure and all the means of salvation established within her, and within her visible framework are united to Christ, who governs her through the Supreme Pontiff and the Bishops, by the bonds of profession of faith, the sacraments, ecclesiastical government and communion.”

The Eucharist, as the supreme sacramental manifestation of communion in the Church, demands to be celebrated in a context where the outward bonds of communion are also intact. In a special way, since the Eucharist is “as it were the summit of the spiritual life and the goal of all the sacraments,” it requires that the bonds of communion in the sacraments, particularly in Baptism and in priestly Orders, be real. It is not possible to give communion to a person who is not baptized or to one who rejects the full truth of the faith regarding the Eucharistic mystery. Christ is the truth and he bears witness to the truth (cf. Jn 14:6; 18:37); the sacrament of his body and blood does not permit duplicity.

39. Furthermore, given the very nature of ecclesial communion and its relation to the sacrament of the Eucharist, it must be recalled that “the Eucharistic Sacrifice, while always offered in a particular community, is never a celebration of that community alone. In fact, the community, in receiving the Eucharistic presence of the Lord, receives the entire gift of salvation and shows, even in its lasting visible particular form, that it is the image and true presence of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.”

>From this it follows that a truly Eucharistic community cannot be closed in upon itself, as though it were somehow self-sufficient; rather it must persevere in harmony with every other Catholic community.

The ecclesial communion of the Eucharistic assembly is a communion with its own Bishop and with the Roman Pontiff. The Bishop, in effect, is the visible principle and the foundation of unity within his particular Church. It would therefore be a great contradiction if the sacrament par excellence of the Church’s unity were celebrated without true communion with the Bishop. As Saint Ignatius of Antioch wrote: “That Eucharist which is celebrated under the Bishop, or under one to whom the Bishop has given this charge, may be considered certain.” Likewise, since “the Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible source
and foundation of the unity of the Bishops and of the multitude of the faithful,” communion with him is intrinsically required for the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Hence the great truth expressed which the Liturgy expresses in a variety of ways: “Every celebration of the Eucharist is performed in union not only with the proper Bishop, but also with the Pope, with the episcopal order, with all the clergy, and with the entire people. Every valid celebration of the Eucharist expresses this universal communion with Peter and with the whole Church, or objectively calls for it, as in the case of the Christian Churches separated from Rome.”

40. The Eucharist creates communion and fosters communion. Saint Paul wrote to the faithful of Corinth explaining how their divisions, reflected in their Eucharistic gatherings, contradicted what they were celebrating, the Lord’s Supper. The Apostle then urged them to reflect on the true reality of the Eucharist in order to return to the spirit of fraternal communion (cf. 1 Cor 11:17—34). Saint Augustine effectively echoed this call when, in recalling the Apostle’s words: “You are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor 12:27), he went on to say: “If you are his body and members of him, then you will find set on the Lord’s table your own mystery. Yes, you receive your own mystery.” And from this observation he concludes: “Christ the Lord... hallowed at his table the mystery of our peace and unity. Whoever receives the mystery of unity without preserving the bonds of peace receives not a mystery for his benefit but evidence against himself.”

41. The Eucharist’s particular effectiveness in promoting communion is one of the reasons for the importance of Sunday Mass. I have already dwelt on this and on the other reasons which make Sunday Mass fundamental for the life of the Church and of individual believers in my Apostolic Letter on the sanctification of Sunday Dies Domini. There I recalled that the faithful have the obligation to attend Mass, unless they are seriously impeded, and that Pastors have the corresponding duty to see that it is practical and possible for all to fulfill this precept. More recently, in my Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte, in setting forth the pastoral path which the Church must take at the beginning of the third millennium, I drew particular attention to the Sunday Eucharist, emphasizing its effectiveness for building communion. “It is”—I wrote—“the privileged place where
communion is ceaselessly proclaimed and nurtured. Precisely through sharing in the Eucharist, *the Lord's Day* also becomes *the Day of the Church*, when she can effectively exercise her role as the sacrament of unity."

42. The safeguarding and promotion of ecclesial communion is a task of each member of the faithful, who finds in the Eucharist, as the sacrament of the Church's unity, an area of special concern. More specifically, this task is the particular responsibility of the Church's Pastors, each according to his rank and ecclesiastical office. For this reason the Church has drawn up norms aimed both at fostering the frequent and fruitful access of the faithful to the Eucharistic table and at determining the objective conditions under which communion may not be given. The care shown in promoting the faithful observance of these norms becomes a practical means of showing love for the Eucharist and for the Church.

43. In considering the Eucharist as the sacrament of ecclesial communion, there is one subject which, due to its importance, must not be overlooked: I am referring to the *relationship of the Eucharist to ecumenical activity*. We should all give thanks to the Blessed Trinity for the many members of the faithful throughout the world who in recent decades have felt an ardent desire for unity among all Christians. The Second Vatican Council, at the beginning of its Decree on Ecumenism, sees this as a special gift of God. It was an efficacious grace which inspired us, the sons and daughters of the Catholic Church and our brothers and sisters from other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, to set forth on the path of ecumenism.

Our longing for the goal of unity prompts us to turn to the Eucharist, which is the supreme sacrament of the unity of the People of God, in as much as it is the apt expression and the unsurpassable source of that unity. In the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice the Church prays that God, the Father of mercies, will grant his children the fullness of the Holy Spirit so that they may become one body and one spirit in Christ. In raising this prayer to the Father of lights, from whom comes every good endowment and every perfect gift (cf. *Jas* 1:17), the Church believes that she will be heard, for she prays in union with Christ her Head and Spouse, who takes up this plea of his Bride and joins it to that of his own redemptive sacrifice.

44. Precisely because the Church's unity, which the Eucharist brings
about through the Lord’s sacrifice and by communion in his body and blood, absolutely requires full communion in the bonds of the profession of faith, the sacraments and ecclesiastical governance, it is not possible to celebrate together the same Eucharistic liturgy until those bonds are fully re-established. Any such concelebration would not be a valid means, and might well prove instead to be an obstacle, to the attainment of full communion, by weakening the sense of how far we remain from this goal and by introducing or exacerbating ambiguities with regard to one or another truth of the faith. The path towards full unity can only be undertaken in truth. In this area, the prohibitions of Church law leave no room for uncertainty, in fidelity to the moral norm laid down by the Second Vatican Council.

I would like nonetheless to reaffirm what I said in my Encyclical Letter Ut Unum Sint after having acknowledged the impossibility of Eucharistic sharing: “And yet we do have a burning desire to join in celebrating the one Eucharist of the Lord, and this desire itself is already a common prayer of praise, a single supplication. Together we speak to the Father and increasingly we do so ‘with one heart.’”

45. While it is never legitimate to concelebrate in the absence of full communion, the same is not true with respect to the administration of the Eucharist under special circumstances, to individual persons belonging to Churches or Ecclesial Communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church. In this case, in fact, the intention is to meet a grave spiritual need for the eternal salvation of an individual believer, not to bring about an intercommunion which remains impossible until the visible bonds of ecclesial communion are fully re-established.

This was the approach taken by the Second Vatican Council when it gave guidelines for responding to Eastern Christians separated in good faith from the Catholic Church, who spontaneously ask to receive the Eucharist from a Catholic minister and are properly disposed. This approach was then ratified by both Codes, which also consider — with necessary modifications — the case of other non-Eastern Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church.

46. In my Encyclical Ut Unum Sint I expressed my own appreciation of these norms, which make it possible to provide for the salvation of souls
with proper discernment: “It is a source of joy to note that Catholic ministers are able, in certain particular cases, to administer the sacraments of the Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the Sick to Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church but who greatly desire to receive these sacraments, freely request them and manifest the faith which the Catholic Church professes with regard to these sacraments. Conversely, in specific cases and in particular circumstances, Catholics too can request these same sacraments from ministers of Churches in which these sacraments are valid.”

These conditions, from which no dispensation can be given, must be carefully respected, even though they deal with specific individual cases, because the denial of one or more truths of the faith regarding these sacraments and, among these, the truth regarding the need of the ministerial priesthood for their validity, renders the person asking improperly disposed to legitimately receiving them. And the opposite is also true: Catholics may not receive communion in those communities which lack a valid sacrament of Orders.

The faithful observance of the body of norms established in this area is a manifestation and, at the same time, a guarantee of our love for Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, for our brothers and sisters of different Christian confessions — who have a right to our witness to the truth — and for the cause itself of the promotion of unity.

Chapter Five

The Dignity of the Eucharistic Celebration

47. Reading the account of the institution of the Eucharist in the Synoptic Gospels, we are struck by the simplicity and the “solemnity” with which Jesus, on the evening of the Last Supper, instituted this great sacrament. There is an episode which in some way serves as its prelude: the anointing at Bethany. A woman, whom John identifies as Mary the sister of Lazarus, pours a flask of costly ointment over Jesus’ head, which provokes from the disciples — and from Judas in particular (cf. Mt 26:8; Mk 14:4; Jn 12:4) — an indignant response, as if this act, in light of the needs of the poor, represented an intolerable “waste.” But Jesus’ own reaction is completely different. While in no way detracting from the duty of charity
towards the needy, for whom the disciples must always show special care — “the poor you will always have with you” (Mt 26, 11; Mk 14:7; cf. Jn 12:8) — he looks towards his imminent death and burial, and sees this act of anointing as an anticipation of the honor which his body will continue to merit even after his death, indissolubly bound as it is to the mystery of his person.

The account continues, in the Synoptic Gospels, with Jesus’ charge to the disciples to prepare carefully the “large upper room” needed for the Passover meal (cf. Mk 14:15; Lk 22:12) and with the narration of the institution of the Eucharist. Reflecting at least in part the Jewish rites of the Passover meal leading up to the singing of the Hallel (cf. Mt 26:30; Mk 14:26), the story presents with sobriety and solemnity, even in the variants of the different traditions, the words spoken by Christ over the bread and wine, which he made into concrete expressions of the handing over of his body and the shedding of his blood. All these details are recorded by the Evangelists in the light of a praxis of the “breaking of the bread” already well-established in the early Church. But certainly from the time of Jesus on, the event of Holy Thursday has shown visible traces of a liturgical “sensibility” shaped by Old Testament tradition and open to being reshaped in Christian celebrations in a way consonant with the new content of Easter.

48. Like the woman who anointed Jesus in Bethany, the Church has feared no “extravagance,” devoting the best of her resources to expressing her wonder and adoration before the unsurpassable gift of the Eucharist. No less than the first disciples charged with preparing the “large upper room,” she has felt the need, down the centuries and in her encounters with different cultures, to celebrate the Eucharist in a setting worthy of so great a mystery. In the wake of Jesus’ own words and actions, and building upon the ritual heritage of Judaism, the Christian liturgy was born. Could there ever be an adequate means of expressing the acceptance of that self-gift which the divine Bridegroom continually makes to his Bride, the Church, by bringing the Sacrifice offered once and for all on the Cross to successive generations of believers and thus becoming nourishment for all the faithful? Though the idea of a “banquet” naturally suggests familiarity, the Church has never yielded to the temptation to trivialize this “intimacy” with her Spouse by
forgetting that he is also her Lord and that the “banquet” always remains a sacrificial banquet marked by the blood shed on Golgotha. The Eucharistic Banquet is truly a “sacred” banquet, in which the simplicity of the signs conceals the unfathomable holiness of God: O sacrum convivium, in quo Christus sumitur! The bread which is broken on our altars, offered to us as wayfarers along the paths of the world, is panis angelorum, the bread of angels, which cannot be approached except with the humility of the centurion in the Gospel: “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof “(Mt 8:8; Lk 7:6).

49. With this heightened sense of mystery, we understand how the faith of the Church in the mystery of the Eucharist has found historical expression not only in the demand for an interior disposition of devotion, but also in outward forms meant to evoke and emphasize the grandeur of the event being celebrated. This led progressively to the development of a particular form of regulating the Eucharistic liturgy, with due respect for the various legitimately constituted ecclesial traditions. On this foundation a rich artistic heritage also developed. Architecture, sculpture, painting and music, moved by the Christian mystery, have found in the Eucharist, both directly and indirectly, a source of great inspiration.

Such was the case, for example, with architecture, which witnessed the transition, once the historical situation made it possible, from the first places of Eucharistic celebration in the domus or “homes” of Christian families to the solemn basilicas of the early centuries, to the imposing cathedrals of the Middle Ages, and to the churches, large and small, which gradually sprang up throughout the lands touched by Christianity. The designs of altars and tabernacles within Church interiors were often not simply motivated by artistic inspiration but also by a clear understanding of the mystery. The same could be said for sacred music, if we but think of the inspired Gregorian melodies and the many, often great, composers who sought to do justice to the liturgical texts of the Mass. Similarly, can we overlook the enormous quantity of artistic production, ranging from fine craftsmanship to authentic works of art, in the area of Church furnishings and vestments used for the celebration of the Eucharist?

It can be said that the Eucharist, while shaping the Church and her spirituality, has also powerfully affected “culture,” and the arts in particular.
50. In this effort to adore the mystery grasped in its ritual and aesthetic dimensions, a certain “competition” has taken place between Christians of the West and the East. How could we not give particular thanks to the Lord for the contributions to Christian art made by the great architectural and artistic works of the Greco-Byzantine tradition and of the whole geographical area marked by Slav culture? In the East, sacred art has preserved a remarkably powerful sense of mystery, which leads artists to see their efforts at creating beauty not simply as an expression of their own talents, but also as a genuine service to the faith. Passing well beyond mere technical skill, they have shown themselves docile and open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The architectural and mosaic splendors of the Christian East and West are a patrimony belonging to all believers; they contain a hope, and even a pledge, of the desired fullness of communion in faith and in celebration. This would presuppose and demand, as in Rublëv’s famous depiction of the Trinity, a profoundly Eucharistic Church in which the presence of the mystery of Christ in the broken bread is as it were immersed in the ineffable unity of the three divine Persons, making of the Church herself an “icon” of the Trinity.

Within this context of an art aimed at expressing, in all its elements, the meaning of the Eucharist in accordance with the Church’s teaching, attention needs to be given to the norms regulating the construction and decor of sacred buildings. As history shows and as I emphasized in my Letter to Artists, the Church has always left ample room for the creativity of artists. But sacred art must be outstanding for its ability to express adequately the mystery grasped in the fullness of the Church’s faith and in accordance with the pastoral guidelines appropriately laid down by competent Authority. This holds true both for the figurative arts and for sacred music.

51. The development of sacred art and liturgical discipline which took place in lands of ancient Christian heritage is also taking place on continents where Christianity is younger. This was precisely the approach supported by the Second Vatican Council on the need for sound and proper “inculturation.” In my numerous Pastoral Visits I have seen, throughout the world, the great vitality which the celebration of the Eucharist can have when marked by the forms, styles and sensibilities of different cultures. By
adaptation to the changing conditions of time and place, the Eucharist offers sustenance not only to individuals but to entire peoples, and it shapes cultures inspired by Christianity.

It is necessary, however, that this important work of adaptation be carried out with a constant awareness of the ineffable mystery against which every generation is called to measure itself. The “treasure” is too important and precious to risk impoverishment or compromise through forms of experimentation or practices introduced without a careful review on the part of the competent ecclesiastical authorities. Furthermore, the centrality of the Eucharistic mystery demands that any such review must be undertaken in close association with the Holy See. As I wrote in my Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, “such cooperation is essential because the Sacred Liturgy expresses and celebrates the one faith professed by all and, being the heritage of the whole Church, cannot be determined by local Churches in isolation from the universal Church.”

52. All of this makes clear the great responsibility which belongs to priests in particular for the celebration of the Eucharist. It is their responsibility to preside at the Eucharist *in persona Christi* and to provide a witness to and a service of communion not only for the community directly taking part in the celebration, but also for the universal Church, which is a part of every Eucharist. It must be lamented that, especially in the years following the post-conciliar liturgical reform, as a result of a misguided sense of creativity and adaptation there have been a number of abuses which have been a source of suffering for many. A certain reaction against “formalism” has led some, especially in certain regions, to consider the “forms” chosen by the Church’s great liturgical tradition and her Magisterium as non-binding and to introduce unauthorized innovations which are often completely inappropriate.

I consider it my duty, therefore to appeal urgently that the liturgical norms for the celebration of the Eucharist be observed with great fidelity. These norms are a concrete expression of the authentically ecclesial nature of the Eucharist; this is their deepest meaning. Liturgy is never anyone’s private property, be it of the celebrant or of the community in which the mysteries are celebrated. The Apostle Paul had to address fiery words to the community of Corinth because of grave shortcomings in their celebration of
the Eucharist resulting in divisions (*schismata*) and the emergence of factions (*haireseis*) (cf. 1 Cor 11:17-34). Our time, too, calls for a renewed awareness and appreciation of liturgical norms as a reflection of, and a witness to, the one universal Church made present in every celebration of the Eucharist. Priests who faithfully celebrate Mass according to the liturgical norms, and communities which conform to those norms, quietly but eloquently demonstrate their love for the Church. Precisely to bring out more clearly this deeper meaning of liturgical norms, I have asked the competent offices of the Roman Curia to prepare a more specific document, including prescriptions of a juridical nature, on this very important subject. No one is permitted to undervalue the mystery entrusted to our hands: it is too great for anyone to feel free to treat it lightly and with disregard for its sacredness and its universality.

**Chapter Six**

*At the School of Mary, “Woman of the Eucharist”*

53. If we wish to rediscover in all its richness the profound relationship between the Church and the Eucharist, we cannot neglect Mary, Mother and model of the Church. In my Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, I pointed to the Blessed Virgin Mary as our teacher in contemplating Christ’s face, and among the mysteries of light I included *the institution of the Eucharist*. Mary can guide us towards this most holy sacrament, because she herself has a profound relationship with it.

At first glance, the Gospel is silent on this subject. The account of the institution of the Eucharist on the night of Holy Thursday makes no mention of Mary. Yet we know that she was present among the Apostles who prayed “with one accord” (cf. *Acts* 1:14) *in the first community which gathered after the Ascension in expectation of Pentecost*. Certainly Mary must have been present at the Eucharistic celebrations of the first generation of Christians, who were devoted to “the breaking of bread” (*Acts* 2:42).

But in addition to her sharing in the Eucharistic banquet, an indirect picture of Mary’s relationship with the Eucharist can be had, beginning with her interior disposition. *Mary is a “woman of the Eucharist” in her whole life*. The Church, which looks to Mary as a model, is also called to imitate her in her relationship with this most holy mystery.
54. *Mysterium fidei*! If the Eucharist is a mystery of faith which so greatly transcends our understanding as to call for sheer abandonment to the word of God, then there can be no one like Mary to act as our support and guide in acquiring this disposition. In repeating what Christ did at the Last Supper in obedience to his command: “Do this in memory of me!,” we also accept Mary’s invitation to obey him without hesitation: “Do whatever he tells you” (*Jn* 2:5). With the same maternal concern which she showed at the wedding feast of Cana, Mary seems to say to us: “Do not waver; trust in the words of my Son. If he was able to change water into wine, he can also turn bread and wine into his body and blood, and through this mystery bestow on believers the living memorial of his passover, thus becoming the ‘bread of life.”

55. In a certain sense Mary lived her *Eucharistic faith* even before the institution of the Eucharist, by the very fact that *she offered her virginal womb for the Incarnation of God’s Word*. The Eucharist, while commemorating the passion and resurrection, is also in continuity with the incarnation. At the Annunciation Mary conceived the Son of God in the physical reality of his body and blood, thus anticipating within herself what to some degree happens sacramentally in every believer who receives, under the signs of bread and wine, the Lord’s body and blood.

As a result, there is a profound analogy between the *Fiat* which Mary said in reply to the angel, and the *Amen* which every believer says when receiving the body of the Lord. Mary was asked to believe that the One whom she conceived “through the Holy Spirit” was “the Son of God” (*Lk* 1:30-35). In continuity with the Virgin’s faith, in the Eucharistic mystery we are asked to believe that the same Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, becomes present in his full humanity and divinity under the signs of bread and wine.

“Blessed is she who believed” (*Lk* 1:45). Mary also anticipated, in the mystery of the incarnation, the Church’s Eucharistic faith. When, at the Visitation, she bore in her womb the Word made flesh, she became in some way a “tabernacle” — the first “tabernacle” in history — in which the Son of God, still invisible to our human gaze, allowed himself to be adored by Elizabeth, radiating his light as it were through the eyes and the voice of Mary. And is not the enraptured gaze of Mary as she contemplated the face
of the newborn Christ and cradled him in her arms that unparalleled model of love which should inspire us every time we receive Eucharistic communion?

56. Mary, throughout her life at Christ’s side and not only on Calvary, made her own the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist. When she brought the child Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem “to present him to the Lord” (Lk 2:22), she heard the aged Simeon announce that the child would be a “sign of contradiction” and that a sword would also pierce her own heart (cf. Lk 2:34-35). The tragedy of her Son’s crucifixion was thus foretold, and in some sense Mary’s Stabat Mater at the foot of the Cross was foreshadowed. In her daily preparation for Calvary, Mary experienced a kind of “anticipated Eucharist” — one might say a “spiritual communion” — of desire and of oblation, which would culminate in her union with her Son in his passion, and then find expression after Easter by her partaking in the Eucharist which the Apostles celebrated as the memorial of that passion.

What must Mary have felt as she heard from the mouth of Peter, John, James and the other Apostles the words spoken at the Last Supper: “This is my body which is given for you” (Lk 22:19)? The body given up for us and made present under sacramental signs was the same body which she had conceived in her womb! For Mary, receiving the Eucharist must have somehow meant welcoming once more into her womb that heart which had beat in unison with hers and reliving what she had experienced at the foot of the Cross.

57. “Do this in remembrance of me” (Lk 22:19). In the “memorial” of Calvary all that Christ accomplished by his passion and his death is present. Consequently all that Christ did with regard to his Mother for our sake is also present. To her he gave the beloved disciple and, in him, each of us: “Behold, your Son!” To each of us he also says: “Behold your mother!” (cf. Jn 19: 26-27).

Experiencing the memorial of Christ’s death in the Eucharist also means continually receiving this gift. It means accepting — like John — the one who is given to us anew as our Mother. It also means taking on a commitment to be conformed to Christ, putting ourselves at the school of his Mother and allowing her to accompany us. Mary is present, with the Church and as the Mother of the Church, at each of our celebrations of the
Eucharist. If the Church and the Eucharist are inseparably united, the same ought to be said of Mary and the Eucharist. This is one reason why, since ancient times, the commemoration of Mary has always been part of the Eucharistic celebrations of the Churches of East and West.

58. In the Eucharist the Church is completely united to Christ and his sacrifice, and makes her own the spirit of Mary. This truth can be understood more deeply by re-reading the Magnificat in a Eucharistic key. The Eucharist, like the Canticle of Mary, is first and foremost praise and thanksgiving. When Mary exclaims: “My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,” she already bears Jesus in her womb. She praises God “through” Jesus, but she also praises him “in” Jesus and “with” Jesus. This is itself the true “Eucharistic attitude.”

At the same time Mary recalls the wonders worked by God in salvation history in fulfilment of the promise once made to the fathers (cf. Lk 1:55), and proclaims the wonder that surpasses them all, the redemptive incarnation. Lastly, the Magnificat reflects the eschatological tension of the Eucharist. Every time the Son of God comes again to us in the “poverty” of the sacramental signs of bread and wine, the seeds of that new history wherein the mighty are “put down from their thrones” and “those of low degree are exalted” (cf. Lk 1:52), take root in the world. Mary sings of the “new heavens” and the “new earth” which find in the Eucharist their anticipation and in some sense their programme and plan. The Magnificat expresses Mary’s spirituality, and there is nothing greater than this spirituality for helping us to experience the mystery of the Eucharist. The Eucharist has been given to us so that our life, like that of Mary, may become completely a Magnificat!

Conclusion

59. Ave, verum corpus natum de Maria Virgine! Several years ago I celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of my priesthood. Today I have the grace of offering the Church this Encyclical on the Eucharist on the Holy Thursday which falls during the twenty-fifth year of my Petrine ministry. As I do so, my heart is filled with gratitude. For over a half century, every day, beginning on 2 November 1946, when I celebrated my first Mass in the Crypt of Saint Leonard in Wawel Cathedral in Krakow, my eyes have gazed in recollection upon the host and the chalice, where time and space in
some way “merge” and the drama of Golgotha is re-presented in a living way, thus revealing its mysterious “contemporaneity.” Each day my faith has been able to recognize in the consecrated bread and wine the divine Wayfarer who joined the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and opened their eyes to the light and their hearts to new hope (cf. Lk 24:13-35).

Allow me, dear brothers and sisters, to share with deep emotion, as a means of accompanying and strengthening your faith, my own testimony of faith in the Most Holy Eucharist. Ave verum corpus natum de Maria Virgine, vere passum, immolatum, in cruce pro homine! Here is the Church’s treasure, the heart of the world, the pledge of the fulfillment for which each man and woman, even unconsciously, yearns. A great and transcendent mystery, indeed, and one that taxes our mind’s ability to pass beyond appearances. Here our senses fail us: visus, tactus, gustus in te fallitur, in the words of the hymn Adoro Te Devote; yet faith alone, rooted in the word of Christ handed down to us by the Apostles, is sufficient for us. Allow me, like Peter at the end of the Eucharistic discourse in John’s Gospel, to say once more to Christ, in the name of the whole Church and in the name of each of you: “Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68).

60. At the dawn of this third millennium, we, the children of the Church, are called to undertake with renewed enthusiasm the journey of Christian living. As I wrote in my Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte, “it is not a matter of inventing a ‘new programme.’ The programme already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition; it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its centre in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with him transform history until its fulfillment in the heavenly Jerusalem.” The implementation of this programme of a renewed impetus in Christian living passes through the Eucharist.

Every commitment to holiness, every activity aimed at carrying out the Church’s mission, every work of pastoral planning, must draw the strength it needs from the Eucharistic mystery and in turn be directed to that mystery as its culmination. In the Eucharist we have Jesus, we have his redemptive sacrifice, we have his resurrection, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit, we have adoration, obedience and love of the Father. Were we to disregard the Eucharist, how could we overcome our own deficiency?
61. The mystery of the Eucharist — sacrifice, presence, banquet — does not allow for reduction or exploitation; it must be experienced and lived in its integrity, both in its celebration and in the intimate converse with Jesus which takes place after receiving communion or in a prayerful moment of Eucharistic adoration apart from Mass. These are times when the Church is firmly built up and it becomes clear what she truly is: one, holy, catholic and apostolic; the people, temple and family of God; the body and bride of Christ, enlivened by the Holy Spirit; the universal sacrament of salvation and a hierarchically structured communion.

The path taken by the Church in these first years of the third millennium is also a path of renewed ecumenical commitment. The final decades of the second millennium, culminating in the Great Jubilee, have spurred us along this path and called for all the baptized to respond to the prayer of Jesus “ut unum sint” (Jn 17:11). The path itself is long and strewn with obstacles greater than our human resources alone can overcome, yet we have the Eucharist, and in its presence we can hear in the depths of our hearts, as if they were addressed to us, the same words heard by the Prophet Elijah: “Arise and eat, else the journey will be too great for you” (1 Kg 19:7). The treasure of the Eucharist, which the Lord places before us, impels us towards the goal of full sharing with all our brothers and sisters to whom we are joined by our common Baptism. But if this treasure is not to be squandered, we need to respect the demands which derive from its being the sacrament of communion in faith and in apostolic succession.

By giving the Eucharist the prominence it deserves, and by being careful not to diminish any of its dimensions or demands, we show that we are truly conscious of the greatness of this gift. We are urged to do so by an uninterrupted tradition, which from the first centuries on has found the Christian community ever vigilant in guarding this “treasure.” Inspired by love, the Church is anxious to hand on to future generations of Christians, without loss, her faith and teaching with regard to the mystery of the Eucharist. There can be no danger of excess in our care for this mystery, for “in this sacrament is recapitulated the whole mystery of our salvation.”

62. Let us take our place, dear brothers and sisters, at the school of the saints, who are the great interpreters of true Eucharistic piety. In them the theology of the Eucharist takes on all the splendor of a lived reality; it
becomes “contagious” and, in a manner of speaking, it “warms our hearts.” Above all, let us listen to Mary Most Holy, in whom the mystery of the Eucharist appears, more than in anyone else, as a mystery of light. Gazing upon Mary, we come to know the transforming power present in the Eucharist. In her we see the world renewed in love. Contemplating her, assumed body and soul into heaven, we see opening up before us those “new heavens” and that “new earth” which will appear at the second coming of Christ. Here below, the Eucharist represents their pledge, and in a certain way, their anticipation: “Veni, Domine Iesu!” (Rev 22:20).

In the humble signs of bread and wine, changed into his body and blood, Christ walks beside us as our strength and our food for the journey, and he enables us to become, for everyone, witnesses of hope. If, in the presence of this mystery, reason experiences its limits, the heart, enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, clearly sees the response that is demanded, and bows low in adoration and unbounded love.

Let us make our own the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas, an eminent theologian and an impassioned poet of Christ in the Eucharist, and turn in hope to the contemplation of that goal to which our hearts aspire in their thirst for joy and peace:

**Bone pastor, panis vere, Iesu, nostri miserere...**

**Come then, good Shepherd, bread divine, Still show to us thy mercy sign; Oh, feed us, still keep us thine; So we may see thy glories shine in fields of immortality.**

**O thou, the wisest, mightiest, best, Our present food, our future rest, Come, make us each thy chosen guest, Co-heirs of thine, and comrades blest With saints whose dwelling is with thee.**

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter’s, on 17 April, Holy Thursday, in the year 2003, the Twenty—fifth of my Pontificate, the Year of the Rosary.

Joannes Paulus II
Address at the get-together with young people in Madrid (May 3, 2003)

1. Led by the hand of the Virgin Mary and accompanied by the example and intercession of the new Saints, we have revisited in prayer several moments in the life of Jesus.

Indeed, in its simplicity and depth the Rosary is a true compendium of the Gospel and leads to the very heart of the Christian message: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

Mary, in addition to being our Mother who is close, discreet and understanding, is the best Teacher for achieving knowledge of the truth through contemplation. The drama of contemporary culture is the lack of interiority, the absence of contemplation. Without interiority culture has no content; it is like a body that has not yet found its soul. What can humanity do without interiority?

Unfortunately, we know the answer very well. When the contemplative spirit is missing, life is not protected and all that is human is denigrated. Without interiority, modern man puts his own integrity at risk.

2. Dear young people, I invite you to be part of the “School of the Virgin Mary.” She is the incomparable model of contemplation and wonderful example of fruitful, joyful and enriching interiority. She will teach you never to separate action from contemplation, so as to contribute to making a great dream come true: the birth of the new Europe in the spirit. A Europe that is faithful to its Christian roots, not closed in on itself but open to dialogue and collaboration with the other peoples of the earth; a Europe aware that it is called to be the beacon of civilization and an incentive to progress for the world, determined to combine its efforts and its creativity to serve peace and solidarity among peoples.

3. Beloved young people, you know well how concerned I am for peace in the world. The spiral of violence, terrorism and war still causes hatred and death, even in our day. Peace, as we know, is first of all a gift from on High for which we must constantly ask and which, furthermore, we must all build together by means of a profound inner conversion. Consequently,
today I want to exhort you to *work to build peace and be artisans of peace*. Respond to blind violence and inhuman hatred with the fascinating power of love. *Overcome enmity with the force of forgiveness*. Keep far away from any form of exasperated nationalism, racism and intolerance.

Witness with your life that *ideas are not imposed but proposed*. Never let yourselves be discouraged by evil! For this you will need the help of prayer and the consolation that is born from an intimate friendship with Christ. Only in this way, living the experience of God’s love and radiating Gospel fellowship, will you be able to be the builders of a better world, genuine peaceful and peacemaking men and women.

4. Tomorrow I will have the joy of canonizing five new Saints, sons and daughters of this noble Nation and of this Church. They “were young like you, full of energy, joy and love of life. Their encounter with Christ transformed their lives... Thus, they were enabled to attract other young people, their friends, and to create associations for prayer, evangelization and charity which still endure” (*Message to the Spanish Bishops on the occasion of the Holy Father’s Apostolic Visit*, n. 4).

Dear young people, go forward with confidence to meet Jesus! And like the new Saints, *do not be afraid to talk about him!* For Christ is the true answer to all questions about man and his destiny. You young people must become *the apostles of your peers*. I know well that this is not easy. You will often be tempted to say like the Prophet Jeremiah: “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth” (*Jer 1:6*). Do not be disheartened for you are not alone: the Lord will always accompany you, with his grace and the gift of his Spirit.

5. The Lord’s faithful presence makes you capable of taking on the commitment of the new evangelization, to which all the Church’s children are called. It is a task for all. *Lay people play a lead role* in it, especially husbands and wives and Christian families; nevertheless, today evangelization urgently needs priests and consecrated persons. This is why I want to say to each one of you, young people: if you hear the call of God that says to you: “Follow me!” (*Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27*), do not silence his call. Be generous, respond like Mary, offering God the joyful “yes” of yourself and your life.
I give you my own witness: I was ordained a priest when I was 26 years old. Fifty-six years have passed since then. So how old is the Pope? Almost 83! A young man of 83! Looking back and remembering those years of my life, I can assure you that it is worthwhile dedicating oneself to the cause of Christ and, out of love for him, devoting oneself to serving humanity. It is worthwhile to give one’s life for the Gospel and for one’s brothers and sisters! How many hours are there still to go until midnight? Three hours. Just three hours until midnight and then comes morning.

6. To conclude, I would like to call on Mary, the shining star that announces the Sun that is born from on High, Jesus Christ:

Hail, Mary, full of grace! This evening I pray to you for the youth of Spain, young people full of dreams and hopes.

They are the dawn watchmen, the people of the beatitudes; they are the living hope of the Church and of the Pope.

Holy Mary, Mother of the young, intercede so that they may be witnesses of the Risen Christ, humble and courageous apostles of the third millennium, generous heralds of the Gospel.

Holy Mary, Immaculate Virgin, pray with us, pray for us. Amen.

Torna ai contenuti

The Roman Curia

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: Doctrinal note on some questions related to the commitment and conduct of Catholics in political life (November 24, 2002)

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, having received the opinion of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, has decided that it would be appropriate to
publish the present Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life. This Note is directed to the Bishops of the Catholic Church and, in a particular way, to Catholic politicians and all lay members of the faithful called to participate in the political life of democratic societies.

I. A constant teaching

1. The commitment of Christians in the world has found a variety of expressions in the course of the past 2000 years. One such expression has been Christian involvement in political life: Christians, as one Early Church writer stated, “play their full role as citizens.” Among the saints, the Church venerates many men and women who served God through their generous commitment to politics and government. Among these, Saint Thomas More, who was proclaimed Patron of Statesmen and Politicians, gave witness by his martyrdom to “the inalienable dignity of the human conscience.” Though subjected to various forms of psychological pressure, Saint Thomas More refused to compromise, never forsaking the “constant fidelity to legitimate authority and institutions” which distinguished him; he taught by his life and his death that “man cannot be separated from God, nor politics from morality.” It is commendable that in today’s democratic societies, in a climate of true freedom, everyone is made a participant in directing the body politic. Such societies call for new and fuller forms of participation in public life by Christian and non-Christian citizens alike. Indeed, all can contribute, by voting in elections for lawmakers and government officials, and in other ways as well, to the development of political solutions and legislative choices which, in their opinion, will benefit the common good. The life of a democracy could not be productive without the active, responsible and generous involvement of everyone, “albeit in a diversity and complementarity of forms, levels, tasks, and responsibilities.”

By fulfilling their civic duties, “guided by a Christian conscience,” in conformity with its values, the lay faithful exercise their proper task of infusing the temporal order with Christian values, all the while respecting the nature and rightful autonomy of that order, and cooperating with other citizens according to their particular competence and responsibility. The consequence of this fundamental teaching of the Second Vatican Council is that “the lay faithful are never to relinquish their participation in ‘public
life,’ that is, in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good.” This would include the promotion and defense of goods such as public order and peace, freedom and equality, respect for human life and for the environment, justice and solidarity.

The present Note does not seek to set out the entire teaching of the Church on this matter, which is summarized in its essentials in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, but intends only to recall some principles proper to the Christian conscience, which inspire the social and political involvement of Catholics in democratic societies. The emergence of ambiguities or questionable positions in recent times, often because of the pressure of world events, has made it necessary to clarify some important elements of Church teaching in this area.

**II. Central points in the current cultural and political debate**

2. Civil society today is undergoing a complex cultural process as the end of an era brings with it a time of uncertainty in the face of something new. The great strides made in our time give evidence of humanity’s progress in attaining conditions of life which are more in keeping with human dignity. The growth in the sense of responsibility towards countries still on the path of development is without doubt an important sign, illustrative of a greater sensitivity to the common good. At the same time, however, one cannot close one’s eyes to the real dangers which certain tendencies in society are promoting through legislation, nor can one ignore the effects this will have on future generations.

A kind of cultural relativism exists today, evident in the conceptualization and defense of an ethical pluralism, which sanctions the decadence and disintegration of reason and the principles of the natural moral law. Furthermore, it is not unusual to hear the opinion expressed in the public sphere that such ethical pluralism is the very condition for democracy. As a result, citizens claim complete autonomy with regard to their moral choices, and lawmakers maintain that they are respecting this freedom of choice by enacting laws which ignore the principles of natural ethics and yield to ephemeral cultural and moral trends, as if every possible outlook on life were of equal value. At the same time, the value of tolerance is disingenuously invoked when a large number of citizens, Catholics among
them, are asked not to base their contribution to society and political life—through the legitimate means available to everyone in a democracy—on their particular understanding of the human person and the common good. The history of the twentieth century demonstrates that those citizens were right who recognized the falsehood of relativism, and with it, the notion that there is no moral law rooted in the nature of the human person, which must govern our understanding of man, the common good and the state.

3. Such relativism, of course, has nothing to do with the legitimate freedom of Catholic citizens to choose among the various political opinions that are compatible with faith and the natural moral law, and to select, according to their own criteria, what best corresponds to the needs of the common good. Political freedom is not—and cannot be—based upon the relativistic idea that all conceptions of the human person's good have the same value and truth, but rather, on the fact that politics are concerned with very concrete realizations of the true human and social good in given historical, geographic, economic, technological and cultural contexts. From the specificity of the task at hand and the variety of circumstances, a plurality of morally acceptable policies and solutions arises. It is not the Church's task to set forth specific political solutions—and even less to propose a single solution as the acceptable one—to temporal questions that God has left to the free and responsible judgment of each person. It is, however, the Church's right and duty to provide a moral judgment on temporal matters when this is required by faith or the moral law. If Christians must “recognize the legitimacy of differing points of view about the organization of worldly affairs,” they are also called to reject, as injurious to democratic life, a conception of pluralism that reflects moral relativism. Democracy must be based on the true and solid foundation of non-negotiable ethical principles, which are the underpinning of life in society.

On the level of concrete political action, there can generally be a plurality of political parties in which Catholics may exercise—especially through legislative assemblies—their right and duty to contribute to the public life of their country. This arises because of the contingent nature of certain choices regarding the ordering of society, the variety of strategies available for accomplishing or guaranteeing the same fundamental value, the
possibility of different interpretations of the basic principles of political theory, and the technical complexity of many political problems. It should not be confused, however, with an ambiguous pluralism in the choice of moral principles or essential values. The legitimate plurality of temporal options is at the origin of the commitment of Catholics to politics and relates directly to Christian moral and social teaching. It is in the light of this teaching that lay Catholics must assess their participation in political life so as to be sure that it is marked by a coherent responsibility for temporal reality.

The Church recognizes that while democracy is the best expression of the direct participation of citizens in political choices, it succeeds only to the extent that it is based on a correct understanding of the human person. Catholic involvement in political life cannot compromise on this principle, for otherwise the witness of the Christian faith in the world, as well as the unity and interior coherence of the faithful, would be non-existent. The democratic structures on which the modern state is based would be quite fragile were its foundation not the centrality of the human person. It is respect for the person that makes democratic participation possible. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, the protection of “the rights of the person is, indeed, a necessary condition for citizens, individually and collectively, to play an active part in public life and administration.”

4. The complex array of today’s problems branches out from here, including some never faced by past generations. Scientific progress has resulted in advances that are unsettling for the consciences of men and women and call for solutions that respect ethical principles in a coherent and fundamental way. At the same time, legislative proposals are put forward which, heedless of the consequences for the existence and future of human beings with regard to the formation of culture and social behavior, attack the very inviolability of human life. Catholics, in this difficult situation, have the right and the duty to recall society to a deeper understanding of human life and to the responsibility of everyone in this regard. John Paul II, continuing the constant teaching of the Church, has reiterated many times that those who are directly involved in lawmaking bodies have a “grave and clear obligation to oppose” any law that attacks human life. For them, as for every Catholic, it is impossible to promote
such laws or to vote for them. As John Paul II has taught in his Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae* regarding the situation in which it is not possible to overturn or completely repeal a law allowing abortion which is already in force or coming up for a vote, “an elected official, whose absolute personal opposition to procured abortion was well known, could licitly support proposals aimed at *limiting the harm* done by such a law and at lessening its negative consequences at the level of general opinion and public morality.”

In this context, it must be noted also that a well-formed Christian conscience does not permit one to vote for a political program or an individual law which contradicts the fundamental contents of faith and morals. The Christian faith is an integral unity, and thus it is incoherent to isolate some particular element to the detriment of the whole of Catholic doctrine. A political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the Church’s social doctrine does not exhaust one’s responsibility towards the common good. Nor can a Catholic think of delegating his Christian responsibility to others; rather, the Gospel of Jesus Christ gives him this task, so that the truth about man and the world might be proclaimed and put into action.

When political activity comes up against moral principles that do not admit of exception, compromise or derogation, the Catholic commitment becomes more evident and laden with responsibility. In the face of *fundamental and inalienable ethical demands*, Christians must recognize that what is at stake is the essence of the moral law, which concerns the integral good of the human person. This is the case with laws concerning abortion and euthanasia (not to be confused with the decision to forgo extraordinary treatments, which is morally legitimate). Such laws must defend the basic right to life from conception to natural death. In the same way, it is necessary to recall the duty to respect and protect the rights of the human embryo. Analogously, the family needs to be safeguarded and promoted, based on monogamous marriage between a man and a woman, and protected in its unity and stability in the face of modern laws on divorce: in no way can other forms of cohabitation be placed on the same level as marriage, nor can they receive legal recognition as such. The same is true for the freedom of parents regarding the education of their children; it is an inalienable right recognized also by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. In the same way, one must consider *society’s protection of minors* and
freedom from modern forms of slavery (drug abuse and prostitution, for example). In addition, there is the right to religious freedom and the development of an economy that is at the service of the human person and of the common good, with respect for social justice, the principles of human solidarity and subsidiarity, according to which “the rights of all individuals, families, and organizations and their practical implementation must be acknowledged.” Finally, the question of peace must be mentioned. Certain pacifistic and ideological visions tend at times to secularize the value of peace, while, in other cases, there is the problem of summary ethical judgments which forget the complexity of the issues involved. Peace is always “the work of justice and the effect of charity.” It demands the absolute and radical rejection of violence and terrorism and requires a constant and vigilant commitment on the part of all political leaders.

III. Principles of Catholic doctrine on the autonomy of the temporal order and on pluralism

5. While a plurality of methodologies reflective of different sensibilities and cultures can be legitimate in approaching such questions, no Catholic can appeal to the principle of pluralism or to the autonomy of lay involvement in political life to support policies affecting the common good which compromise or undermine fundamental ethical requirements. This is not a question of “confessional values” per se, because such ethical precepts are rooted in human nature itself and belong to the natural moral law. They do not require from those who defend them the profession of the Christian faith, although the Church’s teaching confirms and defends them always and everywhere as part of her service to the truth about man and about the common good of civil society. Moreover, it cannot be denied that politics must refer to principles of absolute value precisely because these are at the service of the dignity of the human person and of true human progress.

6. The appeal often made to “the rightful autonomy of the participation of lay Catholics” in politics needs to be clarified. Promoting the common good of society, according to one’s conscience, has nothing to do with “confessionalism” or religious intolerance. For Catholic moral doctrine, the rightful autonomy of the political or civil sphere from that of religion and the Church—but not from that of morality—is a value that has been attained and recognized by the Catholic Church and belongs to inheritance of
contemporary civilization. John Paul II has warned many times of the dangers that follow from confusion between the religious and political spheres. “Extremely sensitive situations arise when a specifically religious norm becomes or tends to become the law of a state without due consideration for the distinction between the domains proper to religion and to political society. In practice, the identification of religious law with civil law can stifle religious freedom, even going so far as to restrict or deny other inalienable human rights.” All the faithful are well aware that specifically religious activities (such as the profession of faith, worship, administration of sacraments, theological doctrines, interchange between religious authorities and the members of religions) are outside the state’s responsibility. The state must not interfere, nor in any way require or prohibit these activities, except when it is a question of public order. The recognition of civil and political rights, as well as the allocation of public services may not be made dependent upon citizens’ religious convictions or activities.

The right and duty of Catholics and all citizens to seek the truth with sincerity and to promote and defend, by legitimate means, moral truths concerning society, justice, freedom, respect for human life and the other rights of the person, is something quite different. The fact that some of these truths may also be taught by the Church does not lessen the political legitimacy or the rightful “autonomy” of the contribution of those citizens who are committed to them, irrespective of the role that reasoned inquiry or confirmation by the Christian faith may have played in recognizing such truths. Such “autonomy” refers first of all to the attitude of the person who respects the truths that derive from natural knowledge regarding man’s life in society, even if such truths may also be taught by a specific religion, because truth is one. It would be a mistake to confuse the proper autonomy exercised by Catholics in political life with the claim of a principle that prescinds from the moral and social teaching of the Church.

By its interventions in this area, the Church’s Magisterium does not wish to exercise political power or eliminate the freedom of opinion of Catholics regarding contingent questions. Instead, it intends—as is its proper function—to instruct and illuminate the consciences of the faithful, particularly those involved in political life, so that their actions may always
serve the integral promotion of the human person and the common good. The social doctrine of the Church is not an intrusion into the government of individual countries. It is a question of the lay Catholic’s duty to be morally coherent, found within one’s conscience, which is one and indivisible. “There cannot be two parallel lives in their existence: on the one hand, the so-called ‘spiritual life,’ with its values and demands; and on the other, the so-called ‘secular’ life, that is, life in a family, at work, in social responsibilities, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture. The branch, engrafted to the vine which is Christ, bears its fruit in every sphere of existence and activity. In fact, every area of the lay faithful’s lives, as different as they are, enters into the plan of God, who desires that these very areas be the ‘places in time’ where the love of Christ is revealed and realized for both the glory of the Father and service of others. Every activity, every situation, every precise responsibility—as, for example, skill and solidarity in work, love and dedication in the family and the education of children, service to society and public life and the promotion of truth in the area of culture—are the occasions ordained by providence for a ‘continuous exercise of faith, hope and charity’ (Apostolicam Actuositatem, 4).” Living and acting in conformity with one’s own conscience on questions of politics is not slavish acceptance of positions alien to politics or some kind of confessionalism, but rather the way in which Christians offer their concrete contribution so that, through political life, society will become more just and more consistent with the dignity of the human person.

In democratic societies, all proposals are freely discussed and examined. Those who, on the basis of respect for individual conscience, would view the moral duty of Christians to act according to their conscience as something that disqualifies them from political life, denying the legitimacy of their political involvement following from their convictions about the common good, would be guilty of a form of intolerant secularism. Such a position would seek to deny not only any engagement of Christianity in public or political life, but even the possibility of natural ethics itself. Were this the case, the road would be open to moral anarchy, which would be anything but legitimate pluralism. The oppression of the weak by the strong would be the obvious consequence. The marginalization of Christianity, moreover, would not bode well for the future of society or for
consensus among peoples; indeed, it would threaten the very spiritual and cultural foundations of civilization.

**IV. Considerations regarding particular aspects**

7. In recent years, there have been cases within some organizations founded on Catholic principles, in which support has been given to political forces or movements with positions contrary to the moral and social teaching of the Church on fundamental ethical questions. Such activities, in contradiction to basic principles of Christian conscience, are not compatible with membership in organizations or associations which define themselves as Catholic. Similarly, some Catholic periodicals in certain countries have expressed perspectives on political choices that have been ambiguous or incorrect, by misinterpreting the idea of the political autonomy enjoyed by Catholics and by not taking into consideration the principles mentioned above.

Faith in Jesus Christ, who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6), calls Christians to exert a greater effort in building a culture which, inspired by the Gospel, will reclaim the values and contents of the Catholic Tradition. The presentation of the fruits of the spiritual, intellectual and moral heritage of Catholicism in terms understandable to modern culture is a task of great urgency today, in order to avoid also a kind of Catholic cultural diaspora. Furthermore, the cultural achievements and mature experience of Catholics in political life in various countries, especially since the Second World War, do not permit any kind of ‘inferiority complex’ in comparison with political programs which recent history has revealed to be weak or totally ruinous. It is insufficient and reductive to think that the commitment of Catholics in society can be limited to a simple transformation of structures, because if at the basic level there is no culture capable of receiving, justifying and putting into practice positions deriving from faith and morals, the changes will always rest on a weak foundation.

Christian faith has never presumed to impose a rigid framework on social and political questions, conscious that the historical dimension requires men and women to live in imperfect situations, which are also susceptible to rapid change. For this reason, Christians must reject political positions and activities inspired by a utopian perspective which, turning the tradition of Biblical faith into a kind of prophetic vision without God,
makes ill use of religion by directing consciences towards a hope which is merely earthly and which empties or reinterprets the Christian striving towards eternal life.

At the same time, the Church teaches that authentic freedom does not exist without the truth. “Truth and freedom either go together hand in hand or together they perish in misery.” In a society in which truth is neither mentioned nor sought, every form of authentic exercise of freedom will be weakened, opening the way to libertine and individualistic distortions and undermining the protection of the good of the human person and of the entire society.

8. In this regard, it is helpful to recall a truth which today is often not perceived or formulated correctly in public opinion: the right to freedom of conscience and, in a special way, to religious freedom, taught in the Declaration Dignitatis Humanae of the Second Vatican Council, is based on the ontological dignity of the human person and not on a non-existent equality among religions or cultural systems of human creation. Reflecting on this question, Paul VI taught that “in no way does the Council base this right to religious freedom on the fact that all religions and all teachings, including those that are erroneous, would have more or less equal value; it is based rather on the dignity of the human person, which demands that he not be subjected to external limitations which tend to constrain the conscience in its search for the true religion or in adhering to it.” The teaching on freedom of conscience and on religious freedom does not therefore contradict the condemnation of indifferentism and religious relativism by Catholic doctrine; on the contrary, it is fully in accord with it.

V. Conclusion

9. The principles contained in the present Note are intended to shed light on one of the most important aspects of the unity of Christian life: coherence between faith and life, Gospel and culture, as recalled by the Second Vatican Council. The Council exhorted Christians “to fulfill their duties faithfully in the spirit of the Gospel. It is a mistake to think that, because we have here no lasting city, but seek the city which is to come, we are entitled to shirk our earthly responsibilities; this is to forget that by our faith we are bound all the more to fulfill these responsibilities according to the vocation of each... May Christians... be proud of the opportunity to
carry out their earthly activity in such a way as to integrate human, domestic, professional, scientific and technical enterprises with religious values, under whose supreme direction all things are ordered to the glory of God.”

The Sovereign Pontiff John Paul II, in the Audience of November 21, 2002, approved the present Note, adopted in the Plenary Session of this Congregation, and ordered its publication.

Rome, from the Offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, November 24, 2002, the Solemnity of Christ the King.

Joseph Card. Ratzinger
Prefect

Tarcisio Bertone, S.D.B.
Archbishop Emeritus of Vercelli
Secretary

Torna ai contenuti
PRELATE

• New Circumscriptions
• Decrees
• Activities of the Prelate
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New Circumscriptions

Establishment of New Circumscriptions

On June 19 and 20, 2003, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, established the Delegations of Croatia and Slovenia respectively by the following decrees:

Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRIA
Dei et Apostolicæ Sedis gratia Prælatus
DECRETUM
Perspecto n. 152, §2 Codicis iuris particularis Operis Dei.
Auditis Consilio Generali et Assessoratu Centrali, Prælaturæ Delegationem Croatiae a me dependentem erigo atque erectam declaro.
Datum Romæ, ex Aedibus Curiae Prælatitiae, die 19, mense iunio, anno 2003.

@ Xaverius Echevarría
Franciscus Vives
Curiae Prælatitiae Cancellarius
Reg. Gen. R. Lib. VI pag. 14

Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRIA
Dei et Apostolicæ Sedis gratia Prælatus
DECRETUM
Perspecto n. 152, §2 Codicis iuris particularis Operis Dei.
Auditis Consilio Generali et Assessoratu Centrali, Prælaturæ Delegationem Sloveniæ a me dependentem erigo atque erectam declaro.
Datum Romæ, ex Aedibus Curiae Prælatitiae, die 20, mense iunio, anno 2003.
Decrees

Some decrees

Decree of the appointment of the Vicar of the Delegation of Croatia:

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

DECRETUM

Præsentibus his litteris te, Rev.dum D.num D.rem Georgium Monteiro da Cunha Ramos, ad quinquennium nominamus atque constituimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Delegatione Croatiæ, cum omnibus et singulis iuribus et obligationibus huic officio adnexis.

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

Datum Romæ, ex Aedibus Curiae Prælatitiae, die 19, mense iunio, anno 2003.

@ Xaverius Echevarría
Franciscus Vives
Curiae Prælatitiae Cancellarius
Reg. Gen. R. Lib. VI pag. 14
Decree of appointment of the Vicar of the Delegation of Slovenia:
Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRIA
Dei et Apostolicæ Sedis gratia Prælatus

D E C R E T U M

Præsentibus his litteris te, Rev.dum D.num D.rem Felicem Torra Torreguitart, ad quinquennium nominamus atque constituimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Delegatione Sloveniæ, cum omnibus et singulis iuribus et obligationibus huic officio adnexis.

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

Datum Romæ, ex Aedibus Curiae Prælatitiae, die 20, mense iunio, anno 2003.

@ Xaverius Echevarría
Franciscus Vives
Curiae Prælatitiae Cancellarius
Reg. Gen. R. Lib. VI pag. 14

Decree of appointment of the Regional Vicar of Ireland:
Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRIA
Dei et Apostolicæ Sedis gratia Prælatus

D E C R E T U M

Præsentibus his litteris te, Rev.dum D.num D.rem Robertum Bucciarelli, ad quinquennium nominamus atque constituimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Quasi-Regione Hiberniæ, cum omnibus et singulis iuribus et obligationibus huic officio adnexis.
Activities of the Prelate

Pastoral trips

Bishop Echevarría was in Spain from January 14 to 20. He arrived in Pamplona on Tuesday, January 14, accompanied by the Prelature’s Vicar General, Msgr. Fernando Ocariz, the Regional Vicar of Spain, Msgr. Ramon Herrando, and Msgr. Joaquín Alonso.

On the afternoon of the 16th he attended a reception given by the President of the government of Navarre in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the University of Navarre. Participating in the ceremony were government ministers, the President of the Regional Parliament, the Archbishop of Pamplona, the mayor, and many other government officials of Navarre. The university was represented by its Board of Directors, the deans of the various schools and other academic officials and invitees.

On the morning of the 17th, there was a solemn bestowal of honorary doctorates on three well-known scholars. In the afternoon, the Prelate went
to the Bidasoa International Ecclesiastical College, where he met with the seminarians. Afterwards he visited the University Hospital and spent time with some of the sick people there before meeting with a large group of university women in the school of medicine’s reception hall.

On Saturday, the 18th, he was in Logroño, the city where St. Josemaría lived for some years and where he began his studies for the priesthood in the diocesan seminary. He visited the Alcaste School and spoke with the teachers, emphasizing the importance of charity in their educational work. Following this he went to the cathedral where he prayed before the image of Our Lady of the Angels.

At noon there was an academic ceremony in the seminary honoring St. Josemaría.

In the afternoon, having returned to Pamplona, Bishop Echevarría had a meeting with graduates and friends of the University of Navarre. In answer to the questions of some professors and members of the alumni society about how they could maintain the spirit inculcated by St. Josemaría at the beginning of the university, the Prelate urged them to seek the truth, in accord with their faith, and to work with a Christian spirit. He also encouraged them to promote the values of marriage and the family.

On Sunday, the 19th, he left for Madrid.

From January 21 to 24, Bishop Echevarría was in Jerusalem where he visited with the faithful of the Prelature who live in that city.

On Wednesday, the 22nd, he celebrated Holy Mass in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher at the altar of the Anastasis, the place of the resurrection. That same day he visited the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Archbishop Sabbah.

On Friday, the Prelate of Opus Dei had lunch with the Nuncio, who had arrived the night before. In the afternoon he returned to Rome.
At the invitation of the Spanish Bishops’ Conference, the Prelate of Opus Dei arrived in Madrid on Friday, May 2, to participate in the canonization of five Spaniards.

On the morning of May 3, together with the other participating bishops, Bishop Echevarría went to the Madrid-Barajas international airport to receive the Holy Father. In the evening he took part in the prayer vigil of the Holy Father with young people in the military airport of Cuatro Vientos. Before leaving he had a get-together at the seat of the Regional Commission of Opus Dei, at Diego de León, with the vicars of the ten delegations of the Prelature in Spain, whom he wanted to take part with him in the canonization ceremony and the other events at which the Holy Father would preside.

On Sunday, May 4, the Prelate participated, along with many other bishops, in the Eucharistic concelebration in which John Paul II canonized María Maravillas de Jesús, Ángela de la Cruz, Genoveva Torres, Pedro Poveda and José María Rubio. In the evening Bishop Echevarría went to the Barajas airport to see the Holy Father off.

On Monday, May 5, before leaving, he had various working sessions with the directors of Opus Dei in Spain.

Bishop Echevarría arrived in Johannesburg on Wednesday, May 7. During his stay there he visited the Diocesan Administrator of Johannesburg, Fr. John Finlayson, and had get-togethers with various groups of faithful of the Prelature.

On Friday, the 9th, he traveled to Pretoria, where he visited Archbishop George Daniel, and the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Blasco Francisco Collaço. Upon returning to Johannesburg he had a reunion with the women directors of the Regional Council of the Prelature and, later, a meeting with university women in Arbor Study Centre.

On Saturday, May 10, he received various families and had a get-together with about 200 people, whom he encouraged to draw close to Christ and to learn from his example to work with a spirit of service and a
sense of responsibility. Replying to questions of those attending, he spoke among other topics about love and faithfulness in marriage, the sacrament of reconciliation and, in the context of the recent history of South Africa, of learning to love in order to know how to forgive. In the afternoon, he met with the men directors of the Regional Council of the Prelature. He returned to Europe late Saturday evening.

Bishop Echevarría was in Sweden from May 23 to 26.

During that weekend, aside from two meetings with the Council and the Advisory of the Prelature’s delegation, the Prelate had various gatherings with different groups of faithful of Opus Dei. Recalling the Catholic past of the Nordic countries, he urged them to continue spreading the faith in Sweden and in the other Scandinavian countries. Together with the need for the faith, he emphasized the importance of charity, which has to be shown by dealing with everyone in a friendly way, by smiling, by expressing thanks for the services that others provide.

He also spent a few minutes with the students at the Lärkstadens University Residence. He spoke to them about respect for freedom and the family environment that is found in centers of Opus Dei as a heritage received from St. Josemaría.

He returned to Rome on the afternoon of the 26th.

Participation in a symposium in Logroño

On Saturday, January 18, Bishop Javier Echevarría took part in an academic ceremony commemorating St. Josemaría Escrivá’s priestly work, held in the Logroño diocesan seminary, where he pursued studies for the priesthood from 1918-1920. It was also in this city that the founder of Opus Dei saw the footprints of a discalced Carmelite in the snow, which gave rise to his priestly vocation.

The ceremony, organized by the diocese of Logroño, was presided over by Bishop Ramón Búa, who emphasized in his address the importance for the Riojan seminary of "the ‘footprints,’ the imprint of holiness, that the
saint who has recently been canonized by the Church left impressed on our city." He also stressed "Opus Dei’s closeness to all of us, providing spiritual help to so many priests and lay people in our diocese, who want to respond to the charism of sanctity in their daily life." The second talk was by Msgr. José Luis Illanes, professor of theology at the University of Navarre. He emphasized how important for St. Josemaría were his years of adolescence spent in Logroño. Professor Illanes recalled many small family events in the life of the saint during those years. He ended his talk by noting that "his years in Logroño truly constituted a crossroads—and even the decisive crossroads—in St. Josemaría’s life. God began to mark out a path for him from which he would never veer in the years ahead."

Bishop Javier Echevarría, alluding to St. Josemaría’s preaching on the priesthood, covered the most important elements of a priest’s identity: priestly sanctity as a gift and a task, human virtues, humility, pastoral charity and priestly fraternity. "St. Josemaría," he stressed, "wanted to identify himself with Christ, to be Christ in the exercise of his priestly ministry and in his whole life. This desire gave rise to his life of prayer, his great reverence when celebrating Mass, his need to spend long periods before the tabernacle, and his ardent longing to seek souls and lead them, in Christ, along paths of holiness."

Stressing the importance of pastoral charity for the priest, he pointed to the example given by “St. Josemaría in his travels through the poor neighborhoods of Madrid back in the 1920's and 30's, when he was in constant contact with poverty and sickness, ministering to the dying, comforting the sick, teaching Christian doctrine to children and adults. This is how he spent his life right up to his last days on earth, always concerned about others, those near by and those far away, known and unknown. He gladly prayed and sacrificed himself for all souls, without exception."
Twenty-six faithful of Opus Dei were ordained priests by Bishop Javier Echevarría on Saturday May 31, in the Basílica of St. Eugene in Rome.

Among the new priests are engineers, computer specialists, philologists, veterinarians, physical therapists and physicians.

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Pastoral Letters

Lenten letter to the faithful of the Prelature and cooperators of Opus Dei

At the beginning of Lent, I would like the Holy Father’s repeated calls for peace in the world to resound in your hearts. “In this hour of international concern, we all feel the need to go to God to plead for the great gift of peace. As I wrote in the Apostolic Letter Rosarium Virginis Mariae, ‘The grave challenges confronting the world at the start of this new Millennium lead us to think that only an intervention from on high...can give reason to hope for a brighter future’ (no. 40). I invite everyone to take hold of the Rosary and invoke the Most Holy Virgin’s intercession: ‘one cannot recite the Rosary without feeling caught up in a clear commitment to advancing peace’ (Ibid., no. 6).”¹

These words take on a new urgency in the light of present circumstances. The persevering petition of all men and women of good will, especially those honored with the name of Christ’s disciples, must be raised to heaven with a deep faith in the efficacy of prayer. The Holy Father reaffirmed this a few days ago: “We Christians are especially called to be guardians of peace in the places where we live and work. We are asked to be
alert so that men’s consciences do not succumb to the temptation of selfishness, falsehood and violence.”

True peace among nations is closely linked to respect for God’s law, for his word, for his commandments, precisely because it is the opus iustitiae, the fruit of the respect and fidelity to divine law that Sacred Scripture calls “justice” or “righteousness.” Therefore “peace will never be achieved once and for all, but must be built up continually. Since, moreover, human nature is weak and wounded by sin, the achievement of peace requires a constant effort to control the passions and unceasing vigilance by lawful authority.”

In this context, we can understand why peace must come to birth in the hearts of men and women, as the free and voluntary acceptance of God’s love. If hatred and envy, rancor and animosity persist in people’s hearts, the delicate plant of peace cannot take root there. One must purify one’s heart of all attachment to sin, so that in families, in society and in the whole world there may spread the “kingdom of justice, love, and peace” that Christ has brought to the world. We must fight against any trace of resentment or rancor which, by destroying fraternity, breaks our communion with God.

Let us listen once more to St. Josemaría’s words: “Peace in heaven. But let’s take a look at the earth. Why is there no peace in the world? That’s right, there is no peace, only a certain appearance of peace: a balance created by fear and precarious compromises.... And there is no peace in many hearts which vainly strive to make up for their intransigent soul by continuous activity, by seeking a thin satisfaction in things which do not fill them but only leave a bitter aftertaste of sorrow.”

Never forget the immense importance of each one’s interior struggle, in order to further the cause of peace in the world. And don’t view this as an unrealistic dream. A person who tries, day after day, to be more pleasing to God, who is sorry for his faults and sets for himself small or big steps forward in his spiritual life, who has a true concern to foster the good of those closest to him, who strives to communicate to others the Christian ideals that move him, is a person who is contributing efficaciously to the establishment of peace.

For the upcoming March 5th, Ash Wednesday, John Paul II has asked all men of good will, and especially the sons and daughters of the Church,
to dedicate that day “to prayer and fasting for the cause of peace, especially in the Middle East.”5 I remind you of the Pope's request, to which we want to unite ourselves very generously, with the hope that our united prayer and sacrifice, presented to God through the intercession of our Lady, will once more open wide, as has so frequently happened throughout history, the gates of divine mercy.

“Above all, let us implore God for a conversion of hearts and for prudence in making just decisions, so as to resolve with adequate and peaceful means the disputes which are an obstacle to mankind’s pilgrimage in our days.”6 Only God’s light is able to dissipate the heated passions, the pride, the personal prejudices, both of races and nations, that are often the cause of the failures to resolve conflicts between human communities peacefully. Prayer is an indispensable means if the dialogue between the representatives of nations is to bear fruit. Let us not cease then to pray every day for this intention. In his request, the Holy Father expresses his hope that, on Ash Wednesday, “in every Marian shrine there be raised to heaven an ardent petition for peace by the recitation of the Holy Rosary. I trust that the Rosary will also be recited in parishes and in families for this great cause on which the good of all men and women depends.”7

The intention the Pope holds up for us, joined that day to fasting, is very appropriate for the beginning of Lent, a time the Church especially dedicates to prayer, and to works of charity and penance. Therefore John Paul II specifies: “May this choral prayer be accompanied by fasting, an expression of penance for the hatred and violence that contaminate human relations. Christians share the ancient practice of fasting with so many brothers and sisters of other religions, who by means of this practice strive to free themselves from every taint of pride and to dispose themselves to receive from God the greatest and most necessary gifts, especially that of peace.”8

Let us be generous, each according to our personal circumstances, in the practice of mortification, which so moves God’s heart. And let us urge many others to do the same, not only on Ash Wednesday but throughout the whole of Lent, putting special care into one’s spirit of penance in eating and drinking, in carrying out one’s work down to the last detail, in resting and the use of free time, in offering up life’s setbacks and difficulties, bearing
everything with joy, as our Father advised us. “Bring out your spirit of mortification in those nice touches of charity, eager to make the way of sanctity in the midst of the world attractive for everyone. Sometimes a smile can be the best proof of a spirit of penance.”

Lent summons us to a greater dedication to others: the works of mercy, in their diverse expressions, are another traditional practice of this liturgical period. In his message for Lent this year, the Pope has chosen as his theme some words from Sacred Scripture: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). We have all had direct experience of this truth. When we follow the interior call to serve others, without expecting anything in return, we experience a great happiness that we would not exchange for any joy on earth. In contrast, when we resist God’s invitation and close ourselves against those around us, we feel unhappy and unsatisfied. If this happens on the level of human relations, how much more so when we respond lovingly to the Love—with a capital letter—of the Holy Trinity, striving to imitate the self-giving of the Son, which God the Father has wanted to bring about for our good.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your father,

+ Javier

Rome

March 1, 2003


3. Vatican II, Pastoral constitution Gaudium et Spes, no. 78.


6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

Homilies

At the priestly ordination of deacons of the Prelature, Basílica of St. Eugene, Rome (May 31, 2003)

Dear brothers and sisters. My dear deacons:

1. We are celebrating the Ascension of our Lord, an especially joyful solemnity as we contemplate Jesus, acclaimed by the multitude of angels, entering gloriously into heaven. We too, members of Christ's Mystical Body, live with the hope that one day we will be united with him in glory. This expectation tempers the traces of sadness that mark this feast. The apostles too were dejected, realizing that Jesus was departing definitively in his physical presence, as they stood watching our Lord ascending into heaven. Until those angels asked them: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

Until he returns gloriously to earth, Jesus remains among us in various ways through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Second Vatican Council teaches that our Lord “by his power is present in the sacraments so that when anyone baptizes it is really Christ himself who baptizes. He is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church. Lastly he is present when the Church prays and sings, for he has promised ‘where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them’ (Mt 18:20).” And he is present, above all, “in the Sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of his minister...but
especially in the eucharistic species.”[5] It is this sacramental presence that I would like to speak about briefly here, in order to highlight the meaning of this liturgical celebration in which a group of deacons of the Prelature will be receiving priestly ordination.

2. The recent encyclical of Pope John Paul II on the Holy Eucharist emphasizes a central point of Catholic teaching: “When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of her Lord's death and resurrection, this central event of salvation becomes really present.... This sacrifice is so decisive for the salvation of the human race that Jesus Christ offered it and returned to the Father only after he had left us a means of sharing in it as if we had been present there.”[6]

If we meditate deeply on these words, we will come to the conclusion that we have no reason to envy the apostles. We, too, men and women of the 21st century, when we participate in the Holy Mass with ardent faith and sincere piety, enter into direct contact with our Lord’s death and resurrection. The saving action of the Incarnate Word that took place two thousand years ago, by which we were redeemed from sin and made sons and daughters of God, becomes sacramentally present in the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar. As St. Josemaría said, “the Holy Mass is a real, propitiatory sacrifice that is always present to us.” Since it is real and present, we have to struggle to put ourselves into it more each day and thus convert our whole day into a holy and spotless offering to God the Father, with Christ in the Holy Spirit. Since it is propitiatory, our negligence should hurt us, since on so many occasions we have failed to place the Mass at the center of our lives.

No amount of gratitude to Jesus Christ will ever be sufficient for this inestimable gift. As the Pope tells us, we should always live “in adoration before this mystery: a great mystery, a mystery of mercy. What more could Jesus have done for us? Truly, in the Eucharist, he shows us a love which goes ‘to the end’ (cf. Jn 13:1), a love which knows no measure.”[7]

It was precisely to ensure the real and unfailing presence in the world, till the end of time, of his Sacrifice on the Cross that Jesus instituted the sacrament of Holy Orders. Thanks to this sacrament, our Lord chooses, consecrates and sends out some men to represent Him visibly before others. When they preach the word of God or administer the sacraments, priests
act in persona Christi. These words, as the Holy Father writes, mean “more than offering ‘in the name of’ or ‘in place of’ Christ. In persona means in specific sacramental identification with ‘the eternal High Priest’ who is the author and principal subject of this sacrifice, a sacrifice in which, in truth, nobody can take his place.”[8]

Priests are living instruments of Christ’s Most Holy Humanity. It is he who from heaven works through them, in a very special way at Mass and in Confession. St. Josemaría liked to consider this reality often. He once said: “I arrive at the altar and the first thing that I think is: Josemaría, you are not Josemaría.... You are Christ. All of us priests are Christ. I lend our Lord my voice, my hands, my body, my soul. I give him everything. It is He who says: This is my Body, this is my Blood. He is the one who consecrates. If not, I would not be able to do it. There the divine Sacrifice of Calvary is renewed, in an unbloody way. So I am there in persona Christi, taking Christ’s place. The priest disappears as a specific person.”[9]

3. I now turn to you, my deacon sons. In the get-togethers that we have had during the months of your preparation for the priesthood, I have spoken to you about our Father as the model of a fully priestly life. You know many details about his life that should help you to engrave in fire on your souls his wonderful example of priestly conduct and to become very faithful instruments of our Lord in the work of sanctifying souls.

Now I would like to recall for you one of the very important responsibilities, closely united to the visible representation of Christ the Priest, Teacher and Shepherd, which is being conferred on you as a mission. I refer to the need to be, at every moment, the living transparency of our Lord, so that the faithful, when they look at you, hear your exhortations, and contemplate your behavior, will see the Redeemer’s holy and merciful face.

I tell you in words of St. Josemaría: the priest is asked “to learn how not to hamper the presence of Christ in him, especially in those moments when he is offering the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood and when, in God’s name, he forgives sins in secret, private sacramental confession. The administration of these two sacraments has so important a part in the priest’s mission that everything should hinge on it.”[10] The goal is high, but
not unattainable, because our Lord will grant you his grace abundantly. This certainty will always give you an unalterable peace. Meditate on St. Gregory of Nyssa’s words about the priest: “Yesterday and the day before he was one of the people. Suddenly he appears as guide, teacher, master of piety, minister of the sacred mysteries. All of this happens without his appearance having changed in the least. He apparently continues to be what he was. But by an invisible force, by a special grace, his soul has been transformed.”[11] You, in addition, are equipped with a deep academic and spiritual preparation, and what is more important, with the prayers of thousands of people.

All of us must spontaneously ask the Good Shepherd to send many holy priests to the Church. We pray in first place for the Holy Father, who is spending his life so generously in the service of the Church and of all humanity. We pray also for the Cardinal Vicar of Rome, for the Bishops and for the other sacred ministers. And you, parents and brothers and sisters of the new priests, thank our Lord for the special affection he has shown your family. Try to correspond to this great predilection by renewing your Christian life. My most cordial congratulations go out to all of you.

Our Lady was associated in a unique way to the Sacrifice of the Cross. On Calvary, in the person of St. John, she received the mission of being Mother to each of her Son’s disciples, and in a special way, of priests. “Throughout her life at Christ’s side and not only on Calvary, Mary made her own the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist.”[12] If we go to her with the piety of children, if we pray the Rosary well, contemplating the mysteries, especially in this year dedicated to this Marian devotion, we will enter, as the Holy Father puts it, the school of Mary, the “Eucharistic woman,”[13] and we will make steady progress in our love for God and for others out of love for Him. Amen.

[5] Ibid.
At the confirmation service in the Basílica of St. Eugene, Rome (June 8, 2003)

My dear brothers and sisters:

1. Today we are commemorating the miracle of Pentecost, the visible descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Church in the Cenacle at Jerusalem.

Our Lord promised that after his departure he would send “the Spirit of Truth” from heaven so that he might give life to the Church forever and guide Christians “towards all truth” (Jn 16:13). Ten days after the Ascension, St. Luke tells us in his Acts, while the apostles were gathered around our Lady, “suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them” (Acts 2:2–3).

The third Person of the Blessed Trinity—God with the Father and the Son—conferred his grace superabundantly, opening their intellects and strengthening their wills so that they would become witnesses to Christ and
his teachings to the ends of the earth.

Before the coming of the Holy Spirit, the apostles were already disposed to follow Christ and to give their lives for him, but their weakness held them back. In contrast, scarcely had they received the Holy Spirit when we see Peter and the others head out into the streets and speak of Jesus to everyone gathered there. As St. Josemaría writes: “The Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of strength, has made them firm, strong, daring. The word of the Apostles resounds forcefully through the streets of Jerusalem.”[1]

Those disciples, who before Pentecost were like newborn babes in the spiritual life, are suddenly transformed into courageous people, capable of facing up to any difficulty for the sake of our Lord.

Since that first Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is present in the Church, to guide it through the centuries in Christ’s truth. He is also present in every Christian, through the sacrament of baptism, which inaugurates in us the life of God’s children. This new life that Christ has given to us should grow to full maturity, just as every person after birth slowly develops until he reaches adulthood. The spiritual maturity needed to become adult Christians is precisely what the Holy Spirit gives us through the sacrament of confirmation.

As the Pope told a group about to be confirmed, “Confirmation introduces you to Christian adulthood. It confers on you a sense of responsibility beyond that of children. The child is not yet master of himself, of his life and actions. The adult, on the other hand, assumes responsibility for his own choices and accepts their consequences, since he has acquired the interior plenitude that can decide autonomously, committing his life as seems best to him, and above all, giving love, and not just receiving it.”[2]

2. St. Josemaría Escriva, speaking of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit received in confirmation, often said—in accord with an ancient tradition of the Church—that this sacrament enrolls us in a spiritual militia whose goal is to bring Christian peace and joy everywhere. “Since childhood,” he recalled, “we learned that the sacrament of confirmation turns us into soldiers of Christ. Unfortunately, in today’s world there seems to be a lot of ‘flabbiness’ in people’s spiritual lives, a lack of personal struggle.”[3]
Sadly, this is quite true. The environment in which we live, full of big and small comforts, is opposed to the maturing of an authentic human and Christian life, for which generosity and sacrifice are so important. “How can we recover that strength that we received in this sacrament?” asks St. Josemaria. And he answers: “St. Paul exhorts us: ‘Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus’ (cf. 2 Tim 2:3). Every Christian is, or should be, a good soldier of Christ, strengthened in his vocation by this marvelous sacrament. The Holy Spirit leaves in the soul his unmistakable imprint, his character, the indelible mark of God declaring: ‘This is my beloved son, one of those who will fight for me and for himself, to obtain glory.’”[4]

This struggle, however, does not involve physical violence, nor is it directed against anyone, because the Christian is a man of peace, who always tries to sow around him Christ’s peace and joy. It is a struggle, a sincere struggle, against one’s bad tendencies, against the selfishness, the comfort-seeking, the sensuality, the laziness that we all feel rearing up within us and that are real enemies of our temporal and eternal happiness.

But you shouldn’t think that Christian life is something negative, involving only prohibitions. A Christian’s life is filled with joy. We are the happiest people on earth! Although it’s also true that we have to say ‘no’ to our sins and fight against our defects—our laziness, our pride, our selfishness—in order to be truly happy and transmit joy and peace to others.

3. The realization that we are God’s children imparts to us a great confidence. None of us is ever abandoned to fate in his struggles and trials. God is our Father, who guides our steps, sustains us in our decisions and is present in all our actions. By sending us the Holy Spirit, he helps us to be strong, as soldiers engaged in a very special battle, the only one that God loves: striving to be better and helping others to be better.

From now on, those of you receiving confirmation belong even more fully to Christ. You should be proud of Him, courageous and faithful witnesses to Jesus in the midst of the world. This is why you are about to receive the Holy Spirit. You will bring everywhere, with your good deeds, the image of our Lord crucified and risen. Your life, as St. Paul says, will give off “the fragrance of Christ” (2 Cor 2:15), the aroma of your Christian virtues that makes life among your fellow men more agreeable.
Listen to some words of the Holy Father spoken at a ceremony similar to this one: “By confirmation you will acquire a special relationship with our Lord Jesus. You will be officially consecrated as witnesses before the Church and the world. He needs you.... You will give him your face, your heart, your entire self, so that He will act before others as you act. If you are good, firm in your faith, committed to your neighbor’s good, faithful servants of the Gospel, then it is Jesus himself who will be honored. But if you are weak and ignoble in your behavior, then you will obscure his true identity and fail to give him honor.”[5]

This is a great responsibility. In your family, at work, when relaxing or playing sports, people should be able to notice that you are consistent Christians. From now on, your life should contain more friendship, more availability to others, more spirit of service, more cheerfulness; and also more struggle against sin, against disinterest towards one’s neighbor, against selfishness and comfort-seeking.

At times you may feel tired; you may want to think about yourself and not the others, giving in to selfishness, abandoning your personal struggle to be good sons and daughters of God. Don’t let this happen! Recall the day of your confirmation. Think of the Divine Guest dwelling in your soul, and don’t make him sad. Go to the Blessed Virgin, our Mother, and ask for her help. Go frequently to the sacrament of penance, to confession, where our Lord awaits you to purify your soul once more, to make you strong, to restore your courage and optimism as sons and daughters of God.

Our Lord is asking you to give clear Christian witness in our beloved city of Rome, the center of Christianity and the see of Peter’s successor. On the day of Pentecost, thousands of persons converted to the truth of the risen Christ. God acted with his powerful mercy to bring a radical change of heart in so many people. Our Lord continues to work miracles, but he needs you, who are about to be confirmed, and all of us here present to help him. Let us say ‘yes’ to him with our whole heart.

The Paraclete descended on the apostles and the other disciples while they were praying with Mary. We too are gathered here in prayer. Let us invoke the Holy Spirit in close union with the Blessed Virgin, our Mother. And not only now, but habitually. I invite you to do so by praying the Holy Rosary as a family during this year dedicated by the Holy Father to this
Marian devotion.

Our Lady, the immaculate Spouse of the Holy Spirit, looks at us lovingly from heaven and intercedes for all of us, and in a particular way for you who are going to be confirmed. To her we commend our most fervent desires to be faithful witnesses to Christ, with our words and with our whole life. Amen.


[4] Ibid.


At the Mass on the Feast of Saint Josemaria, Parish of St. Josemaría, Rome (June 26, 2003)

Dear brothers and sisters:

1. St. Ambrose says that “the birthday of a saint is accompanied by widespread rejoicing, since the saints are a good belonging to the whole Church.”[1] June 26, the *dies natalis* of St. Josemaría, is a day of rejoicing for the Church. It is a day of celebration for the hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world who fill the great urban cathedrals and small rural churches to give thanks to God, who is “marvelous in his saints,”[2] for having granted us this friend and protector. While devotion to this holy priest has spread throughout the world, in Rome this feast day has particular significance. Here the founder of Opus Dei surrendered his soul to God, and here in the prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace his sacred remains are venerated.
This year is the first time that we commemorate Josemaría Escrivá with the title of saint. For this reason today has an especially festive tone for us, since we are striving to imbue our life with his spirit and teachings, and we feel indebted for so many graces and favors received from heaven through his intercession.

St. Josemaría is and will always be very close to us. Not only because his figure is of great historical stature, but also because we often have recourse to his intercession for many daily needs, even the smallest ones. We have experienced his fatherhood; we know that he hears us, accompanies us, sustains us. Some of us have known him personally, but all of us talk to him in the intimacy of our soul, as he helps us to travel along the path of holiness and apostolic commitment.

Gratias tibi, Deus, Gratias tibi

Our thanksgiving today takes on a special intensity. We give thanks, in the first place, to the Most Blessed Trinity, who has granted the world and the Church this holy, cheerful servant full of apostolic zeal. We give thanks to the Blessed Virgin, since all graces reach us through her motherly mediation. We give thanks, finally, to St. Josemaría, for his fidelity, for his complete dedication to the mission God entrusted to him from all eternity. He opened up in the world a path of sanctification in professional work and in the fulfillment of the Christian’s ordinary duties, as the prayer reads which millions recite to invoke his intercession. It is a path that can be traveled, and in fact is traveled, by countless men and women in the most diverse circumstances. Gratias tibi, Deus, gratias tibi!

2. The Gospel of the Mass is an invitation to consider once again Jesus’ call to his first disciples. Our Lord went in search of Peter and Andrew while they were immersed in their daily work. He borrows a boat from them and asks them to push off a bit from shore so he can address the multitude. When he finished speaking, he invited them to put out to sea and cast their nets for a catch. Simon Peter, after his initial resistance that was overcome by his faith in Jesus’ word, witnessed with awe the miraculous catch of fish. Then, faced with our Lord’s invitation, “henceforth you will be catching men,”[3] he decides to leave everything and accompany Jesus, together with the other eleven. “And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.”[4]
St. Josemaría meditated often on this passage. He found in it a clear confirmation of the mission that God had entrusted to him: to show all men and women that their work, their secular concerns, can be the occasion for a personal encounter with Christ, who calls everyone to holiness and apostolate. “What amazes you seems quite natural to me: God has sought you out right in the midst of your work. That is how He sought the first, Peter and Andrew, John and James, beside their nets, and Matthew, sitting in the custom-house. And—wonder of wonders—Paul, in his eagerness to destroy the seeds of Christianity!”[5]

Since 1928 the founder of Opus Dei preached this message tirelessly and strove to put it into practice. This was the goal of his earthly existence, the task to which he dedicated all his energies, all the human and supernatural gifts that God had granted him. Now, from heaven, he intercedes before God’s throne so that many men and women may dedicate themselves with all their strength to following Jesus closely, seeking identification with Christ (which is what holiness means) in the ordinary circumstances of their lives.

During the twenty-eight years since his passage to heaven, one hundred and twenty thousand accounts of favors attributed to St. Josemaría’s intercession have reached the offices of the Prelature. They come from every part of the world: from the Amazon jungle to the snows of Antartica, from great cities to small remote towns. Examining this mountain of testimonies, one quickly becomes aware that, besides attending to the most diverse petitions, he obtains, above all, many spiritual graces. Thus he honors the promise he often made during his final years when he began to consider that the moment for his encounter with God was drawing near: “From heaven I will help you more.”

My advice to all of you is to have recourse to St. Josemaría in all your large and small needs, both material and spiritual. The Father follows your steps with affection, and will certainly obtain from God for you much more than you ask for. Ask with faith, with insistence, seeking to identify yourselves with God’s will. Making use of St. Josemaría’s intercession, approach frequently the channels of grace, the sacraments.

3. Since October 2, 1928, when God showed him the immense task destined for him, St. Josemaría was fully aware that this mission could not
be limited to a specific time or place. Rather its scope was universal and permanent. Ordinary life, one’s family, work, social relationships, are permanent realities. As the Pope said on the day of the canonization, summarizing St. Josemaría’s message: “Work and any other activity, carried out with the help of grace, is converted into a means of daily sanctification.”[6]

The universality of St. Josemaría’s person and teaching is clearly reflected in the great variety of places where he is venerated. Today or during the upcoming days Masses will be celebrated in hundreds of cities throughout the world, many of them by the respective diocesan bishops.

Confronted with Jesus’ imperative command in the Gospel, duc in altum!, once again we hear the Pope’s invitation to leave a Christian imprint on the century which has just begun. “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.”[7]

During his homily in the Mass of Canonization, John Paul II said of St. Josemaría: “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.’”[8]

All of us have been invited to follow Christ closely, the majority of you without abandoning your family, your work, your place in society. We must not be afraid to launch out into the deep in all our activities, to be true apostles of Christ, to allow Jesus to board our boat, to truly enter our lives and govern them.

We entrust these desires, which the Master himself has sown in our hearts, to our Blessed Mother, through St. Josemaría’s intercession. Amen.

At the Mass for the repose of the soul of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, Basilica of Saint Eugene, Rome (March 22, 2003)

Dear brothers and sisters:

1. If at all times we should raise our heart in prayer to God, it is even more necessary, if one may say so, during Lent, the time for greater intensity in prayer, in penance and in works of mercy. Besides, the Holy Father Pope John Paul II has asked us for a special commitment to peace in the world. “Indeed,” he said a few days before the beginning of this liturgical period, “peace is a gift from God that we have to ask for with humility and trusting insistence.”[1]

Now that two weeks have already gone by we can draw up a personal balance sheet. How have we responded to the Pope’s request? Has the spirit of prayer and penance truly penetrated more deeply into our hearts? Can we say that we have contributed personally to peace in the world? As the Holy Father said, “We must ask God above all for conversion of hearts, in which all forms of evil and every impulse toward sin has its roots. We must pray and fast for peaceful coexistence among the people and nations of the whole world.”[2]
Conversion of heart: this is the great means that all of us must employ for the good of the world. But conversion begins with the specific recognition of our own faults. Let us meditate on a passage from a homily by St. Josemaría on this theme: “Since our first conscious decision really to follow the teaching of Christ, we have no doubt made good progress along the way of faithfulness to his word. And yet isn’t it true that there is still much to be done? Isn’t it true, particularly, that there is still so much pride in us? We need, most probably, to change again, to be more loyal and humble, so that we become less selfish and let Christ grow in us.”[3]

If, during these days, we have gained some small or great victories over ourselves—over our pride, our sensuality, our laziness—if we have separated ourselves from something that could distance us from God, then we truly have made a new conversion and have cooperated to bringing harmony among people and nations in the whole world.

2. The previous considerations are not out of place in circumstances like those of today: the celebration of Holy Mass on the ninth anniversary of the death of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. I was a witness to his edifying death and was impressed by the peace with which he went to his encounter with God, as well as the serenity which, in the midst of the natural pain of his leaving us, we all felt during those days. As in life, also in death Don Alvaro was a sower of peace among all who surrounded him.

Peace, a gift from God, is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in souls that do not raise obstacles to his action. St. Paul’s teaching is clear. “The fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”[4] Doesn’t this enumeration seem to you a living portrait of our beloved Don Alvaro?

Many witnesses agree in recognizing his ability to transmit serenity to anyone who visited him for whatever reason. This is a characteristic of my predecessor that I would like to emphasize today. The peace that emanated from his words and gestures, fruit of his habitual union with God, was so intense that it immediately spread to those he was speaking with.

For Don Alvaro had learned very well from St. Josemaría how to put into practice one of the greatest truths of our Christian life: the fact that we are, in Christ, beloved children of God the Father. The awareness of being
a son of a merciful and omnipotent Father was the basis of Don Alvaro’s profound interior peace.

Why then do we sometimes allow ourselves to be overcome by anxiety, even while knowing we are sons and daughters of God? Perhaps the reason is that we are not docile to the Holy Spirit, that we do not fully love God’s will. This is the teaching of St. Paul to the Romans, which we have just heard: “all who are led by the Spirit of God, are sons of God.”[5] In this docility to the Paraclete, in this union with the most loving will of God, we find the source of the true interior peace that Christians should transmit to those around them.

3. “Take my yoke upon you,” Jesus tells us, “and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”[6] This is how St. Josemaría and Don Alvaro, his most faithful son, acted. Both of them loved God’s will, fully convinced that all things work together for the good of those who love God.[7]

We have many written testimonies about St. Josemaría’s life. A few weeks ago, the second volume of his biography, which covers the years from 1936 to 1946, was published in Italy. Those years, from the beginning of the Spanish civil war up to his move to Rome, were years rich in both physical and moral trials, which did not dim for a moment his joy and peace, deeply rooted in the awareness of his divine filiation. They were years in which, little by little, that aspiration from the beginning of his priesthood, spelled out in The Forge, became a reality: “You might have thought occasionally, with holy envy, about the adolescent Apostle, John, quem diligebat Iesu—whom Jesus loved.

“Wouldn't you like to deserve to be called ‘the one who loves the Will of God?’ Then take the necessary steps, day after day.”[8]

With reference to Don Alvaro, there comes to mind an episode that I personally experienced. We had prayed and worked a great deal in order to bring about a specific step forward in the apostolic work of Opus Dei. Then the day came when a decision was to be announced. All of us close to Don Alvaro were praying that the proposal had been accepted. Don Alvaro, in contrast, with great simplicity said: “I am praying that God’s will be done.”
Fulfilling God’s will: this was Bishop Alvaro del Portillo’s only wish. He dedicated his life to this objective, following the footsteps of the founder of the Work. Therefore he always had peace in his heart and a smile on his lips. And that is why he always was a man of peace and transmitted peace to others.

Let us try to imitate him, with God’s help. Before any circumstance, joyful or sorrowful, let us put ourselves in the presence of God and ask ourselves with St. Josemaría, before making any decision: “Do you want this Lord? Then it’s what I want also.” [9] And a deep and lasting peace, truly supernatural, will fill our soul.

We entrust our prayers for Don Alvaro, a good and faithful servant who was gentle and humble of heart, to our Lady, Queen of Peace, and also our desires for peace for the whole world. Amen.


At the closing Mass of the centennial of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, Basílica of Saint Eugene, Rome (January 9, 2003)

My dear brothers and sisters:
We are united once again in this splendid basilica to give thanks to the Blessed Trinity.

Each of us has received so many gifts from God over the course of our lives. Let us stop now to consider only those we have received during the centennial year of St. Josemaría’s birth, among which his canonization stands out. I invite you to let your imagination run free, embracing the entire world. Every day I receive letters that testify to the spread of devotion to this saint. A saint who for so many is within easy reach, the saint of the ordinary, of joy.

To celebrate this Mass, I wanted to use the chalice that St. Josemaría used during almost his whole life. It is an elegant chalice, despite the fact that it is made out of brass. St. Josemaría often said that he saw this chalice as an image of himself: poor metal containing the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. We too are the same. As St. Paul says, we are frail vessels that contain the divine nature (cf. 2 Cor 4:7). And the same is true of everyone who seeks holiness, and of all who attain it.

During these days of the Christmas season following on the feast of the Epiphany, we have listened to beautiful Scripture readings that apply to our Savior, and that in a figurative sense can also be applied to his saints, because God’s life is found in the lives of his saints. I myself have drawn much profit from these readings. We have read a passage from the prophet Isaiah that refers to Jesus’ birth: “Populus qui ambulabat in tenebris, vidit lucem magnam.” The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who dwelled in a dark land, a light has shined forth. These words can be applied to the life of St. Josemaría, who always lived with Christ and through Christ. By his own life he has truly given light to many souls. He has dissipated the shadows their lives may have contained, radiating to them the light of Christ. This was not a question of his personal qualities but of God’s strength, reflected in the life of this faithful man.

St. Josemaría’s life overflowed with joy. But if one considers his earthly journey with merely human eyes, it is difficult to see the reasons for this joy. God truly treated him as a sculptor does good quality marble, in order to bring out, with the blows of the chisel, a wonderful sculpture. St. Josemaría saw God’s hand also in the daily setbacks that our Lord used to prepare him
for the mission He was to entrust to him.

When, as a youth, he saw the divine light that was to illumine his entire life, he fell to his knees as a sign of docility to God’s grace. We too should respond docilely to God’s will, struggling against our selfishness and pride, in order to let God’s grace act in our souls, which is the best medicine to make us strong. It was precisely by allowing God to act that St. Josemaría became, from his early adolescence on, a man of continuous and intense prayer. He often reminded us that, when he founded Opus Dei, he was only 26, and lacked any human or financial means. Nevertheless, the grace of God, together with abundant good humor, made possible what then seemed unattainable, which we now see extended throughout the whole world. How was this possible? Through intense prayer. St. Josemaría told us many times that people, in those early times, considered him crazy, saying he was trying to do something impossible. But he always acted with the conviction of someone who never felt himself to be alone.

We want to learn from his example: we are never alone because our Lord is always nearby. When setbacks and trials come, when we have to rectify our conduct because we have made mistakes, God’s merciful hand is always close to each of us. Therefore we have to be truly men and women of prayer, who maintain a loving conversation with our Lord.

On another occasion in his life, when confronting grave difficulties, there came to his lips those words from Sacred Scripture: “Et fui tecum in omnibus, ubicumque ambulasti” (2 Sam 7:9). I have been with you always; wherever you went, I was at your side. For God is our Father, our Friend, a loyal Friend who never abandons us. Here was the foundation of St. Josemaría’s certainty that he was never alone, that he could always count on God’s help. And thus it was possible for him to open up this path, this divine road that all men and women can travel in their ordinary life.

St. Josemaría was also a man of penance, of mortification, because a person who loves knows that love, also human love, is based on the renunciation of oneself, on mortification. A person who is unable to renounce his own ego, his selfishness, in order to serve others, knows little of love. That is why St. Josemaría loved penance: he wanted to disappear, to uproot his own ego, so that God could act in every corner of his life. He
lived an intense mortification, which at times was very harsh, always with the permission of his confessor. But his mortification was primarily in the little things of each day: knowing how to listen, smiling when he didn’t want to, joyfully offering up a headache or any other small suffering that came his way. It was there that his penance was nourished, which later, at specific times, rose to an heroic, extraordinary level. In truth, in all the circumstances of his daily life, he strove to discover the marvel of the Cross.

I said earlier that St. Josemaría was a man of prayer. I was a witness to many episodes in his life that revealed his friendship with God, by whom he felt himself loved and whom he loved with all his strength. In 1972 we visited together a church in Logroño known as La Redonda. Many years had passed since his studies in the Logroño seminary. I remember how the pace of his steps slowed down considerably. When we reached the chapel with the tabernacle under an image of our Lady, with great spontaneity he said: “How many hours I spent here, trying to listen to and speak to our Lord! For,” he continued, “the theme of our prayer, the prayer proper to any Christian, is our life itself.” Try to get close to our Lord, speak with him about your life, and you will see how he will tell us to be more mortified, more cheerful, to finish our work well, to smile even when we are tired. By spending time with our Lord in prayer, we will learn to live with supernatural outlook on all occasions.

St. Josemaría was a tireless worker. I recall that when I arrived in Rome, I heard people in the Holy See express their surprise at the depth of the studies Msgr. Escrivá had carried out in order to bring forward the canonical solution for Opus Dei. They were also impressed by the care for details shown in the documents presented, which facilitated their study. Strive to carry out your work very well, to follow a schedule, to serve others in your work. Thus you will know how to finish your work well, offering it to God, with the accomplishment of a person who loves his work as the place where he finds God.

One final point that is very important. St. Josemaría was a man who deeply loved doing apostolate. Yesterday evening while preparing for this day that concludes the centennial, I had the opportunity to see a movie that brought together some of his catechetical gatherings in various parts of the world. At one moment he was asked to what extent Catholics should do
apostolate. His immediate response obliges all of us: we mustn’t deceive ourselves; we are not Catholics if we don’t know how to give an apostolic tone to our whole life. St. Josemaría explained that it was not enough to pray a bit, to go to Mass on Sundays. We must strive to give others the treasure that we have.

I will tell you a final story that shows how to do apostolate in any circumstance. We were in Florence, in a wholesale store where we had to buy something. We asked the proprietor if he would oblige us by selling an item separately and he agreed to do so. St. Josemaría began to ask about the person’s life; after the conversation was finished, while we were leaving, he said to us: “You have a companion who does not waste any time!” Try not to waste time! Be friends of the truth. Bring others to an encounter with God.

In all our efforts we can count on our Lady’s intercession, who will help us to always look towards Jesus. Let us ask her help, so that we don’t let ourselves be held back by a false human respects and so that we have the spontaneity needed to speak about who we are: Christians, consistent Christians. We should never feel ashamed to speak about what we are trying to live. Be apostolic. The world needs people who tell others to live the faith and who live it themselves. If we behave in this way, we will be following the steps of St. Josemaría, who based his apostolate on intense prayer, generous mortification, work well done, and who then spoke spontaneously of the Christ whom he found throughout his whole day.

May Jesus be praised.

At the confirmation celebrated at the parish of St. John the Baptist in the Collatine, Rome (May 18, 2003)

Dear brothers and sisters:

1. Once again I have the privilege of administering the sacrament of confirmation to a large group of both young people and adults, in this
beloved parish of St. John the Baptist. For a bishop, a successor to the Apostles, the opportunity to impart the gift of the Holy Spirit is always a motive for great joy.

Today is the Fifth Sunday of Easter. Throughout these weeks we have shared in the joy experienced by the Apostles upon seeing at their side Jesus Christ, who had risen from the dead. This was the first dawn of the Church, a time filled with joyful amazement, but as yet somewhat tentative. Our Lord spent long periods of time with the disciples, teaching them many things, but it was clearly a temporary situation. Then on Pentecost, after our Lord’s Ascension, the Spirit of the Father and the Son descended visibly upon the first Apostles, transforming them. The Church, till then like a new born babe, suddenly matured. The Apostles, who hadn’t dared to speak about Jesus publicly, were filled with fortitude. Courageous and determined, they launched out along the streets of Jerusalem to announce fearlessly that Jesus is the Son of God in whom we must believe to be saved, and whose commands we must lovingly fulfill.

What happened to the Church at Pentecost must be repeated in the life of each Christian. “Just as Easter is brought to fulfillment at Pentecost,” the Holy Father said, “so the sacrament of baptism is brought to fulfillment by confirmation. In each baptized person, by the work of the Holy Spirit, in confirmation a mature faith needs to be brought about, as happened to the Apostles at Pentecost.”[1]

The Pope thus points to the profound meaning of confirmation. It confers Christian maturity and promotes spiritual growth, preparing us to assume the responsibility of being Christ’s witnesses. We stand in special need of this help in today’s world, where being consistent with our faith, being faithful to Christ’s teachings, requires sacrifice, even heroism. It is impossible to live our faith well without the help of the Holy Spirit.

2. All of you about to be confirmed have learned from your catechism the most important effects of confirmation. The special gift of the Holy Spirit that you are about to receive, as the Apostles did on Pentecost, will unite you more closely to Christ. It will strengthen your divine filiation, thanks to which we can exclaim: “Abba! Father,” addressing God as an affectionate Father. It will reinforce your bonds with the Church and make you adult members, with the responsibility to defend Christ’s name in word
and deed. It will give you the strength needed to never be ashamed of Christ’s Cross and to take holy pride in being a Christian.

When your sponsors, acting as witnesses, place their hand on your shoulder, consider the depth of meaning found in this gesture. It is an expression of the faith and Christian testimony passed on from one generation to another in the Church since Pentecost. This continuity is like a relay race, in which one athlete passes the baton on to another until the race is over. Starting today you should run with more determination in your spiritual life, which in a way can be compared to a sport. You are about to acquire a special commitment before God, but our Lord himself assures you of his help by this sacrament. And since faith must be shown in deeds, you should strive to imbue your whole life with it. You have two principal areas in which you need to exercise your new responsibilities: your family, and your work or studies.

Bring your Christian joy to your family life. You young people need to respect your parents and obey them, as Jesus obeyed Mary and Joseph. You should be available to help with chores at home. And those of you who are already adults and are perhaps preparing to form a home of your own, don’t forget that if love is to be lasting it cannot be reduced to feelings. Authentic love is characterized by the ability to forget about oneself and is faithful unto death. For all this you need the fortitude that only the Holy Spirit can give.

When working or studying you should act in keeping with your dignity as Christians. Work and study seriously, aware that you not only need to earn a living but must influence others in a positive way. Many people will come to ask for your advice at work; drawn by your example, they will end up opening their hearts in search of a direction that can change the course of their lives. The First Reading from today’s Mass offers us a clear example. When Saul, after his conversion, tried to join the other Christians, all of them fled. They didn’t believe that he was a true disciple, since only a short time before he had persecuted the Christians. But the loyalty of his good friend Barnabas won them over, and Saul of Tarsus became Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles.
3. By their very nature, baptism and confirmation lead to the Eucharist. Therefore a person who has received these sacraments should feel the need to receive Communion frequently, going to Confession beforehand whenever necessary. John Paul II recently sent all Christians an Encyclical letter on the Eucharist; he signed it last Holy Thursday. In that document, which I encourage you to read and meditate on, the Holy Father shows how the Church is built up and grows daily thanks precisely to the Eucharist. And he explains the deepest reason for this reality: in every Mass the sacrifice of Calvary becomes present in all its salvific strength, through which Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man in the most pure womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, obtained for us pardon for our sins and made us God’s children.

Each Sunday when you participate in the Holy Mass, consider the immense, infinite importance of this gathering of the Church as God’s family. As St. Josemaría wrote, it is the supreme moment when “time blends with eternity.”[4] It is the moment when “Jesus, with the gesture of a high priest, attracts all things to himself and places them, with the breath of the Holy Spirit, in the presence of God the Father.”[5] Since our Lady was intimately associated with Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross, now when the priest celebrates Mass (where he is not Fr. Peter or Fr. Paul: he is Christ!), Mary too is present in a mysterious way, and intercedes so that each of us may obtain all the spiritual fruit available in the Holy Sacrifice.

I have made mention of the Pope. Let us not forget that today he turns eighty-three. We are all witnesses of how generously the Holy Father spends himself in service to the Church and all mankind, sparing himself no sacrifice.

Let us intensify our union with the Pope by praying for him and offering some small mortification. We are preparing to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of his pontificate. Moreover, we are in the month of May when we Christians feel the loving duty to offer our Lady some little flower, as a sign of thanksgiving and in petition for heavenly favors. Praying the Rosary as a family, as the Pope has recommended during this year dedicated to this Marian devotion, will be an excellent way to pray for the person and intentions of the Pope. Amen.

[1] John Paul II, Homily during the Administration of Confirmation, 31
Addresses

Before the regional government of Navarre (January 16, 2003)

Your excellency, President of the Government of Navarre, esteemed dignitaries and rector, dear professors and students, ladies and gentlemen:

I want to begin by expressing my heartfelt thanks for the opportunity to greet all those present and to thank you for your warm welcome.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Navarre, in the person of the President of the government, for the careful attention the University of Navarre has always received from this Ancient Kingdom.

The joyful reality we contemplate today was made possible by the constant prayer and sacrifice of the Founder and First Grand Chanciller, St. Josemaría Escrivá, and by his close vigilance as the university began to grow. He said in 1967: “The University of Navarre was begun in 1952—after many years of prayer, I’m glad to say—with the dream of engendering a university embodying the cultural and apostolic ideals of a group of professors with a great love for teaching.”[1]

This university was born in Navarre, and therefore it was with a universal outlook, open to all men and women. The passion with which this
people has always defended its freedom over the centuries drew the attention of a great lover of freedom, St. Josemaría Escrivá, Aragones by birth, Navarran by adoption. This land provided fertile ground for the first steps of an endeavor open to all, which bears witness to the fact that a university can spring from the energies of the people and be sustained by the people.[2]

Navarre occupied a special place in the heart of St. Josemaría. On December 17, 1937, the bishop of Pamplona at that time, Marcelino Olaechea, who was a good friend of his, welcomed Fr. Josemaría, then a young thirty-five year old priest, after he had just crossed over the Spanish border. During those days he was already noting down some personal considerations which would later form part of his most universal book, *The Way*. It is no almost certain that several of those points were written here in Pamplona. A new and longer stay took place in June 1941, when he directed 4 seven-day retreats for diocesan priests, one after another, in Burlada.

Personally I retain vivid memories of other visits by St. Josemaría to this city. On October 25, 1960, after the Mass of the Holy Spirit celebrated in the cathedral by Archbishop Enrique Delgado of Pamplona, the General Studies of Navarre was formally established in a solemn academic act. In the afternoon, in the City Hall, this august assembly bestowed on St. Josemaría the title of adopted son of Pamplona.

I also warmly recall November 21, 1965, when the Holy Father Paul VI, in Rome, blessed the statue of Holy Mary, Mother of Fair Love, which now presides over the university campus.

A few years later, on the sunlit morning of October 8, 1967, St. Josemaría gave a homily during Holy Mass before more than forty thousand friends of the university. In his homily, he summed up the spiritual message that God had imprinted on his soul on October 2, 1928: the invitation to find Christ in the midst of our daily work. “There is no other way, my children. Either we find God in our ordinary life or we will never find him.”[3]

On another splendid morning recently in October, in Rome, his Holiness John Paul II canonized the person who incarnated the message of
holiness in everyday life—the message he proclaimed, with special attractiveness, during that Mass on the esplanade of the University of Navarre’s library.

There also come to my mind and heart countless memories of the second Grand Chancellor of the University, his Excellency Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. With the magnanimity proper to a man of gigantic faith and generous availability, he encouraged so many initiatives at the University of Navarre that marvelously intertwined university tradition with scientific progress.

These events lead us to give heartfelt thanks to God for so many blessings, and to continue working with more determination in this beloved university, which has the responsibility to be “a world-class cultural hub,” [4] as her holy Founder wanted. Much has been achieved during these first fifty years, both in teaching and in research. The University of Navarre began in 1952 with forty-eight students and eight professors. Today, there are more than fifty thousand graduates, twelve thousand students and three thousand professors. It has made important contributions in both the sciences and humanities, and I am very happy when I consider the service that the university has rendered to this land of Navarre, by creating thousands of new jobs here.

These figures highlight the efforts of thousands of people who, inspired by St. Josemaría and following the lead of the first rector, Professor Ishmael Sánchez Bella, have dedicated their lives to this marvelous cultural undertaking, which has always aspired to work shoulder to shoulder with other universities.

However, given the high standard set by the Founder and first Grand Chancellor, we are convinced that there is still a great deal left to do. Today’s society so clearly stands in need of our disinterested service. Before us lie new challenges that require a response in keeping with a Christian spirit and human dignity. We face the challenge of respecting the norms of bioethics in scientific research. Confronting us are the need to strengthen the family, the problems stemming from globalization, the challenges of migration, international justice, world terrorism, poverty in third-world countries, the protection of the environment, the consolidation of a new Europe faithful to its Christian roots. These are some of the current issues
for fruitful dialogue among the disciplines, in striving to foster a Christian culture.

The University of Navarre wants to take a qualitative leap forward in the years to come in research and in the formation of women and men disposed to serve and to build up a more just society. They need to be “experts in humanity,” as the Pope has recently reminded us, sowers of peace and joy, as St. Josemaría said, who put art and science at the service of man, firmly committed to the truth. They need to shun the neutrality that ordinarily serves as a justification for selfish individualism and anthropological reductionism; they must be people who are persistent and magnanimous, capable of bringing the good name of Navarre to the entire world.

I ask God, through St. Josemaría's intercession, to continue pouring forth his graces on the University of Navarre and on these blessed lands for which the first Grand Chancellor prayed so much and for which he felt a special affection.[5] Thank you.


At a ceremony in the Diocesan Seminary of Logroño (January 18, 2003)

A priest and solely a priest: St. Josemaría, a model of priestly life
I am grateful to my dear brother in the episcopate, Bishop Ramon Búa, for his affectionate invitation to speak to the Rioja clergy. He suggested that I speak about the call to holiness in the priestly ministry, in light of the example and teachings of St. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, recently canonized by Pope John Paul II, and I do so with great joy.

Indeed to evoke the figure and teachings of this holy priest is a very great joy for me. If, in addition, those listening to me are priests, my joy is multiplied, because I know very well the deep love, even more, the veneration, that the founder of Opus Dei had for his brothers in the priesthood. How much he enjoyed having a chance to spend time with them. He learned from all of them and, to those who asked him, he was happy to open his heart and speak about the great loves in his life: Christ and Mary, the Church and the Pope, and all souls. He used to say that, on these occasions, he felt like someone who was coming to sell honey to the beekeeper. But his honey was of such quality that those who listened to him left with renewed desires to be faithful to their vocation, their soul overflowing with optimism, determined to spend themselves joyfully in their pastoral and apostolic tasks.

Identity of the priest

I will begin my talk with some words that St. Josemaría often addressed to newly ordained priests, but that can be useful—perhaps even more so—when we have spent many years as priests: “Be first of all, priests; second, priests; always and in everything, only priests.” This affirmation reflects his very high concept of the ministerial priesthood, by which some poor men (and that is what we all are before our Lord) are constituted ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God (1 Cor 4:1). So firm was his faith in the sacramental identification with Christ that is carried out in the sacrament of Holy Orders, that his only claim to merit, besides which all other honors on earth pale, was simply that of being a priest of Jesus Christ.

The saints, from earliest times, have emphasized the dignity of the priesthood. A number of Popes, among whom I expressly mention St. Pius X, St. Pius XI and the present Roman Pontiff, have written unforgettable documents that have nourished and continue to nourish our priestly life. St. Josemaría has also left us his teaching on the priest’s dignity. In a homily
from 1973, when confused voices were being raised about the identity of
the priest and the value of the ministerial priesthood, he summed up his
thoughts in the following words: “Here we have the priest’s identity: he is a
direct and daily instrument of the saving grace which Christ has won for us.
If you grasp this, if you meditate on it in the active silence of prayer, how
could you ever think of the priesthood in terms of renunciation? It is a gain,
an incalculable gain. Our mother Mary, the holiest of creatures—only God
is holier—brought Jesus Christ into the world just once; priests bring him
on earth, to our soul and body, every day: Christ comes to be our food, to
give us life, to be, even now, a pledge of future life.”[1]

When those of us at his side asked him about how his priestly vocation
came about, he always pointed to God’s initiative, who sought him out
when he was 15 or 16 years old. As you know very well, it was in Logroño,
in December of 1917 or January of 1918, where he had his first
presentiments—his first “inklings,” as he used to say—that God was calling
him to something that he didn’t as yet know of. He had never thought of
becoming a priest. But sensing God’s impetus, and seeking to prepare
himself better to fulfill God’s will, he decided to enter the seminary. In all
truth he could say, as the years went by, that the impulse for his priestly
vocation had been “a call from God, an inkling of love, the falling in love by
a boy of 15 or 16 years of age.”[2]

He received his first priestly formation in the seminary of Logroño, and
later completed it in Saragossa. God wanted the seed that he was going to
cast upon the earth on October 2, 1928, to find a priestly heart deeply
prepared to receive it and make it bear fruit. This is why, with gratitude to
our Lord, St. Josemaría said that his vocation was, let me insist, that of
being a priest, only a priest, always a priest. He loved madly this gift that,
by configuring him with Christ, had prepared him to be an instrument in
God’s hands for the founding of Opus Dei.

A gift and a task

It used to be that when listing the conditions necessary for candidates to
the priesthood, it was prescribed that they had to be chosen from among
men who led an “honest life.” This formulation, minimalist and now
antiquated, seemed very poor to St. Josemaría. “We understand, with the
entire tradition of the Church,” he wrote in 1945, “that the priesthood demands—because of the sacred functions that belong to it—something more than an honest life. It demands a holy life in those who exercise it, constituted, as they are, as mediators between God and men.”[3]

Josemaría Escrivá received a deeply Christian formation in his family and at school, which instilled knowledge of doctrine, the frequenting of the sacraments, and a concern for the spiritual and material needs of those around him, as witnesses of that period have stressed. When he received God’s call to the priesthood, his life made a radical change in the sense that the intensity and frequency of his contacts with God and his apostolic concern for others increased. This led him to a maturity beyond his years. Those words from Sacred Scripture were fulfilled in his life: super senes intellexi quia mandata tua servavi.[4] I have acquired greater prudence than the elders because I have faithfully fulfilled your commandments. Right from those first “inklings,” the adolescent Josemaría began to take holiness seriously, diligently striving to know and fulfill God’s will.

In chapter five of the dogmatic constitution Lumen Gentium, the Second Vatican Council points to the vocation of all the baptized to holiness: “The followers of Christ, called by God not in virtue of their works but by his design and grace, and justified in the Lord Jesus, have been made sons of God in the baptism of faith and partakers of the divine nature, and so are truly sanctified. They must therefore hold on to and perfect in their lives that sanctification which they have received from God.”[5]

As members of Christ’s Mystical Body, into which we have been incorporated by Baptism, we have all been truly sanctified. We bear in ourselves the seed and beginning of the new life that Christ gained for us through his death and resurrection. Baptismal consecration is the foundation of the call to sanctity in all walks of life. Thus, given the absolute gratuity of what we have received, holiness is clearly seen as a gift. It is an unmerited gift that God our Father grants us in Christ through the Holy Spirit. At the same time, holiness is a personal call, a task that is entrusted to the responsibility of every Christian. As St. Josemaría said, it is the task of a lifetime.[6]

Sanctity then is a gift and a task. It is the gratuitous gift that we can
never merit and, at the same time, a task that has to be carried out by personal effort with heroic correspondence in a truly committed Christian life.

**Priestly holiness as a gift**

Since all the baptized, priests and laity, share one and the same radical condition, all are called equally to the fullness of Christian life. “There is no such thing as second class holiness. Either we put up a constant fight to stay in the grace of God and imitate Christ, our Model, or we desert in that divine battle. God invites everyone; each person can become holy in his own state in life.”[7]

Here we come to one of the fundamental intuitions that St. Josemaría Escrivá preached, by divine will, from 1928 on. On founding Opus Dei, our Lord showed him that everyone has to strive to become holy in his own state in life, in the life to which he has been called, in his own work and through his own work, according to that well known expression of St. Paul: *unusquisque, in qua vocacione vocatus est, in ea permaneat* (1 Cor 7:20).

Holiness in priests and in lay people is built, therefore, on the same foundation: the original consecration imparted by Baptism and perfected by Confirmation. Nevertheless, it is evident that the duty of seeking holiness is especially urgent in the case of the priest, who has “been chosen from among men and is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins” (*Heb* 5:1).

“Constantly in contact with the holiness of God,” John Paul II has written, “the priest must himself become holy. His very ministry commits him to a way of life inspired in the radicalism of the Gospel.”[8] And he adds in his book *Gift and Mystery*: “While the Second Vatican Council speaks of the universal call to holiness, in the case of the priest we must speak of a special call to holiness. Christ needs holy priests! Today’s world demands holy priests! Only a holy priest can become, in an increasingly secularized world, a resounding witness to Christ and his gospel. And only thus can a priest become a guide for men and women and a teacher of holiness.”[9]

The priest has been doubly consecrated by God: in Baptism, as all Christians, and in the sacrament of Holy Orders. Therefore, although we
cannot speak of first or second class holiness, because all are called to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect (cf. Mt 5:48), there is no doubt that the duty of striving for perfection falls in a special way on priests. Let us reread some words of the founder of Opus Dei that are especially clear in this regard. “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.”[10]

In the exercise of the ministry for which he has been ordained, the priest is nourished by his spiritual life, which enkindles God’s love in him. Therefore it would be a grave mistake to allow other aspirations or tasks to blur in his soul what, for him, is a clear path for attaining holiness: the careful and loving celebration of the Mass; the preaching of the Word of God; the administration of the sacraments to the faithful, especially that of Penance; a life of constant prayer and cheerful penance; the care for souls entrusted to him, together with the thousand and one services that a vigilant charity is able to detect.

From the moment he perceived his call to the priesthood, and more explicitly from the moment he was ordained as a priest, St. Josemaría wanted to identify himself with Christ, to be Christ himself, in the exercise of his priestly ministry and in his whole life. Hence his life of prayer, his attentive celebration of Mass, his “need” to spend long periods before the tabernacle; and hence also his sense of urgency to seek out souls to lead them, in Christ, along paths of sanctity. He understood that one can and ought to live in a holy way in all states of life, and specifically in that of marriage. Therefore, from his earliest years as a pastor, besides leading many people along the path of apostolic celibacy taken up with true joy, he encouraged many others to discover the dignity of a vocation to marriage.

Pope John Paul II wrote to priests: “In the words Mysterium fidei we find ever more each day the meaning of our own priesthood. Here is the measure of the gift which is the priesthood, and here is also the measure of the response which this gift demands. The gift is constantly growing! And this is something wonderful. It is wonderful that a man can never say that he has fully responded to the gift. It remains both a gift and a task: always! To be conscious of this is essential if we are to live our own priesthood to the full.”[11]
St. Josemaría Escrivá celebrated Holy Mass each day with a lover’s passion, with the vivid awareness that “the sacrament of Orders, in effect, equips the priest to lend our Lord his voice, his hands, his whole being.”[12] Listen to his description, during a family get-together, of the mysterious eclipse that takes place during those moments of the human personality of the priest, who becomes a living instrument of God:

“When I come to the altar, my first thought is: Josemaría, you are not Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, you are Christ. All of us priests are Christ. I lend our Lord my voice, my hands, my body, my soul; I give him everything. It is He who says: this is my Body, this is my Blood, it is He who consecrates. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to do it. There the divine Sacrifice of Calvary is renewed in an unbloody manner. I am there in persona Christi, taking the place of Christ. The priest disappears as a specific person: Father Peter, Father Paul, Fr. Josemaría…. No sir! It is Christ.”[13]

Priestly holiness as a task

The incomparable greatness of the priest is based on his sacramental identification with Christ, which leads him to be ipse Christus and to act in persona Christi capitis, above all in the Eucharistic celebration and in the ministry of reconciliation. “It is a greatness which is on loan,” wrote St. Josemaría, “completely compatible with my own littleness. I pray to God our Lord to give all of us priests the grace to perform holy things in a holy way, to reflect in every aspect of our lives the wonders of the greatness of God.”[14]

Every Catholic has to try to ensure that all his conduct reveals that he is a follower of Christ: in his family, his profession, his social or recreational activity. The priest’s daily life too has to make clear that he belongs to Christ. By the indelible character received at ordination, he is a priest twenty-four hours a day, not only in moments when he is expressly exercising his ministry. We must keep this very much in mind today, when our multi-cultural and multi-religious society is dispensing with so many signs that reminded people in the past of the primacy of God and of the supernatural life. I do not say this with pessimism, but with the intention that all of us should strive to ensure that the Christian roots of our people are not lost, that they are manifested in pious traditions, in culture, art and customs.
The priest has to reach the goal of sanctity on an inclined plane, as it were, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, who is the one who molds the features of Jesus Christ in his adoptive children. In this process, which lasts a lifetime, together with the supernatural action of grace, each person's docile response is decisive.

It is impossible to attain holiness without an effort to practice the virtues, without the daily struggle to grow in them. The virtuous habits on which the priest's holiness rests are no different than those of the other faithful, since we are all called to the same goal, union with God, and we all have the same means to attain this goal. The difference is based on the way of exercising these virtues. In the priest, everything should be done in a priestly way, that is, always keeping present the purpose of his specific vocation, the service of souls. We have to follow our Lord’s example, who said of himself: *Pro eis ego sanctifico meipsum, ut sint et ipsi santificati in veritate* (Jn 17:19).

**Human virtues of the priest**

Using the metaphor of construction—an image with Biblical roots—the first thing that one looks for is solid ground. Christ himself alluded to this need, at the conclusion of his Sermon on the Mount, when he praised the prudent man who built his house on rock, so that when the wind and rain came the building stood firm (cf. Mt 7:24-25).

In the Christian's spiritual life, the solid ground of the spiritual edifice is made up of the human virtues, for grace always builds on nature. We mustn't forget that the priest does not cease to be man when he receives ordination. On the contrary, precisely because he has been taken from among men and made a mediator between God and men (cf. Heb 5:10), he must be careful about his human preparation, which enables him to serve souls better.

“This formation,” writes Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, “includes all the human virtues which are integrated directly or indirectly in the four cardinal virtues, and the non-ecclesiastical culture which is indispensable to enable the priest to exercise his apostolate effectively—helped, of course, by grace.”[15] My predecessor as head of the Prelature of Opus Dei emphasized the principal reasons why a priest needs to acquire and develop these
virtues: “First, as part of the ascetical struggle normally needed to attain perfection; second, as a means to exercise the apostolate with greater efficacy.”[16]

In St. Josemaría’s life, the witnesses to his pastoral work agree in describing him as a priest in love with Jesus Christ, dedicated to the service of souls, with a strong and harmonious personality, in which the human and the supernatural virtues fused tightly in a unity of life. His homily entitled “Human Virtues,” included in the book *Friends of God*, shows the theological foundation for the need to cultivate human virtues: the deep reality of the incarnation of the Word, perfect Man without ceasing to be perfect God. The homily analyzes the principal virtues that a Christian and a priest should cultivate: courage, serenity, patience, laboriousness, order, diligence, veracity, love for freedom, sobriety, temperance, daring, magnanimity, loyalty, optimism, cheerfulness.

**Founded on humility.**

“Humility is the foundation of our life, the means and precondition for being effective,”[17] wrote St. Josemaría, in harmony with the spiritual tradition of Christianity. Clearly he is referring here to the moral foundation, since the theological foundation—as he preached with his life and his words—is centered on theological faith, which leads us to deeply consider our divine filiation in Christ. This conviction makes clear the deepest truth about ourselves and, therefore, necessarily strengthens our humility, which is nothing other than “walking in truth,” as St. Teresa said: walking in the faith.

By cultivating a strong faith, one avoids the error of presenting humility as a lack of decisiveness or initiative, the renunciation of rights that are duties. There is nothing further from the thought of the founder of Opus Dei. “Being humble,” he preached on one occasion, “is not going about dirty, or neglectful; nor does it mean being indifferent to all that is going on around us, in a continual ceding of rights. Much less is it saying stupid things against oneself. There can’t be any humility where there is a theatrical pose and hypocrisy, because humility is truth.”[18]

So important is this virtue in a Christian’s life that St. Josemaría assured us: “just as one puts salt on food so that it doesn’t taste bland, so in our lives
we always have to apply humility.”[19] And he used a classic comparison: “Don’t be like those hens who, when they have managed to lay just a single egg, go around the whole house clucking. You have to carry out your intellectual or manual work, which is always apostolic, with big intentions and desires, which our Lord will transform into realities, seeking to serve God and pass unnoticed.”[20]

But let us return to the theological foundation, faith, and along with faith, hope: there is no holiness if one’s faith is not growing to embrace all reality, if one does not foster, as the motive for one’s earthly journey, the virtue of hope. From the first moment, the founder of Opus Dei fully realized that the mission God had entrusted to him far exceeded his own strength. This is why he always had insistent recourse to the only means for placing divine omnipotence within our grasp: prayer and sacrifice. Innumerable testimonies exist documenting how he went around begging, in the hospitals and poor districts of Madrid, as though it were a treasure, for the prayers and offering of their sufferings to God by many abandoned people, to whom he brought the consolation and encouragement of his priestly assistance.

What a great need we priests have for an ever stronger faith and hope! We are involved in work where the only thing absolutely necessary (cf. Lk10:42) is employing the supernatural means. True miracles are needed to lead souls to God. Nevertheless, “you hear people saying sometimes that there are fewer miracles nowadays. Might it not rather be that there are fewer people living a life of faith.”[21] St. Josemaría’s words should be a wake-up call to our sense of responsibility, because the priest has to be, before all else, a man of faith and hope. “Through faith,” writes the Pope, “he attains the invisible goods that constitute the heritage of the redemption of the world carried out by the Son of God.”[22]

_Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen_ (Heb 11:1). And it is in “the persevering prayer of each day, whether done with ease or with dryness, where priests, like all Christians, receive from God...new light, firmness in faith, a sure hope in the supernatural efficacy of their pastoral work, renewed love. In a word, the stimulus to persevere in their work and the root of the effectiveness of the work itself.”[23] In these words of Bishop del Portillo, the founder of Opus Dei’s closest collaborator
for many years, we can detect an allusion to the spiritual life of St. Josemaría, who received from God the grace to be a contemplative in the midst of the most absorbing tasks. Don Alvaro adds: “Without prayer, a prayer that strives to be continuous in the midst of all one’s activities, there is no identification with Christ…a priest who doesn’t pray, if he doesn’t falsify the image that he gives of Christ, the model for all, presents it as something nebulous that neither attracts nor orients, that fails to serve as a compass to the people who see us or hear us.”[24]

\textit{Pastoral charity}

We thus arrive at the central virtue of Christian life, charity. In the case of the priest, this virtue takes on the specific contours of pastoral charity, stemming from his awareness of being a representative of Christ, the supreme pastor (cf. 1 Pet 5:4) of souls, who has given his life for his sheep (cf. Jn 10:11). This supernatural conviction has to impel the priest to spend himself in the exercise of his ministry, urged on by the charity of Christ (cf 2 Cor 5:14). Pastoral charity, nourished deeply by the Eucharist and by prayer, will ensure that a priest’s ministry bears fruit.

The figure of St. Josemaría provide us with a marvelous example in this respect. From the first moments of his vocation, he spared himself no effort in his service to souls. I have already alluded briefly to his visits to the poorest districts of Madrid back in the 1920’s and 30’s, in constant contact with poverty and sickness, caring for the dying, comforting the sick, teaching children and adults Christian doctrine. I can assure you, because I saw it with my own eyes, that he spent himself in that way for the rest of his life, always concerned about the others, both those near and far, known and unknown. He prayed and sacrificed himself gladly for all souls, without exception.

God’s special assumption of the person of the priest, which takes place at ordination, integrally consecrates him to the service and total love of Christ. So rich and extensive is this gift that a priest can make his own, in a particularly profound sense, the words of St. Paul: \textit{mihi vivere Christus est} (Phil 1:21), \textit{vivo autem iam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus} (Gal 2:20). Therefore, the mission he has received is universal in scope. A priest is sent out to the whole world, as a living instrument of Christ “who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his
own who are zealous for good deeds” (Tit 2:14).

Sacramental identification with Christ, together with the mission received, are the source of the special demands of pastoral charity, and place the priest in a special situation in the mystery of Christ and the Church. Commenting on the doctrinal deepening of this point by the Second Vatican Council, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo wrote: “If one considers that the incarnate Love who came to mankind avoided any kind of human attachment, no matter how good and noble, that might restrict his full ministerial dedication, one can readily understand why the priest should do the same, freely renouncing, through celibacy, something which is good and holy, in order to unite himself more easily to Christ with his whole heart, and for Him and in Him, dedicate himself with greater freedom to the untiring service of God and men.”[25]

Priestly celibacy is a manifestation of the complete offering of one’s life, which the priest freely makes to God and to the Church. Seen in this light, it is easy to understand St. Josemaría’s words spoken in a family conversation back in 1969. “A priest, if he has a true priestly spirit, if he is a man with interior life, can never feel alone. No one’s heart can be more in love than his. He is a man of Love, the representative among men of Love made man. He lives by Christ, for Christ and in Christ. This is a divine reality that moves me deeply when, every day, holding the Chalice and the Sacred Host in my hand and raising them, I slowly repeat those words from the Canon, savoring them: Per Ipsum, et cum Ipso et in Ipso… My life is through Him, with Him, in Him, for Him and for souls. I live through his Love and for his Love, in spite of my personal miseries. And in spite of these miseries, perhaps because of them, my love is a love that is renewed each day.”[26]

**Priestly fraternity**

Loving all souls without exception, St. Josemaría had a special love for his brother priests. I have already alluded to his joy when he was able to have a get-together with them, seeking to learn from their dedication, so often heroic, and transmit to them at the same time some of his personal experience. But I can’t fail to recall his special concern for priests, especially during the years that he lived in Spain. In the decade of the forties, for example, at the petition of diocesan bishops, he preached many retreats for
the clergy, so in need of spiritual assistance after the terrible trial of the religious persecution of the previous years. St. Josemaría gave himself wholeheartedly to that task, sometimes assisting more than a thousand priests in a single year.

Right to the end of his life, he urgently begged God to send many priestly vocations to the Church. He personally prepared and sent to the seminaries a large number of young men with a vocation to the priesthood. And he urged the laity to pray with insistence to the Lord of the harvest, asking that he send many workers into his field (cf. Mt 9:37-38). For St. Josemaría, the pulse of the supernatural vitality of a diocese was measured by the number of priestly vocations, for whom the primary responsibility fell on the priests themselves.

How sad he was when he met someone who showed no concern for this task. For he saw this lack of concern as a clear sign that the priest himself was not happy with his call. On one occasion, when asked about the reason for the scarcity of vocations for the seminaries, he answered: “Perhaps the first reason is that often we priests do not fully value the treasure that we hold in our hands, and therefore we fail to enkindle young people with the desire to possess this treasure themselves. Seminaries would be full, if we loved our priesthood more deeply.”[27]

He showed a great concern to do everything possible to foster the sanctity of the clergy. The first apostolate of priests, he would insist, has to be with their brother priests: not leaving them alone in their anxieties, sharing in their joys, encouraging them in their difficulties, strengthen them in moments of doubt. Engraved with fire on his heart were those words from Sacred Scripture: *frater, qui adiuvatur a fratre, quasi civitas firma* (Prov 18:19), a brother who is helped by his brothers is as strong as a walled city.

So intense was his zeal to help his brothers in the priesthood, that in 1950, when Opus Dei had already received the definitive approval of the Holy See, he considered dedicating himself fully to diocesan priests. When he had already offered our Lord the sacrifice of Abraham—for he had decided to leave the Work, if this were necessary—God showed him that this sacrifice wasn’t necessary. There was a place for diocesan priests in the spirit of Opus Dei, which teaches Christians to sanctify themselves in the
midst of the world, each in his own occupation or task. In full communion with their own ordinary and the presbytery of their diocese, they could seek sanctity in the exercise of their ministerial duties, having a special veneration for their diocesan bishop and closely united with their brothers in the priesthood. The doors of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, to which the clergy incardinated in Opus Dei already belonged, were opened wider to give access to diocesan priests who received this specific divine calling.

Today, in this land of Rioja, where the work of Opus Dei has been fully integrated in the diocese for many years, I raise my heart in gratitude to the Blessed Trinity for the plentiful fruit that the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross has produced and continues to produce, in service to the universal Church and to the local churches. All of this is the result of the grace that God grants through his Blessed Mother, a grace to which St. Josemaría corresponded fully eighty-five years ago, when, right here in Logroño, he received the call to the priesthood.


[9] Ibid.


At the awarding of honorary doctorates at the University of Navarre (January 17, 2003)

Most eminent Cardinal and esteemed civil authorities, illustrious professors of this university, ladies and gentlemen:

In this academic year 2002-2003, the University of Navarre will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its existence in this world. In the years
before its founding, it existed only in the priestly soul of St. Josemaría Escrivá, who prepared this beautiful reality with his prayer and sacrifice. Certainly for a university institution destined to serve humanity throughout the centuries, five decades are not much time. But if looked at from the perspective of man’s allotted stay on this earth, it constitutes a period of time worthy of being celebrated.

The first way to do so is to give thanks to the Most Blessed Trinity for all the ineffable gifts granted through the mediation of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, and also to thank St. Josemaría, such a docile instrument in God’s hands by his magnanimous correspondence to divine inspiration. We owe gratitude also to all those who, with filial trust in our Father God and supported by the founder’s prayer, confronted the challenge of beginning this university without human resources. Their efforts were supported by the assistance provided by institutions in Navarre, to whom once more I extend my wholehearted recognition. Thanks also to those who came later and who brought the university forward with the same spirit. It is impossible to mention everyone here, but I can't fail to express my gratitude to the first rector, Professor Ismael Sánchez Bella.

It is fitting that this celebration include one of the most significant acts of academic life: receiving into the ranks of the doctors of this alma mater several persons of great academic renown. By enriching the body of teachers and students, they will serve as a stimulus to pursue the task of seeking the truth with renewed zeal, with high goals of service to all mankind.

For us it is a motive of profound joy to receive these three new doctors into our university family.

Doctor Mary Ann Glendon, a professor at Harvard University, has achieved academic excellence in the juridical field, which has enabled her to confront, with undeniable competence, vital questions in the present circumstances of human life and international relationships. She has delved deeply into human rights, emphasizing the dignity of the person, through numerous publications on questions of political life, the family, divorce and abortion, which have received wide recognition. We all recall with gratitude her role, marked by great juridical acumen and a spirit of service to humanity, in heading the Holy See’s delegation at the fourth United Nations conference on women, in Beijing.
Professor Anthony Kelly of Cambridge University has attained international prestige for his research on compound materials in physics. He has authored publications of high quality and served as President of the Institute for Metals at his university. He has been visiting professor at many universities and has held managerial level positions in several companies. His academic life, marked by numerous prizes and international recognition, has been characterized by a zeal for service, which led him to carry out a self-sacrificing work of training disciples and sharing his knowledge.

Cardinal Antonio Maria Rouco, Archbishop of Madrid and President of the Spanish bishops’ conference, is an example of a priest with a great university spirit. His service to the Church and his love for the truth led him to research and teaching in the theological field, especially in Fundamental Theology and Ecclesiology, and in the juridical field, at the Universities of Munich and Salamanca. In his numerous writings he stands out for the depth with which he has dealt with the subject of Church-state relationships. Our alma mater has also benefited from his teaching talents, both through his participation in academic activities and through articles published here in Pamplona. Following a long tradition of the great teachers of divine revelation, his university experience and mentality has enriched the Church and made his pastoral activity more fruitful, first in Santiago de Compostela and later in Madrid. Our Holy Father John Paul II has appointed him to numerous dicasteries in the Roman Curia and entrusted him with important responsibilities in the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops dedicated to the formation of priests.

The example of these illustrious teachers encourages us to reflect on some aspects of the role of the university in the context of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of this university, which is occurring at a moment of great social changes. The institution of the university must never remain at the periphery of the historic developments of human culture. One of its missions is to study and evaluate the main currents that arise, and thus contribute incisively to personal and social progress. St. Josemaría encouraged this university to be “at the very origin of the upright changes that occur in the life of society.”[1]
Many of today’s trends and the advanced techniques of communication spur us to seek greater contact between the various fields of knowledge, seeking to overcome the fragmentation and isolation found there. In his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul II writes: “Taking up what has been taught repeatedly by the Popes for several generations and reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council itself, I wish to reaffirm strongly the conviction that the human being can come to a unified and organic vision of knowledge. This is one of the tasks which Christian thought will have to take up through the next millennium of the Christian era. The segmentation of knowledge, with its splintered approach to truth and consequent fragmentation of meaning, keeps people today from coming to an interior unity.”[2]

The challenges that today’s society places before the man of science demand strong interdisciplinary collaboration and a growing spirit of teamwork. Following the teachings of St. Josemaría and those of my predecessor Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, I have always tried, as Chancellor, to encourage the exercise of an interdisciplinary approach, conscious that this requires a continual effort to overcome divisions that are deeply rooted in more than a few university institutions.

This unity of knowledge will be attained, not by reducing everything to a material dimension, but rather by fostering the humanistic spirit of the university as the highest enterprise at the service of the human person. The founder and first chancellor of this university affirmed: “The university has as its highest mission to serve mankind, to be a leaven in the society in which it exists. Therefore it should investigate the truth in all fields, from theology, the science of the faith, called to consider truths that are always timely, to all the other sciences of the human spirit and of nature.”[3]

Every true university is characterized by universality in the search for truth. It is for this reason that all branches of knowledge are important and that each fulfills an indispensable role. It is this too that, from its origins, has made it essential for the university to cultivate the humanities, and especially the study of philosophy and theology. The light that emanates from Christ does not violate the created order. On the contrary, just as grace is not opposed to the natural order but rather heals and elevates it, so to, in the intellectual realm, the light of faith and its application in
theological science illumines and strengthens human nature, and indeed all creation, preserving it from the degrading menace of sin.

Pope John Paul II wrote: “This sapiential dimension is all the more necessary today, because the immense expansion of humanity’s technical capability demands a renewed and sharpened sense of ultimate values. If this technology is not ordered to something greater than a merely utilitarian end, then it could soon prove inhuman and even become potential destroyer of the human race.”[4]

A renewed interdisciplinary effort will enable one to confront timely questions of great importance that affect the dignity of man: the protection and care of human life from its beginning, marriage and the family, ecology, ethical questions arising from technological development, problems of justice, peace and human rights.

In his apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Pope John Paul II encourages us to strive to clarify in our work that these questions entail values rooted in the very nature of the human person: “For Christian witness to be effective, especially in these delicate and controversial areas, it is important that special efforts be made to explain properly the reasons for the Church’s position, stressing that it is not a case of imposing on non-believers a vision based on faith, but of interpreting and defending the values rooted in the very nature of the human person. In this way charity will necessarily become service to culture, politics, the economy and the family, so that the fundamental principles upon which depend the destiny of human beings and the future of civilization will be everywhere respected.”[5]

It is well known that in some countries the university is subject to legislative, economic and cultural pressures that seek to reduce the university’s role to that of preparing professionals for the immediate needs of society. In line with this logic, often research and teaching are pursued separately, and the humanities are set aside. The spread of this trend would mean depriving society of one of the most important instruments of human progress.

The university is a place of freedom in solidarity, of fraternal service to all men and women, where a fuller knowledge of reality is sought for the
common good, with the necessary autonomy so as not to be converted into a mere cog of economic or political power.

“The university does not live with its back turned to any uncertainty, to any worry, to any need of mankind. Its mission is not to offer immediate solutions. Rather, by studying problems with scientific depth, it also moves hearts, spurs the passive, awakens sleeping powers, forming citizens disposed to build a more just society.”[6]

The fifty years of this university’s life evoke the memory of its beginnings and the foundational spirit bequeathed to it by St. Josemaría Escrivá. Under his guidance, those who began the university did not have many material means at their disposal, but they did have a clear idea of their mission: to begin a university where teaching would be grounded on research. And this has been true right from the beginning. In addition, little by little, with the generous aid of so many people and institutions that understood the great importance of the apostolate of the intellect,[7] you have set for yourself ever higher goals in your research. Without a facile conformity to the spirit of the age, you have to advance in all fields of knowledge, both in the sciences of the human spirit and those of nature, convinced that it is impossible to make progress without an accurate knowledge of our own past and of the present in which we live.

Interdisciplinary research projects by scholars in the humanities, science and technology will result in a greater service to society, and a richer human preparation for the students. Providing students with professional competence is not enough, since they also have to grow humanly and as Christians, in order to serve all men and women in accord with human dignity. This is one of the great challenges of our day and age: creating a new humanistic culture strengthened by Christ’s Cross and Resurrection. My predecessor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, said here in 1994: “With a mind open to every facet of human knowledge and with the generosity of spending time attending to each student, the professors will transmit to their students, through the example of their life and the force of their words, the convictions necessary to fight joyfully against their own selfishness and to embark on the adventure of giving renewed enthusiasm to a tired world.”[8]

Now that a number of years have gone by since its founding, I am
happy to see that the University of Navarre is constantly renewing itself and confronting the changes that are taking place, keeping present the always timely priority of training new professors. Here also one can see the importance of teamwork, which should go hand in hand with the creativity proper to an intellectual. By combining efforts, the personality of each one is enriched and higher goals can be reached. The still brief history of this center of learning strengthens our conviction that, without overlooking the required material means, the greatest treasure are the people who make up the university, the professors, the students, the administrators, the workers who take care of the material upkeep, all united by the spirit that animates everyone.

The new doctors present us with a marvelous example of how to live these university ideals in today’s world. We thank them for their example and stimulus in striving for goals that are ever more in accord with the needs of our time.

At this crossroads of history, full of hope in the midst of shadow, we feel the responsibility of keeping strong the university spirit that has come down to us from St. Josemaría Escrivá. Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom and Mother of Fair Love, will obtain for us from the Blessed Trinity the light and strength needed to undertake this new stage in the life of the University of Navarre.


“Witness to Love,” Article in La Vanguardia, Barcelona, Spain (May 4, 2003)

“The life and words of the Pope display a deep consistency that can be summarized in one phrase: John Paul II is a credible witness to Love.” An article by Bishop Javier Echevarría published in the Barcelona newspaper “La Vanguardia” on the occasion of the Pope’s fifth trip to Spain.

We should thank John, Jesus’ young disciple, for recording in his Gospel the incisive dialogue between the resurrected Christ and Peter, at the edge of Lake Tiberias after the miraculous catch of fish. Our Lord lights a fire and prepares some fish and bread for the seven disciples who have just spent the night in their boat hard at work fishing. After breakfast, he takes Peter aside and asks him three times if he loves him more than the others. Simon answers the first two times by saying simply that he loves our Lord. On the third occasion, his grief leads him to add: “Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you.” Jesus responds to this profession of love by entrusting Peter with the mission of caring for his flock.

Since that moment and right to the end of history, the mission of Peter’s successors is tied to the great paradox of human existence: we know we are bearers of the highest aspirations while at the same time we experience our personal smallness and weakness. The Son of God asked Peter three times for a profession of love, because it is only through their love for the Master that the successors of the fisherman from Galilee will be able to serve and strengthen their brothers.
John Paul II's fifth trip to Spain leads me to recall these pages of John’s Gospel. In our time, when great technological progress contrasts with deep doubts about the mystery of the human person, John Paul II ceaselessly illumines the deepest dimension of our existence: the vocation to Love. I write this word with a capital letter not only because it refers mainly to Love for God, but also to highlight the greatness of Love in all its noble manifestations.

**Credible witness**

Some people express difficulty in understanding the consistency between various aspects of the message of John Paul II. In some cases, they perceive a divergence between these two themes: his crystal clear teachings on birth control, abortion, euthanasia and respect for life; and on the other hand, his strong calls for justice and social solidarity. Nevertheless, the Pope’s life and words display a deep consistency that can be summarized in one phrase: John Paul II is a credible witness to Love.

God has granted us a successor to Peter who, through both his priestly experience and his vocation as a writer and philosopher, has helped us to better understand the greatness of the divine call to Love. In a climate of distrust and fear, he has invited us to cross the threshold of hope and to seek—with God’s help—a love that is generous, clean and freely-bestowed. He has highlighted the greatness of the marital union, a gift granted by God for Love and the transmission of life. He has illumined—without fears born of a false spiritualism—the spousal nature of the human body. And, based on his own experience of spiritual paternity, he has shown both the beauty of marriage and the marvelous fruitfulness of celibacy freely received as God’s gift.

At the World Youth Day of the Great Jubilee in the Year 2000, we witnessed the positive response of countless youths to a Pope, already elderly, who affirmed human existence as being-for-Life, instead of a nihilistic being-for-death, speaking to them with persuasive conviction of the generous love that leads to self-sacrifice.

I think that this explains why the Pope has shown so much concern for families and why he considers them the foundation of all true human progress. Nor is there a change of tone when John Paul II turns to
another fundamental dimension of our existence: work. Here also he places priority on the growth of the person through professional activity in the service of others. Focusing on mere economic aspects serves to diminish the individual, to reduce him to a cog in the productive machine. Often it is necessary to risk changing certain structures that seem practical or pragmatic but that limit the free development of persons. The Catalanian poet Joan Maragall put it very well: “Esfuércate en tu quehacer / como si de cada detalle que pienses, / de cada palabra que digas, / de cada pieza que pongas, / de cada golpe de martillo que des, / dependiese la salvación de la humanidad / porque en efecto depende, créelo” (Strive in your task / as though on each small detail that you consider / on each word that you say, / on each piece that you place, / on each hammer blow that you strike, / depends the salvation of humanity / because it truly does, believe me.)

The same vocation to Love resounds when John Paul II seeks to greet each person that approaches him, when he smiles on taking a small child in his arms and blessing it, when he plays with his cane or sings during his meetings with young people, trying to speak with each one, even when there are many thousands present. Therefore, his tone becomes especially urgent when defending human rights, when giving voice to the weakest, as in the case of many African countries that feel themselves abandoned. His insistence on speaking of man not in general or collective terms, but rather in terms of his unrepeatable uniqueness, has helped us realize more fully that each person has an incommensurable dignity and value.

Defending Love

Likewise, his constancy in recalling our moral duty to exhaust all possible means of peacefully resolving conflicts reflects a love without any discrimination. Thus he never fails to recall for us deeply important matters: the moral and physical sufferings of the civilian population, the resentments that embitter hearts, the barriers that impede fraternity. If on occasion military conflict cannot be avoided, which is always a “defeat for humanity” (Speech to Diplomatic Corps, January 13, 2003), this does not mean that the Pope’s words have been useless. It means rather that perhaps we have not sufficiently sought peace, in all its manifestations: peace in consciences, in families, in the workplace, in public life.

I would like to emphasize, finally, that John Paul II defends Love
against its most powerful enemy: the ego of each person when he allows himself to be carried away by his own weakness and selfishness. The Holy Father has inspired deep decisions in many young people, helping them to discover their Christian vocation, because his testimony is backed up by his life, by his daily physical spending of himself.

For the past 25 years, he has been a credible witness to God’s Love for each human being, traveling all over the world. And even more so now, when his bodily weakness allows us to better glimpse the strength of divine Love in his life. Many people have been moved, especially recently, by his unconditional self-giving, which is simply the intensification of what he has been doing throughout his entire pontificate. He has spared no effort, spurned no sacrifice.

The first Christian community in Jerusalem put the sick in the path of Peter, so that at least his shadow would touch them and cure them. I ask God that the shadow of the steps of John Paul II may cure us of our ills, and that we may learn from the life of this credible witness to God’s Love.

Interview granted to Montserrat Lluís, of the newspapers El Correo, Bilbao, España (23-II-2003)

*For many people, religion has lost its weight in the scale of values....*

There are more Catholics now than ever before. But more important than numbers is the fact that the Church is vibrant, that it is challenging and attracting people just as it did 20 centuries ago. Of course, it cannot be denied that there are some countries or places where fewer people practice the faith. There are many reasons for that, but certainly one is the encroachment of a culture that marginalizes Christ, producing fertile ground for the passions to take root.

*How can people be made to see that sacrifice and charity yield more happiness than pleasure and money?*
We all experience the discrepancy between what we are and what we should be. But when Christian magnanimity is discovered, its superiority to the fleeting happiness brought by pleasure and money becomes clear. Therefore our Lord invites us to struggle against being prisoners of comforts and inclinations that soften and degrade the soul. Nothing is more wonderful than a selfless life of union with Jesus Christ.

*Opus Dei invites us to seek holiness through our work. How many people nowadays believe they are working for anything besides a paycheck?*

One's occupation should not be conceived in mere economic terms. In the plans of God, work develops and perfects the person. People are ennobled when, instead of just drawing a salary, they put their creativity and interest into doing things well and offering loyal service to God and others. In our economically hyperactive society, discovering the Christian value of work can be liberating and brings about fraternity.

*You reject birth control. But is it responsible to bring half a dozen children into the world on a salary of 600 euros a month?*

Wages insufficient to support children, inadequate housing, and obstacles to balancing family and professional life are all problems that citizens and their representatives should seek to alleviate. But this is not solely an economic question: many people using birth control make more than 600 euros. What the Church rejects is a vision of life that puts material welfare above the Christian and human values of marriage.

*In the face of a succession of pederast priest cases, can the Church still legitimately require chastity before marriage?*

Continence is part of Christian morality, which is nothing other than a way of acting in accord with the dignity of the person and one's true happiness. The Church's teaching about marriage will never change. If a Catholic were caught stealing, whether a priest or a layperson, the Church wouldn't change its teaching on robbery.

*Do you approve of church leaders giving their opinions on politics?*

Every layperson, like any other citizen, can take part in politics according to his or her own views. The only thing necessary is that they act in accordance with their faith, which does not impose any political program,
but calls for honesty, playing by the rules, and a sincere spirit of service to the community.

*Is it acceptable that religion be the cause of military conflicts, such as the one between the Palestinians and Israel?*

It is a great tragedy for men to be killed, whatever the cause. But I don't think the conflict in the Holy Land has religious motives. It's a fight over land. Among Palestinians and Israelis, there are men and women capable of living together in a spirit of brotherhood. Peace is a blessing of heaven that requires men of good will on earth.

*How can peace come to the Basque country?*

Peace cannot be reduced to the mere absence of war. For that, military victory or a truce would suffice. Authentic peace, inseparable from justice, springs from a friendly understanding among people. This requires mutual understanding and forgiveness, an effort to get to know each other and resolve misunderstandings. And a great deal of grace from God. St. Josemaría never tired of repeating that peace in communities and between peoples can come about only from peace in consciences. And he added that violence is never suitable, neither to conquer nor to convince; the one who uses it always ends up the loser.

*Does Opus Dei have a lot to thank John Paul II for?*

The entire Church owes John Paul II a great deal of gratitude for his constant dedication. It would take a long time to mention all the reasons. One only has to see how, despite his age and physical condition, he spares no effort in his service to the Church and the world.

*Can he stop the war in Iraq?*

John Paul II is a luminous example of love for true peace. Allow me to take the opportunity to ask those who will read these words to unite themselves to the Pope and pray for what he is doing, and has always done, for the cause of peace.

*Does the prelate of Opus Dei ever suffer a crisis of faith?*

No crises, but trials, yes. Faith necessarily goes through hard moments. Sometimes evil appears to triumph — or really does, though never in a
lasting way. The unexpected death of people you love, physical ailments, life's setbacks: these personal encounters with the Cross can be disconcerting. But through them our Lord helps us grow, as persons and as Christians.

_How much time do you pray every day?_

I dedicate time to meditating before the Blessed Sacrament, as well as many hours at work, which is also prayer, because all activities can become prayer. But the center of my life is the Holy Mass, just as it is for every Christian.

_What distinguishes a member of Opus Dei from an ordinary Christian?_

Members of Opus Dei are ordinary Christians who have listened to God's call to identify themselves with Jesus Christ and help others know him, from their place in the world: their home, their profession, their social environment.

_Is faith a sufficient weapon against depression?_

Depression can affect anyone. Faith helps people deal with it well, by conferring meaning on suffering and difficulties. It spurs people to have patience and to trust more in God. As with any other illness, it can be turned into a privileged opportunity for sanctification.

_Opus Dei set up an ambitious educational "mission" in Africa to coincide with the canonization of Escriva. What else have you done for the disadvantaged?_

Opus Dei has worked in Africa for more than fifty years. A few examples that come to mind are the Monkole Medical Center in Kinshasa; Kianda School and Strathmore College, Kenya's first interracial schools; and Iroto Rural Development Center in Nigeria.

_Do you harbor hopes that churches will be filled again some day? How can this be accomplished?_

There is no lack of places where the churches are filled each day. I see it on my trips. For 2,000 years Christianity has maintained a perennial youth, even though its vitality lives side by side with decadence or indifference. There is no need to revise doctrine, which must always remain faithful to
the Gospel. Rather, what is needed is to revise one's life each day, seeing where God is asking us for a conversion.

What has your contribution to Opus Dei been?

I haven't thought about it. I am trying to be faithful to the inheritance I received and to leave this inheritance to my successors as intact and alive as it was when I took it. I like to repeat a prayer I learned from St. Josemaria: "Lord, make Yourself seen through my wretchedness."

Interview granted to Paolo Cavallo, of the periodical Il Secolo XIX, Genoa, Italy (June 26, 2003)

Elevated to the altars on October 6 of last year, on June 26 we celebrate the canonical feast of St. Josemaría Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei. He is a saint of our own day and age, who wanted the Work to be a path that would give meaning and dignity to work and to ordinary life.

His successor, Bishop Javier Echevarría, directs the Work’s activity throughout the world. A “father and mother” for hundreds of thousands of persons committed to this path of daily sanctification, and a person who is close to the Pope, Bishop Echevarría is a privileged witness to these twenty-five years of John Paul II’s pontificate, of the challenges that the Church faces in fostering peace and human dignity and safeguarding the roots of Christian culture.

The Pope’s pontificate has spanned 25 years of the world’s history. How do you view his accomplishments?

The scope of the Pope’s activities is so extensive that it hard to give a brief summary. John Paul II is a unique figure in our moment of history. His moral authority is universally recognized. His prestige is such that no one can ignore his efforts on behalf of human dignity, respect for life, peace, and the poor of our world. The Pope has shown with his deeds, as did his predecessors, that he is "the servant of the servants of God," an unflagging
defender of truth, and an advocate for all men and women, in whose dignity he believes with all his strength. But there is something more important than his personal prestige. In the past 25 years John Paul II has made Christ present to our day and age; he has encouraged humanity to turn to Jesus for the answers to the fundamental questions about the meaning of human existence. This is the ultimate reason for his authority.

_Nevertheless, it doesn’t seem that he is actually making much headway. Why not?_  

Some of the Pope’s efforts clearly contrast with the reigning mindset and culture. Thus people may view them as obligatory but out-of-date, as necessary but destined to fail. This apparent discordance is not a sign of irrelevance. Real teachers are not enclosed in their own times. His efforts should be viewed from the perspective of the Church’s teaching authority. They indicate a direction that we should follow, one that everyone finds difficult, but that can be ignored only at the expense of our civilization. They hold up values that should be beyond argument: the promotion of peace, the defense of life, the affirmation of justice, the offering of and asking for pardon. What we can’t do is to try to choose one of these values at the expense of another. The good is indivisible.

_Does Opus Dei owe a great deal to this Pope?_

The message spread by St. Josemaría since 1928, later confirmed by the Second Vatican Council, has been particularly attractive because it is a rediscovery of the extraordinary beauty of Christian holiness. Sanctity is an ideal that should be sought and put into practice in every moment of life, as much in times of peace and serenity as in times marked by discord and suffering. It is an ideal within reach of all men and women. Everyday life can at times seem mundane, but if we seek Christ, what is routine is transformed into a path towards God and our own happiness. I am grateful to all the Popes, from Pius XII down to today, because they have all shown great affection for Opus Dei. But we have a particular debt of gratitude to John Paul II, because during his pontificate several events of special importance for Opus Dei’s history have taken place, such as the canonization of St. Josemaría.
What does Opus Dei do to support the Pope’s efforts? For example, the Pope has been speaking out about the European constitution and the need for recognition of Europe’s Christian roots. What has Opus Dei done in this regard?

The mission and commitment of Opus Dei is to give formation to the faithful of the Prelature and to anyone else who asks for it. A consistent spiritual formation fosters personal responsibility, a desire to contribute to the building up of a more Christian and more human society. To ignore the Christian roots of Europe would be to deny the reality of European history, something the Bishop’s Commission of the European Union has noted clearly. The Church does not pursue privileges but rather tries to be of service to everyone. It is a question of respecting reality, instead of going along with the anti-clerical prejudices of the past. In fact, Christianity is the cradle of Europe. In this context, Opus Dei emphasizes the responsibility of each person, in particular of each Christian citizen, to contribute to the evangelization of culture through one’s work, showing a spirit of initiative, going against the current if need be and opening up a path for future generations.

But it seems that the Church wants to dominate European politics....

Along with the value of freedom, it is necessary to keep pluralism in mind. No one could think that Catholics are promoting a ‘single model’ for Europe, neither in cultural matters nor in politics. The many cultures living together in Europe are, notwithstanding their common Christian roots, quite distinct from each other, but no one is trying to make them uniform. What is essential, ultimately, is respect for reality and respect for history, in a climate of freedom and pluralism.

Freedom and peace are interrelated. Will there ever be a day when peace comes to Palestine?

In the Holy Land the fight is over a piece of land. The dispute is a question of justice. Among the Palestinians and Israelis there are men and women capable of living together in a spirit of fraternity. Peace is a gift from God, but it requires men and women of good will on earth. It must be constructed with human effort. Authentic peace is inseparable from justice. It requires a spirit of understanding and forgiveness, and an effort by people to know and value one another. St. Josemaría often said that peace within
and between peoples can only arise out of peace in consciences. And he added that violence neither conquers nor convinces. The one who uses it is always left defeated.

War often has its origin in situations of extreme poverty, such as in Africa. The African continent needs help. Has Opus Dei committed itself to doing something for the poorest people of Africa?

When the Pope announced his intention to canonize St. Josemaría last year, an organizing committee was set up. Among others things, the committee established a solidarity fund for Africa with contributions from people attending the canonization. We called it Project Harambee 2002. So far, more than a hundred thousand people, as well as various entities and institutions, have contributed to the fund. The money collected is going to help 18 educational projects in sub-Saharan Africa. One of these is a center for the social reintegration of children obliged to fight during the civil war in Sierra Leone. It is only a drop in the ocean of need. But Project Harambee 2002 has been a way to channel the natural happiness of those who have received graces through St. Josemaría towards a desire to remember those in need. Life is made up of joy and sorrow, health and sickness, strength and weakness. Our life will always contain both light and shadows. What is important is putting one’s life at the service of others.
ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA
Closing of the centennial year

January 9, 2002 marked the hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Founder of Opus Dei. To commemorate this event, between that date and January 9, 2003, activities were organized in many countries where St. Josemaría is known through his books and teachings.

The centennial of St. Josemaria’s birth concluded in Rome with a Mass celebrated by the Prelate of Opus Dei in the Basilica of St. Eugene on this past January 9th. Bishop Echevarría recalled that among the many gifts received during the past year, the most notable was that of the canonization of Josemaría Escriva on October 6. He invited those present to thank God for “all the gifts that he has granted us.” Around January 9, Masses were also celebrated in honor of St. Josemaria in cities in various countries.

The first act of the centennial was the International Congress on “The Greatness of Ordinary Life,” organized by the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, which took place in Rome from January 8 to 11, 2002. Some 1200 participants of 57 nationalities took part for the purpose of studying various topics—the family, education, social integration—in light of the message of Josemaría Escriva. More than 100 conferences and round tables took place during the days of the congress.

In the context of the celebration of the centennial, during this year people from various countries undertook many service initiatives, moved by the desire to improve the living conditions of those around them and thus make it easier for many people to get closer to God and discover the joy of Christian life. Thus was born the Institute for Industrial Technology in Lagos, Nigeria, the Moluka medical clinic in Kinshasa, Congo, the agricultural and stock raising school Guatanfur in Temza, Colombia, the medical dispensary Anauc in Caracas, Venezuela, the Los Pinos educational center in Montevideo, Uruguay, the Centenario medical clinic in Monterrey, Mexico, the Braval program of professional formation for immigrants, and the Laguna care center in Madrid, Spain. Along the same lines, the organizing committee for the canonization of St. Josemaria established the “Harambee 2002” project, a solidarity fund destined to finance educational programs in Africa.

Throughout 2002, other congresses, study days and conferences have
dealt with questions related to the teachings of Josemaria Escriva. A few example are: "The Christian in the Secular World" (Washington D.C.), "Le travail, chemin de sainteté" (Abidjan, Ivory Coast), "Mitteleuropäischen Kongress zum 100. Geburtstag des Seligen Josemaría Escrivá" (a congress which took place successively in Vienna, Prague, Bratislava, Budapest and Zagreb), "La dottrina sociale della Chiesa e il beato Josemaría Escrivá" (Nápoles, Italy), "Santidade no terceiro milénio, um desafio ao alcance de todos" (Fátima, Portugal), "Le matérialisme chrétien de Josemaría Escrivá" (Brussels, Belgium), "Hacia una educación más humana" (San José, Costa Rica), "Deux citès: cité terrestre, cité céleste" (at the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris).

In January 2002, an exposition about Josemaria Escriva was held at the basilica of Notre Dame des Victoires, in París, which included posters, videos, books and other documents. This exposition later traveled to Aix-en-Provence, Marseille, Bordeaux and Strassbourg. Similar expositions took place in schools, churches and various locations in Macao, Hong Kong, Abidjan, London (in Westminster Cathedral), Barbastro, Chicago, Madrid, Manila, Melbourne... We might also mention the dedication of a church to St. Josemaría in the diocese of Barbastro.

The centennial year also saw the publication of the critical-historical edition of The Way, Josemaria Escriva most widely distributed book. Since its appearance more than four million copies have been sold. On the occasion of the centennial, various special editions of The Way were published. In December 2002, the first bilingual edition in Guarani and Spanish appeared in Paraguay. An Internet web page with the published writings of the new saint was also inaugurated.

Torna ai contenuti

On the feast of June 26

On June 26, 2003, the Church celebrated for the first time the Feast of St. Josemaría, “the saint of the ordinary,” as the Pope referred to him nine months earlier, on October 7, in his address to participants in the canonization Opus Dei’s founder.
In Rome, the Church of St. Josemaría, well decorated for its parish feast day, was the scene of a Eucharistic concelebration at which the prelate of Opus Dei presided before a large congregation. Mass was said in honor of the new saint on this day in other Roman churches and parishes as well.

Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi presided over the concelebration in the Cathedral of Milan. The multitude of faithful completely filling the church showed by their presence their devotion to the new saint.

“My dear people,” said Cardinal Tettamanzi in his homily, “we find ourselves here to venerate the memory of St. Josemaría Escrivá on the anniversary of his birth in heaven. To venerate a memory is always to recall something. In this case, what are we recalling? Certainly his teachings, his practical recommendations, the witness of his life, but above all his spiritual stature, and therefore the secret and power of a life totally dedicated to Christ, the Lord of the Church. Our recollection is taking place in a Eucharistic celebration, and therefore is marked by a sense of profound gratitude, because we recognize in this saint, and in his work, a great gift of God to the Church and to each of us in particular.”

The Cardinal also recalled some words of St. Josemaría that, he said, can now be read as a summary of the fruitfulness with which God rewarded his own life of dedication: “I dream,” and the dream has become a reality, “of multitudes of sons and daughters of God, sanctifying themselves in their lives as ordinary citizens, sharing the goals and endeavors of their fellow men and women. I feel the need to shout out to them this divine truth: if you remain in the midst of the world, it is not because God has forgotten you, or our Lord has failed to call you. He has invited you to continue in the activities and concerns of this world, because he has made you realize that your human vocation, your profession, your talents do not lie outside his divine plans: he has sanctified them as a pleasing offering to the Father.”

Archbishop Franc Rodé of Ljubljana presided at a solemn concelebration in his cathedral in honor of the Feast of St. Josemaría. In his homily Archbishop Rodé expressed his gratitude for the imminent beginning of the apostolic work of the Prelature of Opus Dei in Slovenia. About a hundred faithful took part in the Mass. A choir from the city provided musical accompaniment in the liturgy.
In the parish church of Saint Honoré d’Eylau, with a congregation of more than twelve hundred faithful from Paris and its suburbs, a Eucharistic concelebration was presided over by Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, who during his homily focused on the entrance prayer for the Mass of St. Josemaría. He emphasized the relationship between the sanctification of work and apostolate and the work of the Redemption.

Archbishops Philippe Barbarin of Lyon, Emile Marcus of Toulouse, Jean-Pierre Ricard (President of the French Bishops’ Conference) of Bordeaux, and Joseph Doré of Strasbourg presided over the liturgical celebrations in their respective archdioceses for the Feast of St. Josemaría, as did Bishop Louis Dufaux of Grenoble. In Marseille, Archbishop Bernard Panafieu, at the end of the ceremony in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, announced that the rector of the basilica was putting a statue of the founder of Opus Dei in one of the chapels. A public collection to underwrite the cost of the statue and the decoration of the chapel has been started.

In Beirut, Maronite Archbishop Paul Matar celebrated the Mass of St. Josemaría on June 25. Some 200 people attended. The Latin-rite bishop Paul Dahdah also was present at the ceremony. Commenting on the Gospel parable of the yeast that leavens the whole mass, Archbishop Matar mentioned in his homily a childhood recollection of his. At home, his mother made the bread and would sometimes point out the action of the leaven. The effect of Christians in society should be the same, Archbishop Matar continued: a silent but efficacious and necessary action, such as St. Josemaría showed by his teachings and his life.

Bishop Henry Howaniec OFM of Almaty, Kazakhstan, presided over a Eucharistic concelebration in the cathedral. Another Mass was held in the parish of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, in Shimkent, another city in Kazakhstan.

In Japan the Feast of St. Josemaría was commemorated with Masses in Seido High School in Nagasaki, and in the city of Ashiya.

On Saturday the 28th at nine in the morning, more than two thousand people attended the Mass of the Feast of St. Josemaría Escrivá celebrated at the Cathedral of St. Paul in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Presiding over the ceremony was Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Aké. Referring to the delicate
situation in his country, he said in his homily: “Thanks to Saint Josemaría, you have become propagators of God, companions of God, friends of God, because you are struggling to live a holy life. What do we expect of you in the context of war in which the Ivory Coast finds itself? The answer is clear: to live a holy life in your family, in your professional environment, wherever God’s providence has placed you. Then your life will necessarily have a great repercussion on all those around you. He who walks towards holiness is always an artisan of peace, for a person who aspires to holiness necessarily lives by love.”

Nine bishops from various Congolese dioceses concelebrated the Holy Mass in honor of St. Josemaría Escrivá in the cathedral of Kinshasa. Cardinal Etsou presided. Referring to the circumstances through which the country was now going, the Cardinal underlined the urgent need to put into practice the doctrine of sanctification of work preached by the founder of Opus Dei. “If all Christians sanctified their work,” said Cardinal Etsou, “we would be in the vestibule of paradise. We know that total happiness comes later, but with work well done and sanctified we help construct peace, coexistence, fraternity, love of God among all of us. Therefore, the work of the faithful of the Prelature is fundamental: you are the apostles of the sanctification of work. All will feel impelled, seeing women and men who work, and who work well, to do the same for the love of God. The Congo will be saved thanks to work.”

Also in Lubumbashi, twelve hundred miles from the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the country’s southeast, a Mass was held in honor of Saint Josemaría by Msgr. Joseph Kabayo, coordinator for Catholic education in the province of Katanga. About a hundred faithful attended.

On the other side of the Congo River, various parishes in Brazzaville organized Masses in honor of St. Josemaría on June 26th.

Masses in honor of St. Josemaría Escrivá were also celebrated in other African cities in which there are no centers of Opus Dei, including Tunisia and Dar-es-Salaam.

In the Mass which took place in Sydney, the principal celebrant was Archbishop George Pell. Concelebrating were Cardinal Edward Clancy
and Archbishop Barry James Hickey of Perth, as well as the Vicar of Opus Dei in Australia and New Zealand, Msgr. John Masso. The message of the homily centered on the need for the new evangelization which the Holy Father is asking of all Christians. This was a desire which St. Josemaría expressed with the aspiration: *All with Peter to Jesus through Mary.*

In Washington, D.C., in the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Cardinal Keeler of Baltimore gave a homily before some 1,800 people that stressed the teachings of St. Josemaría on the sanctification of ordinary life, which anticipated in various aspects the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. Citing the homily of the Holy Father in the canonization ceremony of Josemaría Escrivá, he recalled that the founder of Opus Dei lived and taught, as did all the great saints, that apostolic efficacy always and only comes from an intense prayer life.

In Montreal, the Basilica of St. Patrick was filled on June 27 with more than five hundred faithful. The celebration was presided over by Bishop Luc Cyr of Valleyfield, accompanied by the Regional Vicar of the Prelature of Opus Dei and a dozen priests, two of them from Africa.

In Canada here were also Masses in honor of St. Josemaría in seven other cities: Toronto, Quebec, Ottawa, Kingston, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver.

**St. Josemaría in the Cathedral of Monterrey and in the Basilica of Roble**

On November 9, 2002, Cardinal Adolfo Suárez Rivera, Archbishop of Monterrey, Mexico, presided at the celebration of a Mass of thanksgiving for the canonization of St. Josemaría. At the conclusion of the ceremony he expressed his desire that both in the Cathedral and in the Basilica of Our Lady of Roble, the patroness of the city, a relic of the new saint would be venerated. He also proposed that a statue or picture of the new saint be placed in each of these churches.
On April 17 of this year, Holy Thursday, before the Mass in cena Domini, a bust of St. Josemaria was blessed in the Basílica del Roble and an oil painting in the Cathedral, each of them with a relic ex ossibus of the new saint.

The commemorative plaque reads as follows:

Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer
Founder of Opus Dei
Promoter of the universal call to sanctity
(1902-1975)
He preached holiness untiringly
and taught lay people to seek sanctity by
carrying out their work diligently, finishing it well,
so that it could be offered to God.
He was canonized by His Holiness John Paul II on October 6, 2002.
His liturgical feast is celebrated on June 26.
This image has been placed
in the Basílica of our Lady of the Oak at the wish of
Most Reverend Adolfo Cardinal Suárez Rivera,
Archbishop of this city,
who personally blessed it on April 17, 2003.

The naming of the emergency building of the Hospital of Crotone

On Sunday, March 8, a ceremony was held to dedicate to St. Josemaria the new emergency building of the hospital of Crotone, in Italy. The new hospital pavilion “is on a par with the most modern facilities in southern
Italy. Built to serve all of the people in this province, it is dedicated to St. Josemaria Escriva, the modern saint of work and of suffering, which we have the duty to alleviate,” said Dr. Furriolo, the director of the medical center. “St. Josemaria,” he continued, “is an eminent witness to the importance of doing one’s work very well, regardless of the position in which we find ourselves.”

First Mass in the parish of St. Josemaria, Valencia

On March 28, more than a hundred parishioners attended the first Mass of the parish of St. Josemaria Escriva in the district of Campanar, in Valencia, Spain. The beginning of pastoral activity coincided with the anniversary of the priestly ordination of the founder of Opus Dei. The parish, established by the Archbishop of Valencia, Agustín García-Gasco, on October 8, 2002, two days after the canonization of St. Josemaria, began its provisional activity in the chapel of the Divine Child School, close to the place where the new church would be built.

Commentaries of St. Josemaría on the Mysteries of Light of the Rosary

“The Holy Rosary, written in 1931, naturally contains no reference to the new ‘mysteries of light.’ But Saint Josemaria often contemplated and preached on these Gospel scenes as an expression of his great love for all that Christ did and said. Therefore we have included here some texts from the writings of the Founder of Opus Dei that make reference to the luminous mysteries, to help readers meditate on the complete Rosary.” With these words, Bishop Javier Echevarría introduces the texts that have been incorporated in the new editions of Holy Rosary, in accord with new
mysteries that the Pope recently added to the traditional fifteen mysteries of the Rosary.

During these months, editions of *Holy Rosary*, including the new texts, have been published in Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, France, Germany, Guatemala, Italy, Japan and Spain, with combined printings of some 150,000 copies.

A stone in Cartagena of the Indies

Since last April 2, one of the gardens surrounding the church of Bocagrande in Cartagena of the Indies, Colombia, is dedicated to the memory of St. Josemaría Escriva. On that day, Archbishop Carlos Jose Ruíseco Vieira, of Cartagena, presided over a brief ceremony for the unveiling of a commemorative plaque there.

The garden is located on the seashore, overlooking the Bay of Cartagena, the most important seaport in Colombia. From there one can see most of the city, including the historic center and the residential areas of Manga and Castillogrande.

A street dedicated to St. Josemaría in Rossano Calabro

Rossano Calabro, an ancient city in Calabria with 35,000 inhabitants, and with a rich Greco-Byzantine history, named a street for St. Josemaría Escrivá on March 15.

The street, an important artery in an area rich in schools and institutes, was built to provide thousands of students with a safer access to their schools. The city of Rossano, together with the *Accademia dei Fiumi* of Cosenza, a corporate apostolic work of Opus Dei, organized the symposium
entitled "St. Josemaría, the saint of the ordinary," which was held in connection with the inauguration of the street and a Mass of thanksgiving.

Torna ai contenuti

Some publications about St. Josemaría and Opus Dei

The publisher Verbinum of Warsaw has published 1000 copies of W ramionach Ojca, the Polish translation of a book by Andrea Mardegan containing a selection of texts from St. Josemaria on divine filiation. The prologue is by Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, Archbishop of Milan.

Also in Poland, the Kamplius Society of Poznan has prepared a Polish version of The Saint of the Ordinary, a video by Alberto Michelini on the canonization of St. Josemaria.

In Italy the Leonardo Mondadori publishing company has published the Italian translation of the second volume of the biography of St. Josemaria by Andrés Vázquez de Prada, which covers the years 1936-1946. In the United States the English version of this book has been published by Scepter Publishers with the subtitle God and Daring.

Also in the United States a joint edition of Cures Through the Intercession of Josemaría Escrivá, by Flavio Capucci was brought out (Scepter Publishers and the Midwest Theological Forum), which is a translation of the Italian Un mondo di miracoli. The same author published in Spain: Favores que pedimos a los santos. 200 relatos en vivo de la intercesión de San Josemaría. This is a collection of 200 descriptions of favors received through the intercession of St. Josemaria.

Within its collection Księga œwietych (Book of the Saints), Edipresse of Warsaw has published 70,000 copies of an illustrated magazine-style booklet dedicated entirely to St. Josemaria. Distributed on newsstands and by subscription, it contains articles on the life and message of the founder of Opus Dei.

In Lagos the first Nigerian edition of Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer has been published by Criterion Publishers.
In Spain two volumes on the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá have been published. The first, from the publishing house Palabra, is entitled *Canonización de Josemaría Escrivá. Crónica y homilías*. The second, edited by Ediciones Rialp, includes many photographs of the founder of Opus Dei and is entitled *La canonización de Josemaría Escrivá. 6 de octubre de 2002*. This book was also published in Italian by Edizioni Ares and in German by Adamas Verlag.

Rialp has also published a book entitled *Páginas de amistad. Relatos en torno a Encarnita Ortega*, by Maite del Riego Ganuza, which is a collection of testimonies about this member of Opus Dei who met St. Josemaria in the 1940s.

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**Dedication of a Square in Milan**

On Saturday, January 18, in the presence of the mayor, Gabriele Albertini, Bishop Erminio De Scalzi and the Vicar of Opus Dei in Italy, Msgr. Lucio Norbedo, the "Piazzetta San Josemaría Escrivá" was dedicated in a central area of the old section of Milan, not far from the Basilica of St. Ambrose.

In his address, the mayor made reference to the canonization of St. Josemaria as “an event that made one reflect, stirring up everyone’s interest.” And he recalled that the naming of a street in Milan shows that “our city, whose reputation is due to the diligence of its citizens and their optimistic openness to the world, wants to render homage to the charismatic figure of the holy founder of Opus Dei.” Bishop De Scalzi then blessed the plaque with the name of the saint and expressed his pleasure that St. Josemaria Square fell within the parish limits of the Basilica of St. Ambrose.

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The naming of a grammar school in Rose, Cosenza

The small grammar school in Rose, a village of 4,500 inhabitants in the province of Cosenza, Italy, is the first school in Italy dedicated to St. Josemaria Escriva. It is located on highway 19, on which St. Josemaria traveled by car on June 22, 1948, on his return from a trip through Calabria and Sicily.

The inauguration ceremony took place on Saturday, April 12, after talks by teachers and by the parish priest, Fr. Battista Belcastro, about the new saint and his teachings. Among those present were the Archbishop of Cosenza, Giuseppe Agostino, the director of the Center of Administrative Services, Antonio Santagada, the Mayor of Rose, Mario Bria, and, naturally, the students and their families.
Establishment of new centers of the Prelature

The Prelate’s vicars have established new centers of the Prelature in the following cities:

Beirut (Lebanon), Bilokozly (Czech Republic), Byblos (Lebanon), Johannesburg (South Africa, two centers), León (Mexico), Majadahonda (Spain), Madrid (Spain), Puerto de Santa María (Cádiz, Spain), Rosario (Argentina), Temuco (Chile), Úbeda (Spain).

New honorary doctorates at the University of Navarre

In conjunction with the celebration of its fiftieth anniversary, on January 17 the University of Navarre granted honorary doctorates to three well-known figures:

Dr. Mary Ann Glendon, professor at Harvard University; Dr. Anthony Kelly, professor at Cambridge University; and Cardinal Antonio Maria Rouco, Archbishop of Madrid.

Presiding at the ceremony was Bishop Javier Echevarría, Chancellor of the University, who noted that the incorporation of these distinguished educators into the university’s family of doctors constitutes “a stimulus to pursue the task of seeking the truth with renewed zeal, with very goals of service to all mankind.” He added that their example “impels us to reflect on some aspects of university life in the context of the fiftieth anniversary of this university, which is taking place at a moment of profound social change.”

The Chancellor, after pointing out that “the university can never remain at the margin of historic transformations of human culture,” said: “The university is a place of freedom in solidarity, of fraternal service to man, where one seeks to advance in the knowledge of reality for the common good, but with the necessary autonomy so that this advance is not turned
into just one more means of exerting economic or political power.”

The sponsors of the new honorary doctors also took part in the ceremony. These were Dr. Julio Muerza, dean of the School of Law; Dr. Javier Gil, professor of the Graduate School of Engineering; and Father Francisco Varo, dean of the School of Theology.

Dr. Mary Ann Glendon is an expert on bioethics, human rights and constitutional law in Europe and the United States. Bishop Echevarría highlighted “her academic excellence in the juridical field, which has enabled her to confront, with undeniable competence, vital questions in the present circumstances of human life and international relationships. She has delved deeply into human rights, emphasizing the dignity of the person, through numerous publications on questions of political life, the family, divorce and abortion, which have received wide recognition.”

Dr. Anthony Kelly, professor emeritus of Metallurgical Science at the University of Cambridge, is considered one of the fathers of “compound materials.” He has held research and teaching positions in Northwestern University and the University of Illinois, and in the Universities of Birmingham and Surrey in the United Kingdom. “His academic life, marked by numerous prizes and international recognition, has been characterized by a zeal for service, which led him to carry out a self-sacrificing work of training disciples and sharing his knowledge,” noted the Chancellor of the University of Navarre.

Finally Bishop Echevarría referred to the accomplishments of Cardinal Rouco. “He is an example of a priest with a great university spirit. His service to the Church and his love for the truth led him to research and teaching in the theological field, especially in Fundamental Theology and Ecclesiology, and in the juridical field, at the Universities of Munich and Salamanca.”

After words of praise for the three honorary doctors, the Chancellor noted that “the challenges presented by today’s society demand a strong interdisciplinary collaboration and a growing spirit of teamwork” to confront “present-day questions of great importance for human dignity: the protection and care of human life, marriage and the family, the ethical
questions raised by technological development and the problems of justice, peace and human rights.”

Bishop Echevarría emphasized St. Josemaría Escrivá’s guiding role in the University of Navarre’s foundation: “Under his guidance, those who began the university did not have many material means at their disposal, but they did have a clear idea of their mission: to begin a university where teaching would be grounded on research. And this has been true right from the beginning.” Finally, he stressed that “providing students with professional competence is not enough, since they also have to grow humanly and as Christians, in order to serve all men and women in accord with human dignity.”

With the investiture of the three new honorary doctors, the University of Navarre has now granted this distinction to thirty-two scholars in its fifty year history.

“Catholics in Public Life,” round table at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

On April 9, a round table on “the participation of Catholics in political life” was held in the Höffner auditorium of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, in connection with the doctrinal note of the same title published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Joining Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation, were a number of well-known political and intellectual figures: Francesco Cossiga, Giuseppe De Rita, Prof. Ernesto Galli della Loggia, Prof. Paolo Del Debbio and Msgr. Ángel Rodríguez Luño. The meeting was opened with a greeting from the Chancellor of the University, Msgr. Javier Echevarría, who spoke of politics as a path to sanctity, in light of the example of St. Thomas More, patron of statesmen and politicians.

“The document is addressed to Catholics, but it is intended to provide food for thought for everyone,” said Cardinal Ratzinger in his address. “Politics is carried out on the plane of reason, a reason that is common to
all men and women. A secular state,” he stressed, “excludes theocracy and the formation of political policies dictated by faith. Faith can illuminate the realm of politics, but one cannot reduce the political field, which is based on reason, to faith.” Politics “is guided by reason and by the natural virtues of prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude.” The Cardinal stressed that this distinction of two spheres has always been part of Christian tradition, based on the words of Christ himself who said that one must give to God what is God’s and to Caesar what is Caesar’s. The lay and secular nature that is proper to politics also excludes “a positivism and empiricism that shrivels reason” and “that is blind to moral values.”

The former President of Italy, Francesco Cossiga, noted that “this document clarifies some points that should guide not only Catholics and Christians, but anyone who supports democracy.” Among these, Cossiga mentioned the impossibility of holding that “politics should be situated at the margin of ethics,” as though it could be reduced to a technical undertaking.” He also spoke of faith and reason as two types of knowledge that are not two separate truths, but rather two ways of knowing the moral law. The secularity of politics, therefore, is a question of respecting others’ freedom, rather than diluting one’s own faith.

Msgr. Ángel Rodríguez Luño, professor of Moral Theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, said that the Christian faith could not be identified with any specific political platform. But faith does entail clear consequences for political activity insofar as one’s “faith confirms, adds to, or modifies the political culture of those who accept it.” In addition, “history shows that faith has at times also been innovative and creative in the social and political sphere.” The two key ideas in the doctrinal note, according to Professor Rodríguez Luño, are “consistency” and “freedom.” The principal role of the Church is that of forming consciences, rather than creating a culture, so that there be well-formed individuals capable of expressing a culture within the context of legitimate plurality.

Professor Giuseppe De Rita, Secretary General of the CENSIS Foundation (Center for the Study of Social Investments), emphasized the note’s “just condemnation of cultural relativism and ethical pluralism,” along with its “positive affirmation of the centrality of the person, since democratic participation is only possible to the extent that it is founded on a
correct understanding of the human person.” Therefore, “every democracy will be fragile if it does not have as its foundation the centrality of the person.”

Professor Ernesto Galli della Loggia, an editor for Corriere della Sera and a professor of the History of Political Parties and Movements at the University of Perugia, pointed out that the doctrinal note of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith “highlights one of the central problems of today’s liberal society,” namely “the lack of shared values.” For a society to function properly, he stressed, formal laws and economic and political apparatus are not enough; the people in the society must also possess values that they share in common.

The academic discussion ended with comments by Paolo Del Debbio, Professor of Social Ethics and Communication and author of a recent book on globalization. According to Del Debbio, a Catholic active in politics today should avoid vague debates about values in general. Instead he should strive to “indicate some very specific paths for actions that are based on these values.”

Cause of canonization of Toni Zweifel

Under the presidency of Dr. Lenherr, representative of the Episcopal Delegate, information gathering has begun in Zurich, Switzerland, for the process of canonization of the Servant of God, Toni Zweifel, an engineer who died with a reputation for sanctity in 1989.

Cause of canonization of Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri

On May 3, with the approval of Archbishop Norberto Cardinal Rivera Carrera of Mexico City, the beginning of the work of the ecclesiastical
tribunal entrusted with documenting the cause of canonization of the Servant of God Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri was announced.

Before more than five hundred people gathered in the Panamerican Auditorium of the Instituto de Alta Dirección de Empresa (IPADE), Dr. Benito Padrinas, Postulator of the Cause, gave a description of the work of the tribunal in investigating the life and virtues of this Servant of God: “It is a matter of exhaustively documenting the years of Guadalupe’s stay in Mexico,” said Dr. Badrinas.

Following the Postulator’s address, Dr. Mercedes Eguibar Galarza presented a biographical volume entitled: Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri. Trabajo, amistad y buen humor.

Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri lived in Mexico City from 1950 to 1956. Many of those who knew Guadalupe agreed that she was a very ordinary woman, with a great heart, but above all with a great love for God, shown both in her life of piety and in her friendships. She seemed to sense an urgent need to bring everyone she knew closer to God.

Before writing her book, Eguibar spent two years gathering information about Guadalupe’s life, interviewing two hundred people in Spain, Mexico and Rome.

Pontifical appointments

The following priests have been named Prelates of Honor of His Holiness: Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Msgr. Manuel Dacal, Msgr. Italo Altimari Gasperi, Msgr. Alejandro González Gatica and Msgr. Soichiro Nitta.


In addition, the Pope has named Msgr. Francesco Di Muzio as Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

Masses for the repose of the soul of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo

On March 23, the ninth anniversary of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo’s passage to heaven, Masses were held throughout the world in suffrage for his soul. In most cases the celebrants were priests of the Prelature (the Vicars of the Prelate in each country where this was possible). However, many Archbishops and Bishops wanted to give witness to their affection and devotion to Bishop del Portillo by officiating at Masses for him in their diocesan cathedrals.

The prayers of the faithful highlighted petitions for peace, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary in this year of the Rosary. Most of the homilies by the celebrants stressed the Pope’s pressing calls for peace in Iraq and in the Holy Land, and recalled Bishop Álvaro del Portillo as a “man of peace.”

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, Archbishop Roberto Gonzalez, before imparting the blessing at the end of the ceremony, referred to the edict of the previous December 6 in which the Prelate of Opus Dei requested that anyone who had something to say about Bishop Álvaro del Portillo to do so, in order to prepare the documents pertaining to the opening of his cause of beatification and canonization.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Masses were held in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi. In Cameroon, a Mass was celebrated in the capital, Yaoundé.

In São Paulo, the solemn Mass for the soul of Bishop del Portillo took
place in the church of Santa Generosa, celebrated by the Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Brazil, Msgr. Vicente Ancona Lopez.

In Peru, Archbishop Oscar Cantuarias, of Piura presided at the Eucharistic concelebration in the church of San Sebastián. Masses of suffrage were also held in the capital, Lima, as well as in Cañete, Arequipa and Chiclayo. Masses were also celebrated in the principal cities of the other countries in Latin America.

In Sydney, Australia, Saint Martha’s parish in Strathfield was the setting for a Mass to pray for the soul of Bishop del Portillo. Those attending came from very diverse backgrounds, with persons of Asian, Middle Eastern, African and European descent apparent in the large crowd. A number of priests concelebrated with the Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Australia.

In Cebu, in the Philippines, Auxiliary Bishop Isabelo Abarquez celebrated Mass in the cathedral on March 21. He said that he was trying to pay back, to a small extent, his personal debt of gratitude to Don Álvaro.

In Europe, many Masses were offered for the soul of Bishop del Portillo on the ninth anniversary of his death. The Prelate of Opus Dei presided at the Mass celebrated in the Basilica of St. Eugene, in Rome.

Torna ai contenuti
Initiatives
Building peace in the 21st Century

The theme for this year’s UNIV Congress, “Building peace in the 21st century,” coincided with a particularly agitated international situation. The activities organized in connection with the Congress, both in Rome and in other parts of the world, gave rise to clarifying discussions about the Pope’s recent statements on peace.

Creston College in the University of New South Wales, Sydney, held a three day conference for Australian university women, with participants from Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

The event, which took place during Holy Week, centered on the contribution that each person could make to the “building up of peace.” One of the basic premises was the need to view peace as a consequence of the struggle that each person carries on interiorly with oneself, a struggle that then overflows to influence interpersonal relationships. Among the conclusions emphasized was the importance of true friendship as a path to peace.

A university society dedicated to social service activities presented a study entitled “Building peace through service.” Based on data that emerged from interviews with their fellow students, another group prepared some “Reflections of young people on the four pillars of peace according to John Paul II: Truth, Justice, Love and Freedom.” In addition, a group working in the medical field centered their study on the topic of “Peace in the face of suffering.”

At the Alcorce Cultural Center in Chiclayo, Peru, a colloquium was organized on “The Limits of a Just War.” The university women who took part in it considered, in the light of the teachings of John Paul II, the events that were taking place in the Middle East.

Father Eutiquiano Saldón reflected on the ethical dimension of war and analyzed the posture of the Holy See in regard to the war in Iraq.
The young women who took part in this activity also discussed the international panorama, the social context of the conflict and the potential for future hostilities. “Peace is always built on justice, freedom, solidarity and truth,” one of the participants affirmed, echoing the teachings of the Pope on the “pillars of peace.”

Two congresses were held in Costa Rica on the topic of “building peace in the 21st century,” one of them for high school boys and another for university students.

From April 14 to 19 the Kamuk Boys Club organized a congress at the Agricultural School in Guapiles, which was attended by forty boys from all over Central America. The welcoming speech was given by Ramon Yglesias, former Vice-Minister of Foreign Trade.

In San Jose, the capital, the Miravalles University center held a congress during Holy Week that was attended by university students from Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Its objective was to analyze the social and political setting of the Middle East countries involved in conflict and to go more deeply into the position of the Holy See on the question of the armed conflict in Iraq.

Rodolfo Piza, former alternate ambassador to the UN, discussed the antecedents of the war and the policies of the various countries in light of international law. José J. Chaverri, director of the Diplomatic School, commented on the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* of Blessed John XXIII. Alberto Dahik, an economist and politician, explained the cultural and political context of the countries in conflict. Ramon Yglesias dedicated a session to the recent doctrinal note of the Holy See on the participation of the lay faithful in political life.

More than two hundred university students took part in the UNIV 2003 Forum at the Guadaira Student Residence in Seville, which had the same title as the UNIV Congress (“Building peace in the 21st century”). In
the introductory session, the Attorney General spoke on the topic of justice and globalization, after which twenty-two written reports were presented. There was also a presentation of a video entitled *Huancavelica al Sur: si no estás aquí tampoco lo vivirás allí*. This was an audiovisual report on a work camp carried out by volunteers from a local non-governmental organization. The work camp took place in Huancavelica, one of the least developed areas of Peru.

The Rigel Cultural Center in Yaoundé, Cameroon, organized a seminar on “Peace in the 21st Century,” which took place on May 3 in the amphitheater of the School of Science and Technology of Communication.

The first address, “Legal positivism: a menace to peace,” clarified the need for positive law to be in accord with natural law, and emphasized that the role of law is not to state what is being done, but to help to do what is right. Mention was also made of the need to resist unjust laws.

“Solidarity, a factor in peace” and “Education for peace: the role of the family and society” were the titles of the two presentations that followed the introductory address. All three of the presentations were by students who take part in activities at Rigel.

The seminar was moderated by Professor Innocent Futcha, from the University of Yaoundé.

In brief

Barcelona

*Sixth Conference on bioethics at Bonaigua Student Residence*

Scientific advances in experiments with adult stem cells and the need to promote legal regulations that respect human life in this area were the principal topics dealt with in the Sixth Conference on Bioethics organized
at the end of March by the Pineda Foundation, held at the Bonaigua University Residence, a corporate work of Opus Dei.

The opening address, entitled “Ethics, law and science: responsibility towards the future,” was given by Professor Natalia Lopez Moratalla, professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the University of Navarre. The author of over a hundred publications in her specialty, she spoke about her experience in regard to advances in cellular therapy, thanks to the utilization of adult stem cells.

“Today we know,” she says, “that the stem cells of an adult, used with proper methods, can facilitate the cellular regeneration of tissues. Some successes are already obvious. The reality is that the stem cells of adults are far more advantageous and do not have the risks of rejection and production of tumors that occur when embryonic stem cells are transplanted.”

Professor Lopez Moratalla referred to experimentation with frozen embryos and noted that “it is not good medicine to destroy incipient life and then to try to control all the potential that its cells contain. The fact that these human beings with a few days development are ‘surplus’ is already an injustice, which does not justify a further injustice.”

The Dean of the School of Health sciences at the International University of Catalonia, Dr. Miquel Àngel Serra, spoke in similar terms. Dr. Angel Serra took part in a round tale moderated by the journalist Pilar Cambra, editor in chief of the periodical Expansion. Other participants were the gynecologist Josep Ramon Méndez, the philosopher Santiago Fernández Burillo and Assumpció Esteve, professor of Law at the University of Barcelona.

Dr. José Miguel Serrano, professor of the Philosophy of Law at the Complutense University in Madrid, referred to the existence of a bioethics of consensus, which is compatible with party interests, and which substitutes arguments of research efficacy for medical logic. He appealed to the responsibility of those in government to set legal limits to experimentation and to defend the right of the embryo not to be used as mere biological material.

Bella Vista (Argentina)
Professional Workshop at ICES

From January 1 to 5 a workshop for young women was held at ICES (Instituto de Capacitación para Empresas de Servicio: “Institute for Training in the Service Industries”). The students were introduced to the work carried out in each of the Institute’s main specialties: laundry, cooking, housekeeping and restaurant operation. This intensive workshop helped young women from different walks of life to appreciate the work carried out in the service sector and its positive repercussions on family and social life.

The ICES, a private institution under the general supervision of the education department of the Province of Buenos Aires, offers specialized courses in the hospitality sector, principally in the areas of food preparation and housekeeping. It was started in the seventies through the encouragement of the founder of Opus Dei.

St. Josemaría Escrivá visited the ICES during his stay in 1974. The present Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, also visited it, in 1997. Referring to the activities carried out in the center, he emphasized “the importance of women in the life of society and in the life of the Church,” and encouraged them to consider the dignity involved in “the marvelous task of taking care of a home, which is what the Blessed Virgin Mary, our mother, did.”

Cañete (Peru)

Rural development in Cañete

Over fifty university women from Lima and other Peruvian cities took part in a rural development project in the valley of Cañete. The activity was organized by the Condoray Professional Training Center for Women, which has been working to improve the living standards of women in this province since 1963.

The women carried out a census of 400 families in the area that served as a basis for a socio-economic study aimed at understanding the needs of each village and formulating development projects. The program included the cleaning and repair of local community facilities, classes in human
formation for women and classes in hygiene for the children. A team of young women also carried out a catechism program for the smaller children.

The participants were enriched by the experience, which led them to discover the need to have greater solidarity with those who suffer spiritual and material needs and to commit themselves to the building of a more human world.

Since 1987, more than 550 Peruvian university women have taken part in the rural development programs of Condoray, which have benefited more than 4,000 children and 2,800 rural women.

Glasgow, Scotland

*Return to "Humanae vitae"*

On Saturday, March 10, a seminar was held on the encyclical *Humanae Vitæ* in Dunreath, a center of Opus Dei on the south side of Glasgow. The seminar studied *Humanae Vitæ* in light of Pope John Paul II’s teachings on the “theology of the body” and other Church documents. In their presentations the speakers emphasized the positive contribution Catholics could make to society today by striving to better understand the Pope’s teachings.

The chaplain of Dunreath, Fr. Stefan Hnylycia, presented an overview of the encyclical and the Church’s teachings on the transmission of life. Fr. Hnylycia pointed out that some Catholics have a very limited knowledge of the human person, and explained the reasons that led people with scant Christian formation to use anti-conceptive methods. He presented a summary of the key arguments the Church presents to men and women today on this crucial topic.

John Deighan, representative of the Bishops’ Conference in the Scottish parliament, spoke about the various currents of thought influencing today’s culture in Scotland, especially as affecting matters related to the family. Deighan spoke of the pressures young people and married people are exposed to and presented suggestions on how to create an environment more favorable to Christian values.

The third speaker was Dermot Grenham, director of Dunreath and actuary for the Prudential Assurance Company in Stirling, not far from
Glasgow. He gave a broad picture of present day demographic trends in Scotland, characterized by low birthrates and an aging population. He stressed the negative consequences that this would have for the country’s future welfare. A mentality more open to life, he said, is greatly needed also from the economic point of view.

**Hamilton (New Zealand)**

*A multicultural vacation program*

Rimbrook Study Centre, in Hamilton, offered a program for fifteen university and high school women who worked as volunteers with grade school children in a disadvantaged area in Wellington, New Zealand’s capital. A group of Wellington parents had obtained the use of a building and taken over the task of publicizing the program.

The children represented a wide variety of ethnic groups: native New Zealand Maoris, children from Tonga, Samoa, India, the Philippines, and descendants of Europeans. The volunteers also represented diverse cultural backgrounds, including three students from the People’s Republic of China. The young volunteers also took advantage of their stay in Wellington to visit a nursing home and provide company for some of the patients.

**Lisbon (Portugal)**

*On the 25th anniversary of the pontificate of John Paul II*

The Oratory of St. Josemaría, in Lisbon, organized a series of conferences on the life and message of the Roman Pontiff in honor of the 25th anniversary of his pontificate.

The monthly sessions were scheduled from January to October 2003. The opening remarks by Auxiliary Bishop Manual Clemente of Lisbon were entitled “The Pope Who Came from Afar.” This was followed by a series of lectures under the title “What the Pope thinks about…,” summarizing the content of the encyclicals *Centesimus Annus, Veritatis Splendor, Laborem Exercens, Fides et Ratio, Evangelium Vitae* and the apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*.

The Boavista Student Residence, a corporate work of apostolate of the Prelature in Oporto, organized a similar series of lectures on the Pope in connection with the 25th anniversary of his pontificate.
Lismullin (Ireland)

History and evangelization

County Meath in the eastern part of Ireland boasts of a rich history. For more than two thousand years, the region has played an important part in the country’s development.

Lismullin Conference Centre, located in County Meath, sponsored the Heritage Series, a series of five weekly conferences on aspects of the history of Meath, including those related to its Christian heritage. Speakers included historians and archaeologists specializing in Meath. One of the talks dealt with was the tie between St. Patrick, Ireland’s patron saint, and the hill of Tara, ancient seat of the kings of Ireland, which is nearby Lismullin. The speaker was Edel Bhreathnach, a medieval specialist who has spent several years studying the history of Tara.

Some two hundred people attended the sessions.

Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)

Health and community

In the second half of 2002, some medical students taking part in activities at Laranjeiras Cultural Center began planning a volunteer activity for public school students and their families. During the first months of this year, the students drew up a series of talks on ways to avoid some frequent illnesses, and on habits that are dangerous to one’s health. Provision was also made for a walk-in health facility for the students and their families looked after by medical specialists.

After getting the approval of the principal of the José de Alencar municipal school, whose students come from low income families, the project was aired among colleagues at the medical school of the University of Rio de Janeiro. Many staff members joined the project to show their solidarity with a part of the city’s population that could not easily obtain medical assistance given the serious problems confronting the public hospitals that provide services free of charge.

The activities of Health and Community take place every two weeks. From the experience of these first months, it is easy to see that the project will grow and expand, and already studies are being made to see how it
might incorporate new areas such as legal assistance, through the collaboration of law students from the various law schools in Rio de Janeiro.

San José (Costa Rica)

Program for professional development

During the first half of 2003, the Miravalles University center, in conjunction with the Technological Institute of Costa Rica, organized a Professional Development Program that seeks to encourage university students to assume a direct role in improving the country’s institutions by providing a leadership based on value-formation.

The group was made up of twenty-seven university students close to graduation in ten different fields. They had an opportunity to share impressions with such speakers as Roger Ruiz, administrator of the School of Agriculture, who directed the sessions on team-work and good use of time. Rodolfo Arguedas, the president of the “United Supermarkets Corporation,” gave a talk on his experiences as a business executive.

Dr. Miguel Cantillo, formerly of the universities of Stanford and Berkeley in California, presented a talk on “Ethics and Privileged Information in Business.” Another speaker was German Cespedes, a graduate of the IPADE’s MBA program, who spoke on the building of character and ethics in business. Jorge Silva, a specialist in leadership programs, directed sessions on setting priorities in life.

The objectives of the Professional Development Program were focused on three areas: ethics and values, life goals, and business and social management. The program, whose sessions were carried out at the Technological Institute facilities, seeks to provide university students with the tools needed to lead a morally coherent professional life.

Santo Tomé (Argentina)

From Arenales and Montes Grandes

From January 21 to 31 a social project was carried out by university and high school girls at Santo Tomé. The planning organization for the volunteers was carried out at the Arenales Cultural Center and the Montes Grandes Club.
This was not the first time that the people in the villages of Santo Tomé saw dozens of student volunteers working to help them. “The Santo Tomé work camps began in 1987. They arose out of the need to help those living in this impoverished area,” explained Cecilia Coimbra, who was chosen as one of the “women of the year” in 1998 in Argentina for her work in getting this project under way.

The purpose of the project is to provide training in the health field and to develop rural micro-businesses to provide income for the people living there. Over the past years close to a thousand volunteers, mostly students but also young professionals, have given of their time and talent to carry out various programs of assistance in the area. Projects have included vaccination campaigns, programs of literacy and nutrition, development of family gardens, courses in child care, school tutoring in various areas, pediatric medical assistance, and first aid.

For families that wish it, catechism classes are offered based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church, to prepare those taking part to receive the sacraments. Devotion to St. Josemaría, whose teachings have inspired this projects since its beginning, has taken great hold among the families and acquaintances of those helped.

São Paulo (Brazil)

_Mídia e Cia: apostolate of public opinion_

With the goal of spurring young people to assume a positive role in this field, the Itaim Cultural Center, whose spiritual direction is entrusted to the Prelature of Opus Dei, has organized the Mídia e Cia program. Its goal is to put high school students in contact with university students of journalism and press professionals, who teach them to critically analyze the news published in newspapers and magazines, and to reflect upon the underlying ideological biases of the various organs of information. They are also helped to compose their own stories and letters which are then sent to the principal newspapers.

Coordinated by Professor Antonio Jorge Pereira Jr. and journalist Fernando Ignacio Vieira, the participants in Mídia e Cia had the opportunity to visit press and communications facilities, attend projections of movies related to ethical problems in the press, debate the role of the
mass media, and create a newspaper library and informative organ for their group.

The high school students come from various schools in São Paulo. A good number of them hope to study journalism in the university.

**São Paulo (Brazil)**

*An award for “volunteer of the year”*

In the second half of 2002, the Jacamar University Study Center organized a “Training Program for Volunteers,” in which over one hundred university students took part. One of the persons involved in coordinating the program received a “Volunteer of the Year” award presented by a national organization.

The program involved classes and practical activities such as visits to nursing homes and hospitals. The students also carried out a social project during their school vocation in a poor neighborhood of a city in the interior of the state of São Paul.

To deepen their ethical reflection on the meaning of volunteer work, participants studied points in the Catechism of the Catholic Church that refer to this matter and to the dignity of the human person, the moral law, freedom and participation in social life.

**Suva (Fiji Islands)**

*In the middle of the Pacific*

A grade school teacher from the Fiji Islands had suggested carrying out some construction and renovation projects in a small village thirty miles south of Suva, the country’s capital. After many hours of preparation, a group of 17 Australians and 4 New Zealanders gathered in the capital of Fiji, after flying from Sydney and Auckland, to undertake an adventure in the tropical jungle.

The village, situated on the estuary of the Rewa River, has only 200 inhabitants, whose living conditions are very precarious. They lack financial resources and are totally isolated from the urban world. The only way to reach the village is by traveling down the river in small boats, since there is no road to the village, only footpaths.
The work included renovation of a community center and the installation of a cistern to collect rain water to provide a source of safe drinking water. Students also helped in the construction of a road and repaired the doors of the church in a nearby village. The inhabitants were particularly grateful for the renovation work done on the chapel, which included the installation of windows. The Church’s universality was vividly felt when attending Mass with faithful from such diverse cultures.

**Vienna (Austria)**

*The mother’s role in society*

Hohewand Conference Center offered a family seminar from February 28 to March 2 entitled “Mut zur Familie” (Daring to be a Family).

The purpose of the seminar was to give a positive focus to the task of today’s mothers. The speakers, almost all married women with children, highlighted the woman’s role in the family and in society.

Marina Gudenus, mother of six, stressed that “today there is more talk of the values that are transmitted to children. People speak naturally about the problems that could arise.” Alexandra Schwarz, also the mother of six children, directed a lively work session on the advantages and disadvantages of combining attention to one's family with a profession outside the house.

Ehrentraud Sailer entitled her address “The family and the means of communication.” Mrs. Sailer was the originator of an opinion group that has been working for several years with considerable success in the area of the mass media.

The seminar also included a presentation by Professor Cris Graas, who explained the term “domestic church” used in *Gaudium et Spes*, and spoke about marriage as a Christian vocation.

The final talk was by Assunta Mensdorff, an expert in questions of family ethics and the mother of five children, who spoke about communicating better in one’s marriage and keeping one’s love youthful. The enthusiasm of the participants was reflected by their prolonged applause when the seminar concluded.
Suffrages for the deceased

In the first six months of 2003, 245 faithful of the Prelature and 14 members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross passed away.

The suffrages stipulated by Saint 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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Torna ai contenuti
A STUDY
“Law and spirit: on the 20th anniversary of the establishment of Opus Dei as a Personal Prelature,” by Prof. Antonio Viana

1. Opus Dei in the Church

On November 28, 1982, Pope John Paul II erected Opus Dei as a personal prelature by the Apostolic constitution Ut Sit. To be more precise in terms of canon law, we can say that the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of this pontifical act embraces two other important dates: March 19, 1983, when the papal document was orally promulgated by Archbishop Romolo Carboni, then Apostolic Nuncio to Italy, given this charge by the Roman Pontiff, and May 2 of the same year when the texts were published in the official Bulletin of the Holy See, after the canons of the Code of Canon law were promulgated on January 25, 1983.[1]

Thus Opus Dei’s long juridical path came to an end, when what St. Josemaría Escrivá called his “special intention” was finally fulfilled—an intention for which he had prayed earnestly and asked others to pray for throughout much of his life. St. Josemaría had sought the status of personal prelature ever since the Second Vatican Council foresaw this figure in its decree Presbyterorum Ordinis (no. 10), in 1965, and a year later Pope Paul VI sketched out the conciliar provision in legislative detail in his motu proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae. For many years he had been praying that ecclesiastical authorities would confirm the unity of vocation of the members of Opus Dei and guarantee their condition as lay faithful or secular priests in the Church. He sought a status that would permit the stable dedication of priests (their incardination, in canon law terminology) to the formation of the members and their participation in the apostolic tasks of the Work. A status was required that would provide the future Prelate with the canonical instruments needed for the Work’s ordinary governance and for overseeing its apostolic work, and that would be adapted to the international nature of Opus Dei, not limited to a specific territory. All of this would have to fall within the common law of the Church, and not be a matter of privilege or exception, so that the faithful of Opus Dei would not cease to be members of the diocese in which they lived and to depend on their local bishop, like the other faithful of the diocese.[2]
Putting his faith more in the power of prayer than in the study of canonical concepts, what he sought was a solution to the institutional problem of Opus Dei that would respond to all the demands just mentioned: the unity of vocation, without classes of members or degrees of incorporation; the full secularity of the faithful of Opus Dei, without assimilation to the religious or what today is called the consecrated life; the formation and incardination of a clergy of its own; the authority of the prelate; an interdiocesan configuration, without an exemption from the power of the diocesan bishops. These requirements were and are indispensable to the effective realization of the message that St. Josemaría was striving to transmit since 1928 “by divine inspiration,” to use the words of John Paul II at the beginning of the decree *Ut Sit*.[3] One can thus understand the importance of the pontifical acts of 1982-1983 and also the profound joy and thanksgiving to God with which the fulfillment of St. Josemaría “special intention” was received. As his successor Bishop Alvaro del Portillo said, those were days “of great rejoicing.” And he added immediately that they marked “the beginning of a new stage in the path of loyalty and faithfulness to the Church that began on October 2, 1928.”[4]

Now twenty years have gone by since the beginning of this new stage. During these years the apostolic work of Opus Dei has been consolidated throughout the world and begun in new countries. At the same time, its apostolic growth has been accompanied by a clear perception of its orientation towards the service of the universal Church and the particular Churches.

These years have witnessed a progressive doctrinal clarification of Opus Dei’s insertion in the ecclesiastical communion. Not that this was unclear before, but the congruity between the reality of the Work and canonical legislation has made possible a deep and fruitful theological and canonical reflection on Opus Dei in the Church. As St. Josemaría foresaw, first comes life, then the norms that regulate and channel it, and finally theological reflection.

This process of theological deepening has included some important related events. We could recall here the ordination as bishops of the first two Prelates, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo in 1991 and Bishop Javier
Echevarría in 1994.[5] These ordinations did not in themselves involve any enhancement of Opus Dei’s canonical status, which had already been consolidated by the pontifical acts of 1982 and 1983. They were, nevertheless, very appropriate for the Work’s internal structure, based on the distinction and organic cooperation between laity and priests. In addition, they facilitate the service Opus Dei renders to the dioceses. By his consecration as a bishop, the Prelate becomes part of the college of bishops and establishes with them the corresponding bonds of communion, representing the Prelature. Thereby the Prelate exercises an episcopal function, by which he is the head of the presbyterate of the Prelature (formed by the calling to holy orders and incardination into the Prelature of some of the laymen of Opus Dei). And he is the Ordinary of the Prelature in communion with the Roman Pontiff and the other bishops as members of the episcopal college.

These bonds between the Prelate and the Roman Pontiff, the bishops, the priests and the faithful of the Prelature, are a manifestation of what a document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1992 referred to as “unity and diversity in ecclesial communion,” evoking at the same time the necessary harmony and coordination between Opus Dei and the local Churches. As this document states, “for a more complete vision of this aspect of ecclesial communion—unity in diversity—it is necessary to consider that there are institutions and communities established by the Apostolic authority for special pastoral tasks. These, as such, belong to the universal Church, although their members are also members of the particular Churches where they live and work. This fact of belonging to the particular Churches, with the flexibility that is proper to it, has diverse juridical expressions. It not only does not injure the unity of the particular Church, which is based on the bishop, but it contributes to giving this unity the interior diversification proper to communion.”[6]

We cannot go into here the specific canonical questions involved in the relationship between the Prelature of Opus Dei and the local Churches.[7] But as we have just recalled with words from the 1992 document, this relationship is based on the principle of the dual and inseparable membership of the faithful of Opus Dei in both the prelature and the diocese in which they live.
Regarding the position of the lay faithful of Opus Dei in the various dioceses, we recall that the power of the Prelate over them extends to all that refers “to the fulfillment of the specific obligations undertaken through the juridical bond, by means of a contract with the Prelature.”[8] These obligations involve ascetical, apostolic and formative elements that do not fall under the power of the diocesan bishop, since they are specifications and developments of the freedom enjoyed by all the faithful in the Church. Thus it is perfectly possible for these lay persons to continue depending in everything else on the diocesan bishop, and for this dependence be the same as that of the other faithful in the diocese, neither more nor less.[9] It is important to keep these points in mind when considering the relationship of Opus Dei to the dioceses, because they exclude any possible attempt at exemption or separation of jurisdictions.

2. Pontifical addresses in the years 2001 and 2002

In addition to the ordination of the first two Prelates as bishops, another noteworthy event in these twenty years of Opus Dei’s existence as a personal prelature was the audience granted by Pope John Paul II, on March 17, 2001, to those taking part in a study conference on the Papal letter Novo Millennio Ineunte. The conference took place in Rome under the encouragement of Bishop Javier Echevarría, the present Prelate of Opus Dei. The papal address at that audience was an especially important step in the above mentioned process of theological and canonical “deepening,” because it focussed specifically on the nature, internal structure and apostolic ends of Opus Dei as a personal prelature.[10]

The Pope began by highlighting the interconnection of pastor, priesthood and lay faithful proper to Opus Dei as a personal prelature, formed on the basis of the distinction and mutual relationship between the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood of those in holy orders. The Pope described this composition as an “organic union of priests and laity,” which confers on Opus Dei an “hierarchical nature... established by the Apostolic Constitution which had erected the Prelature.”[11] Pope John Paul II, upon recalling his own intention when erecting Opus Dei twenty years earlier as a personal prelature, also emphasized its continuity with the foresight of the Second Vatican Council in regard to personal prelatures.[12] The Pope made clear that Opus Dei is
not structured as a lay movement to which priests are joined as chaplains, nor as a clerical body with which lay faithful collaborate externally. On the contrary, the Prelature of Opus Dei is, as the apostolic constitution *Ut Sit* establishes, and as its statutes emphasize, an “apostolic organism” of incardinated priests and incorporated lay people, which is organic and indivisible—“organically structured,” as the Pope expressed it.[13]

After describing the structure of Opus Dei, Pope John Paul paused to consider the vocation and mission of the faithful of the Prelature in the context of a “spirituality of communion.”

The laity, “as Catholics,” are called to carry out a broad apostolate in their ordinary tasks. “Their specific capacities in their various human activities are, in the first place, an instrument entrusted to them by God, which will enable ‘the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mould communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture’ (Apostolic Letter *Nove Millennio Ineunte*, 29)…. Their apostolic zeal, fraternal friendship, and charity and solidarity, will enable them to turn ordinary social relationships into opportunities to awaken among the people around them the thirst for truth that is the first condition for a salvific encounter with Christ.”

For their part, the priests “perform an irreplaceable primary function: that of helping souls, one by one, by means of the sacraments, preaching and spiritual guidance, to open themselves to the gift of grace.”

From the Pope’s description of the missions proper to the laity and priests, one can see in Opus Dei a reflection of the bonds of communion and the priestly structure of the Church. The lay faithful incorporated in the Prelature are called to live, in accord with the spirit of the Work, their Christian vocation to sanctify earthly realities. The priests through their ministry serve all the faithful, especially the members of Opus Dei, and cooperate organically with them in the service of their apostolic mission. Both priests and laity work in communion with the Roman Pontiff and the bishops, through their union with their father and Prelate. As Prof. Hervada says, “the relation between priest and faithful in Opus Dei is a ministerial one, the same ordinary relationship that exists between priests and the lay faithful. The priests are ordained for the ministerial service of the laity belonging to Opus Dei, and at the same time the priests and laity
carry out jointly their apostolic mission. The relation between priests and laity in Opus Dei is the fundamental cleric-lay relationship.”

One can thus better understand why the internal structure of Opus Dei has a hierarchical nature, insofar as it reflects the bonds of ecclesial communion, the communion of the faithful and the hierarchical communion present in every ecclesiastical circumscription. This represents a true communion that should be nourished spiritually and apostolically. Pope John Paul II, in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, emphasized the importance of communion as a spiritual attitude. His March 17, 2001 address, which we have been recalling, is an invitation to “bear in mind the importance of the ‘spirituality of communion’ emphasized in my Apostolic Letter.” [15]

Seeking the face of Christ was the constant concern of St. Josemaría, “a man who thirsted for God and was consequently a great apostle. He wrote: ‘In intentions, may Jesus be our aim; in affections, our Love; in conversation, our theme; in actions, our model.’” [16]

The twentieth anniversary of the establishment of Opus Dei as a personal prelature coincides with two other major celebrations of the year 2002. This year was also the centennial of the birth of Josemaría Escrivá, on January 9, as well as the year of his canonization, on October 6, an event of great theological, spiritual and apostolic meaning for the whole Church.

Both celebrations were the occasion for new addresses by Pope John Paul II, in which he referred to the teachings that our Lord wanted to recall and transmit through St. Josemaría and the Work he founded. Unlike the address of March 17, 2001, the Pope’s words on these two occasions hardly touch upon the Prelature as an institution. Rather they focus on the message that, by God’s will, Opus Dei is called to transmit and to teach people to practice.

On the occasion of the centennial of the birth of St. Josemaría, an international congress was held in Rome, from January 8 to 12, 2002, under the title of “The Greatness of Ordinary Life: the Vocation and Mission of the Christian in the Midst of the World.” On the last day of the congress, the participants were received by Pope John Paul II in the Pope Paul VI auditorium. On that occasion the Pope read an address centered on the value of daily life as a path to sanctity. [17] The Holy Father emphasized the importance of “unity of life,” an expression so often used by St. Josemaría
and underlined recently by the pontifical magisterium, to express the necessary correspondence between a Christian’s faith and works. These two aspects—sanctity in ordinary things and unity of life—are related, because “the Lord wants to enter into a loving communion with each one of his children, right in the heart of daily occupations, in the context of everyday life.”[18] The Pope encouraged his audience to show others every day that “the love of Christ can indeed inform the whole gamut of human existence. In this way you will attain the ideal of the unity of life which I insisted on in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici, as fundamental to the evangelization of contemporary society (cf. no. 17).”[19]

Pope John Paul returned to this idea in his homily on October 6 at the canonization Mass of Josemaría Escrivá. On that solemn occasion he spoke of the need to “elevate the world to God and transform it from within.” And he encouraged his listeners “not to let yourselves be frightened by a materialistic culture that threatens to dissolve the genuine identity of Christ’s disciples.”[20] The Holy Father said that “Josemaría Escrivá understood 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.”[21]

Therefore Opus Dei is a “spiritual family” called to offer to the Church the goods of unity and apostolic service. But this contribution is not principally a corporate activity; rather it is carried out above all through the personal work of its faithful in their varied settings. This is the Prelature’s principal contribution as an institution. Indeed in Opus Dei’s Particular Code of Law (its Statutes), there is not a single section referring to the activity of the Prelature as such. This is not so much because such activity does not exist, but because it is found above all in the formation and spiritual assistance of its faithful, so that they are in a position to act individually or in association with others as leaven in the mass of society.[22] Opus Dei’s principal aim is not to carry out institutional activities of the Prelature, but rather to help every Christian to sanctify earthly realities,
“raising the Cross of Christ above every human reality,” as the Pope recalled in the words cited above. And this is made a reality through the personal commitment to strive for unity of life by its members and others who participate in the apostolates of the Prelature.

3. Law and spirituality

Thus we can understand why the canonical form of a personal prelature regulated by canons 294-297 of the Code of Canon Law has an instrumental character, like any other corporate structure in the Church and in civil society. It is at the service of the supernatural vocation of the person, of the spiritual growth of the children of God. Nor is it accidental that the Statutes of Opus Dei reveal a close connection between the written law and spirituality.

Indeed, the Statutes contain many references not only to its organizational structure, but also to its spiritual reality. We find in the Statutes abundant references to the purpose of Opus Dei, specified as the sanctification of individuals through the exercise of the Christian virtues in their particular state, profession and circumstances in accord with a secular spirituality (no. 2 § 1). This is made possible by a contemplative life, a life of prayer and sacrifice, the sense of divine filiation, ascetical and doctrinal-religious formation, personal apostolate “tamquam fermentum in massa humanae societates” (no. 3 §3), a unity of purpose and organization, “of vocation and spirit” (no. 4 §3), etc.

In this regard, it is worthwhile recalling no.79 §1 of the Statutes, which emphasizes the harmony between faith and works: “The spirit of Opus Dei has a two-fold aspect, ascetical and apostolic, which complement one
another fully, and which are intrinsically and harmoniously united and intertwined with the secular character of Opus Dei. Thus it always fosters a solid and simple unity of ascetical, apostolic, social and professional life.”

The strong spiritual content of these and other texts confirms the instrumental meaning of the norms that govern Opus Dei. Indeed, Opus Dei’s particular law serves as “the expression of the charism, or more exactly, the specification of what that charism requires,” and, therefore, of the place of Opus Dei in the Church. This instrumental role recognizes the limitations of written law, because the expressions of a charism transcend any normative text, insofar as it is called to become visible above all in the life and heart of the faithful. But at the same time it is a necessary instrument, since the law here is not only a guarantee of institutional unity through the observance of what the written norm disposes, but also recognition and encouragement of a spirit that is to be lived out in human history.

In addition, these frequent references in the Statutes to meta-legal realities (spirituality, ascetical means, one’s Christian vocation in the midst of the world) can be explained by St. Josemaría’s desire to make evident in these norms the spirit of Opus Dei. Thus one would be able to correctly understand the rest of the statutory dispositions, especially during those years when Opus Dei existed in the Church with a juridical format that was less than adequate, since it was more suited to the law for religious, or what today we would call the “consecrated life.”

These important realities are what in the end give meaning to all the Prelature’s activities: fostering the spiritual life of its faithful in light of the vocation to holiness and its practical consequences; providing a doctrinal formation which makes it possible that “in all social environments there be people who are intellectually prepared so that, with naturalness, in the ordinary circumstances of their daily life and work, they can carry out, through their example and word, an effective apostolate of evangelization and catechesis;” finally, providing members with the apostolic formation and pastoral assistance needed to carry out this apostolic work.

4. Apostolic spontaneity in a hierarchical institution
The history of the Church gives us numerous examples of tensions between law and gospel, statutes and life, charism and institution. On the one hand, we find situations where Catholic orthodoxy has clearly been lost. For example, attempts have been made to establish a division between the Church of charity and the Church of law, as if these were separate and incompatible dimensions, with juridical forms suffocating the spontaneous and personal expression of Christian charity. Another example is Lutheranism, which was an open challenge to the rights of the Pope in the name of individual freedom. In its more radical formulations, some Lutherans even affirmed the incompatibility of law with the reality of the Church.[29] The most they would reluctantly accept was a limited discipline or organization, but only as an indispensable human instrument, not as a means of salvation or a channel of divine action.

On the other hand, we find positions that, without being heterodox, reveal a clear lack of trust in the role of law in the service of justice and freedom. These attitudes and sentiments are found not only in the life of the Church but also in civil society. Recent decades have witnessed an increasingly negative vision of law, understood as a norm limiting freedom, or even as the result of compromises and a pragmatic balancing between political organizations, without any special concern for the dignity of persons and things. In contrast, the Christian vision of law sees it as a service to the realization of justice, the welfare of the person and the common good. In the Church law fulfills an indispensable function, insofar as it is an instrument of unity and continuity of the message transmitted throughout history, above and beyond the persons who at any particular moment hold positions in the Church. When our Lord instituted the Church, he also determined its fundamental organization by his choice of twelve apostles, and the call of Peter as head of the apostolic college.[30] And the divine institution of the sacraments established, along with the specification of authority, the other basic pillar on which divine positive law rests, inasmuch as the sacraments are goods given by our Lord to the Church, which distributes them through its ministers, so that there is an obligation to provide them and a right to receive them.[31]

The Church necessarily includes a legal dimension. The Holy Spirit nourishes the life of the Church, which exists as “one complex reality which
comes together from a human and a divine element.... As the assumed nature, inseparably united to him, serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a somewhat similar way, does the social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ who vivifies it, in the building up of the body.” The Spirit gives rise to and fosters the different charisms, at the same time as he brings about in the Church the harmonious blending of divine law and human law throughout the various stages of history. It is true that at times the vivifying presence of the Spirit might be obscured because of the hypertrophy of structures or an excessive confidence in the action of men. But the power of God is always able to bring forth new charisms, to revive those that are old, and to give impetus to aspirations towards holiness not only in the personal and associative life of the faithful, but also within the hierarchical structures of the Church, such as the dioceses and prelatures. Therefore the juridical figure of the personal prelature can be seen as an instrument to further and consolidate realities of holiness and apostolate, an instrument of human law for the action of the Holy Spirit.

It is important to clarify that charisms, special vocations, spirituality, and apostolic life are not restricted to associations or institutes of consecrated life. The ecclesiastical circumscriptions, and among them the personal prelatures, are called to be communities where Christian life becomes precisely that: life in Christ and dedication to others, settings of flourishing spiritual life, of Christian holiness and, as a necessary consequence, apostolate. Apostolate is the goal of the Church and of every Christian community, regardless of whether they possess an hierarchical or associative institutional structure.

Considered in the light of pastoral and apostolic action, the spirit of Opus Dei is transmitted in two ways. On one hand, the Prelate and his presbyterate carry out a special pastoral work at the service of the laity of the Prelature, as an expression of the service rendered by the priestly ministry to the common priesthood. On the other hand, the whole of the Prelature, priests and laity together, in organic cooperation carry out an apostolate of service to the local Churches.

The Prelature of Opus Dei is seen therefore:

—as a community of faithful formally organized by the supreme authority of the Church to spread among people of all walks of life the call
to holiness in one’s daily occupations.

—as composed of priests and laity, reciprocally related in accord with the distinction and cooperation between the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood.

—as served and governed by a Prelate as its own ordinary, with the cooperation of a presbyterate

These essential aspects express a shared responsibility, a call to be Opus Dei and to do Opus Dei, as St. Josemaría liked to put it. That is, to struggle personally to correspond to the grace of baptism, to seek Christian sanctity and to serve one’s neighbor in one’s ordinary activities.[36]

In summary, the twenty years that have gone by since the establishment of Opus Dei as a personal prelature are an occasion for gratitude to God for all the gifts granted during these years: for the service rendered to the Church that this juridical instrument has facilitated; for the extension of the apostolic work of the faithful of the Prelature; for the theological deepening that has taken place in the message that God wanted to remind the Church of; for the canonization of the Founder of Opus Dei, and the reception of his message in the local Churches.

These are realities that move us to contemplate the future with optimism and a desire to be faithful. The future is a call to harmonize spontaneity, the spiritual and apostolic strength arising from a supernatural vocation, with the direction and government of the apostolic work and life of Opus Dei. Spirit and law, charism and hierarchical institution, are not only compatible; they are inseparable dimensions of this complex and familiar reality that is the Church.


[2] In addition to other data collected in the *Canonical Path* about the history of Opus Dei before 1982, there is, on page 317, note 106, a revealing anecdote. Pedro Casciaro, one of the first members of Opus Dei,
tells how in 1936 he accompanied St. Josemaría to the church of Saint Elizabeth in Madrid, where St. Josemaría was at that time rector. Seeing that Pedro was looking at some ornamental details in the church, he pointed to two funeral slabs on the ground at the foot of the sanctuary, and said: “There is the future canonical solution of the Work.” He did not add any explanation. The two stone slabs were for two Spanish prelates, one from the second half of the 18th century and the other from the middle of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Both were major chaplains of the king and military vicars general, who, as such, held a non-territorial quasi-episcopal jurisdiction over the members of the royal household and the Spanish armed forces. As is explained in the note just cited, “Casciaro's testimony is significant, because it shows that in the mind of the founder there was always present in one form or another the idea of a jurisdictional structure of a secular and personal character.”

[3] “With very great hope, the Church directs its attention and maternal care to Opus Dei, which—by divine inspiration—the Servant of God Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer founded in Madrid on October 2, 1928, so that it may always be an apt and effective instrument of the salvific mission which the Church carries out for the life of the world.” John Paul II, Apostolic Const. Ut Sit, November 28, 1982, in AAS, 75 (1983), pp. 423-425.


[9] This principal of equality is sanctioned by the Statutes of Opus Dei, when in no. 172 2 they say that the lay faithful of the Prelature depend on the local ordinaries according to the universal law “in the same way as other Catholics in their own dioceses.” And the Declaration of the Congregation of Bishops, on August 23, 1982 (*AAS*, 75, 1983, pp. 464-468) explains that “the laity incorporated in the Prelature of Opus Dei continue to be faithful of the diocese in which they have their domicile or quasi-domicile, and therefore remain under the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop in all that the law determines in respect to the ordinary faithful in general” *Declaratio*, no. IV, c. The *Declaratio’s* no. IV, a explains that “In accord with what is established in 1, a, the members of the Prelature should observe the territorial norms regarding general prescriptions of a doctrinal, liturgical and pastoral character, as well as the laws related to public order and, in the case of priests, to the general discipline of the clergy.” The Statutes (*Codex Iuris Particularis Operis Dei*), are published as an appendix in *The Canonical Path of Opus Dei*, cited in note 1, pp. 610-645; and also in Pedro Rodriguez, Fernando Ocáriz, and Jose Luis Illanes, *Opus Dei in the Church: An ecclesiological study of the life and apostolate of Opus Dei*, Princeton 1994, pp. 197-238, and in Valentin Gomez-Iglesias, A. Viana and J. Miras, *El Opus Dei, Prelatura Personal. La Constitución Apostólica “Ut Sit,”* Pamplona 2000, pp. 131-165.


[11] “You are here representing the components by which the Prelature is organically structured, that is, priests and lay faithful, men and women, with its own Prelate as head. This hierarchical nature of Opus Dei, established in the Apostolic Constitution with which I erected the Prelature
(cf. Apostolic Const. *Ut Sit*, Nov. 28, 1982), offers a starting point for pastoral considerations that are rich in practical applications. In the first place, I wish to emphasize that the membership of the lay faithful in their own particular Church, and in the Prelature through their incorporation in it, means that the specific mission of the Prelature converges with the evangelizing efforts of each particular Church, just as the Second Vatican Council foresaw when it first envisaged personal prelatures.

[12] See previous note: “... just as the Second Vatican Council foresaw when it first envisaged personal prelatures.”

[13] “Since Opus Dei has grown, with the help of divine grace, to the extent that it has spread and works in a large number of dioceses throughout the world, as an apostolic organism made up of priests and laity, both men and women, which is at the same time organic and undivided—that is to say, as an institution endowed with a unity of spirit, of aims, of government and of formation—it has become necessary to give it a juridical configuration which is suited to its specific characteristics” Apostolic Constitution, *Ut Sit*, Introduction. As we have seen in the text cited above, note 11, the Papal address speaks explicitly of lay people incorporated in the Prelature.


[15] See no. 1 of his address, which cites nos. 42 and 43 of Novo Millennio Ineunte.

[16] These words of St. Josemaría, found in no. 271 of *The Way*, are cited in no. 3 of John Paul II’s address.

This volume contains part of the sessions of the Congress and also includes the Italian, English and Spanish translations of John Paul II’s address on January 12, 2002. This address was published in *Romana* 34 (2002), pp. 14-15.


[19] Ibid., no. 4.

[20] John Paul II, homily of October 6, 2002, no.3. The text of this homily is published in *Romana* 35 (2002). In his address on October 7, 2002 to those attending the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá, John Paul II said: “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 of the professions and in the most advanced frontiers of development there can only come a positive contribution to the strengthening of the harmony between faith and culture, which is one of the greatest needs of our time.” See text of this address in *Romana* 35 (2002).

[21] Ibid., no.4.

[22] In Bishop del Portillo’s letter to the members of Opus Dei on December 8, 1981 (a letter which he did not send to the faithful until after the announcement of the establishment of the Prelature), there were some references to this question in the context of criticisms certain persons were raising against Opus Dei: “They have accused us (I tell you this because it is public knowledge and because we have forgiven them from the very start) of wanting to be independent of the bishops, or seeking to be outside the
hierarchy, or not being inserted in the local churches. Perhaps they did not understand that we were only interested in being recognized for what we are: fully secular priests and ordinary faithful, who certainly constitute on an international level a jurisdictional unity of spirit, of specific formation and of government, but who, just like the other faithful, cheerfully continue to depend on the bishops in everything related to their ‘ordinary pastoral care,’ the one that each bishop exercises over all the other lay people of his diocese.....Because they did not know sufficiently well the real nature of the Work, some mistakenly wanted to treat us like religious or as members of ecclesiastical associations or movements that always act as a group, whether in ecclesiastical structures or in civil life .... They did not understand that, despite the solidity of our formation and government, our role ordinarily is not to work like just one more group among others, but to fan out, with each person trying to be leaven or salt wherever he carries out his professional work, in his family and among his friends. .... On not seeing us act like one more group among those working in the diocese, without realizing that we wanted to be (I repeat) the leaven or salt that disappears in the dough, they thought we did not want to collaborate and that we kept our distance from diocesan pastoral initiatives. They did not grasp that through the ordinary channels where secular, professional and family life takes place, you are present, my children, everywhere: in the academic world and in the world of work; in parishes, in diocesan associations; in civil, educational and charitable initiatives; and so forth. Where citizens and Christian faithful live their ordinary lives is where the members of Opus Dei are present: ordinarily each one personally (not as a group), enlivening all those areas with apostolic zeal in the service of the universal Church and of the local church.” See *The Canonical Path of Opus Dei*, pp. 596—597, for original Spanish text.


[24] Cf. Statutes, no. 79 (The translation is our own.).


[26] He wrote in 1961: “With God’s grace I elaborated, little by little, the norms of our particular law, measuring the Work as it grew” (*The Canonical Path*, p. 87). The founder’s main concern was, as he also wrote in
1961, “the grave responsibility of making sure that this new phenomenon was set forth in the norms of our particular law, according to what God wanted” (The Canonical Path, p. 89, note 30).

[27] Cf. The Canonical Path, p. 223.

[28] Cf. Statutes, no. 96 (the translation is our own).

[29] This is the thesis of Rudolf Sohm a German Lutheran jurist at the beginning of the twentieth century. Sohm recognized that Catholicism upheld the legal order as something necessary for the Church. Cf. among many others J. Otaduy, “La ley y el Espíritu: Lo invisible de una Iglesia visible,” in Imágenes de la Fe, 212 (1987), pp. 14, 9-15.


[34] This aspect has been highlighted by J. Hervada, “Aspectos de la estructura jurídica del Opus Dei,” op. cit., p. 1059: “It might appear that ecclesiastical circumscriptions (dioceses, prelatures, etc.) are not apostolic entities, that only entities of an associative nature are apostolic environments where one lives the apostolic dimension of the Christian mission. But this view is no longer sustainable since the last Ecumenical council... The ecclesiastical circumscriptions are apostolic entities with a two-fold dimension: ad intra by the pastoral action of the bishop, prelate, etc., on the clergy and faithful, of the priests on the faithful, and of the faithful among themselves and, insofar as possible (for example, via fraternal correction), of the faithful with respect to priests and the person in charge. And ad extra, the action of all in respect to non-believers or those distanced from the faith. This apostolic structure may indeed be little noticed, or completely unnoticed, in many ecclesiastical circumscriptions, but this is, in every case, a deplorable de facto situation.”
Cf. J. Miras, “Notas sobre la naturaleza de las prelaturas personales,” op. cit., p. 373, which mentions an informative note that the Congregation for the Bishops sent in November 1981 to the bishops of the dioceses in which centers of Opus Dei had been established.

“Each of us, by means of his or her self-giving in the service of the Church, must be Opus Dei—that is, operatio Dei—a work of God, in order to do Opus Dei on earth,” Josemaría Escrivá, Letter of February 14, 1950, cited by Fernando Ocáriz, “Vocation to Opus Dei as a Vocation in the Church,” op. cit., p. 97. “A member of Opus Dei, a lay person in the Prelature of Opus Dei, is simply a lay person, an ordinary Christian who, taking to heart the implications of baptism, commits himself or herself to spread that ideal by striving to make it a reality in one’s daily life. In Monsignor Escrivá’s own words, it means ‘doing Opus Dei by being Opus Dei oneself.’ Obviously, all this involves the contribution of the priestly ministry, without which there is no Christian life” Jose Luis Illanes, “The Church in the World,” op. cit., p. 124.