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.
SUMMARY
EDITORIAL

• Follow Me

HOLY SEE

The Roman Pontiff

• Holy Thursday Letter to Priests (March 13, 2005)
• Address to the participants in UNIV 2005 (March 21, 2005)
• Spiritual Testament
• Homily at the Final Mass of Italy’s Eucharistic Congress (May 29, 2005)
• Message for the World Day of Peace (January 1, 2005)
• Homily at the Solemn Mass Initiating the Petrine Ministry (April 24, 2005)
• On taking possession of the Cathedral of Rome (May 7, 2005)
• First Message at the end of the Eucharistic Concelebration with the Cardinal Electors in the Sistine Chapel (April 20, 2005)

PRELATE

New Circumscriptions

• New Circumscriptions

Activities of the Prelate

• Pastoral Trips
• Priestly Ordinations
• Eucharistic ceremony at the Prelatic Church

Pastoral Letters

• On the death of Pope John Paul II (April 3, 2005)
• On the occasion of the Conclave (April 10, 2005)

Homilies

• At the Mass for the repose of the soul of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, in the Basilica of St. Eugene, Rome (March 22, 2005)
• At the ordination of deacons of the Prelature, Basilica of St. Eugene (May 21, 2005)
• On the Feast of St. Josemaria, Basilica of St. Eugene (June 25, 2005)

Addresses
• On the 20th anniversary of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (January 10, 2005)
• At the 29th symposium on the Theology of the Priesthood at the School of Theology of Northern Spain (March 4, 2005)
• At the international symposium on Canon Law at the Peter Pazmany Catholic University of Budapest (February 7, 2005)

Articles and Interviews
• Interview granted to Cesare Cavalleri of the magazine Studi Cattolici (May 21, 2005)
• In the Father’s House, an article in ABC, Madrid (April 5, 2005)
• Faith and Unity article in La Gaceta de los Negocios, Madrid (May 7, 2005)
• Upon learning of the death of John Paul II (April 2, 2005)
• In regard to the sickness of Pope John Paul II (April 1, 2005)
• On the election of Benedict XVI (April 19, 2005)
• Your most important business is your children, article in La Stampa, Turin (June 25, 2005)

Books published
• Getsemani, a new book of Bishop Javier Echevarria

ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA
• Other News
• 70th anniversary of the first pilgrimage to Sonsoles
• Thirtieth anniversary of St. Josemaria’s departure for heaven
• Statue of St. Josemaria in a Marseille church

NEWS
• Masses for the repose of the Bishop Alvaro del Portillo
• The Church studies the sanctity of Jose Maria Hernandez Garnica
• Establishment of new Centers of the Prelature
• Pontifical Appointments
• Conclusion of the Diocesan phase of the cause of canonization of Guadalupe Ortiz de Landazuri

INITIATIVES

• The twentieth anniversary of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

In Brief

• Graz (Austria) -- Christiana Justin in Geidorf Cultural Center
• Buenos Aires -- Leadership roles for women
• Helsinki (Finland) -- The family, a means of communication between the individual and society
• Nairobi (Kenya) -- Businesses for village women
• Louvaine-la-Nuve (Belgium) -- Conference of Msgr. Schooyans at Neussart Residence
• Bogota -- A Corpus Christi Procession
• São Paulo (Brazil) -- Building a house for a poor family
• São Paulo -- Television program for the family
• Cristobal Colon (Ecuador) -- Social work amid extreme poverty
• Lismullin (Ireland) -- "Come and see for yourself" workshop
• Zürich (Switzerland) -- From Professor Ratzinger to Pope Benedict XVI
• Rome -- The Pincio Clock entrusted to ELIS students
• Paris -- A meeting with Cardinal Barbarin
• Manila (Philippines) -- Responsible citizenship
• Las Pinas (Philippines) -- Young people and the future of the country
• Toledo (Spain) -- Presentation of the Navarre Bible
• Paris -- Workshop on priestly vocations

IN PACE

• Faithful of Opus Dei and members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross who died in the first half of the year 2005

A STUDY

• Saint Josemaria Escriva, Reader of Sacred Scripture
EDITORIAL
Follow Me

Just as the last verse often reveals the meaning of a poem, so did the death of John Paul II shed new light upon his life, revealing its deepest meaning.

The words pronounced at his funeral by the one who a few days later would become his successor, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, reaffirmed for us the certainty that the meaning of the Pope’s life, which his death has now illuminated, is God’s call. A call which first the young Lolek, then Father Karol, later Cardinal Wojtyla, and finally John Paul II, always answered with a total generosity. “‘Follow me.’ The Risen Lord says these words to Peter. They are his last words to this disciple, chosen to shepherd his flock. ‘Follow me’—this lapidary saying of Christ can be taken as the key to understanding the message which comes to us from the life of our late beloved Pope John Paul II.”[1]

The memory of the Pope places us once more before the truth that we have only one sure guide who guarantees that our behavior in this world has a direction and meaning, a destination that it is worthwhile attaining. There is only one sure way, and it is Jesus Christ himself, who told us that he is “the Way, the Truth and the Life.” [2] John Paul II understood this very clearly and put it into practice, and in this lies his greatness.

As Cardinal Ratzinger pointed out during the Mass for the election of a Pope, today’s world offers us so many fraudulent “follow me’s,” so many illusions, so many incitements to the most improbable adventures of the ego: “How many winds of doctrine we have known in recent decades, how many ideological currents, how many ways of thinking... The small boat of thought of many Christians has often been tossed about by these waves—thrown from one extreme to the other.”[3] Under the deceitful cloak of self-sufficiency our world today contains an immense amount of disorientation, of perplexity, of ships set adrift. Therefore the figure of John Paul II is for the men and women of our times—for Christians, but also for those who do not believe in Christ—like a beacon in a storm.

In his moving recollection of the deceased Pope, Cardinal Ratzinger told us: “How often, in his letters to priests and in his autobiographical
books has he spoken to us about his priesthood, to which he was ordained on November 1, 1946. In these texts he interprets his priesthood with particular reference to three sayings of the Lord. First: ‘You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last’ (Jn 15:16). The second saying is: ‘The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep’ (Jn 10:11). And then: ‘As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love’ (Jn 15:9).”

Remaining in Christ’s love—or what is the same, persevering and being faithful to it—means opening oneself to the truth, to the truth that today is sometimes so difficult to find, owing to an oppressive “dictatorship of relativism which does not recognize anything as for certain and which has as its highest goal one’s own ego and one’s own desires.” Being faithful to Christ’s love means recognizing that Jesus is not only the Way and the Life, but also the Truth, for we only attain the Truth if we go out of ourselves, if we love.

“At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love.” These words of Saint John of the Cross, which John Paul II liked so much, are a beautiful image of Christian life. Today many prefer to revolve around themselves, to follow the dance of relativism, a movement that leads nowhere: “in circuitu impii ambulant,” the ungodly walk in circles, says the Psalmist. We, however, know we have been called to fulfill a mission in this life: to be useful to God and to our fellow men and women, to blaze a trail, to shed light. And one who has a vocation is traveling towards a specific port. To travel means to make progress, to refuse to give in to one’s own ego: not only to be faithful, but to be more faithful each day, with one’s eyes set on the goal. And there we now see a new light shining: a lighted beacon named John Paul II.


Back to Contents
HOLY SEE

• The Roman Pontiff
Dear Priests!

1. In this Year of the Eucharist, I particularly welcome our annual spiritual encounter for Holy Thursday, the day when Christ’s love was manifested “to the end” (cf. Jn 13:1), the day of the Eucharist, the day of our priesthood.

My thoughts turn to you, dear priests, as I spend this time recuperating in the hospital, a patient alongside other patients, uniting in the Eucharist my own sufferings with those of Christ. In this spirit I want to reflect with you on some aspects of our priestly spirituality.

I will take as my inspiration the words of Eucharistic consecration, which we say every day in persona Christi in order to make present on our altars the sacrifice made once and for all on Calvary. These words provide us with illuminating insights for priestly spirituality: if the whole Church draws life from the Eucharist, all the more then must the life of a priest be “shaped” by the Eucharist. So for us, the words of institution must be more than a formula of consecration: they must be a “formula of life.”

A life of profound “gratitude”

2. “Tibi gratias agens benedixit.” At every Mass we remember and relive the first sentiment expressed by Jesus as he broke the bread: that of thanksgiving. Gratitude is the disposition which lies at the root of the very word “Eucharist.” This expression of thanksgiving contains the whole Biblical spirituality of praise for the mirabilia Dei. God loves us, he goes before us in his Providence, he accompanies us with his continuous saving acts.

In the Eucharist Jesus thanks the Father with us and for us. How could this thanksgiving of Jesus fail to shape the life of a priest? He knows that he must cultivate a constant sense of gratitude for the many gifts he has received in the course of his life: in particular, for the gift of faith, which it
is his task to proclaim, and for the gift of the priesthood, which consecrates him totally to the service of the Kingdom of God. We have our crosses to bear — and we are certainly not the only ones! — but the gifts we have received are so great that we cannot fail to sing from the depths of our hearts our own Magnificat.

* A life that is “given”

3. *Accipite et manducate. Accipite et bibite.* Christ’s self-giving, which has its origin in the Trinitarian life of the God who is Love, reaches its culmination in the sacrifice of the Cross, sacramentally anticipated in the Last Supper. It is impossible to repeat the words of consecration without feeling oneself caught up in this spiritual movement. In a certain sense, when he says the words: “take and eat,” the priest must learn to apply them also to himself, and to speak them with truth and generosity. If he is able to offer himself as a gift, placing himself at the disposal of the community and at the service of anyone in need, his life takes on its true meaning.

This is exactly what Jesus expected of his apostles, as the Evangelist John emphasizes in his account of the washing of the feet. It is also what the People of God expect of a priest. If we think about it more fully, the priest’s promise of obedience, which he made on the day of Ordination and is asked to renew at the Chrism Mass, is illuminated by this relationship with the Eucharist. Obeying out of love, sacrificing even a certain legitimate freedom when the authoritative discernment of the Bishop so requires, the priest lives out in his own flesh that “take and eat” with which Christ, in the Last Supper, gave himself to the Church.

* A life that is “saved” in order to save

4. *Hoc est enim corpus meum quod pro vobis tradetur.* The body and the blood of Christ are given for the salvation of man, of the whole man and of all men. This salvation is integral and at the same time universal, because no one, unless he freely chooses, is excluded from the saving power of Christ’s blood: *qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur.* It is a sacrifice offered for “many,” as the Biblical text says ( *Mk* 14:24; *Mt* 26:28; cf. *Is* 53:11-12); this typical Semitic expression refers to the multitude who are saved by Christ, the one Redeemer, yet at the same time it implies the totality of human beings to whom salvation is offered: the Lord’s blood is “shed for
you and for all,” as some translations legitimately make explicit. Christ’s flesh is truly given “for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51; cf. 1 Jn 2:2).

Repeating Christ’s venerable words in the recollected silence of the liturgical assembly, we priests become privileged heralds of this mystery of salvation. Yet unless we sense that we ourselves are saved, how can we be convincing heralds? We are the first to be touched inwardly by the grace which raises us from our frailty and makes us cry “Abba, Father” with the confidence of God’s children (cf. Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15). This in turn commits us to advance along the path of perfection. Holiness, in fact, is the full expression of salvation. Only if our lives manifest the fact that we are saved do we become credible heralds of salvation. Moreover, a constant awareness of Christ’s will to offer salvation to all cannot fail to inspire us with fresh missionary fervor, spurring each of us on to become “all things to all men, in order to save at least some of them” (1 Cor 9:22).

_A life that “remembers”_

5. “Hoc facite in meam commemorationem.” These words of Jesus have been preserved for us not only by Luke (22:19) but also by Paul (1 Cor 11:24). We should keep in mind that they were spoken in the context of the Paschal meal, which for the Jews was indeed a “memorial” (in Hebrew, zikkarón). On that occasion the Israelites relived the Exodus first and foremost, but also the other important events of their history: the call of Abraham, the sacrifice of Isaac, the Covenant of Sinai, the many acts of God in defense of his people. For Christians too, the Eucharist is a “memorial,” but of a unique kind: it not only commemorates, but sacramentally makes present the death and resurrection of the Lord.

Jesus said: “Do this in memory of me.” The Eucharist does not simply commemorate a fact; it commemorates Him! Through his daily repetition in persona Christi of the words of the “memorial,” the priest is invited to develop a “spirituality of remembrance.” At a time when rapid social and cultural changes are weakening the sense of tradition and leading the younger generation especially to risk losing touch with their roots, the priest is called to be, within the community entrusted to him, the man who faithfully remembers the entire mystery of Christ: prefigured in the Old Testament, fulfilled in the New, and understood ever more deeply, under the guidance of the Spirit, as Jesus explicitly promised: “He will teach you
all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (Jn 14:26).

A “consecrated” life

6. “Mysterium fidei!” Every time he proclaims these words after consecrating the bread and wine, the priest expresses his ever-renewed amazement at the extraordinary miracle worked at his hands. It is a miracle which only the eyes of faith can perceive. The natural elements do not lose their external characteristics, since the “species” remain those of bread and wine; but their “substance,” through the power of Christ’s word and the action of the Holy Spirit, is changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ. On the altar, then, Christ crucified and risen is “truly, really and substantially” present in the fullness of his humanity and divinity. What an eminently sacred reality! That is why the Church treats this mystery with such great reverence, and takes such care to ensure the observance of the liturgical norms intended to safeguard the sanctity of so great a sacrament.

We priests are the celebrants, but also the guardians of this most sacred mystery. It is our relationship to the Eucharist that most clearly challenges us to lead a “sacred” life. This must shine forth from our whole way of being, but above all from the way we celebrate. Let us sit at the school of the saints! The Year of the Eucharist invites us to rediscover those saints who were vigorous proponents of Eucharistic devotion (cf. Mane Nobiscum Domine, 31). Many beatified and canonized priests have given exemplary testimony in this regard, enkindling fervor among the faithful present at their celebrations of the Mass. Many of them were known for their prolonged Eucharistic adoration. To place ourselves before Jesus in the Eucharist, to take advantage of our “moments of solitude” and to fill them with this Presence, is to enliven our consecration by our personal relationship with Christ, from whom our life derives its joy and its meaning.

A life centered on Christ

7. “Mortem tuam annuntiamus, Domine, et tuam resurrectionem confitemur, donec venias.” Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, the remembrance of Christ in his Paschal Mystery leads to the desire for a full
and definitive encounter with Him. We live in expectation of his coming! In priestly spirituality, this expectation must be lived out through pastoral charity, which impels us to live in the midst of God’s People, so as to direct their path and to nourish their hope. This task requires from the priest an interior attitude similar to that of the Apostle Paul: “Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal” (Phil 3:13-14). The priest is someone who, despite the passing of years, continues to radiate youthfulness, spreading it almost “contagiously” among those he meets along the way. His secret lies in his “passion” for Christ. As Saint Paul said: “For me, to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21).

Particularly in the context of the new evangelization, the people have a right to turn to priests in the hope of “seeing” Christ in them (cf. Jn 12:21). The young feel the need for this especially; Christ continues to call them, to make them his friends and to challenge some to give themselves completely for the sake of the Kingdom. Vocations will certainly not be lacking if our manner of life is truly priestly, if we become more holy, more joyful, more impassioned in the exercise of our ministry. A priest “won” by Christ (cf. Phil 3:12) more easily “wins” others, so that they too decide to set out on the same adventure.

A “Eucharistic” life at the school of Mary

8. The relationship between the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Eucharist is a very close one, as I pointed out in the Encyclical Ecclesia de Eucharistia (cf. Nos. 53-58). In its own sober liturgical language, every Eucharistic Prayer brings this out. Thus in the Roman Canon we say: “In union with the whole Church we honor Mary, the ever-virgin Mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God.” In the other Eucharistic Prayers, honor leads to petition, as for example in Prayer II: “Make us worthy to share eternal life with Mary, the virgin Mother of God.”

In recent years, I have warmly recommended the contemplation of the face of Christ, especially in my Letters Novo Millennio Ineunte (cf. Nos. 23ff.) and in Rosarium Virginis Mariae (cf. Nos. 9ff.), and I have pointed to Mary as our great teacher. In the Encyclical on the Eucharist I then spoke of her as the “Woman of the Eucharist” (cf. No. 53). Who more than Mary can help us taste the greatness of the Eucharistic mystery? She more than anyone can teach us how to celebrate the sacred mysteries with due
fervor and to commune with her Son, hidden in the Eucharist. I pray to her, then, for all of you, and I entrust to her especially the elderly, the sick, and those in difficulty. This Easter, in the Year of the Eucharist, I gladly repeat to each of you the gentle and consoling words of Jesus: “Behold your Mother” (Jn 19:27).

With these sentiments, I send you my heartfelt blessing, and I wish you the profound joy of Easter.

Gemelli Hospital in Rome,
the Fifth Sunday of Lent, 2005

Address to the participants in UNIV 2005
(March 21, 2005)

Dear Young People,

1. I am delighted to offer a cordial welcome to all of you who have come from various parts of the world to take part in the annual Congress of UNIV. I greet each one of you with affection, and I ask you to make the most of the opportunity of your stay in Rome to grow in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. I greet those who accompany you; in a special way, I greet the Bishop Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría Rodríguez, who is taking part in your meeting.

On the basis of your university studies, you are committed to building a new culture, respectful of the truth about humankind and society. At this International Congress you are addressing precisely the theme: “Planning culture,” focusing on the language of music.

2. Music, like all the languages of art, brings men and women closer to God, who has prepared for those who love him “what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived” (I Cor 2:9). But at the same time, art can sometimes be the vehicle for a conception of the human being, of love or of happiness that does not correspond to the truth of God’s plan. It is therefore necessary to use a healthy discernment. I repeat to you what I
wrote for the youth of the whole world in my Message for the upcoming World Youth Day: “Do not yield to false illusions and passing fads, which so frequently leave behind a tragic spiritual vacuum!” (no. 5; L’Osservatore Romano English edition, September 1, 2004, p. 7). It is also up to you, dear young people, to renew the languages of art and culture. May you therefore be committed to developing the courage not to accept behavior and entertainment that can be classified as excessive and disruptive.

3. As you are reminded through the many formation activities promoted by the Prelature of Opus Dei under the guidance of the Bishop Prelate, every person, whatever his or her condition or status, is called to encounter Christ in his or her own life every day. The vocation of the lay faithful, as you well know, is to strive for holiness, enlivening temporal realities with the Christian spirit. And then, dear students and university teachers, as St. Josemaría used to like to repeat, work and study must also be “a constant prayer for you. It has the same loveable words, but a different tune each day. It is very much our mission to transform the prose of this life into poetry, into heroic verse” (Furrow, no. 500).

May Mary Most Holy help you to meet her Son Jesus in the liturgy of this Holy Week and in the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. May the Virgin Mother of God, Woman of the Eucharist, lead each one of you to the joy of encountering Christ.

With these sentiments I bless all of you and your families as I offer you my fervent good wishes for a Holy Easter.

Spiritual Testament

Totus Tuus ego sum

In the Name of the Most Holy Trinity. Amen.

“Watch, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming” (Mt 24: 42)—these words remind me of the last call that will come at whatever time the Lord desires. I want to follow Him and I want all that is part of my earthly life to prepare me for this moment. I do not know
when it will come but I place this moment, like all other things, in the 
hands of the Mother of my Master: Totus Tuus. In these same motherly 
hands I leave everything and everyone with whom my life and my vocation 
have brought me into contact. In these Hands I above all leave the Church, 
and also my Nation and all humankind. I thank everyone. I ask forgiveness 
of everyone. I also ask for prayers, so that God’s Mercy may prove greater 
than my own weakness and unworthiness.

During the spiritual exercises I reread the Testament of the Holy 
Father Paul VI. Reading it gave me the incentive to write this Testament.

I leave no possessions of which it will be necessary to dispose. As for 
the things I use every day, I ask that they be distributed as seems 
appropriate. Let my personal notes be burned. I ask that Father Stanislaw 
see to this, and I thank him for his help and collaboration, so understanding 
for so many years. On the other hand, I leave all my other “thank you’s” in 
my heart before God Himself, because it is difficult to express them.

With regard to my funeral, I repeat the instructions that were given by 
the Holy Father Paul VI (here a note in the margin says: burial in the 
ground and not in a sarcophagus, March 13, 1992). Let the College of 
Cardinals and my Fellow Citizens decide on the place.

“apud Dominum misericordia
et copiosa apud Eum redemptio”

John Paul PP. II
Rome, March 6, 1979

After my death I ask for Holy Masses and prayers
February 5, 1990

Undated page
I express the most profound trust that, in spite of all my weakness, the Lord will grant me every grace necessary to face, in accordance with his will, any task, test or suffering that He sees fit to ask of his servant during his life. I am also confident that he will never let me fail through some attitude I may have: words, deeds or omissions, in my obligations to this holy Petrine See.

February 24, to March 1, 1980

Also during these spiritual exercises I reflected on the truth of the Priesthood of Christ in the perspective of that Passing which the moment of death is for each us. The Resurrection of Christ is an eloquent sign of the departure from this world for rebirth in the other, future world.

I therefore read the draft of my Testament as it was recorded last year, also written during the spiritual exercises—I compared it with the Testament of my great Predecessor and Father, Paul VI, with his sublime testimony on the death of a Christian and a Pope—and I reminded myself of the matters mentioned in the draft of March 6, 1979, prepared by me (in a somewhat makeshift manner).

Today, I would like to add just this: that everyone keep the prospect of death in mind and be ready to go before the Lord and Judge—and at the same time Redeemer and Father. So I keep this continuously in my mind, entrusting that decisive moment to the Mother of Christ and of the Church—to the Mother of my hope.

The times we are living in are unspeakably difficult and disturbing. The Church’s journey has also become difficult and stressful, a characteristic proof of these times—both for the Faithful and for Pastors. In some Countries (as, for example, those I read about during the spiritual exercises), the Church finds herself in a period of persecution no less evil than the persecutions of the early centuries, indeed worse, because of the degree of ruthlessness and hatred. Sanguis martyrum—semen christianorum [“The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians” (Tertullian)]. And in
addition to this, so many innocent people disappear, even in this Country in which we live....

I would like once again to entrust myself entirely to the Lord’s grace. He Himself will decide when and how I am to end my earthly life and my pastoral ministry. In life and in death [I am] Totus Tuus through Mary Immaculate. I hope, in already accepting my death now, that Christ will give me the grace I need for the final passover, that is, [my] Pasch. I also hope that He will make it benefit the important cause I seek to serve: the salvation of men and women, the preservation of the human family and, within in it, all the nations and peoples (among them, I also specifically address my earthly Homeland), useful for the people that He has specially entrusted to me, for the matter of the Church and for the glory of God Himself.

I do not want to add anything to what I wrote a year ago—except to express this readiness and, at the same time, this trust which these spiritual exercises have once again inspired in me.

John Paul II

March 5, 1982

Totus Tuus ego sum

In the course of the spiritual exercises this year I read (several times) the text of my Testament of 6 March 1979. Although I still consider it as temporary (not definitive) I am leaving it in its present form. I am not (for the moment) changing anything, nor do I add anything to the arrangements it contains.

The attack on my life on 13 May 1981 in some way confirmed the exactness of the words I wrote during the spiritual exercises in 1980 (February 24—March 1).

I feel so much more deeply that I am totally in God’s Hands—and I remain continuously available to my Lord, entrusting myself to Him through His Immaculate Mother (Totus Tuus).
March 5, 1982

In connection with the last sentence of my Testament of March 6, 1979 (“Let the College of Cardinals and my Fellow Citizens decide on the place/that is, the place of the funeral”)—I explain that I have in mind: the Metropolitan of Krakow or the General Council of the Polish Bishops’ Conference—in the meantime, I ask the College of Cardinals to do their best to satisfy the possible requests of those listed above.

March 1, 1985
(during the retreat)

Once again—with regard to the expression “the College of Cardinals and my Fellow Citizens”: the “College of Cardinals” is under no obligation to consult “my Fellow Citizens” on this topic; it may, however, do so, if for some reason it should deem it appropriate.

JPII

The spiritual exercises in the Jubilee Year 2000 (March 12—18)

[for the Testament]

1. When, on October 16, 1978, the Conclave of Cardinals chose John Paul II, Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski, the Primate of Poland, said to me: “The task of the new Pope will be to lead the Church into the Third Millennium.” I do not know if I am repeating the sentence exactly as he said it, but this was at least the sense of what I heard him say at the time. These words were spoken by the Man who went down in history as the Primate of the Millennium: a great Primate. I witnessed his mission, his
total confidence, his struggles and his triumph. “When victory is won, it will be a victory through Mary”: The Primate of the Millennium was fond of repeating these words of his Predecessor, Cardinal August Hlond.

Thus, I was in some way prepared for the task presented to me on that day, October 16, 1978. As I write these words, the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 is already a reality that is taking place. On the night of December 24, 1999 the symbolic Great Jubilee Door in the Basilica of St. Peter was opened, and subsequently that of St. John Lateran, then that of St. Mary Major—on New Year’s Day, and on January 19 the Door of the Basilica of St. Paul “Outside-the-Walls.” Particularly the latter event, because of its ecumenical character, was imprinted indelibly on memories.

2. As the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 continues, the 20th century closes behind us and the 21st century unfolds, from one day to the next. In accordance with the designs of Providence, I have been granted to live in the difficult century that is retreating into the past, and now in the year in which I have reached my 80s (“octogesima adveniens”), I must ask myself whether the time has come to say with Simeon of the Bible, “Nunc dimittis.”

On May 13, 1981, the day of the attack on the Pope during the General Audience in St. Peter’s Square, Divine Providence miraculously saved me from death. He himself, who is the One Lord of life and death, extended this life of mine, and in a certain way he restored it to me. Ever since that moment it has belonged even more to Him. I hope He will help me to recognize how long I must continue this service to which he called me on October 16, 1978. I ask him to deign to call me to Himself whenever he wishes. “If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then... we are the Lord’s” (cf. Rom 14: 8). I hope that as long as I am granted to carry out the Petrine service in the Church, God in His Mercy will grant me the necessary strength for this service.

3. As I do every year during the spiritual exercises, I read the Testament that I wrote on March 6, 1979. I continue to keep the instructions it contains. What was added then, and also during the subsequent spiritual retreats, reflects the difficult and tense general situation that marked the 1980s. After autumn of the year 1989, this situation changed. The final decade of the last century was free of the previous tensions; this does not mean that it did not bring new problems and difficulties. In a special way
may Divine Providence be praised for this, that the period known as the “Cold War” ended without violent nuclear conflict; the risk of it had been threatening the world in the previous period.

4. As I stand on the threshold of the Third Millennium “in medio Ecclesiae,” I would like once again to express my gratitude to the Holy Spirit for the great gift of the Second Vatican Council, to which, together with the whole Church—and especially with the whole Episcopate—I feel indebted. I am convinced that it will long be granted to the new generations to draw from the treasures that this 20th-century Council has lavished upon us. As a Bishop who took part in the Council from the first to the last day, I desire to entrust this great patrimony to all who are and will be called in the future to put it into practice. For my part, I thank the eternal Pastor who has enabled me to serve this very great cause in the course of all the years of my Pontificate.

“In medio Ecclesiae…” from the very first years of my service as a Bishop—precisely, thanks to the Council—I was granted to experience the fraternal communion of the Episcopate. As a priest of the Archdiocese of Krakow, I was granted to experience the fraternal communion of the presbyterate—the Council had opened a new dimension of this experience.

5. How many people I would have to list! The Lord God has probably called the majority of them to Himself—as for those who are still here, may the words of this Testament recall them, everyone and everywhere, wherever they may happen to be.

In the course of the more than 20 years since I have been carrying out the Petrine service “in medio Ecclesiae,” I have experienced the benevolent and most especially the fruitful collaboration of so many Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops, so many priests and so many consecrated persons—Brothers and Sisters—finally, of a great many lay people, in the Curial environment and in the Vicariate of the Diocese of Rome as well as outside these contexts.

How could I not embrace with grateful memories all the Episcopal Conferences in the world, which I met in the course of their visits ad limina Apostolorum! Besides, how could I fail to remember all the Christian Brothers and Sisters—non-Catholics! And the Rabbi of Rome and likewise
all the representatives of non-Christian religions, not to mention all the representatives of the worlds of culture, science, politics and the media!

6. As the end of my earthly life draws close, I think back to its beginning, to my Parents, my Brother and my Sister (whom I never knew, for she died before I was born), to the Parish of Wadowice where I was baptized, to that city of my youth, to my peers, my companions of both sexes at elementary school, at high school, at university, until the time of the Occupation when I worked as a laborer, and later, to the Parish in Niegowic, to St. Florian’s Parish in Krakow, to the pastoral work of academics, to the context... to all the contexts... to Krakow and to Rome... to the persons who were especially entrusted to me by the Lord.

I want to say just one thing to them all: “May God reward you!.”

“In manus Tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum .”

A.D. March 17, 2000

Homily at the Final Mass of Italy's Eucharistic Congress (May 29, 2005)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

“Glorify the Lord, Jerusalem; Zion, praise your God (Responsorial Psalm). The invitation of the Psalmist that is also echoed in the Sequence expresses very clearly the meaning of this Eucharistic Celebration: we are gathered here to praise and bless the Lord. This is what urged the Italian Church to gather here in Bari on the occasion of the National Eucharistic Congress.

I also wanted to join all of you today to give special emphasis to the celebration of the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, thus to pay homage to Christ in the Sacrament of his love and at the same time to strengthen the bonds of communion that bind me to the Church in Italy and to her Pastors. My venerable and beloved Predecessor, Pope John Paul II, would also have liked to have been here at this important ecclesial event,
as you know. We all feel that he is close to us and with us is glorifying Christ, the Good Shepherd, whom he can now contemplate directly.

I greet with affection all of you who are taking part in this solemn liturgy: Cardinal Camillo Ruini and the other Cardinals present, Archbishop Francesco Cacucci of Bari, whom I thank for his kind words, the Bishops of Puglia and those who have come here in large numbers from every corner of Italy; priests, men and women religious and lay people, particularly the young people, and of course, all those who helped in various ways with the organization of the Congress.

I likewise greet the Authorities who, with their welcome presence, stress that Eucharistic Congresses are part of the history and culture of the Italian people.

The intention of this Eucharistic Congress, which ends today, was once again to present Sunday as the “weekly Easter,” an expression of the identity of the Christian community and the centre of its life and mission.

The chosen theme—“Without Sunday we cannot live”—takes us back to the year 304, when the Emperor Diocletian forbade Christians, on pain of death, from possessing the Scriptures, from gathering on Sundays to celebrate the Eucharist and from building places in which to hold their assemblies.

In Abitene, a small village in present-day Tunisia, 49 Christians were taken by surprise one Sunday while they were celebrating the Eucharist, gathered in the house of Octavius Felix, thereby defying the imperial prohibitions. They were arrested and taken to Carthage to be interrogated by the Proconsul Anulinus.

Significant among other things is the answer a certain Emeritus gave to the Proconsul who asked him why on earth they had disobeyed the Emperor’s severe orders. He replied: “Sine dominico non possumus”: that is, we cannot live without joining together on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist. We would lack the strength to face our daily problems and not to succumb.

After atrocious tortures, these 49 martyrs of Abitene were killed. Thus, they confirmed their faith with bloodshed. They died, but they were
victorious: today we remember them in the glory of the Risen Christ.

The experience of the martyrs of Abitene is also one on which we 21st-century Christians should reflect. It is not easy for us either to live as Christians, even if we are spared such prohibitions from the emperor. From a spiritual point of view, the world in which we find ourselves, often marked by unbridled consumerism, religious indifference and a secularism closed to transcendence, can appear a desert just as “vast and terrible” (Deut 8: 15) as the one we heard about in the first reading from the Book of Deuteronomy. God came to the aid of the Jewish people in difficulty in this desert with his gift of manna, to make them understand that “not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord” (Deut 8: 3).

In today’s Gospel, Jesus has explained to us, through the gift of manna, for what bread God wanted to prepare the people of the New Covenant. Alluding to the Eucharist he said: “This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and died nonetheless, the man who feeds on this bread shall live forever” (Jn 6: 58).

In taking flesh, the Son of God could become Bread and thus be the nourishment of his people, of us, journeying on in this world towards the promised land of Heaven.

We need this Bread to face the fatigue and weariness of our journey. Sunday, the Lord’s Day, is a favorable opportunity to draw strength from him, the Lord of life.

The Sunday precept is not, therefore, an externally imposed duty, a burden on our shoulders. On the contrary, taking part in the Celebration, being nourished by the Eucharistic Bread and experiencing the communion of their brothers and sisters in Christ is a need for Christians, it is a joy; Christians can thus replenish the energy they need to continue on the journey we must make every week.

Moreover, this is not an arbitrary journey: the path God points out to us through his Word goes in the direction inscribed in man’s very existence. The Word of God and reason go together. For the human being, following the Word of God, going with Christ means fulfilling oneself; losing it is equivalent to losing oneself.
The Lord does not leave us alone on this journey. He is with us; indeed, he wishes to share our destiny to the point of identifying with us.

In the Gospel discourse that we have just heard he says, “He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him” (Jn 6: 56). How is it possible not to rejoice in such a promise?

However, we have heard that at his first announcement, instead of rejoicing, the people started to murmur in protest: “How can he give us his flesh to eat?” (Jn 6: 52). To tell the truth, that attitude has frequently been repeated in the course of history. One might say that basically people do not want to have God so close, to be so easily within reach or to share so deeply in the events of their daily life.

Rather, people want him to be great and, in brief, we also often want him to be a little distant from us. Questions are then raised that are intended to show that, after all, such closeness would be impossible.

But the words that Christ spoke on that occasion have lost none of their clarity: “Let me solemnly assure you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (Jn 6: 53). Truly, we need a God who is close to us. In the face of the murmur of protest, Jesus might have fallen back on reassuring words: “Friends,” he could have said, “do not worry! I spoke of flesh but it is only a symbol. What I mean is only a deep communion of sentiments”.

But no, Jesus did not have recourse to such soothing words. He stuck to his assertion, to all his realism, even when he saw many of his disciples breaking away (cf. Jn 6: 66). Indeed, he showed his readiness to accept even desertion by his apostles, while not in any way changing the substance of his discourse: “Do you want to leave me too?” (Jn 6: 67), he asked. Thanks be to God, Peter’s response was one that even we can make our own today with full awareness: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6: 68). We need a God who is close, a God who puts himself in our hands and who loves us.

Christ is truly present among us in the Eucharist. His presence is not static. It is a dynamic presence that grasps us, to make us his own, to make us assimilate him. Christ draws us to him, he makes us come out of ourselves to make us all one with him. In this way he also integrates us in
the communities of brothers and sisters, and communion with the Lord is always also communion with our brothers and sisters. And we see the beauty of this communion that the Blessed Eucharist gives us.

We are touching on a further dimension of the Eucharist that I would like to point out before concluding.

The Christ whom we meet in the Sacrament is the same here in Bari as he is in Rome, here in Europe, as in America, Africa, Asia and Oceania. He is the one same Christ who is present in the Eucharistic Bread of every place on earth. This means that we can encounter him only together with all others. We can only receive him in unity.

Is not this what the Apostle Paul said in the reading we have just heard? In writing to the Corinthians he said: “Because the loaf of bread is one, we, many though we are, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf” (I Cor 10: 17).

The consequence is clear: we cannot communicate with the Lord if we do not communicate with one another. If we want to present ourselves to him, we must also take a step towards meeting one another.

To do this we must learn the great lesson of forgiveness: we must not let the gnawings of resentment work in our soul, but must open our hearts to the magnanimity of listening to others, open our hearts to understanding them, eventually to accepting their apologies, to generously offering our own.

The Eucharist, let us repeat, is the sacrament of unity. Unfortunately, however, Christians are divided, precisely in the sacrament of unity. Sustained by the Eucharist, we must feel all the more roused to striving with all our strength for that full unity which Christ ardently desired in the Upper Room.

Precisely here in Bari, fortunate Bari, a city that preserves the bones of St Nicholas, a land of encounter and dialogue with our Christian brethren of the East, I would like to reaffirm my desire to assume as a fundamental commitment working with all my might for the re-establishment of the full and visible unity of all Christ’s followers.
I am aware that expressions of good will do not suffice for this. We need concrete acts that penetrate souls and shake consciences, prompting each one to that inner conversion that is the necessary condition for any progress on the path of ecumenism (cf. Message to the Universal Church, Sistine Chapel, 20 April 2005; L'Osservatore Romano English Edition, 27 April, p. 3).

I ask you all to set out with determination on the path of that spiritual ecumenism which, through prayer, opens the doors to the Holy Spirit, who alone can create unity.

Dear friends who have come to Bari from various parts of Italy to celebrate this Eucharistic Congress, we must rediscover the joy of Christian Sundays. We must proudly rediscover the privilege of sharing in the Eucharist, which is the sacrament of the renewed world.

Christ’s Resurrection happened on the first day of the week, which in the Scriptures is the day of the world’s creation. For this very reason Sunday was considered by the early Christian community as the day on which the new world began, the one on which, with Christ’s victory over death, the new creation began.

As they gathered round the Eucharistic table, the community was taking shape as a new people of God. St Ignatius of Antioch described Christians as “having attained new hope” and presented them as people “who lived in accordance with Sunday” (“iuxta dominicam viventes”). In this perspective, the Bishop of Antioch wondered: “How will we be able to live without him, the One whom the prophets so long awaited?” (Ep. ad Magnesios, 9, 1-2).

“How will we be able to live without him?” In these words of St Ignatius we hear echoing the affirmation of the martyrs of Abitene: “Sine dominico non possimus”.

It is this that gives rise to our prayer: that we too, Christians of today, will rediscover an awareness of the crucial importance of the Sunday Celebration and will know how to draw from participation in the Eucharist the necessary dynamism for a new commitment to proclaiming to the world Christ “our peace” (Eph 2: 14). Amen!
Message for the World Day of Peace  
(January 1, 2005)

DO NOT BE OVERCOME  
BY EVIL BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD

1. At the beginning of the New Year, I once again address the leaders of nations and all men and women of good will, who recognize the need to build peace in the world. For the theme of this 2005 World Day of Peace I have chosen Saint Paul’s words in the Letter to the Romans: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (12:21). Evil is never defeated by evil; once that road is taken, rather than defeating evil, one will instead be defeated by evil.

The great Apostle brings out a fundamental truth: peace is the outcome of a long and demanding battle which is only won when evil is defeated by good. If we consider the tragic scenario of violent fratricidal conflicts in different parts of the world, and the untold sufferings and injustices to which they have given rise, the only truly constructive choice is, as Saint Paul proposes, to flee what is evil and hold fast to what is good (cf. Rom 12:9).

Peace is a good to be promoted with good: it is a good for individuals, for families, for nations and for all humanity; yet it is one which needs to be maintained and fostered by decisions and actions inspired by good. We can appreciate the profound truth of another saying of Saint Paul: “Repay no one evil for evil” (Rom 12:17). The one way out of the vicious circle of requiting evil for evil is to accept the Apostle’s words: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21).

Evil, good and love

2. From the beginning, humanity has known the tragedy of evil and has struggled to grasp its roots and to explain its causes. Evil is not some impersonal, deterministic force at work in the world. It is the result of human freedom. Freedom, which distinguishes human beings from every
other creature on earth, is ever present at the heart of the drama of evil. Evil always has a name and a face: the name and face of those men and women who freely choose it. Sacred Scripture teaches that at the dawn of history Adam and Eve rebelled against God, and Abel was killed by Cain, his brother (cf. Gen 3-4). These were the first wrong choices, which were succeeded by countless others down the centuries. Each of these choices has an intrinsic moral dimension, involving specific individual responsibilities and the fundamental relationship of each person with God, with others and with all of creation.

At its deepest level, evil is a tragic rejection of the demands of love.[1] Moral good, on the other hand, is born of love, shows itself as love and is directed towards love. All this is particularly evident to Christians, who know that their membership in the one mystical Body of Christ sets them in a particular relationship not only with the Lord but also with their brothers and sisters. The inner logic of Christian love, which in the Gospel is the living source of moral goodness, leads even to the love of one’s enemies: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink” (Rom 12:20).

The “grammar” of the universal moral law

3. If we look to the present state of the world, we cannot help but note the disturbing spread of various social and political manifestations of evil: from social disorders to anarchy and war, from injustice to acts of violence and killing. To steer a path between the conflicting claims of good and evil, the human family urgently needs to preserve and esteem that common patrimony of moral values bestowed by God himself. For this reason, Saint Paul encourages all those determined to overcome evil with good to be noble and disinterested in fostering generosity and peace (cf. Rom 12:17-21).

Ten years ago, in addressing the General Assembly of the United Nations about the need for common commitment to the service of peace, I made reference to the “grammar” of the universal moral law,[2] to which the Church appeals in her various pronouncements in this area. By inspiring common values and principles, this law unites human beings, despite their different cultures, and is itself unchanging: “it subsists under the flux of ideas and customs and supports their progress... Even when it is rejected in
its very principles, it cannot be destroyed or removed from the heart of man. It always rises again in the life of individuals and societies.”[3]

4. This common grammar of the moral law requires ever greater commitment and responsibility in ensuring that the life of individuals and of peoples is respected and advanced. In this light, the evils of a social and political nature which afflict the world, particularly those provoked by outbreaks of violence, are to be vigorously condemned. I think immediately of the beloved continent of Africa, where conflicts which have already claimed millions of victims are still continuing. Or the dangerous situation of Palestine, the Land of Jesus, where the fabric of mutual understanding, torn by a conflict which is fed daily by acts of violence and reprisal, cannot yet be mended in justice and truth. And what of the troubling phenomenon of terrorist violence, which appears to be driving the whole world towards a future of fear and anguish? Finally, how can we not think with profound regret of the drama unfolding in Iraq, which has given rise to tragic situations of uncertainty and insecurity for all?

To attain the good of peace there must be a clear and conscious acknowledgment that violence is an unacceptable evil and that it never solves problems. “Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity. Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings.”[4] What is needed is a great effort to form consciences and to educate the younger generation to goodness by upholding that integral and fraternal humanism which the Church proclaims and promotes. This is the foundation for a social, economic and political order respectful of the dignity, freedom and fundamental rights of each person.

The good of peace and the common good

5. Fostering peace by overcoming evil with good requires careful reflection on the common good[5] and on its social and political implications. When the common good is promoted at every level, peace is promoted. Can an individual find complete fulfillment without taking account of his social nature, that is, his being “with” and “for” others? The common good closely concerns him. It closely concerns every expression of his social nature: the family, groups, associations, cities, regions, states, the
community of peoples and nations. Each person, in some way, is called to work for the common good, constantly looking out for the good of others as if it were his own. This responsibility belongs in a particular way to political authorities at every level, since they are called to create that sum of social conditions which permit and foster in human beings the integral development of their person.[6]

The common good therefore demands respect for and the integral promotion of the person and his fundamental rights, as well as respect for and the promotion of the rights of nations on the universal plane. In this regard, the Second Vatican Council observed that “the increasingly close interdependence gradually encompassing the entire world is leading to an increasingly universal common good... and this involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups and the common good of the entire human family.”[7] The good of humanity as a whole, including future generations, calls for true international cooperation, to which every nation must offer its contribution.[8]

Certain reductive visions of humanity tend to present the common good as a purely socio-economic state of well-being lacking any transcendent purpose, thus emptying it of its deepest meaning. Yet the common good has a transcendent dimension, for God is the ultimate end of all his creatures.[9] Christians know that Jesus has shed full light on how the true common good of humanity is to be achieved. History journeys towards Christ and in him finds its culmination: because of Christ, through Christ and for Christ, every human reality can be led to complete fulfillment in God.

The good of peace and the use of the world’s goods

6. Since the good of peace is closely linked to the development of all peoples, the ethical requirements for the use of the earth’s goods must always be taken into account. The Second Vatican Council rightly recalled that “God intended the earth and all it contains for the use of everyone and of all peoples; so that the good things of creation should be available equally to all, with justice as guide and charity in attendance.”[10]
As a member of the human family, each person becomes as it were a
citizen of the world, with consequent duties and rights, since all human
beings are united by a common origin and the same supreme destiny. By
the mere fact of being conceived, a child is entitled to rights and deserving
of care and attention; and someone has the duty to provide these. The
condemnation of racism, the protection of minors, the provision of aid to
displaced persons and refugees, and the mobilization of international
solidarity towards all the needy are nothing other than consistent
applications of the principle of world citizenship.

7. The good of peace should be seen today as closely related to the new
goods derived from progress in science and technology. These too, in
application of the principle of the universal destination of the earth’s goods,
need to be put at the service of humanity’s basic needs. Appropriate
initiatives on the international level can give full practical implementation
to the principle of the universal destination of goods by guaranteeing to all
— individuals and nations — the basic conditions for sharing in
development. This becomes possible once the barriers and monopolies that
marginalize many peoples are removed.[11]

The good of peace will be better ensured if the international
community takes on greater responsibility for what are commonly called
public goods. These are goods which all citizens automatically enjoy,
without having consciously chosen them or contributed to them in any way.
Such is the case, for example, at the national level, with such goods as the
judiciary system, the defense system and the network of highways and
railways. In our world the phenomenon of increased globalization means
that more and more public goods are taking on a global character, and as a
result common interests are daily increasing. We need but think of the fight
against poverty, the promotion of peace and security, concern for climate
change and disease control. The international community needs to respond
to these interests with a broader network of juridical accords aimed at
regulating the use of public goods and inspired by universal principles of
fairness and solidarity.

8. The principle of the universal destination of goods can also make
possible a more effective approach to the challenge of poverty, particularly
when we consider the extreme poverty in which millions of people are still
living. The international community, at the beginning of the new millennium, set the priority of halving their number by the year 2015. The Church supports and encourages this commitment and invites all who believe in Christ to show, practically and in every sector, a preferential love for the poor.\footnote{12}

The tragedy of poverty remains closely linked to the issue of the foreign debt of poor countries. Despite significant progress in this area, the problem has not yet been adequately resolved. Fifteen years ago I called public attention to the fact that the foreign debt of poor countries “is closely related to a series of other problems such as foreign investment, the proper functioning of the major international organizations, the price of raw materials and so forth.”\footnote{13} Recent moves in favor of debt reduction, centered mainly on the needs of the poor, have certainly improved the quality of economic growth. Yet, because of a number of factors, this growth is still quantitatively insufficient, especially in relation to the millennium goals. Poor countries remain trapped in a vicious circle: low income and weak growth limit savings and, in turn, weak investments and an inefficient use of savings do not favor growth.

9. As Pope Paul VI stated and as I myself have reaffirmed, the only really effective means of enabling States to deal with the grave problem of poverty is to provide them with the necessary resources through foreign financial aid — public and private — granted under reasonable conditions, within the framework of international commercial relations regulated with fairness.\footnote{14} What is urgently needed is a moral and economic mobilization, one which respects agreements already made in favor of poor countries, and is at the same time prepared to review those agreements which have proved excessively burdensome for some countries. In this regard, new impulse should be given to Public Aid for Development, and new forms of financing for development should be explored, whatever the difficulties entailed.\footnote{15} Some governments are already looking carefully at promising mechanisms for this; these significant initiatives should be carried out in a spirit of authentic sharing, with respect for the principle of subsidiarity. The management of financial resources destined to the development of poor countries should also entail scrupulous adherence, on the part of both donors and recipients, to sound administrative practices. The Church
encourages and contributes to these efforts. One need only mention the significant contribution made by the many Catholic agencies dedicated to aid and development.

10. At the end of the Great Jubilee of the year 2000, in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, I spoke of the urgent need for a new creativity in charity,[16] in order to spread the Gospel of hope in the world. This need is clearly seen when we consider the many difficult problems standing in the way of development in Africa: numerous armed conflicts, pandemic diseases aggravated by extreme poverty, and political instability leading to widespread insecurity. These are tragic situations which call for a radically new direction for Africa: there is a need to create new forms of solidarity, at bilateral and multilateral levels, through a more decisive commitment on the part of all, with complete conviction that the well-being of the peoples of Africa is an indispensable condition for the attainment of the universal common good.

May the peoples of Africa become the protagonists of their own future and their own cultural, civil, social and economic development! May Africa cease to be a mere recipient of aid, and become a responsible agent of convinced and productive sharing! Achieving this goal calls for a new political culture, especially in the area of international cooperation. Once again I wish to state that failure to honor the repeated promises of Public Aid for Development, the still unresolved question of the heavy foreign debt of African countries and the failure to give those countries special consideration in international commercial relations, represent grave obstacles to peace which urgently need to be addressed and resolved. Today more than ever, a decisive condition for bringing peace to the world is an acknowledgement of the interdependence between wealthy and poor countries, such that “development either becomes shared in common by every part of the world or it undergoes a process of regression even in zones marked by constant progress.”[17]

*The universality of evil and Christian hope*

11. Faced with the many tragic situations present in the world, Christians confess with humble trust that God alone can enable individuals and peoples to overcome evil and achieve good. By his death and resurrection, Christ has redeemed us and ransomed us “with a price” (1 Cor
6:20; 7:23), gaining salvation for all. With his help, everyone can defeat evil with good.

Based on the certainty that evil will not prevail, Christians nourish an invincible hope which sustains their efforts to promote justice and peace. Despite the personal and social sins which mark all human activity, hope constantly gives new impulse to the commitment to justice and peace, as well as firm confidence in the possibility of building a better world.

Although the “mystery of iniquity” (2 Thess 2:7) is present and active in the world, we must not forget that redeemed humanity is capable of resisting it. Each believer, created in the image of God and redeemed by Christ, “who in a certain way has united himself to each human being,”[18] can cooperate in the triumph of good. The work of “the Spirit of the Lord fills the earth” (cf. Wis 1:7). Christians, especially the lay faithful, “should not, then, hide their hope in the depth of their hearts, but rather express it through the structures of their secular lives in continual conversion and in wrestling ‘against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of iniquity’ (Eph 6:12).”[19]

12. No man or woman of good will can renounce the struggle to overcome evil with good. This fight can be fought effectively only with the weapons of love. When good overcomes evil, love prevails and where love prevails, there peace prevails. This is the teaching of the Gospel, restated by the Second Vatican Council: “the fundamental law of human perfection, and consequently of the transformation of the world, is the new commandment of love.”[20]

The same is true in the social and political spheres. In this regard, Pope Leo XIII wrote that those charged with preserving peace in relations between peoples should foster in themselves and kindle in others “charity, the mistress and queen of all the virtues.”[21] Christians must be convinced witnesses of this truth. They should show by their lives that love is the only force capable of bringing fulfillment to persons and societies, the only force capable of directing the course of history in the way of goodness and peace.

During this year dedicated to the Eucharist, may the sons and daughters of the Church find in the supreme sacrament of love the wellspring of all communion: communion with Jesus the Redeemer and, in
him, with every human being. By Christ’s death and resurrection, made sacramentally present in each Eucharistic celebration, we are saved from evil and enabled to do good. Through the new life which Christ has bestowed on us, we can recognize one another as brothers and sisters, despite every difference of language, nationality and culture. In a word, by sharing in the one bread and the one cup, we come to realize that we are “God’s family” and that together we can make our own effective contribution to building a world based on the values of justice, freedom and peace.

[1] In this regard, Saint Augustine observed that "two loves established two cities: love of self, carried to contempt for God, has given rise to the earthly city; love of God, carried to contempt for self, has given rise to the heavenly city" (De Civitate Dei, XIV:28).


[5] The common good is widely understood to be "the sum of those conditions of social life which enables groups and individuals to achieve their fulfillment more completely and readily." Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes, 26.


[10] Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes., 69

Homily at the Solemn Mass Initiating the Petrine Ministry (April 24, 2005)

Your Eminences, my dear brother bishops and priests, distinguished authorities and members of the diplomatic corps, dear brothers and sisters,

During these days of great intensity, we have chanted the litany of the saints on three different occasions: at the funeral of our Holy Father John
Paul II; as the Cardinals entered the Conclave; and again today, when we sang it with the response: *Tu illum adiuva*—sustain the new Successor of Saint Peter. On each occasion, in a particular way, I found great consolation in listening to this prayerful chant. How alone we all felt after the passing of John Paul II—the Pope who for over twenty-six years had been our shepherd and guide on our journey through life! He crossed the threshold of the next life, entering into the mystery of God. But he did not take this step alone. Those who believe are never alone—neither in life nor in death. At that moment, we could call upon the Saints from every age—his friends, his brothers and sisters in the faith—knowing that they would form a living procession to accompany him into the next world, into the glory of God. We knew that his arrival was awaited. Now we know that he is among his own and is truly at home. We were also consoled as we made our solemn entrance into Conclave, to elect the one whom the Lord had chosen. How would we be able to discern his name? How could 115 Bishops, from every culture and every country, discover the one on whom the Lord wished to confer the mission of binding and loosing? Once again, we knew that we were not alone, we knew that we were surrounded, led and guided by the friends of God. And now, at this moment, weak servant of God that I am, I must assume this enormous task, which truly exceeds all human capacity. How can I do this? How will I be able to do it? All of you, my dear friends, have just invoked the entire host of Saints, represented by some of the great names in the history of God’s dealings with mankind. In this way, I too can say with renewed conviction: I am not alone. I do not have to carry alone what in truth I could never carry alone. All the Saints of God are there to protect me, to sustain me and to carry me. And your prayers, my dear friends, your indulgence, your love, your faith and your hope accompany me. Indeed, the communion of Saints consists not only of the great men and women who went before us and whose names we know. All of us belong to the communion of Saints, we who have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we who draw life from the gift of Christ’s Body and Blood, through which he transforms us and makes us like himself. Yes, the Church is alive—this is the wonderful experience of these days. During those sad days of the Pope’s illness and death, it became wonderfully evident to us that the Church is alive. And the Church is young. She holds within herself the future of the
world and therefore shows each of us the way towards the future. The Church is alive and we are seeing it: we are experiencing the joy that the Risen Lord promised his followers. The Church is alive—she is alive because Christ is alive, because he is truly risen. In the suffering that we saw on the Holy Father’s face in those days of Easter, we contemplated the mystery of Christ’s Passion and we touched his wounds. But throughout these days we have also been able, in a profound sense, to touch the Risen One. We have been able to experience the joy that he promised, after a brief period of darkness, as the fruit of his resurrection.

The Church is alive—with these words, I greet with great joy and gratitude all of you gathered here, my venerable brother Cardinals and Bishops, my dear priests, deacons, Church workers, catechists. I greet you, men and women Religious, witnesses of the transfiguring presence of God. I greet you, members of the lay faithful, immersed in the great task of building up the Kingdom of God which spreads throughout the world, in every area of life. With great affection I also greet all those who have been reborn in the sacrament of Baptism but are not yet in full communion with us; and you, my brothers and sisters of the Jewish people, to whom we are joined by a great shared spiritual heritage, one rooted in God’s irrevocable promises. Finally, like a wave gathering force, my thoughts go out to all men and women of today, to believers and non-believers alike.

Dear friends! At this moment there is no need for me to present a program of governance. I was able to give an indication of what I see as my task in my Message of Wednesday 20 April, and there will be other opportunities to do so. My real program of governance is not to do my own will, not to pursue my own ideas, but to listen, together with the whole Church, to the word and the will of the Lord, to be guided by Him, so that He himself will lead the Church at this hour of our history. Instead of putting forward a program, I should simply like to comment on the two liturgical symbols which represent the inauguration of the Petrine Ministry; both these symbols, moreover, reflect clearly what we heard proclaimed in today’s readings.

The first symbol is the Pallium, woven in pure wool, which will be placed on my shoulders. This ancient sign, which the Bishops of Rome have worn since the fourth century, may be considered an image of the yoke
of Christ, which the Bishop of this City, the Servant of the Servants of God, takes upon his shoulders. God’s yoke is God’s will, which we accept. And this will does not weigh down on us, oppressing us and taking away our freedom. To know what God wants, to know where the path of life is found—this was Israel’s joy, this was her great privilege. It is also our joy: God’s will does not alienate us, it purifies us—even if this can be painful—and so it leads us to ourselves. In this way, we serve not only him, but the salvation of the whole world, of all history. The symbolism of the Pallium is even more concrete: the lamb’s wool is meant to represent the lost, sick or weak sheep which the shepherd places on his shoulders and carries to the waters of life. For the Fathers of the Church, the parable of the lost sheep, which the shepherd seeks in the desert, was an image of the mystery of Christ and the Church. The human race—every one of us—is the sheep lost in the desert which no longer knows the way. The Son of God will not let this happen; he cannot abandon humanity in so wretched a condition. He leaps to his feet and abandons the glory of heaven, in order to go in search of the sheep and pursue it, all the way to the Cross. He takes it upon his shoulders and carries our humanity; he carries us all—he is the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. What the Pallium indicates first and foremost is that we are all carried by Christ. But at the same time it invites us to carry one another. Hence the Pallium becomes a symbol of the shepherd’s mission, of which the Second Reading and the Gospel speak. The pastor must be inspired by Christ’s holy zeal: for him it is not a matter of indifference that so many people are living in the desert. And there are so many kinds of desert. There is the desert of poverty, the desert of hunger and thirst, the desert of abandonment, of loneliness, of destroyed love. There is the desert of God’s darkness, the emptiness of souls no longer aware of their dignity or the goal of human life. The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast. Therefore the earth’s treasures no longer serve to build God’s garden for all to live in, but they have been made to serve the powers of exploitation and destruction. The Church as a whole and all her Pastors, like Christ, must set out to lead people out of the desert, towards the place of life, towards friendship with the Son of God, towards the One who gives us life, and life in abundance. The symbol of the lamb also has a deeper meaning. In the Ancient Near East, it was customary for kings to style
themselves shepherds of their people. This was an image of their power, a cynical image: to them their subjects were like sheep, which the shepherd could dispose of as he wished. When the shepherd of all humanity, the living God, himself became a lamb, he stood on the side of the lambs, with those who are downtrodden and killed. This is how he reveals himself to be the true shepherd: “I am the Good Shepherd... I lay down my life for the sheep,” Jesus says of himself (Jn 10:14f). It is not power, but love that redeems us! This is God’s sign: he himself is love. How often we wish that God would show himself stronger, that he would strike decisively, defeating evil and creating a better world. All ideologies of power justify themselves in exactly this way, they justify the destruction of whatever would stand in the way of progress and the liberation of humanity. We suffer on account of God’s patience. And yet, we need his patience. God, who became a lamb, tells us that the world is saved by the Crucified One, not by those who crucified him. The world is redeemed by the patience of God. It is destroyed by the impatience of man.

One of the basic characteristics of a shepherd must be to love the people entrusted to him, even as he loves Christ whom he serves. “Feed my sheep,” says Christ to Peter, and now, at this moment, he says it to me as well. Feeding means loving, and loving also means being ready to suffer. Loving means giving the sheep what is truly good, the nourishment of God’s truth, of God’s word, the nourishment of his presence, which he gives us in the Blessed Sacrament. My dear friends—at this moment I can only say: pray for me, that I may learn to love the Lord more and more. Pray for me, that I may learn to love his flock more and more—in other words, you, the holy Church, each one of you and all of you together. Pray for me, that I may not flee for fear of the wolves. Let us pray for one another, that the Lord will carry us and that we will learn to carry one another.

The second symbol used in today’s liturgy to express the inauguration of the Petrine Ministry is the presentation of the fisherman’s ring. Peter’s call to be a shepherd, which we heard in the Gospel, comes after the account of a miraculous catch of fish: after a night in which the disciples had let down their nets without success, they see the Risen Lord on the shore. He tells them to let down their nets once more, and the nets become so full that
they can hardly pull them in; 153 large fish: “and although there were so many, the net was not torn” (Jn 21:11). This account, coming at the end of Jesus’ earthly journey with his disciples, corresponds to an account found at the beginning: there too, the disciples had caught nothing the entire night; there too, Jesus had invited Simon once more to put out into the deep. And Simon, who was not yet called Peter, gave the wonderful reply: “Master, at your word I will let down the nets.” And then came the conferral of his mission: “Do not be afraid. Henceforth you will be catching men” (Lk 5:1-11). Today too the Church and the successors of the Apostles are told to put out into the deep sea of history and to let down the nets, so as to win men and women over to the Gospel—to God, to Christ, to true life. The Fathers made a very significant commentary on this singular task. This is what they say: for a fish, created for water, it is fatal to be taken out of the sea, to be removed from its vital element to serve as human food. But in the mission of a fisher of men, the reverse is true. We are living in alienation, in the salt waters of suffering and death; in a sea of darkness without light. The net of the Gospel pulls us out of the waters of death and brings us into the splendor of God’s light, into true life. It is really true: as we follow Christ in this mission to be fishers of men, we must bring men and women out of the sea that is salted with so many forms of alienation and onto the land of life, into the light of God. It is really so: the purpose of our lives is to reveal God to men. And only where God is seen does life truly begin. Only when we meet the living God in Christ do we know what life is. We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary. There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and to speak to others of our friendship with Him. The task of the shepherd, the task of the fisher of men, can often seem wearisome. But it is beautiful and wonderful, because it is truly a service to joy, to God’s joy which longs to break into the world.

Here I want to add something: both the image of the shepherd and that of the fisherman issue an explicit call to unity. “I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must lead them too, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd” (Jn 10:16); these are the words of Jesus at the end of his discourse on the Good Shepherd. And the account of the
153 large fish ends with the joyful statement: “although there were so many, the net was not torn” (Jn 21:11). Alas, beloved Lord, with sorrow we must now acknowledge that it has been torn! But no—we must not be sad! Let us rejoice because of your promise, which does not disappoint, and let us do all we can to pursue the path towards the unity you have promised. Let us remember it in our prayer to the Lord, as we plead with him: yes, Lord, remember your promise. Grant that we may be one flock and one shepherd! Do not allow your net to be torn, help us to be servants of unity!

At this point, my mind goes back to October 22, 1978, when Pope John Paul II began his ministry here in Saint Peter’s Square. His words on that occasion constantly echo in my ears: “Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors for Christ!” The Pope was addressing the mighty, the powerful of this world, who feared that Christ might take away something of their power if they were to let him in, if they were to allow the faith to be free. Yes, he would certainly have taken something away from them: the dominion of corruption, the manipulation of law and the freedom to do as they pleased. But he would not have taken away anything that pertains to human freedom or dignity, or to the building of a just society. The Pope was also speaking to everyone, especially the young. Are we not perhaps all afraid in some way? If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we open ourselves totally to him, are we not afraid that He might take something away from us? Are we not perhaps afraid to give up something significant, something unique, something that makes life so beautiful? Do we not then risk ending up diminished and deprived of our freedom? And once again the Pope said: No! If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation. And so, today, with great strength and great conviction, on the basis of long personal experience of life, I say to you, dear young people: Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ—and you will find true life. Amen.
On taking possession of the Cathedral of Rome (May 7, 2005)

Dear Father Cardinals,

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, when I can sit for the first time on the Chair of the Bishop of Rome as Successor of Peter, is the day on which the Church in Italy celebrates the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord. At the centre of this day we find Christ. And it is also only thanks to him, thanks to the mystery of his Ascension, that we can understand the significance of the Chair, which in turn is the symbol of the Bishop’s power and responsibility.

So what does the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord mean for us? It does not mean that the Lord has departed to some place far from people and from the world. Christ’s Ascension is not a journey into space toward the most remote stars; for basically, the planets, like the earth, are also made of physical elements.

Christ’s Ascension means that he no longer belongs to the world of corruption and death that conditions our life. It means that he belongs entirely to God. He, the Eternal Son, led our human existence into God’s presence, taking with him flesh and blood in a transfigured form.

The human being finds room in God; through Christ, the human being was introduced into the very life of God. And since God embraces and sustains the entire cosmos, the Ascension of the Lord means that Christ has not departed from us, but that he is now, thanks to his being with the Father, close to each one of us for ever. Each one of us can be on intimate terms with him; each can call upon him. The Lord is always within hearing. We can inwardly draw away from him. We can live turning our backs on him. But he always waits for us and is always close to us.

From the readings of today’s liturgy we also learn something more about the concrete way the Lord makes himself close to us. The Lord
promises the disciples his Holy Spirit. The first reading that we heard tells us that the Holy Spirit will give “power” to the disciples; the Gospel adds that he will guide them to the whole truth. As the living Word of God, Jesus told his disciples everything, and God can give no more than himself. In Jesus, God gave us his whole self, that is, he gave us everything. As well as or together with this, there can be no other revelation which can communicate more or in some way complete the Revelation of Christ. In him, in the Son, all has been said to us, all has been given.

But our understanding is limited: thus, the Spirit’s mission is to introduce the Church, in an ever new way from generation to generation, into the greatness of Christ’s mystery. The Spirit places nothing different or new beside Christ; no pneumatic revelation comes with the revelation of Christ—as some say -, no second level of Revelation.

No: “He will have received from me...,” Christ says in the Gospel (Jn 16: 14). And as Christ says only what he hears and receives from the Father, thus the Holy Spirit is the interpreter of Christ. “He will have received from me.” He does not lead us to other places, far from Christ, but takes us further and further into Christ’s light. Consequently, Christian Revelation is both ever old and new. Thus, all things are and always have been given to us. At the same time, every generation, in the inexhaustible encounter with the Lord—an encounter mediated by the Holy Spirit—always learns something new.

The Holy Spirit, therefore, is the power through which Christ causes us to experience his closeness. But the first reading also has something else to say: you will be my witnesses. The Risen Christ needs witnesses who have met him, people who have known him intimately through the power of the Holy Spirit; those who have, so to speak, actually touched him, can witness to him.

It is in this way that the Church, the family of Christ, “beginning at Jerusalem”..., as the Reading says, spread to the very ends of the earth. It is through witnesses that the Church was built—starting with Peter and Paul and the Twelve, to the point of including all who, filled with Christ, have rekindled down the centuries and will rekindle the flame of faith in a way that is ever new. All Christians in their own way can and must be witnesses of the Risen Lord.
When we read the saints’ names we can see how often they have been—and continue to be—first and foremost simple people from whom shone—and shines—a radiant light that can lead others to Christ.

But this chorus of witnesses is also endowed with a clearly defined structure: the successors of the Apostles, the Bishops, who are publicly responsible for ensuring that the network of these witnesses survives. The power and grace required for this service are conferred upon Bishops through the sacrament of Episcopal Ordination. In this network of witnesses, the Successor of Peter has a special task. It was Peter who, on the Apostles’ behalf, made the first profession of faith: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16: 16).

This is the task of all Peter’s Successors: to be the guide in the profession of faith in Christ, Son of the living God. The Chair of Rome is above all the Seat of this belief. From high up on this Chair the Bishop of Rome is constantly bound to repeat: Dominus Iesus—“Jesus is Lord,” as Paul wrote in his Letters to the Romans (10: 9) and to the Corinthians (I Cor 12: 3). To the Corinthians he stressed: “Even though there are so-called gods in the heavens and on the earth... for us there is one God, the Father... and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom everything was made and through whom we live” (I Cor 8: 5).

The Chair of Peter obliges all who hold it to say, as Peter said during a crisis time among the disciples when so many wanted to leave him: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe; we are convinced that you are God’s holy one” (Jn 6: 68 ff.).

The One who sits on the Chair of Peter must remember the Lord’s words to Simon Peter at the Last Supper: “...You in turn must strengthen your brothers” (Lk 22: 32). The one who holds the office of the Petrine ministry must be aware that he is a frail and weak human being—just as his own powers are frail and weak—and is constantly in need of purification and conversion.

But he can also be aware that the power to strengthen his brethren in the faith and keep them united in the confession of the Crucified and Risen Christ comes from the Lord. In St Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, we find the oldest account we have of the Resurrection. Paul faithfully
received it from the witnesses. This account first speaks of Christ’s death for our sins, of his burial and of his Resurrection which took place the third day, and then says: “[Christ] was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve...” (I Cor 15: 4). Thus, the importance of the mandate conferred upon Peter to the end of time is summed up: being a witness of the Risen Christ.

The Bishop of Rome sits upon the Chair to bear witness to Christ. Thus, the Chair is the symbol of the potestas docendi, the power to teach that is an essential part of the mandate of binding and loosing which the Lord conferred on Peter, and after him, on the Twelve. In the Church, Sacred Scripture, the understanding of which increases under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the ministry of its authentic interpretation that was conferred upon the Apostles, are indissolubly bound. Whenever Sacred Scripture is separated from the living voice of the Church, it falls prey to disputes among experts.

Of course, all they have to tell us is important and invaluable; the work of scholars is a considerable help in understanding the living process in which the Scriptures developed, hence, also in grasping their historical richness.

Yet science alone cannot provide us with a definitive and binding interpretation; it is unable to offer us, in its interpretation, that certainty with which we can live and for which we can even die. A greater mandate is necessary for this, which cannot derive from human abilities alone. The voice of the living Church is essential for this, of the Church entrusted until the end of time to Peter and to the College of the Apostles.

This power of teaching frightens many people in and outside the Church. They wonder whether freedom of conscience is threatened or whether it is a presumption opposed to freedom of thought. It is not like this. The power that Christ conferred upon Peter and his Successors is, in an absolute sense, a mandate to serve. The power of teaching in the Church involves a commitment to the service of obedience to the faith. The Pope is not an absolute monarch whose thoughts and desires are law. On the contrary: the Pope’s ministry is a guarantee of obedience to Christ and to his Word. He must not proclaim his own ideas, but rather constantly bind
himself and the Church to obedience to God’s Word, in the face of every attempt to adapt it or water it down, and every form of opportunism.

Pope John Paul II did this when, in front of all attempts, apparently benevolent to the human person, and in the face of erroneous interpretations of freedom, he unequivocally stressed the inviolability of the human being and of human life from the moment of conception until natural death. The freedom to kill is not true freedom, but a tyranny that reduces the human being to slavery.

The Pope knows that in his important decisions, he is bound to the great community of faith of all times, to the binding interpretations that have developed throughout the Church’s pilgrimage. Thus, his power is not being above, but at the service of, the Word of God. It is incumbent upon him to ensure that this Word continues to be present in its greatness and to resound in its purity, so that it is not torn to pieces by continuous changes in usage.

The Chair is—let us say it again—a symbol of the power of teaching, which is a power of obedience and service, so that the Word of God— the truth!—may shine out among us and show us the way of life.

But in speaking of the Chair of the Bishop of Rome, how can we forget St Ignatius of Antioch’s words addressed to the Romans? Peter came from Antioch, his first See, to Rome, his permanent See. His martyrdom decreed that he stay here definitively and bound his succession to Rome for ever.

Ignatius, for his part, while remaining Bishop of Antioch, was also heading for the martyrdom that he was to suffer in Rome. In his Letter to the Romans, he refers to the Church of Rome as “She who presides in love,” a deeply meaningful phrase. We do not know with any certainty what Ignatius may have had in mind when he used these words. But for the ancient Church, the word love, agape, referred to the mystery of the Eucharist. In this mystery, Christ’s love becomes permanently tangible among us. Here, again and again he gives himself. Here, again and again his heart is pierced; here he keeps his promise, the promise which, from the Cross, was to attract all things to himself.

In the Eucharist, we ourselves learn Christ’s love. It was thanks to this center and heart, thanks to the Eucharist, that the saints lived, bringing to
the world God’s love in ever new ways and forms. Thanks to the Eucharist, the Church is reborn ever anew! The Church is none other than that network—the Eucharistic community!—within which all of us, receiving the same Lord, become one body and embrace all the world.

Presiding in doctrine and presiding in love must in the end be one and the same: the whole of the Church's teaching leads ultimately to love. And the Eucharist, as the love of Jesus Christ present, is the criterion for all teaching. On love the whole law is based, and the prophets as well, the Lord says (cf. Mt 22: 40). Love is the fulfillment of the law, St Paul wrote to the Romans (cf. 13: 10).

Dear Romans, I am now your Bishop. Thank you for your generosity, thank you for your sympathy, thank you for your patience with me! As Catholics, in some way we are also all Romans.

With the words of Psalm 87, a hymn of praise to Zion, mother of all the peoples, Israel sang and the Church sings: “Of Zion they shall say: “One and all were born in her...” (v. 5). We too can likewise say: as Catholics, in a certain way, we are all born in Rome.

Thus, I want to try with all my heart to be your Bishop, the Bishop of Rome. And let us all seek to be more and more Catholic—more and more brothers and sisters in the great family of God, that family where no one is a stranger.

Lastly, I would like to warmly thank dear Cardinal Camillo Ruini, Vicar for the Diocese of Rome, the auxiliary bishops and all their collaborators. I warmly thank the parish priests, the clergy of Rome and all who, as the faithful, make their contribution to building here the living house of God. Amen.

Basilica of St. John Lateran
First Message at the end of the Eucharistic Concelebration with the Cardinal Electors in the Sistine Chapel (April 20, 2005)

Venerable Brother Cardinals,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

All you men and women of good will,

1. "Favor and peace be yours in abundance" (I Pet 1: 2)! At this time, side by side in my heart I feel two contrasting emotions. On the one hand, a sense of inadequacy and human apprehension as I face the responsibility for the universal Church, entrusted to me yesterday as Successor of the Apostle Peter in this See of Rome. On the other, I have a lively feeling of profound gratitude to God who, as the liturgy makes us sing, never leaves his flock untended but leads it down the ages under the guidance of those whom he himself has chosen as the Vicars of his Son and has made shepherds of the flock (cf. Preface of Apostles I).

Dear friends, this deep gratitude for a gift of divine mercy is uppermost in my heart in spite of all. And I consider it a special grace which my Venerable Predecessor, John Paul II, has obtained for me. I seem to feel his strong hand clasping mine; I seem to see his smiling eyes and hear his words, at this moment addressed specifically to me, "Do not be afraid!"

The death of the Holy Father John Paul II and the days that followed have been an extraordinary period of grace for the Church and for the whole world. Deep sorrow at his departure and the sense of emptiness that it left in everyone have been tempered by the action of the Risen Christ, which was manifested during long days in the unanimous wave of faith, love and spiritual solidarity that culminated in his solemn funeral Mass.

We can say it: John Paul II's funeral was a truly extraordinary experience in which, in a certain way, we glimpsed the power of God who, through his Church, wants to make a great family of all the peoples by means of the unifying power of Truth and Love (cf. Lumen Gentium, n. 1). Conformed to his Master and Lord, John Paul II crowned his long and fruitful Pontificate at the hour of his death, strengthening Christian people
in their faith, gathering them around him and making the entire human family feel more closely united.

How can we not feel sustained by this testimony? How can we fail to perceive the encouragement that comes from this event of grace?

2. Surprising all my expectations, through the votes of the Venerable Father Cardinals, divine Providence has called me to succeed this great Pope. I am thinking back at this moment to what happened in the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi some 2,000 years ago. I seem to hear Peter’s words: “You are the Christ..., the Son of the living God,” and the Lord’s solemn affirmation: “You are ‘Peter’ and on this rock I will build my Church.... I will entrust to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (cf. Mt 16: 15-19).

You are Christ! You are Peter! I seem to be reliving the same Gospel scene; I, the Successor of Peter, repeat with trepidation the anxious words of the fisherman of Galilee and listen once again with deep emotion to the reassuring promise of the divine Master. Although the weight of responsibility laid on my own poor shoulders is enormous, there is no doubt that the divine power on which I can count is boundless: “You are ‘Peter,’ and on this rock I will build my Church” (Mt 16:18). In choosing me as Bishop of Rome, the Lord wanted me to be his Vicar, he wanted me to be the “rock” on which we can all safely stand. I ask him to compensate for my limitations so that I may be a courageous and faithful Pastor of his flock, ever docile to the promptings of his Spirit.

I am preparing to undertake this special ministry, the “Petrine” ministry at the service of the universal Church, with humble abandonment into the hands of God’s Providence. I first of all renew my total and confident loyalty to Christ: “In Te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in aeternum!”

Your Eminences, with heartfelt gratitude for the trust you have shown me, I ask you to support me with your prayers and with your constant, active and wise collaboration. I also ask all my Brothers in the Episcopate to be close to me with their prayers and advice, so that I may truly be the Servus Servorum Dei. Just as the Lord willed that Peter and the other Apostles make up the one Apostolic College, in the same way the Successor of Peter and the Bishops, successors of the Apostles—the Council has
forcefully reasserted this (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 22) -, must be closely united with one another. This collegial communion, despite the diversity of roles and functions of the Roman Pontiff and the Bishops, is at the service of the Church and of unity in the faith, on which the efficacy of evangelizing action in the contemporary world largely depends. Therefore, it is on this path, taken by my Venerable Predecessors, that I also intend to set out, with the sole concern of proclaiming the living presence of Christ to the whole world.

3. I have before my eyes in particular the testimony of Pope John Paul II. He leaves a Church that is more courageous, freer, more youthful. She is a Church which, in accordance with his teaching and example, looks serenely at the past and is not afraid of the future. With the Great Jubilee she entered the new millennium, bearing the Gospel, applied to today’s world through the authoritative rereading of the Second Vatican Council. Pope John Paul II rightly pointed out the Council as a “compass” by which to take our bearings in the vast ocean of the third millennium (cf. Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, nos. 57-58). Also, in his spiritual Testament he noted, “I am convinced that it will long be granted to the new generations to draw from the treasures that this 20th-century Council has lavished upon us” (17 March 2000; *L’Osservatore Romano* English edition [ORE], 13 April 2005, p. 4).

Thus, as I prepare myself for the service that is proper to the Successor of Peter, I also wish to confirm my determination to continue to put the Second Vatican Council into practice, following in the footsteps of my Predecessors and in faithful continuity with the 2,000-year tradition of the Church. This very year marks the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of the Council (December 8, 1965). As the years have passed, the Conciliar Documents have lost none of their timeliness; indeed, their teachings are proving particularly relevant to the new situation of the Church and the current globalized society.

4. My Pontificate begins in a particularly meaningful way as the Church is living the special Year dedicated to the Eucharist. How could I fail to see this providential coincidence as an element that must mark the ministry to which I am called? The Eucharist, the heart of Christian life and the source of the Church’s evangelizing mission, cannot but constitute
the permanent centre and source of the Petrine ministry that has been entrusted to me.

The Eucharist makes constantly present the Risen Christ who continues to give himself to us, calling us to participate in the banquet of his Body and his Blood. From full communion with him flows every other element of the Church’s life: first of all, communion among all the faithful, the commitment to proclaiming and witnessing to the Gospel, the ardor of love for all, especially the poorest and lowliest.

This year, therefore, the Solemnity of Corpus Christi must be celebrated with special solemnity. Subsequently, the Eucharist will be the centre of the World Youth Day in Cologne in August, and in October, also of the Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, whose theme will be: “The Eucharist, source and summit of the life and mission of the Church.”

I ask everyone in the coming months to intensify love and devotion for Jesus in the Eucharist, and to express courageously and clearly faith in the Real Presence of the Lord, especially by the solemnity and the correctness of the celebrations.

I ask this especially of priests, whom I am thinking of with deep affection at this moment. The ministerial Priesthood was born at the Last Supper, together with the Eucharist, as my Venerable Predecessor John Paul II so frequently emphasized. “All the more then must the life of a priest be “shaped’ by the Eucharist” (Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 2005, n. 1; ORE, March 23, p. 4). In the first place, the devout, daily celebration of Holy Mass, the centre of the life and mission of every priest, contributes to this goal.

5. Nourished and sustained by the Eucharist, Catholics cannot but feel encouraged to strive for the full unity for which Christ expressed so ardent a hope in the Upper Room. The Successor of Peter knows that he must make himself especially responsible for his Divine Master’s supreme aspiration. Indeed, he is entrusted with the task of strengthening his brethren (cf. Lk 22: 32).

With full awareness, therefore, at the beginning of his ministry in the Church of Rome which Peter bathed in his blood, Peter’s current Successor takes on as his primary task the duty to work tirelessly to rebuild the full
and visible unity of all Christ’s followers. This is his ambition, his impelling duty. He is aware that good intentions do not suffice for this. Concrete gestures that enter hearts and stir consciences are essential, inspiring in everyone that inner conversion that is the prerequisite for all ecumenical progress.

Theological dialogue is necessary; the investigation of the historical reasons for the decisions made in the past is also indispensable. But what is most urgently needed is that “purification of memory,” so often recalled by John Paul II, which alone can dispose souls to accept the full truth of Christ. Each one of us must come before him, the supreme Judge of every living person, and render an account to him of all we have done or have failed to do to further the great good of the full and visible unity of all his disciples.

The current Successor of Peter is allowing himself to be called in the first person by this requirement and is prepared to do everything in his power to promote the fundamental cause of ecumenism. Following the example of his Predecessors, he is fully determined to encourage every initiative that seems appropriate for promoting contacts and understanding with the representatives of the different Churches and Ecclesial Communities. Indeed, on this occasion he sends them his most cordial greeting in Christ, the one Lord of us all.

6. I am thinking back at this time to the unforgettable experience seen by all of us on the occasion of the death and funeral of the late John Paul II. The Heads of Nations, people from every social class and especially young people gathered round his mortal remains, laid on the bare ground, in an unforgettable embrace of love and admiration. The whole world looked to him with trust. To many it seemed that this intense participation, amplified by the media to reach the very ends of the planet, was like a unanimous appeal for help addressed to the Pope by today’s humanity which, upset by uncertainties and fears, was questioning itself on its future.

The Church of today must revive her awareness of the duty to repose to the world the voice of the One who said: “I am the light of the world. No follower of mine shall ever walk in darkness; no, he shall possess the light of life” (Jn 8: 12). In carrying out his ministry, the new Pope knows that his task is to make Christ’s light shine out before the men and
women of today: not his own light, but Christ’s.

Aware of this I address everyone, including the followers of other religions or those who are simply seeking an answer to the fundamental questions of life and have not yet found it. I address all with simplicity and affection, to assure them that the Church wants to continue to weave an open and sincere dialogue with them, in the search for the true good of the human being and of society.

I ask God for unity and peace for the human family, and declare the willingness of all Catholics to cooperate for an authentic social development, respectful of the dignity of every human being.

I will make every conscientious effort to continue the promising dialogue initiated by my Venerable Predecessors with the different civilizations, so that mutual understanding may create the conditions for a better future for all.

I am thinking in particular of the young. I offer my affectionate embrace to them, the privileged partners in dialogue with Pope John Paul II, hoping, please God, to meet them in Cologne on the occasion of the upcoming World Youth Day. I will continue our dialogue, dear young people, the future and hope of the Church and of humanity, listening to your expectations in the desire to help you encounter in ever greater depth the living Christ, eternally young.

7. Mane nobiscum, Domine! Stay with us, Lord! This invocation, which is the principal topic of the Apostolic Letter of John Paul II for the Year of the Eucharist, is the prayer that wells up spontaneously from my heart as I prepare to begin the ministry to which Christ has called me. Like Peter, I too renew to him my unconditional promise of fidelity. I intend to serve him alone, dedicating myself totally to the service of his Church.

To support me in my promise, I call on the motherly intercession of Mary Most Holy, in whose hands I place the present and future of the Church and of myself. May the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and all the Saints also intercede for us.

With these sentiments I impart to you, Venerable Brother Cardinals, to those who are taking part in this rite and to all who are watching it on
television and listening to it on the radio, a special, affectionate Blessing.
PRELATE

- New Circumscriptions
- Activities of the Prelate
- Pastoral Letters
- Homilies
- Addresses
- Articles and Interviews
- Books published
New Circumscriptions

On February 2, 2005, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, announced that the Delegation of the Dominican Republic would now be dependent on Venezuela rather than Puerto Rico, by the following decree:

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

DECRETUM

Perspectis nn. 150 et 153 Codicis iuris particularis Operis Dei.

Auditis Consilio Generali et Assessoratu Centrali necnon Vicariis Regionum quarum interest, hoc decreto statuimus ut Delegatio Republicæ Dominicanæ hactenus in circumscriptione Quasi-Regionis Portoricensis constituta deinceps a Commissione Regionis Venetiołanæ dependeat.

Datum Romæ, ex Aedibus Curiae Prælatitiae, die 2 mensis februarii, anno 2005.

+ Xaverius Echevarría

Franciscus Vives

Curiae Prælatitiae Cancellarius

Reg. Gen. R. Lib. VI pag. 18

Activities of the Prelate

Pastoral Trips
From February 4 to 8, the Prelate of Opus Dei was in the Czech Republic and also in Hungary. On Friday the fourth he arrived in Prague from Rome, and went directly to see the Nuncio. On the following day a gathering of some six hundred people was held at the Prague Convention Center. He encouraged those present to be very united to the Holy Father John Paul II, who was hospitalized at that time. On that same day he left by plane for Hungary.

In Budapest he stayed at the Orbánhegy Residence, as he had done on an earlier trip almost ten years ago. On the sixth he had lunch with the Archbishop, Cardinal Péter Erdő, and greeted the Nuncio. In mid-afternoon, in a meeting room of the Hotel Flamenco, he had a catechetical get-together with faithful of the Work, Cooperators and friends attended by some five hundred people. He told them that St. Josemaría had prayed a lot for Hungary and reminded them of their responsibility to be apostles and to re-Christianize society. “My children, speak fearlessly! You will bring about many conversions! You will bring many people to turn their lives around! Let no one be able to say: I had at my side a person who knew the goodness, the mercy of God, and he didn’t tell me anything. Speak! Speak!...Everyone from the place where he is, as ordinary citizens.” He also insisted on the importance of devotion to the Holy Eucharist.

On the following day, February 7, the Prelate of Opus Dei took part in a conference on canon law. He had been invited by Cardinal Péter Erdő to give a talk on “the exercise of governing power in personal prelatures.”[1] The conference took place in the Catholic university of Budapest. In the afternoon, after the official conference lunch, Bishop Echevarría went to pray at the Marian shrine of Máriaremète.

At midday on the eighth he left by plane for Prague. From there, after a brief stop, he returned to Rome.

***

The Prelate of Opus Dei arrived in Helsinki on February 25 to take part in ceremonies commemorating two important events for the Catholic Church in Finland: the 850th anniversary of the arrival of St. Henry, who evangelized the country, and the 50th anniversary of the creation of the diocese of Helsinki. On Saturday the 26th and Sunday the 27th he took
part in various ceremonies and, with other Church leaders, concelebrated two solemn Masses.

During these days, he also spent time with the faithful of the Prelature from Estonia and Finland and with members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross who exercise their priestly ministry in Pushkin. He also had an opportunity to greet many other persons who take part in the Prelature’s apostolates.

On the 28th he traveled to Riga. There he celebrated Holy Mass and spent a few hours with the faithful of Opus Dei in Latvia and some of their friends. He reminded them of the responsibility all Christians have to bear witness to Christ through a daring and incisive apostolate.

On Tuesday, the first of March, in the morning he visited Bishop Josef Wrobel of Helsinki in that city. In the afternoon he began his return trip.

From March 2 to 5 the Prelate was in Valladolid and Burgos. The object of his trip was to encourage the apostolic work of the Prelature’s faithful in Castille and Leon and to take part in a theology conference, invited by Archbishop Francisco Gil Hellín of Burgos.

In Valladolid, Bishop Echevarría visited Archbishop Braulio Rodriguez and prayed before the patroness of the city, our Lady of St. Lawrence. At the urging of the pastor, he wrote a few words in the parish visitor’s book: “With great joy I have come to adore our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, led by the hand of our Lady of St. Lawrence. I have asked her to make me a contemplative and to help me lead others to this great good. I have also asked that people in this parish may grow in their prayer life and that many priestly vocations may result. Laus Dei Virginique Matri.”

On March 3 he visited the Alcazarén women’s educational center, started by faithful and Cooperators of Opus Dei, and had a spirited get-together with the directors, teachers, parents, administrative personnel and some alumnae.

On the fourth he was in Burgos, for the 29th International Symposium on the Theology of the Priesthood, in which he was to participate. The
symposium was centered on seven twentieth-century Spanish priests, including St. Josemaría Escrivá. In his talk, which was attended by the Archbishop of Burgos, Bishop Echevarría spoke about the figure of the Founder of Opus Dei and his message, as reflected in the addresses and homilies of John Paul II and other documents of the Holy See. The conference had as its title: “The saint of ordinary life: St. Josemaría Escrivá in the Church’s magisterium.”[2]

In the course of his talk he had mentioned that St. Josemaría had lived for fourteen months in Burgos, where he finished writing *The Way* and collected abundant material for his doctoral thesis entitled *La Abadesa de las Huelga*. Afterwards, the Prelate of Opus Dei answered questions from the audience.

Later Bishop Echevarría had a meeting with the mayor at the City Hall. The mayor informed him that the Assembly had decided to dedicate one of the city squares to St. Josemaría.

On the fifth, the Prelate returned to Valladolid where he met with more than seven thousand people in the Pisuerga Arena. All were seeking advice for their Christian life appropriate to their personal circumstances. For example, in answer to the question of a bus driver, the Prelate said: “you have to transmit joy and peace. Offer your work to God, even when you are tired, and pray for all the people who get on your bus.” As he did on numerous occasions during those days, the Prelate also asked those present in the Arena to pray for the health of John Paul II: “He has given his life for the world and for the Church. He is detached from his life, but he needs your prayer. He loves all of us madly,” he said.

Invited by Cardinal Bernard Panafieu, the Prelate of Opus Dei took part in the installation of a statue of St. Josemaría in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Marseille, on June 18.

A few days earlier, on June 15, he had arrived in Paris. There he visited the new Archbishop, André Vingt-Trois, and the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Fortunato Baldelli. Also during those days he went to pray
before an image of our Lady of the Miraculous Medal in Rue du Bac. He also visited the Dosnon hospitality school, attached to the Couvrelles Conference Center.

On the 18th, upon arriving in Marseille, he went first to the Basilica of Notre Dame de la Garde, patroness of the city. Afterwards, at four in the afternoon, he had a catechetical encounter with some eight hundred people in a conference room on the ship Napoleon Bonaparte, moored in the port of la Joliette. For an hour he answered questions on seeking an integral Christian life in one’s profession and family, on married love, on Eucharistic devotion, on imparting a Christian formation to one’s children, and on apostolate in difficult environments. More than once he asked those present to pray for the new Pope, Benedict XVI.

That same evening, at seven, in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, a Eucharistic concelebration took place presided over by the Archbishop. In the course of the ceremony, Bishop Javier Echevarría blessed the new statue of St. Josemaría that had been installed in a side chapel dedicated to our Lady.

On Sunday, June 19, the Prelate was also in Aix-en-Provence. In the evening he visited Cardinal Panafieu in the Archbishop’s residence.

On the morning of the 20th, after giving the meditation and celebrating Holy Mass in Castelvieil Center in Marseille, he returned to Rome.

[1] The text of this talk is on page 87.


Back to Contents

Priestly Ordinations

On Saturday, May 21, forty-two faithful of Opus Dei received priestly ordination from the hands of Bishop Echevarría. They come from 13 countries: Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Colombia, France, Guatemala, Italy, Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines, Spain, the United States, and Uruguay.
Eucharistic ceremony at the Prelatic Church

On May 2 a special Eucharistic ceremony of adoration took place in the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, on the feast of the Dedication of the Prelatic Church, during the Year of the Eucharist. From three-thirty till seven in the evening, many people came to spend time in adoration before our Lord exposed in the monstrance. The exposition ended with Benediction, with the Prelate taking part.

Pastoral Letters

On the death of Pope John Paul II (April 3, 2005)

On the death of Pope John Paul II

May Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!

My dear children: We have been preparing ourselves for the sad moment of the death of our beloved Pope John Paul II, who — more frequently in these last years and months — has offered to the whole world the serene and joyful witness of his intimate union with God, through suffering.

Since last Wednesday, when the Pope’s health suddenly worsened, the entire Church has gathered around its supreme Shepherd, praying with
faith in every corner of the globe. Once more the scene narrated in the Acts of the Apostles, when King Herod had the apostle Peter imprisoned, intending to put him to death, has become a reality: earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church (Acts 12:5).

This prayer for the Successor of St. Peter, aside from having been a source of strength for the Pope in recent days, has united us more firmly to Christ and to his beloved Spouse, the Church. It has helped Catholics to discover once more that we form part of the great family of God’s children, who have a common Father on earth. We have also felt the closeness of many other Christians and of countless men and women of good will, who have united themselves to our prayer. Let us give thanks to God for all these gifts, and for such a good and faithful servant, Pope John Paul II!

In the Work, many reasons for thanksgiving join us to John Paul II. Our Father taught us to love the Pope ardently, whoever he might be, for the simple and sublime reason that he is the Vicar of Christ, his visible representative on earth. But our veneration becomes even more pressing on considering how, during these years of his ministry as supreme Shepherd, he has helped Catholics to fulfill our filial duty of faithful adhesion, by the example of his intense spiritual life (one could almost touch it!), his joyful service to souls, his charity towards all men and women, and also his paternal demands. And he has raised the Work to a Prelature, so that we carry out Opus Dei — this little “portion” of the Church — as God wants.

We know the enormous spiritual and moral prestige that the Holy Father had throughout the whole world, but during the past few days — also on seeing the extensive coverage that the means of communication have dedicated to him — I think that everyone, including non-Catholics, have touched the truth that ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia: where Peter is, there the Church is found. And now, after so many years of generous dedication to God, the depth and effectiveness of his ministry as Supreme Shepherd has become even more apparent.

We are filled with the certainty that the Blessed Trinity has opened wide the gate of heaven to him, as a reward for his constant zeal for souls, his persevering invitation to all men and women to open the doors of their souls to Christ. At the same time, with profound and serene gratitude, let us
offer suffrages for the eternal rest of his soul. In addition to those that Saint Josemaría established in Opus Dei for moments such as these, I urge you to be generous in offering suffrages for John Paul II. Have the conviction that these prayers (we are accustomed to seeing this) are “round trip” petitions: they rise up to heaven and God returns them to earth as an abundant torrent of graces.

My daughters and sons: John Paul II, together with our Lord, continues to invite us: Rise, let us be on our way! He is asking us to take up with determination, day after day, the path of our Christian life. Duc in altum! (Lk 5:4), he is reminding each of us. All Catholics, as faithful children of the Church, have to launch out into the deep in the great ocean of the world, to carry out — without mediocrity, with full and wholehearted dedication — the mission to co-redeem that Christ has entrusted to us.

When the Conclave of Cardinals, united under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, chooses Peter’s new Successor, we will hear the announcement, furrow open and well-prepared through the abundant prayer and mortification of all Christians. We already love him with all our soul, whoever he might be. And as our Father told us on similar occasions, we offer everything for him and his intentions—even our breathing!

During these days of sede vacante, perhaps the aspiration that our Founder suggests in Furrow can assist us: I thought the comment on loyalty you had written to me was very appropriate...: “I carry with me every day in my heart, in my mind and on my lips, an aspiration: Rome!” (no. 344).

With all my affection I bless you.

Your Father,

+ Javier

On the occasion of the Conclave (April 10, 2005)

On the occasion of the Conclave

My dear children: may Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!

I feel the need to write you once again, just a week after my last letter, because of the events we have witnessed during these days, which are a grace from God for his Church. Together with the other shepherds of the People of God, I ask that all of us may deeply assimilate the marvelous unity of the Catholic Church that has been so clearly seen in the spontaneous manifestations of prayer and filiation on the death of John Paul II. I ask God that the experiences of these days not be just passing sensations, but that they remain in our souls and bring about a conversion, an eagerness to serve God and others, renewed resolutions of generous Christian conduct, of faithful love.

The death of John Paul II has been a new catechesis. The Pope began his fruitful pontificate with an encyclical on Our Lord Jesus Christ, Redeemer of Man. And he ended it, even after the physical loss of the use of his voice, with the same eloquent teaching. Christ is our Savior; whoever follows Christ loves life and does not fear sickness or death, because the dignity of God’s children extends from the beginning to the end of our earthly existence.

A page in the history of the Church and the world has just closed, marked by the singular figure of the one who during this period has been the Father and Supreme Shepherd of the People of God. Our Lord wanted us to be witnesses of these moments, during which we received, I repeat, a grace and a responsibility: that of continuing to proclaim Jesus Christ in accord with the example of Peter’s successor. With the election of the next Pope, in the conclave that begins on the 18th, a new chapter in the firm continuity of the Church’s history will begin. All of us Catholics can participate actively in this event, by uniting ourselves through our prayer to the cardinals and to the whole Church.

During these days I have frequently recalled the two conclaves that I experienced in Rome together with our founder, in 1958 and 1963. I can
never forget the insistence with which he urged us to pray and to offer everything for the next Pope. I recall how moved he was on seeing the fumata bianca, the white smoke, and the faith with which he immediately knelt and said the prayer oremus pro beatissimo Papa nostro, even before knowing, through the Cardinal Protodeacon’s announcement, who had been elected. And our beloved Don Alvaro did likewise.

Like St. Josemaría in those moments, we already love with our whole soul the successor of John Paul II, whoever he may be. We love him with filial affection, and we pray that God grant him abundant graces, and that his ministry be filled with fruits of holiness for the Church and of peace for civil society.

Let us renew our desire to serve the Pope, for it was only to serve the Church that God wanted Opus Dei. And already now, during this period of sede vacante, we can serve the Pontiff who within a few days will occupy the Chair of St. Peter. United to all Catholics, let us pray and offer sacrifices for the one the Holy Spirit will place at the head of the Church, doing so with supernatural peace, filled with hope.

Let us also pray that all Catholics may know how to see this new period with eyes of faith, without paying attention to considerations foreign to supernatural logic. There comes to mind the memory of the first audience that Paul VI granted to our founder, in January 1964. At the end, Don Alvaro also came in, and the Pope said to him: we have known each other for so many years, and “sono diventato vecchio,” I have become old. Don Alvaro immediately replied: “No, Santità, lei è diventato Pietro,” you have become Peter. Since the beginning of this year, I have been asking everyone to pray the aspiration Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam: all with Peter, to Jesus, through Mary. These words that I heard from St. Josemaría take on special meaning during these days. We don’t know who the next Pope will be, but whoever he is, he will be Peter. And we are already accompanying him with our prayer, going to the intercession of Holy Mary, Mother of the Church.

The worldwide respect and affection that we have seen in recent days for John Paul II make clear for us the “impact” of sanctity, the power of attraction of Christ, the glory of God that shines in those who struggle to be faithful.
At the same time, this unity (which we could describe as “impetuous,” like the affection accompanying it) shows us that the Church is closely gathered around Peter. These outpourings of love are a tribute filled with gratitude to John Paul II, and an affectionate welcome to his successor.

I insist: as always, this is a moment for unity. The Pope is always the visible source and foundation of this unity. And just as John Paul II has been so until his death, so will be the one who is elected to succeed him. Our soul overflows with the need to express, out of justice, profound gratitude to John Paul II, so merited by his total dedication to the mission that God entrusted to him. I am sure that you are also already offering the new Pope, whoever he may be, your affection and gratitude for his efforts in the exercise of his universal ministry.

With all my affection I bless you.

Your Father,

+ Javier

Rome, April 10, 2005

Homilies

At the Mass for the repose of the soul of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, in the Basilica of St. Eugene, Rome (March 22, 2005)

At the Mass for the repose of the soul of the Servant of God, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, Basilica of St. Eugene, Rome

1. This year, the anniversary of the death of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo falls within the celebration of Holy Week. Eleven years have gone by since
St. Josemaría’s first successor left us to go to God. We have come here today, in close communion with thousands of people throughout the whole world who like ourselves are gathered close to the altar, to recall the dies natalis of this exemplary bishop, a faithful servant of God and of his Church. Our hearts overflow with deep gratitude to our Lord, convinced that the Blessed Trinity wanted to take Don Alvaro into the embrace of beatific joy. At the same time, we are aware of the power of his paternal intercession to obtain for us from heaven the gifts that we all need.

Knowing that we are pilgrims on this earth, it does us a lot of good to think of the beloved persons who have preceded us on the path to our heavenly dwelling. They have reached the goal, and their memory fills us with hope, as we see the providence of our Heavenly Father that accompanies us throughout our existence. Did not Jesus clearly say that “the very hairs of our head are counted” (cf. Mt 10:30), that each person is of immense value in God’s eyes?

The memory of men and women who have been faithful to God’s love, as was Don Alvaro, reveals to us paths of faith, hope and charity. They are men and women who have sanctified themselves in circumstances very similar to our own. They had difficulties as we do. They fought and they conquered, and, like us, they also lost an occasional battle. Nevertheless, they got back up once and again, trusting in God’s love, and responded generously to divine grace, without half-hearted measures. Above all, they knew how to take up the cross of each day, in physical and moral sufferings, in large and small things, with the joy of the children of God and with the certainty of the truth that St. Josemaría expressed in the Latin phrase: lux in Cruce, requies in Cruce, gaudium in Cruce! Only in the Cross does one encounter light, rest and happiness.

This is what we contemplate carried out to the fullest possible extent in these days of the Paschal Triduum, now imminent: the passion and death of Jesus, undertaken out of love for God and men, is the door to reach the glory of the resurrection.

In recalling the faithful persons who have preceded us to our heavenly dwelling, there come to my mind the significant words from the first years of the spread of the Gospel: in hoc signo vincis, in this sign you will conquer. According to an ancient tradition, these words were made known precisely
here, in Rome. We are called to assist God’s victory in our souls and announce this inestimable gift to the persons around us, through the good news of the Cross. I am certain that the amazing supernatural effectiveness of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo’s life was due precisely to this reality: each day he loved and embraced the cross our Lord offered him, with full availability and sincere joy, without noise or ostentation, with the happiness of being close to Jesus.

The apostle Andrew, on seeing from afar the cross of his own martyrdom, is said to have directed these words of greeting to the wood on which he was to be crucified: \textit{O bona crux, diu desiderata, sollice amata, sine intermissione quae\textipa{2}ita!} Hail, O Cross, so long desired, so greatly loved, sought without rest. We too can make the decision, during this Holy Week, to seek the Cross in the little things of each day, to love it when it appears in our life, to thank Jesus when he grants us this gift, which is a fount of effectiveness.

2. Perhaps you are asking yourselves what one must do to truly love the Cross. There is only one reply: to take part with faith and devotion in the Holy Mass. John Paul II, in the Apostolic Letter with which he began the Eucharistic Year, said: “Holy Mass needs to be set at the center of the Christian life and celebrated in a dignified manner by every community.”[1]

Many of us recall the devotion with which Don Alvaro, out of his great love for Jesus, sacramentally renewed the divine Sacrifice of Calvary. Both in solemn celebrations with the participation of thousands of the faithful, and in daily Mass, my beloved predecessor identified himself with what he was carrying out, well-aware of being, like all priests at the altar, Christ himself.

My dear sisters and brothers, let me address two incisive questions to you, which I also direct to myself. How are we living the Holy Mass? Are we aware, in every circumstance, that it is not a matter of a simple commemoration of something that happened twenty centuries ago, but of making present, in a mysterious way, the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ? This great event, which physically took place only once in history, is made present on the altar in a manner that is both mysterious and real, beneath the veil of the sacramental species, each time that the
minister ordained by the Church acts in persona Christi, taking the place of Christ.

Let us ask the Blessed Trinity for the grace of never becoming used to celebrating or taking part in the Mass, so that we may discover and receive, with an ever new astonishment, the incommensurable gift of the Body and Blood of Christ which God the Father grants us through the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus we too will experience in our lives the reality that St. Josemaría wrote down when his heart was overflowing with love for our Lord: “That is why I must love the Mass so! (‘Our’ Mass, Jesus).”[2]

Spurred by his ardent faith, Don Alvaro gave heartfelt thanks to God after Mass, even when he was experiencing, as he confided to us, spiritual aridity. For love is not reduced to a feeling; rather it is above all a generous impulse of the will that, docile to the command of the intellect illumined by faith, seeks identification with the person loved.

In this regard, the following considerations of my predecessor seem very pertinent to me. “If a beautiful sunset is marvelous, what should receiving Communion be? For the Sun of the universe comes into our soul; he touches us and inflames us! If we think about this miracle more frequently, we will be filled with embarrassment and gratitude. Jesus comes in Communion to transform us, to increase our faith, our hope, our love. He infuses all the virtues into our soul and enlivens them, truly making the Holy Mass the center and root of our interior life.[3]

3. We are in Holy Week. In two days the Paschal Triduum begins, in which we commemorate, first, Christ’s Last Supper with his apostles, when he institutes the Eucharist and the priesthood, and then his passion and death to free us from our sins, and his glorious resurrection. Let us formulate the firm resolution to live all of these events, which the liturgy presents to us in their perennial timeliness, very close to our Lady, whom Christ himself gave us as our Mother. As the Holy Father said in his encyclical on the Eucharist, let us remember that in the Holy Mass, which is the living memorial of Calvary, “all that Christ accomplished by his passion and his death is present. Consequently all that Christ did with regard to his Mother for our sake is also present....
“Experiencing the memorial of Christ’s death in the Eucharist” continued the Pope, “also means continually receiving this gift. It means accepting—like John—the one who is given to us anew as our Mother. It also means taking on a commitment to be conformed to Christ, putting ourselves at the school of his Mother and allowing her to accompany us. Mary is present, with the Church and as the Mother of the Church, at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist.”[4]

This path is the one that Bishop del Portillo traveled, day after day, following in the footsteps of St. Josemaría, always seeking to increase his filial love for the Blessed Virgin. Let us go to his intercession asking that we too, during this Holy Week and later throughout our whole life, will learn how to walk in our Lady’s company. Thus we will stay very close to her Son, who each day gives us the gift of Himself, of his life, death and resurrection, at Holy Mass, and who awaits us continually in the Tabernacle.

Let us pray insistently for our beloved Pope John Paul II, for his health and his intentions, and for all those who work in the government of the Church. And let us also ask our Lord to provide many vocations of holy priests. Amen.

[3] Alvaro del Portillo, Notes taken from his preaching, October 20, 1985
At the priestly ordination of deacons of the Prelature, Basilica of St. Eugene, Rome

My dear sons who soon will become priests:

My dear brothers and sisters:

I greet you with St. Paul’s salutation to the Corinthians that we have just heard: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor 13:14).

Today, the solemnity of the Holy Trinity, is a great day in the Church. We celebrate and adore the highest mystery of our faith, the central mystery of Christian life—of the life of every man and woman, who are all called to share in God’s life. This truth, revealed to us by Christ, infinitely surpasses the intellectual grasp of any creature and constitutes “the fruit and goal of our entire life.”[1] As St. Augustine says, “this is our ultimate joy, and there is none greater: to enjoy the Triune God in whose image we have been made.... This contemplation is promised as the aim of all of our actions and the eternal perfection of our joy.”[2]

Our joy on such a great feast is increased by the ordination of forty-two new priests. I cordially congratulate their families, and assure you that you are especially present in our hearts. But you must also pray a lot for the new priests. Now they need your prayers more than ever. At the same time, let us give thanks to God, who never ceases to bring forth ministers of Christ. And let us beseech him that they may be even more abundant throughout the whole world.

The priest, a man of the Eucharist

The spiritual riches of the priesthood are enormous. Each priest, in virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, is configured in a special way to the Eternal High Priest and is enabled to visibly represent him before men, taking his place and acting in persona Christi Capitis, that is to say, as a living instrument of Christ, the Head of the Church.

I would like to invite you to reflect for a moment on some of the aspects of this specific sacramental configuration with Christ. I refer to the Eucharistic, ecclesiological and Marian dimensions of the priestly ministry.

In first place, the Eucharistic dimension. As our beloved Pope John
Paul II so often recalled, the Eucharist and the priesthood were born together in the Cenacle at Jerusalem, on the evening of Holy Thursday. Therefore “the life of a priest,” as he wrote in his last letter to priests, a few weeks before his death, “must, all the more, be ‘shaped’ by the Eucharist.”[3]

Between the priesthood and the Eucharist there exists, therefore, an indissoluble bond: the priest lives for the Eucharist, and the Eucharist, which is the Bread of Life for all Christians, can only be effected by bishops and their collaborators, the priests. Thus the paschal mystery of our Lord's death and resurrection is made present in a sacramental way in the Sacrifice of the Mass. Pope Benedict XVI wanted to emphasize this truth of our faith from the first moments of his pontificate. Speaking of the “providential coincidence” of the beginning of his Petrine ministry with the Year of the Eucharist, he said: “The Eucharist makes constantly present the Risen Christ who continues to give himself to us, calling us to participate in the banquet of his Body and his Blood.”[4]

My dear candidates for the priesthood: always remember that the gift and task of consecrating the Eucharist, which our Lord is granting you today, brings with it a very great responsibility. At times the thought will occur to you that you are only poor men, and it is true: we all are. But have no fear. God, who called you, also offers you all of his help to be holy priests; that is to say, priests in love with Christ, dedicated to the salvation of souls, fully available for the needs of the apostolate. Follow the example of St. Josemaría, who liked to define himself as “a priest of Jesus Christ,” and also as “a sinner who loves Jesus Christ madly.” The two are perfectly reconcilable, because the incomparable dignity of the priesthood, as our Founder taught, is “a greatness which is on loan: it is completely compatible with my own littleness. I pray to God our Lord” he said, “to give all of us priests the grace to perform holy things in a holy way, to reflect in every aspect of our lives the wonders of the greatness of God.”[5]

The priest, builder of communion

If the Church “makes” the Eucharist through her priests, it is also certain that the Church itself is “born” of the Eucharist, as Pope John Paul II stressed in his last encyclical. From the Eucharistic dimension of the priesthood there stems necessarily its ecclesiological dimension. A priest
lives for the Eucharist in the Church and at the service of the Church. Without full communion with the Roman Pontiff and one’s own Ordinary, a priest could not provide a true ecclesial service. From remotest antiquity, an important witness to this reality is found in the liturgy of the Mass, where mention is always made of the universal Church and of its visible head, the Pope, as well as of one’s own bishop and all the other bishops in communion with the Holy See.

In this regard, with gratitude to our Lord, I would like to recall the impressive manifestation of communion that was seen in Rome and in the whole world during the past weeks. Every sector in the Church was closely united around John Paul II in the moving farewell that accompanied his departure from this world, and then around Benedict XVI. During these days the Church was seen to be more alive than ever, under the stimulus of the Holy Spirit. It is a task that falls to everyone, and first of all to priests, to see to it that this precious inheritance not only is not lost, but that it is strengthened in the future. This close communion of Catholics, in both heart and deed, around the Vicar of Christ will necessarily produce great goods for the Church and for the whole world.

You, my dear ordinands, in addition to offering joyfully, in union with all the faithful, many prayers and mortifications for the Roman Pontiff, from now on have in your hands specific means for reinforcing this communion. Your conformation with Christ the Priest enables you to teach the Word of God with authority. Go even more deeply into the Church’s teachings, which you know very well, especially with the example of your complete adherence to the magisterium. In your specific case, being builders of communion in the Church, to which you are called, has to be manifested in what St. Josemaría called a “dominant passion” in Opus Dei: to love the unity of the Prelature with your whole heart, as an expression of the unity of the Church, of which the Work is a small part. You have to be instruments of unity among your fellow men and women and in the heart of all the apostolic activities in which you take part. A great mission awaits you, my sons, in your service to the Church, which will be so efficacious!

Another specific way of building communion, as priests, is by your joyful dedication, which at times may be fatiguing, to the ministry of reconciliation entrusted to you today. This sacrament brings about
communion with God and with the others, reconciling with God and with the Church those who admit they are sinners and increasing grace in those who receive it worthily. This has to be another “dominant passion” of yours: to bring many souls to God in the holy sacrament of Penance.

All of us are called to carry out a great catechesis of confession. Bring your friends, relatives and acquaintances to the sacrament of divine mercy. You will make them happier and then they too will be eager to bring others to confession.

The Marian dimension of the priesthood

Although only briefly, I would like to mention a third dimension of the priesthood: its special relationship with our Lady. Christ the Redeemer, whom priests represent, is not an abstraction but a specific Person: he is the eternal Son of God, born in time of a very specific woman, the Virgin Mary, whose blood runs in his veins. Being a priest precisely insofar as he was man, Jesus wanted to associate his Mother in his redemptive work. From high on the Cross, he addressed to his disciple those marvelous words: here is your mother; and to our Lady: here is your son (cf. Jn 19:26-27). Certainly every Christian is a child of Mary, but the priest is such by a new title as well. When Jesus directed himself to John, he was speaking to a man who had been invested with the priestly dignity the evening before, in the Cenacle.

Let us all meditate on these words of John Paul II: “In the ‘memorial’ of Calvary [in the Holy Mass] all that Christ accomplished by his passion and his death is present. Consequently all that Christ did with regard to his Mother for our sake is also present....

“Experiencing the memorial of Christ’s death in the Eucharist also means continually receiving this gift. It means accepting—like John—the one who is given to us anew as our Mother. It also means taking on a commitment to be conformed to Christ, putting ourselves at the school of his Mother and allowing her to accompany us. Mary is present, with the Church and as the Mother of the Church, at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist. If the Church and the Eucharist are inseparably united, the same ought to be said of Mary and the Eucharist.”[6] As a result, the special
relationship of the priest with the Eucharist also brings with it a special relationship of the priest with Mary.

I would like to cite here some words of St. Josemaría that have a universal value for all of us, but that in the Marian month of the present Eucharistic Year are especially timely. He wrote: “for me, the first Marian devotion—I like to see it that way—is the Holy Mass...Every day, as Christ comes down into the hands of the priest, there is renewed his real presence among us with his Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity: the same Body and Blood that he took on in the womb of Mary.”[7] I recommend that everyone reflect on these words, and I do so myself. Let us try to have them very present in the coming weeks, preparing ourselves for the solemnity of Corpus Christi.

To conclude, I would like to pass on to you a thought of Benedict XVI, taken from the homily he gave a few days ago, when he took possession of the Basilica of St. John Lateran, the seat of the Bishop of Rome. The Pope reminded us that from the Eucharistic sacrifice is born the apostolic yearnings of the people of God. And he added: “In this mystery, Christ’s love becomes permanently tangible among us. Here, again and again he gives himself. Here, again and again his heart is pierced; here he keeps his promise, the promise which, from the Cross, was to attract all things to himself....

“Thanks to the Eucharist, the Church is reborn ever anew! The Church is none other than that network—the Eucharistic community!—within which all of us, receiving the same Lord, become one body and embrace all the world.”[8]

Through the intercession of the Mother of the Church, of the Mother of priests, of the Mother of all Christians. Amen.


Dear brothers and sisters:

1. Once more we are joyfully celebrating the liturgical feast of St. Josemaría Escrivá, moved forward this year to June 25 because tomorrow is Sunday. This permits us to commemorate the Founder of Opus Dei on the same day as the anniversary of the priestly ordination of my beloved predecessor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, and of two other sons of our Father, who back in 1944 were the first to receive the priesthood in Opus Dei. Thus began a long chain of “ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor 4:1), at the service of the Church and of souls. In reality the first link in that chain is precisely St. Josemaría, who is now firmly anchored to our Lord for all eternity, and who from heaven continues interceding for all of us. I invite you therefore to give thanks to the Blessed Trinity for the gift of the priesthood to the Church and to pray that there be many priestly vocations throughout the whole world.

Tomorrow is also the thirtieth anniversary of the dies natalis of St. Josemaría. To us, creatures immersed in time, thirty years might seem a long time, but they are nothing if compared with the eternity the saints are enjoying.

Today’s feast is highlighted by the fact that we are now in the midst of
the Year of the Eucharist, the last great pastoral initiative of the servant of
God John Paul II. The memory of his passage to his Father’s house, which
so deeply moved the world two months ago, is still very fresh for us. The
Pope viewed this Eucharistic Year, in a certain sense, as the culmination of
his Pontificate, which began with the desire to place Christ at the center of
the cosmos and history (we can recall here his first encyclical, Redemptor
Hominis). His Pontificate ended in Easter week, precisely in the heart of
the year dedicated to adoring with greater ardor Jesus Christ truly present
in the Blessed Sacrament.

I remind you of his words in the apostolic letter Mane Nobiscum: “The
Year of the Eucharist takes place against a background which has been
enriched by the passage of the years, while remaining ever rooted in the
theme of Christ and the contemplation of his face. In a certain sense,” John
Paul II continued, “it is meant to be a year of synthesis, the high-point of a
journey in progress” (Apostolic letter, Mane Nobiscum, October 7, 2004, no.
10). On rereading these words, it is clear that John Paul II wanted to leave
us as a legacy the exhortation to love the Blessed Eucharist with greater
generosity.

I would like to mention here that within a few weeks, God willing, in
August, I will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of my priestly ordination.
Help me to prepare well for this anniversary. I give deep thanks to our Lord
for granting me, nearly a half century ago, the opportunity to make him
present every day on the altar. And I ask pardon for my faults. I will be very
grateful to you, if you help me.

2. There are many reasons, then, for making the Eucharist the focal
point for our prayer today. The liturgy of the Mass itself spurs us to do so.
Echoing some of the teachings of the Founder of Opus Dei, it invites us to
pray: “Accept, Father, these gifts we offer in memory of Saint Josemaría,
and through this sacramental renewal of the sacrifice of the Cross
graciously sanctify all our works” (Mass of St. Josemaría, Prayer over the
gifts).

God called St. Josemaría to be the herald and teacher of the universal
call to sanctity. The Founder of Opus Dei taught that in the family, in one’s
profession, in the most diverse secular activities—nel bel mezzo della strada,
as he used to say—each of us must strive to uncover the divine lights that shine in even the most ordinary activities when carried out with Christ and in Christ. This is the material of our sanctification, which is made possible thanks to the sacrifice of Christ. If we bring to Holy Mass our daily duties, together with the bread and wine that are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, we will be able to respond to the call to seek Christian perfection in the ordinary situations of life, directing them to our heavenly Father (cf. Mt 5:48).

Unfortunately, for centuries this idea of sanctity was not held by many Catholics. Benedict XVI alluded to this while still Cardinal Ratzinger. Referring to the canonization of St. Josemaría, he wrote: “Knowing a little about the history of the saints, and realizing that in the canonization process one looks for ‘heroic’ virtue, we almost inevitably have a mistaken idea of holiness. We feel tempted to say: ‘It is not for me, because I don’t feel myself capable of carrying out heroic virtues: this is too high an ideal for me.’ Sanctity then becomes something reserved for a few ‘great figures,’ whose images we see on the altars, and who were very different from us ordinary sinners. But this is a mistaken notion of sanctity, a wrong perception which has been corrected—and this seems to me the central point—precisely by Josemaría Escrivá” (“Letting God Work,” in L’Osservatore Romano, October 6, 2002).

Today countless persons—pastors of the Church, spiritual writers, theologians, men of science, ordinary faithful—are giving thanks to God for having awakened in their souls, using St. Josemaría as his docile instrument, the desire to attain sanctity in their everyday life. We too give thanks today because St. Josemaría taught us to seek God with simplicity in the ordinary, normal situations of our daily life. I cite some other words of then Cardinal Ratzinger, where he points out that this is “a message of the greatest importance. It is a message that brings one to overcome what can be considered the great temptation of our times: the idea that after the ‘big bang’ God retired from history. The action of God did not ‘stop’ at the moment of the ‘big bang,’ but rather continues through time, both in the world of nature and in the world of man” (Ibid.).

3. The Eucharist is the “place” where God makes himself present with the greatest intensity in the course of history, from the very moment of its
institution at the Last Supper. This is so because under the veil of the Eucharistic Species, the whole Jesus is present, with his Humanity and his Divinity.

The Eucharist is an admirable synthesis of our faith. Making truly present the mystery of our Lord’s death and resurrection, it contains under the appearances of bread and wine the same Jesus who was born of the Virgin Mary, who worked for thirty years in Nazareth, who preached and carried out miracles, who founded the Church, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, who died and rose on the third day, who ascended into heaven, who will come to judge the living and the dead in order to definitively establish his kingdom.

My dear sisters and brothers, how ardently we need to thank God for having entrusted this great mystery to his Church! In the words of St. Josemaría, “we have to especially thank our Lord for having instituted the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, by which he has remained among us. It is something marvelous. He had to leave but he wanted to remain with us. And since he is all-powerful, he carried out this great miracle of love. We can’t do everything we would like to; our power isn’t great enough, but our Lord is able to do so. He went to heaven and, at the same time, he has remained hidden under the species of bread and wine.

“There are three things we have to thank him for in a special way: the institution of this sacrament, its perpetuation through the words of consecration recited by the priest, and its administration. These are three marvelous manifestations of the goodness of God, who accommodates himself to the needs of our nature. I always think of the love of a good mother who cares for her little child; she washes it, perfumes it and afterwards smothers it with kisses and says: ‘I’m going to eat you up!’ Our Lord has said this to us also: ‘Take and eat me!’ He couldn’t be more human.

“But we don’t make God our Lord human when we receive him. It is he who divinizes us, exalts us, raises us” (Notes taken from a conversation, April 4, 1969).

St. Josemaría lived by the Eucharist and for the Eucharist. He dedicated all possible care to the Most Blessed Sacrament as a proof of love
and a sign of gratitude. Let us listen once more to Benedict XVI, before he became the successor of Peter, referring still to St. Josemaría: “He loved and proclaimed the Eucharist in all its dimensions: as adoration of God present among us in a hidden but real way; as a gift, in which he communicates himself to us again and again; as a sacrifice, in accordance with those words of Scripture: ‘Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired, but a body hast thou prepared for me’ [Heb 10:5]” (homily during a Mass of Thanksgiving for the beatification of Josemaría Escrivá, May 19, 1992).

St. Josemaría was moved, for example, by the closeness of Jesus in the Sacred Host, who awaits us in our churches. “When you approach the Tabernacle remember that he has been awaiting you for twenty centuries” (The Way, no. 537). This is an ever-present truth that should move each of us. How has our personal contact with Jesus in the Eucharist grown during this year dedicated to the Eucharist? How do we love and frequent the sacrament of Penance, necessary to receive the Eucharist worthily when one has gravely offended God and to prepare a less unworthy dwelling place for him. I invite you to consider these questions personally, so that we can answer them with sincerity, with generosity. Let us take the opportune decisions to grow in intimacy with Jesus in those moments dedicated to prayer, when we assist at Holy Mass and when we receive him in Communion.

The Most Holy Virgin is our mother. The task of all mothers is to feed and educate their children. Let us ask her to help us always, like a good Mother, to receive this Bread of Heaven with greater care each day, with greater gratitude, with a love that never ceases to grow. Amen

Back to Contents

Addresses
On the 20th anniversary of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (January 10, 2005)

Filled with gratitude to God, we recall yesterday’s 20th anniversary of the decree Dei Servus, on January 9, 1985, by which the Congregation for Catholic Education officially established the Roman Academic Center of the Holy Cross, the original nucleus of the present university. The Roman sections of the University of Navarre’s schools of Theology and Canon Law had been established the previous October by my beloved and venerated predecessor, then Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo, thus bringing to reality a long cherished dream of St. Josemaría Escrivá.

Also today the fourteen volumes of the acts of the congress commemorating the centennial of St. Josemaría’s birth will be presented, which was held three years ago, just a few months before his canonization. The University’s Rector will describe the contents of these acts in a few moments. I will therefore limit myself to some brief reflections on the anniversary itself.

No one can be unmindful of the fact that the formation of all the faithful in the Church, a formation adequate to each one’s vocation and mission, constitutes one of the principal needs of the People of God in our day and age. The concern that Opus Dei’s holy founder had for formation, particularly that of priests, gave rise to his wish to establish a center of ecclesiastical studies in Rome—as well as so many other initiatives throughout the world.

As Msgr. del Portillo said in 1985 in a message to the University of Navarre’s School of Theology, the University “seeks to respond to the repeated calls by his Holiness John Paul II that theologians and canonists, and all the other professionals in the ecclesiastical sciences, carry out their work with loyalty to the doctrine of Jesus Christ as faithfully transmitted by the magisterium, while striving to respond to the problems and needs of contemporary culture.”[1] Penetrating more and more deeply into the knowledge of God and man in order to attain a unity of personal life and
participate in the evangelizing work of the Church by entering into a dialogue with the men and women of our times: this is the exciting panorama that is presented before us and that calls for a daily and constant effort on our part.

It is important never to forget that all the activities of the ecclesiastical centers of higher studies should have as their final goal the building up of the Church and the good of the faithful. This is the specific contribution of the ecclesiastical universities and schools to the Church’s evangelizing mission, since God needs apostles who know how to transmit to others what they have first assimilated in study and prayer, and striven to live in an exemplary manner.[2]

In the face of the world’s current situation, which we always view with objectivity and optimism, there is a clear need to help foster a new culture and a new legislation that respond fully to God’s plan for creation and to human dignity. This is truly an ambitious goal, but to attain it we count on God’s help. It is a mission that falls to all the people of God without exception, including the specific contribution of those who cultivate both the sacred and the secular sciences. For this contribution to bear fruit two things are required: in first place, there must be an ever higher level of scientific competence; and in second place, there is a need to foster interdisciplinary work, without creating watertight compartments, so that each branch of research is in communication with the others and contributes to the common task. I feel the need to stress the importance today (really it has always been necessary, but perhaps especially so now) of this interdisciplinary aspect, that is, for the sciences of the spirit and the positive sciences to move forward together, firmly directed to a search for the truth in all its aspects, a truth that sets us free (cf. Jn 8:32) and that find its fullness in Christ, because only he is “the way, the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6).

With God’s help—for Him be all the glory!—the little seed sown twenty years ago with the setting up of the Roman Academic Center of the Holy Cross has taken firm root thanks to the concern of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo and the efforts of the teachers, administrative personnel, students and so many benefactors who have contributed to the growth of what is
today, by the title granted by John Paul II on July 15, 1998, the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.

The various names that our center of ecclesiastical studies has had over the course of these twenty years of existence correspond to the various stages of its canonical configuration: at first, as we have already mentioned, it was called the Roman Academic Center of the Holy Cross; later (after January 9, 1990), the Roman Athenaeum of the Holy Cross; still later (after June 26, 1995), the Pontifical Athenaeum of the Holy Cross; and finally (since July 15, 1998), the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. I only wish to emphasize that the name “Roman” with which our University was born, is indicative of its fundamental aspiration, which it should always preserve, because “Romanness” means above all close union with the Holy Father and full fidelity to his teachings, the universality of a yearning that extends to all parts of the world, and charity and understanding towards all mankind.

Two decades after its first steps, my thoughts go in first place to God, to thank him for the countless benefits that he has poured down on us and the abundant fruit that we have gathered up till now. Thanks also to our Lady, Sedes Sapientiae, to whose maternal care we have entrusted each of our steps. Thanks also to St. Josemaría, who, above all with his prayer, set down the foundations upon which the university has risen.

Thanks also to our Supreme Pontiff, John Paul II, whom we have seen spending himself day after day for the good of the Church without concern for himself. The Pope has so often expressed his concern for fostering a truly human culture and has followed with his fatherly gaze the development of our university since its birth.

I would also like to take this occasion to express my deep personal thanks and that of all involved in the University to Cardinal Jose Saraiva Martins, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, who is present with us today, for the decisive role that he played as Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education, in granting the title of Pontifical University to our institution.

Looking to the future, we are all aware that we must persevere in our efforts to attain ever more fully the ends that characterize the university. To
do so, we count on the help of God who will never fail us if, on our part, we seek to respond with generosity.

Yesterday marked the end of the liturgical time of Christmas, and in our hearts there remain indelibly sculpted the figures from the nativity scene—with the Child Jesus, Mary Most Holy and St. Joseph at the center—who represent in an ineffable way God’s love for us. Let us continue now on the path that the Holy Father John Paul II set for us when he dedicated this year to the Holy Eucharist: Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross is renewed each day on our altars *pro mundi vita*, for the life of the world. He is present in our midst and remains in the tabernacle so that we may turn to him with confidence and so that, knowing and loving him to the point of identifying ourselves with him, we may sanctify our ordinary work of seeking and transmitting the truth and learn to be witnesses to that truth at every moment in our lives, in order to bring all men and women his message of peace, truth and love.


Back to Contents

At the 29th symposium on the Theology of the Priesthood at the School of Theology of Northern Spain (March 4, 2005)

*At the 29th International Symposium on the Theology of the Priesthood at the School of Theology of Northern Spain*  

**THE SAINT OF ORDINARY LIFE**  

*St. Josemaría Escrivá in the Church’s magisterium*
October 6, 2002 was an unforgettable day in Rome. Before a huge crowd of faithful gathered in St. Peter’s Square, Pope John Paul II proclaimed Josemaría Escrivá a saint. The Pope has left an affectionate testimonial to this day in a recently published book. “In October 2002,” he recalls, “I had the joy of canonizing Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, the founder of Opus Dei, a zealous priest, and an apostle to the laity in modern times.”[1]

These words provide me with the connecting thread for my contribution to this symposium, to which the authorities of the Theological School of Northern Spain have so kindly invited me. I would like to express my heart-felt gratitude for this opportunity to speak about St. Josemaría and his teachings. Some of you here had a chance to meet him and deal with him personally; in my case, this was true over a period of almost three decades.

I don’t want to begin, however, with my personal testimony or that of others who were witnesses to his life, but rather with a source of a higher order: the homilies and addresses of the Roman Pontiff, as well as other documents of the Holy See, that refer to the person and teachings of this holy priest whom God has given to the Church.[2]

Moreover, this city we are now in has seen his footsteps and framed a period of his life, usually referred to by his biographers as “the Burgos epoch.”[3] In this ancient city, over a number of months, St. Josemaría celebrated Holy Mass every day. He would unite himself intensely to the Sacrifice of the Cross, embracing the arduous privations those years brought with them and giving himself generously in prayer and penance. Here he finished writing The Way, and did research for his doctoral thesis in canon law, entitled La Abadesa de las Huelgas. Along the streets of Burgos he frequently chatted with those who sought him out to receive spiritual direction. “We used to go,” he recalled years later, “for walks along the banks of the River Arlanzon. There we would talk and, while they opened their hearts, I tried to guide them with suitable advice to confirm their decisions or open up new horizons in their interior lives. And always, with God’s help, I would do all I could to encourage them and stir up in their hearts the desire to live genuinely Christian lives. Our walks would
sometimes take us as far as the monastery of Las Huelgas. On other occasions we would find our way to the cathedral.

“I used to enjoy climbing up the cathedral towers to get a close view of the ornamentation at the top, a veritable lacework of stone that must have been the result of very patient and laborious craftsmanship. As I chatted with the young men who accompanied me I used to point out that none of the beauty of this work could be seen from below. To give them a material lesson in what I had been previously explaining to them, I would say: ‘This is God’s work, this is working for God! To finish your personal work perfectly, with all the beauty and exquisite refinement of this tracery stonework.’ Seeing it, my companions would understand that all the work we had seen was a prayer, a loving dialogue with God. The men who spent their energies there were quite aware that no one at street level could appreciate their efforts. Their work was for God alone. Now do you see how our professional work can bring us close to our Lord? Do your job as those medieval stonemasons did theirs, and your work too will be *operatio Dei*, a human work with a divine substance and finish.”[4]

At other times, walking alone along the sunlit paths of this Castilian land, his soul would expand in contemplative prayer, as we see in a letter to one of the first faithful of Opus Dei: “This morning, on my way to Las Huelgas monastery to do my prayer, I discovered a ‘new Mediterranean’: the holy Wound in my Lord’s right hand. There I was all day long kissing and adoring. How truly lovable is our God’s Holy Humanity! Pray that he grant me his Love to completely purify all my other affections. It’s not enough to say, ‘heart on the Cross!’ If one of Christ’s wounds cleanses, heals, soothes, strengthens, enkindles and enraptures, what won’t the five do, open on the wood? Heart on the Cross! My Jesus, what more could I ask for? I realize that if I continue contemplating in this way (St. Joseph, my father and lord, is the one who led me there, after I asked him to enkindle me), I’ll end up crazier than ever. Try it out yourself!”[5]

St. Josemaría taught a great number of souls to take up the path of contemplation in ordinary life, a path he himself tread, guided by the Holy Spirit. The Decree of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints on his heroic virtue calls him “a traveling contemplative.”[6] The Roman Pontiff has pointed to this aspect of his spirit on a number of occasion; in the
canonization ceremony, he refers to him as “the saint of ordinary life,” [7] which I have chosen as the title for my talk.

First of all, I want to consider here the spiritual and pastoral features that have been most emphasized in the pontifical texts regarding St. Josemaría. Then I will look at some central characteristics of his contribution to the life and sanctity of the Church, as highlighted in those same texts. Finally, I will sketch some lines of theological reflection that are opened up there, and will finish with some considerations about the impact of St. Josemaría’s teachings on the present and future of the Church.

1. ST. JOSEMARÍA IN THE PONTIFICAL MAGISTERIUM

Some spiritual features emphasized in the pontifical documents

This holy priest always said that the foundation of his life was the sense of his divine filiation. “My life,” he said in one of his homilies, “led me to feel myself especially a son of God, and I have savored the joy of placing myself in the heart of my Father. (Throughout my entire life, I have tried to find my unfailing support in this joyful reality.)”[8] John Paul II, in his homily during the beatification ceremony in 1992, stressed: “His spiritual and apostolic life was based on knowing himself, by faith, to be a son of God in Christ. His love for our Lord was nourished by this faith, as was his apostolic impetus, his constant joy, even in the great trials and difficulties that he had to overcome. ‘To have the cross is to find happiness, joy,’ he tells us in one of his meditations; ‘to have the cross is to identify oneself with Christ, it is to be Christ and, therefore, to be a son of God.’”[9] As the Pope so clearly states, the deep filial attitude that informed St. Josemaría’s thoughts and affections was shown in his daily embrace of Christ’s Cross.

Ten years later, in the canonization ceremony, John Paul II once again emphasizes the same point: “Certainly there will be no lack of misunderstandings and difficulties for anyone who tries to faithfully serve the cause of the Gospel. Our Lord purifies and shapes with the mysterious power of the Cross whoever he calls to follow him; ‘but in the Cross,’ the new saint repeated, ‘we find light, peace and joy: Lux in Cruce, requies in Cruce, gaudium in Cruce!’”[10]

St. Josemaría prayed on a certain occasion, as the Pope reminds us in his 1992 homily: “You made me understand, Lord, that to have the cross is
to find happiness, joy. And the reason, as I see more clearly than ever, is this: to have the cross, is to be identified with Christ; it is to be Christ, and, therefore, to be a son of God."[11] These words present us with a very well defined self-portrait. Commenting on them in 1993, in the framework of a theological symposium on the teachings of Opus Dei’s founder, the Servant of God Alvaro del Portillo, a privileged witness to his holy conduct every day for 40 years, expressly noted the inseparability, in the spirit of St. Josemaría, between his sense of divine filiation and the Cross. “Blessed Josemaría,” wrote his first successor, “during his whole life followed this path of union between filiation and the Cross, the royal road of Christ, in an ever more intense way. His spiritual teachings, which give voice to his own experience of God and his divine plans, express the living certainty that the Cross is precisely the path that must be traveled by anyone who wishes to follow Christ in all circumstances.”[12]

I have chosen to stress first the close link between a deep sense of divine filiation and identification with the Cross because it lies at the heart of St. Josemaría’s entire spiritual life. All the other characteristics of his human and priestly figure are based on it.[13] It is from this union that his life of prayer arose and “that assiduous unitive experience”[14] of which one of the first pontifical documents alluding to him spoke, with the following illustration: “Constantly immersed in the contemplation of the Trinitarian mystery, he used the sense of divine filiation in Christ as the basis of a spirituality in which the strength of faith and the apostolic daring of charity are harmoniously combined with filial abandonment into the hands of his Father, God.”[15]

St. Josemaría Escrivá left behind him the example of a contemplative soul in the midst of everyday activities, showing us that it is possible, as the same document emphasizes, “to attain the heights of union with God amid the hustle and bustle of daily life and in intense persevering work.”[16] In words of John Paul II, “he was able to attain the peak of contemplation with continuous prayer, constant mortification, the daily effort of a work fulfilled with exemplary docility to the motions of the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of ‘serving the Church as the Church wished to be served.’”[17]

A lover of Jesus Christ, this priest, as the Church’s magisterium also points out, was “a passionate lover of the Eucharist.”[18] In the current Year
of the Eucharist that the Church is celebrating at the wish of the Holy Father, it is especially pleasing to recall that the daily life of countless men and women throughout the world has shown the deep influence of St. Josemaría’s Eucharistic love: “Be a Eucharistic soul!” he wrote. “If the center around which your thoughts and hopes turn is the Tabernacle, then, my child, how abundant the fruits of your sanctity and apostolate will be!”[19]

Many ordinary Christians today, following the footsteps of the founder of Opus Dei, are imbuing homes, offices, factories, universities and the whole field of honest human work with a deep love for the Eucharist. They see the Holy Mass as “the center and root of their spiritual life,”[20] while striving during the day to keep their hearts set on our Lord with an eagerness “to work as He worked and to love as He loved,”[21] to offer all their work “for Christ, with Him and in Him,”[22] giving glory to God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

**Pastoral features**

The spiritual features mentioned above are inseparable from other, more explicitly pastoral ones also emphasized by the Magisterium.

The central characteristic of his pastoral mission was the proclamation, from 1928 right to the end of his life, of the universal call to sanctity, and of sanctification in ordinary life. As the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints observed, St. Josemaría must be counted among the “witnesses to holiness whom the life-giving Spirit has inspired in every age...by the extraordinary vigor—prophetically anticipating the Second Vatican Council—with which he sought, from the very start of his ministry, to address to all Christians the Gospel’s call: ‘Your duty is to sanctify yourself. Yes, even you...To everyone, without exception, our Lord said: “Be perfect, as my heavenly Father is perfect” ’(*The Way*, no. 291).”[23]

A well-known homily by St. Josemaría has been published under the title *Passionately Loving the World.*[24] Christian love for the world, in the spirit of Opus Dei’s founder, has an essentially supernatural dimension, since it has as its purpose, as John Paul II said, that of “elevating the world to God and transforming it from within.”[25] A man with a thirst for God and a great apostle,[26] “St. Josemaría,” the Pope stated, “was profoundly
convinced that the Christian life contained a mission and an apostolate: we are in the world to save it with Christ. He passionately loved the world, with a 'redemptive love.'”[27]

A passionate love for the salvation of the world means, first of all, a passionate love for the salvation of every man and woman, created in the image of God and called to be in Christ God’s sons and daughters.[28] As another papal document says: “Josemaría Escrivá was a saint of great humanity. All who dealt with him, of whatever culture or social condition, saw him as a father, totally dedicated to service to others, because he was convinced that each soul is a marvelous treasure; indeed, ‘Every single person is worth all the blood of Christ.’”[29]

The affirmation of St. Josemaría cited by the Pope was one of the central features of his permanent priestly zeal. In a homily encouraging priests to be generous in the exercise of their pastoral ministry, we read: “God’s grace comes to the aid of every soul, for every person needs specific, personal help. You cannot treat souls en masse! It is not right to offend human dignity and the dignity of the sons of God by not going personally to the aid of each one. The priest must do just that, with the humility of a man who knows he is only an instrument, the vehicle of Christ’s love. For every soul is a wonderful treasure; every man is unique and irreplaceable. Every single person is worth all the blood of Christ.”[30]

The origins of Opus Dei are closely tied to the founder’s pastoral ministry among the poor and sick of Madrid. In his priestly soul there burned intensely, with the fire of charity, a passion for justice, which means a passion for the dignity, defense and betterment of each human life, created in the image of God. “A man or a society that does not react to suffering and injustice and makes no effort to alleviate them,” he wrote, “is still distant from the love of Christ’s heart. While Christians enjoy the fullest freedom in finding and applying various solutions to these problems, they should be united in having one and the same desire to serve mankind. Otherwise their Christianity will not be the word and life of Jesus; it will be a fraud, a deception of God and man.”[31]

The life of St. Josemaría was entirely marked by a zealous service that was shown, in the words of John Paul II, “in his dedication to his priestly ministry and in the magnanimity with which he brought into being so
many works of evangelization and of social development for the most poor.”[32] The decree on his heroic virtue also points to the same reality: “With tireless charity and active hope he guided the development of Opus Dei throughout the world, promoting a vast mobilization of lay people who became aware of their personal responsibility in the Church’s mission. He gave life to numerous initiatives in the work of evangelization and human welfare.”[33]

Many of the initiatives given life by his efforts are perhaps little known to public opinion, because the spirit of St. Josemaría included the deep desire to pass unnoticed so that only God would shine forth. He never sought human recognition, striving to ensure that Catholics act on their own personal responsibility, with apostolic zeal and love for the Church. At the same time, while seeking to disappear, he knew how to work in deed and in truth.[34] As the above-mentioned decree on his virtues notes, during his whole life “he devoted himself tirelessly to the task of forming the members of Opus Dei—priests and laity, men and women—so that they would acquire a solid spiritual life, an exemplary adherence to the Church’s magisterium, and an ardent zeal for souls expressed in a personal commitment to carry out a far-reaching apostolate.”[35]

Teacher of Christian life

Another characteristic emphasized in the pontifical texts is found in the apostolic letter of beatification: St. Josemaría was “an authentic teacher of Christian life.”[36]

More recently, during the canonization, John Paul II once again emphasized that same idea in different terms. “St. Josemaría was a master in the practice of prayer, which he considered to be an extraordinary ‘weapon’ to redeem the world. He always recommended: ‘In the first place prayer; then expiation; in the third place, but very much in “third place,” action’ (The Way, 82). It is not a paradox, but a perennial truth: the fruitfulness of the apostolate lies above all in prayer and in intense and constant sacramental life. This, in essence, is the secret of holiness and the true success of the saints.”[37]

Many men and women have discovered this “secret of holiness” through the founder of Opus Dei. “His life and his message,” recalls the
Decree of Canonization, “have taught countless Christian faithful, particularly lay people, engaged in the most varied professions, to transform their ordinary work into prayer, service of others, and a path towards holiness.”[38] Thus a great number of people have learned the dignity of their baptismal vocation integrated fully into their daily existence, and have strengthened their love for the Church and their joyful service of her evangelizing mission.

The same can be said, with the appropriate differences, of so many secular priests throughout the world who have discovered in St. Josemaría, as the Pope said, “a shining example of concern for priestly holiness and brotherhood.”[39]

*The “saint of ordinary life”*

I want to close this section by looking at some words of John Paul II on the day after the canonization. “St. Josemaría,” said the Pope, “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.”[40]

These words were greeted with spontaneous applause from the multitude of faithful filling St. Peter’s Square, in the Audience the Pope granted on the day after the canonization. Many of them had learned from St. Josemaría to value the beauty and greatness of everyday life, when lived in the light of Christ. For them, and for so many other faithful throughout the whole world, the words of the Pope’s talk expressed the experience of their own struggle, striving to carry out their everyday activities with that spirit.

The same idea was solemnly included in the Decree of Canonization in the following terms: “He framed this program of Christian holiness in the context of one’s normal daily duties and tasks, for which reason he may rightly be called ‘the saint of ordinary life.’ Indeed, his life and message have taught countless Christian faithful, particularly lay people, engaged in
the most varied professions, to transform their ordinary work into prayer, service of others, and a path towards holiness.”[41]

We can use these words to continue delving deeper into the founder of Opus Dei’s teachings and life, always following the thread of the interventions of the pontifical magisterium.

II. A SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTION TO THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

The Holy Spirit builds up the Church with the cooperation of men and women. In the case of St. Josemaría, his specific contribution to the Church’s mission was his integral faithfulness to the call he received to found Opus Dei. Thus one can read in the Decree of Canonization: “On October 2nd, 1928, the Lord gave him the light to see what He had planned for him: on that day, he founded Opus Dei. Thus, a new pathway of life was opened in the Church, so that all men and women—without distinction of race, class or culture—might realize that they are called to the fullness of charity and to the apostolate, each in their own place in the world. Indeed, the ordinary circumstances of life are the place where the Lord calls us and the hinge upon which our loving response turns.”[42]

From that moment on, St. Josemaría’s entire life was placed at the service of the mission God had entrusted to him, for the good of the Church and of all mankind.

“The importance of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá,” the Pope pointed out to participants in a theological conference celebrated in the context of the beatification of the founder of Opus Dei, “does not derive solely from his message, but also from the apostolic reality that he began. In the sixty-five years that have gone by since its foundation, the Prelature of Opus Dei, an indissoluble unity of priests and laity, has contributed to making the saving announcement of Christ resound in many environments. As Pastor of the universal Church I hear echoes of that apostolate, in which I encourage all the members of the Prelature of Opus Dei to continue in, in faithful continuity with the spirit of service to the Church which always inspired the life of its founder.”[43]

The Holy Father’s words invite us to consider the figure of St. Josemaría in the context of “the apostolic reality that he began,” Opus Dei.
As the Roman Pontiff pointed out in the Apostolic brief of beatification: “In faithful fulfillment of the task entrusted to him, he brought priests and lay people, men and women to discover that it is in their daily occupations that they can live out their co-responsibility in the Church’s mission, with a full dedication to God in the ordinary circumstances of everyday life. ‘The divine paths of the world have been opened up,’ he exclaimed (Christ Is Passing By, no. 21). He did not restrict himself simply to describing the pastoral opportunities that were opened up by this evangelizing effort, but rather went on to establish it as a stable and organic part of the Church.”

It is necessary, therefore, to study the message of St. Josemaría alongside the theological and pastoral reality of Opus Dei. The spiritual and doctrinal message is shown through the nature and life of the Prelature, which in turn find its theological and pastoral identity in that divine message. This reality is reflected in some words of the Apostolic Constitution Ut sit, by which John Paul raised Opus Dei to the status of a Personal Prelature. “From its beginnings, this Institution [Opus Dei] has in fact striven, not only to illuminate with new lights the mission of the laity in the Church and in society, but also to put it into practice; it has also endeavored to put into practice the teaching of the universal call to sanctity, and to promote at all levels of society the sanctification of ordinary work, and by means of ordinary work. Furthermore, through the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, it has helped diocesan priests to live this teaching, in the exercise of their sacred ministry.”

At the service of the whole Church

“The history of the Church and of the world,” John Paul II pointed out in 1993, “develops under the action of the Holy Spirit, who, with the free collaboration of men, directs all events towards the realization of the salvific plan of God the Father. An evident manifestation of this is the constant presence throughout history of men and women, faithful to Christ, who illuminate the various epochs of history with their life and their message. Among these distinguished figures, an outstanding place is held by Blessed Josemaría Escrivá.”

God acts in history in many ways, and in a special way through his saints. These faithful servants bring to the Church, above all, their love for God, materialized, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in their lives and
works. All of them contribute to “letting everyone know better the love of God,” or what is the same, “letting them know Christ,” announcing “to this world to which we belong and in which we live, the message—old and at the same time new—of the Gospel,” as St. Josemaría wrote. Each saint fulfills that task in accord with the gifts received, which have forged his personal configuration with our Lord and established the outlines of his vocation and mission in the Church.

The testimony of the saints, a mirror in which Christ is reflected, has always had a strong impact on the Church’s history and action, and opened up paths for theology. “The Spirit,” as Vatican II so marvelously says, “dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful as in a temple (cf. 1 Cor 3:16, 6:19). In them he prays and bears witness to their adoptive sonship (cf Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15-16, and 26). Guiding the Church in the way of all truth (cf Jn 16:13) and unifying her in communion and in the works of ministry, he bestows upon her varied hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way he directs her, and he adorns her with his fruits (cf Eph 4:11-12; 1 Cor 12:4; Gal 5:22). By the power of the Gospel he permits the Church to keep the freshness of youth. Constantly he renews her and leads her to perfect union with her Spouse.”

Nurtured by the warmth and light of the Paraclete’s action, there arises in the Church the mutual influence between holiness and theology, both essentially united to the magisterium. As another conciliar passage points out, “the Tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress in the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit. There is a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on. This comes about in various ways. It comes through contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their heart. It comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience. And it comes from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth.”

The influence of the saints in the assimilation of the doctrine of the faith in each epoch, and consequently in the development of theology, is decisive for the life of the Church. This was well expressed by the International Theological Commission in a 1988 document, speaking of the Church’s living tradition, which stressed both the perennial nature of
revealed truth and its ongoing understanding at each moment under the
guidance of the Holy Spirit. This ongoing grasping of revelation “is not a
purely intellectual process, nor solely an existential or sociological one. Nor
does it consist solely in a more exact definition of specific concepts, of
logical consequences, or of mere changes of formulas or new formulations.
It is suggested, sustained and directed by the acting of the Holy Spirit in
the Church and in the hearts of specific Christians. It takes place in the
light of faith, and is driven by the charisms and testimony of the saints that
the Spirit of God gives to the Church at particular times.”[51]

The name of Josemaría Escrivá will forever be associated with the
proclamation of the universal call to sanctity, and the application of that
teaching in a specific message of sanctification by means of ordinary
professional work. “With supernatural intuition,” the Pope said during the
beatification ceremony, “he untiringly preached the universal call to
holiness and apostolate. Christ calls everyone to become holy in the realities
of everyday life. Hence, work too is a means of personal holiness and
apostolate, when it is done in union with Jesus Christ, for the Son of God,
in the Incarnation, has united himself in a certain way with the whole
reality of man and with the whole of creation.”[52] These words situate us
before a central element of the teaching of St. Josemaría, who, as John Paul
II pointed out at another moment, “can be a source of inspiration for
theological thought. Indeed, theological research, which carries out an
indispensable mediation in the relations between faith and culture,
progresses and is enriched by going to the source of the Gospel, under the
stimulus of the experience of the great witnesses of Christianity. And
Blessed Josemaría is, undoubtedly, one of these.”[53]

III. SOME LINES OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Let us go on now to look at some perspectives that open up for
theological reflection.

An idea untiringly repeated by St. Josemaría, and especially
representative of his teaching, can be summed up in these words: “I have
repeated it constantly, since the day that our Lord chose for the foundation
of Opus Dei! We have to sanctify our ordinary work, we have to sanctify
others through the exercise of the particular profession that is proper to
each of us, in our own particular state in life.”[54] I cannot stop now to
comment in detail on these rich words, but will limit myself to drawing out a few important aspects.

In the first place, the message presented by St. Josemaría is not the result of his own initiative, but of God’s doing, and is intimately linked to the origin of Opus Dei, born by “divine inspiration,” as we read in the Apostolic constitution *Ut Sit.*[^55] In the second place, the hinge of spiritual life in the teaching of St. Josemaría is found in the sanctification of the ordinary work of the sons and daughters of God, seen as a sanctifiable and sanctifying activity, both of oneself and of others, and therefore with an essential apostolic dimension.

In words of John Paul II from 1993, St. Josemaría “invited men and women of the most diverse social conditions to sanctify themselves and to cooperate in the sanctification of others, by sanctifying ordinary life.”[^56] The reference to sanctifying work is broadened, without diluting the essence of the message, to sanctifying ordinary life, which also includes one’s family and social duties. “For over thirty years,” said the founder in 1957, “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.”[^57] As the Pontifical Brief of beatification affirms: “In faithful fulfillment of the task entrusted to him, he brought priests and lay people, men and women, to discover that it is in their daily occupations that they can live out their co-responsibility in the Church’s mission, with a full dedication to God in the ordinary circumstances of everyday life.”[^58]

Let us now turn our attention to three central aspects: the sanctity of the Christian in ordinary life, the Christianization of the world ab intra, from within, through the sanctification of professional work, and the unity of Christian life.

*The sanctity of the Christian in everyday life*

In respect to the first point, the Pope emphasizes that St. Josemaría “put at the center of his preaching the truth that all of the baptized are called to the fullness of charity, and that the most immediate way to attain this common goal is found in the normality of everyday life.”[^59] This daily
normality involves deeds that are repeated day after day in the habitual relationship with family members or persons from one's professional and social environment. God wants to enter into a communion of love with each of his children in the context of the occupations of each day, in the ordinary context in which their life unfolds,” said the Roman Pontiff. The theological and spiritual consequences are evident. As John Paul II continues, “daily activities present themselves as a valuable means of union with Christ, capable of being transformed into an environment and means of sanctification, into a terrain for exercising the virtues and into a dialogue of love that is carried out in deeds. The spirit of prayer transfigures one's work and thus enables one to remain in contemplation of God, even while carrying out various occupations.”

That daily activities can serve not only as the place for our sanctification but also as the “matter” to be sanctified is a truth that is deeply illuminated by the light of the mystery of the Word Incarnate. “I never tire of repeating,” wrote St. Josemaría, “that the world can be made holy. We Christians have a special role to play in sanctifying it. We are to cleanse it from the occasions of sin with which we human beings have soiled it. We are to offer it to our Lord as a spiritual offering, presented to him and made acceptable through his grace and with our efforts. Strictly speaking, we cannot say that there is any noble human reality that does not have a supernatural dimension, for the divine Word has taken on a complete human nature and consecrated the world with his presence and with the work of his hands. The great mission that we have received in baptism is to redeem the world with Christ.”

The Christian’s ordinary activities, when he is united to Christ by grace, and he seeks to join his daily work to the work carried out by Christ, become for him a “sanctifiable and sanctifying reality.” “Since Christ took it into his hands, work has become for us a redeemed and redemptive reality. Not only is it the background of man’s life, it is a means and path of holiness.”

“For every one of the baptized who wants to faithfully follow Christ,” emphasizes the Brief of Beatification, “the factory, the office, the library, the laboratory, the workshop and the home can be transformed into places of meeting with the Lord, who chose to live a hidden life for thirty years.
Can anyone doubt that the time that Jesus spent in Nazareth formed part of his salvific mission? Therefore for us too daily life, apparently gray, with its monotony made up of gestures that seem to always be repeated in the same way, can acquire the relief of a supernatural dimension and thus be transfigured.”[66] “The founder of Opus Dei has reminded us that the universality of the call to fullness of union with Christ means also that any human activity can be converted into a place of meeting with God.”[67] As St. Josemaría expressed this deep apostolic reality: “the divine paths of the earth have been opened up.”[68]

This spirit enables one to fully carry out today the mission of “making the Christian spirit a vital energizing force in the temporal sphere,”[69] as the Second Vatican Council urged, a topic to which we will now turn.

Sanctification of the world “from within,” through sanctification of work

With theological depth, St. Josemaría wrote: “There is no way to separate interior life from apostolate, just as there is no way to separate Christ, the God man, from his role as redeemer. The Word chose to become flesh in order to save men, to make them one with him. This is why he came to the world; he came down from heaven ‘for us men and for our salvation,’ as we say in the creed.

“For a Christian apostolate is something instinctive. It is not something added onto his daily activities and his professional work from the outside. I have repeated it constantly, since the day that our Lord chose for the foundation of Opus Dei! We have to sanctify our ordinary work, we have to sanctify others through the exercise of the particular profession that is proper to each of us, in our own particular state in life.”[70]

This teaching on the interconnection between holiness, work and the Christian building up of the world has now become, by God’s grace, the life of a great number of Christians. “Work therefore takes on,” says John Paul II, “a central role in Christian sanctification and apostolate. The special connection between the dynamism of human actions and supernatural grace shows clearly how the supernatural life of union with Christ occupies a central place, while it also leads the faithful to make a determined effort to transform the world.”[71]
The spirit of Opus Dei’s founder contains an implicit theology of work, imbued with its own characteristics. The Decree of Canonization points out some of them: “Josemaría Escrivá teaches that work, if it is carried out with the help of God’s life-giving grace, is a wellspring of inexhaustible fruitfulness. It is a means of lifting up the Cross and placing it on the summit of all human activity, so that the world is transformed, as it were, from within, according to the Spirit of Christ, and reconciled with God.”

The magisterial text just cited implicitly alludes to a specific event that took place in Madrid on August 7, 1931. God made St. Josemaría understand, while celebrating Holy Mass on that day, then the feast of the Transfiguration, that the work of the children of God had to be an instrument to raise the Cross of Christ to the summit of all human activities, thus contributing, from the point of view of temporal realities, to the exaltation of Christ and the drawing of all created realities to him. “There came to my mind, with extraordinary force and clarity,” as St. Josemaría later recalled, “that verse from Scripture: et si exaltatus fuero a terra, omni traham ad meipsum (Jn 12:32)...And I understood that it would be the men and women of God who would raise the Cross with the teachings of Christ to the summit of all human activities... And I saw our Lord triumph, drawing everything to himself.”

The theology of work and the theology of the Cross mutually illumine one another in grasping the perennial timeliness of Christ’s redemptive action, to which he has wished to associate Christians through the Gift of the Spirit, calling them to transform the earth with the power of their faith and love. “This message” as John Paul II said on one occasion, “has abundant and fruitful implications for the evangelizing mission of the Church. It fosters the Christianization of the world ‘from within,’ showing there can be no conflict between the divine law and the demands of genuine human progress. This saintly priest taught that Christ must be the apex of all human activity (cf. Jn 12:32).”

In every time and place, but especially now when many seem to harbor the prejudice of seeing an irremediable conflict between Christian faith and contemporary culture, the disciples of Christ, as citizens immersed in social and cultural realities, have a particular obligation to make the voice of the
Gospel heard. St. Josemaría reminds us that being a Christian brings with it a mission. “Being a Christian is not something incidental; it is a divine reality that takes root deep in our life. It gives us a clear vision and strengthens our will to act as God wants.”[76]

Our responsibility as Christ’s disciples is great. But the power of the children of God to defend the truth with charity (cf Eph 4:11) is also great, in this stage of history so much in need of Christian life and vigor. “What illuminates our conscience is faith in Christ, who has died and risen and is present in every moment of life. Faith moves us to play our full part in the changing situations and in the problems of human history. In this history, which began with the creation of the world and will reach its fulfilment at the end of time, the Christian is no expatriate. He is a citizen of the city of men, and his soul longs for God. While still on earth he has glimpses of God’s love and comes to recognize it as the goal to which all men on earth are called.”[77]

In the 1990 Decree by the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints on the heroic virtue of Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, we find a synthesis of all that we have just said: “Regnare Christum volumus! ‘We want Christ to reign’ Here was Monsignor Escrivá’s program: ‘to place Christ at the summit of all human activities.’ His service to the Church helped initiate an upward movement toward God of men and women engaged in temporal affairs in all life’s sectors and professions.”[78]

* A theology of unity of life

From the moment he received the seed of Opus Dei in October 1928, Josemaría Escrivá began to multiply his pastoral activity among people of all conditions. In spite of the difficulties in beginning, he soon found himself surrounded by a group of priests and laity, men and women, students and professionals, healthy and sick, for whom the example of his love for God and the supernatural vigor of his teachings were the path that led them to discover the ideal of Christian sanctity and apostolate in the fulfillment of their professional, family and social duties. They discovered the ideal of living for the glory of God without leaving their own place in the world, carrying with a *priestly spirit*[79] the gentle burden of the Cross,[80] in order to co-redeem with Christ.
By fostering this ideal among Christian faithful of all walks of life, St. Josemaría contributed to forging in the contemporary Church a widespread experience of contemplative life in the midst of daily activities, and an extensive awareness of personal apostolic responsibility. “Christ awaits us,” he insists in one of his homilies. “We are ‘citizens of heaven’ (Phil 3:20), and at the same time fully-fledged citizens of this earth....Let us persevere in the service of our God, and we will see the growth in numbers and in sanctity of this Christian army of peace, of this co-redeeming people. Let us be contemplative souls, carrying on an unceasing dialogue with our Lord at all hours—from the first thought of the day to the last, turning our heart constantly toward our Lord Jesus Christ, going to him through our Mother, Holy Mary, and through him to the Father and the Holy Spirit.”[81]

To grasp more deeply the broad pastoral phenomenon God has brought forth in the Church through St. Josemaría, we need to consider the concept of unity of life, so frequent in his teaching.[82] The Decree of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints on his heroic virtues refers at length to the importance of this concept in his teaching, placing it in its theological context. “Many are the paths to Christian holiness,” we read in the document. “The path marked out and followed by the Servant of God reveals with special clarity the radical nature of the baptismal vocation. His vivid perception of the mystery of the incarnation made him see how supernatural life penetrates all human realities in the heart of a person reborn in Christ. These realities thus become the setting for holiness and the means to that goal. From the late 1920’s onward the Servant of God was a true pioneer of the ‘intrinsic unity of Christian life,’ proclaiming the fullness of a contemplative life ‘in the middle of the street,’ and calling all the faithful to take an active part in the apostolates of the Church from the place each one occupies in the world.”[83]

As St. Josemaría insisted: “There is no clash, no opposition, between serving God and serving men; between the exercise of our civic rights and duties and our religious ones; between the commitment to build up and improve the earthly city, and the conviction that we are passing through this world on our way to our heavenly homeland. Here too, as I never tire of repeating, we can see that unity of life which is an essential condition for those who are trying to sanctify themselves in the midst of the ordinary
situations of their work and of their family and social relationships. Jesus does not allow any division here.”[84]

John Paul II refers to the importance of unity of life for the evangelization of the contemporary world in a talk he gave in January 2002 to the participants in an international congress celebrated in Rome in honor of the centennial of Josemaría Escrivá’s birth. “Show by your daily efforts,” said the Pope, “that the love of Christ can animate the whole spectrum of existence, permitting one to attain the ideal of unity of life, which, as I reaffirmed in the post-synodal exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, is fundamental in the commitment to evangelize modern society (cf. no. 17). Prayer, work and apostolate, as you have learned from blessed Josemaría, meet and are fused together if one lives with this spirit. He always encouraged you to love the world passionately. And he added an important consideration: ‘Be men and women of the world, but do not be worldly men and women’ (The Way, no. 939). Thus you will succeed in avoiding the danger of being conditioned by a worldly mentality, which thinks of spiritual commitment as something which belongs exclusively to the private sphere and which, therefore, has no relevance in regard to public behavior.”[85]

“We are always doing the same thing,” wrote the founder of Opus Dei, “for everything can be prayer, all activity can and should lead us to God, nourish our intimate dealings with him, from morning to night. Any honorable work can be prayer and all prayerful work is apostolate. In this way the soul develops a unity of life, which is both simple and strong.”[86]

IV. THE IMPACT OF THE MESSAGE OF ST. JOSEMARÍA ON THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

We now come to the last topic of this paper.

The organizers of this symposium expressly suggested including some reflections on the impact of this priestly example on the future of the Church and society.

The same documentary sources that I have been citing—that is to say, the various pontifical documents on Josemaría Escrivá and his teachings—are to a great extent exhortations to follow his example and continue his mission. They contain, therefore, frequent allusions to the
importance of doing so both at the present moment and for the future of the Church and society.

*Permanent timeliness of the message*

The supernatural certainty and strength that God grants to those he has chosen, urging them to carry out the mission that he has entrusted to them, constitutes for them, although always in the semi-obscurity of faith, a firm basis for their dedication. This simple idea, easily confirmed in the biographies of the saints, came to my mind as I recalled the sureness with which St. Josemaría, entirely trusting in God, spoke in his *Apuntes intimos* of the projection of Opus Dei into the future: “Since it is entirely God’s and he wants it to last until the end, haste is not necessary. The Work began in 1928, on the feast of the holy guardian angels, and will continue forever. As long as people are wayfarers on earth, the Work will exist!”[87]

These deep supernatural convictions of the founder, grounded in faith, in hope and in his intense love for Jesus Christ, have by God’s mercy become a reality in so many corners of the world today. In the homily of the Mass of beatification, John Paul II pointed to “the relevance and transcendence of his spiritual message, deeply rooted in the Gospel, which is shown also by the fruitfulness with which God has blessed the life and work of Josemaría Escrivá. The land of his birth, Spain, is honored by this son of hers, an exemplary priest, who succeeded in opening up new apostolic horizons of missionary and evangelizing activity.”[88]

We find the relevance and transcendence of his message above all in the call to holiness in ordinary life, through sanctified and sanctifying work, carried out for the glory of God and at the service of all men and women. In 1966 a journalist from *The New York Times* asked Josemaría Escrivá: “How do you visualise the future of Opus Dei in the years to come?” In his answer, he states: “our aim is to collaborate with all other Christians in the great mission of being witnesses of Christ’s Gospel, to recall that it can vivify any human situation. The task that awaits us is immense. It is a sea without shores, for as long as there are men on earth, no matter how much the techniques of production may change, they will have some type of work that can be offered to God and sanctified. With God’s grace, Opus Dei wants to teach them how to make their work an act of service to all men of every condition, race and religion. Serving men in this way, they will serve
God."[89]

The entire fabric of daily life made up of one’s professional, family and social obligations has been converted, with Christ’s grace and following his example, into a place for finding God, into a path of holiness and apostolate, a path of freedom, self-giving and happiness. As one of the magisterial documents says: “This message of sanctification in and of earthly realities appears to be providentially relevant to the spiritual circumstances of our time, characterized by its concern to exalt human values yet also tending to an autonomy that divorces the world from God. Furthermore, by inviting Christians to seek union with God through their daily work—which confers dignity on human beings and is their lot as long as they exist on earth—his message is destined to endure as an inexhaustible source of spiritual light regardless of changing epochs and situations.”[90]

We also find explicit references to various aspects of the timeliness and perpetuity of St. Josemaría’s message in other documents of the magisterium. I will mention here four specific examples:

The first points to the contribution of St. Josemaría to the strengthening of the harmony between faith and culture. It is taken from an address John Paul II gave to those attending the canonization at the audience he granted on the following day, after the first Thanksgiving Mass. These are the Pope’s words: “The message of St. Josemaría impels the Christian to act in places where the future of society is being shaped. From the laity’s active presence in all the professions and at the most advanced frontiers of development there can only come a positive contribution to the strengthening of that harmony between faith and culture which is one of the greatest needs of our time.”[91]

The second quote refers to St. Josemaría’s insistence on the need to spread the message of the universal call to holiness, above all with the example of one’s own consistent Christian life. In his homily during the canonization ceremony, John Paul II said: “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 listening to the voice of the
Spirit. In this way, you will be the ‘salt of the earth’ (cf. Mt 5:13) and ‘your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven’ (Mt 5:16).”[92]

The third text points to the importance of St. Josemaría’s message for recovering the Christian meaning of created goods. “In a society in which an unbridled craving for material things turns them into idols and a cause of separation from God,” the Pope said on May 17, 1992, during the beatification ceremony, “the new Beatus reminds us that these same realities, creatures of God and of human industry, if used correctly for the glory of the Creator and the service of one’s brothers and sisters, can be a way for men and women to meet Christ. ‘All the things of the earth,’ he taught, ‘including the earthly and temporal activity of men and women, must be directed to God’ (Letter, March 19, 1954).”[93]

Finally, the Roman Pontiff emphasizes the importance of St. Josemaría’s teaching for building up the world in a Christian way. I cite here words from the homily at the Canonization Mass: “‘The ordinary life of a Christian who has faith,’ Josemaría Escrivá used to say, ‘when he works or rests, when he prays or sleeps, at all times, is a life in which God is always present’ (Meditation, 3 March 1954). This supernatural vision of life unfolds an extraordinarily rich horizon of salvific perspectives, because, even in the only apparently monotonous flow of normal earthly events, God comes close to us and we can cooperate with his plan of salvation. So it is easier to understand what the Second Vatican Council affirmed: ‘there is no question, then, of the Christian message inhibiting men from building up the world...on the contrary it is an incentive to do these very things’ (Gaudium et Spes, no. 34).”[94]

These four brief references point to broad perspectives for the Church’s mission in her service of mankind. The Church has “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16), as St. Paul says. She knows herself to be the bearer of the true meaning of man. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, she possesses a patrimony of theological and anthropological wisdom, vital for the happiness of each man and woman, and therefore she has the obligation to proclaim it for the good of all humanity. This proclamation will become truly efficacious if the Christian meaning of life is incarnated in daily life, through the example and the deeds of our Lord’s disciples. Since the divine
Word “has taken on a complete human nature and consecrated the world with his presence and with the work of his hands,”[95] the march of history calls repeatedly for the salt and light of Christian doctrine. The world needs the active leaven of Christian identity, incarnated in the daily life of all the faithful, and in a special way in the lay faithful, since it is they who more directly bear this specific mission. “A great task awaits us. We cannot remain inactive, because our Lord has told us clearly, ‘Trade till I come’ (Lk 19:13). As long as we are awaiting the Lord’s return, when he will come to take full possession of his kingdom, we cannot afford to relax. Spreading the kingdom of God isn’t only an official task of those members of the Church who represent Christ because they have received sacred powers from him. ‘Vos autem estis corpus Christi. You are also the body of Christ’ (1 Cor 12:27), says the Apostle, with a specific command to ‘trade’ right up to the end.”[96]

***

To conclude these reflections I will return to an idea that I alluded to earlier. I mentioned above that the principal contribution of St. Josemaría to the universal Church was his correspondence to God’s grace in founding Opus Dei, which he received in his soul as a divine seed, and his constant effort to ensure it set down firm roots. In his earthly life, it was not granted to him to see the canonical journey of the Work reach its final destination. Our Lord wanted this final sacrifice from him. But he led Opus Dei up to the threshold of the final stretch, and, as Divine Providence so disposed, he bequeathed to the hands of others, especially to his first successor, the Servant of God, Alvaro del Portillo, the task and the joy of reaching, with the Church’s blessing, the completion of that long path. By the Apostolic Constitution Ut Sit, on November 28, 1982, the Personal Prelature of Opus Dei was established, to which the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross is intrinsically united. It is only natural, then, when considering the permanent timeliness of the message of St. Josemaría in the Church and in society, that one’s attention be directed also to the permanent timeliness of the Prelature’s service to the local Churches for the holiness of the faithful and the construction of a society worthy of human dignity.

Quite recently, John Paul II told a group of faithful of Opus Dei: “You are here representing the components by which the Prelature is organically
structured, that is, priests and lay faithful, men and women, headed by their own Prelate. This hierarchical nature of Opus Dei, established in the Apostolic Constitution by which I erected the Prelature (cf. Apostolic Const. *Ut sit*, Nov. 28, 1982), offers a starting point for pastoral considerations full of practical applications. First of all, I wish to emphasize that the membership of the lay faithful in their own particular Churches and in the Prelature, into which they are incorporated, enables the special mission of the Prelature to converge with the evangelizing efforts of each particular Church, as envisaged by the Second Vatican Council in desiring the figure of personal prelatures."

As the bishops of the dioceses in which the apostolic work of the faithful of Opus Dei is carried out well know, this is the most immediate and, of course, the most important service of the Prelature to the particular Churches. This is what St. Josemaría wanted from the beginning, as he always encouraged the men and women of Opus Dei to foster a great love for the Spouse of Christ, teaching them by his own example to be ready for any sacrifice and to work silently for the Church, without seeking any human recognition. As he wrote in *The Way*: “In that cry *serviam!* you express your determination to ‘serve’ the Church of God most faithfully, even at the cost of fortune, of reputation and of life.” Here we find the focus of his teaching, and here also, thanks be to God, is the daily reality of the activities of formation and the apostolates of the Prelature all over the world, essentially characterized by the organic cooperation of the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood.

This organic cooperation is precisely the point emphasized by John Paul II in another part of the address I just cited. “The organic way that priests and laity work together is one of those privileged areas where pastoral activity will take life and be strengthened, activity marked by that ‘new energy’ (cf. Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, no. 15) which has encouraged us all since the Great Jubilee.”

Confronted with the immense and fascinating challenge of the “new evangelization,” there is an urgent need to put into play the apostolic potentialities of all the faithful, fostering in everyone, both priests and laity, as well as in persons in the consecrated life, a profound sense of ecclesial communion. John Paul II pointed out in this respect that “St. Josemaría
Escrivá spent his life in the service of the Church.”[100] And he continued: “Dear brothers and sisters, in imitating him with openness of spirit and heart, with a readiness to serve the local Churches, you contribute to strengthening the ‘spirituality of communion’ which my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* points out as one of the most important goals of our time (cf. nos. 42-45).”[101]

In a Church called to be the soul of the contemporary world, with a “new dynamism” of holiness and of vibrant proclamation of the Gospel, St. Josemaría and his teachings remind us that the power of God has not diminished,[102] “for the Lord has opened up all the divine paths of the earth.”[103]

To close, I would like to recall, in the words of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, that “Opus Dei has never tried to present itself as the final or most perfect development in the history of spirituality. For a person who lives by faith, it is clear that the fullness of time has already occurred in Christ and that all the spiritualities that maintain their fidelity to the Church and their respective foundational gift are up to date. At times, an ‘historicist’ view of the life of the Church might be inclined to look down on the old and exaggerate the new, or the reverse, for no other reason than mere chronology. Opus Dei loves and venerates all institutions—old and new—that work for Christ in filial adhesion to the Church’s magisterium.”[104]


[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.


[21] Ibid., no. 154.


[31] Ibid., no. 167.


[34] 1 Jn 3:18.


[39] Ibid.


[42] Ibid.


[48] Ibid., n. 132.


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


[62] Ibid.

[63] St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 120.

[64] Ibid., no. 47

[65] Ibid.


[67] Ibid.

[68] Cf., for example, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 21; *Friends of God*, no. 314.


theological analysis of the text cited by St. Josemaría can be found in the work of Pedro. Rodríguez, “*Omnia traham ad meipsum*: el sentido de Juan 12, 32 en la experiencia espiritual de Mons. Escrivá de Balaguer,” in *Romana* 13 (1991) 331-352.


[84] St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Friends of God*, no. 165


[86] St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 10


At the international symposium on Canon Law at the Peter Pazmany Catholic University of Budapest (February 7, 2005)

At the international symposium of Canon Law, in the Peter Pázmány Catholic University

THE EXERCISE OF THE POWER OF GOVERNANCE IN PERSONAL PRELATURES

I warmly thank the rector of the university, Professor Gyorgy Fodor, and the president of the Institute of Canon Law, Professor Géza Zuminetz, for their gracious invitation to participate in this conference dedicated to the so-called “territorial-personal jurisdictional circumscriptions.” This conference is one of many important international
gatherings organized by this university.\textsuperscript{[1]} The formulation of the topic, intentionally broad, permits us to consider here the diverse expressions of power and jurisdiction of a personal type that exist in the same territory, even though they deal with different manifestations of canonical legality, since each of them derives from entities of a different theological nature.

The organizers have asked me to consider the exercise of the power of governance in personal prelatures, and to transmit, using general categories, the juridical experience of the only personal prelature existing at this time, Opus Dei, to the extent that one can make this jump from the particular to the general. As you know already, these prelatures are ecclesiastical jurisdictions of a predominantly statutory configuration, in the sense that the few general norms provided in the Code of Canon Law allow the statutes, sanctioned by the Holy See for each of them, to configure, as pastoral needs dictate, very diverse prelatures, although all of them will logically possess the necessarily common elements foreseen by the Code.

I think it important, at the beginning of this presentation, to remind you that the Second Vatican Council confronted with great pastoral sensitivity the most diverse questions about the nature, life and needs of the Church. The subject entrusted to me—the exercise of governing power in personal prelatures—can be understood precisely from this pastoral perspective so central to the Council. As we know, Vatican II presented a definition of particular Churches in which territorial factors played no role (cf. \textit{Christus Dominus}, no. 11). In addition, it suggested the usefulness of establishing special dioceses or personal prelatures, international seminaries, and other institutions of this type, to carry out particular pastoral initiatives on behalf of different social groups (cf. \textit{Presbyterorum Ordinis}, no. 10; \textit{Ad Gentes}, no. 20, note 4, no. 27, note 28). The norms of the Code of Canon Law of 1983 bring together, in canons 294–297, these pastoral aspirations of the Council insofar as personal prelatures are concerned. I am sure that our Eastern Rite brethren understand very well this position about personal jurisdiction, since a great part of their canonical regulations fall within this framework, and we all are well aware of their constant service to the Church. Their presence here today is, also for me, a motive for joy.

From very early on, St. Josemaría Escrivá, through his constant prayer and mortification, sought a canonical figure of this type. The founder of
Opus Dei was sure that he would be heard by almighty God, through the intercession of our Lady. But it was only from heaven that he was able to see realized the appropriate canonical solution that he had so long desired for the theological and pastoral reality entrusted to him. The figure of the personal prelature as suggested by the Second Vatican Council had, in effect, been delineated in general terms in the canonical set up of the new Code. And in what refers specifically to Opus Dei, it had been configured by the Apostolic Constitution *Ut Sit* and by the particular statutes or "Codex iuris particularis Operis Dei," approved by this Apostolic Constitution. This juridical figure permitted Opus Dei to be fitted into the framework of canon law in a manner adequate to its proper nature, something that undoubtedly was for its own faithful, both priests and laity, and for many other people in the Church, a motive for thanksgiving to God and to the Church.\[2\]

In this conference, I will make reference to the elements that all personal prelatures necessarily share, within the specific framework of the subject proposed to me. Nevertheless, we will first need to look at some of the central characteristics of the type of structure we are considering here.

1. Personal prelatures as part of the hierarchical structure of the Church: special characteristics and juridical experience

As we know, personal prelatures represent a new figure in the Church, and therefore they have the special characteristics of any new institution.\[3\]

Personal prelatures, as such, were already present in the Second Vatican Council’s decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, and were introduced into canonical law from the time of the first pontifical document making the conciliar decisions operative: the motu proprio *Ecclesiae Sanctae* (in no. 1, 4 of its first chapter).\[4\] From this first document, personal prelatures are situated within the ambit of the hierarchical structure of the Church which, on the basis of an ecclesiastical jurisdiction of a personal type, seeks to provide a flexible instrument to meet specific pastoral needs of various types.

Departing from the territorial criteria which as a general rule the Latin Church makes use of to organize its own activities, the Church’s history testifies to frequent recourse to personal structures in order to solve
particular problems of various types. It is obviously not possible to provide a
detailed historical record here, but I would like to recall in the present
context, in line with a recent monograph,[5] how a proposal to set up a
personal diocesan jurisdiction in Hungary, directly subject to the Holy See,
was taken under consideration by Pope Innocent III in the times of King
Emerich, as far back as 1204. The reason was one of ecumenical unity, to
provide a way of reuniting under a single bishop the churches and
monasteries of the Eastern rite situated in the Kingdom of Hungary.

In our day, the indications of Vatican II and the post-Conciliar
legislation on personal prelatures have been taken up into the 1983 Code of
Canon Law in canons 294-297. This is not the moment to discuss how
these canons of the Code have incorporated the Conciliar and post-
Conciliar teaching. I would only like to point out that, in my judgment, the
singularity of the figure and the uncertain use of ecclesiological categories,
together with others of a technical and canonical nature, provoked some
doubts in a Consultor just prior to the promulgation of the Code, during
the final writing of the text.[6] And this resulted in a questionable
systematic insertion of personal prelatures that, even though it had a very
restricted interpretive and substantial relevance, certainly did not further, at
least initially, a correct understanding of this figure.

This question has already been studied sufficiently,[7] and it does not
seem opportune to consider it in detail now. I think one can say,
evertheless, that the canonical experience of the Church in these more
than twenty years since the promulgation of the Latin Code has
contributed to correcting, at least in part, the initial misunderstandings,
illuminating clearly the hierarchical nature of personal ecclesiastical
circumscriptions, of personal prelatures. This is a category which (as also
occurs in the case of military ordinariates, whose present norms are also of
recent creation) is not included in the notion of a particular Church,
understood from a strictly theological point of view.

Many elements of the canonical experience acquired during these years
confirms this conception of the nature of personal prelatures. It is also a
matter of uniform and indisputable experience,[8] confirmed by various
magisterial documents and norms of the Holy See which have emphasized
specific aspects of the hierarchical dimension of personal prelatures,[9] or
which, as in the case of the praxis curiae, have contributed to bringing into focus the jurisdictional dimension of the personal ecclesiastical circumscriptions, of personal prelatures, with the interpretive authority that canon 19 attributes to such praxis.

It is also true that, beyond the problems linked to the evolution of the normative texts, the consolidation of the new juridical figure must necessarily be tested by the creation in the future of other—though not necessarily many—personal prelatures. Within the common framework of the hierarchical structure of the Church and respecting the few norms of the Code to which all circumscriptions of this type must necessarily adhere, there is room for a variety of tasks or pastoral needs for which this figure is foreseen. And therefore there is also room for a variety of statutes approved by the Apostolic See in function of the specific pastoral needs of each case, the organizational possibilities which the Church can offer in such cases, and, finally, the scope involved (national, within a bishops’ conference, or international). Beyond this variety, personal prelatures that in the future may be constituted by the Apostolic See must necessarily refer to the few common stable elements defined by canonical legislation, which it seems to me have already been acquired in these years, in light of the uniform praxis adopted by the Church.

These common elements can be viewed as similar, in substance, to those typical of any ecclesiastical circumscription. The prelature is made up of a community of faithful who, while remaining as members of their respective particular Churches, are also entrusted, under well defined perspectives, to a Pastor—the prelate of which canon 295 1 of the CIC speaks—assisted by his own presbyterate. We here again encounter the common categories necessarily present in any ecclesiastical circumscription, whether territorial or personal: a coetus fidelium [community of faithful] entrusted to a Pastor, understanding in this context by “coetus” something that differs theologically from the portio or pars Ecclesiae universalis, which ecclesiologically is usually individuated in a particular Church.

At the same time, it is necessary to affirm that the norms of the Code do not necessarily find a univocal application in the configuring of personal prelatures, since some of these norms (and I refer to the contents of canons 294—297) are in fact optional.
For example, the incardination of its own clergy envisioned by canon 295 1, although existing in the first prelature that has been established, is not necessarily an essential element, since the possibility exists for prelatures without their own incardinated clergy, as might occur, and in fact does occur, in military ordinariates. The same could be said with respect to having its own seminary, the geographical ambit of the prelate’s activity, etc. The very incorporation of faithful to the prelature by means of the convention indicated in canon 296 solved, in the case of the first prelature established, the technical way of incorporating the lay faithful in the prelature and the way of establishing their relationship with the prelate. But this is just one possibility, and it might eventually be replaced by other forms of incorporation. For example, in other possible cases, the determination of which faithful are entrusted to the pastoral care of the prelate—always maintaining their attachment to the diocese of their domicile—might be established by authority of the Apostolic See in the very act of establishing the prelature, as could occur in the case of a military ordinariate[12] or as has happened in the personal Apostolic Administration of Campos in Brazil.[13]

In synthesis, as one can see by a careful reading of the legal texts, only some of the structural elements pointed out in canons 294—297 for personal prelatures should be considered essential. Therefore, only some of the characteristics established in the case of the first of these personal prelatures, the Prelature of Opus Dei, are valid also for the prelatures that, for other pastoral purposes, may be created afterwards.

2. The juridical nature of the power exercised in personal prelatures

The framework traced up to this point allows us to identify the essential elements proper to personal prelatures and at the same time determine the context to which such prelatures belong, that of personal ecclesiastical circumscriptions. I think, in fact, that the notion of the particular Church should be used in a strictly theological context, and I will try to adhere to that principle in this discussion.

Nevertheless, since personal prelatures belong to the ecclesiastical jurisdictions through which the Church organizes itself hierarchically as the People of God, this entails that the power of the one who is in charge of
them, the Prelate, is necessarily a power of an episcopal nature, similar from this point of view to that of any other pastor who finds himself in charge of an ecclesiastical circumscription, whether a bishop or not. The latter situation is found, for example, in the case of some apostolic prefects and apostolic vicars or administrators, who nevertheless are pastors placed in charge of pastoral circumscriptions in the Church. This is to say that the jurisdiction exercised by all these pastors, including the personal prelate, is a case of the exercise of the munus regendi of directing and governing a community of the baptized, which can be also conferred, as centuries of Church history attest to, upon a priest with ecclesiastical jurisdiction. A quick consultation of the Annuario Pontificio would be enough to show this reality.\[14\]

Going beyond the strict limits that the structure of the Church requires (according to which neither the prelate nor other pastors of similar jurisdiction necessarily have to be bishops), for reasons of consistency between the juridical dimension and the sacramental reality of the Church, and more specifically, in respect to personal prelatures, between the juridical dimension and the pastoral reality of the Church, the episcopal ordination of these prelates would seem to be appropriate, for the Apostolic See assigns to them, with their appointment to the office, a canonical mission and a flock\[15\] over which they are to exercise the corresponding pastoral function.

And, in fact, this is what the Holy See has decided upon in the case of the two Prelates who have followed each other at the head of the only personal prelature currently in existence.\[16\]

My predecessor, the Servant of God Alvaro del Portillo, whose cause of beatification has recently been introduced, was ordained as a bishop on January 6, 1991,\[17\] as was the following Prelate on January 6, 1995.\[18\] Relevant for what I will say later is a passage from the Papal Bull corresponding to the last of these two episcopal ordinations, which speaks explicitly of the flock\[19\] entrusted to the pastoral care of the Prelate elevated to the status of bishop.

In the office of prelate, therefore, an ecclesiastical power of an episcopal nature is exercised, which is defined in general terms and conferred on each prelate individually by the Apostolic See. This power corresponds to the
ministry of a pastor in relation to a *coetus fidelium*. Properly speaking, such conferral represents a *missio canonica*, with the assigning of the faithful over whom the Prelate holds ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the sense indicated by the statutes, as is said in canon 296. I will return to this later on to delimit these ideas better, since, in my opinion, strictly speaking they should not be referred to in the same terms as in regard to a particular Church.

Therefore, in order to go more deeply into the canonical nature of the power exercised in personal prelatures, one needs to refer to the traditional canonical categories concerning ordinary and delegated power, as this has been synthesized since the earliest canonical codification and which has reached us through canons 129ff of the present Code. Likewise, as specific elements, aside from canons 294ff, we should also look at the juridical experience gained from the establishment of the first personal prelature. However, we should only do so to the extent that the general normative framework permits the transference of such data to a general context.

The first paragraph of canon 295 points out that “a personal prelature is governed by the statutes given to it by the Apostolic See and its government is conferred upon a prelate as its own Ordinary, to whom there corresponds the power of establishing a national or international seminary, as well as of incardinating students and raising them to orders in title of service to the Prelature.” Together with other questions that I will take up again later, this norm points out with technical precision the nature of the power of the Prelate.

In that sense, and by reference to canon 131, which determines the typical categories of ecclesiastical power, it is said that, within the jurisdictional ambit of the Prelature, the Prelate possesses a power of ordinary government (that is to say, attached to the office of, presiding over, or heading the prelature itself) which is of a proper nature and not vicarious or exercised in the name of another, as for example occurs in the various mission ecclesiastical jurisdictions, such as apostolic vicariates, apostolic prefectures, etc., whose respective pastors exercise jurisdiction in the name of the Supreme Pontiff, as is carefully pointed out in canon 371.

The Prelate possesses then an ordinary power of his own in the ambit of the personal prelature and in the terms established for each prelature by
their respective statutes. According to such statutes, the content of the power could vary from one prelature to another, as will be shown as follows, but the juridical nature of the power would remain the same in each case.

On this foundation, and in connection with canonical tradition, some authors maintains that the power of a personal prelate, as, for example, that of a military Ordinary, is in all cases a power “shared a jure” (shared from the primatial function), which must be distinguished from the strictly sacramental episcopal headship, which corresponds in the strict theological sense only to a diocesan bishop in reference to a particular Church.\[20\] The specificity of these personal jurisdictions brings with it, in effect, a particular type of relationship with the primatial function, something that no. 16 of the letter Communionis Notio, from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, noted in 1992 in pointing out that, with the particular Churches, “there exist institutions and communities established by the Apostolic Authority for special pastoral tasks. These, as such, belong to the universal Church, although their members are also members of the particular Churches where they live and work.”\[21\]

It would be interesting to stop and consider in more detail these considerations, but it is not possible to do this now. I would just like to say that, in line with such observations by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, some authors have held that personal prelatures, like military ordinariates, are in reality structures that belong theologically to the universal Church, while others (seeking to express the same intuition) have preferred to speak of structures complementary to the particular Churches.\[22\] I think that in both cases the underlying vision calls for a distinction in ecclesiological terms between these realities and particular Churches, while specifying a particular theological bond of the aforesaid structures with the Successor of Peter and the Head of the episcopal college.

Another general characteristic of the power of the prelate derives from the fact that it is exercised in an ecclesiastical circumscription of a personal type. It is true that every relationship of jurisdiction, as shown by canon 136 regarding the executive power, is a hierarchical relationship among subjects that transcends territorial limits. But independently of this, the fact of being a matter of a personal jurisdiction means above all that it is not the
territory, but the circumstances or condition of the persons themselves that determines who are the subjects included in the jurisdiction of the prelate and therefore in the corresponding community of the faithful. There must always be an objective and specified circumstance, since otherwise it would not be possible to identify with certainty the persons over whom the prelate exercises jurisdiction. We must not forget in any case (and this will be useful to us soon) that in territorial circumscriptions the territorial factor serves to delimit jurisdiction only with respect to the laity, because for the clergy a very different criterion is followed.

From the personal nature of the structure that we are now considering there also follows the fact that, in principle, the Prelate does not possess in any territory a jurisdiction that could come into conflict with those of the local ordinaries.

We should also note that the personal nature of these jurisdictions does not mean that in these cases some type of territorial jurisdiction is not possible. Regarding the military ordinaries, for example, it has been indicated that the personal jurisdiction is concurrent with that of the local bishop in the military camps and places for worship. Analogically in the case of personal prelates, a similar determination might also be made in the moment of their establishment or afterwards. Indeed, it seems difficult to reject canonically some ambit of territorial jurisdiction for the personal pastor, for example in the church established as the prelatic church, in the seat of its curia, in its own seminary, etc.

Therefore, the power of the personal prelate is that of an Ordinary; and, insofar as Ordinary of a place, taking into account what has already been said, this condition is clear in those specific places in which the prelature has a territory and in what refers to his qualification as Ordinary of the place of incardination.

We find ourselves, therefore, facing a hierarchical structure whose purpose is to take care of special pastoral needs, potentially very distinct from one another, with the consequent need to restrict as much as possible the common characteristics and to establish an elastic general framework which would permit each prelature to delineate itself by its statutes, modeling in them the faculties of each Prelatic office according to the needs of the case.
One should keep in mind that in personal prelatures the jurisdiction of the Prelate, especially over the lay faithful, can be very diverse, and therefore that this should be clearly specified in the statutes.

3. The exercise of the Prelate’s power insofar as it refers to the content and the distinct components of the Prelature

Given the topic before us, another question that we should consider is the exercise of the power of the Prelate. This question can be considered in relation to at least two different problems that have to do with elements both of a theological nature and of a technical juridical nature. The first involves the content of the power of the prelate; the second, the nature of the relation of jurisdiction with respect to the subjects entrusted to the jurisdiction of the prelate.

In this case also we need to keep clearly in mind the functional nature of the figure of personal prelatures and, therefore, the potential diversity between one prelature and another in what concerns the content of the power of the prelate or the manner of his jurisdictional relationship with the subjects entrusted to his jurisdiction. It is not licit, as I have pointed out more than once, to extend to other future prelatures the juridical experience that we possess, limited to what is up to now the only personal prelature. In each case—it couldn’t be otherwise—the specific pastoral circumstances will be what determine the configuring of each of the prelatures and the extension of the jurisdiction to be conferred upon the prelate.

In the case of Opus Dei, questions of concurrence with the jurisdiction of diocesan bishops have not arisen; but, given what I have just said, it is clear that this experience cannot be generalized. It seems reasonable to foresee that the pastoral needs which, in the future, might suggest the erection of new personal prelatures, will usually bring with them the need to delineate a certain sharing in the ordinary pastoral care of the faithful involved.

Reflecting for example, on the eventual need to resolve, by means of personal prelatures, problems of pastoral attention to certain categories of refugees, of nomads, of gypsies or of émigrés (above all in cases of transitory emigration to places without adequate pastoral structures), it is logical to consider an adequate jurisdiction by the prelate as necessary, similar to that
reserved to military ordinariates by the Apostolic constitution *Spirituali Militum Curae.* Certainly, it should always be a matter of a cumulative jurisdiction with the diocesan bishop of the place, since a common characteristic of all the so-called complementary circumscriptions—personal prelatures and military ordinariates follow the same discipline on this point—is that the faithful belong simultaneously to the personal jurisdiction and to the diocesan territorial jurisdiction.

In every case, as also happens with the military ordinary, the power of the personal prelate has reference to the three amits of governmental power mentioned by canon 135, that is, to legislative power (the power to issue laws or general decrees in matters of its particular competence), executive power and judicial power. Specifically, for the tribunal constituted in the Prelature of Opus Dei, the Signatura Apostolica has assigned, as court of second instance, the Tribunal of Appeals of the Vicariate of Rome, which is the same organ that acts as court of second instance for the tribunal of the Military Ordinariate for Italy.[27]

The second question mentioned earlier in regard to the exercise of the prelate’s power refers to the jurisdictional relationship with the subjects who form part of the Prelature: the lay faithful incorporated into the prelature by formal agreement or in some other way, or the faithful assigned to the pastoral care of the prelature[28] and the clergy incardinated or, perhaps eventually, not incardinated but in any case dedicated pastorally to the mission of the Prelature.

As one can see, the situations might be very diverse, for which reason it seems wise not to establish positions that are necessarily rigid, which soon might be obsolete, simply because we are dealing with an institution that was desired precisely to offer the elasticity needed to resolve very different kinds of pastoral problems. Therefore, it would be unrealistic to try to limit the possibilities of action on the part of those who might have such a task entrusted to them and the authority to carry it out.[29]

Nevertheless, one thing which should necessarily be taken into consideration, and which seems rather to have been forgotten by some authors who have dealt with this topic, is that the juridical rule established in the Church to determine ecclesiastical jurisdiction in regard to the
various categories of Catholic faithful (principally the laity and clergy) is very diverse. But this fact cannot be used to speak of distinct grades of membership. Among other things, this would go directly against that “true equality in dignity and action” proclaimed in canon 208, in line with no. 32 of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, which is one of the fundamental juridical situations of the baptized highlighted by the Second Vatican Council. Let me explain this point more fully.

One of the theses held in this respect, on the basis of a reading of canon 294 that fails to take into account other data of canon law, beginning with the canons immediately following it, is that only the clergy, priests and deacons, mentioned in canon 294, belong to the personal prelature. The lay faithful who, by agreement with the prelature, as provided in canon 296, or in some other way, come to “cooperate organically” with it are not incorporated, according to this thesis, in the prelature itself, but are only some form of auxiliaries or coadjutors, in accordance with an external relationship model that is fairly frequent in associations of faithful allied to institutes of consecrated life. However, as regards personal prelatures, a view of this kind is absolutely mistaken. It shows no knowledge of the historical formation of the figure and is contradicted by its juridical experience, even if this is somewhat limited.

In general terms, we must keep in mind, as I have said, that the different types of jurisdictional relationship with the clergy and the lay faithful in no way justifies speaking of different degrees of membership. One cannot say that diocesan priests belong to the diocesan Church more fully than the lay faithful do, in spite of the fact that the bond of incardination represents a relationship of hierarchical subjection which is much more intense and extensive than that which links the lay faithful to his own bishop by the baptismal relationship through the rules of domicile.

In the case of personal prelatures (and I think that what I will say is also true in good measure for the other so-called complementary circumscriptions), the clergy incardinated as indicated by canon 294 have a complete and exclusive jurisdictional relationship with the prelature which has the same intensity and extension as that established by any other regular clergy with their own diocese and bishop. It is not possible for clergy to maintain a double incardination, since incardination always has
the same juridical content. The cleric incardinated in a prelature has, with respect to the prelate, the same total jurisdictional dependence that the cleric incardinated in a diocese has with respect to the diocesan bishop.

In the case of the lay faithful, in contrast, one can belong to two jurisdictions at the same time, as is also true of military ordinariates. This is not something recent. The possibility of this double dependence derives from canonical tradition, as is shown by the rules of domicile and quasi-domicile present in canon 107. The only novelty in this case is the fact that the dependence on the second jurisdiction is not determined by quasi-domicile, but by a circumstance which is personal in nature.

In addition, while the juridical consequences of incardination are uniformly the same in all cases (and the same can be said of the juridical relevance of quasi-domicile), in the case of complementary circumscriptions—personal prelatures and military ordinariates—the effects are specified by their respective statutes. More precisely, the fact that the bond of the lay faithful with the prelature is not the same as that of the clergy, or that which binds one to the diocese of domicile, does not authorize us to conclude that their link to the prelature is less than that of the clergy who are incardinated, or even that it is non-existent. This would be a reductive thesis both in relation to the postulates of equality proclaimed by and present in the Code, as well as in relation to the theological content given to the expression “cooperatio organica,” with which no. 10 of the same Conciliar constitution specified the relationship between the royal priesthood and the ministerial priesthood in the building up of the Church, an expression which was, significantly, included in canon 296 in relation to the incorporation of lay faithful in personal prelatures.

The juridical experience of the only currently existing prelature does not leave any room for doubt. No. III of the Apostolic Constitution Ut Sit, which established the Prelature of Opus Dei, says quite directly that “the jurisdiction of the personal Prelature [that is, of the Prelate], extends to the clergy incardinated in it, and also—only in what refers to the fulfillment of the specific obligations undertaken through the juridical bond, by means of a contract with the Prelature—to the laity who dedicate themselves to the apostolic activities of the Prelature: both clergy and laity are under the authority of the Prelate in carrying out the pastoral task of the Prelature as
established in the preceding article.” I don’t see how one could reconcile this norm of the Apostolic Constitution with the idea that the lay faithful do not fully belong to the Prelature.

Finally, in regard to the specific case of Opus Dei, the Holy Father John Paul II has made explicit statements on more than one occasion. Specifically, in the course of an audience granted in March of 2001 to faithful of Opus Dei from all over the world, gathered in Rome to participate in a conference organized by the Prelature to consider the Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, he expressed himself in these words: “You are here representing the components by which the Prelature is organically structured, that is, priests and lay faithful, men and women, headed by their own Prelate. This hierarchical nature of Opus Dei, established in the Apostolic Constitution by which I erected the Prelature (cf. Apostolic constitution *Ut Sit*, November 28, 1982), offers a starting point for pastoral considerations full of practical applications. First of all, I wish to emphasize that the membership of the lay faithful in their own particular Churches and in the Prelature, into which they are incorporated, enables the special mission of the Prelature to converge with the evangelizing efforts of each particular Church, as envisaged by the Second Vatican Council in desiring the figure of personal prelatures.” And the Pope continued: “The organic way that priests and laity work together is one of those privileged areas where pastoral activity will take life and be strengthened, activity marked by that ‘new energy’ (cf. Apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, no. 15) which has encouraged us all since the Great Jubilee. In this connection, we should recall the importance of that ‘spirituality of communion’ stressed by the Apostolic letter (cf. ibid., nos. 42—43).”[31]

I am going to finish. In this talk I have tried to point out some relevant parameters within which the exercise of the pastoral power of government in personal prelatures develops, considered in general terms. I have tried to do so by referring to the principal observations that authors have highlighted in regard to this canonical figure. I am convinced that, precisely because of the versatility that the statutes grant to personal prelatures, these will be in the future a splendid pastoral instrument at the service of evangelization and apostolate, so needed by the Church of the 21st century. I also think that the growing progress in the communion between faithful
and pastors, stressed in recent documents of the papal magisterium, will increase esteem for a pastoral structure which has been suggested by the Second Vatican Council and which, like all the other structures in the Church, can have no other objective than the service of Christ’s Church.


The activity regarding Concordats of the Holy See during this period, for example, has presented personal prelatures to the various states together with the other ecclesiastical circumscriptions—dioceses, apostolic vicariates, military ordinariates, etc.—as an expression of the hierarchical structure of the Church, with the natural consequence that the different States have conceded a substantially identical treatment to these institutions within their respective juridical systems, seconding the proposals of the Holy See (see, for example, art. 6 § 1 of the Concordat between the Holy See and the Republic of Poland, of July 28, 1993; art. 5 of Accord on Juridical Questions between the Holy See and the Republic of Croatia, of December 19, 1996; Additional Protocol of Accord between the Holy See and the Republic of Gabon on principles and on some juridical dispositions relative to their relations and their collaboration, of December 12, 1997; art. 5 of the Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Lithuania concerning juridical aspects of the relations between the Catholic Church and the State, of May 5, 2000).

I will cite only the Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, of 1994, which states that, in personal prelatures as in military ordinariates, there is a presbiterium in the proper sense around their respective Pastor, as occurs in particular Churches in the strictly theological sense (cf. Congregation for the Clergy, Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, of January 31, 1994, no. 25 and art. 22 § 2.5). More recently, the instruction *Erga Migrantes*, in considering canonical discipline with respect to pastoral attention to emigrants, has pointed to personal prelatures as hierarchical structures that might be useful for the pastoral care of this nucleus of faithful, in the case that specific circumstances would make this

[10] This could be through the *Annuario Pontificio*, where all of the territorial and personal ecclesiastical circumscriptions are considered together (see *Annuario Pontificio* 2003, “Statistical Data on the Catholic Hierarchy,” pp. 1063-1066), or through instruments such as those used to prepare the quinquennial reports on the *ad limina* visits. (Cf. Congregation for the Bishops, *Formulario per la relazione quinquennale*, Ed. Vaticana, 1997); or through other similar ways.


Denique te, dilecte Fili, gregem tuum et omnes Christifideles committimus intercessioni Dei Genetricis Mariae et beati Josephmariae Escrivá de Balaguer, ut omnibus significare valeas “opera maximi Dei” (cf. 2 Mac 3, 36) (ibid., p. 15).

Once more I insist that I consider it important to specify the reference to the theological notion of particular Church in the strict sense, as it emerges from the Conciliar documents and the following magisterium, in order to emphasize the distinction from the generic use which is frequently made of the term.


This is established by can. 295 (which enables one to see the non-exhaustive nature of can. 134).

In this connection, see the full array of indications presented by canons 265, 266 and 967 §2. See also Ciro Tammaro, “Il Prelato come ordinario proprio della Prelatura personale,” in Antonianum 77, 2002, pp. 575-583.


The jurisdiction of the Prelate with respect to the lay faithful is not limited to the possibility of the incorporation of faithful by means of a contract in conformity with canon 296. One must keep in mind the nature of the pastoral care that the Holy See has entrusted to the Prelature and, therefore, who the faithful are over whom it has jurisdiction. For example, there might be a personal prelature—as an experienced archbishop suggested some years ago—for the pastoral care of Gypsies within the sphere of a specific bishops’ conference. These Gypsies would be under the jurisdiction of the Prelate insofar as the statutes of the Prelature so determined for the fulfillment of its particular pastoral mission. The subjects of the pastoral care of the prelature, as occurs in the case of military personnel in the military ordinariates, would be faithful of the prelature without prejudice to their dependence on the diocesan bishop in their place of domicile.

This institutional elasticity has traditionally been emphasized by authors as a positive element characterizing the figure of the personal prelature: see, for example, Giuseppe Dalla Torre, “Le strutture personali e le finalità pastorali,” in *I principi per la revisione del Codice di diritto canonico*, pp. 580 ff.

For critical comments and positions, see the recent monograph by Ciro Tammaro, *La posizione giuridica dei fedeli laici nelle Prelature personali*, Antonianum, Rome 2004.


Back to Contents
Interview granted to Cesare Cavalleri of the magazine Studi Cattolici (May 21, 2005)

Interviewed by Cesare Cavalleri

1. Fourteen encyclicals, fifteen apostolic exhortations, eleven apostolic constitutions, forty-five apostolic letters, thousands of addresses, audiences, homilies. The magisterium of John Paul II is both broad and deep. It is impossible, therefore, to synthesize it in a short answer. Nevertheless, what do you see as the main strengths of the thought of the Pontiff who has just left us, in both the dogmatic and the moral realm.

In my opinion, the thought of John Paul II can be summarized in a single word. It is a word written with a capital letter: Christ, the Word of God made Man. In the realm of behavior, Christ as the only model for our conduct. In the realm of theology, Christ as the object and foundation of our faith. But that Word, that Person, Jesus Christ, is not only the key to the Pope’s thought: it is the explanation of his entire life. How difficult it is to distinguish between life and magisterium in John Paul II!

This is stated very clear by the Pope himself in his encyclical Redemptor Hominis, which set out the program for his pontificate: “Our spirit is set in one direction, the only direction for our intellect, will and heart is—towards Christ our Redeemer, towards Christ, the Redeemer of man. We wish to look towards him—because there is salvation in no one else but him, the Son of God” (no. 7).

During the past few weeks, so many men and women, whether Christians or not, have expressed their admiration for John Paul II for apparently very diverse reasons, including his holiness, his denunciation of totalitarianism, his efforts for peace, his trust in youth, his defense of life, his support for the family, his concern for the poor, his courage in the face of pain and sickness. In my opinion, this wide variety of perceptions, all of them true, gives voice to the truth that the solution to mankind’s great
problems is to be found in Christ. It is also significant that many people have returned to Jesus Christ through the Pope’s death.

2. The theological framework for the magisterium of John Paul II is grounded on a specific anthropology. The interest that the philosopher Karol Wojtyla had in the works of Husserl and Edith Stein is well known. But in his last book, Memory and Identity, the Pope explicitly played down the contribution of phenomenology and once more emphasized the value of Thomistic realism. What is the relationship between reason and faith, a topic to which the Pontiff expressly dedicated an encyclical?

When Karol Wojtyla, John Paul II, left us for heaven, he still had the same intellectual passion that had led him to penetrate into phenomenology, deeply influenced by the mysticism of Edith Stein. At the same time, his whole magisterium is saturated with the teachings of Thomas Aquinas, as he pointed out in one of his visits to the Angelicum Pontifical University. I think that the change to which you allude falls to the study of specialists. Aside from these considerations, it is evident that, because of his capacity to dialogue with the main currents of modern philosophy, the thought of John Paul II is itself the fruit of the harmony between reason and faith.

In these times of esoteric beliefs and intellectual pessimism, the Pope was a courageous defender of reason. He expressed confidence in the ability of the human intellect to know the truth. And he presented the faith as a light, not as a limit. Christian faith enlightens the intellect in its effort to understand reality.

Faith protects reason from superstition and fear, while inviting it to recognize the existence of mysteries. Faith helps reason to become aware of its limits, but also to regain confidence in its great possibilities.

3. In his 104 apostolic trips all over the world, in his 146 Italian pilgrimages, in his visits to 317 of the 333 parishes in Rome, John Paul II fully exercised his role as universal Pastor, as Primate of the Italian Church and as Bishop of the city of Rome. This Pope, presented by some as “media minded” because of his intelligent and extensive use of the communications media, has always favored direct contact with reality. To what extent are the mass media instruments of evangelization? What apostolic repercussions should we expect
from the extraordinary media coverage of the funeral of John Paul II and the election of Benedict XVI?

The role played by the means of communication in society accounts for the importance that the Church attributes to them. In the end, the essential question is a cultural one. The communications media are both a source of knowledge and an educational force. They create models of behavior, and could even be called “lectureships in morality.” It is natural to raise question about the legitimacy and limits of their power. But, above all, Catholics have to feel their responsibility to be present in this “Areopagus,” this public forum, a privileged place for giving expression to their faith.

During the events of the past days, television, radio and the press from all over the world have treated the beautiful liturgical ceremonies with respect and dignity, enabling hundreds of millions of people to travel vicariously to Rome, to pray for the Pope, to say good-bye to John Paul II and welcome Benedict XVI. The so called “system” of the communications media meshed very well with the universal, spiritual structure of the Church.

4. The large crowds, especially young people, on the apostolic trips and the immense gathering of people that we saw in connection with the funeral of the Pope, have led some people to question the real depth of these emotional outpourings, undoubtedly very noble, but perhaps also fleeting. How do you view all this?

Of course, it would be a mistake to confuse religion with feelings. But it would also be a mistake to undervalue emotions. I have already alluded to this point. To be moved by the death of someone we love, to yearn for the presence of a father, are deeply human reactions. Thus the emotion-filled response of so many people during these weeks shows that the Church is truly a family, one that is young and alive, as Benedict XVI said on April 24.

In addition, the profound emotions we experienced may well have important practical consequences. They make a deep impression on the spirit of young people and leave a permanent mark on one’s heart. They can take away the coldness that sometimes comes upon us with the passage of
the years and prevent skepticism from setting in. Both everyday life and memorable events are important in determining who we are.

I think that many people, once the emotion has died down, will remember having taken part in such an historic moment, experiencing a spiritual reality of great intensity, a moment of grace. In short, they will remember hearing the call of God, who once more touched the portals of their heart. I am convinced that during these days many people have decided to respond to that call, to give themselves to God with a faithful love, to live an upright human and Christian life.

5. In regard to the popular outpouring around John Paul II, there are those who say that people came to applaud the singer, but that they did not like the song. Indeed, the difficulties the magisterium of the Church is having in guiding practical behavior is well known, in matters of right to life, sexual morality, stability of the family.... How do you view this lack of consistency in those who do not hesitate to call themselves Catholics?

When we go to listen to a person with moral authority, we are expressing what we seek, not what we already have. This happens in the religious sphere, but also in other fields, because life is always, in some way, a search, a path, a desire, a yearning for something better, more beautiful, more just.

In this regard, there come to mind some words of John Paul II, when commenting on the famous statement of St. Augustine: “You have made us, O Lord, for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you” (Confessions, I, 1). “In this creative restlessness,” says John Paul II, “beats and pulsates what is most deeply human—the search for truth, the insatiable need for the good, hunger for freedom, nostalgia for the beautiful, and the voice of conscience” (Redemptor Hominis, no. 18).

Listening to the Pope with attention, with this restlessness, is today a kind of preamble of the faith, a beginning of Christian life. After that first step comes the personal decision to seek formation and light, the yearning to exercise charity, the recourse to the strength of the sacraments.

I dare to say that the Pope fulfills an important mission in drawing men and women of good will. After this there comes into play the apostolic responsibility of Catholics, both priests and laity, who make the Church
present everywhere. Before focusing on the inconsistency of some, I prefer to pray that the events we have recently experienced will encourage us to renew our resolution to be more courageous in making Christ known. So many people are telling us in so many ways that they want to get to know him, to deal with him, to love him.

6. You were with John Paul II many times, including outside of official audiences. Can you give us any personal recollection?

A particularly moving memory for me is connected with the death of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, my predecessor as Prelate of Opus Dei, on March 23, 1994. That day, John Paul II came to Our Lady of Peace, the prelatic church, which we were using as the mortuary chapel. He came to pray and, undoubtedly, to show his paternal affection, during moments when we in Opus Dei were left without a father. That episode for me encapsulates John Paul II: a faithful father who is always present when you need him, who brings his consoling affection at the moment of sorrow.

7. It is undeniable that Opus Dei’s history is closely bound to the pontificate of John Paul II. He raised the Work to a personal Prelature on November 28, 1982, beatified the founder on May 17, 1992, and canonized him on October 6, 2002. What is the source of John Paul II’s harmony with the spirit of Opus Dei?

Before answering, I would like to note that all the institutions and all the faithful in the Church felt themselves loved by John Paul II, who always bestowed great pastoral attention on what the Holy Spirit brought forth in the Church. In Opus Dei we want to serve all the successors of Peter, following the example of St. Josemaría. And I cannot fail to mention the fact that Pope Paul VI, of venerable memory, manifested on various occasions both to Msgr. Escrivá and to his first successor, that he ardently wished to see the arrival of a juridical solution for Opus Dei. In the first audience that he granted to my predecessor, Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo, he asked him to tell everyone in Opus Dei that he considered Msgr. Josemaría Escrivá to be one of the persons in the twentieth century who had responded most heroically to God’s call.

But I think that the root of the harmony with John Paul II, to which you referred just now, sprang from the Pope’s passion for evangelization, from his love for the world, from his awareness of the role of the laity in the
Church’s mission. The Holy Father’s pastoral concerns, his love for mankind, his elevated vision of work as giving dignity to the human person, led him to appreciate the spirit of Opus Dei and its message of sanctification of work and ordinary life. As far as the Prelature is concerned, we have tried to correspond to this affection, to the encouragement to be faithful to the Church, with the desire to never disappoint the expectations of the Holy Father and to loyally second his teachings. All of these memories are now for me a reason to give thanks.

8. John Paul II proclaimed 1338 people blessed and canonized 482 saints. Is this an application of the Second Vatican Council, whose essential message was the universal call to holiness?

Yes, certainly. Some people, in addition, have seen in these large numbers an effort by the Pope to put Christ’s message within reach of every man and woman. Indeed, in a society as secularized as ours, there is a need to open all ways of access to souls, to hearts. And the lives of saints are extraordinary vehicles for communicating the faith: living models who are attractive to persons of all races and cultures.

Saint Paul called the early Christians “saints.” The saints are in a certain sense “one of us.” They show that it is possible to follow Christ. Their example nourishes our hope. I think that John Paul II, here too, wanted to emphasize the reality that Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, does not discriminate. He calls everyone to holiness, which is the goal, let us never forget, for which man was created, every man and every woman. In my opinion, John Paul II wanted to tell us that our Lord is not far from anyone, that he is interested in everyone.

9. The life of John Paul II, the “Totus Tuus Pope,” was imbued with Marian devotion. Without trying to find a hidden meaning in everything, there is an undeniable connection between the life of the Pope and the apparitions of our Lady at Fatima: the assassination attempt on May 13; the third secret, in which the Pope recognized himself; the death of Sister Lucia on February 13, shortly before the Pope died... I’m not looking for any prophecies, but perhaps the apocalyptic tone of some interpretations of Marian apparitions, which seem to imply that we are reaching the end times, gives pause for thought.
I have a lot of devotion to Our Lady of Fatima. I have frequently prayed before her simple and motherly statue, and am moved by the story of the young shepherds. But I would not know how to begin giving an opinion on these apocalyptic interpretations. I am neither inclined nor prepared to do so. Only God can read between the lines of the book of history. I live on today’s page. I trust in the Divine Writer and am firmly convinced that his plans call for a life filled with hope, grounded on the reality that the Son of God has wanted to give his life for us.

10. The brevity of the conclave that elected Benedict XVI gives the picture of a closely united Church, even a unanimous one. Do you think that we have now gotten past the post-Conciliar cyclone and that the often artificial distinction between “progressives” and “conservatives” has been overcome.

The conclave was clearly a resounding lesson in unity, which will undoubtedly mark the future. It was like an echo of St. Ambrose’ words, ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia: “where Peter is, there the Church is found.” It also fulfilled once more St. Josemaría’s heartfelt aspiration: omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam, all, with Peter, to Jesus through Mary. We have seen how the cardinals, with very different mentalities and experiences and coming from the most varied geographical areas, have set aside their differences and quickly closed ranks in union with Peter.

The distinction between “conservatives” and “progressives” is simply an a priori application of a merely political classification to a rich and profound reality. To interpret the conclave in this way is like viewing reality in black and white. I believe that also here a clear advance has been made, since many commentators now have a better grasp of the nature of the Church.

From the beginning of that gathering, I saw the whole Church, with its prayer and self-sacrifice, inside the Sistine Chapel, and I had constantly in mind our Lord’s promise that he would not fail to hear those who prayed in his name.

11. I would appreciate knowing your view of Benedict XVI, in light of your acquaintance with him.

I see him as a person who stands out for his theological intellect, his clear vision of problems in the Church and in contemporary culture, and his broad outlook. One should also mention that he has already spent many
years serving the Church and is a man with a deep spiritual life. Anyone who has dealt with him even briefly can give witness to his refinement and ability to listen.

In the face of a world convulsed by conflicts, the Holy Father shows himself to be clearheaded and calm, prepared to give reasons for the Church’s hope, for faith in its Master. If to all this one adds that the Holy Spirit has sought him out, it seems to me that he is in the highest degree the right person for this moment in history.

12. What does the name that the new Pope chose suggest to you.

Personally, the name’s reference both to St. Benedict and to Pope Benedict XV seems to me to highlight the importance the Church gives to culture and to striving for peace. I think that today we Catholics have the responsibility to strive to make the faith understandable to our fellow men by stressing the Christian roots of culture, especially in Europe. I refer to culture in the broad sense: the climate that Christian families create around them; the fostering of works of mercy; and also scientific research, films, and literature. Catholics today have to be builders of peace and a culture of life.

To most Catholics the choice of the name provoked surprise and a healthy curiosity to know the reasons. The newness of the name is thus another reminder to unite ourselves more to the Pope and his intentions, as he himself never ceases to ask us.

13. What most struck you about the work of Cardinal Ratzinger as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith?

His capacity to harmonize charity with service to the truth. He has been a good example of St. Paul’s advice: veritatem facientes in caritate (speaking the truth in love, Eph 4:15). In the book, The Ratzinger Report, we read: “Dogmatic definition is a service to truth, a gift offered to believers by the authority established by God. Dogmas, someone has said, are not walls which prevent one from seeing, but, very much to the contrary, windows opened to the infinite.” These words were written by Cardinal Ratzinger a few years after he was put in charge of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. I think they are one of the keys to his leadership of that Congregation.
14. In an article published by Professor Joseph Ratzinger, before becoming a cardinal, in the magazine Studi Cattolici (no. 69, December 1966), one finds a strong defense of liturgical reform and, at the same time, a pointing to some overly hasty applications. Do you think that this concern might be one of the priorities of the new pontificate?

One finds an explanation of this concern in some other words written by Cardinal Ratzinger a few years ago: “The inexhaustible reality of the Catholic liturgy has accompanied me through all phases of life. And so I shall have to speak about it again and again” (Milestones: Memoirs 1927-1977, p. 20). If we take into account that the liturgy is an action of God, open to man’s participation, we understand its centrality in Christian life. I think that Pope Benedict XVI is very attuned to the sacredness of the liturgy, where heaven and earth unite in such a mysterious beauty, and that he daily experiences the efficacy of the adage, lex orandi, lex credendi.

15. The pastoral program of the Church for the third millennium was sketched out by John Paul II in his apostolic letter Novo Millennio Ineunte. Will the new Pope have an easy task?

It seems to me very important to emphasize that, now and always, the application of that program is the responsibility of the whole Church, not just of the Pope. The abdication of this mission by the faithful, both priests and laity, would mean giving in to a comfort-seeking that would have grave consequences. In his encyclical Redemptoris Missio John Paul II said: “I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church’s energies to a new evangelization and to the mission ad gentes. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples” (no. 3).

The work of Benedict XVI will be made less difficult to the extent that we strive to support all Catholics with our prayer and our work, each of us giving testimony to Jesus in the place we occupy in society. Also in this regard the words of St. Leo the Great are very appropriate: agnosce, christiane, dignitatem tuam! recall your dignity, O Christian. We are all called to build up the Church, in full adhesion to the Holy Father and his magisterium.
16. In his homily during the Mass pro eligendo pontifice, the cardinal dean, Joseph Ratzinger, spoke of a “a dictatorship of relativism which does not recognize anything as for certain and which has as its highest goal one’s own ego and one’s own desires.” What are the principal moral problems that Christians have to confront today?

It is not easy to answer such a broad question. We could speak about many subjects, but I would like to mention here only two virtues: charity and chastity.

In the first place, I think that Christians have to reaffirm their conviction that charity is the summit of the Gospel message. Charity in its full sense, that is to say, not only the occasional extraordinary gesture, but constant charity, in one’s family, with one’s friends, among one’s colleagues; concern for the sick, the poor, the lonely, the sad, the needy; charity at work, in politics, in the economy. Really we are speaking of a personal virtue, of one of the greatest gifts that the Church can offer to the world. We are also speaking of the Holy Spirit, who is uncreated Love, and of his action on souls.

In many environments, chastity is—an absent virtue, exiled, something that produces a devastating prejudice against a person. Paradoxically, one finds a certain shame in mentioning it, while all shame has been lost in speaking in public about the most twisted perversions, thus giving a sense of normality to every kind of disorder. Christian purity brings us immediately to Jesus, who asked of his disciples a cleanness of sight, of heart and of conduct. Unfortunately we are living in an eroticized society, where sex has become a type of merchandise that is bought and sold. We are seeing the terrible consequences of this painful loss of humanity, which turns a rational creature into an animal. Catholics have to restore to the world an appreciation for chastity, which is more closely linked to charity than might at first seem the case. In a certain sense, chastity is a form of charity: of love for God, of respect for oneself and for others.

17. St. Leo IX, whom historians consider the best German Pope of the Middle Ages, condemned the erroneous theories of Berengarius of Tours about the Eucharist at the Synod of Vercelli in the year 1050. Perhaps it is not just by
chance that Benedict XVI, who was elected on April 19, the liturgical feast of St. Leo IX, has emphasized the fact that his election took place during the Year of the Eucharist proclaimed by John Paul II.

One of the first documents of John Paul II—his letter *Dominicae Cenae*, in 1980—was on the Eucharist. His last pastoral decision, of great symbolism, was to center this year, which became the last of his pontificate, on the Eucharist. Thus, the first synod of bishops that the new Pope will preside over will be dedicated to the Eucharist, “the center of the Church’s life” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1343) and the source of its evangelizing mission. Indeed, all of this makes us think of God’s ordinary providence, which always finds a way to help us look “towards the center,” towards the Eucharist.

18. In one of the thanksgiving Masses for the beatification of Josemaría Escrivá, on May 19, 1992, Cardinal Ratzinger defined the founder of Opus Dei as “a great man of God, who traveled all over the world to bring to everyone the courage of Christian normality, which is precisely holiness: to live the gift that we received in baptism.”

I have noticed that Benedict XVI likes to consider the Christian life as a seed deposited in the soul at the moment of baptism. At first it seems insignificant; nevertheless it shows itself to be efficacious in the face of evil and, above all, it brings goodness to the world. It brings, so to speak, clean water, water that makes all the deserts fruitful. It is a question, in the end, of the Gospel parable of the mustard seed, which sums up the aspirations of all Christians, and consequently of the faithful of Opus Dei, placed as we are in the midst of the world. The mission of Catholics in society can be seen in this way: as bearers of a small, and at the same time great, seed of peace and joy that matures within the soul and spreads throughout the world.

19. In these moments, what are the priorities of Opus Dei in carrying out its service to the Church?

The service that the Prelature carries out can be summed up in its formative task, open to priests and laity, men and women, of all cultures and professions. The formation that Opus Dei gives helps to remind people of an essential truth: that all Christians are called to imitate Jesus in our
daily lives, that our vocation is to serve others, to love them, precisely through our profession and our dealings with others. Serving others in one’s ordinary life, discovering the dimension of service contained in all human work, is an excellent way of making Christ known. I also like to stress that the work of Opus Dei is directed to everyone; it isn’t limited to any particular sector of society. It tries to help every Christian to bring Christ’s light to those around him. This means both transmitting the treasure of the faith, and learning from others, who are loved and redeemed by Christ. It also fills me with joy that the faithful of Opus Dei, both men and women, seek to look towards Mary, the woman of the Eucharistic, who knew how to make her entire life an oblation, in union with Christ’s sacrifice, for all souls.

Back to Contents

In the Father's House, an article in ABC, Madrid (April 5, 2005)

_In the Father’s house_

John Paul II spoke to us in many ways. He spoke through encyclicals, homilies, addresses, letters and books—through his words, his writings, and the images he left us. He often employed the language of symbols, with eloquent gestures full of meaning. All of these actions sprang from the depths of a soul intimately united with Jesus Christ, and therefore carried with them the communicative power of the Word of God.

These thoughts kept running my mind on the evening of Saturday, April 2. It seemed to me that the whole day had seen a succession of signs of deep eloquence. In the morning we heard the halting words that he addressed to young people—his last message: “I have sought you out; now you are the ones who have come close to me, and I thank you for it.” As some of the television programs in Italy said, April 2nd was an unexpected and improvised “World Youth Day.” By nightfall, 100,000 persons were praying to our Lady for the Pope, as he was dying. And our Lady graciously accepted the prayer of her children for their father. “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.” John Paul II
seems to have died just as the prayers in the Square were ending, and the final “Amen” was a farewell to him. Before this, at eight o’clock, Bishop Stanislaus Dziwisz celebrated the Mass of Divine Mercy Sunday. Is there any message that could be more consoling for one who is dying? The Merciful Love of God the Father is waiting for you in heaven, the definitive dwelling of Love.

To me, April 2, seems filled with symbolism, coincidences that were impossible to foresee, impossible to organize. Only the Providence of God, rich in mercy, could unite the prayer of thousands of children for their father, before the Blessed Virgin, on the eve of the universal feast of Divine Mercy.

All of those circumstances speak to us not only with the language of words or the expressiveness of emotions, but with the beauty of symbols, which leave an indelible imprint on the soul.

The liturgy for the funeral of John Paul II puts on our lips a beautiful prayer, in the preface of the Mass for the dead, which confirms us in “the hope of our happy resurrection.” How forcefully the Church declares that “the sadness of death gives way to the bright promise of immortality”! How natural it is for us to imagine the Pope in the presence of the Blessed Trinity, in a life that will never end. For we know that “for your faithful people life is changed, not ended. When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven.”

John Paul II possessed many qualities and gifts. Some people will now stress his role in the history of the Church and of humanity, his human and supernatural virtues, his talents. For me, as for countless men and women all over the world, the Pope was, above all, a father. In him we deeply experienced the reality that the Church is united by the bonds of communion proper to a family. The Pope is a father for Catholics from many different countries; he is the principle and foundation of unity in the Church, the source of fraternity among all men, the promoter of peace.

I dare to say that John Paul II portrayed in an outstanding way the principal role of his life, the role of father, the function of vicar of Christ. He did so with his whole personality, as an image and living symbol among us. May we all understand and put into practice what God is asking of us in
such a clear way, making the Church, as John Paul II urged, “a home and school of communion.”

Today we have so many reasons to be grateful: to God, for the gift of this Pope; to John Paul II, for his strong and gentle fidelity; to so many people, eminent or unknown, who were his collaborators throughout these almost 27 years. We are especially grateful to those who cared for him with filial love up to the last moment: to Archbishop Dziwisz, Father Stanislaus, his faithful aide throughout his life; to the religious sisters, whose names do not appear in the papers; to Poland, who gave the Church such an illustrious son; to the doctors looking after him; to the journalists who have been describing to us, with deep emotion, these painful and unique moments.

Pope John Paul II would often say, when people sometimes asked him not to expend such a great physical effort: “after one Pope there comes another.” I think we can detect here not only his awareness of being in this world only in passing, like all men and women, but also his certainty of having been put by the Holy Spirit in the see of Peter not to be acclaimed as a man, but to strive to ensure that mankind acclaims God.

In these days Catholics are already praying for the next Pope, whoever he may be. And we are also praying to our beloved John Paul II that he intercede before God for his successor. There come to mind some words of St. Josemaría Escrivá: “I thought the words on loyalty that you sent to me was very appropriate: ‘I carry with me every day in my heart, in my mind and on my lips, an aspiration: Rome!’” The name of a city, a prayer, a bond of union for all Catholics, for all men of good will.

Faith and Unity article in La Gaceta de los Negocios, Madrid (May 7, 2005)

Faith and unity

On the evening of April 19, when the fumata bianca announced the election of the new Pope, the people who had crowded into St. Peter’s
Square burst into uncontainable applause. And this scene was repeated in many other cities and countries all over the world. No one knew yet who had been elected. The cries of joy were not for a particular person. They were for St. Peter’s Successor and the Vicar of Christ on earth. Thus what St. Ambrose wrote so many centuries ago was once again seen to be true: *Ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia.* Where Peter is, there the Church is present. The Church and all her children were rejoicing at the new Roman Pontiff. A little less than an hour later we met Pope Benedict XVI and received his apostolic blessing. And we were moved to see once again that the Successor of Peter is with the Church and the Church rejoices with his presence.

After some time had passed, we began to reflect on what we had experienced with so much joy. The conclave’s brevity—scarcely 24 hours—gave rise to quite a few commentaries. In our mother the Church there are legitimate differences of language, mentality and experience. But the Holy Spirit brings all of these together when the search is made for the one who can best guide the Church in confronting the challenges that our era presents, continuing in a dynamic and creative way the work of our beloved and unforgettable John Paul II.

His last homily before being elected to the chair of Peter, and Pope Benedict XVI’s first message on the morning of April 20, present us with the broad outlines of the challenges that need to be confronted and that the Pope will not fail to respond to. Faith in Christ our Lord and Redeemer is the center on which all these converge and from which an adequate response must also come. This realization leads to the petition that our Lord “give us a new shepherd according to his heart, a shepherd who will lead us to the knowledge of Christ, to his love, to true joy,” a petition from the Liturgy that heaven has heard.

Striving to attain “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13), is the task that confronts each new Christian generation. Today anyone who decides to follow the path of faith is buffeted by strong ideological currents and intellectual fashions. Through faith we open our hearts to the saving mercy of God. God’s mercy is a joyous affirmation, a positive reality that wounds no one and fills all men and women with peace and hope. But divine mercy puts a limit to evil, as
John Paul II said. And the “father of lies” (Jn 8:44) continually searches out new means of resistance, seeking to separate us with subtle deceptions from faith in the Church’s Creed. He tries to convince us that, in order to be up to date, one has to let oneself be led by any gust of human doctrine (cf. Eph 4:14). Only someone with a superficial view of certain aspects of contemporary culture could fail to see this reality.

Fortunately there are also many positive signs today. Benedict XVI reminds us of what was evident to everyone: “John Paul II's funeral was a truly extraordinary experience in which we glimpsed the power of God, who, through his Church, wants to make a great family of all peoples by means of the unifying power of Truth and Love.” All those who spontaneously poured into Rome, including non-Catholics and non-believers, putting up with long waits and much discomfort to bid a final farewell to the one who for nearly three decades guided us on the path of faith, were the fruit of John Paul II's generous self-giving, giving himself in the sight of all right to his last breath. We couldn’t have a clearer example of holiness, calling us to give our life with generosity in order to bring Christ to every corner of the world. “We must be enlivened by a holy restlessness,” we heard from then Cardinal Ratzinger in his homily on April 18, “a restlessness to bring to everyone the gift of faith, of friendship with Christ. Truly, the love and friendship of God was given to us so that it might also be shared with others. We have received the faith to give it to others.” And with the faith we should also offer our availability to cooperate, with a readiness to dialogue, in the construction of a truly just society, built on freedom and peace.

Benedict XVI has sketched out the broad outlines of his pontificate. The Church, during this third millennium, needs to continue illuminating human life with the light of the Gospel, which has been applied to our times, with the Holy Spirit’s help, by the Second Vatican Council, whose teachings need to continue to be carried out. Especially during this year, the Eucharist, the heart of the Church’s life and the source of her evangelizing mission, will be the permanent center of the Petrine ministry to which the new Roman Pontiff has been called. With the power of the Eucharist we have to seek diligently, within the one truth, for full unity with all those who believe in Christ, pressing on in theological dialogue.
and taking the specific steps needed to move people's hearts towards union. Above all there is a need for interior conversion—a necessary prerequisite for true progress on the path of ecumenism. No effort will be spared in fostering peace and dialogue among cultures, so that mutual understanding will lead to the seeds of a better future for all. Benedict XVI will continue to foster the solicitous attention to youth shown by John Paul II, because they are the future and hope of the Church and of humanity. The Holy Father declared that his primary task consists in making Christ’s light shine forth before the men and women of today, including those of other religions and those seeking an answer to the most pressing problems of human existence.

Benedict XVI is preparing to undertake these tasks, trusting in the help of God and in our prayers and our own fidelity to Christ. He is placing the many gifts God has granted him entirely at the service of his demanding mission. These include his deep theological knowledge and strong piety, the experience acquired during so many years working closely beside John Paul II in the service to the Church, and his clear vision of the dramas of secularism and relativism. All those who know him well recognize his refinement and ability to listen to and appreciate others’ views (so far removed from the caricature spread by a few thoughtless people) and his broad intellectual outlook, which has led some of the most important European intellectuals of our time to seek to dialogue publicly with him.

In these first days of his pontificate, he has more than once referred to the fragility of the inadequate instruments that God deigns to employ. We who are sons and daughters of God and of the Church know that this is a time for unity, of which Peter’s successor is the visible source and foundation. He has a right to the gratitude and affectionate loyalty of all Catholics for his efforts in the exercise of his universal ministry, which is now beginning. Personally I am frequently saying, and asking others to do so, a short prayer that I so often heard from the lips of St. Josemaría Escrivá: *Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam*. All with Peter, to Jesus, through Mary.
Upon learning of the death of John Paul II (April 2, 2005)

*Upon receiving the news of the death of Pope John Paul II*

Today more than ever is a time to pray, closely united in Christ, our hearts full of gratitude to John Paul II. He spent himself day after day until his last breath in order to fulfill his mission as Father and Shepherd.

Today our filial gratitude is mixed with sorrow, profound and serene sorrow. Throughout these nearly 27 years we learned to love John Paul II with our whole heart, which now is rent by his absence.

But we know, through faith, that John Paul II has crossed "the threshold of hope" to await us, with his habitual goodness and peace, in the heavenly home everyone longs for.

From faith, too, arises our supernatural serenity. We neither want to, nor can we, cancel our sorrow, but we live it serenely, convinced that God has done what is best for so faithful a servant of his Church.

This is also the moment to pray for the next Pope, for whom we Catholics are ready from this moment to give all of our filial affection. I ask God to grant him grace and assistance in assuming a task with so much responsibility.

As for myself, I confidently ask for the protection of John Paul II, a good and faithful servant of the Lord, and I also ask him to intercede before God for his successor.

In regard to the sickness of Pope John Paul II (April 1, 2005)

*In response to the sickness of John Paul II*

In the midst of the peace that the Holy Father always conveys to us, we are all deeply concerned by the recent turn in the health of our beloved
John Paul II.

I recently learned that he wanted to pray the Stations of the Cross today, to meditate again on the sufferings of Our Lord. We unite ourselves to the prayers of the Pope, who is giving us so clear an example, in the midst of his suffering, of the trust that comes from being with Jesus.

I pray for his Holiness, for all that he bears in his soul. And I ask God to accompany him, to fill him with his light, and to flood him even more with serenity.

I am sure that I am speaking for multitudes of people in saying that we Catholics, in particular, wish we could be at his side, accompanying him moment by moment, not leaving him night and day. We can do that with our prayers. Today, the first Friday of the month, is a good occasion to pray to Our Lord in the Eucharist for our beloved Pope.

On the election of Benedict XVI (April 19, 2005)

On the election of Pope Benedict XVI

Today is a moment of great joy for the entire Church. Catholics all over the world are giving thanks to God for the gift of a new Pope, Benedict XVI. Once again his children turn their eyes to Peter’s successor, finding in him light and serenity.

In my name, and with the certainty that I am expressing the sentiments of the men and women who make up the Prelature of Opus Dei, I assure Benedict XVI of our fullest union both with him and with his teachings: a deep communion. The new Pope is well acquainted with the Prelature’s mission and knows he can count on the cheerful efforts of the priests and lay people who form part of it in order to serve the Church, which was St. Josemaría Escrivá’s only ambition. Along with our union with him, I also want to transmit to him my deep filial affection, joined to the prayer and affection of all the faithful of Opus Dei.
During these days of trust-filled waiting, there has been a lot of talk about the Roman Pontiff’s immense responsibility, about the Church’s need for his ministry, and the weight of the mission that rests on his shoulders. All of this is true. But we are also seeing now how the Pope, besides God’s help, can rely on the support of the prayer and affection of all Catholics and of so many other persons of good will.

The circumstances surrounding the death of John Paul II and the election of Benedict XVI have been a marvelous manifestation of faith on the part of millions of persons and a moving expression of unity: in a shared sorrow first of all, at the loss of our beloved John Paul II, and also in their joy at the gift of a new Pope. May John Paul II protect his successor in this moment of a new springtime!

I am also struck, as is only natural, by the Church’s marvelous continuity, so clearly reflected in the joy of the People of God at the election of Peter’s new successor.

Back to Contents

Your most important business is your children, article in La Stampa, Turin (June 25, 2005)

*Your most important business is your children*

From ancient times there has been a kind of dichotomy between “big history” and “little history,” between the unusual and the everyday. On the one hand are the grand gestures (real or imagined) of kings and heroes; on the other hand, the ongoing tasks, often tiring, that occupy ordinary people most of each day as they work to support their families.

Even in Christian lands, people often regarded work as a punishment from God. Those words of Yahweh when he cast our first parents out of the Garden of Eden after they committed the original sin are familiar enough: “You shall eat your bread in the sweat of your brow.” But many seem to have forgotten the divine command, “Increase and multiply, fill the
earth and subdue it,” when the Lord made man and woman in his image and likeness.

For many centuries work (especially manual, but not only that) was considered something that lacked dignity, and people tried to be free of it when good fortune, a noble birth, or an important position in society made that possible. Today, what wounds human dignity is not work but precisely the contrary—unemployment. In this sense, the changed perspective has a positive side. The social teaching of the Church, beginning with the 19th-century popes, has played a role in bringing about that change.

The popes’ social teaching has also influenced the life and writings of spiritual authors who find it congenial with their own insights. Several writers of the 20th century come to mind, especially St. Josemaría Escrivá. In a commentary on God’s command to Adam to till the earth, the Founder of Opus Dei asserted that work is dignified and holy, “a human necessity God has entrusted to us here on earth, filling our days and making us partakers of his creative power, that we might harvest ‘fruits for eternal life’ (Jn 4:36) while earning our living” (Friends of God, 57).

Thanks to this change to a more mature evaluation of work during the past century, professional tasks have been recognized as a commonplace that does not lower human dignity. Unfortunately, however, many people regard those occupations as something out of the ordinary that interferes with normal living. Professional success at all costs has come to occupy center stage: achieving great dreams of epic proportions is what matters. Morality—the human and supernatural value of the ordinary—is often set aside.

Today ordinary life has been reduced in practice to domestic life. The family is cast on the ash heap, the great loser in a feverish rat race. Plainly, a culture shaped by “stakhanovites,” by fathers and mothers absent from the home, has had a very negative impact on family life.

Sometimes, unfortunately, it becomes easier to break the marital bond than a professional contract. And disproportionate work also places the children in danger. A boundless increase of juvenile violence, for example, has been attributed to a reversal of values represented by the frenetic urge to
produce that leads many to undermine the family’s strength as an institution.

An absentee father who is more interested in his career than in his children cannot serve as a firm reference point for them. In the same way, a child’s relationship to an absent mother cannot fail to be disregarded even if it is always a necessary relationship at the bottom of everyone’s heart. Schools that sacrifice authentic human formation to criteria of efficiency do not help their students to cultivate what is most basic to their needs.

When John Paul II spoke of “the gospel of work” he helped us to discover its supernatural meaning. When performed with a Christian outlook, any task can humanize families, jobs, and society as a whole.

“Children are your most important ‘business,’” St. Josemaría once told a businessman to dissuade him from devoting too much of himself to his job at the expense of his family.

It has been 30 years since the Founder of Opus Dei died (June 26, 1975). His message can fill us with new hope in the permanent quest for meaning as we face the continuous barrage of questions the contemporary world aims at us. St. Josemaría reminds us of a great truth that Benedict XVI has emphasized in proclaiming that the Church is alive. She invites us to explore her treasury of hidden answers that can become lights to guide us on our way.

Books published

Getsemani, a new book of Bishop Javier Echevarria

A book by Bishop Javier Echevarría entitled Getsemani: En oración con Jesucristo[^1] (Gethsemane: In Prayer with Jesus) has been published by
Planeta publishing company of Barcelona. The book is the fruit of the author’s personal prayer.

Using St. Matthew’s account of Christ’s prayer in the Garden as a connecting thread, the Prelate of Opus Dei analyzes verse by verse the Evangelists’ teaching about Jesus’ agony in the Garden of Olives. Through the book’s nine chapters, the author invites us to unite ourselves fully to Christ’s prayer, contemplating Jesus from up close and trying to be one more person in the Gospel scene. “Let us pause calmly in contemplating this passage,” he invites the reader, “which shows us the divine strength of Jesus’ love for mankind, his brothers and sisters, and, at the same time, to what an extreme he took upon himself our frailty and weakness.”

Ascetical considerations, supported by documents of the magisterium of the Church, writings of the saints, the Church Fathers and other spiritual authors, especially St. Josemaría Escrivá, alternate with paragraphs of intimate personal prayer, which help the reader to draw close to Jesus, and to formulate resolutions for a sincere and deep personal conversion. The reader is led to see how Christ’s prayer in Gethsemane should be a model for our own lives.

The narratives of St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke are presented at the beginning of the book in three parallel columns, enabling the reader to compare the details provided by each Evangelist.

ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA
Other News

The journalist Frances Greene, who holds a doctorate in Communication Law and Ethics from the Complutense University of Madrid and a research professorship in the School of Communications at the University of the Andes in Chile, has carried out a study on the Founder of Opus Dei’s approach to public opinion.

Her book is entitled *La opinión pública y los medios de comunicación en el pensamiento de San Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer*, and has been published by Editorial Promesa. In the first of its five chapters, the author discusses the central message of Opus Dei in regard to sanctification of work in the context of the work of a journalist. The second chapter contains commentaries by St. Josemaría about the role of the media in the task of evangelization. The third discusses the Founder of Opus Dei’s concern for the professional, doctrinal, and spiritual formation of journalists, with special attention to his direct involvement in the creation of the School of Communications at the University of Navarre. In the fourth chapter, Professor Greene gives a summary of St. Josemaría’s preaching on four key virtues for social communications: truth, freedom, responsibility, and justice. In the final chapter she speaks of how closely he followed the news of the world in the press, seeing in every situation God’s provident hand.

February 2005 saw the publication of the second edition of *Pot*, the Slovenian version of *The Way*. The first edition had been published in Argentina in 1973. The new edition, by the Slovenian publisher, Koper Ognijce, is a thorough revision of the first edition, and amounts almost to a new translation. The print run was 2,000 copies. The large number of reviews published in the country’s media indicate the strong interest in the book.
On the occasion of the Year of the Eucharist, the Colombian publisher Procodes, in collaboration with the Corporation for Studies and Publications in Quito, has published 10,000 copies of the Booklet *La Eucaristía, Misterio de Luz*, which includes two homilies by St. Josemaría (“The Eucharist, Mystery of Faith and Love” and “On the Feast of Corpus Christi”), in addition to a prologue by the Prelate of Opus Dei and an appendix with suggestions for proper deportment in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. In the second half of 2004 the same booklet has been published (or in some cases republished) in many other countries, including Spain, Italy, Brazil, the Congo, Australia, the United States, Slovenia, Kenya, etc. In Poland, the KCC publishing company has published a compact disk with an audio version of these two homilies, with voice and background provided by specialists from Polskie Radio.

In the Italian cities of Martina Franca and Chieti, a street and a plaza respectively have been dedicated to St. Josemaría. Also in the church of San Elias in Messina and the church of Santa Maria la Nueva in Vibo Valentia, portraits of St. Josemaría have been placed for the veneration of the faithful.

On May 21 and 22 a pilgrimage was undertaken from Vienna to the Shrine of Máriapócs, organized by the Cathedral and by the church of St. Peter. The pilgrimage was held to commemorate two events: the fiftieth anniversary of St. Josemaría’s stay in Vienna, where the Founder of Opus Dei prayed to our Lady using the aspiration *Sancta Maria, Stella Orientis, filios tuos adiuva!*, and the centennial of the miraculous shedding of tears by the shrine’s icon of our Lady. The Greek Catholic bishop blessed a plaque commemorating the two anniversaries, which was to be later placed in the shrine.

70th anniversary of the first pilgrimage to Sonsoles

In May, the month the Church dedicates to our Lady, many Catholics have the custom of honoring the Mother of God by making a pilgrimage.
In 1935, St. Josemaría undertook a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Sonsoles in Avila, Spain, marking an important milestone in the history of Opus Dei.

The historian Andrés Vázquez de Prada, in his book The Founder of Opus Dei, relates the trip made by St. Josemaría, accompanied by two students, Ricardo Fernandez Vallespin and Jose Maria Gonzalez Barredo, to honor our Lady at this shrine: “Without entering into the walled area,” Vazquez de Prada tells us, “they walked directly to the small shrine. From far off one could see the shrine high on a hill top. They prayed a rosary as they were going up, another inside, in front of the statue of our Lady, in the midst of votive offerings and plaques in thanksgiving of favors granted, and a third part of the rosary on their way back to the Avila railroad station...As a souvenir of this pilgrimage, Fr. Josemaría kept a handful of ears of wheat in a small case as a symbol of the hope of apostolic fruitfulness in the month of May.”

In the shrine of Sonsoles there is now a plaque recalling that first pilgrimage of the founder of Opus Dei.

Thirtieth anniversary of St. Josemaria's departure for heaven

June 26, 2005 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the death of the founder of Opus Dei. The anniversary was celebrated with the simplicity that would have pleased St. Josemaría, who always said that his desire was to “hide and disappear.” Nevertheless, many of the media made reference to the date. Vatican Radio, for example, broadcast an interview with Fr. Norman Insam, Delegate Vicar of the Prelature in Rome.

As is now customary, the feast of St. Josemaría was celebrated throughout the world with solemn Masses attended by large numbers of people.
Statue of St. Josemaría in a Marseille church

A statue of St. Josemaría was blessed in Marseille on June 18. The statue, the work of a local artist, Louis Taddei, is in a chapel dedicated to our Lady in one of the most important churches in the city, the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. The life-sized statue is located at a slight elevation, framed by an arch, facing a bust of Archbishop Belslunce of Marseille, who in 1720, when the entire population was threatened by the plague, consecrated the city to the Sacred Heart.

The idea of dedicating a statue to St. Josemaría arose three years ago, according to Virginie Pappalardo, in charge of information for the event. She recalled that a few days before October 6, 2002, the date of the canonization of the Founder of Opus Dei, “thousands of people left the port of Marseille for Rome to take part in the canonization. On seeing the faith of all those people, we realized that Josemaría Escrivá was a saint with widespread devotion in France as well.”

The blessing of the statue took place in the course of a Eucharistic celebration presided over by Cardinal Archbishop Bernard Panfieu of Marseille, together with other celebrants. Among them was the Prelate of Opus Dei, who blessed the statue. About 1400 people took part in the ceremony.

In the homily, the Cardinal spoke of the miraculous catch of fish by the first apostles in the Lake of Tiberias, and recalled the pilgrimages that the Founder of Opus Dei—whom he referred to as an “adventurer in sanctity”—made to the Shrine of Notre Dame de la Garde during his stays in Marseille.

At the end of the ceremony, Bishop Echevarría turned to Msgr. Ellul, the rector of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, to thank him for his reception and for the initiative he had taken in installing the statue of St. Josemaría.

Marseille was the first city to organize (in 1996 in the church of Notre Dame de la Garde) an exposition about the Founder of Opus Dei.
News
Masses for the repose of the Bishop Alvaro del Portillo

On the occasion of the eleventh anniversary of the death of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, Masses for him were celebrated in many cities throughout the world. The following gives details about some of them.

In Montevideo, the faithful filled the downtown parish church of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel on March 13 where, with the presence of the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Janusz Bolonek, a Eucharistic celebration was held for the soul of the first Prelate of Opus Dei. In Brazil, two Masses were celebrated on March 23rd, the anniversary date itself. One of these was in São Paulo and the other in Rio de Janeiro. The latter took place in the Church of St. Margaret Mary, presided over by Auxiliary Bishop Antonio Augusto Dias Duarte of Rio de Janeiro. In Ecuador two Masses were organized, both on March 22: one was held in the rectoral church of St. Josemaría, in Guayaquil, celebrated by Archbishop Antonio Arregui; and the other, with about 400 people in attendance, was concelebrated by Archbishop Emeritus Juan Larreo (who has been living for some time in Quito) and other priests in a public oratory of the capital. In Lima, the Mass for Bishop del Portillo, concelebrated by Cardinal Cipriani and various priests (among them the Regional Vicar of the Prelature) brought together a multitude of faithful. Other such celebrations were held in Chiclayo, Cañete, Arequipa and Piura. In Chile, Masses were celebrated in seven cities: Santiago, San Bernardo, Viña del Mar, Concepción, Antofagasta, San Fernando and Temuco. In San Salvador, Tegucigalpa and Guatemala there were also Masses for Bishop del Portillo on the days before March 23 (since the anniversary fell on Wednesday of Holy Week this year, the observance was held earlier in most places).

As in previous years, the CITE (Cebu Institute of Technology and Enterprise) organized a Mass in the cathedral of Cebu, Philippines, for the soul of Bishop del Portillo, who was the founder of that educational center. The Mass took place at 6 p.m. on March 11, presided over by the Cardinal Archbishop, Ricardo J. Vidal, who concelebrated with seven other priests. About one thousand people took part.

In Strathmore University in Nairobi, Kenya, a Mass was held for
Bishop Alvaro, presided over by Msgr. Robert Lozano, with some 300 people attending. The Mass celebrated in Kinshasa was presided over by Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Nlandu. During the ceremony, and especially in the prayers of the faithful, prayers were offered for the health of Pope John Paul II and for peace in the world and in the Congo. An anniversary Mass for Bishop del Portillo was also celebrated in Lubumbashi. In Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, a Mass was held on March 16, in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit of Mvolyé, presided over by Msgr. Antoine Torres, Regional Vicar of Opus Dei, with about 300 people in attendance.

On the anniversary of his death, Bishop del Portillo was remembered in Spain with Masses for the repose of his soul in 35 cities. The one in Vigo, in the Church of Our Lady of Fatima, on Wednesday, March 16, was broadcast by the parish television station and by a local radio station, reaching over 25,000 people. Masses for Bishop del Portillo were also celebrated in Amsterdam, Paris, Cologne, Vienna, Milan and many other cities. In the Basilica of St. Eugene, in Rome, the Eucharistic concelebration for the first Prelate of Opus Dei was presided over by his successor, Bishop Javier Echevarría.

The Church studies the sanctity of Jose Maria Hernandez Garnica

The process of canonization of the priest and engineer, José María Hernández Garnica (1913-1972), opened on February 28 in Madrid, his native city. The opening ceremony, presided over by Auxiliary Bishop César Franco Martinez, took place in the Pontifical Basilica of St. Michael.

Speaking to those present, including a large number of the candidate’s relatives, Bishop Franco stressed the close tie between Fr. José María and St. Josemaría Escrivá. “It is very beautiful,” he said, “to see in all the Church’s foundations and apostolic works the fruits of Christian life and of holiness that the witness of the founder’s heroic life in the service of God and men brings forth.” For his part, José Carlos Martin de la Hoz, director
of the Office for the Causes of Saints of the Prelature of Opus Dei in Spain, and postulator of the cause, underlined among other features Fr. José María’s generous response to God’s call, the centrality of the Mass in his life, his apostolic fruitfulness, his humility, his frankness and his union with the founder of Opus Dei, “who placed great trust in him.”

José María Hernández Garnica was one of the first faithful of Opus Dei (he asked for admission to the Work in 1935) and one of those who worked closest with the founder. In addition to being a mining engineer, he held doctorates in Natural Science and in Theology. He was also one of the three first members of the Work to be ordained a priest, together with Alvaro del Portillo and José Luis Múzquiz, in 1944. Soon afterwards, St. Josemaría placed him in charge of the apostolic work of Opus Dei with women. Later, starting in 1957, St. Josemaría asked him to take responsibility for Opus Dei’s development in England, Ireland, France, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium and The Netherlands. He died with a reputation for sanctity on December 7, 1972, in Barcelona.

Establishment of new Centers of the Prelature

The Regional Vicars have established Centers of the Prelature in the following cities:

Alcorcón (Spain), Barcelona, Elche (Spain), Madrid, Manila, Matadepera (Spain), Móstoles (Spain), Ribeirão Preto (Brazil), Toronto, and Torrent (Spain).

Pontifical Appointments

On January 12, 2005 the Holy Father John Paul II appointed Father Augusto Diaz Duarte as Auxiliary Bishop of Rio de Janeiro.

Msgr. Ignacio Carrasco de Paula has been named Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy for Life.

Msgr. Paul O'Callaghan has been named a member of the Council of the Pontifical Academy of Theology.

Father Javier Canosa Rodriguez has been named consultor for the Congregation for Catholic Education.

Conclusion of the Diocesan phase of the cause of canonization of Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri

The cause of canonization of Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri (1916-1975), chemist and researcher, was opened several years ago. On March 18, in the Zurbaran Student Residence in Madrid, where she had been the director, the ceremony concluding the diocesan instruction, the first phase of the process that the cause of the saints ordinarily follows, was brought to its conclusion. The ceremony was presided over by the Cardinal Archbishop of Madrid, Antonio Rouco Varela, who on November 12, 2001 had opened the process at the request of the Prelature.

Throughout a hundred sessions, the tribunal examined the writings of Guadalupe, listened to the testimony of fifty-four witnesses who knew and dealt with her during her lifetime, and collected evidence that she lived the Christian virtues in a heroic manner. The resulting documentation is now being remitted to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri, one of the first women to ask for admission, joined Opus Dei on March 19, 1944. She worked in Spain, Mexico and Italy, carrying out an intense work of apostolate and social development with special attention to the problems of women. Her doctoral thesis in chemistry was entitled “Refractory insulation with rice husk ashes.”
She taught in a number of educational institutions, including the Instituto Ramiro de Maeztu and the Women's School for Industrial Instructors, both in Madrid. In 1965 she received the Juan de la Cierva Research Prize.

In Mexico, she helped found several student residences and schools for farm women. In Rome, she assisted St. Josemaría Escrivá for several years in the central government of Opus Dei.

In the ceremony concluding the process, the Cardinal Archbishop of Madrid noted that “what the life of this servant of God contributes to the Church and society of the 21st century is: femininity, professionalism and zeal for sanctity, lived in the world, seeking the welfare of women, without limiting her total and radical dedication to Christ in Opus Dei.” In connection with this last point, he recalled the impact on Dr. Landázuri of her first meeting with St. Josemaría on January 25, 1944: “it changed her life; she saw, after speaking with him, that God was asking everything of her.”

Two bulletins have been published about Dr. Ortiz de Landázuri. Recourse to her intercession is widespread, as is shown by the numerous favors attested to by signed statements, of which a hundred have been included in the documentation.
INITIATIVES

• In Brief
The twentieth anniversary of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

An address delivered by Cardinal José Saraiva Martins

It is a source of particular satisfaction to me to take part in the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, not only because of my awareness of this university’s high scientific level and profound ecclesial sense, but also because I have had occasion to follow closely its still brief but fruitful trajectory during these past twenty years.

My years as a professor and rector of the Pontifical University Urbaniana coincided with the first steps of what is today the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. It was back in the eighties when I first learned that a group of professors living in Rome were going to begin the departments of theology and canon law under the direction and patronage of the University of Navarre’s prestigious schools in those fields. On January 9, 1985, the Congregation for Catholic Education issued the decree by which these two departments were established. And thus was born the Roman Academic Center of the Holy Cross.

In May of 1988, I was appointed secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education. From that moment on, reports about the Roman Academic Center reached me in a direct and official way. On January 9, 1990, after having verified the development attained by the Roman Academic Center of the Holy Cross, the Congregation promulgated the decree with which it became the Roman Athenaeum of the Holy Cross, establishing not only the school of theology but also that of philosophy, to which was later added the school of canon law. The institution thus took an important step forward in its process of consolidation. Some time later, when I was still in the Congregation for Catholic Education, two other important events took place: the granting by the Holy Father, on June 26, 1995, of the title “Pontifical,” and the creation, on February 26, 1996, of the school of social communication.

In May of 1998, John Paul II granted me the honor of being named Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. The culminating
moment in the history of the institution in which we now find ourselves, that is, its elevation to the rank of Pontifical University, thus came to my knowledge more indirectly. Nevertheless, my relationship with the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross has been continual, although from a different perspective. As Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, on October 6, 2002 I had the immense joy of participating in the solemn canonization of St. Josemaría Escrivá, to whose apostolic and priestly zeal we owe the creation of this university. And a short time ago I was called upon to issue the nihil obstat for the beginning of the process of beatification and canonization of its founder and first Chancellor, the Servant of God, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo.

I could add here some additional considerations, but this is not the moment to speak about myself. Rather I want to focus on the institution whose twentieth anniversary we are celebrating. Therefore, I will dedicate the rest of my talk to some brief remarks about the spirit a university should have, which this institution and its faculty marvelously exemplify.

From the times of its origin, the university has often been the subject of reflection. Thus we have many ancient and modern commentaries that we could use as guidelines for our considerations. On this occasion it seems particularly appropriate to me to use the words that Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo spoke, as Chancellor of the Roman Academic Center, on November 20, 1985, at the opening of its first academic year: “In civil society, the university—with its teaching and research, with its aspiration to penetrate deeply into the sources of wisdom and science—is in the vanguard of mankind’s paths. This truth, which is valid for all universities, is so with greater reason for those in which the ecclesiastical disciplines are cultivated. Indeed, the study and teaching of the sacred sciences, always in union with the magisterium of the Church and under her guidance, opens the path that the Christian should follow and indicates the final goal towards which he should direct his steps.” “The Roman Academic Center of the Holy Cross,” Msgr. del Portillo continued, “tries to faithfully carry out this ideal.”[1]

The words just cited, which may stir up moving memories among many who today work at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, indicate the three fundamental points for the configuration of a university that I would
now like to briefly comment on: a) the unity between different fields of knowledge; b) the formation of persons; c) service to culture and, from the Christian point of view, the great task of evangelization.

a) *Diversity and dialogue among the sciences*

The diversity of the sciences and, at the same time, the need for a connection among them, has been noted since antiquity, giving rise to profound epistemological reflections—one need only think here of Aristotle. The inspiration of the medieval era was to unite these diverse sciences in a single organization—hence the name *universitas scientiarum*—thus bringing about a reciprocal stimulus. There were of course frequent moments of dissonance and conflict, but the university proved to be not only an effective institution, but also one capable of adapting to very diverse cultural situations. And it has retained these properties down to our day.

An analysis of the life of the university shows that a determining element for its fruitfulness comes not only from the coexistence of the different fields of knowledge, but also from other factors, of which I would like to point out two. On the one hand, the formation of a community that unites teachers and disciples. On the other, intimately connected with the preceding one, the uniting of teaching and research, so that teachers can transmit to their disciples not only knowledge already acquired, but also the desire of progressing in knowledge and the methodologies and instruments that permit the effective realization of this desire.

This is not the moment to sketch a history of the institution of the university, nor (a less ambitious objective, but still foreign to the purpose I am aiming at) to show how the existence or lack thereof of cooperation among researchers in different fields (interdisciplinary study, it would be called today) has always marked the periods of progress or decline in the university. St. Josemaría Escrivá, who was a great academic, perceived this clearly and therefore on many occasions promoted dialogue and teamwork that fostered a spirit of service and love for the truth. As he once said, “love for the truth imbues the life and work of the scientist and sustains his rectitude in possibly difficult situations.”[2] No researcher moved by an authentically scientific interest and, in broader terms, no Christian, can “be afraid of developing human knowledge, because all intellectual effort, if it is serious, is aimed at truth.”[3]
St. Josemaría Escrivá also emphasized the need to unite moral rectitude and love of truth with respect for the autonomy of the sciences, and, therefore for the legitimate freedom of teachers and researchers, in accord with a unified vision of the world and of man that always puts knowledge at the service of the person. His university mentality was thus fused with his condition as a Christian and a priest in a reciprocal strengthening. His writings in this regard are numerous. Here we will cite only one of the most significant texts, taken from an interview that he granted in 1967: “Religion is the greatest rebellion of men who do not want to live as beasts, who are not satisfied and will not rest until they reach and come to know their Creator. Thus, the study of religion is a fundamental need...That is why religion should be present in the universities, where it should be taught at the high, scholarly level of good theology. A university from which religion is absent is an incomplete university; it neglects a fundamental facet of human personality, which does not exclude but rather presupposes the other facets.”[4]

b) Formation

The words just cited refer, on the one hand, to the subordination of society to the good of the human person and, more specifically, to the good of the human person understood in all its richness, that is, open to God and called to union with him. On the other hand, they refer to the autonomy and specificity of each science, since what we might call the “theological orientation” of the human being and of his various activities does not ignore, but rather presupposes, the existence of other dimensions, certainly less high but equally constitutive of the human person. And in the specific case of the university, this implies seriousness in research, dedication to teaching, and professionalism in all the duties proper to academic life.

Having said this, and therefore having reaffirmed the autonomy of every sphere of science, it would be good to repeat that human society is not made up of machines or of slaves, but of human beings endowed with intellect and freedom. Therefore the institutions that make up society should enjoy a life of their own; they should have certain proper spheres of activity in which they can move with autonomy and which are respected by the rest of society. And at the same time they should be harmoniously
integrated into the society, giving rise to a sincere and authentic common life. What is destructive of social life is not only violent submission to a despotic authority or the negation of all autonomy, but also selfishness, the excessive, egocentric concern for one’s own interests.

St. Josemaría Escrivá had a clear awareness of this. Indeed, in his preaching two realities were always united: freedom and responsibility. Freedom, understood as a divine gift in virtue of which every human being is called to decide about his own life; and responsibility, as a spiritual attitude, as a nobility of spirit by which every human being, man or woman, consciously takes up his vocation, the role which he is called upon to carry out in history before God, and coordinates his activity with that of those around him.

The university, as St. Josemaría pointed out, needs to have “its own life.” It “must have the independence of an organ in a living body. That is, it must have freedom within its specific task of service to the common good,”[5] since “the university has as its highest mission that of serving mankind and of being a leaven in society.”[6]

In reading his writings, we soon note that this ideal, this union between freedom and responsibility, brings with it two fundamental consequences for the university: the love for the truth that we have already mentioned, with all that stems therefrom, and attention to the student as a person. Scientific rigor, eagerness to advance in human knowledge, the thrill one feels in making new discoveries, all these should never lead one to forget that he is not only a researcher but also a human being, and that at the same time those who listen to him in class, or participate in his research work, are not only disciples but men and women, human persons. His work as a university professor or researcher does not have as its goal just the progress of human knowledge. Also, and inseparably, it should seek to form those who are close to him as persons.

“There is no university in the proper sense,” wrote St. Josemaría, “in schools in which the transmission of knowledge is not united to the integral formation of the students’ personality.”[7]

The university should be an institution that forms men and women by elevating their mind and spirit. This goal is furthered not only through the
general tone of the teaching carried out in harmony with the truth and the demands of the times, but also (and I am happy to say this here in the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, where all of this is well looked after) the cordial relationship between professors and students, as well as, although this may seem of secondary importance, the beauty and decoration of the buildings.


c) Service to evangelization

“The university does not turn its back on the doubts, the worries, the needs of its students. It is not its mission to offer immediate solutions. But studying problems with scientific depth moves hearts, shakes off passivity, awakens sleeping powers and forms citizens prepared to construct a more just society.”[8] These words spoken by St. Josemaría in another academic address bring us to the third and final point I would like to develop.

To speak of the university, and in particular of a university which, faithful to its name, promotes not only the growth of knowledge but also the formation of those who attend it, is to speak of the future, of the succeeding generations. More specifically, of the effort thanks to which present generations are preparing the path for the following ones, fostering the progressive development of humanity. This task requires work, dedication, effort. And to give direction to all this effort, one needs an adequate conception of man and his destiny, something to which I have already referred. Societies are always the reflection of the image that human beings have of themselves. Christ, in whom we find the truth about God and about man, is the sure and indispensable guide.

Pope John Paul II, in the first of his encyclicals, invited us to look to Christ, “the center of the cosmos and of history,” and to turn entirely towards him all of our faculties: intellect, will, heart.[9] A call, no less pressing, was directed to us many years later, when in Novo Millennio Ineunte the Roman Pontiff sketched out the program for the period in history in which we now find ourselves: “Duc in altum! Let us go forward in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help of Christ.”[10]

Only a few months ago, when proclaiming the Year of the Eucharist, John Paul II recognized that the good auspices under which the
millennium began have become darker and that “a scenario emerged which, despite certain positive elements, is marred by acts of violence and bloodshed which cause continued concern.”[11] The Pope, nevertheless, did not retreat or abandon his effort, but rather decisively reaffirmed his hope: “in inviting the Church to celebrate the Jubilee of the two-thousandth anniversary of the Incarnation, I was convinced—and I still am, more than ever!—that this celebration would be of benefit to humanity in the ‘long term.’”[12] “More than ever!” Beyond any doubts and difficulties, the Christian has the assurance of God’s love shown in Christ, and he should live and act in accordance.

In St. Josemaría Escrivá we find this same faith, this same confidence in the power that Christ’s teaching and life can have on history. Among his many statements in this regard, I have chosen one that comes precisely from one of his academic addresses and that has as its background university work: “This world of ours will be saved, not by those who try to drug the life of the spirit, reducing everything to questions of economics or personal welfare, but by those who have faith in God and in the eternal destiny of man and who know how to receive the truth of Christ as a light to guide man’s action and behavior.”[13] They will act as consistent Christians, and thus serve their fellow citizens, who recognize and receive the faith as the fullness of truth: not only as a light that consoles them in moments of tribulation, but as a spur that leads them to undertake works of service to their fellow men and women.

I have reached the end of my talk. The above considerations and texts are well known to those who make up the academic faculty of the institution in which we find ourselves. For the Università della Santa Croce the adjective “pontifical” is not, nor has it ever been, a merely decorative title. Rather it is a qualification which it considers binding, inviting it to an active fidelity to the Roman Pontiff, and, in union with the Roman Pontiff, to the entire Church. This is the spirit which, echoing the priestly and apostolic zeal of St. Josemaría Escrivá, was infused into it by its founder, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, and which its present Chancellor, Bishop Javier Echevarría, whose friendship I consider an honor, continues to remind us of.
Twenty years have passed since the present Pontifical University of the Holy Cross began its work. This is a brief period of time for an institution, but a time filled with accomplishments, thanks precisely to its faithfulness to its foundational spirit. I end by expressing my wish that future years, lived always with the same intellectual and spiritual bearings, may be as fruitful, if not more so, than those that have already gone by.

In Brief

Graz (Austria) -- Christiana Justin in Geidorf Cultural Center

Geidorf Cultural Center opened its doors in 1973. Besides offering formative activities for the students in Graz, in recent years it has also organized conferences on teaching methods for parents.

“Should limits be set for one’s children? How and when?” This was the title of a conference given on March 3 by Christiana Justin, an anesthesiologist. Dr. Justin has five children and has been a widow for the past five years. An appealing multimedia presentation with scenes from the daily life of her children, now ranging in age from 12 to 24, held the audience’s attention. She noted that the second part of the title of her talk suggested the answer to the first question. —Yes, one has to establish limits, but one has to decide what they are, how they should be presented so they are accepted, and when is the proper moment to set them and to remove them.

Dr. Justin said that the limits are established naturally, with a logic of their own, at the point where the freedom of one person curtails that of another: A child who eats the chocolate that his brother has hidden in his “secret hiding place;” an adolescent who is listening to loud music when his father gets home tired from work and sits down to read the newspaper; a
daughter who spends the money her mother has given her for two weeks allowance on an expensive hair cut—all of these have gone over the line. In recent years, certain theories of education expounded radically anti-authoritarian systems, that of Summerhill being the most popular, with disastrous consequences. Thus, while the “healthy beating” our grandparents spoke of has gone out of style, today the imposition of behavioral limits on children, both tots and those of school age, has once more come to be seen as good pedagogy.

Limits are, in a way, challenges that contribute to the development of one’s personality: the children test how far they can go, how great a risk they can take before their parents react, and thus they learn to recognize the limits of what is possible and permitted. These limits give them security and confidence and impart attitudes necessary for life in society, learning to wait, not to have everything right away, to put others first, etc.

What characteristics, then, should limits have, to be effective in the education of children? Dr. Justin mentioned four. First: the limits have to make sense. That is, one must not make rules just for the sake of making rules. Second: the limits established have to be consistent, not changing them in a moment of “unsureness.” Third: the limits have to be the same for all the children, although at times one must apply them in a different way, according to circumstances of age, sickness, etc. In general, in a family with several children it is easier to set and maintain limits, because the children themselves will “educate” each other. Fourth and last: setting limits requires good judgment, that is, finding the mid-point between “laissez-faire” and over-strictness.

On April 30, Christiana Justin returned to Geidorf Cultural Center to take part in a meeting of friends and cooperators convoked to help get an ambitious project underway: the financing of the future building for Geidorf. The present building, provided by the Steirische Kulturvereinigung in 1973, is no longer adequate for the center’s needs, and the board of directors has decided to construct a new building.
Buenos Aires -- Leadership roles for women

La Ciudadela University Residence, in collaboration with the Center for Entrepreneurship at the IAE, the School of Business Management at Austral University, organized a seminar under the title *Women, what is your leadership role today?* The seminar took place on Saturday, April 30, at the Pilar university campus.

The conference was opened by Silvia Torres Carbonell, director of the Center for Entrepreneurship. It provided an opportunity for dialogue between the audience, some 700 university students and young professionals, and the speakers—distinguished professional women in various fields who transmitted their experience in both the professional and family spheres. All of them agreed that women, as well as men, can integrate family and professional work, and that the feminine contribution is indispensable in society. At the same time, there was unanimity that the concept of leadership of women has certain characteristics of its own and must always include the idea of service to the common good.

One of the panels was led by Graciela Barbadillo, a ballerina at the Teatro Colon, Maria Gattinoni de Mujía, a lawyer, and Raquel San Martín, editor of the education section in *La Nación*. Another panel included Clarisa Estol, president of the Banco Hipotecario Argentino, Ana Giesso, a businesswoman in the fashion industry, and Maria Amelia Videla, of Manpower-Argentina. The latter emphasized, as a special quality of women, flexibility, understood as the capacity for interruption and negotiation: “This permits women,” she said, “to carry out an agenda that includes doing a number of different things at the same time.” Clarisa Estol concluded her presentation with a strong affirmation: “A person is not complete if she doesn’t have a family...My most valuable works of art are my children.”

“Education begins in the family; it is there that the most important values are imparted. School comes later. Therefore it is important to spend time with one’s family. This is why my children and my husband are the most important reality in my life,” declared the well-known model, television hostess and now businesswoman, Valeria Mazza, in reply to a question during the discussion period that followed the working sessions.
The conference was closed by Paola Delbosco, a doctor in philosophy from La Sapienza University in Rome: “A woman brings to the world something unique to her: her maternity,” she noted. Citing Edith Stein, she said that a woman’s soul “should be welcoming, luminous, noble and tranquil,” in order to protect life and perceive the needs of others.

Helsinki (Finland) -- The family, a means of communication between the individual and society

The builders of the medieval cathedrals did not spare any efforts. They knew that what they were constructing had to last for centuries. What should one say about the love between a man and a woman, if we truly believe that marriage should lead to a happiness that will last forever?

This comparison was made by Isabelle Gaullier, a specialist in family and marriage questions, at a seminar held on April 14 in the Vanhapuisto Cultural Center in Helsinki. The seminar focussed on the central role of the family for the correct development of the person. In accepting the challenge to construct a marriage, Ms. Gaullier said, both idealism and realism are needed. At the end, returning to the image of the great medieval churches, the speaker concluded: “it’s worth the effort, when what you are building is a cathedral.”

The next speaker, Dr. Kaija Hartiala, deputy mayor of Turku, the third largest city in Finland, related some everyday experiences from her own family. Mrs. Hartiala, who has been married for thirty years, has four children, along with a political and professional career that demands quite a bit of dedication. Through real life anecdotes, she stressed some key points for maintaining a happy marriage and a united family. For example, to confront the pressure of individualism, which could result in each member of the family “doing his own thing” and being absorbed by his own work, interests, friends, etc., the decision was made in their family to have dinner a little later than usual. Thus everyone could be at home together and talk
about their experiences that day. She also spoke of the importance of sharing interests with the other members of the family: in her case, jogging, which she does every day with her husband.

The audience raised many questions at the end of the seminar, an indication of the great interest in this topic in Finland.

Nairobi (Kenya) -- Businesses for village women

With the help of Kianda Foundation and the European Union, the Institut zur Cooperation Bei Entwicklungs-Projekten (ICEP) in 2003 started the project Trainer of Trainers. University women from Fanusi Study Centre, a corporate apostolate of Opus Dei, learned to instruct village women on how to start their own micro-businesses. In two years, 465 women from the villages of Ngong, Ngarariga and Riara have benefited from the program, in which 45 university women have taken part under the direction of Susan Kinyua.

The students first attend an intensive one-week training course, part of which includes a visit to the homes of the women who have been recommended for the program by the local office for community development.

Once the 60 or 70 women who are to benefit from the program in a village have been selected, the students begin the sessions with them. After a month, each woman is asked to present a plan for a business of her own, prepared with the help of the instructors. After agreeing on the amount of money needed to begin the business, the funds are provided by the European Union, the ICEP, and Kianda Foundation. The students, together with the person in charge of the project, visit the women each week for six months to follow up on their progress. With the money that they earn, the village women gradually repay the help they received.

An important part of the preparation given to the village women are the Life Skills sessions. These include talks on honesty, cheerfulness, a spirit of
service, hygiene and good manners, qualities that are beneficial to their families and to society in general. “The project,” says Susan Kinyua, “has an impact on the whole person. The women learn to make better use of their possessions and to be orderly, and as a consequence their self-esteem grows.” One of them said that, after the project, her husband respected her more and they argued less because she was now contributing to the support of the household. Now this woman is encouraging her friends to begin a business. Another, a widow, had lost everything. She was forced to leave her children with her mother: if I’m alone, she thought, I can find shelter some place and take care of myself. Thanks to the project, she began a small business, obtained a house and was able to bring her children there.

More than the money, what the women said they appreciated the most were the Life Skills sessions. “Will you continue giving us advice even when the project is over?” they asked the instructors, who promised to try to do so.

On their part, the university students also benefit from the program. They learn to appreciate the education they have received and some of them have already extended the project to their own home villages. On March 22, a graduation ceremony was held in Ngarariga during which diplomas were awarded to 80 women. The invited dignitary was Regina Gitau, director of adult education for the Kiambu district. Also attending was Titus Katembi as representative of the European Union.

Louvaine-la-Nueve (Belgium) -- Conference of Msgr. Schooyans at Neussart Residence

Msgr. Michel Schooyans, professor emeritus at the University of Louvaine, gave a lecture on John Paul II on April 12, at the Neussart Student Residence. Only ten days had gone by since the death of the Pope, and although the speaker himself noted how difficult it was to capture in a few words a personality as rich as that of John Paul II, the value of a
testimony such as his was evident to all. A member of the Pontifical Academy for the Social Sciences, Msgr. Schooyans was for many years a privileged witness of the concerns and decisions of the Holy Father.

The scope of the action of John Paul II was far reaching, including the defense of human rights (which many see linked to historic events such as the fall of the Berlin wall), the encouragement of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, the reconsideration of the relationship between faith and reason, and the defense of the family and human life. Msgr. Schooyans, in his address, concentrated on one specific area: John Paul II as the Pope of freedom.

Starting with his own experience, he described the climate of work that John Paul II created around him, characterized by a sincere openness to the contribution of each person and an interchange of ideas and opinions. The Pope’s spirit of work, combining rigor with good humor, was possible only through an intense life of prayer. “The incredible rhythm of the Pope’s pace of work,” said Msgr. Schooyans in response to a question, “never led him to lose sight of God; all the tasks waiting to be accomplished never cut off his search for God.”

Much has been said about the relationship of John Paul II to the fall of the Berlin wall and of Communist totalitarianism. According to Msgr. Schooyans, however, more important than obtaining freedom in a particular territory have been his efforts to achieve interior freedom for all humanity. “His concern to free man from slavery is at the center of Pope John Paul II’s teaching (although perhaps less widely known), about life, the family, and human sexuality. What the Pope proclaims is that Jesus has come to give us freedom, if we want it, from all the slaveries that weigh upon what St. Paul called the ‘old man’.”

One of the questions raised by the audience focussed on the meaning of suffering for John Paul II. “We have to thank the Holy Father,” said Msgr. Schooyans, “for having carried the cross to the end. If he had renounced it, it would have been less evident that by his suffering and death he had led the Church to a new Resurrection, a new Pentecost.”
Bogota -- A Corpus Christi Procession

On Thursday, May 26, the feast of Corpus Christi on the universal calendar, a Eucharistic procession was held at the University of La Sabana for the first time. This ceremony was in response to the wish expressed by the Holy Father that, during this year, the Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ be celebrated with special solemnity.

The procession was presided over by the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Msgr. Hernan Salcedo Plazas, with over 600 people taking part, including students, professors, friends, and neighbors. It began at the main chapel of the university and crossed through a large part of the campus, from the Plaza de los Balcones to the Glorieta de los Sauces, from there to the School of Medicine, then to the School of Administration, passing by the Shrine of the Mother of Fairest Love, finally returning to the main chapel. The path was decorated with an abundance of flowers, while the university choir accompanied the procession with songs in honor of the Blessed Sacrament.

Many participants expressed the desire to have the Corpus Christi procession become a yearly event on the campus.

Back to Contents

São Paulo (Brazil) -- Building a house for a poor family

The Centro Assistencial e Educacional de Pedreira, a professional training school in one of the poorest neighborhoods of São Paulo, each year undertakes activities of solidarity with the poor during the vacation period. These projects are carried out by the schools students and other young men who take part in means of Christian formation organized by the Prelature of Opus Dei.

Among the activities this year, of special interest was that of five students who decided to build a house for a schoolmate’s family who were living in a shack in the neighborhood. They took it upon themselves to
obtain the material needed for construction and for the installation of electricity and running water. Numerous difficulties had to be overcome, ranging from bureaucratic obstacles to the lack of time. But finally, with the help of other students, teachers and friends, they managed to complete the project on time. As might be expected, the biggest joy of the construction team was the happiness of the family who benefited from their efforts.

São Paulo -- Television program for the family

Two years ago, a group of professionals organized the Association for Culture and Current Events (ACEA), dedicated to reflection on the ethical and humanistic principles of culture. Its first activity was a cycle of conferences entitled “Values as the Basis for a New Society.”

At the end of its first year, ACEA had gathered extensive material in the area of education, bioethics, ecology and, above all, the family. At the same time, the Rede Vida television channel decided that the material would be of interest for its program Tribuna Independiente, which is broadcast throughout the country on Friday evenings.

Tribuna Independiente brings together experts in various fields who participate in round table discussions on subjects of their specialty. On this interactive program, TV viewers send their questions by e-mail, which are answered directly if time permits. The questions that remain unanswered at the end of the program are handled afterwards.

At the request of the public, Tribuna Independiente is now broadcast also on Mondays. In addition, the Association sends videos of the programs to anyone interested. Many requests come from schools, libraries and universities. The principal of the Galois School in Brasilia was invited to speak on the respective roles of parents and schools in educating children. Later she decided to make copies of the video for the three thousand families who send children to her school.
An example of the repercussion of *Tribuna Independiente* was the case of a 15-year-old girl who after seeing one of the programs sent an e-mail to Professor Sueli Caramello Uliano, who had spoken about abortion. The correspondence was then continued, with the result that the young girl changed her decision to have an abortion.

The current research on embryonic stem cells, which is the subject of a piece of pending legislation, led the Attorney General of the Republic to watch an episode of *Tribuna Independiente* that considered this question. Two days later he declared in the country’s largest newspaper: “I have been greatly impressed by an interview that I saw on *Rede Vida* with a specialist on this question and am reflecting on his words. The fact is that, in order to save a life, one is doing away with another life.”

Cristobal Colon (Ecuador) -- Social work amid extreme poverty

More than 80 percent of the people in the community of Cristóbal Colon, in Esmeraldas Province, live in poverty. For five days, from March 28 to April 1, a group of university and high school students who take part in the means of formation at Alfil Cultural Center in Quito, carried out a social service program there. They cleaned up an area where a day-care center is to be built, dug a septic tank with a drainage ditch, rehabilitated the existing day-care center, and gave catechism classes to the children.

“Although the work was hard—especially the digging—what the people thanked us for most was the possibility of receiving the sacraments. A priest who accompanied us heard confessions and celebrated Mass for them, something they don’t usually have available,” said Pablo Cordero, who directed the project. Mateo Ruales, another volunteer, added that, of all that he did, the most important for him was giving catechism classes to the children and preparing them for their first confessions. For his part, Juan José Paz said he was especially moved when a teacher at Cristóbal Colón invited them to plant several trees next to the Canandé River: “She told us that this would commit us to returning. I certainly would like to go
back, and not just to see whether the trees have taken root.”

Lismullin (Ireland) -- "Come and see for yourself" workshop

At the end of a retreat, the participants, from all over Ireland and most of them Cooperators, decided that the best way to encourage their friends to make a retreat was to invite them to experience the atmosphere of Lismullin. That idea resulted in the organization, two weeks later, of a 24-hour workshop entitled “Come and see Lismullin.” Each of the organizers committed himself to inviting a few acquaintances. The workshop was filled, and those who enjoyed it the most were the promoters on seeing the reactions of their friends. As a consequence, they insisted on the need to organize a similar workshop in the Fall.

Zürich (Switzerland) -- From Professor Ratzinger to Pope Benedict XVI

On June 25, 2005, a seminar for priests was held in the Flüntern Conference Center in Zürich. It was opened by Canon Christoph Casetti, who related his personal impressions as a disciple of Professor Ratzinger at the University of Münster and in summer theology weeks in Bierbronn, Germany. He presented a picture of an accessible man, with a deep theological knowledge and a great capacity for clarifying complex questions. In the second part of his conference he gave an overall picture of the work of Joseph Ratzinger as professor, bishop, and cardinal prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

This presentation was followed by celebration of Mass. The liturgical texts were those of the votive Mass of Christ the Eternal High Priest, since, as Canon Casetti noted, the date marked the anniversary of the ordination
of the three first priests of Opus Dei. Following a projection of a filmed get-together with St. Josemaría in Valle Grande, Peru, Father Andreas Wildhaber gave a meditation on an aspiration prayed frequently by the Founder of Opus Dei: “omnes cum Petro ad Jesum per Mariam!” All with Peter to Jesus through Mary! The seminar ended with Benediction and the singing of the Salve Regina.

Back to Contents

Rome -- The Pincio Clock entrusted to ELIS students

Since 1867 there has been a monumental water clock in the Pincio Gardens, the Roman park of the Villa Borghese. The clock was built by Giovanni Embriaco, a Dominican religious with an interest in technology. It functions thanks to a small artificial reservoir that causes its pendulum to oscillate.

As part of the “Adopt a monument” program promoted by the Rome municipal government, restoration of the clock has been entrusted to Centro ELIS. In May, in the course of a simple ceremony, the mayor of Rome, Walter Vetroni, gave the director of the School of Silversmithing and Watchmaking of ELIS, Pierluigi Bartolomei, the key to the complicated mechanism, which in the future will be adjusted and maintained by students at the school.

For this occasion and coinciding with its 25th anniversary, the School of Silversmithing and Watchmaking organized an exposition entitled L’ora e l’oro (Time and Gold), from May 9 to 14, in an art gallery on the Piazza del Popolo. The Undersecretary of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Gianni Letta, was present at the opening ceremony.

The professional courses in silversmithing at ELIS began in 1979 and those in watchmaking the following year. The initiative was suggested by the professional association of silversmiths. At a time of unrestrained violence, when dark clouds seemed to be hovering over the profession (a silversmith on the Via Gallia had died in an assault in 1979), the association
thought that the ELIS school would represent a constructive response. Hundreds of students have since graduated from ELIS. Their training consists in 3,600 hours of instruction and practice over a period of three years. External practice is carried out in some of the best workshops in the field. In some cases, the watchmaking students also work at the Swiss *Eta* company, the world leader in the production of watch mechanisms.

Paris -- A meeting with Cardinal Barbarin

On the evening of Wednesday, March 8, Cardinal Philippe Barbarin, Archbishop of Lyon, met at the *Centre Garnelles* in Paris with about a hundred university students and young professionals.

The gathering, with the informal atmosphere of a get-together, touched upon such topics as the role of the bishops, overcoming difficulties to attend daily Mass, vocation as a specific call from God, the need for prayer, and apostolate.

The responses of Cardinal Barbarin were direct and to the point, with a constant dose of humor. In regard to the need to find an answer in life that would satisfy all the needs of the body, intellect and spirit, he answered that in the search for perfection “machines have us beaten.” But citing Christ’s words, “be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect,” he said that “prayer is God remaking me, God putting me in my right place.” At another moment, answering a young teacher of physical education’s question about how to help his students respond to a possible vocation, Cardinal Barbarin commented on the “Magnificat,” our Lady’s song of praise to God, and spoke of what he called “the apostolate of the ‘yes’,” which “consists in moving towards the great ‘yes’ through a series of small ‘yes’s.’”

Manila (Philippines) -- Responsible citizenship
The Philippine government four years ago made the National Service Training Program (NSTP) part of the academic curriculum. The aim of this program is to encourage students of higher learning dedicate a total of 108 hours to volunteer activities, and thus acquire a greater civic awareness.

Iraya Study Center and Tahilan Residence & Study Center, through an agreement with the University of the Philippines and that of St. Thomas, have received authorization to carry out a program with several hundred students who, after receiving the proper training, will teach catechism in two schools in Manila. The preparation includes classes of Catholic doctrine and seminars on topics of special relevance such as the family, the environment and strategies for combating poverty. It also includes instruction by experts on motivation techniques for children through tutorials in reading, mathematics, English and the sciences. The experience has been very positive. The NSTP helps the young people to become aware of their own duties and responsibilities as citizens. “To know that I can be useful to others,” said one girl taking part in the program “not only made me happy, but gave me a new sense of personal fulfillment.”

Las Pinas (Philippines) -- Young people and the future of the country

Alliance for the Family is an initiative begun by some faithful and cooperators of Opus Dei. Its objective is to actively promote the defense of the family: in the first place through campaigns oriented to fostering positive legislation. The juvenile section of Alliance for the Family was born in September, 2004, and five months later organized its first interscholastic contest: On-the-spot Writing. The awarding of prizes took place on February 12 in the Narra Club.

Nadia, a fourth-year high school student, received first prize for her essay, in which she said, among other things: “Young people make up 15% of the Philippine population and we can become a determining factor in exposing certain fallacies that are spread as supposedly scientific facts. A widespread prejudice is that with less people the per-capita income will
increase. The fact is just the reverse: more people in the work force means more income for everyone. Let our country maintain its present rate of growth in population so that there will be more people earning income in comparison to the number of those dependent on others’ income.”

Toledo (Spain) -- Presentation of the Navarre Bible

In 1971, a team of specialists in the School of Theology at the University of Navarre began preparing a new edition of the Bible. The work has progressed since then at a steady pace and has recently been concluded. The result comes to 6,500 pages, in five volumes. The Spanish text is based on the oldest known existing texts in Aramaic, Greek, Hebrew and Latin. The commentaries include 3,000 quotations from saints, Fathers of the Church, and ecclesiastical documents.

On Thursday, May 5, the complete Navarre Bible was presented in the auditorium of the ONCE Foundation of Toledo. Presiding at the ceremony was Archbishop Antonio Cañizares of Toledo, the Primate of Spain. Also taking part were Francisco Varo, a member of the publishing committee, Ignacio Garcia Pinilla, Vice-Dean of the School of Humanities of Castilla-La Mancha, and Pilar Hernández, commercial director of EUNSA (Ediciones Universidad de Navarra).

The Archbishop of Toledo said that the notes accompanying the sacred text are a great help for the reader in placing himself “before a text that is not the word of man, but the word of God, always living and timely.” On his part, Francisco Varo pointed out that the criterion guiding the work of translation had been the effort to be “faithful to the original, including the forms of expression of the Hebrew or Greek languages,” while at the same time trying to provide a Spanish translation that was fluent, simple and clear to the reader.
Paris -- Workshop on priestly vocations

On Tuesday, February 1, some fifty priests from various dioceses gathered at the parish of Saint Pierre du Gros Caillou in Paris. Among them were three diocesan delegates of vocations and the superior of a Belgian seminary. They met to study the question of priestly vocations, so essential for the life of the Church.

The workshop included three presentations followed by a discussion, a Eucharistic concelebration and lunch. “We wanted to discuss this subject,” explained one of the organizers, “from three viewpoints. Msgr. Anatrella dealt with the individual facing the decision of the priesthood. Fr. Guillaume de Menthière emphasized the way the Church calls candidates to the priesthood. Finally, Professor Levillain focussed on the topic from the viewpoint of history in general and the history of the Church in particular.”

Msgr. Tony Anatrella, a specialist in social psychiatry and a consultor to the Pontifical Council for the Family, explained some psychological characteristics of the process of personal maturity in candidates to the priesthood, and the importance of channeling them towards the cultivation of interior life. In addition, he emphasized the influence of the “visibility” of the priest in the process of young people identifying with the priesthood. Priests, he said, have to attract by their example, and thus they have to care for the image they project in their way of dressing and conducting themselves.

Fr. Guillaume de Menthière, a teacher at the Cathedral School in Paris and pastor of the church of St. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, spoke of the need to create a culture that fosters vocations, as John Paul II recommended. “The Church calls the candidate who has the necessary qualities,” he said. But, he explained, “such suitability is necessarily somewhat open, for in reality only God knows what priests the Church needs. Therefore, one should have no fear of calling people, of having imaginative initiatives, of launching out in an apostolate that seeks them out.”

Finally, Philippe Levillain, professor at the University of Nanterre and member of the Institut Universitaire de France, spoke of priestly vocations in
France and of applying in French seminaries the guidelines of the Council of Trent on the formation of the clergy. After an historical journey through the 19th and 20th centuries, he said: “societies have the priests they deserve.” If at times vocations are lacking, it is because the laity are not responding to the fundamental questions facing humanity at a particular period.

Back to Contents
IN PACE
Faithful of Opus Dei and members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross who died in the first half of the year 2005

In the first half of 2005, 297 faithful of the Prelature and 23 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.

To read the full version of Romana, you can subscribe to the print edition.

Back to Contents
A study
Saint Josemaría Escrivá, Reader of Sacred Scripture

Francisco Varo
University of Navarre

Sacred Scripture is the ever-timely word of God. Therefore Biblical studies cannot be limited to researching questions from the past, but must seek for signs of God’s ongoing dialogue with mankind.[1] This conversation is carried out most fully in the lives of the saints—saints in the biblical sense, not only those who have been officially canonized by the Church but all those who through grace are sustained by faith and charity. For it is they who are capable of hearing and responding most fully to God’s voice, finding the Word of God in the written words that make up the text of the Bible.[2] Thus a theological study of Sacred Scripture requires one to pay attention to the ways in which reading the Holy Bible has borne fruit in the lives of the saints.

In the life of St. Josemaría Escrivá, right from his youth we see his soul being enriched by his reading of Scripture and the word of God taking on life in his deeds.[3]

An exhaustive investigation of the riches that came to light when St. Josemaría read and invited others to read the Gospel, or any Biblical passage, is an immense task, since texts and phrases from Sacred Scripture ordinarily constituted the background for all his preaching, for his catechesis, and often for his daily conversations, in which with human and supernatural grace he generously shared with others the treasure of the Word of God.

The present study will be limited to an initial study of his activity as a reader of Sacred Scripture, from three complementary perspectives. The first section will consider key moments in his life when, in one way or another, he “heard” the voice of God in the words of Scripture. The second investigates the passages of Scripture, meditated on once and again, that left a deeper mark on his writings. The third looks at his very personal style of presenting the Gospel in his preaching.
In dialogue with God, through Sacred Scripture

St. Josemaría Escrivá's biographers have recorded that he was a devoted reader of good literature, both Spanish and spiritual. He also read and had a good knowledge of the writings of the Fathers of the Church. But the Holy Bible, especially the Gospel, was, in his hands, not only a book filled with useful instruction, but a place to encounter Christ.

St. Josemaría always gave great importance to little things as a manifestation of his love for God. This concern is reflected in his activity as a reader of Sacred Scripture. When looking at the text he paid careful attention to each detail, to each gesture and reaction of the people involved, to each word.

Sacred Scripture, read and reread, and meditated on deeply, left in his heart a reservoir of “small texts,” incisive phrases, often very brief—sometimes only one or two words—which prolonged the divine dialogue of prayer, spilling over into all of his daily activity. He repeated these phrases to himself in the street or while he worked, discovering not a glorious and remote past, but present-day vistas that opened before his eyes.

One might mention in this context his use of the expression *ut videam!*, the words with which the blind man at Jericho responded to Jesus’ question, “What would you have me do for you?” “Lord, let me see” (*Mk* 10:46—52). St. Josemaría, right from his early youth, had been impressed by the boldness of Bartimaeus in throwing aside his warm cloak to reach Jesus, and the simplicity with which he explained what he needed. He was also struck by the quick response of the Master, who was moved by the blind man’s daring and simplicity, and immediately granted him his sight (cf. *Mk* 10:46—52). When in his youth he realized that our Lord was asking something from him, and that he still did not know exactly what it was, while putting himself completely in God’s hands, he prayed insistently, asking for light: *ut videam!* As he wrote years later, in 1947:

I can never forget how, when meditating on this passage many years back, and realizing that Jesus was expecting something of me, though I myself did not know what it was, I made up my own aspirations: ‘Lord, what is it you want? What are you asking of me?’ I had a feeling that he
wanted me to take on something new and the cry *Rabboni, ut videam,*
“Master, that I may see,” moved me to beseech Christ again and again,
“Lord, whatever it is that you wish, let it be done.”[8]

On other occasions, the word of God sown in his heart by his careful
reading yielded rich spiritual fruit. One event of this sort lies behind an
annotation that he made in his personal journal (*Apuntes*) in October, 1931.

I felt God acting. He was making spring forth in my heart and on my
lips, with the force of something imperatively necessary, the tender
invocation: *Abba! Pater!* I was out on the street, in a streetcar...Probably I
prayed out loud.

And I walked along the streets of Madrid for an hour, maybe two, I
can’t say; time passed without my being aware of it. People must have
thought I was crazy. I was contemplating, with lights that were not mine,
that amazing truth. It was like an ember burning in my soul, never to be
extinguished.[9]

Other experiences of this kind also opened up new and surprising
perspectives in some passages from Scripture. This happened, for example,
with Jesus’ words in St. John’s Gospel: “And I, when I am lifted up from
the earth, will draw all men to myself” (*Jn* 12:32). The Evangelist
comments: “He said this to show by what death he was to die” (*Jn* 12:33).
Some days before the words just cited from his Apuntes, on August 7,
1931, he had noted down:[10]

The time for the Consecration arrived. At the very moment when I
elevated the Sacred Host, without my losing the necessary recollection,
without my becoming distracted (for I had just made mentally the Offering
to the Merciful Love), there came to my mind, with extraordinary force and
clarity, that passage from Scripture: *Et si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia
traham ad meipsum* (*Jn* 12:32). Ordinarily, before the supernatural, I feel
afraid. Later comes the “Do not be afraid, it is I.” And I understood that
there will be men and women of God who will lift the cross, with the
teachings of Christ, to the pinnacle of all human activities... And I saw our
Lord triumph, attracting to himself all things.”[11]

We notice that the words from Scripture that struck him are always
cited in Latin: *Ut videam! Abba, Pater! Et si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia*
*traham ad meipsum. Ne timeas!* The reason seems clear. He read Sacred Scripture in the Latin Vulgate, as was usual in those years. St. Josemaría is an assiduous and attentive reader of the word of God. But he is not only a reader: he listens. And that enables him to hear the word of God and to understand the meaning that our Lord is communicating to him through words of Scripture.

Brief and incisive phrases, such as those mentioned, are frequent in his preaching and writings.[12] Although the words of Scripture are always the background to his discourse,[13] in his works he did not ordinarily concern himself with technical questions, such as the analysis of the structure of a passage. Rather, the recalling of a few words brings to mind a scene rich in meaning. This is the case, for example, in some lines in the book *Furrow*:

Do you want to be daring in a holy way, so that God may act through you? Have recourse to Mary, and she will accompany you along the path of humility, so that, when faced by what to the human mind is impossible, you may be able to answer with a *fiat!* — be it done!, which unites the earth to Heaven.[14]

Here the simple mention of the word *fiat* is enough to recall the complete verse: “And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me [*fiat*] according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her” (*Lk* 1:37). This evokes the whole passage of the Annunciation and condenses for the reader the memory of the divine action involved in our Lady’s call to a supernatural vocation, her unconditional acceptance of God’s plan, and the result that ensued: the incarnation of the Son of God.

In the next section of this study, we will consider the brief passages from Scripture that are mentioned most frequently in St. Josemaría’s writings. Only then will it be possible to raise the question of his overall hermeneutical approach, seeking in his works explicit statements (although usually just passing references, such as a comment in one of his meditations) on how to read and teach others to read Sacred Scripture.

*Most frequently cited words of Sacred Scripture*

A merely numerical approach to the use of Scripture in the writings of any author has great limitations, and might have little meaning in itself.
But it does provide objective data that allows one to draw some preliminary conclusion.

We do not intend to present a mere collection of numerical tables or statistical facts, but rather to focus on words and phrases that reappear with greater frequency in St. Josemaría’s writings. We have limited ourselves here to his currently published works. On the one hand we have such texts as *The Way*, *Holy Rosary*, *Conversations with Josemaría Escrivá*, and the collection of homilies entitled *Christ Is Passing By*, which are the books published during the author’s lifetime. To these we have added *Friends of God*, *Furrow*, *The Forge*, *In Love with the Church*, and *The Way of the Cross*, all of which St. Josemaría had already revised for publication, but which were not actually printed until after his death. His extensive unpublished writings have not been included. We are aware, then, of the fact that this work constitutes only a first attempt to broach this topic.

Scripture is preached, heard and read. But from a phenomenological point of view, the first act is reading. A text which is not read is a dead letter.[15] Therefore, to raise the question of the texts that are cited most frequently in St. Josemaría’s works is to highlight the passages from Scripture that resonated most forcefully for him in his own reading.

A simple enumeration of the passages from Sacred Scripture that are most often cited explicitly[16] is in itself quite illustrative. The two passages that appear most frequently, fourteen times each, are Luke 1:38, and within this verse especially the words “behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word,”[17] and the first part of the Christological hymn of St. Paul’s Letter to the Philippians (*Phil 2:6-8*), especially the phrase: “he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.”[18] Third place in frequency, cited twelve times, are the words from Matthew 11:29-30: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”[19] Uniting all three of these texts is the call for a full acceptance of God’s plans and an unconditional and fearless personal dedication, following in Christ’s footsteps.

Cited ten times are the words from St. John’s Gospel referring to the scene at Calvary, words that strongly express the meaning of fidelity: “But
standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene” (Jn 19:25).[20]

Two passages from different contexts but with very similar content are each cited nine times. The first comes from Christ’s words at the Last Supper. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5).[21] The second is an exclamation of St. Paul: “I can do all things in Him who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13).[22]

Next in frequency come the Gospel words: “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mt 16:24), commented on eight times in the published works of St. Josemaría.[23]

Among the frequent citations in his preaching and writing is Jesus’ strong appeal: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:34—35),[24] and an explicit confession of love for Jesus by St. Peter, which came as a response to his direct question, “Do you love me?” “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you” (Jn 21:17).[25] Both of these texts are cited on seven occasions.

Finally we find three texts that are each mentioned on six occasions. The first is the heartfelt cry: “I came to cast fire on the earth; and would that it were already kindled” (Lk 12:49).[26] The second is Jesus’ trusting appeal: “Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Lk 22:42).[27] The third stresses the truth that all Christians are called to sanctity: “even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love” (Eph 1:4).[28]

St. Josemaría’s published works contain thousands of scriptural references, stressing the great themes of Christian catechesis and spirituality. Nevertheless, the recurring texts are not very many. The list that we have just presented includes all the passages that are cited more than five times, and it is not a particularly long list. Therefore its content offers valuable information about the way in which he read Scripture.
One can observe, first of all, that it is not a matter of complete passages from Scripture. At the same time, one finds in them a high density of content, which is shown especially in two aspects. The first is the presentation of Jesus, both in his actions and in his words, as a model for Christians. The second is the spur to respond faithfully to God. Here the figure of Mary is the paradigm with her yes to the divine plans revealed to her at the Annunciation, a yes that remained immutable, as shown by her fidelity at the foot of the Cross.[29]

If we look at his commentaries on these texts, we are struck by the vigorous force he found in the word of God, effective today and now, at each moment. We could cite, for example, some words that St. Josemaría preached on obedience:

Our Lord does not disguise the fact that his wholehearted obedience to God’s will calls for renunciation and self-sacrifice. Love does not claim rights, it seeks to serve. Jesus has led the way. How did he obey? “Usque ad mortem, mortem autem cruces, unto death, death on a cross.”[30] You have to get out of yourself; you have to complicate your life, losing it for love of God and souls. “So you wanted to live a quiet life. But God wanted otherwise. Two wills exist: your will should be corrected to become identified with God’s will: you must not bend God’s will to suit yours.”[31]

It has made me very happy to see so many souls spend their lives—like you, Lord, “even unto death”—fulfilling what God was asking of them. They have dedicated all their yearnings and their professional work to the service of the Church, for the good of all men.

Let us learn to obey, let us learn to serve. There is no better leadership than wanting to give yourself freely, to be useful to others. When we feel pride swell up within us, making us think we are supermen, the time has come to say “no.” Our only triumph will be the triumph of humility. In this way we will identify ourselves with Christ on the cross—not unwillingly or restlessly or sullenly, but joyfully. For the joy which comes from forgetting ourselves is the best proof of love.[32]

The author stirs the soul of the reader through the use of a brief and direct style.[33] The words from Scripture (Phil 2:8—9) appear as a response to a question directed to Jesus—How did you obey? We find ourselves
reading within a communicative process, carried out in prayer. Our contemplation of the example of Jesus does not remain as merely grateful admiration for what he has done, but spurs us to a vital identification with Him. The author brings in his own personal testimony as to the effectiveness of God’s word: “It has made me very happy to see so many souls spend their lives—like you, Lord, ‘even unto death’—fulfilling what God was asking of them,” thus helping us to formulate a specific response of generous self-giving.

St. Josemaría’s commentary does not seek to offer an academic exposition or a theological reflection on Christ’s kenosis, or to present a theological discussion of the virtue of obedience. What interests him here, as in most cases, is the actual life of the Christian, the disciple of Christ who must imitate the Master to the point of identifying himself with Him and making Him present in the midst of the world.\[34\]

The text from Philippians highlights the contrast between Jesus and Adam. The latter, being man, wanted to be like God (cf. Gen 3:5), while Jesus, being God, “emptied himself” (Phil 2:7). Christ’s obedience even to the cross (Phil 2:8) repaired the disobedience of the first man. St. Josemaría, in contemplating the example of Jesus, had before his eyes the Christian of our times. In the face of the temptation to make himself into a “superman,” to “be like God” and to disobey, he presented us with the path to be a true man and “lord,” in the image of God, which consists in imitating Jesus Christ and thus discovering the “lordship of serving.”

Another example illustrates the same hermeneutical attitude in a very different context. It is taken from an interview,\[35\] in which he is asked: “In conclusion, could you give us your opinion as to how the role of women in the life of the Church can best be promoted?” His lengthy answer ended with the words:

God is urging the Church to fulfill this task, the task of making the entire world Christian from within, showing that Christ has redeemed all mankind. Women will participate in this task in the ways that are proper to them, both in the home and in other occupations which they carry out, developing their special characteristics to the full.
The main thing is that like Mary, who was a woman, a virgin and a mother, they live with their eyes on God, repeating her words *fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*—‘be it done unto me according to Thy word’ (*Lk* 1:38). On these words depends the faithfulness to one’s personal vocation—which is always unique and non-transferable in each case—which will make us all cooperators in the work of salvation which God carries out in us and in the entire world.[36]

Mary’s response to the message of the angel is presented as though spoken into the ear of a woman today, so that, whether in the home or in any other professional occupation, she may give her unconditional adherence to God’s call, cooperating very directly “in the work of salvation which God carries out in us and in the entire world.” Here one sees the Christian anthropology of “the new man”—or more precisely of “the new woman” in this case—called to make the Gospel present not only in the ideal sphere in the act of reading, but in real life every day.

*“Another character in the scene”*

Reading does not consist in the mere line-by-line decoding of written symbols. In the act of reading several instruments are activated to unfold the potential of the text. As one advances in the text one recalls something read a few pages earlier, and new expectations are opened up which await a reply. Vacancies in the text are being filled in for the reader about which the text itself is silent.[37] In short, through signs a world of references is built up; there is brought into being the “world of the text,”[38] about which the text is speaking.

When the text in question is Sacred Scripture, this reading takes place in the Church with the guidance that is provided not only by the text but also by the Holy Spirit. These make up the “world of the text” for the Christian reader, who when reading has present the content and the unity of the entire Scriptures, the living Tradition of the whole Church and the analogy of faith.[39]

The text is a universe of truths that is open to the questions that are addressed to it. For example, the Gospel of St. Mark not only says what the evangelist wanted to transmit to his readers when he wrote it, but much more. The evangelist certainly wanted to point out the need to discover
who Jesus was, and to profess one’s faith in him, and to make the Gospel reach the ends of the earth. But through the world of the text that he constructed it is also possible to know a great many other things, such as the way in which Jesus, Peter and other persons who appear in the Gospel acted. It also informs us about the value placed on ancient traditions, and many other specific aspects of the customs of the times.

If the text is a universe of truths open to the questions that are put to it, clearly the depth of the responses offered to the reader depends on the value of the questions raised. Therefore, we will turn now to looking at the way St. Josemaría questioned the text of Sacred Scriptures.

The Forge contains a brief but incisive counsel regarding what God is saying to us in the very act of reading Scripture:

Do you want to learn from Christ and follow the example of his life? Open the Holy Gospels and listen to God dialoguing with men—with you.[40]

The Gospel is a book that enables us to look at past events that continue to be active in the present. The person reading is called to take an active part, listening attentively to the words addressed to him there:

As usual, let us turn to the New Testament, this time to St. Matthew, chapter eleven: “Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart” (Mt 11:29). Don’t you see? We have to learn from him, from Jesus who is our only model. If you want to go forward without stumbling or wandering off the path, then all you have to do is walk the road he walked, placing your feet in his footprints and entering into his humble and patient Heart, there to drink from the wellsprings of his commandments and of his love. In a word, you must identify yourself with Jesus Christ and try to become really and truly another Christ among your fellow men.[41]

The author involves the reader in his own response to the text. “One can go even further: the intention of Blessed Josemaría,” wrote a literary critic some years ago, “is that the receiver should take the initiative and become the creator, the co-author, the principal author in the conversation.”[42] Thus St. Josemaría invites us to read Sacred Scripture “from within”:
If you wish to get close to our Lord through the pages of the Gospels, I always recommend that you try to enter in on the scene taking part as just one more character there. In this way (and I know many perfectly ordinary people who live this way) you will be captivated like Mary was, who hung on every word that Jesus uttered or, like Martha, you will boldly make your worries known to him, opening your heart sincerely about them all no matter how little they may be.¹

But, and here is the key to understanding his way of reading Scripture, he is not inviting the reader to travel in his imagination to recreate a story in the distant past. Rather we are asked to contemplate today’s world, the world lying before each of us, and to go to the Sacred Text as a point of reference to evaluate our own experience in its true supernatural dimensions:

Make it a habit to mingle with the characters who appear in the New Testament. Capture the flavor of those moving scenes where the Master performs works that are both divine and human, and tells us, with human and divine touches, the wonderful story of his pardon for us and his enduring Love for his children. Those foretastes of Heaven are renewed today, for the Gospel is always true: we can feel, we can sense, we can even say we touch God’s protection with our own hands; a protection that grows stronger as long as we keep advancing despite our stumbles, as long as we begin again and again, for this is what interior life is about, living with our hope placed in God.²

St. Josemaría insists that Christ continues being very close to each Christian even today:

Live your life close to Christ. You should be another character in the Gospel, side by side with Peter, and John, and Andrew. For Christ is also living now: Iesus Christus, heri et hodie, ipse et in saecula! — Jesus Christ lives! Today, as yesterday, he is the same, for ever and ever.³

The risen Jesus is living now, and seeks in our own time disciples who will live close to Him and work at his side. He needs men and women who, identified with Him, will make Him present in the world.⁴

In one of his homilies he recommends:
My advice is that, in your prayer, you actually take part in the different scenes of the Gospel, as one more among the people present. First of all, imagine the scene or mystery you have chosen to help you recollect your thoughts and meditate. Next apply your mind, concentrating on the particular aspect of the Master’s life you are considering—his merciful Heart, his humility, his purity, the way he fulfills his Father’s Will. Then tell him what happens to you in these matters, how things are with you, what is going on in your soul. Be attentive, because he may want to point something out to you, and you will experience suggestions deep in your soul, realizing certain things and feeling his gentle reprimands. [47]

St. Josemaría urges us to contemplate the Gospel scenes by living them personally, “as one more character in the scene.” [48] He “develops his ministry of the Word by teaching us how to listen to the voice of God, who calls each one to sanctify himself in his own setting, in the place Providence has assigned to him.” [49] In The Forge he gives us the fundamental norm for reading and living the Gospel:

When you open the Holy Gospel, think that what is written there—the words and deeds of Christ—is something that you should not only know, but live. Everything, every point that is told there, has been gathered, detail by detail, for you to make it come alive in the individual circumstances of your life.

God has called us Catholics to follow him closely. In that Holy Text you will find the Life of Jesus, but you should also find your own life there.

You too, like the Apostle, will learn to ask, full of love, “Lord, what would you have me do?” And in your soul you will hear the conclusive answer, “The Will of God!”

Take up the Gospel every day, then, and read it and live it as a definite rule. This is what the saints have done. [50]

St. Josemaría “enters’ and ‘asks others to enter’ into the Gospel, which thus acquires its necessary and convincing formative dimension, leading one to the knowledge of the mystery of Christ and to communion with Him.” [51] We see him doing so with special force in his reading of the Passion:
Do you want to accompany Jesus closely, very closely?... Open the Holy Gospel and read the Passion of our Lord. But don’t just read it: live it. There is a big difference. To read is to recall something that happened in the past; to live is to find oneself present at an event that is happening here and now, to be someone taking part in those scenes.

Then, allow your heart to open wide; let it place itself next to our Lord. And when you notice it trying to slip away—when you see that you are a coward, like the others—ask forgiveness for your cowardice and mine.\(^{[52]}\)

The discourse of St. Josemaría moves in the ambit of *logos pragmatikós*, of the word that seeks to lead the reader to an encounter with God. As has been noted incisively of his literary work, “the writer through his discourse is seeking several different ends: the first of these is to contemplate; the last, to make the hearer or reader contemplate...there is the deliberate intention of moving the reader and immersing him in contemplation.”\(^{[53]}\)

Thus the reader is led to discover the Gospel’s perennial timeliness. “The exegesis of the Founder of Opus Dei could be described as one ‘of total involvement,’ which floods the soul with light.”\(^{[54]}\)

*In Dialogue with the Word of God*

“The Bible always served as St. Josemaría’s primary referential language.”\(^{[55]}\) Each of his pages was saturated with the words and content of Sacred Scripture, which by being meditated on once and again, enabled him to establish a dialogue with the Word of God.\(^{[56]}\) St. Josemaría would intersperse brief fragments or phrases from the Bible into the thread of his narration, accompanied by comments that were also brief (and at times without commentary), allowing that condensed citation to work on the reader in the act of reading.

He does not provide us, then, with a theory of exegesis or hermeneutics. Rather, he is an excellent guide for the authentic way to read Sacred Scripture, which goes beyond externals and establishes a personal communication with the Word of God speaking in the Biblical text. St. Josemaría was not unaware of existing textual analyses of Scripture that tried to weave together all the various threads found in the Bible. But he opted for presenting isolated threads, seeking to liberate Scripture from methodological bonds that were tightly binding it and that could render it
sterile by distracting the reader’s attention from the essential content in the communicative process.

St. Josemaría did not approach the Bible like someone searching in an antique store. His reading of the text was never an archeological reconstruction of past events. On the contrary, he brought the texts to life and inserted them into the cultural and religious concerns of today’s world. Although St. Josemaría was acquainted with contemporary exegetical techniques that employed a critical, structural, sociological and even psychoanalytical method in reading the Biblical texts, his commentaries moved on another level. He always sought to free the reading of the Bible from bonds which, although in part necessary, could suffocate its timeliness and impact.

In contrast to the great literary epics of the ancient world and the great religious books produced by human ingenuity in various times and cultures, in the Biblical text we find a message that has not been thought up by man, and that can ground one’s life precisely because it precedes and sustains it, totally transcending human thought. In that text we can hear God’s Word and enter into dialogue with it.

What was always foremost in St. Josemaria’s reading of the Biblical text was his eager desire to know God and to discover his will through the words of Scripture. He did not get lost in the myriad of literary and historical questions that make up the “textual world” of the Bible, and that can be of great interest, but he went directly to what was most important, a personal encounter with the Word of God.

Thus he brought to the Church new paths for putting into practice the Second Vatican Council’s exhortation that all preaching be nourished and guided by Sacred Scripture. As we read in the Dogmatic Constitution Dei Verbum:

In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets His children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in the word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life.[57]

[1] Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Dei Verbum,
We can recall here St. Anthony Abbott’s decision to give up his possessions and dedicate himself to prayer in the desert after hearing the episode of the rich young man (Mt 16:16-24) (cf. St. Athanasius, _Life of St. Anthony_, ch. 2-4; PG 26, 842-846); also or how St. Francis of Assisi, on February 24, 1209, during the reading of the Gospel at Mass (Mt 10:1-24) felt the call to an apostolic life of absolute poverty (cf. Tomas de Celano, _Vita B. Francisci_, I, ch. 9).


Cf. Andrés Vazquez de Prada, _The Founder of Opus Dei_, vol. I, Scepter Publishers 2001, pp. 63—64, which mentions his reading when still quite young of Gonzalo de Berceo, Alphonse X the Wise, and the poem El Cid; and 121-122, regarding his broad literary interests during his years at the seminary of Saragossa. In regard to his activity as a reader see Maria Thereza Oliva Pires de Mello, “A importância da leitura na obra do


[6] The person best acquainted with the writings of Saint Josemaria, Alvaro del Portillo, noted that when citing a text from Scripture “he never simply brings it in for show or in a hackneyed way. Each verse has been meditated frequently and yields new aspects hidden, perhaps, for centuries” (Alvaro del Portillo, Foreword to St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ Is Passing By*, paragraph 7).


It is good to note here that the Biblical riches of his writings cannot be reduced to the passages that are cited frequently, since Sacred Scripture is, as it were, the fertile soil in which all his words are rooted.


St. Josemaría Escrivá, *The Forge* 1021; *Christ Is Passing By* 19, 21, 31, 62, 113, 144, 162; *Friends of God* 97, 111, 201, 236; *The Way of the Cross* fourth station: second point for meditation; twelfth station: first point for meditation.


St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Holy Rosary*, fifth sorrowful mystery; *The Way* 507, 508, 982; *Furrow* 248, 977; *The Forge* 758; *Christ Is Passing By* 140, 171; *Friends of God* 287.

St. Josemaría Escrivá, *The Way* 416, 781; *Furrow* 697; *The Forge* 425, 437; *Christ Is Passing By* 16, 153; *Friends of God* 254, 305.

St. Josemaría Escrivá, *The Way* 717; *The Forge* 337, 656; *Christ Is Passing By* 120; *Friends of God* 123, 213, 271, 305.

Phil 2:8


The interview took place on February 1, 1968.

*Conversations with Msgr. Escrivá*, 112.

In regard to the concept “world of the text,” see Vicente Balaguer, *La interpretación de la narración: la teoría de Paul Ricoeur*, Eunsa, Pamplona 2002.


“If we seek for a method in the founder of Opus Dei’s ‘reading’ of the Bible, we can find it in his own expression: “as one more character in the scene” (José María Casciaro Ramírez, “La ‘lectura’ de la Biblia en los escritos y en la predicación del beato Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer,” *Scripta Theologica* 34 (2002,1) 140).


"He did not cite Biblical passages as references in support of what he was saying as "an argument from Scripture." On the contrary, the sacred texts are the point of departure for his reflection. He only cites them after meditating on them repeatedly, and incorporating them into his life" (Jose Maria Casciaro Ramirez, "La 'lectura' de la Biblia en los escritos y en la predicacion del beato Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer," *Scripta Theological* 34 (2002,1)134).