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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Thank You, Holy Father

Bishop Javier Echevarría, the prelate of Opus Dei, commemorated the 25th anniversary of John Paul II’s pontificate in this article published in L’Osservatore Romano. By way of exception we are reproducing that article in this issue of Romana as an editorial. Undoubtedly all of the faithful of the Prelature will see in it a formal expression of their feelings of gratitude to the Vicar of Christ at this moment of special ecclesial commemoration.

Thank you, Holy Father.

Photos of the Pope from the last few years show one thing that’s changed, and another that hasn’t. As time passes, we see a man’s body slowly but surely breaking down. But what comes home just as clearly and even more forcefully is the image of the same crowds with the same fervor, pressing about him every place he goes.

Many have tried to explain the mystery of John Paul II’s magnetism. In general they have sought for an answer in the hopes that move so many people to turn to him. For example, with all the conflicts bloodying the world, there is a widespread desire for peace, and John Paul II has continually declared that the path to true peace lies in practicing a forgiveness that outlasts division. Others say that what moves us to look to the Pope is the keen thirst for truth felt by a society tired of lies and fleeting trends: the voice of the Pope fearlessly proclaims a perennial truth, an incorruptible morality, which rises up in defense of the dignity of man.

But we must go deeper if we wish to truly understand John Paul II’s extraordinary attraction. We must look at what theology calls the sensus fidei: a sort of instinct of faith permeating the minds and hearts of Catholics.

From this perspective, we see a Church clustered around the Pope, a Church unable to distance itself from its supreme Shepherd, a Church that grasps the impossibility of conceiving of itself without him. And we see a Pope who lives for the Church, a Pope in whom the Church seeks the face of Christ.

Anyone who listens to him can sense that he speaks with an authority from above—from that Gospel which will not disappear “till heaven and
earth pass away” (Mt 5:18). Close to the successor of Peter we feel a bond of communion stronger than any tie based on history or culture. We touch the mystery that makes the Church the family of God and makes each person a daughter or son of God.

Age and physical suffering are weakening his strength but strengthening his will, as he becomes ever more united to the cross of Jesus, the one whom he loves with such obvious and exemplary generosity.

The Pope has called us to contemplate the face of Christ, so that the Church can “take up with new impetus its evangelizing mission” in this new millennium (Apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 2). And we cannot help but think of the Pope’s own example in his mission as Shepherd of the universal Church, when we read these other words of his: “The men and women of our own day — often perhaps unconsciously — ask believers not only to ‘speak’ of Christ, but in a certain sense to ‘show’ him to them. And is it not the Church’s task to reflect the light of Christ in every historical period, to make his face shine also before the generations of the new millennium?” (*Ibid.* 16).

This “contact” with our Lord is produced especially through pain: “The Church is constantly invited by Christ to touch his wounds, to recognize, that is, the fullness of his humanity taken from Mary, given up to death, transfigured by the Resurrection: ‘Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side’ (Jn 20:27). Like Thomas, the Church bows down in adoration before the Risen One, clothed in the fullness of his divine splendor, and never ceases to exclaim: ‘My Lord and my God!’ (Jn 20:28)” (*Ibid.* 21).

In the union between Peter’s successor and Jesus Christ, which everyone senses to one degree or another, we find another explanation of the mysterious harmony between Pope and people. The natural sentiment of affection and gratitude which Catholics have for John Paul II is, fundamentally, a recognition that the Pope has made us rediscover the best in ourselves: our personal relationship with God, who created us and saved us in his love.

In his first encyclical, the Pope wrote that man “is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission.” The final reason for
the connection he makes with the hearts of believers is the fact that his passion for man has its roots in the God-become-man. We feel close to John Paul II because he reminds us that Christ is close to us, that he lives with us, that he gives meaning to our lives. Certainty of Christ’s closeness needs no more evidence than that of the cross, the cross to which the Pope is also fastened.

It is only logical then for us to commemorate John Paul II’s 25th anniversary by considering his importance, the profundity of his teachings, and the consequences of his decisions. And it is also quite natural for us to feel the need to express our gratitude with our whole heart. As he recently requested in Pompeii on the feast of our Lady of the Rosary, let us pray for him always, as a sign of our filial affection and of our deep and sincere gratitude.

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HOLY SEE

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1. "Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo - I will sing of your mercies, O Lord, for ever (cf. Ps 89[88]: 1).

Twenty-five years ago I had a special experience of divine mercy. At the Conclave, through the College of Cardinals, Christ said to me, as he once said to Peter by the Lake of Genesaret: "Tend my sheep" (Jn 21: 16).

I heard echo in my soul the question he addressed to Peter at that moment: 'Do you love me? Do you love me more than these...?' (cf. Jn 21: 15-16). Humanly speaking, how could I not have been apprehensive? How could so great a responsibility not burden me? I had to turn to divine mercy in order to answer the question "Do you accept?" with confidence: "In the obedience of the faith, before Christ my Lord, entrusting myself to the Mother of Christ and of the Church, aware of the great difficulties, I accept".

Today, dear brothers and sisters, I am pleased to share with you an experience that has now lasted for a quarter of a century. Every day that same dialogue between Jesus and Peter takes place in my heart. In spirit, I focus on the benevolent gaze of the risen Christ. Although he knows of my human frailty, he encourages me to answer confidently, like Peter: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you" (Jn 21: 17). And then he invites me to take on the responsibilities that he himself has entrusted to me.

2. "The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep " (Jn 10: 11). While Jesus was saying these words, the Apostles did not realize that he was referring to himself. Not even his beloved Apostle John knew it. He understood on Calvary, at the foot of the Cross, when he saw Jesus silently giving up his life for "his sheep".

When the time came for John and the other Apostles to assume this same mission they then remembered his words. They realized that they
would be able to fulfil their mission only because he had assured them that he himself would be working among them.

As Peter, a "witness of the sufferings of Christ" (I Pt 5: 1), was particularly aware of this, he admonished the elders of the Church: "Tend the flock of God that is your charge" (I Pt 5: 2).

Down the centuries, the successors of the Apostles, guided by the Holy Spirit, have continued to gather Christ's flock and lead it toward the Kingdom of Heaven, knowing that only "for Christ, with Christ and in Christ" could they assume so great a responsibility.

I was conscious of the same thing when the Lord called me to carry out Peter's mission in this beloved city of Rome and at the service of the whole world. From the beginning of my Pontificate, my thoughts, prayers and actions were motivated by one desire: to witness that Christ, the Good Shepherd, is present and active in his Church. He is constantly searching for every stray sheep, to lead it back to the sheepfold, to bind up its wounds; he tends the sheep that are weak and sickly and protects those that are strong. This is why, from the very first day, I have never ceased to urge people: "Do not be afraid to welcome Christ and accept his power!" (Homily at the Mass Inaugurating the Pontifical Ministry of John Paul II, 22 October 1978, L'Osservatore Romano English edition, 2 November 1978, p. 12). Today I forcefully repeat: "Open, indeed, open wide the doors to Christ!" (cf. ibid.). Let him guide you! Trust in his love!

3. When I was beginning my Pontificate I appealed to all: "Help the Pope and all who wish to serve Christ and with Christ's power to serve the human person and the whole of mankind!". As I thank God with you for these 25 years totally steeped in his mercy, I feel a special need to express my gratitude to you too, brothers and sisters of Rome and of the whole world, who have responded and continue to respond in various ways to my request for help. Only God knows what sacrifices, prayers and sufferings have been offered to sustain me in my service to the Church. How much kindness and concern, how many signs of communion have surrounded me each day. May the good Lord reward everyone generously! I implore you, dear brothers and sisters, do not stop your great work of love for the
Successor of Peter. I ask you once again: help the Pope, whoever wants to serve Christ, to serve man and all humanity!

4. To you, Lord Jesus Christ,
The one Pastor of the Church
I offer the fruit of these 25 years of ministry
at the service of the people you have entrusted to my care.
Forgive the evil done and multiply the good:
All is your work and you alone deserve glory.
With full confidence in your mercy
I commend to you, again today, those whom years ago you entrusted to my pastoral care.
Keep them in love, gather them into your sheepfold,
take the weak upon your shoulders,
bind up the wounded, take care of the strong.
Be their Shepherd, so that they do not stray.
Protect the beloved Church which is in Rome and the Churches of the whole world.
Instil the light and power of your Spirit in those you have chosen to guide your flock:
May they carry out their mission enthusiastically as guides, teachers and sanctifiers,
while they await your glorious return.
I renew to you, through the hands of the Beloved Mother, Mary, the gift of myself, of the present and of the future:
May all be done according to your will.
Supreme Pastor, stay with us,
so that with you we may safely journey onwards
to the house of the Father,
to the house of the Father. Amen!

Address to pilgrims to the Shrine of Pompei
at the close of the Year of the Rosary
October 7, 2003

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. The Blessed Virgin has granted me to return to honour her at this famous Shrine which Providence inspired Bl. Bartolo Longo to found as a centre of outreach of the Holy Rosary.

In a certain sense, the Year of the Rosary culminates in today’s visit. I thank the Lord for the fruits of the Year that has given rise to an important reawakening of this prayer, both simple and profound, that goes to the heart of Christian faith; it appears absolutely current as we stand before the challenge of the third millennium and the urgent commitment of the new evangelization.

2. The context of Pompei, the ancient Roman city buried under the ashes of Vesuvius in the year 79 A.D., highlights this timeliness in a special way. Those ruins speak. They ask the crucial question about man’s destiny. They witness to a great culture yet, in addition to enlightened responses, they also disclose disturbing interrogatives. The Marian City was born from the heart of these questions, presenting the risen Christ as the response, the “Gospel” that saves.

Today, as in the times of ancient Pompei, it is vital to proclaim Christ to a society that is drifting away from Christian values and even forgetting about them. I thank the Italian Authorities for helping with the organization of my pilgrimage that began in the ancient City. It enabled me to cross the ideal bridge of a dialogue, undoubtedly fruitful, for cultural and spiritual growth. Against the background of ancient Pompei, the proposal
of the Rosary acquires symbolic value as a renewed incentive to Christian proclamation in our time.

What actually is the Rosary? A *compendium of the Gospel*. It brings us back again and again to the most important scenes of Christ’s life, almost as if to let us “breathe” his mystery. The Rosary is the privileged path to contemplation. It is, so to speak, Mary’s way. Is there anyone who knows and loves Christ better than she?

Bl. Bartolo Longo, Apostle of the Rosary, was convinced of this; he paid special attention to the contemplative and Christological character of the Rosary. Thanks to this Blessed, Pompei has become an international centre for the *spirituality of the Rosary*.

3. I wanted my pilgrimage to have the meaning of a *plea for peace*. We have meditated upon the Mysteries of Light as if to turn the beam of Christ’s light on the conflicts, tensions and dramas of the five Continents. In my Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, I explained why the Rosary is a prayer that by its very nature is oriented to peace. This is not only because it disposes us to pray for peace, strengthened by the intercession of Mary, but also because it enables us to assimilate Jesus’ plan of peace, together with his mystery.

At the same time, with the tranquil rhythm of the repetition of the *Hail Mary* the Rosary calms our spirit and opens it to saving grace. Bl. Bartolo Longo had a prophetic intuition when he chose to add to the church dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary *this facade as a monument to peace*. So it was that the cause of peace came to be part of what the Rosary itself proposes. It is an intuition whose timeliness does not escape us at the beginning of this millennium, already so battered by the winds of war and streaked with blood in so many parts of the world.

4. The invitation to pray the Rosary that rises from Pompei, a crossroads of people of every culture who are attracted both by the Shrine and by the archaeological site, also calls to mind the commitment of Christians, in collaboration with all people of goodwill, to be builders and witnesses of peace. May civil society, represented here by the authorities and personalities whom I cordially greet, welcome this message ever more deeply.
May the ecclesial community of Pompei be ever more equal to facing this challenge. I greet its various members: the priests and deacons, the consecrated persons, especially the Dominican Daughters of the Holy Rosary who were founded precisely for the mission of this Shrine, and the lay people. My heartfelt thanks go to Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino for his warm words to me at the beginning of this meeting. An affectionate “thank you” to you all, devotees of the Queen of the Rosary of Pompei. May you be “peacemakers,” following in the footsteps of Bl. Bartolo Longo, who knew how to combine prayer and action, making this Marian City a *stronghold of charity*. The new *Centre for children and families*, which you have kindly desired to name after me, demonstrates the heritage of this great work.

Dear Brothers and Sisters! May Our Lady of the Holy Rosary bless us as we prepare to call on her with the Supplication. Let us deposit our desires and our good resolutions in her maternal heart.

Address at the Congress on the 25th anniversary of his pontificate and the Message from the College of Cardinals

October 18, 2003

*Your Eminence, Dean of the College of Cardinals; Your Eminences and Beatitudes; Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,*

1. I listened with great attention to your message, read by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Dean of the College of Cardinals. I am deeply grateful for his respectful greeting and cordial good wishes on behalf of everyone here.

I greet the Cardinals, the venerable Patriarchs, the Presidents of the Bishops’ Conferences and all who have taken part in the Symposium you organized, at which you reviewed some of the doctrinal and pastoral
approaches that have inspired the activity of the Successor of Peter in the past 25 years.

I offer you in particular, dear Brothers of the College of Cardinals, my sincere gratitude for the affectionate closeness that you make me feel, not only on this occasion but always, as this meeting, moreover, eloquently demonstrates. In a certain way, the sense of unity and collegiality that must motivate the sacred Pastors in their common service to the People of God is rendered more visible today. Thank you for your witness!

2. Thinking back over the past 25 years, I remember how often you have helped me with your advice to understand better the important questions concerning the Church and humanity. How could I fail to see that the Lord has acted through you in supporting the service to believers and to all men and women that is demanded of Peter?

Contemporary man, as the Dean of the College of Cardinals has wished to stress, is floundering in his breathless search for values. And—according to the intuition of Augustine in former times—he will never find peace except in loving God to the point of being prepared to make the sacrifice of himself.

The profound changes that have taken place in the past 25 years call into question our ministry as Pastors, appointed by God as fearless witnesses of truth and hope. We must never lack the courage to proclaim the Gospel; indeed, it must be our prime commitment to the last breath and we must undertake it with ever renewed dedication.

3. The one Gospel proclaimed with one heart and one soul: this is Christ’s commandment, and it is this that the Church of today and of all time demands of us, as individuals and as a College. This is what today’s men and women expect of us.

It is thus imperative that we foster among one another deep unity, which is not limited to affective collegiality but rooted in full doctrinal sharing and practically expressed in harmonious understanding.

How could we be authentic teachers for humanity or credible apostles of the new evangelization if we were to allow the discord of division to enter our hearts? The people of our time need Christ and his words of
salvation. Indeed, the Lord alone can give true answers to the anxieties and questions of our contemporaries. He has sent us out into the world as a single, undivided College that must witness with a unanimous voice to him, to his words, to his ministry. Our credibility depends on this!

Our work will be all the more effective the better able we are to make the face of the Church shine out, the Church which loves the poor, which is simple and which takes the part of the weakest. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, whom I will have the joy of adding to the Book of Saints tomorrow, is an emblematic example of this Gospel attitude.

4. Your Eminences, who have come from every continent and belong in a special way to the venerable Church of Rome, can give the Successor of Peter effective support in the fulfilment of his mission. With your ministry, with the wisdom you have acquired from your own culture, with the zeal of your consecration, you form a crown of honour that makes the face of Christ’s Bride even more beautiful. This is another reason why you are asked to strive constantly for more complete fidelity to God and his Church. Indeed, holiness is the secret of evangelization and of any authentic pastoral renewal.

As I assure each one of you of my remembrance in prayer, I ask you to continue to pray for me that I may carry out my service to the Church faithfully for as long as the Lord desires. May Mary, Mother of the Church, accompany and protect us, and may Luke the Evangelist whose feast we are celebrating today, intercede for us.

With these sentiments, I cordially impart to you all a special Apostolic Blessing.

MESSAGE FROM THE COLLEGE OF CARDINALS

Holy Father,

The College of Cardinals has gathered to thank the Lord and you for your 25 years of fruitful work as Successor of St Peter, as it is only right to remember at this time. In these years, the Barque of the Church has often had to sail against the wind and on rough seas. The sea of history is agitated by conflicts between the rich and the poor, between peoples and cultures; by the prospects opened by human ability and the risk that human
beings run of self-destruction because of these same possibilities. At times the sky appears to be covered by heavy clouds that conceal God from the eyes of men and women and call the faith into question.

Today more than ever, we are experiencing that the history of the world—as Augustine saw it—is a struggle between two forms of love: love of self to the point of contempt for God, and love of God to the point of being prepared to sacrifice oneself for God and for one’s neighbour. And although the signs of people’s presumption and of distancing themselves from God are being felt and perceived more than the witness of love, thanks be to God we can see today that his light has never been extinguished in history; the great array of Saints and Blesseds whom you, Holy Father, have raised to the honour of the altars, is an eloquent sign: in them we recognize with delight God’s presence in history and his love, mirrored on the faces of the men and women blessed by God.

In this span of time, Your Holiness, constantly comforted by the loving presence of the Mother of Jesus, you have guided us with the joy of faith, the undaunted courage of hope and the enthusiasm of love. You have enabled us to see God’s light despite all the clouds, and made sure that the weakness of our faith, which all too easily prompts us to exclaim: “Save us, Lord; we are perishing”(Mt 8:25), does not prevail. Today we wholeheartedly thank you for this service.

As a pilgrim of the Gospel, like the Apostles you set out and crossed the continents bearing the proclamation of Christ, the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, the proclamation of forgiveness, of love and of peace. Unflaggingly, you have proclaimed the Gospel in season and out of season, and in its light you have reminded all people of the fundamental human values: respect for human dignity, the defence of life, the promotion of justice and peace. Above all, you have gone out to meet the young, communicating to them the fire of your faith, your love for Christ and your willingness to dedicate yourself to him, body and soul.

You have been concerned with the sick and the suffering and have launched a passionate appeal to the world to share the goods of the earth equitably and so that the poor may have justice and love.
You have interpreted the commandment of unity that the Lord gave to his disciples as a commandment addressed to you personally; this has led you to do your utmost to make believers in Christ one, so that the benevolent power of God himself may be recognized in the miracle of unity that human beings are powerless to create. You have gone out to meet people of other religions, to reawaken in all the desire for peace and the readiness to become instruments of peace.

Thus, over and above all the barriers and divisions, you have become for all humanity a great messenger of peace. You have never ceased to appeal to the consciences of the powerful or to comfort those who are victims of the lack of peace in this world. In this way, you have obeyed the Lord who bequeathed this promise to his followers: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you” (Jn 14:27). Precisely in meeting the needs of others, you have never allowed anyone to doubt that Christ is the Love of God made flesh, the Only Son and Saviour of all. For you, to proclaim Christ is not to impose something foreign on anyone but to communicate to all what each one basically longs for: the eternal love that every human heart is secretly awaiting.

“The Redeemer of man is the centre of the universe and of history”: these opening words of your first Encyclical were like a clarion call that invited us to a religious reawakening, centering all things once again in Christ.

Holy Father, the College of Cardinals, at the end of this Congress during which it has recalled only a few aspects of the 25 years of your Pontificate, desires unanimously to reaffirm its filial attachment to your person and its faithful, total loyalty to your lofty Magisterium as Pastor of the universal Church.

“The joy of the Lord is your strength,” Ezra the priest said to the people of Israel at a difficult moment (Neh 8:10). You, Holy Father, have rekindled in us this joy of the Lord. We are grateful to you for this. May the Lord always fill you with his joy.
Review of Other Documents

A review of other documents

John Paul II: Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Europa (June 28, 2003)

John Paul II: Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation Pastores gregis, on the bishop, servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the hope of the world (October 16, 2003)

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

D E C R E T U M

Præsentibus his litteris te, Rev.dum D.num D.rem Georgium Rossman, ad quinquennium nominamus atque constituimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Quasi-Regione Australiæ et Novæ Zelandiæ, 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 Curiæ Prælatitiæ, die 7, mense novembri, anno 2003.

@ Xaverius Echevarría
Franciscus Vives
Curiæ Prælatitiæ Cancellarius
Reg. Gen. R. lib. VI pag. 14
Upon arriving in Portugal on July 4, 2003, the Prelate of Opus Dei headed for Enxomil, a conference center near Oporto, where he was to spend some days.

He met with faithful of the Prelature, friends and cooperators on Saturday, July 26. The Prelate spoke to them about the family, and about sickness, work and apostolate. He encouraged those present to pray and mortify themselves for the Holy Father and to encourage others to pray the Rosary. Two days later he had a get-together with priests in Enxomil.

During his stay in Portugal, he went to Fatima twice to pray to our Lady.

On July 30, the Prelate traveled to London, where he remained until August 2. During his brief stay he had a number of get-togethers with faithful of the Prelature in the centers of the Commission and Regional Advisory. He also met with several groups in Netherhall House, a student residence in the northwestern district of London.

On the morning after his arrival, he dedicated the altar of the new oratory at the seat of the Regional Commission, beneath which he placed a relic *ex ossibus* of St. Josemaria. On August 1, in the afternoon, he visited Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor, Archbishop of Westminster. That same evening he had a get-together with members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross.

Bishop Echevarría encouraged a group of women faithful of the Prelature who are members of the boards of directors of various apostolic works not to be daunted by the difficulties that might arise in their work. He recalled St. Josemaria’s tireless work to overcome all the obstacles in beginning Opus Dei, never losing his peace. He also spoke with several women who work in the field of fashions, stressing the impact they could have by promoting styles that respect the dignity of each person.

At the end of his stay in London, he visited Crosmore, an apartment in the “City of London” which some faithful of the Prelature and Cooperators have made available for apostolic activities of Opus Dei. There the prelate recalled St. Josemaria’s first visit to the “City” in 1958, when everything was still to be done and it seemed a folly to begin apostolic work in that milieu—apparently so distant from God. But with God’s grace and the
impetus of the founder of Opus Dei, it had become a reality.

On August 2, the Prelate arrived in Ireland from London.

On Sunday, August 3, at eleven-thirty in the morning he celebrated Holy Mass in Lismullin, a conference center about twenty-five miles from Dublin. During the Mass, he dedicated the altar and blessed the oratory.

On the last day of his stay he had a number of get-togethers with faithful of the Prelature, during which he transmitted the blessing of the Pope and encouraged those present to carry out a far-reaching apostolate on the island through their professional work, just as the early Christians had done. He also urged them to help improve their children’s education through active participation in the schools where they were enrolled. He told the priests that they should be instruments of God to serve all souls and that they should make the Holy Mass the center of their day.

In Cleraun, a study center for university students, Bishop Echevarría had a get-together with boys who take part in apostolates of the Prelature. He told them they were the future of the Church, and invited them to read the Gospels diligently in order to get to know Christ and bring him to others.

Bishop Echevarría arrived in Argentina on September 2. On the following day he stopped at Chacabuco, a center of Opus Dei, to visit some gravely ill faithful of the Prelature.

On Saturday the thirteenth he went to Austral University. In one of the lecture halls of the School of Biomedical Sciences he had two meetings with faithful of the Prelature who work in the university. He encouraged them to have the enthusiasm of pioneers, and spoke to them of the urgency of bettering society. He also met with the boards of directors of the university’s various academic bodies.

In the afternoon, after visiting the diocesan bishop, he went to the Shrine of Our Lady of Lujan, where he conferred the priesthood on two Associate faithful of the Prelature. It was the first priestly ordination he officiated at in the Americas.[1]

On Monday September 29, in the morning, he had get-togethers with several groups. In the afternoon he took part in the ceremony granting
three honorary doctorates at Austral University.[2]

On the following morning, September 30, he had a get-together in the Austral University auditorium with several hundred people. He spoke about conversion, prayer and sacrifice in ordinary life. He also encouraged those present to contribute to the advancement of their country through work well done.

Right after the get-together, the prelate left for Ezeiza Airport to return to Rome.

During his stay in Argentina, on September 17 the Prelate of Opus Dei flew from Buenos Aires to Montevideo, Uruguay’s capital. Upon arriving he went to the Monte VI high school, where there was to be a get-together with faithful of Opus Dei in the school’s gymnasium. He encouraged those present to work towards resolving their country’s problems, by praying with optimism and acting with responsibility.

In the afternoon he had other meetings with various groups of faithful, and late in the evening he returned to Buenos Aires.

Bishop Echevarría also interrupted his stay in Argentina to take a short trip to Chile on September 25. During this trip he showed his concern for a number of sick people, and visited Bishop Adolfo Rodríguez Vidal, the first priest of Opus Dei to come to Chile, who died shortly after the Prelate’s visit.

He also took advantage of his stay to have get-togethers with many faithful of the Prelature. In these gatherings he expressed his joy at being able to be with his daughters and sons and encouraged them to be very apostolic and to seek the intercession of St. Josemaría. The Prelate also insisted that the faithful of Opus Dei should contribute to spreading the value and meaning of the Christian virtues of holy purity, decency and modesty. Before leaving for the airport he visited the shrine on the campus of the University of the Andes, where he prayed to our Lady and personally thanked all of the workers who had taken part in its construction.

The Prelate arrived in Paris late in the evening on Thursday, December 18, accompanied by Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz and Msgr. Joaquin Alonso. From the airport he went to the Couvrelles Conference Center. On the
morning of the 19th, Bishop Echevarría gave a meditation and celebrated Holy Mass in the Dosnon School of Hostelry, adjoining the conference center. Later he had a get-together with the directors, teachers and students of the school, whom he encouraged to live a consistent Christian life and to rediscover each day the incalculable value of their work in service to others. He also met for a few minutes with those who were taking part in a retreat at the conference center.

Before returning to Paris, the Prelate went to the Couvrelles cemetery to pray at the graves of some of the Prelature’s faithful.

That afternoon and the following day he had a number of get-togethers with faithful of the Prelature from Paris and other French cities. He urged them to draw closer to God, especially in the days preceding Christmas, and to continue to carry out a tireless personal apostolate with hope and optimism, each in his own environment.

During these days the Prelate also had meetings with the members of the Advisory and the Regional Commission. On the morning of Sunday, the 21st, after preaching and celebrating Mass at the seat of the Commission, Bishop Echevarría returned to Rome.


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Pastoral Letters
A pastoral letter to the faithful of the Prelature and its cooperators on the 25th anniversary of the pontificate of John Paul II and the 75th anniversary of the foundation of Opus Dei (October 2, 2003)

Twenty-five years ago we celebrated the golden anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei. Our Lord so arranged it that this date coincided with a period of sede vacante in the Church. John Paul I, the Pope who had moved the entire world with his smile in only thirty-three days, had just died. That anniversary of the Work, prepared for with so much prayer and joy, was saturated with the sadness of that period of mourning. Shortly thereafter, on October 16, we were filled with joy at the election of John Paul II as the successor of Peter. As we celebrate now the twenty-fifth anniversary of that event, we unite ourselves to the homage that millions of people, believers and non-believers, render to the Roman Pontiff.

The fact that this feast practically coincides with Opus Dei’s seventy-fifth anniversary grants us another opportunity to discover the workings of the divine Providence that governs all things well[1] and that guides history throughout the ages. It seems as though our Lord wants to confirm an essential characteristic of the spirit of Opus Dei: a great love for the Church and for its visible head, as our founder stated in 1934, when he wrote, after having often preached it: Christ. Mary. The Pope. Haven’t we just indicated, in three words, the loves that make up the entire Catholic faith?[2] And in 1964, after an audience that Pope Paul VI granted to him, he said: In Opus Dei we have an extraordinary affection and a great veneration for the Pope: an affection and a veneration that we want to see grow every day. In my desire to serve the Church, I have always seen to it that my children have a great love for the Pope.[3]

These desires of St. Josemaría continue to be followed, thanks be to God, all over the world. This is testified to by the hundreds of thousands of souls who receive formation in the Prelature’s centers or collaborate with its apostolates. There Catholics learn to pray every day for the Pope and his intentions, or to put more effort into this filial duty. They are encouraged
to get to know his teachings deeply and to put them into practice. They are urged to spread them among their relatives, friends and acquaintances, making themselves amplifiers for the pontifical magisterium in whatever environment they find themselves. And the many non-Catholics, and even non Christians, who help out in Opus Dei as Cooperators respect and admire the Holy Father, in whom they discover, as do innumerable people of upright heart, a man of God, an intrepid defender of human rights, a peace-bearer for peoples and consciences. For they find in the Pope a living image of Jesus Christ.

Through God’s goodness, the aspiration of St. Josemaría that I have tried to echo frequently in your ears becomes a reality each day: Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam! That all the men and women God places at your side may go, with Peter, to Jesus through Mary. Thank you, Lord!, I repeat again, while raising my heart filled with affection to the Mother of the Church, through whose intercession all good things come.

For this anniversary, many places will hold acts of homage in honor of Pope John Paul II, to which we want to join ourselves wholeheartedly. But we Catholics cannot limit ourselves to these exterior expressions of affection, because that would be very little. As children of the Church we must accompany the Pope, above all, by the generous offering of our prayer, our sacrifice and our work for him, his health, and his intentions. Let us try to pass on to many people this way of taking part in the approaching anniversary. Persevering prayer and generous mortification should always be the foundation for our affection and veneration for the Holy Father.

A year has gone by since the canonization of St. Josemaría. As I have repeated frequently during these months, October 6 should never be erased from our memory or conduct. This date is etched forever in the history of Opus Dei, and we must return to it again and again to find once more the impetus towards personal holiness and apostolate that we all felt that day with special intensity. The Pope’s words have to unceasingly nourish our prayer and that of those we are trying to bring closer to God by following the spirit of Opus Dei. The Pope told us on that occasion: To raise the world to God and transform it from within: this is the ideal the holy founder points out to you, dear brothers and sisters, who rejoice today to
see him raised to the glory of the altars. He continues to remind you of the need not to let yourselves be frightened by a materialist culture that threatens to dissolve the genuine identity of Christ’s disciples. He liked to repeat forcefully that the Christian faith is opposed to conformism and interior inertia.

Following in his footsteps, spread in society the consciousness that we are all called to holiness whatever our race, class, society or age. In the first place, struggle to be saints yourselves, cultivating an evangelical style of humility and service, abandonment to Providence and constant attention to the voice of the Spirit. In this way, you will be the “salt of the earth” (cf. Mt 5:13) and “let your light shine before men, in order that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:16).[4]

By his example and words, St. Josemaría taught us to go to our Lady at every moment, to show her our affection and our trust in her maternal mediation. Don Alvaro, his first successor as head of Opus Dei, urged us to strive “to stay closely united to our Lady, going to her in everything and for everything”[5] Let us strive to pray the Rosary with a tender and strong devotion, especially during this month of October, the final month in the “year of the Rosary” proclaimed by the Pope. Let us put great care into contemplating the mysteries, in accord with the Holy Father’s suggestions, who exhorted us to turn our eyes to Christ, to strive to understand him, to configure ourselves with him, to address our petitions to him and to announce him to others, always through Mary and with Mary.[6]

As you begin each decade, put the Pope’s intentions in first place. Thus you will be very united to the intentions of your Father and Prelate. As St. Josemaría once told us: "Children of my soul, we have the great joy of knowing that God has chosen us from all eternity and has brought us to this family of Opus Dei, which finds its pride in serving: serving all souls and, above all, serving the Church, One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic; serving the Roman Pontiff with an unconditional love. Faithful to Jesus Christ, docile to the Church’s magisterium, we work and pray to extend the Kingdom of God, united to the Pope in a deep filial obedience."[7]

+ Javier

Dear brothers and sisters:

My dear deacon sons:

1. I am deeply moved and grateful to the Blessed Trinity to be celebrating Holy Mass and administering priestly ordination, here in the shrine of our Lady of Lujan, to these two deacons of Opus Dei. All the Marian shrines, homes of our Mother, are places for a special encounter with the one who, as an ancient Father of the Church so beautifully said: “gave us the bread of life, to replace Eve’s bread of exhaustion.”[1]

Moreover, Lujan holds unforgettable memories for me personally. Here, on Wednesday, June 12, 1974, I accompanied St. Josemaría Escrivá on a pilgrimage. I remember the pealing of the bells that announced his arrival, the large crowd that accompanied him with its joyous family.
atmosphere, and the calm and recollected demeanor of the Father, as he knelt on the floor of the sanctuary devoutly praying the Rosary.

Today, I invite you to unite yourselves expressly to the founder of Opus Dei’s prayer during that pilgrimage. He came to Lujan to ask our Lady to protect the Church, to pray for this land of the Rio de la Plata, to leave at Mary’s feet the spiritual fruit of his catechesis here. I can assure you that, as always, he learned a lot from the Argentinians and from so many people from Uruguay, Paraguay, and Bolivia, who joined themselves to his prayer.

It is the first time that I am administering the sacrament of Holy Orders in the Americas, which is another reason for my joy. I ask you to unite yourselves to my prayer, beseeching our Lord, through the intercession of his most holy Mother, to make them very holy, and to continue sending to the Church vocations of pious, learned and cheerful priests.

Let us pray for the shepherd of this diocese and for all the bishops, and in a special way for our Holy Father John Paul II. Let us redouble our prayer for him and for his intentions in the weeks that still remain before the celebration of his silver anniversary, on October 16, as successor to St. Peter.

2. All the Christian faithful are sons and daughters of Mary. From the Cross, as the Church invites us to consider on the feasts of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and the memorial of our Lady of Sorrows, Jesus turned to her and to the beloved disciple, who represented the disciples of all times, and said to his Mother: “Woman, behold your Son.” Then, turning to his disciple, he said: “Behold your mother.” St. John tells us that “from that hour, the disciple took her to his own home” (Jn 19:26–27), that is, he placed her at the center of his life and began to honor her as his true Mother.

Let us not forget that Christ’s words have a special power: they bring about what they signify, for they are the words of the incarnate Word, and therefore endowed with divine omnipotence. Thus when Jesus says “Behold your mother” and “Behold your son,” at that very moment there came to
birth in Mary’s heart a true spiritual maternity towards all believers, and in his disciples a true filial relationship to our Lady.

We are in a month rich in Marian feasts. They are a loud knock at the door of our souls, by which the Church through her liturgy reminds us of the decisive importance of devotion to our Lady in the lives of all Christians. Honoring Mary, entrusting to her our spiritual and material needs, going to her so that she bring us to her Son, is an integral part of the path that Jesus has opened to lead us to heaven. In words of St. Josemaria, I remind you that the source from which the practices of Marian piety spring are “faith in God the Father’s saving will; love for God the Son who really became man and was born of a woman; trust in God the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us with his grace. It is God who has given us Mary, and we have no right to reject her. We should go to her with a son’s love and joy.”[2]

3. John, the beloved disciple, formed part of that group of first disciples to whom our Lord, at the Last Supper, entrusted the sacrament of his Body and Blood, so that they could make it present until the end of time: “Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19). Thus, as the Pope said, Mary’s “maternal role would take on special significance in relation to a priest apostle. And we can imagine that Jesus’ look was directed not only to John, but down through the centuries to the long series of his priests, right to the end of the world. He entrusted each of them in a special way, like the beloved disciple, to Mary’s motherhood.”[3]

The ultimate foundation of Mary’s special maternal role with respect to priests is based on the mystery of the Incarnation. Upon becoming the Mother of Christ, our Lady was made Mother of the Eternal High Priest. At their ordination, priests receive a special configuration with Jesus Christ. The Paraclete consecrates them so that they can make Christ present among all men and women. “All of us Christians,” taught St. Josemaria, “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.”[4]

This visible representation of Christ, the Head of the Church, reaches its summit in the preaching of God’s word and in the administration of the sacraments. Especially in the sacrament of Penance and at Mass, the priest
is Christ himself. As the founder of Opus Dei so graphically expressed it: “I am, on the one hand, a member of the faithful like the others; but, above all, I am Christ at the Altar! I am renewing in an unbloody manner the divine Sacrifice of Calvary and I am consecrating, in persona Christi, in the person of Christ. I really represent Jesus Christ, for I am lending him my body, my voice, my hands and my poor heart, so often stained, which I want him to purify.”[5]

Great are the tasks that are entrusted to each priest, who has to strive to reflect Christ’s face at every moment. To carry them out worthily, to draw souls to God and attain sanctity himself, he needs abundant grace and a generous response. The priestly character capacitates him to represent Jesus and the sacramental grace assures him of divine help. My sons, this grace will never be lacking if you strive to correspond to God’s love. You can rely on the prayers of countless persons throughout the whole world, and above all on the intercession of our Lady. Show her your filial affection, go with confidence to her help, have recourse to her in every circumstance, because, and I repeat it gladly, she is in a special way your Mother.

Let us listen once more to the Pope. “What should we ask from Mary, as mother of priests? Today, as in every epoch (and perhaps even more so now), priests should ask Mary for the grace of knowing how to receive God’s gift with a grateful love, with the gratitude she showed in the Magnificat; the grace of being generous in their personal dedication, imitating her example of a generous mother; the grace of purity and faithfulness to their commitment of celibacy, following her example as a faithful Virgin; the grace of an ardent and merciful love, contemplating her witness as Mother of Mercy.”[6]

The biographies of holy priests always speak of their deep Marian devotion. The life of St. Josemaria teaches us how to draw close to our Lady. There come to mind so many manifestations of his piety: his slow and contemplative praying of the Rosary; his greetings directed to the images of our Lady that he met on his path; the aspirations that sprang from his heart and his lips, and that were often captured in his writings; the kisses with which he honored the images of the Mother of God and our Mother…
Let us go then to St. Josemaria, asking him to teach us to be very devoted to our Lady and thus attain a greater intimacy with Jesus. Listen to what he tells us: “Invoke the Blessed Virgin. Keep asking her to show herself a Mother to you—monstra te esse Matrem! As well as drawing down her Son’s grace, may she bring the clarity of sound doctrine to your mind, and love and purity to your heart, so that you may know the way to God and take many souls to him.”[7] Amen.

[1] St. Ephraim of Syria, hymns 6, 7 (Lamy 592, 594).
[5] Ibid.

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At the priestly ordination of deacons of the Prelature, at the Shrine of Torreeciuadad, Spain (August 31, 2003)

Dear brothers and sisters.

My dear deacon sons:

1. Once more we find ourselves in this Marian shrine to carry out Jesus’ command at the Last Supper: “Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19). Today not only are we sacramentally renewing the sacrifice of Calvary, as in every Mass, but we will also confer the sacrament of Holy Orders upon a group of deacons. Once they become priests of the New Testament, they will visibly represent Christ, the Head of the Church, before the rest of the faithful. Then, as living instruments of the Supreme Priest, they will lend him their intellects and wills, their hands, their souls and their bodies, in
order to act in persona Christi in preaching the Word of God and in administering the sacraments, especially Penance and the Eucharist.

There are no greater actions in this world than forgiving sins and making Christ’s sacrifice present on the altar. St. John Chrysostom, with his usual eloquence, writes: “If anyone considers carefully what it means to be a man still clothed in flesh and blood, and nevertheless able to draw so close to the blessed and most pure Nature, then he will come to understand how great is the honor bestowed on priests by the grace of the Spirit …. For to those who dwell upon earth, whose conversation is still within the ambit of this world, it has been granted to administer the treasures of Heaven, receiving a power that God never granted to the angels or archangels.”[1] As St. Josemaría exclaims in one of his homilies: “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.”[2]

The Holy Father, in his recent encyclical on the Eucharist, writes that “this thought leads us to deep amazement and gratitude.”[3] Amazement and gratitude that has to be manifested in a very specific way: valuing each day more the divine forgiveness we receive in Confession, preparing with great care to attend Mass and to receive Holy Communion. In addition, let us ask God that we never lack the holy priests required to provide for the needs of the Church all over the world, priests who are well-formed, cheerful and filled with apostolic zeal. Jesus himself tells us to pray for this gift: The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest (Mt 9:37-38).

Let us pray for the Pope, for the bishops (especially the bishop of this diocese), for priests and deacons, and for priestly vocations. Let us pray that there be many truly Christian families, where vocations for the Church are forged, families who see the call of one of their sons to the priesthood as a great blessing from God. I warmly congratulate the parents and brothers and sisters of the new priests. God will repay you for what you have done, by your prayers and example, to help these sons and brothers of yours become Christ’s ministers.
2. I now direct myself to you, my dear ordinands. In St. Josemaría you have a wonderful model to guide you every day in exercising your priesthood. Meditate often on his life; consider once and again his words, and go confidently to his intercession to confront the questions that will arise in your work.

Don’t forget that, like all the priests of the Prelature, you are especially sons of our Father’s prayer. Recalling the history of how the first priests came to Opus Dei, he wrote: “I prayed trustingly and eagerly for so many years for your brothers who were to be ordained and for those who would later follow their path. I prayed so much that I can say that all the priests of Opus Dei are sons of my prayer.”

St. Josemaría prayed a lot for you, my sons, even without knowing you, and he did so insistently. Now, from heaven, he will help you in the exercise of your ministry and closely follow your steps, with the paternal and maternal affection that he always showed towards his sons and daughters.

And what lessons can we draw from his priestly life? There are so many that it’s impossible to list them all here. But we need only open our eyes to immediately see some lessons of capital importance, which show us his burning love for the Holy Eucharist.

For we find ourselves in a place where every corner is a song of love to our Lord and his Blessed Mother. Who but a person truly in love with Jesus and Mary would have the mad idea of constructing a shrine in such an isolated and rugged place? Certainly, he was moved by a debt of gratitude towards our Lady of Torreciudad; but above all he was moved by his ardent love for the Blessed Sacrament. Therefore he wanted, and happily it has become a reality, that Torreciudad should have many confessionalss, so that souls could be reconciled with God and worthily receive Jesus in the Eucharist. Thus he wanted the Shrine’s esplanade to be big enough to provide room for thousands of people. And he wanted the reredos to be a catechesis for the faithful, pointing to and emphasizing the real presence of Jesus in the tabernacle.

I recall perfectly that day in May 1975, just a month before his leaving us for heaven, when St. Josemaría visited this shrine, then practically
finished. He sat down on one of the benches, raised his eyes towards the reredos, with the tabernacle in the center, and contemplated the various scenes. “It’s a marvelous reredos,” he remarked, filled with a joy that showed clearly on his face. Then he went up to the sanctuary to look closely at the altar, the crucifix, the candlesticks, and exclaimed: “How well people will be able to pray here!”

Making use of these brief recollections, my sons, I want to highlight for you some of the priestly aspirations that filled St. Josemaría’s heart. Always be eager to administer God’s pardon in the sacrament of Penance. Celebrate Holy Mass with real piety, making the prayers of the Church your personal prayer. Be generous in everything that has to do with Eucharistic worship. Show by your behavior, in spite of the inevitable defects that we all have, that you are men who believe and who love.

3. I return to the recent encyclical of Pope John Paul II, which I invite everyone to read and to meditate on slowly, because you will obtain, we will all obtain, light and encouragement to draw close to our Lord in the Eucharist. The Holy Father wrote that he wanted to enkindle in all the faithful the Eucharistic “amazement” I mentioned above, following closely on what he wrote in his apostolic letters on the mission of the Church in the new millennium and on the Rosary. And he added: “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.”[5]

My dear brothers and sisters: I invite you to formulate the resolution of making a more determined effort to draw close to Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Let us strive to take part at Holy Mass with greater devotion, to prepare ourselves better to receive Holy Communion, to visit our Lord frequently in the tabernacle. Let us often speak to others of the marvel of a God who is hidden in the Sacred Host, where one finds open all the treasures of grace and mercy. Thus we will be able to accompany the Holy Father closely during the weeks that remain before the celebration of
his silver anniversary as Roman Pontiff, on the coming 16th of October. If we go to our Lady, whom the Pope in his encyclical calls “the woman of the Eucharist,” we will learn to act with great refinement towards Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Let us tell her, making use of words of St. Josemaría: “Mother, don’t leave me! Help me to seek your Son; help me to find your Son; help me to love your Son—with my whole being!”[6] Amen.


At the Mass on the first anniversary of the canonization of St. Josemaria Escriva, St. Eugene's Basilica Rome (October 6, 2003)

My dear children:

1. A year has passed since that happy day of St. Josemaría Escrivá’s canonization. I cannot fail to recall that, during the long months of spiritual preparation for that grace-filled event, I often stopped to consider the canonization as a new encounter with God through the mediation of this holy priest; that it had to be, therefore, a true and deep personal conversion.

   And thus it was. On October 6, 2002, in St. Peter’s Square, we all grew in our conviction that heaven is our definitive destination, the place where God await us, the goal of our life. St. Josemaría smiled at each of us from the tapestry hanging on the façade of the Vatican basilica, addressing to us the central point of his message: the universal call to holiness. The Holy Father’s invitation in his homily at Mass helped us to formulate a sincere
resolution: “To elevate the world to God and transform it from within: this is the ideal the holy founder points out to you... He continues to remind you of the need not to let yourselves be frightened by a materialist culture that threatens to dissolve the genuine identity of Christ's disciples. He liked to repeat forcefully that the Christian faith is opposed to conformism and interior inertia.

“Following in his footsteps, we must spread in society the consciousness that we are all called to holiness whatever our race, class, education or age. In the first place, struggle to be saints yourselves, cultivating an evangelical style of humility and service, abandonment to divine Providence, and constant attention to the voice of the Spirit. Thus, you will be the ‘salt of the earth’ (cf. Mt 5:13) and your light will ‘so shine before men’ that they will see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (ibid., 5:16).”[1]

To convert this resolution into a reality, we should foster our contrition for our great or small faults, for our poor response to God's gifts. This is the practical, daily perspective within which we must focus our conversion. Therefore, today I want to formulate for all of us the wish that October 6 will be a date that is never erased from our memory. One of St. Josemaría's constant teachings, let us never forget it, was that our interior life has to be just that: to begin...and to begin again.[2]

2. Another thought that often came to my mind during those months of preparation was that October 6 was going to be a feast for the whole Church. St. Josemaría belongs to the patrimony of sanctity that constitutes the unfathomable riches of the mystery of the Church. His teaching and example point out to us a path that all of us—men and women, young and old, priests and laity, intellectuals and manual workers, healthy and sick, married, celibate or widowed—are called to follow: “To elevate the world to God and transform it from within,” as the Pope put it.

A saint for the whole Church this idea is clearly expressed in the words of Pope John Paul II on the day following the canonization: “St. Josemaria was chosen by the Lord to announce the universal call to holiness and to point out that daily life and ordinary activities are a path to holiness. One could say that he was the saint of ordinary life. In fact, he was convinced
that for those who live with a perspective of faith, everything is an opportunity to meet God, everything can be an incentive for prayer. Seen in this light, daily life reveals an unexpected greatness. Holiness is truly within everyone’s reach.”[3]

So many events, great and small, have occurred during this year, that have underscored this reality with the force of deeds. We have received countless testimonies, from all over the world and from all sorts of people, that recount the stories of so many persons who have sought out his intercession before God and received spiritual and material favors—at times real miracles. Devotion to St. Josemaría has spread even more widely during the last few months, which is a spur to our efforts to be Christians whose lives are consistent with their faith.

I would like to add one consideration, both consoling and demanding at the same time. This saint, this priest who enjoys such great powers of intercession before God, continues to have, over each of us, the paternity that he possessed while on earth, which was a very specific characteristic of his human and spiritual personality. Let us listen once more to the Holy Father: “St. Escrivá was a very human saint. All those who met him, whatever their culture or social status, felt he was a father, totally devoted to serving others, for he was convinced that every soul is a marvelous treasure; indeed, every person is worth all of Christ’s Blood.”[4]

So we can be certain that he continues to concerned about us from heaven, that he watches over us and prays that we be faithful to God’s plans. With God’s grace, in spite of our limitations, any spiritual goal is within our reach. Sanctity is not a utopia. To act, guided by this hope, is not an impossible dream. It’s true: sanctity can be obtained in the ordinary events of one’s daily life, as St. Josemaría taught. But this doesn’t lessen the demands of sanctity. Sanctity is the fullness of love. And love allows no room for mediocrity or routine. A Christian should soar very high.

But this calls for a real commitment on our part. The filial bond that unites us to St. Josemaría is inseparable from the record of his life, the life of a man who reached holiness by fulfilling without reserve the mission God had entrusted to him. The Pope spoke about this as well in his address: “In the Founder of Opus Dei, we see a great love for the will of
God. There exists a sure criterion of holiness: fidelity in accomplishing the divine will down to the last consequences. For each of us God has a plan, to each he entrusts a mission on earth. A saint cannot even conceive of himself outside of God’s plan: he lives only to achieve it.”[5]

Therefore St. Josemaría speaks to us of fidelity to the vocation that God has given to each of us; he speaks to us of perseverance, of our duty to correspond to the grace of God that comes to us from heaven in every circumstance. In the life of a Christian, God’s gift and our personal effort are inseparably intertwined.

4. A few days ago, we celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei. For an institution that must last for centuries, seventy-five years are only a beginning. Our holy founder was convinced that when our Lord plans a work, he chooses instruments that are completely disproportionate and inadequate, so that one can see that the work is his.

We and so many souls throughout the world, who are nourished by the spirit of the Work, are those instruments. We have to perseveringly beg for God’s help, conscious of our littleness, and thankful for the fruit that He grants us. The best way to express this gratitude is to love the sacraments more each day, to zealously guard, together with all our brothers and sisters in the faith, the riches God has bequeathed to his Church.

Allow me to recall at least one of these treasures: the close union, the real filial devotion to the Pope that St. Josemaría taught us. This union constitutes a bulwark defending the faith of Christians against the influx of a secularization that is trying to undermine everything.

Within a few days, on the 16th of this month, in union with all Catholics and many other men and women of good will, we will celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the election of John Paul II as Peter’s successor. On this date I would like all of us to offer our prayer, our mortification and our work for the Pope, for his intentions, for his health. But not only that: I would like us to also feel challenged by the witness of his adhesion to the Cross, which is more and more evident each day. In the Holy Father we see now, in an eloquent way, the face of Christ who suffers, who takes upon himself, on the road to Calvary, the weight of all mankind,
so in need of redemption. Union with the Pope, in these moments, means
above all being generous each day, without complaint, with holy
stubbornness, with love, with dignity, in bearing our personal sufferings,
sharing in the Cross of Christ.

Let us ask the Blessed Virgin, who stands upright on the summit of
Golgotha, to watch over the Pope with maternal affection, so that we can
have him beside us for many years, for the good of the Church and all
humanity. Amen.

[1] John Paul II, Homily during the canonization of St. Josemaria,
October 6, 2002.


Josemaria, October 7, 2002.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

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At the Mass inaugurating the academic year
2003/04 at the Pontifical University of the
Holy Cross, Rome (October 14, 2003)

1. As we begin the academic year, the votive Mass of the Holy Spirit
offers us an opportunity to implore the gifts of the Paraclete, so necessary to
carry out our work properly. The professors, in their research and
preparation of classes; the non-teaching personal in their administrative
tasks; the students in their studies and efforts to master the different
subjects... all have many duties to be sanctified. St. Josemaría Escrivá, who
inspired this university, taught us that God awaits us in the ordinary
circumstances of our lives: while we are studying for an exam, answering a
telephone call, or teaching a class. Every honest human activity, carried out
with love for God and souls, is capable of transforming our human life into
something divine. “Do you really want to be a saint? Carry out the little
duty of each moment: do what you ought and put yourself into what you are doing.”[1]

The Mass of the Holy Spirit also invites us to implore the Paraclete’s gifts for the Church and for the Pope. In two days we will celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the election of Pope John Paul II as successor of St. Peter. Since the reason why this university exists and why you have come to Rome is to serve God by serving the Church and the Roman Pontiff, the coinciding of this date with the beginning of the academic year should mean for each of us an occasion for renewing our affection and gratitude to the Holy Father. We should pray especially for the Pope in this Mass so that God will bless him, fill him with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and assist him in his important service to the Church.

In this liturgy, prayers for the Pope will be heard in Italian, English, Ibo, Polish, Chinese, Kikuyu, French, Spanish and other languages. Thus we will manifest the Church’s universality, which can also be seen by looking at the features of your faces, the faces of children of God.

2. The desire to serve the Church and the Pope spurs us to work with decision, joy and scientific rigor. Philosophy, theology, canon law and social communications, the fields of study imparted in this university, help us to understand, safeguard and spread the answers God provides, through the creation and redemption, to mankind’s deepest questions. Therefore your commitment cannot remain enclosed within the walls of a classroom, or the pages of a specialized journal, or the sheets of an examination.

Within a few years, many of you who are now students will return to your native lands with a deep intellectual formation. This will enable you to guide others, reminding them—in a world which is sadly distant from God—that the meaning of life can be found only in a personal relationship with the One who freely grants us eternal happiness. Likewise, professors will feel the joy of having spread the Church’s teaching through your work, your publications and, last but not least, also through your students, who now listen to your words and who within a few years will be scattered all over the globe.

The Holy Spirit will help you to penetrate deeply into the revealed mysteries if we go to him, if we ask for his light to know how to combine
scientific rigor, intellectual creativity and intense study, with a solid life of faith. The need to use to the maximum one’s own intellectual capacity should be combined with a continual and growing awe in the face of the mystery of God’s love. The scientific rigor that should characterize intellectual work must be grounded in interior life, because faith and one’s personal relationship with God are the necessary conditions for penetrating most deeply into the revealed mysteries.

Our nearness to God takes on special intensity and meaning in the Eucharistic sacrifice, as Pope John Paul II recalled in his recent encyclical Ecclesia de Eucharistia: “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).”[2] Therefore the Mass should be a source of inspiration for our work, whether intellectual or administrative, and a fountain of energy for our entire day. Seeing and experiencing the greatness of God’s love for each of us should lead us to strive to grasp more deeply the infinite mysteries of revelation: “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.”[3]

3. Intimacy with Jesus should not be limited to the few minutes when we attend or celebrate the holy Sacrifice of the Altar. On the contrary, our personal relationship with Christ should extend throughout the entire day by visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Pope John Paul II encouraged us: “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,’ (Novo Millennio Ineunte, no. 32), 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!”[4]

The Eucharist, therefore, should preside over our daily work, until it becomes a reference point for our entire existence. I invite you to ask yourselves, in the silence of your hearts: Am I aware that our Lord, in his
sacramental presence, is very close me, in this university and in the place where I live? Do I go frequently to see him, also in the intervals between classes? Do I have the custom of greeting him in the oratory or the chapel every time that I enter or leave a place where He is present?

Mary, our mother, is the best path for finding Christ and for finding Him anew, as St. Josemaría recalled and as the Holy Father has recently written: “Christ is the supreme Teacher, the revealer and the one revealed. It is not just a question of learning what he taught but of ‘learning him.’ In this regard could we have any better teacher than Mary? From the divine standpoint, the Spirit is the interior teacher who leads us to the full truth of Christ (cf. Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:13). But among creatures no one knows Christ better than Mary; no one can introduce us to a profound knowledge of his mystery better than his Mother.”[5]

Our Lady of the Church of St. Apollinaris so often receives our glances of love, also when we go to greet Jesus on entering or leaving the university. Mary, who encourages us to combine our scientific work with a tender love for her Son, will make present to our Lord our projects and resolutions for this academic year. May the one who is Mater Ecclesiae, Mother of the Church, intercede for us, so that our love for the Church and for the Roman Pontiff increases each day. Amen.

[3] Ibid., no. 11.
[4] Ibid., no. 25.
At the Mass celebrating the Tenth Anniversary of the Campus Biomedico, Rome (October 15, 2003)

Dear professors, students, doctors, nurses and administrative personnel.

1. Today we celebrate the Mass inaugurating the University Campus Biomedico’s tenth year of existence. Ten years are not many years for a human life, and much less so for a university institution. Nevertheless, the first years of life are always very important for defining the character of a person and the identity of an institution.

The first Mass for this occasion was celebrated ten years ago, on this very date, by my predecessor as head of the Prelature of Opus Dei, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. On that occasion, Don Alvaro encouraged us to “learn how to accept with elegance and a sporting spirit” the difficulties that accompany all beginnings. He also recommended that you work with a spirit of unity and understanding, with optimism. “The key word,” he said, “that should never be forgotten is this one: service. In your work as educators, researchers, students, and in all the other important tasks of administration, maintenance, cleaning, etc., you are called to serve others with joy”[1]

You are a young university community, the youngest sister of many other universities rich in history, with which you have had close links of collaboration. Those of us who have been involved—in some cases, right from the start—in this noble adventure, feel the need to thank God for having called us to help construct the intellectual, material and spiritual foundations of an institution which, with God’s help, will yield much fruit, as it is already doing, down through the centuries.

2. The Eucharistic Sacrifice, which makes present Christ’s immolation on the Cross, is an expression of praise and thanksgiving to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Unite yourselves joyfully to the self-giving that Christ makes of himself upon the altar, offering him your personal sacrifices, your study and work, whatever it might be: teaching or learning, research, health assistance, or looking after the essential services for the university community.
Our gratitude should be expressed not only by words of thanks, but above all by deeds, seeking to make some recompense for the gifts we have received.

These gifts aren’t hard to perceive. It is not so much a matter of the buildings (the polyclinic, the ambulatory facilities, the classrooms and research laboratories) that have sprung up over these years; above all it is the opportunity you have to find better ways to care for the sick, to make progress in the biomedical sciences, to form a future generation of doctors, engineers, nurses, dietitians.

Do you want to construct a great university? Then don’t forget to take extraordinary care of the smallest details. I remind you of some words of St. Josemaría: “Have you seen how that imposing building was built? One brick upon another. Thousands. But, one by one. And bags of cement, one by one. And blocks of stone, each of them insignificant compared with the massive whole. And beams of steel. And men working, the same hours, day after day...—Have you seen how that imposing building was built?... By dint of little things!”[2]

3. St. Josemaría, whom all of you view as the father and patron of your university, was—like all the saints—“a great soul,” a truly magnanimous person. Indeed, he inspired great undertakings throughout the world in service of all men and women (including several universities). And do you know how he managed to do this, and to spread this spirit around him? It was by fulfilling his daily work as perfectly as possible and putting care into little things with love and for love.

Anyone involved in teaching or other educational tasks should especially recall that the essential power of their work consists in knowing how to turn the smallest actions and gestures of each day into vehicles for great things. As St. Josemaría also wrote, “Everything in which we poor men have a part—even holiness—is a fabric of small trifles which, depending upon one's intention, can form a magnificent tapestry of heroism or of degradation, of virtue or of sin. —The great legends of old always relate extraordinary adventures, but never fail to mix them with homely details about the hero. —May you always attach great importance to the little things. This is the way!”[3]
When, at the end of the day, we glance back at the hours that have gone by (everyone makes some sort of self-examination at the end of each day), let us ask in God’s presence: Did I arrive punctually at the classes that I give or attend? Did I make the sick or my companions at work wait for me? Did I attend to everyone, colleagues, students, patients, subordinates, with serenity and respect? Was I careful about order and cleanliness in the places where I study or work? Was I demanding on myself in looking after the instruments I use? Was I understanding and forgiving towards anyone who made a mistake or behaved badly, avoiding, as St. Paul tells us to do in the first reading (cf. Rom 2:102), any hasty judgment or defamation? Do I have the courage and charity needed to correct myself and to correct others out of loyalty? Do I know how to persevere in a task once it has begun?

Taking care of these and many other small things—which at times are not so small—is how we will ensure that the Campus Biomedico University attains the academic achievements on which every university prides itself.

Our thoughts now go to the Holy Father, who will celebrate tomorrow, in union with the whole Church, the twenty-fifth anniversary of his election as the successor of St. Peter. Countless people of all races and religions want to pay him homage for the richness of his teachings, for his tenacity in defending the life and dignity of the human person. All of us want to thank him, above all, for his example of love for God and of Christian fortitude.

At the Campus Biomedico you try to cure the sick, or at least to alleviate their sufferings. You are taught to see in each sick person the image and likeness of God that every man and woman bears. Here we have a great vantage point to understand the marvelous lesson that the Pope has been giving us recently: to help us understand the salvific value of suffering; to teach us to love and serve the sick, seeing in them Christ who suffers and who is our Redeemer. Let us renew, then, our resolution to offer him our affection, our prayers and our work.

Let us ask our Lord, through the intercession of our Lady, who is the greatest human being and at the same time the humble housewife of the home in Nazareth, for the divine and human art of doing great things with
a sense of our human littleness, and the smallest and most humble things with a sense of our greatness as God’s sons and daughters. Amen.


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At the confirmation ceremony celebrated in the parish of St. Josemaria, Rome (October 26, 2003)

My dear brothers and sisters:

1. Those of you about to receive confirmation have prepared for this day helped by your families, your catechism teachers, and your parish priests, who have accompanied you diligently on your path. You have had the opportunity to grow in your knowledge of the basics of our faith, to learn to participate more attentively in the Church’s liturgical celebrations, and to lead a Christian life consistent with the Gospel.

Now, through the sacrament of confirmation, the work of baptism is being perfected in you. You will receive “the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.”[1] The Paraclete, God with us, will impart to you a fuller likeness to Christ and unite you more firmly, as living members, to his Mystical Body, the Church. You, who have already been consecrated to God in baptism, will now received the strength of the Holy Spirit, [2] and you will be signed on the forehead with the seal of the Cross.

Thus you will bring to the world the witness of our crucified and risen Lord, and you will be strengthened by the Spirit to struggle against sin.[3] Your life, enriched by the fruits of the Spirit, will spread, as St. Paul says, the good aroma of Christ (2 Cor 2:15), for the spiritual growth of the whole Church
2. The sacrament of confirmation imprints upon Christians an indelible seal, which makes us witnesses to Christ in the task of bringing to all men and women the joyful news of the Gospel. The most tangible sign of this new presence of the Holy Spirit in one’s soul is found precisely in our daring and joy in speaking about God to the people we know. The apostles, before receiving the Holy Spirit, fled in fright from the enemies of God. But after Pentecost they give themselves up to be imprisoned, and end up giving their lives joyfully in witness to their faith. As St. Josemaría wrote, even without talent, fame or fortune, we can be effective instruments in the service of God and the Church, if we ask the Holy Spirit to give us his gifts.[4]

Don’t you find yourselves moved by this immense panorama? The first reading gives us words from the prophet Jeremiah, who speaks of the return of the people of Israel after long years of exile in Babylon. “Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, The Lord has saved his people” (Jer 31:7).

Yes, my brothers and sisters, our Lord has saved all mankind. As a pledge of his benevolence he communicates to us his Spirit in confirmation; and he gives himself to us, with his Body and Blood, his Soul and Divinity, in the Holy Eucharist. Thus we can share in the responsorial psalm’s enthusiasm when it recounts the return of the exiles to their homeland: “Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, ‘The Lord has done great things for them.’ The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad” (Ps 126[125]:2-3).

Christians, too, who have received so many good things from heaven, should always taste this joy, even amid the difficulties and sufferings of this life. God’s grace will never be lacking. A joy that is born in the depths of our heart, where the Holy Trinity dwells, and that is transmitted to those around us.

I am thinking of so many people, both young people and adults, who are close to you at school or your place of work, who are your relatives or neighbors. Some of them no longer pray or go to Church. They need someone to give them an example of a Christian life lived without any
complexes: the example of other young people who, like themselves, are good students, loyal friends, good sons and daughters; but who are also able to resist what is evil because they know that only when one is at peace with God can one truly be happy. The sacrament that you are about to receive will give you the strength to be witnesses in the world to our crucified and risen Lord.

3. We come to the last point of our meditation. Let us take up St. Mark’s Gospel, which tells us the story of Bartimaeus, a blind man who was begging at the side of the road as Jesus walked by. “And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ And Jesus stopped and said, ‘Call him.’”

Those being confirmed, and all of you who are listening to me: I tell you that today, as every day, Jesus is passing close by. Call out to him with cries from the depths of your heart! Strive to go out to meet him, to detain him! He is always ready to cure us, to cleanse our wounds, to wipe away our sins. It is precisely for this purpose that he left us the sacrament of penance.

Perhaps our passions will rise up and try to dissuade us, like those persons who tried to silence Bartimaeus. Don’t pay any attention to them. St. Josemaría, commenting on this Gospel passage, tells us to act as Bartimaeus did, when we sense that Jesus is passing close by us. “Your heart beat faster and you too began to cry out, prompted by an intimate longing. Then your friends, the need to do the done thing, the easy life, your surroundings, all conspired to tell you: ‘Keep quiet, don’t cry out. Who are you to be calling Jesus? Don’t bother him.’

“But poor Bartimaeus would not listen to them. He cried out all the more: ‘Son of David, have pity on me.’ Our Lord, who had heard him right from the beginning, let him persevere in his prayer. He does the same with you. Jesus hears our cries from the very first, but he waits. He wants us to be convinced that we need him. He wants us to beseech him, to persist, like the blind man waiting by the road from Jericho.”[5] The Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of fortitude and of love, will help us to do so, if we go to him with confidence.
Still fresh in our memory is the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the election of John Paul II as successor of St. Peter. Today we want to give thanks to God for the fruits of his pontificate, and we have committed ourselves to pray even more for the Holy Father and his intentions. For all of us he is a living example of how to follow Christ when He passes close by us: with complete dedication, without seeking excuses, without hiding because of our age, our sickness, our many occupations. Jesus comes to meet us at every moment of our life to ask for our response, and he gives us the grace of the Holy Spirit to assist us. Let us be generous in responding!

All of this will become a reality if, with the help of God, who is present in your soul, you strive to behave as consistent Christians in your work, in your studies, with your family, among your friends. We all have to fight against our defects. Then the Holy Spirit will bring about in you virtues whose fruit will be the conversion of so many of your friends and companions.

Let us turn to our Lady. No human being has ever been as filled with the Holy Spirit as Mary. Let us ask the mother of Christ and our mother to always sustain our desire to truly become like her Son, to welcome Him into our personal life, to bring Christ’s peace to so many people, helping them to share in the holy sacraments. Amen.

On the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, in the Parish of St. John the Baptist al Collatino (December 7, 2003)

My dear brothers and sisters:

1. Every feast of our Lady fills the hearts of Christians with joy, who are happy to give honor to their own mother. Today’s feast, the Immaculate Conception of Mary, has a special solemnity. The Church teaches that, foreseeing the merits of Christ, God preserved our Lady from every stain of sin and adorned her with all graces, from the first instant of her earthly existence, in order to prepare a worthy dwelling place for his Son.

We can say many beautiful things about our Lady, and we would never finish. De Maria nunquam satis, theologians have said; one can never say enough about Mary. Therefore I am very happy to be with you at the conclusion of the traditional novena in honor of the Immaculate Conception, since it gives me an opportunity to praise the Blessed Trinity for the marvels wrought in Mary.

Among the texts from the Old Testament that the Church’s tradition has applied to the mother of Christ, there is one I would like to use as the theme for this homily. It is a verse from the Canticle of Canticles. “Who is this that looks forth like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?”[1]

Our Lady is poetically described as the dawn that announces the rising of the sun each day, a beautiful metaphor of the place God has assigned to Mary in his plan of salvation. Her immaculate conception was the announcing of the imminent arrival of Christ, the Sun of Justice, desired by all generations. The celebration of this feast at the beginning of Advent alerts us to the fact that Christmas is about to arrive and that we should prepare ourselves to worthily receive Jesus in the intimacy of our heart.

Let me ask you and ask myself: Are we really doing this? Are we striving during these weeks to prepare ourselves—with intense prayer and
generous mortification, with work that is well done—for the arrival of our Lord?

2. There does not exist, nor could there ever exist, a more beautiful creature, in soul and in body, than the woman predestined to be the Mother of God. St. Josemaría Escrivá wrote: “Theologians have frequently come up with reasons to explain in some way the meaning of the abundant graces showered upon Mary...’It was fitting; God could do so; therefore he did.’ This is the clearest reason why our Lord granted his Mother, from the very moment of her immaculate conception, all possible privileges. She was free from the power of Satan. She is beautiful, spotless and pure in soul and body: *tota pulchra!*”[2]

Today the liturgy celebrates our Lady’s marvelous beauty. It is above all an interior beauty. Mary’s soul, exempt from all stain of sin, both original and personal, is adorned with all the supernatural gifts, starting with faith, hope, and charity. Thus, as we read in today’s Gospel, the Archangel Gabriel, upon bringing her the joyful announcement of her divine maternity, did not call her by her own name, but used a new expression that indicated our Lady’s status in God’s eyes: “Hail Mary, full of grace...”[3] Mary is the one upon whom God has poured his grace so abundantly that she is totally filled with celestial gifts.

Very aware of her own unworthiness of such an honor, our Lady proclaimed herself *ancilla Domini*, the servant of the Lord.[4] She realized that all she possessed had been gratuitously given to her, the fruit of God’s absolute benevolence, just as the moon receives all its light from the sun. If the full moon enables us to admire the beauty of the night, it is only because it reflects the sun’s light. And so it is with Mary. All her beauty, interior and exterior, comes from God, which she freely acknowledges: “For he who is mighty has done great things for me...for behold henceforth all generations will call me blessed.”[5]

All that each of us possesses as well—life, intelligence, virtues, family, work—everything that is good in us, is God’s gift. Do we acknowledge this? Do we give thanks to God with our whole heart for the gifts he has granted us?
3. “Fair as the moon,” and also “bright as the sun.” This image, which completes the former one, teaches us that our Lady—like the sun, which is the source of light and warmth, without which there could not be any life—is for us a most lovable Mother, who not only gives life to her children, but feeds and educates them and accompanies them at every moment. Mary carried out a mother’s role with Jesus during his earthly life, which she continues to exercise now with all men and women, and particularly with Christians, so that we might gain the eternal happiness to which we have been called, which is nothing other than holiness.

St. Paul reminds us of this in the second reading, when he raises a song of praise and gratitude to God: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ.”[6] Our adoptive filiation should be perfected by the grace of the sacraments and by our personal correspondence. Are we aware of this? Do we go regularly to confession and receive the Eucharist? Do we dedicate some time each day to prayer?

We can count on the help of our Lady, who has a special role in the work of our sanctification, since Jesus himself has entrusted us to her maternal care. John Paul II said in his Apostolic Letter on the Rosary: “In support of the prayer which Christ and the Spirit cause to rise in our hearts, Mary intervenes with her maternal intercession...If Jesus, the one Mediator, is the Pathway of our prayer, then Mary, his purest and most transparent reflection, shows us that Path.”[7]

The Holy Rosary is a privileged means for reaching Jesus through Mary. Praying the Rosary is “both meditation and supplication. Insistent prayer to the Mother of God is based on confidence that her maternal intercession can obtain all things from the heart of her Son....This is a conviction which, beginning with the Gospel, has grown ever more firm in the experience of the Christian people....When in the Rosary we plead with Mary, the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 1:35), she intercedes for us before the Father who filled her with grace and before the Son born of her womb, praying with us and for us.”[8]
4. Our Lady’s help is especially present in moments of temptation or trial. Above all, in the face of attacks by the enemy of souls. Mary shows herself to be “terrible as an army with banners.” She is our greatest defense, because she has never been subject, not even for an instant, to the power of the Evil One. The Blessed Virgin is the perfect fulfillment of the promise of God to our forefathers, as we heard in the first reading. Indeed, after original sin, God justly punished Adam and Eve and their descendants. And turning to the serpent, a figure of the tempter, he added: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”[9]

Let us go then to our Lady in all our needs, especially our spiritual needs. And let us say to her with St. Josemaría: “Mother! Call her with a loud voice. She is listening to you; she sees you in danger, perhaps, and she—your holy mother Mary—offers you, along with the grace of her Son, the refuge of her arms, the tenderness of her embrace…and you will find yourself with added strength for the new battle.”[10] Amen.

[8] Ibid.
Addresses

Address at the opening of the academic year at the Pontifical University of Holy Cross, Rome (October 14, 2003)

Each new academic year is an occasion to examine the path we have followed in the preceding months, giving thanks to God for his gifts, and setting out again on the right path, with renewed determination in our search for the truth. The university, indeed, is marked by an intrinsic vocation to renewal, to originality, but it does not reject the course mapped out by tradition.

Looking at the year that has just gone by, we discover so many reasons to give thanks to God, as grateful children of his. The twenty-fifth anniversary of John Paul II's pontificate, which is being celebrated during these days with events all over the world, has been a testimony to the responsibility and personal dedication with which the Holy Father has responded to God’s call, even in moments of obvious and serious physical disability. This year has also seen a renewed call to unity through prayers for peace and for the family, intentions that the Holy Father recommended in his apostolic letter on the Rosary. This call to unity culminates around the Eucharistic table, in adoration of our Lord who offers himself for us in the sacramental renewal of his sacrifice.

For us, in this Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, which owes its existence to the inspiration of St. Josemaría Escrivá, and for so many other people throughout the world, this has also been a year of special thanksgiving for the canonization of the founder of Opus Dei, the first anniversary of which we celebrated a few days ago. The teachings of St. Josemaría urge us to always seek union with God in all our activities and to give a co-redemptive meaning to every day. We are thankful to God for his gift to the Church in holding St. Josemaría up as a model for following Christ “in the middle of the street,” as this holy priest used to say, and for our work in the university.
Other events, both academic and non-academic, have added to our reasons for gratitude and strengthened our university community: the granting of three honorary doctorates; the beginning of new programs in the various schools and in the institute of religious studies; numerous publications; and the expansion and reconstruction of the library and classrooms.

All these realities, and so many others that each of us could personally add to the list, are evidence of the abundant grace poured out upon us during these past months and encourage us to continue on the path opening before us in the new academic year.

The challenge of building up a university is the challenge of never tiring in our joint search for the truth. The very life of this institution depends on striving to attain this objective. How often we have reflected on this reality. Today, on the occasion of the inauguration of the new academic year, I only want to remind you of one requirement in this endeavor: research in the university, the search for the truth, has to be carried out as a joint effort by the universitas personarum who make up the university. Certainly university work requires hours and hours of individual research and study, and of administrative work and fund-raising, but this would never constitute true university work if it was not marked by a common effort to uncover the truth.

The search for truth within the university requires making one’s own discoveries available to everyone else; the mutual criticism of ideas; generosity in placing research material at the disposition of others even before having reached definitive conclusions; frequent contact with colleagues from other university institutions; allowing one’s personal work to be interrupted when the common interest requires it, including being present on the premises of the university when needed. This is how the search for truth should be carried out in a university. Only in a climate like this are each one’s capacities valued and optimized. Thanks to the united efforts of many persons, culture is advanced; something new is contributed to the community of which the university is a part.

University work thus will offer a real service to the truth; it will help build a living community, one that will lead to renewal and be a catalyst of
originality. And it will help bring about a more noble society, with customs that are more worthy of human dignity, more in accord with the Truth.

In the pontifical universities, university work is also a direct service to the Church’s mission and unity, as the Pope noted in his Mass inaugurating the past academic year. The pontifical universities, John Paul II said, “are specially called to put themselves, in a constantly renewed way, at the service of the unity of the Church. This unity, open by its very nature to the Catholic truth, finds here in Rome the ideal environment for its study and service.”[1] May Mary our Mother, Seat of divine Wisdom, obtain for us from heaven the grace of knowing how to make our university life conform to these ideals of deepening in the truth and in the search for unity, which can help so many souls to find the full Truth, the Word of God Himself.


Address at the awarding of honorary doctorates at the Austral University, Buenos Aires (September 29, 2003)

1. Opening of the session

It is a motive of great joy for me and of profound gratitude to God to be present with you at this solemn ceremony in which three prestigious professors will join the family of Austral University as recipients of honorary doctorates.

The university is a place of intense work, where scientific developments, technical advances, and new ideas decisively influence the configuration of human society. This effort results in true progress when it respects and loves the nature and dignity of the human person, called to live in unity with all men and women and to journey towards God, our Creator and Father, and to enjoy him for all eternity.
The responsibility of offering this service to society, while eschewing explanations that diminish the human and supernatural dignity of each person, is the challenge that all university communities face. Austral University has accepted this great challenge, and under the inspiration of the teachings of St. Josemaría Escrivá, it has been working to meet it from its very beginning.

St. Josemaría was always very aware of the challenge of university life. With supernatural enthusiasm he encouraged thousands of Christians of all races and social conditions to take part in this work of service to humanity and the spread of the light of divine revelation in all fields of university study. Given the great importance of intellectual work for the proper ordering of society, he took special interest in the university tasks in the classroom and the laboratory (cf. *The Way*, no. 338), carried out with rigorous and constant effort, and always with a very refined respect for freedom of consciences.

Those here present share this appreciation (with its deep Christian roots) for university work. Precisely because I know your enthusiasm for your work, let me urge you to foster an even greater sense of responsibility in your tasks. Your country and the whole world are in need of the example of your research and teaching, which will encourage many others to undertake the effort to bring the truth to light, contributing to resolving the great problems of our time—the advancement of society, assistance to those most in need, and above all redirecting all human realities to God.

The ideals and responsibilities that I have just outlined have led the governing council of Austral University to recognize the academic work of three great university people, whom today we are honoring with a doctorate *honoris causa*. Their accomplishments draw the attention and appreciation of those who value work that is well done, and awaken in the university community the responsibility of following their excellent example, which is now receiving public recognition.

2. Address at the closing of the session

The human person, created in the image and likeness of God, encompasses unfathomable riches and unity. This profound truth, which
we will never fully comprehend, awakens our zeal to penetrate ever more deeply into the truth of man’s being.

This zeal beats in the heart of every true university professor, manifested in the eagerness to enrich our understanding of the human person. In the most varied disciplines of university life, the multiple dimensions of the human being are investigated and arguments are tested that provide a reasoned explanation for the sensible, psychic and spiritual facets of each person.

The sciences to which the three new doctors have devoted their lives share, with different methods, in this effort to deepen our knowledge of the human person and to foster each person’s dignity.

The neurosciences seek to comprehend the highly complex reality of the human mind. Professor Tomas Hökfelt has achieved notable results in this field. Besides the international recognition won by his valuable research at the Karolinska Institute, we want to emphasize his concern to form students coming from all over the world. This generous dedication reveals the human and Christian depth of Dr. Hökfelt, and is an eloquent example of how to make work of the highest demand compatible with a real appreciation for one’s collaborators, to whom he has offered his guidance and help with attentive solicitude.

In investigating the physical and chemical mechanisms that regulate the activity of the human body, the scientist discovers that the experimental method does not exhaust reality. Rather, he needs to be open to the other sciences and seek as an ultimate guide the knowledge provided by theology and philosophy.\(^1\) In the words of Pope John Paul II, philosophy plays an important role in formulating the question of the meaning of man’s life, and in providing the answer.\(^2\) Therefore it is a path towards discovering fundamental truths about the life of man.\(^3\) Specifically in the field of logic, Dr. Ignacio Angelelli, professor at the University of Texas-Austin, has carried out internationally recognized research, and has proven himself to be a true teacher. His academic achievements and writings have manifested an attitude of service to all men and women through his philosophical work.
Among the most important advances of the twentieth century in regard to a deeper understanding of the human person, is a greater awareness of the human person’s relational character and communicative nature. The person is essentially open to God, to other persons, and to the physical universe. Each person attains human fullness through interpersonal communication. To be able to transmit ideas or sentiments, to open up one’s intimacy and share it with a beloved person, to express aesthetic reactions, are possibilities that enrich the human person in his relational nature. Professor Alfonso Nieto, who was Rector of the University of Navarre for more than a decade, has explored the field of communications in many of its contemporary forms. His efforts to defend the human person have been directed towards understanding with greater depth the humanizing function of the means of communication. This effort demands responsibility and a vocation of service, for which Dr. Nieto has made himself a spokesman.

These three professors from distinct academic areas, whose work is harmoniously united by disinterested service to the human person, share the conviction that there is an intimate relationship between the university and the person. The defense of the person also constitutes an essential feature of the message of the Church, as His Holiness John Paul II pointed out at the beginning of his pontificate. The Church wants to help every man and woman to find Christ, so that Christ can accompany each person along life’s path, illuminating it with the truth about man and the world.[4] The Prelature of Opus Dei, born in the Church and as an intrinsic part of the Church in order to serve it, has the special mission of opening up divine paths for those who wish to sanctify themselves through their professional work in the midst of secular realities. At a time when certain cultural, social, and political trends offer reductive conceptions of the person (or are even directly opposed to man’s dignity and destiny), we need to boldly repeat other words of the Holy Father affirming that the meaning of culture must be measured by the human person.[5]

Inspired by St. Josemaría Escrivá’s message, Austral University puts service to the human person at the center of its efforts. In its research and teaching, it strives to give light and to be a guide for constructing a new culture in which every man and woman is respected in their most intimate
identity, discovering in their hearts the image of the Triune God, whose Life we are called to share in.

This is not a utopian goal. As the founder of Opus Dei affirmed on an occasion similar to this one, “the university... in studying problems with scientific depth, also moves hearts, spurs on the passive, awakens dormant forces, forming citizens ready to construct a more just society.”[6] Awakening dormant forces: here is the dream that every researcher and teacher nourishes in all his daily efforts--the noble desire to acquire a serious and solid professional prestige that is seen as a service, one whose purpose is to transform our world into one of harmony and of loyal and consistent adhesion to the purposes of the Creator.

There are many urgent tasks confronting Christians,[7] the Holy Father reminded us, as we begin the new millennium. We are grateful for the courageous work of the three new doctors, who have responded to these challenges with their dedicated effort. With God’s help and the maternal intercession of our Lady of Lujan, may all of us unite ourselves to their endeavor, confronting the great challenges presented by our time.

[2] Ibid., no. 3.
[3] Ibid., no. 5.
Interview granted to the Ecclesia news agency, Lisbon, Portugal (July 29, 2003)

1. You lived alongside the founder of Opus Dei for 25 years. When did you begin to call him a saint?

I always considered him a saint. In 1950 something I heard him say was deeply engraved on my memory. Later I came to see that it expressed the norm for his entire life. He spoke of himself as a sinner who loved Jesus Christ madly. A brief prayer that he sincerely repeated to our Lord till the end of his life was: “Lord, let yourself be seen through my misery.” The saints are always deeply convinced of their little worth; the only thing that really matters to them is to identify themselves with Jesus and make him known.

2. What virtues make St. Josemaría a saint for our times?

I see him as being always contemporary, because he possessed the newness of the Gospel. His life and message have a perennial character, and aren't tied to any passing fads or prevailing interests. He strove to live the Gospel teachings as fully as possible and to help everyone to come to know them. His message is not an adaptation to modernity, but rather the transmission of the newness of the Gospel, which is always attractive and, at the same time, a sign of contradiction. He was convinced, as he said in one of his books, that the Christian faith is totally opposed to conformity (cf. Christ Is Passing By, no. 42). The timeliness of St. Josemaría, like that of all the saints, is rooted in his consistency with the Gospel. The saints are not heralds of themselves, but of Christ, although their witness may provoke, along with acceptance by many, opposition by others.

I am convinced that St. Josemaría was, and will continue to be, an instrument used by our Lord to open the ears of many people to God’s call to identify themselves with Him, each in one’s own place in the world. This great priest made it clear that the Master’s call is not directed only to a few specialists or experts in religious matters, but that it has been addressed for
the past 20 centuries to everyone. And for all who discover this light, it brings each day a great and attractive newness that illumines their life with a new clarity.

3. Does the celebration of the centennial of the birth of the founder and his canonization mark, in some way, a change in Opus Dei’s relationship with the Church and society, now that it is becoming better known?

I don’t think that it marks any real change. It’s simply that the worldwide diffusion of information in the media about the centennial and the canonization has helped millions of people to come to know more about Opus Dei. There are continual requests from all over the world asking for more information about St. Josemaría and his teachings.

4. Erecting Opus Dei as a Prelature has given it a special character, at least a unique one. Could this fact generate misunderstanding within the Church itself?

The figure of the personal prelature, foreseen by the Second Vatican Council and included in the Code of Canon Law, does not give Opus Dei any special character, precisely because it is a type of institution foreseen by the common law of the Church. There is no reason why it should give rise to misunderstandings within the Church. What is more, this figure, since it expresses very well the nature and place of Opus Dei in the Church, facilitates and strengthens relationships of communion within the Church.

5. Does the Prelature, like the dioceses, have a “vocations office” or “vocations director”? What exactly does this involve?

The Prelature of Opus Dei does not have a specific “vocations office” as such. In fact, all of its activity in spreading the vocation to sanctity and Christian formation leads to helping each person discover his or her personal vocation in the Church. Indeed, as a fruit of Opus Dei’s apostolic work, besides those who become incorporated in the prelature and many others who discover the deep meaning of their baptismal vocation, many vocations arise for the diocesan seminaries and for religious congregations. This was foreseen by St. Josemaría in 1935, as he put down in writing.

6. Spirituality and solidarity: do these words express similar ideas? To what extent do they imply competition?
Spirituality and solidarity are two different concepts. But naturally a dedication to initiatives of solidarity might very well stem from a particular spirituality, or from a specific ideology or social or political conviction, etc.

I would add that, for a Christian, solidarity is a necessary consequence of his faith, which, as St. Paul writes, acts through charity. In other words, one's faith impresses a particular identity on the natural solidarity in the face of diverse human needs: one that is created by love, the charity that is Jesus' new commandment. Thus, for example, it would make no sense for a Christian to view as an initiative of solidarity an economic assistance program that has as one of its conditions the restricting of births. It is very painful to see the dignity of peoples attacked in this way. Likewise, it is sad to see people who say they abhor terrorism giving free rein to the arms traffic with third world countries.

7. **Looking at the world and contemporary society, do you think the family is in crisis?**

The family enters into crisis when the meaning of matrimonial fidelity and true love for children is lost. Given this thermometer, it isn't hard to see problems in the world around us. It is not the family as such that is in crisis, but the social and family philosophies of many legislators and people in government, with their ideological presuppositions and the grave consequences these occasion in broad sectors of Western society. A recuperation—in prevailing ideas, in law and in real life—of the dignity of the family based on indissoluble marriage is the indispensable condition, even though it might seem difficult to achieve, for overcoming many other crises today, including juvenile delinquency, drugs, etc.

8. **Is it possible to speak of different conceptions of the family?**

Undoubtedly, there are different conceptions of the family; one need only think of the differences between Islamic and Christian views.

But often speaking of different conceptions of the family is an excuse to present as legally correct failures in family life or deviations in some sectors of society. All these people merit the respect that human dignity demands and, for Christians, affection and service. But precisely for this reason, we tell them sincerely what we see as for the good of society and also for their own good, without considering ourselves superior to anyone.
9. How can one combat certain problems that are growing in contemporary society which also affect the Church, such as pedophilia?

All the problems in our society affect the Church, because Christians feel the duty of bringing Christ’s light to wherever darkness is present, and because we are not exempt from sin. But to combat evil, our Lord has given us certain weapons: prayer and the sacraments, especially penance and the Eucharist. Today, the same as yesterday and tomorrow, Catholics have to feel the responsibility of spreading knowledge of the need to go to the sacrament of forgiveness, which obtains God’s grace and fortifies us against the tugging of the passions. The solution to the assaults of evil is not found in psychological theories or psychiatric remedies, but in the help of God’s mercy, which is conferred especially in the sacraments. Psychiatry can be, at times, a necessary help for personal equilibrium, but it does not accomplish a cleansing of moral evil in the soul.

10. Should God, or at least a clear reference to Christianity, have a place in the European constitution? What is the meaning of attempts to exclude it?

The attempts to exclude any reference to Europe’s Christian tradition offers a sad picture of the political panorama in Europe. Aside from constituting an evident historical inconsistency, the exclusion of God’s name and of Christianity will go down in history as an absurd example of intolerant secularism and culpable historical ignorance.

11. Are you in favor of “fortress Europe,” or do you view the phenomenon of immigration as a natural sign of globalization?

The problems presented by immigration are complex and quite serious. Seeing what is happening, there comes to mind at times the memory of what St. Augustine said on contemplating the fall of Hippo: it is not an old world that is ending, but a new one that is beginning. I don’t know where history is leading us, but the present panorama is calling for a new vision for confronting international problems. And this is a serious challenge for the Church as well. I view it with optimism, and think that the Christian minorities who have not allowed themselves to be overcome by consumerism and hedonism—guided by the magisterium and example of the Holy Father John Paul II—are precisely the ones who will be able to offer solutions in conformity with human dignity.
12. *What path can you point out as leading to dialogue between the West and Islam in order to bring about an end to the threat of terrorism?*

I see this path as the effort to make known, every day with greater strength, the Christian vision of life, that is to say, the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Utopia? Naivete? Perhaps for many it is, although I am convinced that Christ brought the Truth to this world and that the effort to help as many people as possible come to know this Truth is of immense importance.

13. *Has this pontificate surpassed all expectations, or, in your opinion, can we expect still further surprises?*

If one considers things from a merely human point of view, one might fail to expect any more surprises or novelties. But, in reality, this consideration would fall short because our faith assures us that the mission of the successor of St. Peter is very especially guided by the Holy Spirit, and therefore has a permanent vitality, which does not need to manifest itself in striking or extraordinary events.
Perhaps it’s due to a short-sighted view that lacks perspective. I recall that some years ago a taxi driver thought Opus Dei was only for taxi drivers. Perhaps not everyone is pleased with God’s logic, which asks Catholics to be leaven in the world.

3. To what do you attribute the criticisms you receive?

To God’s goodness, who blesses with the Cross, and to the miseries of men, mine as well. And to a lack of information on the part of those who criticize us. In any case, those who appreciate Opus Dei are incomparably more numerous than those who criticize. But praise should not lead to self-complacency; we are no better than others. Nor should criticism lead to nervousness or discouragement. With God’s help, one can draw good from everything. I love and respect the few people who do criticize us, and never consider them as enemies.

4. What are the principal challenges facing the Church in the 21st century?

I would highlight the defense and promotion of the sanctity of the family, the formation of priests, and a greater awareness of the laity’s call to apostolate.

5. What influence has Opus Dei had during the pontificate of John Paul II?

More historical perspective will be required to answer this question, since the pontificate of John Paul II continues on its course. In any case, more than what has taken place in the last 25 years, I would stress the influence of St. Josemaría’s teachings on the importance of the Gospel message of the sanctification of Work. The most important thing in the Church is what God does, in spite of our personal limitations and errors.

6. How do you view the level of religious practice in today’s society?

What “religion” means today is a very broad concept. But now when practical atheism is growing as perhaps never before in history, vendors of the empty idols of money, pleasure and power are also proliferating. However, just as twenty centuries ago in the Roman empire, there are many young and not so young people who are radicals, who see the world from a transcendental perspective and refuse to accept being treated merely as consumers.
7. *How can the advance of religious indifferentism be reconciled with the increase of religious fundamentalism, often associated with the expansion of terrorism?*

Who could answer that question? The great number of young people present at the World Youth Days is to a certain extent a denial of the advance of religious indifferentism. Undoubtedly, the abundance of material goods can suffocate and often does suffocate the spirit. We Christians are called to live in the world, but without being worldly. The moral disintegration in today’s society shows in so many ways how a society without God flounders. Fundamentalism represents the other face of the same coin. It is a danger lying in ambush when one fails to preach the freedom with which Christ has freed us.

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Other News

On November 17, 2003 the introduction of Le Fondateur de l’Opus Dei (Tome II, 1936–1946), by Andrés Vázquez de Prada, was held at Brussels’s Fondation Universitaire. Taking part in the presentation were Professor Jean-Marie Cauchies, professor of history and member of the Royal Academy of Belgium, and Stéphane Seminckx, director of the Prelature of Opus Dei’s information office. About 150 people attended the presentation. The first speaker emphasized that this biography is a work of history that captured an epoch with great vigor and objectivity. The second speaker described the spiritual courage of the founder of Opus Dei during the difficult times in Spain from 1936 to 1946.

A new edition of The Way in Arabic has been published. The print run of 1,000 copies, by Ediciones Naufal, will be distributed in various Arab countries, among them Egypt, Jordan, and Syria.

From November 20 to 23, the cultural center of St. Augustine’s Cathedral in Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast, held an exposition on the life and message of St. Josemaría. The opening ceremony was presided over by Msgr. Charles Aka, Vicar General of the diocese. A number of government officials attended the ceremony along with a large public. In his message, the Vicar General stressed the importance of the work that Opus Dei was carrying out in behalf of the diocese. The exposition consisted of 24 posters reflecting the most important moments in the life of the saint, from his childhood right to his death.

The city council of Rio de Janeiro, in October 2003, passed a motion of congratulations on the 75th anniversary of the foundation of Opus Dei. The city councilors approved the motion as a manifestation of the gratitude of Brazil’s former capital for the social and formative work that the Prelature has been carrying out in the city since 1975.

The Promesa publishing company in Costa Rica has published a book entitled El corazón humano en las enseñanzas de San Josemaría Escrivá [The human heart in the teachings of St. Josemaría] by the Chilean academician Carmen Vidal Montecinos. In her study, Dr. Vidal stresses that the teachings of the founder of Opus Dei are a revitalizing contribution to the
educational task of men and women in the third millennium. She points to the universality of these teachings and their profound efficacy when one strives to put them into practice.

To spread knowledge of St. Josemaría throughout the country, Procodes publishers, in Colombia, has printed 5,000 copies of the short biography by Michael Dolz published for the canonization of the founder of Opus Dei. The biography, in combination with a copy of The Way, is being offered at a special price in more than a hundred bookstores and supermarkets. It is also being distributed in almost 500 parishes throughout the country.

In December the publisher Bokförlage Catholica of Vejbystrand, Sweden, printed 1,000 copies of Friends of God in Swedish. More than a fourth of the printing was sold within a few days of publication. Friends of God is the first book of homilies by the founder of Opus Dei published in Swedish. In addition, the following books of St. Josemaría have been made available on the internet in Swedish: The Way, Holy Rosary, The Way of the Cross and Furrow, as well as Friends of God. Since December these works can now be consulted on line.

Archbishop Francisco Javier Martinez of Granada, Spain, on October 5, blessed a new “paso” or float representing one of the stations of the cross, carried in the Holy Friday processions by the Confraternity of Santísimo Cristo de los Favores, a well-known participant in the Good Friday events in Granada. On one of the panels of the float there is an image of St. Josemaría. In 1945, St. Josemaría made his first visit to Granada and during his stay in the city he celebrated Mass in the parish church of St. Cecilio, the patron of Granada, and prayed before the Cristo de los Favores. The confraternity of los Favores wanted to honor St. Josemaría in this way. In the words of the secretary of the Confraternity, this is good news for the faithful, since it is the first image of St. Josemaría that will be carried in the Holy Week processions in Granada.

On November 5, Archbishop Agustin Garcia-Gasco of Valencia, Spain, blessed the land and laid the first stone for the future parish church of St. Josemaría. Some six hundred people attended the ceremony. The Archbishop expressed his wish that “the parish will provide a great service
for all the district’s needs,” thus contributing “to making a better society and a better people.” At the end of the ceremony, he invoked the “protection of the saint to carry out more courageously the path of the presence of the laity in the life of the Church.” He also wanted to note the principal contribution of Opus Dei to the diocese: “well-formed priests and laity, who are at the service of whatever the diocese needs most at each moment.” The ceremony of laying the first stone coincided with the first anniversary of the canonization of the founder of Opus Dei. The activities of the parish began on the previous March 28th, in temporary facilities. The construction of the new church will begin in January and is expected to take three years.

First anniversary of the canonization of Josemaría

On the first anniversary of the canonization of the founder of Opus Dei, Masses of thanksgiving were celebrated on and around October 6 in cities throughout the world.

In the Cathedral of Medellin, Colombia, Archbishop Alberto Giraldo Jaramillo celebrated Mass with eleven priests of the Archdiocese as concelebrants, among them the rector of the Archdiocesan Major Seminary, Fr. Luis Javier Uribe, and the rector of Redemptoris Mater Seminary, Fr. Oriel Blanco.

In another part of Colombia, in Manizales, a Mass of thanksgiving was celebrated by Archbishop Fabio Betancur Tirado in the parish of the Immaculate Conception, on October 10. In his homily, he invited the faithful to courageously take up the challenge presented by the Holy Father in St. Peter’s Square on October 6, 2002: “Bring the world to God and transform it from within.”

In Ecuador, on October 6, two Masses of Thanksgiving for the canonization of St. Josemaría were celebrated. One was held in the oratory of Los Pinos high school, in Quito, celebrated by Archbishop Emeritus
Juan Larrea Holguin of Guayaquil, along with Msgr. Paulino Busca, Regional Vicar of the Prelature of Opus Dei in Ecuador, and Father Florentino Rodriguez, previous Regional Vicar of the Prelature. In his homily, Archbishop Larrea stressed that “the new saint illumines the path of those who by divine vocation are called seek the fullness of the Christian life, the greatest possible realization of our baptismal commitments, in the midst of the world.” He recalled the statement of Pope John Paul II, who undoubtedly in future will be seen as one of the outstanding figures in the history of the Church: “St. Josemaría was chosen by God to proclaim the universal call to sanctity and to show that everyday life, ordinary activities, are a path of sanctification.” The other Mass in Guayaquil was presided over by Archbishop Antonio Arregui of Guayaquil, in the church of St. Josemaría.

In India, Bishop Kuriakose Kunnacherry, of the diocese of Kottayam in Kerala, of the Malabarese rite, celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving in the Cathedral of Christ the King, with several hundred faithful in attendance. On October 2 a solemn Mass was also celebrated in the Cathedral of New Delhi. The principal celebrant was Archbishop Vincent Concessao.

On Tuesday, October 16 a solemn Eucharistic concelebration was presided over by Archbishop Fernand Franck in the Cathedral of Luxembourg. Concelebrating with him were the Regional Vicars of the Prelature of Opus Dei in Belgium and Germany, Fr. Emmanuel Cabello and Msgr. Christoph Bockamp, as well as Fr. Josef Arquer.

The Archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Joachim Meisner, celebrated a solemn Mass in the parish of St. Pantaleon in honor of St. Josemaría for a large congregation of faithful. The Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Germany and the pastor of the parish, Fr. Peter v. Steinitz, concelebrated with him. In his homily, the Cardinal stressed that we all have to renew our faith, since it can become jaded over time. “Opus Dei’s holy founder, Josemaría Escrivá, will help us to believe with renewed strength: to sentire cum Deo, in prayer; to sentire cum Christo, in charity with our sisters and brothers; and to sentire cum Ecclesia, in looking devoutly to the Blessed Virgin Mary.”
In the Church of Notre-Dame in Geneva, Auxiliary Bishop Pierre Farine officiated along with the Regional Vicar of the Prelature, Fr. Peter Rutz, and two other priests. Following the Gospel, the Bishop commented extensively on the meaning of divine filiation and spiritual childhood, which so marked the interior life of St. Josemaría. Also in Switzerland, Bishop Amédée Grab of Coira celebrated a solemn Mass of thanksgiving in the Liebfrauenkirche in Zürich. Concelebrating with him were the Vicar of Opus Dei and six other priests. Noting the difficulties that every work of God has historically encountered in getting underway, Bishop Grab underlined the affection of the Pope and of innumerable bishops for Opus Dei, precisely because they see in it a school of holiness for all the baptized.

Web page dedicated to St. Josemaria

Starting on June 26, 2003 a new web page dedicated to St. Josemaría is available on the internet: (www.josemariaescriva.info). It can be accessed in English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish, and offers information on the founder of Opus Dei and a news section that is constantly updated.

The section Biographical Profile presents a brief summary of St. Josemaría’s life and process of canonization, with official documents and references to his writings. In the section His Teachings the principal aspects of his message of sanctification in ordinary life are presented, accompanied by testimonies that show how this is lived by people from the most varied cultural and social backgrounds.

The section Founder of Opus Dei contains a documented explanation of the Prelature and the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, the Prelate, and the faithful. And in the section Under his Inspiration, various undertakings promoted by St. Josemaría for the most needy are shown, as well as others that arose as a fruit of his example and encouragement.
Another section contains a collection of favors attributed to his intercession: conversions, decisions to practice the Christian faith more fully, cures, material favors, solutions to family problems. It also has contributions from readers who write to the web page attesting to help they personally have received from St. Josemaría.

The web page www.josemariaescriva.info also offers an ample bibliography on the saint and on Opus Dei, articles from the international press, news related to the spread of his teachings, and directions to the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace in Rome, where his mortal remains are venerated.

Items noted there during the past six months include the issuance of a St. Josemaría stamp by the Vatican Post Office, and by the postal services of other countries, including Panama and Guatemala; the first church dedicated to St. Josemaría in Mexico, and an altar dedicated to him in the Church of San Giacomo Apostolo, in the town of San Felice D'Ocre (L’Aquila, Italy), a place St. Josemaría visited on several occasions.

The web page also has information on initiatives undertaken in connection with his centennial and canonization, such as the Laguna Clinic, a palliative care center for the aged and sick in Madrid, and Harambee 2002, which provides support for educational projects in Africa.

Holy Rosary printings reach a million copies

During the Year of the Rosary, decreed by His Holiness John Paul II, new editions of St. Josemaría’s *Holy Rosary* were published in various parts of the world. In some countries such as Uruguay, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Chile, these were the first locally printed editions. In other countries such as Ecuador, Japan, France, Italy, and Poland, they were new editions. In every case they included an appendix with the “Mysteries of Light,” with texts taken from the preaching of St. Josemaría. Some 350,000 copies were printed during the year, bringing the total number of copies in print to over
one million. Many of the new editions include a section explaining how to say the Rosary.

Publication of the third volume of El Fundador del Opus Dei by Andres Vasquez de Prada

The final volume of Andrés Vázquez de Prada’s three volume biography of St. Josemaría Escrivá has been published in the original Spanish. This volume covers the period from 1946, when the founder moved to Rome, up to his death in 1975.

In this last stage of his life, the biography of the saint is intertwined with the Roman phase of the canonical path of Opus Dei, a process that culminated after his death when the Nuncio of His Holiness in Italy, on March 19, 1983, presented the then Prelate of Opus Dei, Alvaro del Portillo, with the Apostolic Constitution Ut Sit of Pope John Paul II, by which the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei was constituted.

This well-documented book is a reference work for anyone wishing to know about the life of St. Josemaría and the history of Opus Dei up to 1975.

Latin Texts of The Mass in honor of St. Josemaría Escrivá

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, with the faculties granted by Pope John Paul II, has approved the Latin texts of the Mass in honor of St. Josemaría Escrivá, with a decree signed on December 2, 2003. The texts are the following:

Sancti Iosephmariae Escrivá
de Balaguer, presbyteri

ANT. AD INTROITUM

(Ier 3, 15)

Dabo vobis pastores iuxta cor meum, et pascent vos scientia et doctrina.

COLLECTA

Deus, qui sanctum Iosephmariam, presbyterum, universalis vocationis ad sanctitatem et ad apostolatum in Ecclesia praeconem effecisti, eius intercessione et exemplo concede, ut, per cotidianum laborem Iesu Filio tuo configuremur et redemptionis operi ardenti amore serviamus. Per Dominum.

SUPER OBLATA

Suscipe, Sancte Pater, haec munera, quae tibi in commemoratione sancti Iosephmariae offerimus, ut, per sacrificium a Christo in ara crucis oblatum, quod in sacramento repraesentatur, cuncta quae agimus sanctificare digneris. Per Christum.

ANT. AD COMMUNIONEM (Mt 20, 28)

Filius hominis non venit ministrari, sed ministrare, et dare animam suam redemptionem pro multis.

POST COMMUNIONEM

Sacramenta, quae sumpsimus, Domine Deus noster, in celebratione sancti Iosephmariae, spiritum adoptionis filiorum in nobis corroborent, ut, voluntati tuae fideliter inhaerentes, in sanctitatis via laeti ambulemus. Per Christum.

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News
Establishment of new Centers of the Prelature

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

Amsterdam, Bogotá (Colombia), Cuzco (Peru, two centers), Glasgow (Scotland), Madrid, Malaga (Spain), Palermo (Italy), Rome, Seville (Spain), Saragossa (Spain).

Honorary doctorates awarded at Austral University

Austral University in Buenos Aires, Argentina, has granted honorary doctorates to Prof. Tomas Hökfelt, of the Department of Neurosciences at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden; to Prof. Ignacio Angelelli, a philosopher from the University of Texas at Austin; and to the former rector of the University of Navarre, Prof. Alfonso Nieto.

The academic ceremony on September 29 was presided over by the Honorary Rector of the University, Bishop Javier Echevarría.

At the opening of the ceremony, the Prelate of Opus Dei recalled the figure of St. Josemaría, “who was always very aware of the challenge of university life. With supernatural enthusiasm he encouraged thousands of Christians of all races and social conditions to take part in this work of service to humanity and the spread of the light of divine revelation.”[1]


Edict of Cardinal Ruini for collection of the writings of Don Alvaro
THE VICARIATE OF ROME AND
THE PRELATURE OF THE HOLY CROSS
AND OPUS DEI[1]

The Cause of Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God Alvaro del Portillo, Bishop-Prelate of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei

Edict

On March 23, 1994, a few hours after returning from a trip to the Holy Land, the Servant of God Alvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei, piously gave up his soul to our Lord at the seat of the Prelatic Curia in Rome.

Bishop del Portillo, a man of God and a diligent shepherd of the Church, dedicated himself with a true ecclesial spirit to the spread of the universal call of the baptized to holiness, in accord with the charism of the founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer.

As his reputation for sanctity has been growing steadily with the passage of the years, testified to by numerous declarations of cardinals, bishops, priests and lay people, and as the initiation of the cause of canonization of the Servant of God has been formally requested, at the same time that we inform the ecclesial community of this, we invite all the faithful to communicate to us directly or to send to the Diocesan Tribunal of the Vicariate of Rome (Plaza S. Giovanni in Laterano, 6; 00184 Rome, Italy), any information, favorable or unfavorable, related to the reputation for holiness of this Servant of God.

Since by the norms of the legal dispositions all the writings attributed to him should be collected, by the present EDICT we indicate that anyone who is in possession of such writings should carefully send to the said Tribunal any document authored by the Servant of God that has not already been entrusted to the Postulation of the Cause.

We remind you that the word “writings” is not to be understood only of printed works, which have already been gathered, but also manuscripts,
diaries, letters and every private writing of the Servant of God. Those who want to keep the original can present a duly authenticated copy.

We establish finally that the present EDICT is to remain visible for two months at the doors of the Vicariate of Rome and of the Curia of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, and that it is to be published in the Bulletin of the Prelature Romana and in the Revista Diocesana of Rome.


Camillo Cardinal Ruini
Vicar General
Giuseppe Gobbi
Notary


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Commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the pontificate of John Paul II at the University of the Andes

In the presence of Cardinal Francisco Javier Errazuriz, Archbishop of Santiago, and Archbishop Aldo Cavalli, Apostolic Nuncio of His Holiness in Chile, a seminar to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II was held at the University of the Andes. The inaugural address “From Karol Wojtyla to John Paul II: a Story in Three Voices,” was presented by Enrique Brahm, a jurist and historian, director of studies in the School of Law at the University of the Andes; by Consuelo Toro, a journalist and member of the board of the School of Communications; and by Cristobal Orrego, a lawyer and professor in the School of Law. Following this there were four round tables: “Service to the human person” (public life); “Builders of society” (culture and economy);
“Be what you are” (the family); and “Look to Christ” (youth). The meeting ended with remarks by the Cardinal Archbishop of Santiago.

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Pontifical appointments

The following priests were appointed as Chaplains to His Holiness on December 18, 2003: Msgr. Robert Bucciarelli, Msgr. George Rossman, Msgr. Juan Ignacio Arrieta, and Msgr. Juan Ramon Areitio.

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Beginning of apostolic work in Croatia and Slovenia

For the past several years, Opus Dei priests and laity have been making periodic trips to Zagreb from nearby cities such as Vienna and Trieste to provide activities for spiritual formation. In July 2003, a center of the Prelature was established in the capital of Croatia. The Kulturni Centar Medvescak is situated in the neighborhood of the same name in the central part of the city.

Among the activities for young men at Medvescak are visits to the needy, which consist in providing small services and companionship to the poor. “The families that we visit are very grateful for the little we can do for them,” says Vuko Brigljevi, secretary of the center, “although we all realize that we are the ones who actually benefit the most.” Classes of Christian formation, language classes, and sports activities are also offered at Medvescak. Other programs that the cultural center plans to begin offering to students are a computer course and a discussion club for book enthusiasts.

Another center of Opus Dei has been set up in the central section of Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, close to Congress Square and the National Library. It began its activities in July 2003. Like Medvescak, it
offers activities for high school and university students and young professionals, including conferences and courses of Christian formation, and sports activities.

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INITIATIVES

• In Brief
Tenth Anniversary of the Campus Biomedico University

The Campus Biomedico University in Rome celebrated its tenth anniversary on October 15, 2003. The university was an initiative of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, who inspired faithful of the Prelature to start an educational institution in Rome that would be a model of teaching and health care based on the ideal of service to the person. The university comprises two schools: a School of Medicine and Surgery, which besides a degree in medicine offers degrees in nursing and dietetics; and a School of Biomedical Engineering.

Bishop Javier Echevarría celebrated the Mass inaugurating the academic year in the Basilica of Sant’Apollinare, in Rome. In his homily he recalled words spoken by his predecessor ten years earlier: “Don Alvaro encouraged us to ‘learn how to accept with elegance and a sporting spirit’ the difficulties that accompany all beginnings. He also recommended that you work with a spirit of unity and understanding, with optimism. ‘The key word,’ he said, ‘that should never be forgotten is this one: service. In your work as educators, researchers, students, and in all the other important tasks of administration, maintenance, cleaning, etc., you are called to serve others joyfully.’”[1]

This ideal of service as a key to the university’s success was reiterated during the ceremony inaugurating the Academic Year, held on the morning of October 15 in the Palazzo Lancellotti. Among those taking part were the Campus Biomedico’s President, Paolo Arullani, the Rector, Vincenzo Lorenelli, as well as professors, students, non-teaching staff and their families. “Finishing the first ten years of one's life,” said Professor Arullani, “is quite significant. But ten years are very few for an institution destined to last for centuries, as we see in other Italian universities now celebrating their respective centennials.” The Rector, Vincenzo Lorenzelli, noted that “the anniversary of an institution is always an occasion to reflect upon its goals and the extent to which these have been attained, in order to channel and where necessary correct future efforts.” During the past ten years this university has become a model of public service, uniting attention to the person—both students and patients—with the effort to attain
outstanding scientific competence. The Campus Biomedico, in the first years of its life, has concentrated its efforts on “improving the quality of its university teaching, and thus of the formation of the new generation,” the Rector continued. “These students confront a society where knowledge, constant learning and continual innovation constitute the only truly competitive factors.” Thus it is important that the university includes a Department of Anthropology and Applied Ethics and a Department for Research in Education and Teaching. Professor Paola Binetti, the director of this last department, said during the inauguration that “all too frequently, a person involved in education is accused of being utopian. Personally, I would be very happy if the Campus Biomedico succeeds in becoming a living expression of a ‘utopia,’ where it is possible to impart knowledge cheerfully and effectively.”

Fabio Mangiacapra, a student at the university, was also one of the speakers. He pointed out that, for the students, the Campus Biomedico is not “simply an excellent university or an ambitious project,” but “also a moral and human” reference point. In the afternoon, a delegation of 200 people made up of professors, students and personnel of the university were received by the President of Italy, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, together with the Minister for Health, Girolamo Sirchia, and the Minister for Education, Letizia Moratti. The President of the Campus Biomedico, Paolo Arullani, in his greeting to Italy’s President, recalled that the university is inspired by the teachings of the founder of Opus Dei. “St. Josemaría,” Arullani said, “taught us to cultivate a Christian spirit together with a sound lay mentality that knows how to give the right weight to professionalism, to civic spirit and to love for one’s country.” This is the spirit that has animated the Campus Biomedico in its first ten years. It has endeavored to “contribute to people in our country being able to speak about ‘good health’ rather than ‘bad health;’ to patients not only being well cared for, but treated with affection; to students not only receiving lessons, but personalized attention in their university studies; to research being carried out with scientific seriousness, with a zeal to help meet all human needs.”

Professor Arullani mentioned the activities that the Campus Biomedico is currently carrying out in the eastern part of Rome, with an ambulatory clinic and a center for advanced cancer as well as the University
Hospital. He also spoke of the support Campus Biomedico is giving to projects for the formation of doctors and nurses in Central Africa. Finally, he spoke about the future: “We are on the eve of a great challenge. Up to now we have been working in rented premises. But now we are about to construct our definitive home in Trigoria, where the first building has already been completed, the Health Care Center for the Aged, which is carrying out ambulatory and inpatient activities for elderly persons in the area. We are facing the challenge of constructing new buildings totaling about a million square feet on a 150 acre campus, and trust that the state will also be able to contribute to this effort. Hopefully one day all of you will be able to visit us there. In the meantime, we continue to rely on your generous help.” Professor Arullani, at the end of his address, presented President Ciampi with a selection of letters from patients at the Campus Biomedico expressing their gratitude for the care and affection they received in the University Hospital.

The President of Italy expressed his sincere congratulations to the university, which can boast of having “a very small percentage of students who have to repeat courses and an extremely high percentage (99%) of students who complete their education in the prescribed time.” The President added: “I note also that the percentage of graduates who find employment after their studies is very high. I cannot but be pleased to see this figure, because, unfortunately, this is not true at all Italian universities. Too often the number of graduates exceeds the requirements of the market. In other cases there are too few doctors in fields that are less popular with students but that are truly needed.”

The Minister for Health described the Campus Biomedico as “an example of how science can be united to ethics, of how attention to the person and respect for human dignity coincide with the highest level of service. In this regard, it is very significant to see the effort the university is making to train professionals in the field of nursing, which in this day and age continues to represent a clear sign of the inseparable union between technical preparation and a human relationship with patients.” The Minister for Education stressed the role of the Campus Biomedico as a model for other universities, since here “great physical and professional
energies are directed to the service of the person. This effort can serve as an example for our entire country.”


In Brief

Ashiya (Japan) -- Revitalizing the family and customs

Under the title of “Revitalizing the family and customs,” a series of conferences on current topics was held at Seido Cultural Center in Ashiya, Japan. The emphasis in the talks was on the importance of human virtues and moral behavior as indispensable foundations for the building up of a society where justice and peace reign.

Dr. Ichiro Mukoyama, author of a thesis on bioethics at the University of Navarre, spoke on the topic of “Light and Darkness in Modern Bioethics.” He insisted on the need for basic ethical norms, so that biomedical science might always be at the service of mankind.

Jose Vicente de los Mozos, director of an automobile company, emphasized the importance of human virtues in professional life: “Work is a means and not an end for the integral development of the person.” When asked what he considered the most influential factor in his life, he replied that it was his decision to marry and form a family: “Before this, whenever I had to make a decision I thought first of ‘me.’ But since I married, I always think of ‘us,’ my wife and my four children.”

Dr. Kunio Hirata, advisor to a pro-life group, spoke on the problem of education in Japanese emotional life, and called on those present to construct a new “Noah’s ark” to help the greatest possible number of persons escape the crisis in which they are immersed. In the final
conference held on November 3, which in Japan is the day for the celebration of culture, the address was given by the historian and journalist Gregorio Gonzalez Roldan. Roldan stressed the importance of human virtues in sports, both for those who take part as well as for the spectators. If sport is to foster understanding and cooperation between persons of different cultures and social environments, and if athletes are to be a model and stimulus for youth, “the cultivation of the virtues,” said the speaker, “is absolutely necessary.”

Miramar (Portugal) -- The family in the twenty-first century

At the end of the summer, the traditional gatherings organized for cooperators of Opus Dei and their friends in this part of the world were held at Fatima and in the Enxomil Conference Center, near Oporto. The central topic was “The family in the twenty-first century.” The talks offered by the conferences were as varied as family and professional life itself: the personal prayer of parents; current problems concerning marriage: an optimistic view; the family and professional work, etc. A well-known psychiatrist from Oporto gave a presentation on personality disorders and how to provide support for friends and family members who suffer from them.

Those attending were able to see a catechetical get-together with St. Josemaría, and another with Bishop Javier Echevarría from one of his recent pastoral visits to Portugal. Many of those attending the conferences had been present at this get-together with the Prelate of Opus Dei, along with their families. Those present at the Shrine of Fatima, as the Year of the Rosary was ending, entrusted to our Lady the intentions of the Holy Father and the fruit from these days.
Warsaw (Poland) -- Work camp in the Ukraine

From August 5 to 20 a work camp was held at a welfare center in the Ukrainian town of Zytomierz. Thirty Polish university students took part. The work principally involved cleaning and maintaining the grounds adjoining the center. The activity aimed at helping the students to learn in practice to give their time to others in greater need. In addition, through personal contacts and cultural visits, they had an opportunity to learn about the customs and culture of the Ukraine. A priest of the Prelature provided pastoral care for those on the camp.

Asuncion (Paraguay) -- Conference on ethics and politics

A conference on the doctrinal note entitled “Some Questions related to the Commitment and Conduct of Catholics in Public Life,” issued at the beginning of the year by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, was organized by the Puntarrieles Study Center.

The activity took place on Tuesday, October 28, and was directed to members of Paraguay’s National Congress. Taking part among others was the President of the Senate, Dr. Mateo Balmelli.

The document was commented on by Fr. Rogelio Livieres, in two sessions. The first session highlighted the fundamental ethical demands of political activity and the current socio-cultural environment in which these need to be implemented. The second session pointed out the requirements of Christian life entailed by the Holy See’s document.

At the start, each of the parliamentarians was given a copy of the doctrinal note. Many expressed the desire to continue receiving informative material on these questions.
Amsterdam -- Dutch students in Poland

With the support of a British institution, a program to develop the cerebral activity of handicapped children through the use of exercises took place in Poland. During this past summer, twelve young Dutch women went to Poland to help out with a group of disabled children. The ten day program was organized by the De Borcht Club in Amsterdam, a corporate apostolic activity of Opus Dei.

Two of the participants, Esther Roeleveld, a financial consultant in Amsterdam, who was responsible for organizing the trip, and Corine van Vliet, a doctor, put some of their impressions in writing.

Esther records: “In addition to providing the children with various types of care, we helped them to eat, played games with them, and took them for walks. After a few days we saw that the children quickly learned to recognize us and sought us out. It was a chance to work, to learn, to have fun, and above all to experience friendship.”

“In the exercise of my profession as a doctor in Holland,” notes Corine, “I have had contact with many sick people, but it is only this summer that I experienced what it means for a family to have a handicapped child. And I learned how one can confront a child’s handicap with love and joy.”

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Porto Alegre (Brazil) -- Ethics and law

A group of law students from two universities in Porto Alegre, with the help of three professors, Alfredo Flores, Elton Somensi and Klaus Klopin, organized a series of work sessions on questions of ethics.

Taking Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* as their reference point, a weekly meeting was held at the Mirador Cultural Center for a debate on the thought of the great Greek philosopher.
The number of those taking part grew as the weeks went by and as more and more law students joined the discussion, as well as students from other fields.

The group has also attracted the interest of many university professors and postgraduate students.

**Houston (Texas) -- Avanti**

As in previous years, Southgate Study Center in Houston, Texas, held its *Avanti* seminar for girls beginning their high school years. The program, which relies on the cooperation of professionals from the Houston area, aimed at providing practical experience in methods of exchanging ideas.

Great interest was expressed in the sessions on the cultural message of the media. Using real life situations, participants learned to detect methods of manipulating public opinion in advertising, images and commentaries. The session on critical evaluation involved the analysis of a movie. Participants were asked to identify the moments in which each of the characters in the film made a life-affecting moral decision.

There were also sessions on how to prepare to choose a career and on selecting productive summer activities. Another popular session was that on friendship and dating.

What the students most appreciated was the opportunity to consider in depth the true meaning of freedom. One girl commented: “I enjoyed learning how to make decisions wisely. Although one does not see the results immediately, if God is involved in a decision, the final result will be happiness.”
In the second half of 2003, three lecture series were organized in Guaymural University Center on medicine, architecture and business. In these series, well-known professionals from the university and in some cases from business circles took part as speakers.

The series were aimed at complementing the academic education of the students and encouraging a sense of service to others in their profession.

In the series on medicine, five topics were presented, fundamentals of neuro-anatomy, basic electrography, cardiac ischemic ailments, epilepsy, and history of neurology.

Speakers in the series on architecture raised topics connected with preserving the country’s cultural patrimony and improving living conditions in the major cities.

The business topics considered were: “empowerment” in business enterprises so as to maximize human resources, the banking industry, effective hiring techniques, and granting bank credits.

Most of those taking part also attend the activities of Christian formation organized by the university center.

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Yaounde (Cameroon) -- Conference on AIDS

On Saturday, November 22, Professor Victor Anomah Ngu, a Cameroon specialist with international prestige, gave a conference on AIDS at Nolanga Study Center in Yaoundé. The audience consisted of university students and high school seniors from Yaoundé.

Professor Ngu first explained the physio-pathology of the disease—the mechanism of production and contagion—to enable listeners to understand better the possible ways that science has of combating AIDS. He gave many examples from his personal research in this area and results obtained in treating patients.

An important part of his exposition was devoted to explaining the
means to prevent this plague. Professor Ngu made it clear that the only sure way to avoid AIDS was moral behavior in accord with human nature: “abstinence and fidelity.”

The conference was followed by a lively question-and-answer session.

Sydney (Australia) -- Social development in Dubbo

Aborigine children from West Dubbo, New South Wales, were the principal beneficiaries of a social development project organized by Creston College, in Sydney. Twenty university women dedicated two weeks of their winter vacation to the program that was held in the Gordon Community Center.

The program included classes in crafts and cooking, sports, visits and excursions. The children enjoyed the various activities aimed at improving their self-confidence and mutual respect. In the afternoons, the students cleaned and cooked for elderly people in the neighborhood and visited with them. They also presented musical programs in a nursing home.

The Gordon Community Center is now preparing for the next vacation program, which it is thinking of expanding to include mothers and adolescents. Over the past twenty years, Creston has also organized volunteer activities for high school and university girls in various Pacific islands such as Fiji and Tonga, and in India, Mexico, the Philippines, and underdeveloped areas in Australia and New Zealand. In January 2004, a group of thirty students will spend three weeks in the Philippines on one of these programs.

Sao Paulo (Brazil) -- Meetings on fashion

Leme Cultural Center in São Paulo organizes “Meetings on Fashion”
twice a year. Aimed at students of the fashion departments in the city, these gatherings discuss questions related to the ethics of creativity, human values and the role of women in contemporary society. In the eighth series of meetings, the first in 2003, well known professionals from the media discussed the development of collections, marketing, labels, visual communication and fashion, merchandising and showcases.

One of the conferences was given by the woman in charge of an important style competition, the most prestigious Brazilian event in the fashion field.

The Christian character of the educational work carried out at Leme Cultural Center, as well as the teachings of St. Josemaría on the sanctification of work that inspired this initiative, frequently provoke the interest of those at the conferences and lead them to reflect more seriously on the repercussions of their work. Often the students taking part in the Meetings on Fashion get involved in other formative activities carried out at the center such as social work, volunteer work in the public schools of the poor neighborhoods in the city, or courses on aspects of the Catholic faith.

Paris -- A conference for priests

What should be done when a sick person asks that his suffering be ended? This question was the focus for a colloquium for priests held at the parish of St. Pierre du Gros Caillou on Monday, November 24, 2003.

Frederic Lapies, professor of philosophy, spoke on the corporality and temporality of the human person, and the need to accept one’s place in the order of things. By accepting suffering, a person experiences his identity and his limits, and finds happiness. On the contrary, if he refuses to recognize these limits, he can be a victim of the dangerous ideology of technology that treats life as a merely instrumental reality.

Msgr. Jacques Suaudeau, a theologian and member of the Pontifical Academy for Life, highlighted the Church’s moral teachings in this area
and explained that helping a person to die never means to kill. To help one die with dignity, he said, means offering a comforting presence and listening, treating the person as a human being and not an object.

Finally, Professor Lucien Israel, a cancer specialist, said that in his long career as a doctor he had received only one request for euthanasia from dying patients. He praised the doctor’s mission as that of defending the person, right to the end.

Seville (Spain) -- A transcendent view of ordinary activities

A round table was held recently in Seville under the title “Work, a transcendent view of ordinary activities.” The Alboran Student Residence invited various professionals to reflect on work as a means for personal growth, for service to society, and for drawing closer to God.

The session was a chance to consider the timeliness of the Christian message on work and to clarify some challenges related to sanctifying work: the balancing of one’s family and professional work, the search for beauty and truth in art, etc.

José Carlos Martín de la Hoz spoke on how St. Josemaría encouraged the formation of university students. “He called them forcefully to holiness; he encouraged them to be magnanimous in their prayer, because human projects become great through prayer; and finally he fostered in them a deep sense of responsibility, to the measure of their personal freedom.”

Nuria Chinchilla, a professor at the IESE, spoke on what she called “the daily challenge: balancing family and professional life.” For Chincilla, the teachings of St. Josemaría in this regard foreshadowed the problems that we are living through today: “first of all, because he stressed the capacity of women to be agents of change, and secondly, because a woman with her feminine perspective can provide new solutions for today’s problems.”
Professor Chincilla pointed out some challenges to women in balancing attention to their family and work. A key element here involves setting priorities regarding one's professional goals and care for one's family. She stressed the need for mutual collaboration between husband and wife in this effort: “their paths in life have to be made completely compatible, above all in relation to the raising of their children.”

Finally Marieta Quesada, a painter, spoke on work and inspiration: “In my case, hard and constant work comes first, blessed occasionally with moments of inspiration. These moments come and go, but it is the labor itself that forges the artist.” She also spoke of the need for temperance in order to capture the beauty of what is simple. “Sobriety of life facilitates the capture of the beauty of the created world, and thus makes it easier to find God, whom one sees shining through beauty.”

Ibadan (Nigeria) -- The role of women in society

Aster Hall, a university residence in Ibadan, organized a seminar to reflect on the role of women in society.

Dr. Nwagi, a professor of psychotherapy, entitled her address “The Valiant Woman.” She pointed out that a strong woman is one who understands her role in society as rooted in her responsibility as a mother. Vera Egbuonu, a secondary school teacher, spoke on “Human tone and cultural formation,” stressing that a well-educated woman always gives a high tone to wherever she finds herself. She also emphasized the importance of material care for the home and the workplace. Attention to small details contributes to creating a pleasant atmosphere and encourages a spirit of service.

The second topic, “In the world without being worldly,” was directed by Veronica Igbanugo, a professor of psychology. Her presentation developed aspects of the homily “Passionately Loving the World,” which St. Josemaría preached in 1967 at the University of Navarre. She stressed
that the world is good because it comes from God’s hands and that mankind has the task of making it better by working for the common good of society.

The last speaker, Margaret Aziba, who works in university administration, centered her talk on the immense task that women have in regard to revitalizing society, through their function in the home. She referred to the attack on family unity resulting from the wave of sensuality that one sees in today’s society, which should stir parents to responsibly confront their task as educators of their children.

Piura (Peru) -- A university conference for business development

A hundred university women took part in the “First university conference for management development in Piura,” organized by the Altozano Cultural Center and the University of Piura, with the aim of fostering local development and business creativity among the young people of Piura.

The students presented 24 ideas for the development of businesses that were evaluated by a jury made up of Carlos Sanchez, director of the Piura Chamber of Commerce; Jesus Castillo, director of the Association of Economists of Piura; and Guillermo Dulanto, head of the Economics Department at the University of Piura.

The projects encompassed a wide variety of economic areas, including the exportation of agricultural produce, the construction industry, the raising and selling of trout, paper recycling, the commercialization of mangos, tourism and education.
Bogota (Columbia) -- Second International Congress on the Family

The Second International Congress on the Family, held on August 28 and 29, 2003, was organized by the University of La Sabana’s Institute for the Family.

More than 100 people took part in the event. In addition to participants from all over Colombia, people came from Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Germany, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Spain, the United States and Venezuela. All came for the same purpose: to reflect on the family. The title chosen for this Second International Congress was “From emotions to the heart: a path to the person.”

Enrique Rojas, a psychiatrist and university professor; Tomas Melendo, professor of philosophy; and Jutta Burggraf, a German philosopher and theologian, were among the speakers. Professor Burggraf spoke on the subject of forgiveness. For the Colombian listeners her words, situated in the context of human love, also represented a proposal for how to escape from the violent situation their country is going through.

The two days of reflection included debates and proposals in regard to the education of the human heart in the opening years of the twenty-first century. The talks centered on the family within the context of a society in which human and technological development do not always grow and interact harmoniously.

The Mayor of Bogotá, Antanas Mockus, and the Attorney General of Colombia, Edgardo Maya, among others, were present representing the government. Mr. Maya, at the official opening of the congress, expressed the desire “that what is said here might reach the forty million people of Colombia. That is the challenge.”

Nairobi (Kenya) -- Building Peace

The UNIV Congress in East Africa celebrated its final phase on July
26, 2003, in Fanusi Study Centre, Nairobi, a university residence for women. The theme of the conference was “Building peace in the twenty-first century.” The sixty participants presented a wide variety of panels and talks. Specific proposals were considered for encouraging peace in society through better communication in the family. Also discussed was the possibility of reducing poverty through micro-financing in small businesses. Multicultural initiatives for peace in Uganda were also discussed.

Carol Mandi, a well-known journalist and former student at Kianda School, insisted on the need to promote peace above all in the family, the basic cell of society. Margaret Roche, director of the Institute of Humanities at Strathmore University, spoke of the important role that teachers play in furthering peace through their influence on young people. Wangari Karuru, a doctor, spoke of the dignity of human life as a principal reason for fostering peace among peoples and of the need to defend the inviolability of human life from conception to natural death. The conclusions of the conference revolved around the importance of extending greater educational opportunities to those in the poorest neighborhoods and the need for professional training for women in the rural areas so as to contribute to the development and stability of families.

Panama City -- The beginning of Tagua

Every week, the women taking part in programs at Tagua overcome many obstacles to attend the classes. They are encouraged to apply what they learn at Tagua in their own homes, and have the opportunity to sell the products they learn how to make, thus obtaining a source of income for their families.

In addition to the classes, talks on family education and human virtues are offered in Tagua, and are welcomed as eagerly as the professional classes.

In May 2004, the first phase of construction of the school of hospitality skills will be completed. Thanks to this new building, it will be possible to
reach more people in the area and increase the number of courses, thus contributing more effectively to the advancement of Panamanian women.

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IN PACE
Suffrages for the Deceased

In the second half of 2003, 277 faithful of the Prelature and 17 members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross passed away.

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

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A study
Devotion to Mary is one of the defining features of St. Josemaría’s personality and spiritual life. He never wanted to put himself forward as a model in anything, because, as he always said, the only model is Christ. He did not hesitate to add, however, that if his children wanted to imitate him in something, it should be in his love for our Lady.

The depth and richness of his devotion to Mary cannot be adequately described in this short article. We will focus on only one aspect here: the relationship between his Marian devotion and the unity of life that he preached and practiced. Unity of life, a defining feature of his own life, represented a significant new concept in the Church. It is also closely related to the universal call to sanctity and the fully lay spirituality that were integral to the founder of Opus Dei’s teaching.

Both features of his spiritual life, Marian devotion and unity of life, have been written about extensively, and there are numerous references to these topics in studies related to Opus Dei and its founder.

Marian devotion, of course, is not the foundation for a Christian’s unity of life. Nor can one say that Marian piety is its substance or its theological perfection. However, St. Josemaría’s life teaches us that Mary, in a certain respect, can be considered a model and principle of unity of life, in a way that is analogous to how Christ himself is the center of a Christian’s existence and the model for his life, with all due differences that will be pointed out below.

1. The universal role of our Lady in the personal piety of St. Josemaría

The founder of Opus Dei’s own writings and the testimonies of those who knew him make clear that his Marian devotion was strong and constant, expressed in filial and trusting prayer. At the same time, his
devotion to Mary was harmoniously integrated with the others facets of his spiritual life. It was not something isolated or independent, nor did it take the preeminent place reserved for the Blessed Trinity and Christ’s Sacred Humanity. “I can vouch for the fact that these were his principal devotions: (1) the Most Holy Trinity, God One and Three (he conversed with each of the three Persons, one by one: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit); (2) our Lord Jesus Christ, above all, his presence in the Eucharist, his Passion, and the years of his hidden life; (3) the Blessed Virgin Mary; (4) St. Joseph; (5) the holy angels and archangels; and (6) the saints: in particular, the twelve apostles; the saints whom he chose as intercessors for certain aspects of the apostolate of the Work…and other saints such as Anthony the Abbot and Teresa of Jesus; and the early Christians.”[7]

Of the many features that might be highlighted in his love for our Lady, we will now look at those that most directly affected his unity of life. The most important is his constant effort to seek out Mary, placing her, along with Christ, at the center of his life.

a) **Constantly seeking our Lady**

St. Josemaria sought out Holy Mary’s company in his work, in his prayer, in his apostolic action. “In 1970,” the current prelate of Opus Dei recalls, “while making a novena to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, he told us that he remembered with perfect clarity the first time that he went to our Lady with the full realization that he was praying to her. Filled with filial piety, he invited each of us to do the same: to evoke that first meeting, praying to our Mother with the same innocence and trust for the intentions we bore in our heart and soul, going to the help of Mary, the all-powerful supplicant. He was two or three years old when he began to pray to our Lady in the Cathedral of Barbastro, before a statue of the Dormition. He advised me to follow a devotion that he himself lived: to affectionately kiss the forehead of an image of our heavenly Mother, and with the piety of a child tell her, ‘come with me.’ On more than one occasion, he spent as much time as he could calling continually to our Lady: Mother, Mother, my Mother! And full of trust, he abandoned in her hands the needs of the Church and of souls.
“He never tired of preaching the urgent need to have recourse to the Most Holy Virgin. For example, in 1953 he told us: ‘Perhaps we need to consider Christ as much ours as Mary considered him hers. He was her life and the reason for her existence. Without Him, Mary couldn’t work, or rest, or live. And if we are faithful, the same should constantly be true of us.’ On April 30, 1968, as he used to do when he began the months or periods of the year during which the Church fosters devotion to our Lady in a special way, he recommended to us: ‘In our dealings with Mary, during the month of May that begins tomorrow, I would like each of us to start making an extra small sacrifice, a bit more of study, some work that is better finished, a smile…. It will be a sacrifice that stems from our piety and is a proof of our self-giving. Let yourself be led by her with generosity. We can’t stop striving to love more each day the Love of loves! And with Mary we will be able to accomplish this, because our Mother lovingly lived a complete self-giving.’

“He emphasized the need to deal with our Lady in order to reach the Blessed Trinity. In 1970 he said: ‘Place your heart, all your love, in the Blessed Trinity. To do so, start with your devotion to our Lady, because, even humanly, she is very close to God, and is the most perfect creature, sine macula, sine ruga, without spot or wrinkle. And God does not deny her anything. Mary necessarily will lead you to her Son, who will introduce you to the Father, and you will receive the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the tree of the Cross.’”[8]

b) Going to our Lady in everything and for everything

Referring to his constant recourse to Mary, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo noted that “he habitually ended his homilies and meditations with an invocation to our Lady. In his book *Holy Rosary* he left us moving examples of his contemplation of the principle mysteries of the life of Jesus and Mary, and also his other works, beginning with *The Way*, are impregnated with Marian devotion. Each chapter of *Furrow* and *The Forge* ends with some thought about our Lady.”[9]

The fact that he always concluded his preaching, whatever the topic might be, with a dialogue with our Lady was not simply a means of infusing devotion to the Mother of God in his hearers. It was something
spontaneous and almost necessary for him to have recourse to Mary in any situation or event. Besides asking our Lady to intercede before God for his needs, he also looked to Mary as an example and model for his own life. The founder of Opus Dei learned many things from Mary. He went to her in search of help, and also to learn. In Furrow, when dealing with the “human virtues” of a follower of Christ, he turns often to the example of Holy Mary. All the chapters of Furrow end with a thought related to the Blessed Virgin. Any effort by a Christian to grow in virtue leads to identification with Jesus, and the safest and most direct path to this goal is devotion to Mary.

   c) Mary as a model and principle of unity of life

   Thus St. Josemaría had recourse to Mary as a model for every virtue and as an example in every circumstance and activity, going to her “in everything and for everything,” as his successor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, aptly put it.[10]

   In the life and teachings of St. Josemaría, our Lady was present in every aspect of his piety, his apostolic activity and his work. One can safely say that his entire life was Marian.

   This universal presence of our Lady in the founder of Opus Dei’s life, never separable from the Triune God or from Christ, made her a constant reference point for him: for growing in virtue, for carrying out his work in a holy way, for bringing souls to God, for bringing forward the mission he had received from God, Opus Dei.

   In short, love for our Lady led him to a unity of life in all that he did and said, in a way that was analogous to the role Christ played in his life and dependent on Him.

   2. Referring everything to our Lady in the writings of the founder of Opus Dei.

   St. Josemaría’s fundamental intuition in this regard can be summed up in the following reflection: our Lady’s help and example “in everything and for everything” stems directly from the fact that she is our mother. Indeed, it is proper to a mother to teach her child all that she knows, and to provide her assistance, especially when she sees her child in need or affliction. “If I
were a leper my mother would kiss me. She would kiss my wounds without fear or hesitation. —Well then, what would the Blessed Virgin Mary do? When we feel we are like lepers, all full of sores, we have to cry out: Mother! And the protection of our Mother will be like a kiss upon our wounds, which will then be healed.”[11] There are many other similar texts in St. Josemaria’s writings.[12] They testify to his faith in Mary’s divine maternity and her spiritual maternity over all men and women.

a) Mary’s universal motherhood

The foundation of St. Josemaría’s Marian devotion is his faith in Mary as mother of God and mother of mankind. Contemplation of Mary’s divine maternity is often stressed in his writings.[13] “Mary is called the mother of God because she conceived the Word made flesh in her womb and He was born of her. This dogma of our Lady’s divine motherhood constitutes the source and root of the privileges with which God freely adorned her.”[14] From this strictly theological and Christological consideration, he moved to an anthropological perspective; from contemplating Mary’s maternity with respect to the Head, he went on to considering her maternity with respect to the members, the Church. “Our Lady is our mother. This is a truth that I have tried to make my own, and that I have preached continually, and that every Catholic has heard and repeated a thousand times, until it becomes deeply imbedded in the intimacy of one’s heart and assimilated in a personal and vivid way.”[15]

Contemplating the mystery of Mary in her divine maternity, a constant feature of Catholic tradition, is joined to contemplating her spiritual maternity over men and women, a teaching that Vatican II has reaffirmed.[16] St. Josemaría’s example is especially significant, since he unites these two aspects of Mary’ maternity. He distinguishes our Lady’s divine maternity from her spiritual maternity, but never separates them. Rather he unites them in a single phrase, “mother of God and mother of mankind.”

This exact expression appears only in a few places in his writings,[17] but the concept is found frequently there, although using other words: for example, “Mother of Christ, Mother of Christians”;[18] “Mother of God and our mother”;[19] “Mother of God, my mother” (or “your mother”);[20]
“Mother of God” (or “Mother of Christ”), “Mother of the Church.”[21] The chapter in *The Way* dedicated to our Lady focuses on Mary’s maternity both with respect to the Word and with respect to mankind. Some points refer to both, while some refer to one or the other.[22]

St. Josemaría often spoke of Mary’s spiritual maternity over all mankind, for example, in this quote from *Christ Is Passing By*: “For Mary is closely tied to the greatest sign of God’s love—the Word made flesh who took upon himself our sins and weakness. Faithful to the divine purpose for which she was born, Mary continues to spend herself in the service of men, who are all called to be brothers of her son Jesus. The Mother of God is also truly the mother of men.”[23] He goes on to provide a biblical reflection on the mystery of Mary which helps explain why her maternity extends to all mankind.[24]

In *Friends of God* he returns to the same subject: “Jesus is comforted anew by the quiet, loving presence of his Mother. Mary does not shout; she does not run about frantically. *Stabat:* she is there, standing next to her Son. It is then that Jesus looks at her, and then turning his gaze to John he exclaims, ‘Woman, this is thy son. Then he said to the disciple, This is thy Mother’ (John 19:26-27). In the person of John, Christ is entrusting all men to his Mother, and especially his disciples: those who were to believe in him.”[25] On other occasions, he cites Fathers of the Church who defend her spiritual maternity: “She can truly be called the Mother of Christians. As St. Augustine puts it: ‘With her charity she cooperates in the birth of faithful to the Church and they are members of a head, of which she is effectively Mother in the flesh’ (*De Sancta Virginitate*, 6; PL 40, 399).[26]

His Marian devotion is deeply marked by his Christology. Mary’s motherhood over the disciples, the Church, and all mankind, is seen as a function of the different ways people can belong to the Body of Christ, as St. Thomas Aquinas explained it. [27] This Christological focus explains his insistence on linking the two motherhoods of Mary, both of which are tied to the “whole Christ” St. Augustine spoke of. From contemplating Mary’s motherhood with respect to the Head, one turns to her motherhood with respect to the members. This relationship with God and with all men and women, precisely because it is universal, can serve as the unifying principal of human life in its fullness.
All those who have a mother, have Mary as their mother, either because they receive their human nature through her (true only in one case, that of the Word, since she was a virgin, before, during and after Jesus’ birth), or because they receive her as mother in the order of grace. Mary looks at both God and men with a mother’s eyes. Her motherhood embraces heaven and earth. She stands in relation to the Most High, and also to the humblest intelligent creature, man, who intellectually ranks below all the angels.

Her singular ontological relationship with the divine Being (she communicated a nature to a divine Person) bestowed on Mary a proper and exclusive universality (received as a gift) that all other creatures lack. This universality essentially characterizes her maternity and vice-versa: she possesses this universality because her maternity is divine; for this reason it can extend, and in fact has extended, to men according to the disposition and consent of God. This allows us to make a daring analogy, but one that is not unfounded, with God’s paternity. Considering that Mary’s maternity is, in fact, a singular participation in the divine paternity, one could think that just as all paternity in heaven and on earth derives from the paternity of the First Person (Eph 3:15), so analogically in Mary one finds in a most perfect way all that in creatures pertains to motherhood. Her singular and exclusive relationship with God brings with it that she is not only a mother, but the Mother, just she is not only a virgin but the Virgin. And we could add that she is not only a woman but the Woman, which seems to be suggested by the way Jesus addresses her at Cana and on Golgotha.

Mary’s double maternity was for St. Josemaría an ocean of beauty and love in which one could be engulfed without being satiated. If one has to avoid going too far here (and this is easily assured by saying that she is not above Christ but below Him: Mary is a creature, Jesus is God), we also have to avoid saying too little, if we want to speak with exactitude and propriety. St. Josemaría resolved this tension by saying that above Mary is only God. “The divine Motherhood of Mary is the source of all the perfections and privileges with which she is adorned. Because of it, she was conceived immaculate and is full of grace; because of it, she is ever virgin, she was taken up body and soul to heaven and has been crowned Queen of
all creation, above the angels and saints. Greater than she, none but God. ‘The Blessed Virgin from the fact that she is the Mother of God has a certain infinite dignity that comes from the infinite good which is God.’[^30] There is no danger of exaggerating. We can never hope to fathom this inexpressible mystery; nor will we ever be able to give sufficient thanks to our Mother for bringing us into such intimacy with the Blessed Trinity.’[^31]

b) Mary’s universality as teacher and intercessor

Mary is the exemplar of every virtue, and especially of unity of life. She is the model, because by her double maternity she is presented to us as the unique realization of the unity of the human and the divine that is found in Christ; and at the same time she is the teacher who instructs us on how to live in accord with this reality. Mary is the most powerful intercessor in everything concerning the salvation of men. Finally, she is a Mother who unites all those who consider themselves her children. We will look at all these points in greater detail in the following sections.

1) Exemplar and teacher of every virtue

That Mary is the “mother of God and mother of mankind” explains the universality of her example. Mary is an example in everything and for everything.

This universality, as the Fathers of the Church taught, is related to her fullness of grace and her Immaculate Conception. Mary accepted the Word into her soul before she did so in her body. She was Christ’s first and best disciple, which is why he chose her as his mother. At the same time, men and women can take her as an example and teacher of how to be other Christs, Christ himself, *ipse Christus*, with the same sentiments as Christ Jesus (Philip 2:5), attaining the virtues that Christ taught by word and gesture (*gestis verbisque*). “St. Augustine calls our Blessed Lady *forma Dei*, the mold of God (*You are worthy to be called the mold of God*) —the mold fit to cast and mold saints. He who is cast in this mold, is presently formed and molded in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ in him….in a short time he will become similar to God, because he has been cast in the same mold which has formed a God who became man.”[^32]

St. Josemaría echoed these strands of Christian tradition: “‘May the soul of Mary’, writes St Ambrose, ‘be in each of you, so that you may praise
our Lord; may the spirit of Mary be in each one of you, so that you may rejoice in God.’ This Father of the Church goes on to say something which at first sight seems bold, but which has a clear spiritual meaning for the life of the Christian. ‘According to the flesh, there is only one Mother of Christ; according to the faith, Christ is the fruit of all of us.’[33] If we become identified with Mary and imitate her virtues, we will be able to bring Christ to life, through grace, in the souls of many who will in turn become identified with him through the action of the Holy Spirit.”[34]

Closely united to Mary’s role as model is her role as teacher of every Christian virtue. In The Way St. Josemaría expresses his admiration for our Lady as “teacher of prayer,” as “teacher of the sacrifice which is hidden and silent,” as the model of “naturalness,” of “humility,” of “strength,” of “simplicity,” of “modesty,” and of “purity.”[35] In Furrow he proposes her as an example of all the virtues he will consider, closing each chapter with a reference to Mary. In the homily “Mother of God, our Mother” in Friends of God,[36] he comments at length on this reality, which is also stressed in the two Marian homilies in Christ Is Passing By.[37] “Our Lady gives us lessons in Fair Love, in faith, hope, charity, knowledge, wisdom. Mary teaches us as a mother does, and, being a mother, she does so quietly. We need to have a sensitivity of soul, a touch of refinement, in order to understand what she is showing us, by what she does more than by what she promises.... In her, all ideals become a reality... If we truly come to know Mary our Mother, how quickly the supernatural virtues will grow in us!”[38]

Thus we see the full reach of Mary’s double maternity. By becoming like our Lady, who is our mother, we become like Christ, who is like Mary because she is also his mother. Becoming like our mother is therefore part of the process of becoming conformed to Christ.

2) **Singular model of unity of life**

Mary, precisely because she is for us an example of every virtue and deed pleasing to her Son, is in a very special way a model of unity of life.

Moral rectitude demands of a person the exercise of all the virtues; while the theological perfection of unity of life means doing everything for love of God, maintaining a constant dialogue with Him. Mary fulfilled
these two demands perfectly, as the founder of Opus Dei often stressed: “For over thirty years God has been putting into my heart the desire to help people of every condition and background to understand that ordinary life can be holy and full of God. Our Lord is calling us to sanctify the ordinary tasks of every day, for the perfection of the Christian is to be found precisely there. Let’s consider it once more as we contemplate Mary’s life. We can’t forget that Mary spent nearly every day of her life just like millions of other women who look after their family, bring up their children and take care of the house. Mary sanctifies the ordinary everyday things—what some people wrongly regard as unimportant and insignificant: everyday work, looking after those closest to you, visits to friends and relatives. What a blessed ordinariness, that can be so full of love of God! For that’s what explains Mary’s life—her love. A complete love, so complete that she forgets herself and is happy just to be there where God wants her, fulfilling, with care, what God wants her to do. That is why even her slightest action is never routine or vain but, rather, full of meaning. Mary, our mother, is for us both an example and a way. We have to try to be like her, in the ordinary circumstances in which God wants us to live.”[39]

The Christocentric focus proper to unity of life finds a unique example in Mary, as St. Josemaría said: “I like to go back in my imagination to the years Jesus spent close to his Mother, years which span almost the whole of his life on earth. I like to picture him as a little child, cared for by Mary who kisses him and plays with him. I like to see him growing up before the loving eyes of his Mother and of Joseph, his father on earth. What tenderness and care Mary and the Holy Patriarch must have shown towards Jesus, as they looked after him during his childhood, all the while, silently, learning so much from him. Their souls would become more and more like the soul of that Son, who was both Man and God. This is why his Mother, and after her St Joseph, understand better than anyone the feelings of the Heart of Christ; and the two of them are thus the best way, I would say the only way, to reach the Savior.”[40]

The present Prelate of Opus Dei spoke of St. Josemaría’s contemplation of our Lady: “He noticed that although Holy Mary’s love for our Lord was entirely supernatural, one could not imagine a more human
love than that which filled her heart. Mary, by sharing in the mystery of the incarnation through her *fiat*! (which she prolonged throughout her stay on earth), dedicated her body, her senses and faculties, all her being to God. And the Second Person of the Trinity became incarnate, thanks to our Lady’s supernatural and human response. Thus we learn that the more supernatural we are, the more capacity we will have to draw close to all creatures.”[41]

In this context, the phrase “Mother of God and mother of mankind” can help us better understand why the Blessed Virgin is the singular model of unity of life.

This phrase emphasizes, in first place, Mary’s motherhood with respect to Christ, who is both human and divine. She is the Mother of Christ according to the flesh, with a full and true human maternity, as the Church has always taught from the beginning, resisting whenever necessary the Docetist or Gnostic interpretations that viewed her maternity as fictitious or only apparent. At the same time, hers is a divine maternity because it embraces a divine Person, as the Church defended against the dualistic interpretations proposed by Nestorius and others.

Secondly, Mary is the mother of all men. This spiritual maternity is also both human and divine, although it does not imply carnal generation nor does it involve a divine Person. It is truly human, because it is really manifested in human love, in the love that a woman has for those who are truly her children, children according to the spirit “on many counts.”[42] It is also divine, because it stems from being the Mother of God, and is expressed in a love that is theological charity imbued with maternal warmth, flowing from her love for God.

No creature has attained, or ever will attain, such close likeness to Christ; no one can ever unite the human and divine as closely as in her. The saints can be examples of heroic virtue and teachers of unity of life, as is St. Josemaría. But they will never enjoy a relationship with God and others that is both as divine and human as in Mary.

3) *Singular teacher of unity of life*

The founder of Opus Dei explains how Mary is the teacher of unity of life by drawing on the example of his own personal Marian devotion,
recommending that we deal with Mary as a child. Bishop Alvaro del Portillo wrote: “Monsignor Escrivá’s teaching brings together the human and the divine aspects of Christian perfection. That must be so when the Catholic doctrine on the Incarnate Word is known in depth and when it is loved, and lived, passionately. The practical and vital consequences of that joyful reality are clearly drawn in Furrow. The author has sketched in outline the life and work of a Christian in the midst of the world, fully committed to the noble aspirations that move other men, and at the same time totally directed towards God. The resulting portrait is most attractive.... In clear contrast with this portrait, Monsignor Escrivá also sketches the characteristic features of the frivolous man, lacking in true virtues.... The prescription of a remedy follows the diagnosis of the illness. ‘Nothing perfects our personality so much as correspondence with grace’ (no. 443). He then proposes a very sound piece of practical advice: ‘Try to imitate the Virgin Mary and you will be a complete man or woman’ (ibid). Next to Jesus, a Christian always discovers his Mother, Holy Mary, and always goes to her for all his needs; to imitate her, to get to know her, to avail himself of her powerful intercession.”

Getting to know Mary, St. Josemaría taught, helps us to be divine and human at the same time, and thus to be like Christ. The conjunction of the human and the divine, characteristic of a full and perfect unity of life, is intimately related (as St. Josemaría often points out) with the sense of one’s divine filiation. For the human and divine natures are united in the Person of the Word, of the Son. Thus one can understand why, to the degree that someone participates in the eternal filiation of the Word through grace, in the same measure he also reflects the union of the two natures in the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. “God wants us to be very human. Our heads should indeed be touching heaven, but our feet should be firmly on the ground. The price of living as Christians is not that of ceasing to be human or of abandoning the effort to acquire those virtues which some have even without knowing Christ. The price paid for each Christian is the redeeming Blood of our Lord and he, I insist, wants us to be both very human and very divine, struggling each day to imitate him who is perfectus Deus, perfectus homo." The imitation of Christ thus necessarily entails the imitation of the union of the human and divine found in Him.
All of this finds immediate application in the case of Marian devotion, as the founder of Opus Dei himself explains: “In our relationship to God, we are not blind men yearning for light and crying in anguished darkness. We are children who know our Father loves us.

“Mary tells us about this warmth and security. That’s why her name goes straight to our heart. Our relationship with our own mother may show us how to deal with Mary the Lady of the Sweet Name. We have to love God with the same heart with which we love our parents, our brothers and sisters, the other members of our family, our friends. And we must love Mary with that same heart, too.

How does a normal son or daughter treat his mother? In different ways, of course, but always affectionately and confidently, never coldly. In an intimate way, through small, commonplace customs. And a mother feels hurt if we omit them: a kiss or an embrace when leaving or coming home, a little extra attention, a few warm words. In our relationship with our mother in heaven, we should act in very much the same way.”[46] The union of the human and the divine leads to a devotion filled with tenderness, shown in trusting and affectionate gestures.

In this respect, it is interesting that the decree on St. Josemaria’s heroic exercise of virtues underline precisely this characteristic of his Marian piety: that it was “imbued with tenderness.”[47] Among the many qualities that could have been highlighted, the fact that the principal reference is to tenderness emphasizes that his devotion was both human and divine, stemming from his faith in Mary as the Mother of God and our mother.

Tenderness is something proper to relationships with beloved persons, especially the most intimate ones: with one’s mother and father, with brothers and sisters, with spouse and children. In consequence, an authentic relationship with our Lady, based on what our Christian faith tells us about her, cannot lack that characteristic, since she is the Mother of God and also our mother. Tenderness here almost seems to be a necessary sign of authenticity.

Genuine Christian devotion has always been characterized by a harmony between the human and the divine, which was inaugurated on earth with the incarnation of the Word. The Christian authenticity of a
specific devotion can be measured, among other things, by how it reflects the union of the human and the divine, both in the devotion itself and in those who practice it.

“Every Christian, by recalling his life, can reconstruct the history of his relationship with our heavenly Mother. This history includes specific dates, persons and places, favors that we recognize as coming from our Lady, encounters laden with a special savor. We realize that the love that God shows us through Mary has all the depth of the divine and, at the same time, the familiarity and warmth proper to the human.”[48] Marian devotion thus becomes a path towards unity of life. By fostering this tender relationship with the mother of God, one that is both human and divine, Marian devotion channels a person’s piety towards the union of the human and the divine that ought to characterize a Christian’s relationship with God.

4) Universal and all-powerful intercessor

The advocatio “Mother of God and mother of mankind” also explains why we can go to our Lady “in everything and for everything,” taking her as a universal intercessor. The founder of Opus Dei wrote: “Mary is the one who is full of grace and the sum of all perfections; and she is also our Mother. Her power before God is such that she can obtain anything we ask for, and, like any mother, she wants to answer our prayers. Like any mother also, she knows and understands our weaknesses. She encourages us and makes excuses for us. She makes the way easy for us and, even when we think there is no possible solution for our worry, she always has one ready to offer us.”[49]

Mary’s situation is not that of other mothers, who at times don’t know how to or are unable to help their children in their requests. Our Lady always knows the solution and is able to help. This power is not a personal power of her own (she never loses sight of her own littleness before God), but that of her intercession before the Almighty. She is his Mother and he never refuses her anything.

Christians quickly noticed the intercessory power of Mary and immediately learned to go to her in their tribulations and necessities, as is attested to by the antiquity of the antiphon Sub tuum praesidium [“We fly to
your patronage]. The founder of Opus Dei made his own this tradition of trusting faith and prayer, and loved to pass it on to others, based on his own experience. Mary accepted everything from God and made it her own with a total docility and availability. She enjoys such esteem before God (God’s eyes rest upon her only with love: she is Immaculate, full of grace before him) that one can truly call her the “all-powerful supplicant.” Mary’s love for men and women as their mother is so great that she is concerned about the problems of each and every one; and she places her omnipotent power of intercession at their service, so that they may draw closer to her Son, getting to know him, love him and serve him.

“Let us go with our imagination to Cana, to discover another of Mary’s prerogatives. Our Lady asks her son to remedy the sad situation of a marriage feast without more wine. He tells the servants: ‘Do whatever he tells you.’ And Jesus carries out what his mother had suggested to him, with her maternal omnipotence. If Christ acts in this way to help people with a small domestic problem, how can he fail to listen to his mother when she beseeches him for all her children? God wants to grant his grace to all men and women through Mary. ‘We are thus,’ writes St. Pius X, ‘very far from attributing to the Mother of God a productive power of grace—a power which belongs to God alone. Yet, since Mary exceeds all in holiness and in union with Jesus Christ, and has been associated by Jesus Christ in the work of redemption, she merits for us de congruo, in the language of theologians, what Jesus Christ merits for us de condigno, and she is the supreme Minister of the distribution of graces.’ Mary is security, the seat of wisdom; and she, the Virgin Mother, mediatrix of all graces, is the one who will lead us by the hand to her Son, Jesus.”

The reference to Mary’s “maternal omnipotence” is interesting, since this expression gives the profound theological reason for the efficacy of our Lady’s supplications before God. As he once said in a meditation: “Et erat Mater Iesu ibi (Jn 2:1). The mother of Jesus was present at the marriage feast....And how our trust in you grows on seeing how you act on this occasion! Who was it that called you the ‘all-powerful supplicant’? But even this name fails to reflect the full power of your intercession. In reality, you are not a supplicant, because it is you who gives the orders, knowing that your Son is always ready to follow your every wish.”
I referred earlier to the personal experience of St. Josemaría as a source of his teachings about our Lady. I would like to cite here one text which shows clearly that his Marian devotion, grounded on the faith that he had received and studied, grew and developed as a result of his spiritual experience and personal meditation.55 “I wrote when I was young (with a conviction that perhaps crystallized during the years of my daily visits to Our Lady of the Pillar, ‘that to Jesus we always go, and to Him we “return,” through Mary.’ And since then the Mother of God has given me so many unmistakable signs of her help. I say this openly, just as a notary attests to a deed, so that there be a public record of my gratitude for events that would not have happened if not for our Lord’s grace, which always reaches us through the intercession of his Mother.”56

5) A mother who acts as a unifying principle in the life of her children

We have seen that, for St. Josemaría, Marian piety is a path towards unity of life, since it helps us to unite the human and divine dimensions in our relationship with God. Furthermore, he teaches us that Mary acts as a true principle of unity of life by efficaciously leading men and women to her Son. Mary in doing so acts as a mother, carrying out in the order of grace what a mother carries out in the order of nature.

On the human level, we know how dependent small children are on their mother, trusting in her completely. With her they feel completely safe. Can we say that something analogous happens with Christians in their spiritual life? St. Josemaría’s teachings lead us to say yes. First, because there are many analogies between the relationship of mothers with their children and of Mary with mankind.57 And also because Mary provides the universality necessary to constitute a unifying principle in a person’s life, analogously to how a mother is such in her child’s human concerns, and to how Christ is such in attaining theological unity of life. Mary is a truly universal mother: she is concerned about everything and encompasses everything; she is interested in everyone and helps everyone, interceding for the salvation of all men and women.

The Word became flesh so that men could become sons of God and brothers in Him. Thus He became the unifying principal of human life. Something similar happens in regard to Mary. Precisely because she is
“Mother of God and mother of mankind,” Mary teaches everyone to behave as children of God and brothers and sisters of one another. This unifying function is based not only on her double maternity (in a way analogous to the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ), but also on her assumption in body and soul into heaven (in a way analogous to Christ’s resurrection).

“From the first moment of the Church all Christians who have sought the love of God—that love revealed in Jesus Christ—have encountered our Lady and experienced her motherly care....It is not surprising then that one of the oldest witnesses to this devotion to Mary is confident prayer: ‘We gather under your protection, holy Mother of God. Do not reject the prayers we say to you in our need, but save us from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin.’[58] In a very natural way we start wanting to speak to the Mother of God, who is also our mother. We want to treat her as someone who is alive. For death has not triumphed over her; she is body and soul in the presence of God the Father, her Son, and the Holy Spirit.”[59]

Devotion to our Lady fosters unity of life because she teaches and helps men and women to become sons and daughters of God and to be brothers and sisters to each other.[60] Her maternal role consists in bringing men and women to her divine Son, so that they can be reconciled with Him and live united to Him as adopted children of his Father and as his brothers and sisters.

First comes filiation: “Because Mary is our mother, devotion to her teaches us to be authentic sons: to love truly, without limit; to be simple, without the complications which come from selfishly thinking only about ourselves; to be happy, knowing that nothing can destroy our hope.”[61]

Then, fraternity: “If we have this filial contact with Mary, we won’t be able to think just about ourselves and our problems. Selfish personal problems will find no place in our mind. Mary brings us to Jesus, and Jesus is ‘the firstborn among many brothers.’[62] And so, if we know Jesus, we realize that we can live only by giving ourselves to the service of others. A Christian can’t be caught up in personal problems; he must be concerned about the universal Church and the salvation of all souls.”[63]
We saw earlier that a mother can be the universal reference principle for her small child. But this isn’t true for an adult. A mother doesn’t provide the unifying principle in the life of a mature person. This objection raises a question of great importance, since it shows the limits of the analogy we have used. But what cannot happen on the natural plain, does occur in supernatural life, for Christ said that only children and those who become like children will enter into the Kingdom of heaven.[64]

“Let’s think about this. It can help us to understand some very important things. The mystery of Mary helps us see that in order to approach God we must become little. As Christ said to his disciples ‘Believe me, unless you become like little children again, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.’[65] To become children we must renounce our pride and self-sufficiency, recognizing that we can do nothing by ourselves. We must realize that we need grace, and the help of God our Father to find our way and keep to it. To be little, you have to abandon yourself as children do, believe as children believe, beg as children beg. And we learn all this through contact with Mary.”[66]

3. Was the founder of Opus Dei’s Marian devotion something new?

What is the import of the founder of Opus Dei’s Marian devotion for the People of God?

A first point to be clarified is that St. Josemaría did not promote new devotions or prayers. Nor did he spread any specific devotions to our Lady or recommend any of the advocations connected to his own life or to the history of Opus Dei. Rather he encouraged and spread existing devotions that were traditional in the Church.[67] And he did so respecting each person’s own likes and interests.[68]

He himself had never wanted to be a founder of anything; he considered himself “a founder without foundation,” and desired “to hide and disappear” so that “only Jesus would shine forth.” His only concern was to carry out the mission God was asking of him: to preach holiness in the midst of the world, teaching men and women how to sanctify their work and daily duties, closely united to the Mother of God. Thereby they would contribute silently and efficaciously to making a reality of the aspiration he so often prayed: omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam; that all may go with
Peter to Jesus through Mary. Thus the founder of Opus Dei’s contribution to the growth of Marian devotion can be found precisely in his concern to place it in direct contact with each Christian’s struggle to attain unity of life.

St. Josemaría did not limit himself to saying that Catholics should put our Lady into their lives. He also showed how this could be done in any place, in any walk of life, without the need to make use of formulas or devotions specific to any particular way of life. The universality of a devotion requires that all should be able to make it their own and practice it. This is the Marian devotion that St. Josemaría taught, which is within the grasp of all because it is nourished by the episodes of daily life of ordinary men and women.

St. Josemaría always insisted that holiness, identification with Christ, should be expressed as unity of life, as a unity of prayer, work and apostolate. This is especially true for those who live in the midst of the world facing the multiple demands of work, family and social obligations. Living in unity, united to Christ, means attaining human and supernatural perfection, and therefore holiness. And this is within the reach of everyone, whatever their gifts, family or social situation, health, etc. It requires no special abilities or talents, since everything, even the smallest incident, can be an occasion for an encounter with God, and for leading others to him.

However, many people fail to understand precisely this point. A disordered self-love, vanity, the zeal to stand out and be noticed, all the results of original sin, can mislead us into thinking that only outstanding deeds are really effective, even in the sphere of one’s religious devotions. But the truth lies elsewhere, as St. Josemaría forcefully tells us:

“Do you see where God’s greatness is hidden? In a manger, in swaddling clothes, in a stable. The redemptive power of our lives can only work through humility. We must stop thinking about ourselves and feel the responsibility of helping others. It can sometimes happen that even well-intentioned people create personal problems—really serious worries—which have no objective basis whatsoever. These problems arise in persons whose lack of self-knowledge leads to pride and a desire to be the center of attention, to be favored by everyone. They want to appear
always in a good light, to be personally secure. They are not content simply to do good and disappear. And so, many who could enjoy a wonderful peace of soul and great happiness become, through pride and presumption, unhappy and unfruitful."

Pride prevents one from recognizing that everyday realities, which seem to have little importance, can have great value in God’s sight. As the Psalm says: “for though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly” (Ps 138[137]:6). Apparently insignificant acts acquire great supernatural value when done for love of God and neighbor. Thus we should go to Him in everything and for everything.

The founder of Opus Dei insisted strongly on the value of little things. And he found in our Lady’s life an example here as well.

“But don’t forget: while God exalted his Mother, it is equally true that he did not spare her pain, exhaustion in her work, or trials of her faith. A village woman one day broke into praise for Jesus exclaiming: ‘Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nourished you.’ Jesus said in reply: ‘Rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.’ It was a compliment to his Mother on her fiat, her ‘be it done.’ She lived it sincerely, unstintingly, fulfilling its every consequence, but never amid fanfare, rather in the hidden and silent sacrifice of each day.

“As we meditate on these truths, we come to understand better the logic of God. We come to realize that the supernatural value of our life does not depend on the great undertakings suggested to us by our overactive imagination. Rather it’s to be found in the faithful acceptance of God’s will, in welcoming generously the opportunities for small, daily sacrifices.

To become God-like, to be divinized, we must begin by being very human, accepting from God our condition as ordinary men and sanctifying its apparent littleness. This is how Mary lived. She who is full of grace, the object of God’s pleasure, exalted above all the angels and the saints, lived an ordinary life. Mary is as much a creature as we are, with a heart like ours, made for joy and mirth as well as suffering and tears."

Although St. Josemaría did not promote new devotions or prayers, he always gave great importance to traditional Marian devotions. A principal
part of the message he spread—the universal call to holiness—was the need to draw close to our Lady in order to attain holiness, identification with Christ, and therefore unity of life. “There are many Marian devotions in addition to the Rosary, just as there are many ways of expressing affection for our earthly mother. Some children show it with a kiss, others with a gift of flowers, others with a silent glance that expresses the intensity of their affection. Something analogous occurs with our love for our heavenly Mother. There are many devotions, and not all of them have to be incorporated into each person’s piety. But we can also be certain that a person who does not express in some way his love for Mary does not possess the fullness of the faith.”[74]

4. Concluding reflections on the Christian depth of St. Josemaría’s Marian devotion

Spiritual authors, besides noting the danger of doctrinally ambiguous devotions, have also warned against the possible lack of authenticity in religious practice when it is disconnected from the theological virtues, moral rectitude, and the revealed truth taught by the Church. They also put us on guard against doctrinal inconsistency and routine, which deprive these practices of their true meaning, expressed by the very word “devotion” itself.[75]

In this final section we will see that the Marian devotions lived and taught by St. Josemaría not only present the characteristics of authentic Catholic devotion, but that, by their Christian depth, they efficaciously guard against possible deviations, including routine. We have already seen that his Marian piety was nourished above all by contemplation of Mary in the light of Scripture and the teachings of the Church, thus ensuring its solidity and doctrinal richness. Grounded in a unity of life lived alongside Christ, this devotion skirts the dangers of routine, sentimentalism, curiosity and hypocrisy.

a) Authenticity in devotions and unity of life

Devotions are authentic when they are an external manifestation of interior dedication, self-giving, faith, hope and love. They are not such when they are limited to external acts that are not enlivened by interior life,
and therefore that fail to produce fruits of conversion, spiritual growth and service to others.

Another criterion of authenticity can be seen in the consistency of a specific devotion with the rest of one’s spiritual life. Indeed, it is impossible, for various reasons, for a true devotion not to influence the life of a person and be reflected in his conduct. Unity of life serves as a measure and guarantee of authentic devotion: a tie to charity can be added to the connection with faith as an indispensable condition of the Christian authenticity of specific manifestations of piety.

St. Josemaría’s Marian devotion left a deep imprint on his personal life and conduct. He wrote: “Your love for our Lady should be more lively, more supernatural. —Don't just go to the Virgin Mary to ask her for things. You should also go to give: give her your affection; give her your love for her divine Son; and show her your affection with deeds of service to others, who are also her children.”[76] His sincere and genuine Marian piety was expressed in deeds of dedication to God and to his fellow men and women:

“Devotion to our Lady of Pilar has always accompanied me: my parents, with their Aragonese piety, instilled it in me from childhood. Now, in thinking of Holy Mary, there come to mind so many periods of prayer and so many events, small in appearance, but great if seen with eyes of love. During the time I spent in Saragossa for my priestly studies, while also attending classes at the law school, my visits to the church of Pilar were at least daily.... I continue going to her with filial love. With the same faith with which I invoked her back in the 20’s, when our Lord was giving me premonitions of what he wanted of me, with that same faith I invoke her now. If on occasion we confront unjust or unpleasant events—splatters of mud that a Christian doesn’t want to remove—they are converted into beautiful flowers, which I place with my heart before that sacred Pillar, as we Aragonese sing, and I say: My Lady, I offer you this too. Under your protection, I am always happy and safe. This is why God wants us to approach our Lady of Pilar: so that, in feeling ourselves comforted by the understanding, affection and power of our Mother, our faith will increase, our hope will be strengthened, our eagerness to lovingly serve all souls will grow. And thus with joy and renewed strength we will be enabled to
dedicate ourselves to the service of others, to sanctify our work and our life:
in a word, to make all the paths of the earth divine.”

His Marian devotion was nourished by the Church’s doctrinal riches. It
was especially ordained towards interior growth, towards the development
of the unity of life that he saw as intrinsic to Christian perfection:
“Devotion to our Lady is not something soft and sentimental. It fills the
soul with consolation and joy to precisely to the extent that it means a deep
act of faith making us go outside ourselves and put our hope in the
Lord.”

Thus we are encouraged to confront the hard battle to attain true
maturity, the battle against the self-love that encloses a person in himself
and cuts him off from the “you” of others and from the “You” who saves us:
“We have to open our eyes; we have to look around us and recognize how
God is calling us through the people at our side. We cannot turn our backs
on others, ignoring them, caught up in our own little world. That wasn’t
how Jesus lived. The Gospel often speaks of his mercy, his ability to feel the
sorrow and share the needs of others. He consoled the widow of Naim;
he wept at the death of Lazarus; he felt compassion for the crowds that
followed him with nothing to eat; he also had pity on sinners, on those
who go through life without knowing light or truth. ‘And when he landed,
Jesus saw a large crowd, and had compassion on them, because they were
like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many
things.’ When we are truly sons of Mary, we understand this attitude of
our Lord, and our heart expands and becomes tender. We feel the
sufferings, doubts, loneliness and sorrow of all other men, our brothers.
And we urgently want to help them and speak to them about God, so that
they can treat him as their Father and understand the motherly care which
Mary is offering them.”

Thus drawing close to our Lady strengthens us at the same time as it
helps us not to feel alone, not to feel abandoned nor to abandon others, to
overcome discouragement, to prevail over rancor and apathy, to live a
generous self-giving to our neighbor in spite of possible negative
experiences, to break free of tepidity, to lead a life of union with God.
Contemplation of Mary, in the thought and teachings of St. Josemaría, is not a cold theoretical exercise. Without losing its intellectual content, it is ordered towards life. It leads one to live alongside Mary, to bring her into one’s own life. “The Mother of God is also truly the mother of men. Our Lord wanted it to be this way. So that future generations might know it, the Holy Spirit inspired St John to write: ‘When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he said to his mother “Woman, behold your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.’[84] John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, brought Mary into his home, into his life. Spiritual writers have seen these words of the Gospel as an invitation to all Christians to bring Mary into their lives. Mary certainly wants us to invoke her, to approach her confidently, to appeal to her as our mother, asking her to ‘show that you are our mother’ (Hymn Ave Maris Stella).”[85]

b) An authentic Christocentric piety

The Christian authenticity of a devotion is shown in an evident way when it leads one to get to know and love Christ better, to draw closer to him with trust. This is how the founder of Opus Dei always understood and practiced Marian piety.

Protestant reformers tended to look askance at Catholic devotion to Mary because they feared that it obscured the central role of Christ in Christian life.

This fear might seem to have a certain rational basis. Since God alone is the principle of an authentic unity of life and he alone can fill the human heart, how could this also be the role of a creature? Wouldn’t seeking the unifying presence offered by a creature more likely result in people going astray, cut off from the true source of unity? If this objection is reasonable, it is also true that there are creatures who help people to give unity and meaning to their life without separating them from God. This is the case of Mary, of the saints, and of many good, upright people.

This fear also has a practical basis. There are, unfortunately, some persons whose Marian devotion fails to respect the elementary demands of the theological order, who fail to direct themselves to her in accord with the truth of the Catholic faith, and therefore who are not really praying to
the Mother of God. But when confronted with these errors, it is always possible to redirect the Marian devotion of these people and give it Christian authenticity.

In its ecumenical dialogue with Protestants, the Second Vatican Council emphasized, in chapter eight of the constitution *Lumen Gentium*, that the importance given to Mary by Catholics in no way signifies any kind of Mariocentrism. The Catholic faith recognizes that our Lady’s role is dependent on Christ and ordained to his redemptive mission, to his salvific action.[86]

For St. Josemaría, Mary is the model and principle of unity of life precisely because of her relationship with Christ, not aside from Him. Thus recourse to our Lady, when authentic, does not and cannot detract from her Son.

Contemplating Mary teaches us that her specific role in the plan of salvation is to engender Christ, to care for and accompany him during his whole life. Completely docile to the Christifying action of the Holy Spirit, Mary carries out her maternal role (as mother of the Incarnate Word, and of men in the order of grace). Our Lady’s whole life is a participation in the Paraclete’s Christifying action. Here we find the source of the special unity of life given by Mary: engendering Christ and caring for him, and engendering the Mystical Body of Christ and caring for it. Mary is always the mother of Christ and of men in him, the mother of Christ and of the Church. As the founder of Opus Dei wrote: “For me, the first Marian devotion (for thus I like to see it) is the Holy Mass….Each day when Christ comes down into the priest’s hands, his real presence among us is renewed, with his Body, his Blood, his Soul and his Divinity: the same Body and Blood that he took from Mary’s flesh. In the sacrifice of the Altar, our Lady’s participation evokes for us the silent reserve with which she accompanied her Son’s life when he traveled through the land of Palestine. The Holy Mass is the action of the entire Trinity: by the will of the Father, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, the Son offers himself in a redemptive oblation. In this unfathomable mystery one can make out, as though veiled, Mary’s most pure face: Daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son, Spouse of God the Holy Spirit.”[87]
St. Josemaría’s experience taught him that Mary, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, is able to unify men’s thoughts, words and deeds in the love of God revealed in Christ. When we realize that Mary’s role as model and principle of unity of life depends on her relationship with Christ as his mother, we avoid any danger that devotion to her could be an obstacle to recognizing the uniqueness of the Mediator and the sovereignty of God. The unifying action of Marian piety consists precisely in uniting men and women with Christ, not in uniting them with herself, apart from Him. The love of the mother cannot be understood as an alternative to the love of the Son, nor as something that could cast a shadow on it.

In summary, Mary’s role is to draw men to her Son, placing them before Christ so that they can be reconciled with Him, learning to love Him and follow Him. St. Josemaria said in one of his homilies: “Without ceasing to be a mother, our Lady is able to get each of her children to face his own responsibilities. Mary always does the immense favor of bringing to the cross, of placing face to face with the example of the Son of God, those who come close to her and contemplate her life. It is in this confrontation that Christian life is decided. And here Mary intercedes for us so that our behavior may lead to a reconciliation of the younger brother—you and me—with the firstborn Son of the Father.”[88]

Thus “the beginning of the way, at the end of which you will find yourself completely carried away by love for Jesus, is a trusting love for Mary.”[89] I wrote that many years ago, in the introduction to a short book on the Rosary, and since then I have often experienced the truth of those words. I am not going to complete that thought here with all sorts of reasons. I invite you to discover it for yourself, showing your love for Mary, opening your heart to her, confiding to her your joys and sorrows, asking her to help you recognize and follow Jesus.”[90]

True Marian devotion leads always to a greater love for God the Father, for the Word, and for the Holy Spirit. “Most Sweet Heart of Mary, prepare a safe way. Guide our steps on earth with strength and security. Become for us the path we are to follow, since you in your love know the way, a sure short-cut, to the love of Jesus Christ.”[91]

Arturo Blanco
This study makes extensive use of the writings of the founder of Opus Dei. To avoid undue repetition, I will include his name as author only the first time that each of his works is mentioned.


The importance of unity of life was a constant teaching of the founder of Opus Dei, who above all practiced it in an eminent way, as is amply attested to by those knew him well: see The Pontifical Decree on the Heroic Exercise of the Virtues by the Servant of God Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, April 9, 1990: AAS 82 (1990) 1451. Manuel Belda calls him a pioneer in this point of the spiritual life: Belda, M., “El Beato Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, pionero de la unidad de vida cristiana,” in El cristiano en el mundo. En el Centenario del nacimiento del Beato Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, Publication Service of the University of Navarre, Pamplona 2003, pp. 467-482. The expression “unity of life” is absent from earlier treatises and manuals of theology, nor is it found in the most important dictionaries and encyclopedias devoted to spirituality: see de Celaya, I., Vocación cristiana y unidad de vida, in La misión del laico en la Iglesia y en el mundo, Eunsa, Pamplona 1987, p. 954. However, this expression is used by the Second Vatican Council: Lumen Gentium, no. 35; Gaudium et Spes, no. 43; Apostolicam Actuositatem, no. 4; Ad Gentes, no. 21; Presbyterorum Ordinis, no. 4; and it has been used various times by John Paul II, in the apostolic exort. Christifideles Laici: nos. 34, 59 and 60. See Belda, M., “La nozione di ‘unità di vita’ secondo l’Esortazione Apostolica ‘Christifideles laici,’” in Annales Theologici 3 (1989) 287-314.

The homily that he gave in Pamplona on October 8, 1967 is especially significant in this regard. It is published in Conversations with Josemaría Escrivá, New York 1981, nos. 113-123; also see Christ Is Passing By, especially nos. 95-101 and 107-113. See also the studies of Juan B. Torelló, “La espiritualidad de los laicos,” in La vocación cristiana, Palabra, Madrid 1975, pp. 49-75; Fernández, A., “Espiritualidad esencialmente secular: Comentario al número cuatro del decreto Apostolicam actuositatem,”
The testimony of the first Prelate of Opus Dei is especially important in this regard. For example, in the book Immersed in God, he said: “To respond fully to this request [the interviewer had asked him to speak about St. Josemaría’s Marian devotion] one would have to write a treatise! “It is important, first of all, to keep in mind that the founder of Opus Dei, endowed as he was with a very rich sensibility, was not inclined to sentimentality. Even his Marian devotion, therefore, was distinguished by the profundity of its theological content. By this I mean that it was based not so much on ‘reasons of the heart’ as on faith—faith, that is, in the prerogatives given by God to our Lady and in her role in our redemption.”He visited countless Marian shrines. His pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City is of particular historical importance. He made this pilgrimage in May 1970, for the intention of asking the Blessed Virgin Mary to be mindful of the needs of the Church and to bring to completion the canonical journey of Opus Dei.“In December 1973, referring to his travels from one Marian shrine to another, he said emphatically, ‘I’m doing nothing but light candles, and I’m going to keep on doing that as long as I’ve got matches.’“His love for the Blessed Virgin Mary impelled him to keep a close eye on everything connected with devotion to her. For example, whenever he commissioned a painting or a statue of our Lady with the baby Jesus, or a picture of the holy women at the foot of the cross, he recommended that the artist try, as much as possible, to make Jesus look like his mother. Christ must, after all, have looked a lot like Mary, since his conception in her womb did not involve a man, but came about through direct intervention by the Holy Spirit; but only a soul very much in love would have placed so much importance on this detail. (Alvaro del Portillo, Immersed in God (an interview conducted by Cesare Cavalleri), Scepter Publishers, 1996, pp. 137-139.)

Ibid. On the Trinitarian and Christocentric substance of St. Josemaría’s spiritual life and Marian devotion, see A. Aranda, María, Hija predilecta del Padre, cit., pp. 324-331; F. Delclaux, Santa María en los escritos del Beato Josemaría Escrivá, cit., pp. 64-146.

And he adds: “He established the custom of placing in each room of Opus Dei centers a simple and artistically tasteful image of our Lady. He taught us to direct a glance towards it, and to give our Blessed Mother an affectionate interior prayer of greeting, whenever we enter or leave a room. … Our founder suggested placing in certain areas of our centers—laundry rooms and kitchens, for example—pictures that show our Lady doing washing, cooking, or feeding the child Jesus. In this way, those of his daughters whose chosen field of service is domestic administration can have a constant reminder of this ideal: that in all that they do to tend to the needs of the household, they should strive to imitate the Blessed Virgin Mary. “Our Father used to say to his daughters that since they didn’t have a foundress, they ought to consider the Blessed Virgin Mary their foundress. And to ensure that they wouldn’t forget this, he established that in all the women’s centers, each chapel should be furnished with an image of our Lady” (Del Portillo, A., *Immersed in God*, op. cit., pp. 138-139).


Here is another illuminating quote, taken from Salvador Bernal, *Msgr. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer: A Profile of the Founder of Opus Dei*, Scepter, London — New York 1977, p. 228: “I had an image of our Lady…. I called it the Virgin of the kisses. I never went in or out of that first residence of ours without first going to the Director’s room, where the image was, and kissing it. I don’t think I ever did it mechanically. It was a human kiss, the kiss of a son who is afraid… But I have said so often that I am not afraid of anyone or of anything, so we’d better not say afraid. It was the kiss of a son who was worried that he was too young and who went to seek in our Lady all the tenderness of her affection. I went to seek all the fortitude I needed in God through the Blessed Virgin.”

In his homily, “To Jesus, Through Mary,” he speaks of the custom of dedicating Saturdays to our Lady by “doing some special little sacrifice for her and thinking particularly about her motherhood.” St. Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 1974, no. 142. In regard to
the Marian contemplation of the founder of Opus Dei, see Aranda, A. *El "bullir" de la sangre de Cristo*, op. cit., pp. 190-192


[16] The Second Vatican Council, solemnly taught the maternity of Mary with respect to mankind, based on her divine maternity and on her cooperation through love in the birth of new members of the Body of Christ: see Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, ch. VIII, esp. nos. 53 and 56, and 60-62.

[17] See, for example, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 140; *Friends of God*, no. 155.

[18] *Christ Is Passing By*, subhead at no. 140.

[19] Ibid., no. 142; *Friends of God*, in the title of the homily dedicated to our Lady and in no. 275.


[23] *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 140.

[24] Ibid., nos. 140-141


[26] *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 141.

[27] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 8, 3: Haec est differentia inter corpus hominis naturale et corpus Ecclesiae mysticum, quod membra corporis naturalis sunt omnia simul, membra autem corporis mystici non sunt omnia simul, neque quantum ad esse naturae, quia corpus Ecclesiae constituitor ex hominibus qui fuerunt a principio mundi usque ad finem ipsius; neque etiam quantum ad esse gratiae, quia eorum etiam qui
sunt in uno tempore, quidam gratia carent postmodum habituri, aliis eam iam habentibus. Sic igitur membra corporis mystici non solum accipiuntur secundum quod sunt in actu, sed etiam secundum quod sunt in potentia. Quaedam tamen sunt in potentia quae nunquam reducuntur ad actum, quaedam vero quae quandoque reducuntur ad actum, secundum hunc triplicem gradum, quorum unus est per fidem, secundus per caritatem viae, tertius per fruitionem patriae. Sic ergo dicendum est quod, accipiendo generaliter secundum totum tempus mundi, Christus est caput omnium hominum, sed secundum diversos gradus. Primo enim et principaliter est caput eorum qui actu uniuntur sibi per gloriam. Secundo, eorum qui actu uniuntur sibi per caritatem. Tertio, eorum qui actu uniuntur sibi per fidem. Quarto vero, eorum qui sibi uniuntur solum potentia nondum ad actum reducta, quae tamen est ad actum reducenda, secundum divinam praedestinationem. Quinto vero, eorum qui in potentia sibi sunt uniti quae nunquam reducetur ad actum, sicut homines in hoc mundo viventes qui non sunt praedestinati. Qui tamen, ex hoc mundo recedentes, totaliter desinunt esse membra Christi, quia iam nec sunt in potentia ut Christo uniuntur. [This is the difference between the natural body of man and the Church’s mystical body, that the members of the natural body are all together, and the members of the mystical are not all together—neither as regards their natural being, since the body of the Church is made up of the men who have been from the beginning of the world until its end—nor as regards their supernatural being, since, of those who are at any one time, some there are who are without grace, yet will afterwards obtain it, and some have it already. We must therefore consider the members of the mystical body not only as they are in act, but as they are in potentiality. Nevertheless, some are in potentiality who will never be reduced to act, and some are reduced at some time to act; and this according to the triple class, of which the first is by faith, the second by the charity of this life, the third by the fruition of the life to come. Hence we must say that if we take the whole time of the world in general, Christ is the Head of all men, but diversely. For, first and principally, He is the Head of such as are united to Him by glory; secondly, of those who are actually united to Him by charity; thirdly, of those who are actually united to Him by faith; fourthly, of those who are united to Him merely in potentiality, which is not yet reduced to act, yet will be reduced to act according to Divine predestination; fifthly, of
those who are united to Him in potentiality, which will never be reduced to act; such are those men existing in the world, who are not predestined, who, however, on their departure from this world, wholly cease to be members of Christ, as being no longer in potentiality to be united to Christ.]


[29] The Way, no. 496: “How people like to be reminded of their relationship with distinguished figures in literature, in politics, in the army, in the Church!... Sing to the Immaculate Virgin, reminding her: Hail Mary, daughter of God the Father: Hail Mary, Mother of God the Son: Hail Mary, Spouse of God the holy Spirit...Greater than you, none but God!”


[31] Friends of God, no. 276.


[33] St. Ambrose, Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam, 2, 26: PL 15, 1561.

[34] Friends of God, no. 281


[37] Christ Is Passing By, nos. 139-149 and 171-178.

[38] Friends of God, nos. 284, 292, 293.


[40] Friends of God, no. 281.

[41] Echevarría, J., El amor a María Santísima en las enseñanzas de
The cited point from *Furrow* reads as follows: “A great sign appeared in Heaven: a woman adorned with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars about her head.’ From this, you and I and everyone may be sure that nothing perfects our personality so much as correspondence with grace.” Try to imitate the Virgin Mary and you will be a complete man or woman.” St. Josemaria, *Furrow*, Scepter, London, 1988, no. 443.

*Cf. Ocáriz, La filiación divina, realidad central en la vida y en la enseñanza de Mons. Escrivá de Balaguer, op. cit., pp. 178-187.*

St. Josemaría took this title from Christian tradition. He used it on various occasions, for example in *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 175 and in *Friends of God*, no. 288; in the latter he writes: “Felix culpa, the Church sings. Happy fault, that has brought us so great and wonderful a Redeemer. Happy fault, we could add, which has merited that we should receive Mary as our Mother. Now we are safe. Nothing should worry us now, because our Lady, the crowned Queen of heaven and earth, is omnipotent in her supplication before our Father God. Jesus cannot deny anything to Mary, nor to us, who are children of his own Mother.”

*St. Pius X, Encyclical Ad Diem Illum, February 2, 1904.*

Words taken from preaching by St. Josemaria on July 11, 1937, included by Pedro Rodriguez in his critical edition of *The Way*, cited above,
p. 636.

[55] See Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, no. 8, on growing in one’s understanding of the revealed word of God.

[56] "La Virgen del Pilar," cited above; see *Friends of God*, no. 293.

[57] See for example *Christ Is Passing By*, no 142.

[58] *Sub suum praesidium confugimus, Sancta Dei Genetrix*: nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus, sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper, Virgo gloriosa et benedicta.

[59] *Christ Is Passing By*, nos. 141-142.

[60] Unity of life requires both a sense of filiation to God and a sense of fraternity with Christ and our fellow men and women. Unfortunately, many of those who boast of fulfilling their religious duties fail to realize that this must also be shown in their care for persons in sorrow and need (Jas 1:27). There is a kind of circularity between these two aspects: fraternity is born of knowing oneself to be children of the same Father; while the reality of fraternity (the affection between brothers and sisters, their mutual help and service) strengthens their sense of filiation and gives it a fuller and more demanding content. Cf. *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 36.

[61] *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 143.

[62] Rom 8:29

[63] *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 145.


[65] Mt 18:3

[66] *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 143.


[68] Thus, for example, during the years of religious persecution in
Spain, when someone who had the devotion of reciting the Little Office of Our Lady was unable to do so because he was in prison and didn’t have a copy of this book, the founder had it delivered to him in prison. See Salvador Bernal, *Msgr. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer*, p. 286-287.

[69] *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 18.

[70] In *The Way*, there is an entire chapter dedicated to this topic. References to it are found throughout all of St. Josemaría’s preaching and teaching.


[72] Luke 1:38


[74] "La Virgen del Pilar," op. cit. This idea also appears in *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 142, cited above.

[75] Almost all the spiritual authors who have dealt with the subject warn against these dangers. See, for example, St. John of the Cross (*The Ascent of Mt. Carmel*, III, c. 42); St. Francis de Sales (*Introduction to the Devout Life*); St. John Eudes (*La Vie et le Royaume de Jésus*), St. Louis de Montfort (*Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*), etc. St. Josemaría does so as well; see, for example, *The Way*, nos. 551, 552 and 574.

[76] *The Forge*, no. 137.

[77] "Recuerdos del Pilar," cit.

[78] *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 143.


[80] Cf. John 11:33

[81] Cf. Matt 15:32

[82] Mark 6:34

[83] *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 146.


[85] *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 140.

"La Virgen del Pilar," op. cit.

*Christ Is Passing By*, no. 149. The idea is already present in *The Way*: “The Virgin of Sorrows. When you contemplate her, look into her Heart; she is a Mother with two sons, face to face: He... and you” (no. 506).


*Christ Is Passing By*, no. 143.

Ibid., no. 178