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

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

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

On the evening of 28 June, during the ceremony of Vespers for the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul, in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, Pope Benedict XVI officially proclaimed the commencement of the Year of St. Paul. It will close on 29 June 2009, the feast of these two Apostles. The Eternal City, “the Rome of Peter and Paul, bathed in the blood of martyrs, the center from which so many have set out to propagate throughout the world the saving word of Christ,”[1] is truly a privileged location since it has been tantorum principum purpurata pretioso sanguine, bathed in the blood of the two foremost Apostles.[2]

During these months, we will commemorate the two-thousandth anniversary of the birth of the Apostle to the Gentiles. To determine this date, studies of St. Paul’s chronology take into account all the facts established in his writings. In the Letter to the Galatians, he states that, after his conversion, he met St. Peter in Jerusalem, three years after his flight from Damascus[3], where the King of the Nabateans, Aretas IV, wielded power.[4] This would mean that his departure from Damascus would have been in the year 37 and his conversion between 34-35 AD. On the other hand, in the Acts of the Apostles, when the martyrdom of Steven is recounted, Paul is mentioned as being a “young” man, soon before receiving his vocation.[5] Therefore, although not a very precise date, a good guess for the birth of St. Paul would be the year 8 AD.

The Year of St. Paul urges us to reflect more deeply on the theological and spiritual legacy St. Paul left to the Church through his vast effort to spread the faith. As an external sign inviting us to meditate on the truths of the faith in the light of the Apostle’s teaching, the Pope lit a “Pauline flame” in the entrance to the Basilica of St. Paul in Rome. And in the same Church he opened the “Pauline Door,” which he passed through accompanied by the Patriarch of Constantinople on June 28th.

Apostle to the Gentiles

Who was Paul of Tarsus? He was born in the capital of the Roman Province of Cilicia, now part of Turkey. When he was captured before the gates of the Temple in Jerusalem, he addressed the crowd that wanted to
kill him with these words: “I am a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cilicia, but
brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated according to the
strict manner of the law of our fathers”.\[6\]

Towards the end of his days, looking back over his life and mission, he
will say of himself: “I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher”.\[7\]
Paul is not only a figure of the past. His message and life are always
relevant, since they contain the core of the perennial Christian message.

Paul has sometimes been called the “thirteenth Apostle.” Although he
didn’t belong to the group of the original Twelve Apostles, he was called to
his mission by Christ himself, who appeared to him on the road to
Damascus (Cf. I Cor 15:8). Moreover, he did as much as anyone to spread
the Gospel. “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are
they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am a
better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far
more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death.
Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.
Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned.
Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift
at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers,
danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false
brethren; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and
thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.”\[8\]

Paul did not lack for difficulties or travail, all of which he bore out of
love for Christ. But all the effort he expended and all the success he
achieved never led to vainglory. As St. Josemaría wrote: “human logic
cannot possibly explain the world of grace. God usually seeks out
deficient instruments so that the work can more clearly seen to be his. It is with
trembling that St. Paul recalls his vocation: And last of all, as by one born
out of due time, he was seen also by me. For I am the least of the apostles,
and am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church
of God” (1 Cor 15: 8-9).\[9\] “How could we not admire a man such as this?”
said Benedict XVI. “How could we not give thanks to God for having
given us an Apostle of this category?”\[10\]
St. Paul’s theological teachings are centered on the figure of Christ. His letters don’t provide us with many historical features of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, as the Gospels do. His concern for the events of our Lord’s earthly existence is focused on the mystery of Christ’s passion and death on the Cross. Paul was never a witness to Jesus’ earthly life; the only information he has comes from the apostolic tradition that preceded him, as he explicitly says: “for I delivered to you as of first importance what I also receive (I Cor 15:3; cf. 11:23ff.). St. Paul’s letters also contain various hymns, professions of faith, and doctrinal acclamations that were probably used in the primitive Christian liturgy and catechesis. Jesus Christ is the center and foundation of Paul’s writing and preaching. In his written works, the name of Christ appears 380 times, surpassed only by that of God, mentioned 500 times. This makes us understand how Jesus had such a profound impact on his life: in Christ we find the culmination of the history of salvation.

A personal encounter with Christ

Reflecting on the life of St. Paul, we could ask ourselves how a personal encounter with our Lord comes about and what sort of relationship is established between Christ and the believer. Paul’s answer contains two key points. First, he highlights the indispensable need for faith.[11] As he wrote to the Romans: “For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of law.”[12] The same point is stated even more explicitly in the Letter to the Galatians: “you know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.”[13] Communion with God comes about exclusively through grace. God comes out to meet us and grants us his mercy, pardoning our sins and allowing us to enter into a relationship of love with him and with our brothers and sisters in the faith.[14]

This doctrine of justification reflects the process of Paul’s own vocation. He was a strict observer of the Mosaic Law, fulfilling even the smallest details. But his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus makes him realize that he too is a sinner.

Thus he recognizes his vocation, and his mission as an apostle. He finds in Christ’s unlimited self-giving on the Cross the invitation to rise
above one’s own ego, placing all our confidence in Christ’s salvific death and resurrection: “he who glories, let him glory in the Lord”\textsuperscript{[15]} This spiritual conversion means, therefore, not seeking oneself, but putting on Christ, giving oneself in union with him. Thus we come to share in Christ’s life and immerse ourselves in him, sharing in both his death and his life. The Apostle describes this reality through the image of Baptism: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life”\textsuperscript{[16]}.

Paul—and with him every Christian—sees the Son of God not only as the One who died out of love for us, obtaining our salvation from sin: “\textit{dilexit me et tradidit semetipsum pro me}, he loved me and gave himself up for me.” Christ is also the One who is present in our own lives: “\textit{vivo autem iam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me}”.\textsuperscript{[17]} Saint Josemaría liked to repeat these words of the Apostle, since he saw the Risen Christ as the only reason for a Christian’s entire life and mission.

\textit{Towards Unity}

Among the many points the Apostle stresses in his epistles, one is especially relevant for this Pauline Year: the unity of all Christians. We are spurred to beseech God insistently for this grace—as great as it is difficult to attain—on seeing that the Patriarch Bartholomew I (following in the footsteps of the Vicar of Christ) has also convoked a Pauline Year in the Orthodox Church. St. Paul’s teachings remind us that full communion among all Christians is founded on the reality of sharing “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”\textsuperscript{[18]} Therefore we should pray that “our common faith, the one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and obedience to the one Lord and Saviour, be fully expressed in the community and ecclesial dimensions.”\textsuperscript{[19]} St. Paul points out the most effective path towards unity in words the Second Vatican Council repeated in its decree on ecumenism: “I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”\textsuperscript{[20]}. 
In the world of the Third Millennium, with humanity ever more interconnected, and paradoxically ever more fragmented and divided by a hedonist and relativistic atmosphere—which places in doubt the existence of any objective truth\textsuperscript{[21]}—our Lord’s prayer, 	extit{ut omnes unum sint}, “that all may be one”,\textsuperscript{[22]} is for us the greatest promise of union with God and unity among all mankind.

\textsuperscript{[1]} St. Josemaría, Homily \textit{Loyalty to the Church}, 4 June 1972.

\textsuperscript{[2]} Cf. Hymn for First Vespers of the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul.

\textsuperscript{[3]} Cf. \textit{Gal} 1:15-18

\textsuperscript{[4]} Cf. \textit{2 Cor} 11:32

\textsuperscript{[5]} Cf. \textit{Acts} 7:58

\textsuperscript{[6]} \textit{Acts} 22:3

\textsuperscript{[7]} \textit{Tim} 1:11

\textsuperscript{[8]} \textit{Cor} 11:22-27

\textsuperscript{[9]} St. Josemaría, \textit{Christ is Passing By}, no. 3


\textsuperscript{[12]} \textit{Rom} 3:28

\textsuperscript{[13]} \textit{Gal} 2:16

\textsuperscript{[14]} Cf. \textit{Rom} 3:24

\textsuperscript{[15]} \textit{1 Cor} 1:31

\textsuperscript{[16]} \textit{Rom} 6:3f

\textsuperscript{[17]} \textit{Gal} 2:20

\textsuperscript{[18]} \textit{Eph} 4:5

\textsuperscript{[19]} Pope Benedict XVI, \textit{Address during his meeting with Bartholomew I at the opening of the Pauline Year}, June 28, 2008.

\textsuperscript{[20]} (Eph 4:1-3)

[22] (Jn 17:21)
HOLY SEE

- The Roman Pontiff
- The Roman Curia
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In his farewell discourse, Jesus announced his imminent death and resurrection to his disciples with these mysterious words: “I go away, and I will come to you”, he said (Jn 14:28). Dying is a “going away”. Even if the body of the deceased remains behind, he himself has gone away into the unknown, and we cannot follow him (cf. Jn 13:36). Yet in Jesus’ case, there is something utterly new, which changes the world. In the case of our own death, the “going away” is definitive, there is no return. Jesus, on the other hand, says of his death: “I go away, and I will come to you.” It is by going away that he comes. His going ushers in a completely new and greater way of being present. By dying he enters into the love of the Father. His dying is an act of love. Love, however, is immortal. Therefore, his going away is transformed into a new coming, into a form of presence which reaches deeper and does not come to an end. During his earthly life, Jesus, like all of us, was tied to the external conditions of bodily existence: to a determined place and a determined time. Bodiliness places limits on our existence. We cannot be simultaneously in two different places. Our time is destined to come to an end. And between the “I” and the “you” there is a wall of otherness. To be sure, through love we can somehow enter the others existence. Nevertheless, the insurmountable barrier of being different remains in place. Yet Jesus, who is now totally transformed through the act of love, is free from such barriers and limits. He is able not only to pass through closed doors in the outside world, as the Gospels recount (cf. Jn 20:19). He can pass through the interior door separating the “I” from the “you”, the closed door between yesterday and today, between the past and the future. On the day of his solemn entry into Jerusalem, when some Greeks asked to see him, Jesus replied with the parable of the grain of wheat which has to pass through death in order to bear much fruit. In this way he foretold his own destiny: these words were not addressed
simply to one or two Greeks in the space of a few minutes. Through his Cross, through his going away, through his dying like the grain of wheat, he would truly arrive among the Greeks, in such a way that they could see him and touch him through faith. His going away is transformed into a coming, in the Risen Lord’s universal manner of presence, yesterday, today and for ever. He also comes today, and he embraces all times and all places. Now he can even surmount the wall of otherness that separates the “I” from the “you”. This happened with Paul, who describes the process of his conversion and his Baptism in these words: “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). Through the coming of the Risen One, Paul obtained a new identity. His closed “I” was opened. Now he lives in communion with Jesus Christ, in the great “I” of believers who have become — as he puts it — “one in Christ” (Gal 3:28).

So, dear friends, it is clear that, through Baptism, the mysterious words spoken by Jesus at the Last Supper become present for you once more. In Baptism, the Lord enters your life through the door of your heart. We no longer stand alongside or in opposition to one another. He passes through all these doors. This is the reality of Baptism: he, the Risen One, comes; he comes to you and joins his life with yours, drawing you into the open fire of his love. You become one, one with him, and thus one among yourselves. At first this can sound rather abstract and unrealistic. But the more you live the life of the baptized, the more you can experience the truth of these words. Believers — the baptized — are never truly cut off from one another. Continents, cultures, social structures or even historical distances may separate us. But when we meet, we know one another on the basis of the same Lord, the same faith, the same hope, the same love, which form us. Then we experience that the foundation of our lives is the same. We experience that in our inmost depths we are anchored in the same identity, on the basis of which all our outward differences, however great they may be, become secondary. Believers are never totally cut off from one another. We are in communion because of our deepest identity: Christ within us. Thus faith is a force for peace and reconciliation in the world: distances between people are overcome, in the Lord we have become close (cf. Eph 2:13).
The Church expresses the inner reality of Baptism as the gift of a new identity through the tangible elements used in the administration of the sacrament. The fundamental element in Baptism is water; next, in second place, is light, which is used to great effect in the Liturgy of the Easter Vigil. Let us take a brief look at these two elements. In the final chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews, there is a statement about Christ which does not speak directly of water, but the Old Testament allusions nevertheless point clearly to the mystery of water and its symbolic meaning. Here we read: “The God of peace … brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant” (13:20). In this sentence, there is an echo of the prophecy of Isaiah, in which Moses is described as the shepherd whom the Lord brought up from the water, from the sea (cf. 63:11). And Jesus now appears as the new, definitive Shepherd who brings to fulfillment what Moses had done: he leads us out of the deadly waters of the sea, out of the waters of death. In this context we may recall that Moses’ mother placed him in a basket in the Nile. Then, through God’s providence, he was taken out of the water, carried from death to life, and thus — having himself been saved from the waters of death — he was able to lead others through the sea of death. Jesus descended for us into the dark waters of death. But through his blood, so the Letter to the Hebrews tells us, he was brought back from death: his love united itself to the Father’s love, and thus from the abyss of death he was able to rise to life. Now he raises us from the waters of death to true life. This is exactly what happens in Baptism: he draws us towards himself, he draws us into true life. He leads us through the often murky sea of history, where we are frequently in danger of sinking amid all the confusion and perils. In Baptism he takes us, as it were, by the hand, he leads us along the path that passes through the Red Sea of this life and introduces us to everlasting life, the true and upright life. Let us grasp his hand firmly! Whatever may happen, whatever may befall us, let us not lose hold of his hand! Let us walk along the path that leads to life.

In the second place, there is the symbol of light and fire. Gregory of Tours (4th century) recounts a practice that in some places was preserved for a long time, of lighting the new fire for the celebration of the Easter Vigil directly from the sun, using a crystal. Light and fire, so to speak, were
received anew from heaven, so that all the lights and fires of the year could be kindled from them. This is a symbol of what we are celebrating in the Easter Vigil. Through his radical love for us, in which the heart of God and the heart of man touched, Jesus Christ truly took light from heaven and brought it to the earth — the light of truth and the fire of love that transform man’s being. He brought the light, and now we know who God is and what God is like. Thus we also know what our human situation is: what we are, and for what purpose we exist. When we are baptized, the fire of this light is brought down deep within ourselves. Thus, in the early Church, Baptism was also called the Sacrament of Illumination: God’s light enters into us; thus we ourselves become children of light. We must not allow this light of truth, that shows us the path, to be extinguished. We must protect it from all the forces that seek to eliminate it so as to cast us back into darkness regarding God and ourselves. Darkness, at times, can seem comfortable. I can hide, and spend my life asleep. Yet we are not called to darkness, but to light. In our baptismal promises, we rekindle this light, so to speak, year by year. Yes, I believe that the world and my life are not the product of chance, but of eternal Reason and eternal Love, they are created by Almighty God. Yes, I believe that in Jesus Christ, in his incarnation, in his Cross and resurrection, the face of God has been revealed; that in him, God is present in our midst, he unites us and leads us towards our goal, towards eternal Love. Yes, I believe that the Holy Spirit gives us the word of truth and enlightens our hearts; I believe that in the communion of the Church we all become one Body with the Lord, and thus we encounter his resurrection and eternal life. The Lord has granted us the light of truth. This light is also fire, a powerful force coming from God, a force that does not destroy, but seeks to transform our hearts, so that we truly become men of God, and so that his peace can become active in this world.

In the early Church there was a custom whereby the Bishop or the priest, after the homily, would cry out to the faithful: “Conversi ad Dominum” — turn now towards the Lord. This meant in the first place that they would turn towards the East, towards the rising sun, the sign of Christ returning, whom we go to meet when we celebrate the Eucharist. Where this was not possible, for some reason, they would at least turn
towards the image of Christ in the apse, or towards the Cross, so as to orient themselves inwardly towards the Lord. Fundamentally, this involved an interior event; conversion, the turning of our soul towards Jesus Christ and thus towards the living God, towards the true light. Linked with this, then, was the other exclamation that still today, before the Eucharistic Prayer, is addressed to the community of the faithful: “Sursum corda” — “Lift up your hearts”, high above all our misguided concerns, desires, anxieties and thoughtlessness — “Lift up your hearts, your inner selves!” In both exclamations we are summoned, as it were, to a renewal of our Baptism: Conversi ad Dominum — we must always turn away from false paths, onto which we stray so often in our thoughts and actions. We must turn ever anew towards him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. We must be converted ever anew, turning with our whole life towards the Lord. And ever anew we must withdraw our hearts from the force of gravity, which pulls them down, and inwardly we must raise them high: in truth and love. At this hour, let us thank the Lord, because through the power of his word and of the holy Sacraments, he points us in the right direction and draws our heart upwards. Let us pray to him in these words: Yes, Lord, make us Easter people, men and women of light, filled with the fire of your love. Amen.

Letter to the Diocese of Rome on the urgent task of Education (January 21, 2008)

Dear Faithful of Rome,

I thought of addressing this Letter to you in order to speak to you about a problem of which you yourselves are aware and to which the various members of our Church are applying themselves: the problem of education. We all have at heart the good of the people we love, especially our children, adolescents and young people. Indeed, we know that it is on them that the future of our City depends. Therefore, it is impossible not to be concerned about the formation of the new generations, about their
ability to give their lives a direction and to discern good from evil, and about their health, not only physical but also moral.

Educating, however, has never been an easy task and today seems to be becoming ever more difficult. Parents, teachers, priests and everyone who has direct educational responsibilities are well aware of this. Hence, there is talk of a great "educational emergency", confirmed by the failures we encounter all too often in our efforts to form sound people who can cooperate with others and give their own lives meaning. Thus, it is natural to think of laying the blame on the new generations, as though children born today were different from those born in the past. There is also talk of a "generation gap" which certainly exists and is making itself felt, but is the effect rather than the cause of the failure to transmit certainties and values.

Must we therefore blame today's adults for no longer being able to educate? There is certainly a strong temptation among both parents and teachers as well as educators in general to give up, since they run the risk of not even understanding what their role or rather the mission entrusted to them is.

In fact, it is not only the personal responsibilities of adults or young people, which nonetheless exist and must not be concealed, that are called into question but also a widespread atmosphere, a mindset and form of culture which induce one to have doubt about the value of the human person, about the very meaning of truth and good, and ultimately about the goodness of life. It then becomes difficult to pass on from one generation to the next something that is valid and certain, rules of conduct, credible objectives around which to build life itself.

Dear brothers and sisters of Rome, at this point I would like to say some very simple words to you: Do not be afraid! In fact, none of these difficulties is insurmountable. They are, as it were, the other side of the coin of that great and precious gift which is our freedom, with the responsibility that rightly goes with it. As opposed to what happens in the technical or financial fields, where today's advances can be added to those of the past, no similar accumulation is possible in the area of people's formation and moral growth, because the person's freedom is ever new. As a result, each person and each generation must make his own decision
anew, alone. Not even the greatest values of the past can be simply inherited; they must be claimed by us and renewed through an often anguishing personal option.

When the foundations are shaken, however, and essential certainties are lacking, the impelling need for those values once again makes itself felt: thus today, the request for an education which is truly such is in fact increasing. Parents, anxious and often anguished about the future of their children, are asking for it; a great many teachers going through the sorrowful experience of their schools' deterioration are asking for it; society overall, seeing doubts cast on the very foundations of coexistence, is asking for it; children and young people themselves who do not want to be left to face life's challenges on their own are also asking for it in their inmost being. Those who believe in Jesus Christ, moreover, have a further and stronger reason for not being afraid: they know in fact that God does not abandon us, that his love reaches us wherever we are and just as we are, in our wretchedness and weakness, in order to offer us a new possibility of good.

Dear brothers and sisters, to make my considerations more meaningful, it might be useful to identify several common requirements of an authentic education. It needs first of all that closeness and trust which are born from love: I am thinking of the first and fundamental experience of love which children have, or at least should have, from their parents. Yet every true teacher knows that if he is to educate he must give a part of himself, and that it is only in this way that he can help his pupils overcome selfishness and become in their turn capable of authentic love.

In a small child there is already a strong desire to know and to understand, which is expressed in his stream of questions and constant demands for explanations. Therefore, an education would be most impoverished if it were limited to providing notions and information and neglected the important question about the truth, especially that truth which can be a guide in life.

Suffering is also part of the truth of our life. So, by seeking to shield the youngest from every difficulty and experience of suffering, we risk raising brittle and ungenerous people, despite our good intentions: indeed,
the capacity for loving corresponds to the capacity for suffering and for suffering together.

We thus arrive, dear friends of Rome, at what is perhaps the most delicate point in the task of education: finding the right balance between freedom and discipline. If no standard of behavior and rule of life is applied even in small daily matters, the character is not formed and the person will not be ready to face the trials that will come in the future. The educational relationship, however, is first of all the encounter of two kinds of freedom, and successful education means teaching the correct use of freedom. As the child gradually grows up, he becomes an adolescent and then a young person; we must therefore accept the risk of freedom and be constantly attentive in order to help him to correct wrong ideas and choices. However, what we must never do is to support him when he errs, to pretend we do not see the errors or worse, that we share them as if they were the new boundaries of human progress.

Education cannot, therefore, dispense with that authoritativeness which makes the exercise of authority possible. It is the fruit of experience and competence, but is acquired above all with the coherence of one's own life and personal involvement, an expression of true love. The educator is thus a witness of truth and goodness. He too, of course, is fragile and can be mistaken, but he will constantly endeavor to be in tune with his mission.

Dear faithful of Rome, from these simple observations it becomes clear that in education a sense of responsibility is crucial: the responsibility of the educator, of course, but also, as he grows up, the responsibility of the child, the student, the young person who enters the world of work. Those who can measure up to themselves and to others are responsible. Those who believe seek further; indeed, they seek to respond to God who loved them first.

Responsibility is in the first place personal, but there is also a responsibility which we share as citizens in the same city and of one nation, as members of the human family and, if we are believers, as children of the one God and members of the Church. Indeed, ideas, lifestyles, laws, the orientations in general of the society in which we live and the image it has of itself through the mass media exercise a great influence on the formation
of the new generations, for good but often also for evil. However, society is not an abstraction; in the end we are ourselves all together, with the orientations, rules and representatives we give one another, although the roles and responsibilities of each person are different. Thus, the contribution of each one of us, of each person, family or social group, is necessary if society, starting with our City of Rome, is to become a more favorable context for education.

Lastly, I would like to offer you a thought which I developed in my recent Encyclical Letter Spe Salvi on Christian hope: the soul of education, as of the whole of life, can only be a dependable hope. Today, our hope is threatened on many sides and we even risk becoming, like the ancient pagans, people "having no hope and without God in the world", as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians of Ephesus (Eph 2: 12). What may be the deepest difficulty for a true educational endeavor consists precisely in this: the fact that at the root of the crisis of education lies a crisis of trust in life.

I cannot finish this Letter, therefore, without a warm invitation to place our hope in God. He alone is the hope that withstands every disappointment; his love alone cannot be destroyed by death; his justice and mercy alone can heal injustices and recompense the suffering experienced. Hope that is addressed to God is never hope for oneself alone, it is always also hope for others; it does not isolate us but renders us supportive in goodness and encourages us to educate one another in truth and in love.

I express my affection for you and assure you of my special remembrance in prayer, as I impart my Blessing to you all.

From the Vatican, 21 January 2008

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

Torna ai contenuti

Greeting to the students taking part in the UNIV 2008 Congress (March 19, 2008)
Dear Friends,

I offer a cordial welcome to all of you who have come to Rome from various countries and universities to celebrate Holy Week together, and to take part in the International UNIV Congress. In this way, you will be able to benefit from moments of common prayer, cultural enrichment and a helpful exchange of the experiences gained from your association with the centres and activities of Christian formation sponsored by the Prelature of Opus Dei in your respective cities and nations.

(Greeting in Spanish)

Vosotros sabéis que con un serio compromiso personal, inspirado en los valores evangélicos, es posible responder adecuadamente a los grandes interrogantes del tiempo presente. El cristiano sabe que hay un nexo inseparable entre verdad, ética y responsabilidad. Toda expresión cultural auténtica contribuye a formar la conciencia y estimula a la persona a superarse a sí misma a fin de que pueda mejorar la sociedad. Uno se siente así responsable ante la verdad, al servicio de la cual ha de ponerse la propia libertad personal. Se trata ciertamente de una misión comprometida y para realizarla el cristiano está llamado a seguir a Jesús, cultivando una intensa amistad con Él a través de la oración y de la contemplación. Ser amigos de Cristo y dar testimonio de Él allí donde nos encontremos exige, además, el esfuerzo de ir contracorriente, recordando las palabras del Señor: estáis en el mundo pero no sois del mundo (cf. Jn15,19). No tengáis, por tanto, miedo, cuando sea necesario, de ser inconformistas en la universidad, en el colegio y en todas partes.

(Greeting in Italian)

Cari giovani dell'UNIV, siate lievito di speranza in questo mondo che anela di incontrare Gesù, talora senza neppure rendersene conto. Per migliorarlo, sforzatevi anzitutto di cambiare voi stessi mediante una vita sacramentale intensa, specialmente accostandovi al sacramento della Penitenza e prendendo parte assiduamente alla celebrazione dell'Eucaristia. Affido ciascuno di voi e le vostre famiglie a Maria, che non smise mai di contemplare il Volto del suo Figlio Gesù. Su ciascuno di voi invoco la protezione di San Josemaría e di tutti i Santi delle vostre terre, mentre di cuore vi auguro Buona Pasqua!
Address to participants in an International Conference of the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family (April, 5, 2008)

Your Eminences,

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I meet you with great joy on the occasion of the International Congress on “Oil on the wounds: A response to the ills of abortion and divorce,” promoted by the John Paul II Pontifical Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family in collaboration with the Knights of Columbus. I congratulate you on the topical and complex theme that has been the subject of your reflections in these days and in particular for the reference to the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37), which you chose as a key to approach the evils of abortion and divorce that bring so much suffering to the lives of individuals, families and society. Yes, the men and women of our day sometimes truly find themselves stripped and wounded on the wayside of the routes we take, often without anyone listening to their cry for help or attending to them to alleviate and heal their suffering. In the often purely ideological debate a sort of conspiracy of silence is created in their regard. Only by assuming an attitude of merciful love is it possible to approach in order to bring help and enable victims to pick themselves up and resume their journey through life.

In a cultural context marked by increasing individualism, hedonism and all too often also by a lack of solidarity and adequate social support, human freedom, as it faces life’s difficulties, is prompted in its weakness to make decisions that conflict with the indissolubility of the matrimonial bond or with the respect due to human life from the moment of conception, while it is still protected in its mother’s womb. Of course, divorce and abortion are decisions of a different kind, which are sometimes
made in difficult and dramatic circumstances that are often traumatic and a
source of deep suffering for those who make them. They also affect
innocent victims: the infant just conceived and not yet born, children
involved in the break-up of family ties. These decisions indelibly mark the
lives of all those involved. The Church’s ethical opinion with regard to
divorce and procured abortion is unambivalent and known to all: these are
grade sins which, to a different extent and taking into account the
evaluation of subjective responsibility, harm the dignity of the human
person, involve a profound injustice in human and social relations and
offend God himself, Guarantor of the conjugal covenant and the Author of
life. Yet the Church, after the example of her Divine Teacher, always has
the people themselves before her, especially the weakest and most innocent
who are victims of injustice and sin, and also those other men and women
who, having perpetrated these acts, stained by sin and wounded within, are
seeking peace and the chance to begin anew.

The Church’s first duty is to approach these people with love and
consideration, with caring and motherly attention, to proclaim the merciful
closeness of God in Jesus Christ. Indeed, as the Fathers teach, it is he who
is the true Good Samaritan, who has made himself close to us, who pours
oil and wine on our wounds and takes us into the inn, the Church, where
he has us treated, entrusting us to her ministers and personally paying in
advance for our recovery. Yes, the Gospel of love and life is also always the
Gospel of mercy, which is addressed to the actual person and sinner that
we are, to help us up after any fall and to recover from any injury. My
beloved Predecessor, the Servant of God John Paul II, the third anniversary
of whose death we celebrated recently, said in inaugurating the new Shrine
of Divine Mercy in Krakow: “Apart from the mercy of God there is no
other source of hope for mankind” (August 17, 2002). On the basis of this
mercy the Church cultivates an indomitable trust in human beings and in
their capacity for recovery. She knows that with the help of grace human
freedom is capable of the definitive and faithful gift of self which makes
possible the marriage of a man and woman as an indissoluble bond; she
knows that even in the most difficult circumstances human freedom is
capable of extraordinary acts of sacrifice and solidarity to welcome the life
of a new human being. Thus, one can see that the “No” which the Church
pronounces in her moral directives on which public opinion sometimes unilaterally focuses, is in fact a great “Yes” to the dignity of the human person, to human life and to the person's capacity to love. It is an expression of the constant trust with which, despite their frailty, people are able to respond to the loftiest vocation for which they are created: the vocation to love.

On that same occasion, John Paul II continued: “This fire of mercy needs to be passed on to the world. In the mercy of God the world will find peace” (ibid., p. 8). The great task of disciples of the Lord Jesus who find themselves the traveling companions of so many brothers, men and women of good will, is hinged on this. Their program, “the program of the Good Samaritan, is a ‘heart which sees.’ This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly” (Deus Caritas Est, n. 31). In these days of reflection and dialogue you have stooped down to victims suffering from the wounds of divorce and abortion. You have noted first of all the sometimes traumatic suffering that afflicts the so-called “children of divorce,” marking their lives to the point of making their way far more difficult. It is in fact inevitable that when the conjugal covenant is broken, those who suffer most are the children who are the living sign of its indissolubility. Supportive pastoral attention must therefore aim to ensure that the children are not the innocent victims of conflicts between parents who divorce. It must also endeavor to ensure that the continuity of the link with their parents is guaranteed as far as possible, as well as the links with their own family and social origins, which are indispensable for a balanced psychological and human growth.

You also focused on the tragedy of procured abortion that leaves profound and sometimes indelible marks in the women who undergo it and in the people around them, as well as devastating consequences on the family and society, partly because of the materialistic mentality of contempt for life that it encourages. What selfish complicity often lies at the root of an agonizing decision which so many women have had to face on their own, who still carry in their heart an open wound! Although what has been done remains a grave injustice and is not in itself remediable, I make my own the exhortation in Evangelium Vitae addressed to women who have had an abortion: “Do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope.
Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To the same Father and his mercy you can with sure hope entrust your child” (n. 99).

I express deep appreciation for all those social and pastoral initiatives being taken for the reconciliation and treatment of people injured by the drama of abortion and divorce. Together with numerous other forms of commitment, they constitute essential elements for building that civilization of love that humanity needs today more than ever.

As I implore the Merciful Lord God that he will increasingly liken you to Jesus the Good Samaritan, that his spirit will teach you to look with new eyes at the reality of the suffering brethren, that he will help you to think with new criteria and spur you to act with generous dynamism with a view to an authentic civilization of love and life, I impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you all.

Address to the members of the General Assembly of the United Nations (April 18, 2008)

Mr President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I begin my address to this Assembly, I would like first of all to express to you, Mr President, my sincere gratitude for your kind words. My thanks go also to the Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, for inviting me to visit the headquarters of this Organization and for the welcome that he has extended to me. I greet the Ambassadors and Diplomats from the Member States, and all those present. Through you, I greet the peoples who are represented here. They look to this institution to carry forward the founding inspiration to establish a “center for harmonizing the actions of
nations in the attainment of these common ends” of peace and development (cf. Charter of the United Nations, article 1.2-1.4). As Pope John Paul II expressed it in 1995, the Organization should be “a moral center where all the nations of the world feel at home and develop a shared awareness of being, as it were, a ‘family of nations’” (Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the 50th Anniversary of its Foundation, New York, 5 October 1995, 14).

Through the United Nations, States have established universal objectives which, even if they do not coincide with the total common good of the human family, undoubtedly represent a fundamental part of that good. The founding principles of the Organization — the desire for peace, the quest for justice, respect for the dignity of the person, humanitarian cooperation and assistance — express the just aspirations of the human spirit, and constitute the ideals which should underpin international relations. As my predecessors Paul VI and John Paul II have observed from this very podium, all this is something that the Catholic Church and the Holy See follow attentively and with interest, seeing in your activity an example of how issues and conflicts concerning the world community can be subject to common regulation. The United Nations embodies the aspiration for a “greater degree of international ordering” (John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 43), inspired and governed by the principle of subsidiarity, and therefore capable of responding to the demands of the human family through binding international rules and through structures capable of harmonizing the day-to-day unfolding of the lives of peoples. This is all the more necessary at a time when we experience the obvious paradox of a multilateral consensus that continues to be in crisis because it is still subordinated to the decisions of a few, whereas the world’s problems call for interventions in the form of collective action by the international community.

Indeed, questions of security, development goals, reduction of local and global inequalities, protection of the environment, of resources and of the climate, require all international leaders to act jointly and to show a readiness to work in good faith, respecting the law, and promoting solidarity with the weakest regions of the planet. I am thinking especially of those countries in Africa and other parts of the world which remain on
the margins of authentic integral development, and are therefore at risk of
experiencing only the negative effects of globalization. In the context of
international relations, it is necessary to recognize the higher role played by
rules and structures that are intrinsically ordered to promote the common
good, and therefore to safeguard human freedom. These regulations do not
limit freedom. On the contrary, they promote it when they prohibit
behavior and actions which work against the common good, curb its
effective exercise and hence compromise the dignity of every human
person. In the name of freedom, there has to be a correlation between
rights and duties, by which every person is called to assume responsibility
for his or her choices, made as a consequence of entering into relations
with others. Here our thoughts turn also to the way the results of scientific
research and technological advances have sometimes been applied.
Notwithstanding the enormous benefits that humanity can gain, some
instances of this represent a clear violation of the order of creation, to the
point where not only is the sacred character of life contradicted, but the
human person and the family are robbed of their natural identity. Likewise,
international action to preserve the environment and to protect various
forms of life on earth must not only guarantee a rational use of technology
and science, but must also rediscover the authentic image of creation. This
never requires a choice to be made between science and ethics: rather it is a
question of adopting a scientific method that is truly respectful of ethical
imperatives.

Recognition of the unity of the human family, and attention to the
innate dignity of every man and woman, today find renewed emphasis in
the principle of the responsibility to protect. This has only recently been
defined, but it was already present implicitly at the origins of the United
Nations, and is now increasingly characteristic of its activity. Every State
has the primary duty to protect its own population from grave and
sustained violations of human rights, as well as from the consequences of
humanitarian crises, whether natural or man-made. If States are unable to
guarantee such protection, the international community must intervene
with the juridical means provided in the United Nations Charter and in
other international instruments. The action of the international community
and its institutions, provided that it respects the principles undergirding
the international order, should never be interpreted as an unwarranted imposition or a limitation of sovereignty. On the contrary, it is indifference or failure to intervene that do the real damage. What is needed is a deeper search for ways of pre-empting and managing conflicts by exploring every possible diplomatic avenue, and giving attention and encouragement to even the faintest sign of dialogue or desire for reconciliation.

The principle of “responsibility to protect” was considered by the ancient ius gentium as the foundation of every action taken by those in government with regard to the governed: at the time when the concept of national sovereign States was first developing, the Dominican Friar Francisco de Vitoria, rightly considered as a precursor of the idea of the United Nations, described this responsibility as an aspect of natural reason shared by all nations, and the result of an international order whose task it was to regulate relations between peoples. Now, as then, this principle has to invoke the idea of the person as image of the Creator, the desire for the absolute and the essence of freedom. The founding of the United Nations, as we know, coincided with the profound upheavals that humanity experienced when reference to the meaning of transcendence and natural reason was abandoned, and in consequence, freedom and human dignity were grossly violated. When this happens, it threatens the objective foundations of the values inspiring and governing the international order and it undermines the cogent and inviolable principles formulated and consolidated by the United Nations. When faced with new and insistent challenges, it is a mistake to fall back on a pragmatic approach, limited to determining “common ground”, minimal in content and weak in its effect.

This reference to human dignity, which is the foundation and goal of the responsibility to protect, leads us to the theme we are specifically focusing upon this year, which marks the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This document was the outcome of a convergence of different religious and cultural traditions, all of them motivated by the common desire to place the human person at the heart of institutions, laws and the workings of society, and to consider the human person essential for the world of culture, religion and science. Human rights are increasingly being presented as the common language and the ethical substratum of international relations. At the same time, the
universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights all serve as guarantees safeguarding human dignity. It is evident, though, that the rights recognized and expounded in the Declaration apply to everyone by virtue of the common origin of the person, who remains the high-point of God’s creative design for the world and for history. They are based on the natural law inscribed on human hearts and present in different cultures and civilizations. Removing human rights from this context would mean restricting their range and yielding to a relativistic conception, according to which the meaning and interpretation of rights could vary and their universality would be denied in the name of different cultural, political, social and even religious outlooks. This great variety of viewpoints must not be allowed to obscure the fact that not only rights are universal, but so too is the human person, the subject of those rights.

The life of the community, both domestically and internationally, clearly demonstrates that respect for rights, and the guarantees that follow from them, are measures of the common good that serve to evaluate the relationship between justice and injustice, development and poverty, security and conflict. The promotion of human rights remains the most effective strategy for eliminating inequalities between countries and social groups, and for increasing security. Indeed, the victims of hardship and despair, whose human dignity is violated with impunity, become easy prey to the call to violence, and they can then become violators of peace. The common good that human rights help to accomplish cannot, however, be attained merely by applying correct procedures, nor even less by achieving a balance between competing rights. The merit of the Universal Declaration is that it has enabled different cultures, juridical expressions and institutional models to converge around a fundamental nucleus of values, and hence of rights. Today, though, efforts need to be redoubled in the face of pressure to reinterpret the foundations of the Declaration and to compromise its inner unity so as to facilitate a move away from the protection of human dignity towards the satisfaction of simple interests, often particular interests. The Declaration was adopted as a “common standard of achievement” (Preamble) and cannot be applied piecemeal, according to trends or selective choices that merely run the risk of
contradicting the unity of the human person and thus the indivisibility of human rights.

Experience shows that legality often prevails over justice when the insistence upon rights makes them appear as the exclusive result of legislative enactments or normative decisions taken by the various agencies of those in power. When presented purely in terms of legality, rights risk becoming weak propositions divorced from the ethical and rational dimension which is their foundation and their goal. The Universal Declaration, rather, has reinforced the conviction that respect for human rights is principally rooted in unchanging justice, on which the binding force of international proclamations is also based. This aspect is often overlooked when the attempt is made to deprive rights of their true function in the name of a narrowly utilitarian perspective. Since rights and the resulting duties follow naturally from human interaction, it is easy to forget that they are the fruit of a commonly held sense of justice built primarily upon solidarity among the members of society, and hence valid at all times and for all peoples. This intuition was expressed as early as the fifth century by Augustine of Hippo, one of the masters of our intellectual heritage. He taught that the saying: Do not do to others what you would not want done to you “cannot in any way vary according to the different understandings that have arisen in the world” (De Doctrina Christiana, III, 14). Human rights, then, must be respected as an expression of justice, and not merely because they are enforceable through the will of the legislators.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As history proceeds, new situations arise, and the attempt is made to link them to new rights. Discernment, that is, the capacity to distinguish good from evil, becomes even more essential in the context of demands that concern the very lives and conduct of persons, communities and peoples. In tackling the theme of rights, since important situations and profound realities are involved, discernment is both an indispensable and a fruitful virtue.

Discernment, then, shows that entrusting exclusively to individual States, with their laws and institutions, the final responsibility to meet the aspirations of persons, communities and entire peoples, can sometimes
have consequences that exclude the possibility of a social order respectful of
the dignity and rights of the person. On the other hand, a vision of life
firmly anchored in the religious dimension can help to achieve this, since
recognition of the transcendent value of every man and woman favors
conversion of heart, which then leads to a commitment to resist violence,
terrorism and war, and to promote justice and peace. This also provides the
proper context for the inter-religious dialogue that the United Nations is
called to support, just as it supports dialogue in other areas of human
activity. Dialogue should be recognized as the means by which the various
components of society can articulate their point of view and build
consensus around the truth concerning particular values or goals. It
pertains to the nature of religions, freely practiced, that they can
autonomously conduct a dialogue of thought and life. If at this level, too,
the religious sphere is kept separate from political action, then great
benefits ensue for individuals and communities. On the other hand, the
United Nations can count on the results of dialogue between religions, and
can draw fruit from the willingness of believers to place their experiences at
the service of the common good. Their task is to propose a vision of faith
not in terms of intolerance, discrimination and conflict, but in terms of
complete respect for truth, coexistence, rights, and reconciliation.

Human rights, of course, must include the right to religious freedom,
understood as the expression of a dimension that is at once individual and
communitarian — a vision that brings out the unity of the person while
clearly distinguishing between the dimension of the citizen and that of the
believer. The activity of the United Nations in recent years has ensured that
public debate gives space to viewpoints inspired by a religious vision in all
its dimensions, including ritual, worship, education, dissemination of
information and the freedom to profess and choose religion. It is
inconceivable, then, that believers should have to suppress a part of
themselves — their faith — in order to be active citizens. It should never
be necessary to deny God in order to enjoy one’s rights. The rights
associated with religion are all the more in need of protection if they are
considered to clash with a prevailing secular ideology or with majority
religious positions of an exclusive nature. The full guarantee of religious
liberty cannot be limited to the free exercise of worship, but has to give due
consideration to the public dimension of religion, and hence to the possibility of believers playing their part in building the social order. Indeed, they actually do so, for example through their influential and generous involvement in a vast network of initiatives which extend from Universities, scientific institutions and schools to health care agencies and charitable organizations in the service of the poorest and most marginalized. Refusal to recognize the contribution to society that is rooted in the religious dimension and in the quest for the Absolute — by its nature, expressing communion between persons — would effectively privilege an individualistic approach, and would fragment the unity of the person.

My presence at this Assembly is a sign of esteem for the United Nations, and it is intended to express the hope that the Organization will increasingly serve as a sign of unity between States and an instrument of service to the entire human family. It also demonstrates the willingness of the Catholic Church to offer her proper contribution to building international relations in a way that allows every person and every people to feel they can make a difference. In a manner that is consistent with her contribution in the ethical and moral sphere and the free activity of her faithful, the Church also works for the realization of these goals through the international activity of the Holy See. Indeed, the Holy See has always had a place at the assemblies of the Nations, thereby manifesting its specific character as a subject in the international domain. As the United Nations recently confirmed, the Holy See thereby makes its contribution according to the dispositions of international law, helps to define that law, and makes appeal to it.

The United Nations remains a privileged setting in which the Church is committed to contributing her experience “of humanity”, developed over the centuries among peoples of every race and culture, and placing it at the disposal of all members of the international community. This experience and activity, directed towards attaining freedom for every believer, seeks also to increase the protection given to the rights of the person. Those rights are grounded and shaped by the transcendent nature of the person, which permits men and women to pursue their journey of faith and their search for God in this world. Recognition of this dimension must be
strengthened if we are to sustain humanity’s hope for a better world and if we are to create the conditions for peace, development, cooperation, and guarantee of rights for future generations.

In my recent Encyclical, *Spe Salvi*, I indicated that “every generation has the task of engaging anew in the arduous search for the right way to order human affairs” (no. 25). For Christians, this task is motivated by the hope drawn from the saving work of Jesus Christ. That is why the Church is happy to be associated with the activity of this distinguished Organization, charged with the responsibility of promoting peace and good will throughout the earth. Dear Friends, I thank you for this opportunity to address you today, and I promise you of the support of my prayers as you pursue your noble task.

Before I take my leave from this distinguished Assembly, I should like to offer my greetings, in the official languages, to all the Nations here represented. Peace and Prosperity with God’s help!

Thank you very much.

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Address prepared by Pope Benedict XVI for the meeting at the La Sapienza University of Rome (January 17, 2008)

(The text of the Conference that Pope Benedict XVI was to give during his Visit to the University “La Sapienza” of Rome, on Thursday, January 17. The Visit was cancelled on January 15.)

Magnificent Rector,

Political and Civil Authorities,

Distinguished Teachers, Technical and Administrative Staff,
Dear Young Students,

It is a cause of deep joy for me to meet the community of La Sapienza, the University of Rome, on the occasion of the inauguration of the academic year. For centuries this University has been a part of the story and the life of the city of Rome, harvesting the fruits of the best intellects in every field of knowledge. Both in the past, when the institution depended directly on ecclesiastical authority (having been founded at the behest of Pope Boniface VIII), and in its more recent history, when the Studium Urbis became an institution of the Italian State, your academic community has maintained a high scientific and cultural standard which places it among the world’s most prestigious universities. The Church of Rome has always looked with affection and admiration at this university centre, recognizing its dedication, often arduous and demanding, to research and to the formation of generations of young people. There have been important instances of collaboration and dialogue in recent years. I would like to recall in particular the World Meeting of Rectors on the occasion of the Jubilee of Universities, when your community not only hosted and organized the event, but above all took responsibility for the prophetic and complex proposal to elaborate a “new humanism for the third millennium”.

On this occasion, I am happy to express my gratitude to you for your invitation to give a lecture at your university. With this prospect in view, I first of all asked myself the question: what can and should a Pope say on such an occasion? In my lecture at Regensburg I did indeed speak as Pope, but above all I spoke in my capacity as a former professor of my old university, seeking to link past memories with the present. However, it is as Bishop of Rome that I am invited to La Sapienza, Rome’s ancient university, so it is as such that I must speak. Of course, La Sapienza was once the university of the Pope. Today, however, it is a secular university with that autonomy which, in keeping with the vision inspiring their foundation, has always been part of the nature of universities, which must be tied exclusively to the authority of the truth. It is in their freedom from political and ecclesiastical authorities that the particular function of universities lies — a function that serves modern society as well, which needs institutions of this kind.
To return to my initial question: what can and should the Pope say at a meeting with the university in his city? As I pondered this question, it seemed to me that it included two others, and the answer should follow naturally from an exploration of these. We need to ask ourselves this: What is the nature and mission of the Papacy? And what is the nature and mission of the university? I have no wish to detain you or myself with an extended discussion on the nature of the Papacy. Let a brief comment suffice. The Pope is first and foremost the Bishop of Rome and as such — as Successor to the Apostle Peter — he has an episcopal responsibility for the whole of the Catholic Church. In the New Testament, the word “bishop” — episkopos —, the immediate meaning of which indicates an “overseer”, had already been merged with the Biblical concept of Shepherd: the one who observes the whole landscape from above, ensuring that everything holds together and is moving in the right direction. Considered in such terms, this designation of the task focuses the attention first of all within the believing community. The Bishop — the Shepherd — is the one who cares for this community; he is the one who keeps it united on the way towards God, a way which, according to the Christian faith, has been indicated by Jesus — and not merely indicated: He himself is our way. Yet this community which the Bishop looks after — be it large or small — lives in the world; its circumstances, its history, its example and its message inevitably influence the entire human community. The larger it is, the greater the effect, for better or worse, on the rest of humanity. Today we see very clearly how the state of religions and the situation of the Church — her crises and her renewal — affect humanity in its entirety. Thus the Pope, in his capacity as Shepherd of his community, is also increasingly becoming a voice for the ethical reasoning of humanity.

Here, however, the objection immediately arises: surely the Pope does not really base his pronouncements on ethical reasoning, but draws his judgements from faith and hence cannot claim to speak on behalf of those who do not share this faith. We will have to return to this point later, because here the absolutely fundamental question must be asked: What is reason? How can one demonstrate that an assertion — especially a moral norm — is “reasonable”? At this point I would like to describe briefly how John Rawls, while denying that comprehensive religious doctrines have the
character of “public” reason, nonetheless at least sees their “non-public” reason as one which cannot simply be dismissed by those who maintain a rigidly secularized rationality. Rawls perceives a criterion of this reasonableness among other things in the fact that such doctrines derive from a responsible and well thought-out tradition in which, over lengthy periods, satisfactory arguments have been developed in support of the doctrines concerned. The important thing in this assertion, it seems to me, is the acknowledgment that down through the centuries, experience and demonstration — the historical source of human wisdom — are also a sign of its reasonableness and enduring significance. Faced with an a-historical form of reason that seeks to establish itself exclusively in terms of a-historical rationality, humanity’s wisdom — the wisdom of the great religious traditions — should be valued as a heritage that cannot be cast with impunity into the dustbin of the history of ideas.

Let us go back to our initial question. The Pope speaks as the representative of a community of believers in which a particular wisdom about life has evolved in the course of the centuries of its existence. He speaks as the representative of a community that preserves within itself a treasury of ethical knowledge and experience important for all humanity: in this sense, he speaks as the representative of a form of ethical reasoning.

Now, however, we must ask ourselves: “What is the university? What is its task?” This is a vast question to which, once again, I can only endeavour to respond in an almost telegraphic style with one or two comments. I think one could say that at the most intimate level, the true origin of the university lies in the thirst for knowledge that is proper to man. The human being wants to know what everything around him is. He wants truth. In this perspective, once can see Socratic questioning as the impulse that gave birth to the western university. I am thinking, for example — to mention only one text — of the dispute with Euthyphro, who in debate with Socrates defended the mythical religion and cult. Socrates countered with a question: “Do you believe that the gods are really waging war against each other with terrible feuds and battles? … Must we effectively say, Euthyphro, that all this is true?” (6 b-c). The Christians of the first centuries identified themselves and their journey with this question which seems not particularly devout — but which in Socrates’ case
derived from a deeper and purer religious sensibility, from the search for the true God. They received their faith not in a positivistic manner, nor as a way of escape from unfulfilled wishes; rather, they understood it as dispelling the mist of mythological religion in order to make way for the discovery of the God who is creative Reason, God who is Reason-Love. This is why reasoned enquiry concerning the truly great God, and concerning the true nature and meaning of the human being, did not strike them as problematic, as a lack of due religious sentiment: rather, it was an essential part of their way of being religious. Hence they did not need to abandon or set aside Socratic enquiry, but they could, indeed were bound to accept it, and recognize reason's laborious search to attain knowledge of the whole truth as part of their own identity. In this way, within the context of the Christian faith, in the Christian world, the university could come into being — indeed it was bound to do so.

Now it is necessary to take a further step. Man desires to know — he wants truth. Truth in the first instance is something discerned through seeing, understanding, what Greek tradition calls theoría. Yet truth is never purely theoretical. In drawing a parallel between the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount and the gifts of the Spirit listed in Isaiah 11, Saint Augustine argued that there is a reciprocity between scientia and tristitia: knowledge on its own, he said, causes sadness. And it is true to say that those who merely see and apprehend all that happens in the world end up being saddened. Yet truth means more than knowledge: the purpose of knowing the truth is to know the good. This is also the meaning of Socratic enquiry: What is the good which makes us true? The truth makes us good and the good is true: this is the optimism that shapes the Christian faith, because this faith has been granted the vision of the Logos, of creative Reason which, in God's incarnation, revealed itself as the Good, as Goodness itself.

In medieval theology there was a detailed disputation on the relationship between theory and practice, on the proper relationship between knowledge and action — a disputation that we need not explore here. De facto, the medieval university with its four faculties expresses this correlation. Let us begin with the faculty which was understood at the time to rank as the fourth — the faculty of medicine. Even if it was considered
more as an “art” than a science, the inclusion of medicine within the ambit of the universitas clearly indicated that it was placed within the realm of rationality, that the art of healing was under the guidance of reason and had been removed from the realm of magic. Healing is a task that always requires more than plain reason, but this is precisely why it depends on the connection between knowledge and power, it needs to belong to the sphere of ratio. Inevitably the question of the relationship between praxis and theory, between knowledge and action, also arose in the faculty of jurisprudence. Here it was a matter of giving the correct form to human freedom, which is always a freedom shared with others. Law is the presupposition of freedom, not its opponent. At this point, however, the question immediately arises: How is it possible to identify criteria of justice that make shared freedom possible and help man to be good? Here a leap into the present is necessary. The point in question is: how can a juridical body of norms be established that serves as an ordering of freedom, of human dignity and human rights? This is the issue with which we are grappling today in the democratic processes that form opinion, the issue which also causes us to be anxious about the future of humanity. In my opinion, Jürgen Habermas articulates a vast consensus of contemporary thought when he says that the legitimacy of a constitutional charter, as a basis for what is legal, derives from two sources: from the equal participation of all citizens in the political process and from the reasonable manner in which political disputes are resolved. With regard to this “reasonable manner”, he notes that it cannot simply be a fight for arithmetical majorities, but must have the character of a “process of argumentation sensitive to the truth” (wahrheitssensibles Argumentationsverfahren). The point is well made, but it is far from easy to put it into practice politically. The representatives of that public “process of argumentation” are — as we know — principally political parties, inasmuch as these are responsible for the formation of political will. De facto, they will always aim to achieve majorities and hence will almost inevitably attend to interests that they promise to satisfy, even though these interests are often particular and do not truly serve the whole. Sensibility to the truth is repeatedly subordinated to sensibility to interests. I find it significant that Habermas speaks of sensibility to the truth as a necessary
element in the process of political argument, thereby reintroducing the concept of truth into philosophical and political debate.

At this point, though, Pilate’s question becomes unavoidable: What is truth? And how can it be recognized? If in our search for an answer we have recourse to “public reason”, as Rawls does, then further questions necessarily follow: What is reasonable? How is reason shown to be true? In any case, on this basis it becomes clear that in the search for a set of laws embodying freedom, in the search for the truth about a just polity, we must listen to claims other than those of parties and interest groups, without in any way wishing to deny the importance of the latter. Let us return now to the structure of the medieval university. Besides the faculty of jurisprudence, there were faculties of philosophy and theology, which were entrusted with the task of studying the human being in his totality, thus safeguarding sensibility to the truth. One might even say that this was the permanent and true purpose of both faculties: to be custodians of sensibility to the truth, not to allow man to be distracted from his search for the truth. Yet how could the faculties measure up to this task? This is a question which must be constantly worked at, and is never asked and answered once and for all. So, at this point, I cannot offer a satisfactory answer either, but only an invitation to continue exploring the question — exploring in company with the great minds throughout history that have grappled and researched, engaging with their answers and their passion for the truth that invariably points beyond each individual answer.

Theology and philosophy in this regard form a strange pair of twins, in which neither of the two can be totally separated from the other, and yet each must preserve its own task and its own identity. It is the historical merit of Saint Thomas Aquinas — in the face of the rather different answer offered by the Fathers, owing to their historical context — to have highlighted the autonomy of philosophy, and with it the laws and the responsibility proper to reason, which enquires on the basis of its own dynamic. Distancing themselves from neo-Platonic philosophies, in which religion and philosophy were inseparably interconnected, the Fathers had presented the Christian faith as the true philosophy, and had emphasized that this faith fulfils the demands of reason in search of truth; that faith is the “yes” to the truth, in comparison with the mythical religions that had
become mere custom. By the time the university came to birth, though, those religions no longer existed in the West — there was only Christianity, and thus it was necessary to give new emphasis to the specific responsibility of reason, which is not absorbed by faith. Thomas was writing at a privileged moment: for the first time, the philosophical works of Aristotle were accessible in their entirety; the Jewish and Arab philosophies were available as specific appropriations and continuations of Greek philosophy. Christianity, in a new dialogue with the reasoning of the interlocutors it was now encountering, was thus obliged to argue a case for its own reasonableness. The faculty of philosophy, which as a so-called “arts faculty” had until then been no more than a preparation for theology, now became a faculty in its own right, an autonomous partner of theology and the faith on which theology reflected. We cannot digress to consider the fascinating consequences of this development. I would say that Saint Thomas’s idea concerning the relationship between philosophy and theology could be expressed using the formula that the Council of Chalcedon adopted for Christology: philosophy and theology must be interrelated “without confusion and without separation”. “Without confusion” means that each of the two must preserve its own identity. Philosophy must truly remain a quest conducted by reason with freedom and responsibility; it must recognize its limits and likewise its greatness and immensity.

Theology must continue to draw upon a treasury of knowledge that it did not invent, that always surpasses it, the depths of which can never be fully plumbed through reflection, and which for that reason constantly gives rise to new thinking. Balancing “without confusion”, there is always “without separation”: philosophy does not start again from zero with every thinking subject in total isolation, but takes its place within the great dialogue of historical wisdom, which it continually accepts and develops in a manner both critical and docile. It must not exclude what religions, and the Christian faith in particular, have received and have given to humanity as signposts for the journey. Various things said by theologians in the course of history, or even adopted in practice by ecclesiastical authorities, have been shown by history to be false, and today make us feel ashamed. Yet at the same time it has to be acknowledged that the history of the
saints, the history of the humanism that has grown out of the Christian faith, demonstrates the truth of this faith in its essential nucleus, thereby giving it a claim upon public reason. Of course, much of the content of theology and faith can only be appropriated within the context of faith, and therefore cannot be demanded of those to whom this faith remains inaccessible. Yet at the same time it is true that the message of the Christian faith is never solely a “comprehensive religious doctrine” in Rawls’ sense, but is a purifying force for reason, helping it to be more fully itself. On the basis of its origin, the Christian message should always be an encouragement towards truth, and thus a force against the pressure exerted by power and interests.

Up to this point, I have spoken only of the medieval university, while seeking nonetheless to indicate the unchanging nature of the university and its task. In modern times, new dimensions of knowledge have opened up, which have been explored within the university under two broad headings: first, the natural sciences, which have developed on the basis of the connection between experimentation and the presumed rationality of matter; second, the historical and human sciences, in which man, contemplating his history as in a mirror and clarifying the dimensions of his nature, seeks to understand himself better. In this process, not only has an immense quantity of knowledge and power been made available to humanity, but knowledge and recognition of human rights and dignity have also evolved, and for this we can only be grateful. Yet the human journey never simply comes to an end; and the danger of falling into inhumanity is never totally overcome, as is only too evident from the panorama of recent history! The danger for the western world — to speak only of this — is that today, precisely because of the greatness of his knowledge and power, man will fail to face up to the question of the truth. This would mean at the same time that reason would ultimately bow to the pressure of interests and the attraction of utility, constrained to recognize this as the ultimate criterion. To put it from the point of view of the structure of the university: there is a danger that philosophy, no longer considering itself capable of its true task, will degenerate into positivism; and that theology, with its message addressed to reason, will be limited to the private sphere of a more or less numerous group. Yet if reason, out of
concern for its alleged purity, becomes deaf to the great message that comes to it from Christian faith and wisdom, then it withers like a tree whose roots can no longer reach the waters that give it life. It loses the courage for truth and thus becomes not greater but smaller. Applied to our European culture, this means: if our culture seeks only to build itself on the basis of the circle of its own argumentation, on what convinces it at the time, and if — anxious to preserve its secularism — it detaches itself from its life-giving roots, then it will not become more reasonable or purer, but will fall apart and disintegrate.

This brings me back to my starting-point. What should the Pope do or say at the university? Certainly, he must not seek to impose the faith upon others in an authoritarian manner — as faith can only be given in freedom. Over and above his ministry as Shepherd of the Church, and on the basis of the intrinsic nature of this pastoral ministry, it is the Pope's task to safeguard sensibility to the truth; to invite reason to set out ever anew in search of what is true and good, in search of God; to urge reason, in the course of this search, to discern the illuminating lights that have emerged during the history of the Christian faith, and thus to recognize Jesus Christ as the Light that illumines history and helps us find the path towards the future.

From the Vatican, 17 January 2008.
I invite you to ceaselessly meditate on "this great mystery of faith", as we proclaim it in every Mass after the Consecration. First of all, in the Eucharist we relive the Lord's Sacrifice at the end of his life, through which he saves all men. In this way we remain close to him and receive in abundance the graces we need for our daily life and our salvation. The Eucharist is par excellence God's act of love for us. What could be greater than giving one's life out of love? In this, Jesus is the model of the total gift of self, the path on which we too must walk in his footsteps.

The Eucharist is also a model of the Christian journey which must shape our existence. It is Christ who convokes us to gather together, to constitute the Church, his Body, in the midst of the world.

To be admitted to the twofold table of the Word and the Bread, we must first receive God's forgiveness, the gift which sustains us on our daily journey, restores the divine image within us and shows us the point to which we are loved. Then, just as in Luke's Gospel he addressed Simon the Pharisee, Jesus continuously addresses us through Scripture: "I have something to say to you" (7: 40). Indeed, every word of Scripture is a word of life for us that we must listen to with great attention. In a particular way, the Gospel constitutes the heart of the Christian message, the total revelation of the divine mysteries. In his Son, the Word made flesh, God has told us everything. In his Son, God has revealed his Face to us as Father, a Face of love, a Face of hope. He has shown us the way to happiness and joy. During the consecration, an especially important moment of the Eucharist because in it we commemorate Christ's sacrifice, you are called to contemplate the Lord Jesus, like St Thomas: "My Lord and my God" (Jn 20: 28). After receiving the Word of God, after having been nourished by his Body, let yourselves be inwardly transformed and receive your mission from him. Indeed, he sends you into the world to be messengers of his peace and witnesses of his message of love. Do not be afraid to proclaim Christ to the young people of your age. Show them that Christ does not hamper your life or your freedom; show them that, on the contrary, he gives you true life, that he sets you free to fight evil and to make something beautiful of your life.

Do not forget that the Sunday Eucharist is a loving encounter with the Lord that we cannot do without. When you recognize him "at the breaking
of bread", like the disciples at Emmaus, you will become his companions. He will help you to grow and to give the best of yourselves. Remember that in the Bread of the Eucharist, Christ is really, totally and substantially present. It is therefore in the mystery of the Eucharist, at Mass and during silent adoration before the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, that you will meet him in a privileged way. By opening your very being and your whole life under the gaze of Christ, you will not be crushed - quite the contrary: you will discover that you are infinitely loved. You will receive the power that you need in order to build your lives and to make the choices that present themselves to you every day. Before the Lord, in the silence of your hearts, some of you may feel called to follow him in a more radical way in the priesthood or the consecrated life. Do not be afraid to listen to this call and to respond with joy. As I said at the inauguration of my Pontificate, God takes nothing away from those who give themselves to him. On the contrary, he gives them everything. He comes to draw out the best that is in each one of us, so that our lives can truly flourish.

I impart an affectionate Apostolic Blessing to you, dear young people, and to all the participants of the International Eucharistic Congress at Quebec.

Celebration of the Vespers of the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul at the opening of the Pauline Year (June 28, 2008)

Your Holiness and Fraternal Delegates,

Your Eminences,

Venerable Brothers in the

Episcopate and in the Priesthood,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
We have gathered near the tomb of St Paul, who was born 2,000 years ago at Tarsus in Cilicia, in present-day Turkey. Who was St Paul? In the temple of Jerusalem, faced with the frenzied crowd that wanted to kill him, he presented himself with these words: "I am a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city [Jerusalem] at the feet of Gamaliel, educated according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God..." (Acts 22: 3). At the end of his journey he was to say of himself: "For this I was appointed a preacher and apostle... a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (1 Tim 2: 7; cf. 2 Tim 1: 11). A teacher of the Gentiles, an apostle and a herald of Jesus Christ, this is how he described himself, looking back over the path of his life. But this glance does not look only to the past. "A teacher of the Gentiles" - these words open to the future, to all peoples and all generations. For us Paul is not a figure of the past whom we remember with veneration. He is also our teacher, an Apostle and herald of Jesus Christ for us too.

Thus we are not gathered to reflect on past history, irrevocably behind us. Paul wants to speak to us - today. That is why I chose to establish this special "Pauline Year": in order to listen to him and learn today from him, as our teacher, "the faith and the truth" in which the reasons for unity among Christ's disciples are rooted. In this perspective, for this 2000th anniversary of the Apostle's birth I wished to light a special "Pauline Flame" that will remain lit throughout the year in a special brazier placed in the Basilica's four-sided portico. To solemnize this event I have also inaugurated the so-called "Pauline Door", through which I entered the Basilica, accompanied by the Patriarch of Constantinople, by the Cardinal Archpriest and by other religious Authorities. It is a cause of deep joy to me that the opening of the Pauline Year has acquired a special ecumenical character through the presence of numerous delegates and representatives of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, whom I welcome with an open heart. I greet first of all His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew I and the members of the Delegation that accompany him, as well as the large group of lay people who have come to Rome from various parts of the world to experience with him and with all of us these moments of prayer and reflection. I greet the Fraternal Delegates of the Churches which have special ties with the Apostle Paul - Jerusalem, Antioch, Cyprus, Greece -
and which form the geographical environment of the Apostle's life before his arrival in Rome. I cordially greet the Brethren of the various Churches and Ecclesial Communities of the East and the West, together with all of you who have desired to take part in this solemn initiation of the "Year" dedicated to the Apostle to the Gentiles.

Thus, we are gathered here to question ourselves on the great Apostle to the Gentiles. Let us not ask ourselves only: who was Paul? Let us ask ourselves above all: who is Paul? What does he say to me? At this moment, at the beginning of the "Pauline Year" that we are inaugurating, I would like to choose from the rich testimony of the New Testament, three texts in which his inner features, his specific character appear. In the Letter to the Galatians, St Paul gives a very personal profession of faith in which he opens his heart to readers of all times and reveals what was the most intimate drive of his life. "I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2: 20). All Paul's actions begin from this center. His faith is the experience of being loved by Jesus Christ in a very personal way. It is awareness of the fact that Christ did not face death for something anonymous but rather for love of him - of Paul - and that, as the Risen One, he still loves him; in other words, Christ gave himself for him. Paul's faith is being struck by the love of Jesus Christ, a love that overwhelms him to his depths and transforms him. His faith is not a theory, an opinion about God and the world. His faith is the impact of God's love in his heart. Thus, this same faith was love for Jesus Christ.

Paul is presented by many as a pugnacious man who was well able to wield the sword of his words. Indeed, there was no lack of disputes on his journey as an Apostle. He did not seek a superficial harmony. In the First of his Letters, addressed to the Thessalonians, he himself says: "We had courage... to proclaim to you the Gospel of God in the face of great opposition... In fact, we never spoke words of adulation, as you know" (1 Thess 2: 2, 5). The truth was too great for him to be willing to sacrifice it with a view to external success. For him, the truth that he experienced in his encounter with the Risen One was well worth the fight, persecution and suffering. But what most deeply motivated him was being loved by Jesus Christ and the desire to communicate this love to others. Paul was a man capable of loving and all of his actions and suffering can only be
explained on the basis of this core sentiment. It is only on this basis that we can understand the concepts on which his proclamation was founded. Let us take another key word of his: freedom. The experience of being loved to the very end by Christ had opened his eyes to the truth and to the way of human existence. It was an experience that embraced everything. Paul was free as a man loved by God, who, by virtue of God, was able to love together with him. This love then became the "law" of his life and in this very way, the freedom of his life. He speaks and acts motivated by the responsibility of love. Here freedom and responsibility are indivisibly united. Since Paul lives in the responsibility of love, he is free; since he is one who loves, he lives his life totally in the responsibility of this love and does not take freedom as a pretext to act arbitrarily and egoistically. In the same spirit Augustine formulated the phrase that later became famous: *Dilige et quod vis fac* (*Tract. in 1 Jo* 7, 7-8) - love and do what you please. The one who loves Christ as Paul loved him can truly do as he pleases because his love is united to Christ's will and thus with God's will; because his will is anchored to the truth and because his will is no longer merely his own, arbitrary to the autonomous self, but is integrated into God's freedom from which he receives the path to take.

In the search for the inner features of St Paul I would like, secondly, to recall the words that the Risen Christ addressed to him on the road to Damascus. First the Lord asked him: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?". To the question: "Who are you, Lord?", Saul is given the answer: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (*Acts* 9: 4f.). In persecuting the Church, Paul was persecuting Jesus himself. "You persecute me". Jesus identifies with the Church in a single subject. This exclamation of the Risen One, which transformed Saul's life, in summary already contains the entire doctrine on the Church as the Body of Christ. Christ did not withdraw himself into Heaven, leaving ranks of followers to carry out "his cause" on earth. The Church is not an association that desires to promote a specific cause. In her there is no question of a cause. In her it is a matter of the person of Jesus Christ, who, also as the Risen One, remained "flesh". He has "flesh and bones" (*Lk* 24: 39), the Risen One says, in Luke's Gospel, to the disciples who thought he was a ghost. He has a Body. He is personally present in his Church, "Head and Body" form one being,
Augustine would come to say. "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?" Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor 6: 15). And he added: just as, according to the book of Genesis, man and woman become one flesh, thus Christ and his followers become one spirit, that is, one in the new world of the Resurrection (cf. 1 Cor 6: 16ff.). In all of this the Eucharistic mystery appears, in which Christ continually gives his Body and makes of us his Body: "The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10: 16f). With these words, at this moment, not only Paul addresses us but also the Lord himself: how could you pierce my body? Before the Face of Christ, these words become at the same time an urgent plea: Bring us together from all our divisions. Grant that this may once again become reality today: there is one bread, therefore we, although we are many, are one body. For Paul, the words about the Church as the body of Christ are not just any comparison. They go far beyond a comparison. "Why do you persecute me?". Christ ceaselessly draws us into his body, building his Body from the Eucharistic center that for Paul is the center of Christian existence by virtue of which everyone, as also every individual, can experience in a totally personal way: he has loved me and given himself for me.

I would like to conclude with words St Paul spoke near the end of his life. It is an exhortation to Timothy from prison while he was facing death, "with the strength that comes from God bear your share of hardship which the Gospel entails", the Apostle said to his disciple (2 Tim 1: 8). These words, which mark the end of the Apostle's life as a testament, refer back to the beginning of his mission. When, after his encounter with the Risen One, while Paul lay blind in his dwelling at Damascus, Ananias was charged to visit the feared persecutor and to lay his hands upon him so that he might regain his sight. Ananias' objection that this Saul was a dangerous persecutor of Christians, was met with the response: this man must carry my name before the Gentiles and kings: "I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name" (Acts 9: 15f.). The task of proclamation and the call to suffer for Christ's sake are inseparable. The call to become the teacher of the Gentiles is, at the same time and intrinsically, a call to suffering in communion with Christ who redeemed
us through his Passion. In a world in which falsehood is powerful, the truth is paid for with suffering. The one who desires to avoid suffering, to keep it at bay, keeps life itself and its greatness at bay; he cannot be a servant of truth and thus a servant of faith. There is no love without suffering - without the suffering of renouncing oneself, of the transformation and purification of self for true freedom. Where there is nothing worth suffering for, even life loses its value. The Eucharist - the center of our Christian being - is founded on Jesus' sacrifice for us; it is born from the suffering of love which culminated in the Cross. We live by this love that gives itself. It gives us the courage and strength to suffer with Christ and for him in this world, knowing that in this very way our life becomes great and mature and true. In the light of all St Paul's Letters, we see how the prophecy made to Ananias at the time of Paul's call came true in the process of teaching the Gentiles: "I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name". His suffering made him credible as a teacher of truth who did not seek his own advantage, his own glory or his personal satisfaction but applied himself for the sake of the One who loved us and has given himself for us all.

Let us now thank the Lord for having called Paul, making him the light to the Gentiles and the teacher of us all, and let us pray to him: "Give us even today witnesses of the Resurrection, struck by the impact of your love and able to bring the light of the Gospel in our time. St Paul, pray for us!

Amen.

Homily on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi
(May 22, 2008)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

After the strong season of the liturgical year which, focusing on Easter spreads over three months - first the 40 days of Lent, then the 50 days of Eastertide -, the liturgy has us celebrate three Feasts which instead have a
"synthetic" character: the Most Holy Trinity, then Corpus Christi, and lastly, the Sacred Heart of Jesus. What is the precise significance of today's Solemnity, of the Body and Blood of Christ? The answer is given to us in the fundamental actions of this celebration we are carrying out: first of all we gather around the altar of the Lord, to be together in his presence; secondly, there will be the procession, that is walking with the Lord; and lastly, kneeling before the Lord, adoration, which already begins in the Mass and accompanies the entire procession but culminates in the final moment of the Eucharistic Blessing when we all prostrate ourselves before the One who stooped down to us and gave his life for us. Let us reflect briefly on these three attitudes, so that they may truly be an expression of our faith and our life.

The first action, therefore, is to gather together in the Lord's presence. This is what in former times was called "statio". Let us imagine for a moment that in the whole of Rome there were only this one altar and that all the city's Christians were invited to gather here to celebrate the Savior who died and was raised. This gives us an idea of what the Eucharistic celebration must have been like at the origins, in Rome and in many other cities that the Gospel message had reached. In every particular Church there was only one Bishop and around him, around the Eucharist that he celebrated, a community was formed, one, because one was the blessed Cup and one was the Bread broken, as we heard in the Apostle Paul's words in the Second Reading (cf. I Cor 10: 16-17). That other famous Pauline expression comes to mind: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3: 28). "You are all one"! In these words the truth and power of the Christian revolution is heard, the most profound revolution of human history, which was experienced precisely around the Eucharist: here people of different age groups, sex, social background, and political ideas gather together in the Lord's presence. The Eucharist can never be a private event, reserved for people chosen through affinity or friendship. The Eucharist is a public devotion that has nothing esoteric or exclusive about it. Here too, this evening, we did not choose to meet one another, we came and find ourselves next to one another, brought together by faith and called to become one body, sharing the one Bread which is Christ. We are united
over and above our differences of nationality, profession, social class, political ideas: we open ourselves to one another to become one in him. This has been a characteristic of Christianity from the outset, visibly fulfilled around the Eucharist, and it is always necessary to be alert to ensure that the recurring temptations of particularism, even if with good intentions, do not go in the opposite direction. Therefore Corpus Christi reminds us first of all of this: that being Christian means coming together from all parts of the world to be in the presence of the one Lord and to become one with him and in him.

The second constitutive aspect is walking with the Lord. This is the reality manifested by the procession that we shall experience together after Holy Mass, almost as if it were naturally prolonged by moving behind the One who is the Way, the Journey. With the gift of himself in the Eucharist the Lord Jesus sets us free from our "paralyses", he helps us up and enables us to "proceed", that is, he makes us take a step ahead and then another step, and thus sets us going with the power of the Bread of Life. As happened to the Prophet Elijah who had sought refuge in the wilderness for fear of his enemies and had made up his mind to let himself die (cf. I Kings 19: 1-4). But God awoke him from sleep and caused him to find beside him a freshly baked loaf: "Arise and eat", the angel said, "else the journey will be too great for you" (I Kings 19: 5,7). The Corpus Christi procession teaches us that the Eucharist seeks to free us from every kind of despondency and discouragement, wants to raise us, so that we can set out on the journey with the strength God gives us through Jesus Christ. It is the experience of the People of Israel in the exodus from Egypt, their long wandering through the desert, as the First Reading relates. It is an experience which was constitutive for Israel but is exemplary for all humanity. Indeed the saying: "Man does not live by bread alone, but... by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord" (Deut 8: 3), is a universal affirmation which refers to every man or woman as a person. Each one can find his own way if he encounters the One who is the Word and the Bread of Life and lets himself be guided by his friendly presence. Without the God-with-us, the God who is close, how can we stand up to the pilgrimage through life, either on our own or as society and the family of peoples? The Eucharist is the Sacrament of the God who does not leave
us alone on the journey but stays at our side and shows us the way. Indeed, it is not enough to move onwards, one must also see where one is going! "Progress" does not suffice, if there are no criteria as reference points. On the contrary, if one loses the way one risks coming to a precipice, or at any rate more rapidly distancing oneself from the goal. God created us free but he did not leave us alone: he made himself the "way" and came to walk together with us so that in our freedom we should also have the criterion we need to discern the right way and to take it.

At this point we cannot forget the beginning of the "Decalogue", the Ten Commandments, where it is written: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex 20: 2-3). Here we find the meaning of the third constitutive element of Corpus Christi: kneeling in adoration before the Lord. Adoring the God of Jesus Christ, who out of love made himself bread broken, is the most effective and radical remedy against the idolatry of the past and of the present. Kneeling before the Eucharist is a profession of freedom: those who bow to Jesus cannot and must not prostrate themselves before any earthly authority, however powerful. We Christians kneel only before God or before the Most Blessed Sacrament because we know and believe that the one true God is present in it, the God who created the world and so loved it that he gave his Only Begotten Son (cf. Jn 3: 16). We prostrate ourselves before a God who first bent over man like the Good Samaritan to assist him and restore his life, and who knelt before us to wash our dirty feet. Adoring the Body of Christ, means believing that there, in that piece of Bread, Christ is really there, and gives true sense to life, to the immense universe as to the smallest creature, to the whole of human history as to the most brief existence. Adoration is prayer that prolongs the celebration and Eucharistic communion and in which the soul continues to be nourished: it is nourished with love, truth, peace; it is nourished with hope, because the One before whom we prostrate ourselves does not judge us, does not crush us but liberates and transforms us.

This is why gathering, walking and adoring together fills us with joy. In making our own the adoring attitude of Mary, whom we especially remember in this month of May, let us pray for ourselves and for everyone;
let us pray for every person who lives in this city, that he or she may know you, O Father and the One whom you sent, Jesus Christ and thus have life in abundance. Amen.

Address to the participants in the International Congress "Woman and Man, the Human in its Totality," on the 20th Anniversary of Mulieris Dignitatem (February 9, 2008)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is a true pleasure to welcome and greet all of you taking part at the international convention on the theme: "Woman and Man, the Humanum in Its Entirety", organized on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the publication of the Apostolic Letter Mulieris dignitatem. I greet Cardinal Stanisław Ryłko, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, and I am grateful to him for expressing your common sentiments. I greet the Secretary, Bishop Josef Clemens, and the members and staff of the Dicastery. In particular I greet the women, who are the great majority of those present and who have enriched the Congress' work with their experience and competence.

The theme upon which you have been reflecting is highly topical: from the second half of the 20th century up to today the movement for the improvement of women in the various aspects of social life has given rise to countless reflections and debates, and has seen many initiatives multiply which the Catholic Church has often watched with close attention. The man-woman relationship in its respective specificity, reciprocity and complementarity certainly constitutes a central point of the "anthropological question", so decisive in contemporary culture and ultimately for every culture. Numerous events and Pontifical Documents have touched upon the emerging reality of the feminine question. I limit
myself to recalling those of my beloved Predecessor John Paul II, who, in June of 1995, wished to write a Letter to Women, while on 15 August 1988, 20 years ago this year, published the Apostolic Letter *Mulieris dignitatem*. This text on the vocation and dignity of women, of great theological, spiritual and cultural richness, in its turn has inspired the Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World, of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

In *Mulieris Dignitatem*, John Paul II wished to deepen the fundamental anthropological truths of man and woman, the equality of their dignity and the unity of both, the well-rooted and profound diversity between the masculine and the feminine and their vocation to reciprocity and complementarity, to collaboration and to communion (cf. n. 6). This "uni-duality" of man and woman is based on the foundation of the dignity of every person created in the image and likeness of God, who "male and female he created them" (*Gen* 1: 27), avoiding an indistinct uniformity and a dull and impoverishing equality as much as an irreconcilable and conflictual difference (cf. John Paul II, Letter to Women, n. 8). This dual unity brings with it, inscribed in body and soul, the relationship with the other, love for the other, interpersonal communion that implies "that the creation of man is also marked by a certain likeness to the divine communion" (*Mulieris dignitatem*, n. 7). Therefore, when men and women demand to be autonomous and totally self-sufficient, they run the risk of being closed in a self-reliance that considers ignoring every natural, social or religious bond as an expression of freedom, but which, in fact, reduces them to an oppressive solitude. To promote and sustain the real advancement of women and men one cannot fail to take this reality into account.

A renewed anthropological study is certainly necessary based on the great Christian tradition, which incorporates new scientific advances and, given today's cultural sensitivity, in this way contributes to deepening not only the feminine identity but also the masculine, which is often the object of partial and ideological reflections. Faced with cultural and political trends that seek to eliminate, or at least cloud and confuse, the sexual differences inscribed in human nature, considering them a cultural
construct, it is necessary to recall God's design that created the human being masculine and feminine, with a unity and at the same time an original difference and complimentary. Human nature and the cultural dimension are integrated in an ample and complex process that constitutes the formation on one’s own identity, where both dimensions, that of the feminine and that of the masculine, correspond to and complete each other.

Opening the work of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Conferences in May of last year in Brazil, I was able to recall how a masculine mentality still persists that ignores the novelty of Christianity, which recognizes and proclaims that men and women share equal dignity and responsibility. There are places and cultures where women are discriminated against or undervalued for the sole fact of being women, where recourse is made even to religious arguments and family, social and cultural pressure in order to maintain the inequality of the sexes, where acts of violence are consummated in regard to women, making them the object of mistreatment and of exploitation in advertising and in the consumer and entertainment industry. Faced with such grave and persistent phenomena the Christian commitment appears all the more urgent so that everywhere it may promote a culture that recognizes the dignity that belongs to women, in law and in concrete reality.

God entrusts to women and men, according to their respective capacities, a specific vocation and mission in the Church and in the world. Here I am thinking of the family, a community of love open to life, the fundamental cell of society. In it the woman and the man, thanks to the gift of maternity and paternity, together carry out an irreplaceable role in regard to life. Children from their conception have the right to be able to count on their father and mother to take care of them and to accompany their growth. The State, for its part, must uphold with appropriate social policies everything that promotes the stability and unity of matrimony, the dignity and responsibility of couples, their rights and irreplaceable duty as educators of their children. Besides, it is necessary to enable the woman to collaborate in the building of society, appreciating her typical "feminine genius".
Dear brothers and sisters, I thank you once again for coming and, while I wish the Convention's work may be successful, I assure you of a remembrance in prayer, invoking the maternal intercession of Mary, that she may help the women of our time to carry out their vocation and their mission in the ecclesial and civil community. With these wishes, I impart to you present here and to those dear to you, a special Apostolic Blessing.

The Roman Curia

Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary granting certain indulgences on the occasion of the two thousandth anniversary of St. Paul's birth (May 10, 2008)

_The Holy Father, through a Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary, has granted certain indulgences on the occasion of the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of St. Paul the Apostle. (May 10, 2008)_

URBIS ET ORBIS

DECRETUM

Saeculo XX expleto postquam Sanctus Apostolus Paulus in terris ortus est,

speciales conceduntur Indulgentiae.

Cum instet sollemnitatis liturgica Principum Apostolorum, Summus Pontifex, pastorali impulsus sollicitudine, in animo habet tempestive decernere de spiritualibus aperiendis thesauris pro sanctificatione fidelium, ita ut ipsi salutaria proposita semper quidem concipienda, vel maxime hac pia et felici occasione innovent et roborent, in actum ferventissime deducenda inde a primis vesperis memoratae sollemnitatis, praesertim in
honorem Apostoli Gentium, a cuius ortu in terris bismillesimus anniversarius dies nunc propinquat.

Sane vero, Indulgentiarum donum, quod Romanus Pontifex universae Ecclesiae praebet, optimae interiori purificationi summo gradu attingendae viam sternit, quae scilicet Beato Paulo Apostolo honorem defert et supernaturalem vitam in cordibus fidelium exaltat et ad fructus bonorum operum gignendos suaviter impellit.

Itaque haec Apostolica Paenitentiaria, cui Beatissimus Pater commisit ut Decretum de Indulgentiis totum per spatium Anni Paulini largiendis et acquirendis præparet atque redigat, per praesens iuxta ipsius Augusti Pontificis mentem editum, gratias, quae in sequentibus significantur, benigne dilargitur:

I.- Omnibus et singulis christifidelibus vere paenitentibus, qui, rite per Sacramentum Paenitentiae expiati et Sacra Synaxi refecti, papalem Sancti Pauli Basilicam ad viam Ostiensem in forma peregrinationis pie inviserint et ad mentem Summi Pontificis oraverint, plenaria temporalis poenae, pro peccatis luendae, Indulgentia, misericorditer in Domino conceditur atque impertitur, obtenta prius ab iisdem admissorum cuiusque suorum sacramentali remissione ac venia.

Plenaria haec Indulgentia a christifidelibus cum sibi, tum aliis fidelibus vita functis toties luci fieri poterit, quoties imperata opera rite perficiantur, norma autem illa usque vigente, qua semel dumtaxat in die consequi licet Indulgentiam plenaram.

Ut vero quae in sacris hisce visitationibus effundentur preces ad Sancti Pauli memoriam recolendam fidelium animos studiosius referant atque excitent, haec, quae sequuntur, statuuntur atque iubentur: praeter eas supplicationes, quae ulter pro singulorum pietate ante SS.mi Sacramenti aram ad Deum admovebuntur, ad Confessionis aram recitari debent Oratio Dominica atque Symboolum Apostolorum, additis piis invocationibus in honorem Beatae Mariae Virginis atque Sancti Pauli. Quae quidem animi devotio sibi semper conexam habeat memoriam Principis Apostolorum Sancti Petri.

II.- Christifideles variarum Ecclesiarum localium, suetis condicionibus (sacramentali Confessione, eucharistica Commu-nione et oratione ad
mentem Summi Pontificis) rite adimpletis, omnino excluso affectu erga quodcumque peccatum, plenariam lucrari valebunt Indulgentiam, si sacrae functioni vel pio exercitio in honorem Apostoli Gentium publice peractis devote interfuerint: diebus, quibus Annus Paulinus sollemniter aperietur et claudetur, in omnibus sacris aedibus; aliis diebus a loci Ordinario determinandis, in sacris aedibus sub titulo Sancti Pauli et, pro utilitate fidelium, in aliis ab ipso Ordinario designandis.

III.- Denique fideles, morbo vel alia legitima et notabili causa impediti, pariter plenariam consequi poterunt Indulgentiam, semper elongato animo a quocumque peccato et concepto proposito suetas condiciones, cum primum eis possibile erit, adimplendi, dummodo iubilari celebrationi in honorem Sancti Pauli peractae se spiritualiter adiunxerint, preces suas suosque dolores misericordi Deo offerentes pro Christianorum unitate.

Quo autem facilius christifideles caelestium horum munera particeps fieri queant, sacerdotes, competenti ecclesiastica auctoritate ad confessiones audiendas adprobati, prompto et generoso animo sese praebant ad ipsas excipiendas.

Praesenti per Annum Paulinum tantum valituro. In contrarium facientibus non obstantibus quibuscumque.

Datum Romae, ex aedibus Paenitentiariae Apostolicae, die X mensis Maii, anno Dominicae Incarnationis MMVIII, in vigilia Dominicae Pentecostes.

+ IACOBUS FRANCISCUS S. R. E. Card. STAFFORD

Paenitentiarius Maior

+ Ioannes Franciscus Girotti, O. F. M. Conv.

Ep. Tit. Metensis, Regens

Torna ai contenuti
Decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for the celebration of the feast of St. Josemaría as a memoria ad libitum in the Diocese of Rome (May 20, 2008)

Decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for the celebration of the feast of St. Josemaria as a memoria ad libitum (optional memorial, in the Diocese of Rome (May 20, 2008).

CONGREGATIO DE CULTU DIVINO ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM

Prot.N. 519/08L

ALMAE URBIS ROMANAE

Instante Eminestissimo Domino Camillo Ruini, Vicario Suæ Sanctitatis Almae Urbis Romanae, litteris die 13 maii 2008 datis, vigore facultatum huic Congregationi a Summo Pontifice BENEDICTO XVI tributarum, perlibenter concedimus ut celebratio Sancti Iosephmariae Escriva de Balaguer, presbyteri, in Calendario proprio Vicariatus Almae Urbis Romanae, gradu memoriae ad libitum, die 26 iunii, peragi valeat.

Contraiis quibuslibet minime obstantibus

Ex aedibus Congregationis de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum, die 20 maii 2008.

+ Franciscus Card. Arinze

Praefectus

+ Albertus Malcolmus Ranjith

Archiepiscopus a Secretis
Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary granting certain indulgences to relatives of faithful of Opus Dei and members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross (May 14, 2008)

The Holy Father, through the Apostolic Penitentiary has granted certain indulgences for the families of the faithful of Opus Dei and the members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, on the Feast of the Holy Family and for those who participate in the liturgical celebration specified in the decree (May 14, 2008).

PAENITENTIARIA APOSTOLICA

Prot. N. 682/07/1

BEATISSIME PATER,

Xaverius Echevarría Rodríguez, Praelaturae personalis Sanctae Crucis et Operis Dei Praelatus, debitae oboedientiae ac filialis venerationis sensus Sanctitati Tuae ex animo pandit, et humillime supplicat, ut eadem Sanctitas Tua sequentes Indulgentias concedere dignetur:

I.- in favorem participantium celebrationes liturgicas quas, triduo ante sollemnitatem Nativitatis Domini et Paschatis, Praelatura Sanctae Crucis et Operis Dei necnon Societas Sacerdotalis Sanctae Crucis, in spiritalem familiarum suorum fidelium atque sodalium profectum, promovere solent: a.- plenariam Indulgentiam suetis condicionibus (sacramentali Confessione, eucharistica Communione et oratione ad mentem Summi Pontificis) lucrandam, si, vere paenitentes, easdem triduanas celebrationes ex integro participaverint; b.- partialem, saltem a contritis acquirendam singulis diebus eiusdem tridui quibus sacris functionibus interfuerint;

II.- pro parentibus, fratribus et sororibus fidelium Praelaturae et sodalium Societatis Sacerdotalis necnon pro coniugibus, filiis et filiabus fidelium supernumerariorum: Indulgentiam plenariam suetis condicionibus lucrandam die festo Sanctae Familiae Iesu, Mariae, Ioseph, si, vere paenitentes, sacrae functioni adfuerint.
Et Deus, etc.

Die XIV Maii MMVIII

PAENITENTIARIA APOSTOLICA, de mandato Summi Pontificis, benigne annuit pro gratia iuxta preces, ad septennium. Contrariis quibuslibet non obstantibus.

+ IACOBUS FRANCISCUS S.R.E. Card. STAFFORD

Paenitentiarius Maior

+ Ioannes Franciscus Girotti, O.F.M. Conv.

Ep. Tit. Metensis, Regens

Torna ai contenuti
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- Activities of the Prelate
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Decree of appointment of the Vicar of the Delegation of Uruguay

Decree of appointment of the Vicar of the Delegation of Uruguay

Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRIA

Dei et Apostolicæ Sedis gratia

Prælatus

D E C R E T U M

Præsentibus his litteris te, Rev.dum D.num D.rem Carolum Mariam González Saracho, nominamus atque constituimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Delegatione Uruguaiæ, cum omnibus et singulis iuribus et obligationibus huic officio adnexis.

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

Datum Romæ, ex Ædibus Curiæ Prælatitiæ, die 29 mense ianuario anno 2008.

+ XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA

Rev.mus D. Dr. Ernestus Burkhart

Curiaæ Prælatitiæ Cancellarius

Reg. Gen. R. lib. VI pag. 28

Decree of appointment of the Judicial Vicar of the Prelature

Decree of appointment of the Judicial Vicar of the Prelature
Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRIA
Dei et Apostolicæ Sedis gratia
Prælatus

D E C R E T U M

Perpensis canonibus 391 § 2, 1420 et 1422 Codicis Iuris Canonici atque Decreto diei 24 ianuarii 1996, quo Prælaturæ Tribunal constituimus;

Cum statuerim ut Rev.mus D.nus Ignatius Celaya Urrutia, hactenus Vicarius Iudicialis, Iudex nominetur prædicti Tribunalis;

Præsenti Decreto Rev.dum D.num Ioseph Andream Carvajal Prieto Vicarium Iudicialem Tribunali Prælaturæ Operis Dei usque ad proximum Congressum Generalem Prælaturæ nominamus.

In perfungendo hoc munere idem Vicarius Iudicialis vigentes normas servabit iuris tum universalis tum particularis.

Ipse præterea, ante officii assumptionem, fidei professionem et ius iurandum fidelitatis emittet coram me vel coram meo delegato (cfr. CIC, can. 833, n. 5 et 1454).

Datum Romæ, ex Ædibus Curiæ Prælatiæ, die 24 mense iunio anno 2008.

+ XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA
Prælatus Operis Dei
Rev.mus D. Dr. Ernestus Burkhart
Curiae Prælatitiae Cancellarius
Reg. Gen. R. lib. VI pag. 31

Torna ai contenuti

Activities of the Prelate
London from April 11 to 13

The Prelate was in London from April 11 to 13. Upon his arrival he went directly to the Cathedral of Westminster, where he was received by the Archbishop, Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor. On the two following days, faithful came from London, Oxford, Manchester and Glasgow for get-togethers with him in Netherhall House and Ashwell House.

The Prelate had a chance to visit the Church of St. Thomas More, which has been entrusted to priests of Opus Dei. Before returning to Rome he stopped at the Church of Our Lady of Willesden, the diocesan shrine of London, where he prayed before the statue of our Lady venerated there.

Portugal from March 7 to 9

In mid-afternoon of Friday, March 7, the Prelate of Opus Dei arrived in Lisbon. On that same day he had meetings with the regional directors of the two branches of the Prelature.

On Saturday morning he went to Fatima to make a pilgrimage to our Lady. He was received by the Bishop of the diocese, Most Rev. Antonio Marto, and Bishop-emeritus Serafim. After praying in the Capelinha, he met with some priests of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross in the House of Our Lady of Sorrows. Before returning to Lisbon, he prayed before the grave of Bishop Alberto Cosme do Amaral, who was bishop of the Diocese of Leiria-Fatima from 1972 to 1993.

In the evening Bishop Echevarría had get-togethers in Lisbon with faithful of the Prelature. He asked for prayers for the Holy Father. On Sunday afternoon he returned to Rome.
Vienna from April 24 to 26

The Prelate of Opus Dei was in Vienna from April 24 to 26. On Friday the 25th, after visiting the Archbishop of Vienna, he prayed before the image of Maria Pócs, in St. Stephen’s Cathedral, and before the monument to the Blessed Trinity.

On Saturday morning he had a get-together with members of the Prelature. In the afternoon, before returning to Rome, he was able to greet some young people who participate in the activities organized by Club Delphín.

Priestly Ordinations

On May 24th, 36 deacons were ordained as priests by Bishop Echevarría in St. Eugene’s Basilica in Rome.[1]

The new priests are from 15 countries: Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, France, Guatemala, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Peru, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Venezuela.

The names of the 36 new priests are:

Avelino Picón Zambrana, Marc Chatanay, Juan Manuel de Ojeda Ruiz de Luna, Iñaki Landa Jáuregui, Gabriel de Castro Tornero Homilías, Pedro Regojo Velasco, Dominique Khoury-Hélou, José Antonio Brage Tuñón, Manuel García de Madariaga Cézar, Marcos Antonio Santini, Sergio Gascón Valverde, Fernando José Gallego Rodríguez, Óscar Beorlegui Murillo, Antonio Cózar Santiago, Iñigo Martínez-Echevarría Castillo, Carlo De Marchi, Francisco Javier Zabaleta Moreno, Alexandre Antosz Filho, Bernal Antonio Campos Retana, José Fernández Labastida, Javier Vicente Salegui Urdaneta, Juan Herráiz Bayod, Rafael López-Ortega Magallanes, Julio Serrano Blanch, Ignacio Palma, Daniel de Jesús Silva Pacheco, Alfonso Berlanga Gaona, Matías Rodríguez Quirós, Jorge Boronat Roda, Carlos Enrique Guillén del Río, Marc Bosch Barrera,
The Netherlands from February 15 to 17

On the morning of Saturday the 16th, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, traveled to Zonnewende, a center directed by the Prelature, where he met with various groups of people to whom he spoke about, among other things, the importance of the family: “If we truly want peace, tranquility, mutual service, and progress to reign in society, we have to educate our children very well,” he said.

On the morning of Sunday the 17th, the Prelate visited the Bishop of Haarlem, the diocese where Amsterdam is located. Before seeing the Bishop, he had a chance to pray before the statue of Our Lady of Haarlem, in the church dedicated to St. Joseph.

Before leaving, the Prelate encouraged the members of Opus Dei to go to the intercession of St. Josemaría and Bishop Alvaro del Portillo and follow their example, in order to fully incarnate the spirit of Opus Dei, united by the communion of saints. “Holland has to catch fire. Once again it will be a source of people who want to bring Christ’s faith to the four corners of the earth. May you give an apostolic dimension to your whole life.”

Barcelona from May 15 to 18

Bishop Echevarría arrived in Barcelona on Thursday May 15, in the evening. On the morning of the 16th, he presided at IESE (the Graduate School of Business) as Chancellor of the University of Navarre and gave an address at the opening of the Fifteenth International Symposium on
Ethics, Business and Society. His talk centered on the application of the Christian vision of the person to the business world.

That same morning he blessed a statue of our Lady at Pineda High School and spoke to the families and teachers assembled there. In the afternoon he went to the Church of Santa Maria de Montalegre, in Raval, a neighborhood with a high level of immigrants and unemployment. There he blessed a statue of St. Josemaría.[1]

On the 17th, he was invited by the International University of Catalonia to give the closing lecture for a conference on “The Family and Society.”

In the evening the Prelate had a catechetical get-together with several thousand persons at the Viaró School.

On the 18th, before returning to Rome, he went to pray at the Basilica of La Mare de Déu de la Mercé (Our Lady of Ransom).

[1] See homily on p. 74

Pastoral Letters

January 2008

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

Since December 25th, everything draws our thoughts to the birth of Christ, Eternal Word of the Father, made flesh and born of the Virgin Mary to save us. In countries with a Christian tradition, popular piety expresses its joy at this marvelous mystery in a great variety of ways. Many men and women of good will, including non-Christians, share with Catholics the ideals of peace, justice and solidarity evoked by this feast,
another proof of how Christ’s message responds to the deepest aspirations of mankind.

Nevertheless, besides awakening these yearnings (which are quite important, especially in moments like the present, marked by a lack of peace in many countries and hearts), the essential message of Christmas is the event itself that we celebrate. As the Holy Father reminded us a few day before Christmas: “In Bethlehem the Light that illumines our life was manifested to the world; the path that leads to the fullness of our humanity was revealed to us. If one does not recognize that God became man, what is the sense of celebrating Christmas? The celebration is emptied of meaning. We Christians above all have to reaffirm with deep and heartfelt conviction the truth of Christ’s birth, giving witness before all men and women to an unheard of gift whose richness is not only for us, but for everyone”[1]

Christmas once again places before our eyes the urgent need to assist in applying the fruits of Christ’s Redemption. The shepherds at Bethlehem give us a good example. After hurrying to the stable, where they found Mary and Joseph and the Child lying in the manger, they returned to their usual work filled with joy. They returned changed within, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, eager to communicate to their relatives and neighbors the good news. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.[2] They spread the news despite being, in all likelihood, somewhat reserved, as is also true today, little given to conversation.

When one experiences a great joy, one feels the need to communicate it to others. Even more so when it is a matter of the supernatural life that Jesus has brought to earth. It is impossible to hide this happiness, since the Christian vocation brings with it, by its very nature, the need to be apostolic. The joy of having been saved by God cannot be contained in a single heart. “St. Augustine says that anyone who gains the conversion of a soul has his own predestined. So think about what it will be like to bring other souls to God’s path, to our self-giving. Something marvelous! For the good, of itself, is diffusive. If I enjoy a good, I will necessarily have an effective desire to see that others come to share in that same happiness.”[3]
However, in many places the false idea has taken hold that one shouldn’t speak to others about one’s own religious convictions. That is tantamount, they say, to meddling in other people’s private conduct, violating their personal privacy. We have to reject any such attitude and always be ready to give a reason for the hope of our Christian vocation,[4] with a sincere desire that the good news of salvation may resound in the ears of our relatives, friends and acquaintances.

We can’t be satisfied with just giving witness by our example, because example alone, although indispensable, is not enough. Let us remember the Lord’s reproach to those who failed to warn the people of the dangers of idolatry: they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber.[5]

My daughters and sons, let us remain vigilant so that we never deserve to receive that reproach; we would cease to be the salt of the earth and light of the world.[6] And that should never happen. Do you nourish your apostolic zeal as a supernatural instinct? Are you asking our Lord to put the opportune words on your lips in your daily conversations, also in your professional dealings and when resting? We have to speak to people about the divine condescension shown by the Son of God’s coming into the world, and about how our Lord awaits our assistance in spreading his message of love, life and peace.

A few weeks ago, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published a *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization*, which Benedict XVI recommends that all the faithful meditate on.[7] Among other points, this document reminds us that “to lead a person’s intelligence and freedom in honesty to the encounter with Christ and his Gospel is not an inappropriate encroachment, but rather a legitimate endeavor and a service capable of making human relationships more fruitful.”[8] The communication of religiously significant events and truths in order that they will be accepted by others is not only in profound harmony with the human phenomena of dialogue, proclamation and education, it also corresponds to another important anthropological fact: the desire, which is proper to the human person, to have others share in one’s own goods.”[9]
Naturally, in this area as in everything, we not only respect the intimacy and freedom of others, but we defend them, excluding every form of violence. We have a clear memory of the example and the teaching of St. Josemaría here, who told us: “I have always defended the freedom of individual consciences. I do not understand violence; I do not consider it a proper way either to persuade or to win over”[10]

I vividly recall our Father’s insistence on the need to speak about our faith. Perhaps he did so more frequently when the idea began to be spread in some sectors that one shouldn’t talk to others about the faith, since the testimony of one’s own conduct is sufficient. In the face of this attitude, which could end up paralyzing the Church’s missionary efforts, St. Josemaría reacted with apostolic fortitude. He insisted: “my children need to seek the occasion for speaking, for communicating these marvels that our Lord has entrusted to us. It’s not enough to ‘be present’ to work in a Christian way.”[11]

When the Second Vatican Council was nearing its end, our Founder urged us to put into practice the important teachings of this great Assembly of the Church. Above all, he invited us to remind people, in public and in private, of the universal call to holiness and apostolate so forcefully proclaimed by the Council. He insisted that we should strive to carry out with everyone—Catholics and non-Catholics, Christians and non-Christians—a persevering apostolic conversation grounded on truth and charity. Thus he lived right to the end. There come to mind so many memories of how he took advantage of opportunities to serve souls in this way.

During those years one often heard that it was better not to explain the Christian faith to others; some even came to view dialogue as a conversation in which one has to leave aside the truths taught by the Church, as though any opinion referring to God or to revealed truths were equally valid and authentic. In those circumstances, basing himself on the Gospels, St. Josemaría spoke about the many examples of Jesus speaking or preaching to his contemporaries. And he liked to point out that Christians have acted in the same way throughout the centuries, following the example of the Master. “In preaching the Gospel, the first Twelve had wonderful conversations with those they met and sought out on their
apostolic journeys and travels. The Church would not exist today if the Apostles had not carried out a supernatural dialogue with all those souls. For the Christian apostolate comes down to this: \( \text{ergo fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Christi (Rom 10:17); faith comes from hearing, and hearing depends upon the preaching of Christ's word.} \)[12]

In his recent encyclical on Christian hope, the Pope incisively develops these teachings. Starting with the idea that zeal for holiness is non-transferable (no one can take our place in our personal correspondence to grace), Benedict XVI explains: “The relationship with Jesus, however, is a relationship with the one who gave himself as a ransom for all (cf. 1 Tim 2:6). Being in communion with Jesus Christ draws us into his ‘being for all’; it makes it our own way of being. He commits us to live for others.”[13]

This is the root of the need to communicate the good news of salvation to other souls. “Our calling to be children of God, in the midst of the world, requires us not only to seek our own personal holiness, but also to go out into all the ways of the earth, to convert them into roads that will carry souls over all obstacles and lead them to the Lord.”[14]

We are totally convinced, since it is intrinsic to the calling we have received, that our Lord wants us to increase our personal apostolate of friendship and trust, so characteristic of the faithful who live by divine vocation in the middle of the world, and specifically of those who are nourished by the spirit of Opus Dei.

This month is the seventy-fifth anniversary of the moment when St. Josemaría gave a decisive push to the apostolic work with young people, which he had been carrying out since the founding of Opus Dei. For it was on Saturday, January 21, 1933, when our Father gathered for the first time a small group of young men, to give them a talk on Christian formation.

Our Father began that activity with such great supernatural outlook, eagerness and affection! Nevertheless, as he so often recalled, only three boys came to that first Circle, despite having spoken to nine or ten people about it. St. Josemaría was not discouraged. Filled with faith, having recourse to the intercession of our Lady and St. Joseph, and entrusting that work once again to the archangel St. Raphael and to the apostle St. John, he gave those first fellows benediction with the Blessed Sacrament. Let us meditate slowly on his words: “When the class ended, I went to the chapel
with the boys. I took hold of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance. I raised it and blessed those three... and I saw three hundred, three hundred thousand, thirty million, three hundred million... white, black, yellow, of all the colors and combinations that human love can devise. Yet I fell short, because… it has all come true. I fell short, because God has been much more generous.”[15]

On the next day, Sunday, January 22, the first catechism class took place (an indispensable means in our apostolic work with young people and with others as well), attended by some of the young boys our Father was dealing with. They went to a school in the outskirts of Madrid, in the district of Los Pinos, where a large group of children awaited them. The classes of formation and catechism and the visits to the poor and the sick, which our Founder had been carrying out for some time already, were and always will be a solid foundation for this apostolate, which is, as our Father always used to say, “the apple of our eyes.”

As is only natural, the weight and joy of carrying this apostolate forward falls principally on the younger faithful of the Prelature, and on those especially entrusted with this task. My daughters and sons, consider our Lord’s confidence, who wants to place in your hands—so that you can mold them as a sculptor molds the clay—the souls of so many young women and men who are sincerely seeking the deep meaning of their lives. Prepare the circles and classes of Christian doctrine very well; ask the Holy Spirit to put into your words a power that will draw them. And launch out decisively to speak with your friends, starting up an apostolic dialogue that will lead them to Christ, suaviter et fortiter,[16] with gentleness and strength.

It is very moving to see Benedict XVI’s insistence when speaking about the need to invite young people to be generous and to come closer to our Lord, to follow him. Let us echo this in the ears of many people, trusting in the action of the Holy Spirit and in the capacity to dedicate themselves to the service of great ideals that has always characterized young people, although at times it seems to be dormant in their hearts.

Let us go with confidence to St. Raphael and St. John, the patrons of this work, and also to St. Josemaría, who began this apostolate so many
years ago now. Keep in mind that thus you are—we are—preparing for the future of the Church, the Christian future of society.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father

+ Javier

Rome, January 1, 2008

[9] Ibid., no. 7.
[10] St. Josemaría, Conversations, no. 44.
[14] St. Josemaría, Christ Is Passing By, no. 120.

Torna ai contenuti

June 2008
My dear children: may Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!

In writing to you as June begins, my heart overflows once again with the need to give thanks to God for all his gifts. On the vigil of the solemnity of Corpus Christi, I ordained to the priesthood thirty-six deacons of the Prelature of Opus Dei. Two days ago we celebrated the solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and yesterday was the feast of the Visitation of our Lady. All these feasts are an invitation to increase our gratitude to our Redeemer, from whose Heart, open on the Cross, all gifts flow to us. Our gratitude is also directed to our Lady, the “marvelous and fertile channel,” as St. Josemaría said, through whom all of heaven’s graces reach us. I go to her Immaculate Heart (yesterday was its liturgical memorial, although it was not celebrated this year), asking her to grant us her refined love so we may learn better each day how to draw close to the three Divine Persons. How do you address personally God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit?

Haurietis aquas in gaudio de fontibus salutis, you will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation. Pius XII used these words from the prophet Isaiah as the title for his encyclical commemorating the first centenary of the extension of the Feast of the Sacred Heart to the universal Church. Recalling that document, Benedict XVI wrote: “the pierced side of the Redeemer is the spring to which we are invited to go by the encyclical Haurietis Aquas. We should have recourse to this spring to attain a true knowledge of Jesus Christ and experience more deeply his love.”

I was a witness to how St. Josemaría always nourished a deep devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It took root in his soul during his childhood, and over the years acquired deeper roots in his interior life and his great doctrinal preparation. In moments of difficulty for the life of the Church (and also of this “small portion” of the Church, the Work), he consecrated Opus Dei to the Most Sacred Heart of the Redeemer. Later, when some people were belittling this sound devotion, he defended it with passionate love and theological depth, as we see in one of the homilies in Christ Is Passing By. He had recourse to the mercy of that Heart and thus, despite all the difficulties that arose, he possessed the peace and joy that the world cannot give.
He pointed to the enormous riches “hidden in the words ‘the Sacred Heart of Jesus.’ When we speak of a person’s heart,” he said, “we refer not just to his sentiments, but to the whole person in his loving dealings with others. In order to help us understand divine things, Scripture uses the expression ‘heart’ in its full human meaning, as the summary and source, expression and ultimate basis, of one’s thoughts, words, and actions.”

*Deus caritas est,*[6] God is Love. Through his infinite love, God the Father sent into the world his only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.[7] Through an equally infinite love, Jesus Christ became incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary. He lived in an obscure corner of our earth, worked as we do, suffered and rejoiced like us, and finally died on the wood of the Cross, offering his life voluntarily to redeem us from our sins. Through that love he gave his mother to us as our mother, during his agony on Golgotha. After his resurrection and ascension to heaven, through love, in union with the Father, he sent us the Holy Spirit, besides remaining with us in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist: with his Body and his Blood, with his Soul and his Divinity, made into the Bread of life, food for our souls and our bodies, the pledge and seed of the glorious resurrection that we too await. The Paraclete, Love of the Father and the Son, teaches us through the action of his grace to constantly advance on the path to sanctity.

Devotion to the Heart of Jesus presents us with a pressing invitation to reflect on and be grateful for the central mysteries of our faith: “we stress the certainty of God’s love and the truth of his commitment to us. When we recommend devotion to the Sacred Heart, we are recommending that we give our whole self to Jesus, *to the whole Jesus*—our soul, our feelings and thoughts, our words and actions, our joys.

“That is what true devotion to the Heart of Jesus means. It is knowing God and ourselves. It is looking at Jesus and turning to him, letting him encourage and teach and guide us. The greatest superficiality that can beset this devotion would be a lack of humanity, a failure to understand the reality of an incarnate God.”[8] Do we foster in our soul this examination, striving to see ourselves each day in Him?

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is the Church’s response to the Blessed
Trinity’s infinite love. The Holy Father explains that this devotion is “the content of all true spirituality and Christian devotion. It is thus important to stress that the basis of the devotion is as old as Christianity itself.”[9] Therefore he invites Catholics “to open themselves to the mystery of God and his love and to allow themselves to be transformed by it.”[10] And he advises us to draw close to “this font to attain true knowledge of Jesus Christ and a deeper experience of his love. Thus, we will be able to understand better what it means to know God’s love in Jesus Christ, to experience him, keeping our gaze fixed on him to the point that we live entirely on the experience of his love, so that we can then give witness to it to others.”[11]

To know, to experience, to live, to give witness: these four expressions sum up the response Christians are called to make to God’s Love. There come to mind those other four “stages” of Christian life that St. Josemaría stressed right from the beginning of his foundational mission and that he always recommended. “I have distinguished as it were four stages in our effort to identify ourselves with Christ: seeking him, finding him, getting to know him, loving him. It may seem clear to you that you are only at the first stage. Seek him then, hungrily; seek him within yourselves with all your strength. If you act with determination, I am ready to guarantee that you have already found him, and have begun to get to know him and to love him, and to hold your conversation in heaven (cf. Phil 3:20).”[12]

First, then, let us seek Christ, day after day, with hunger and thirst for his company: as a deer longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God.[13] That is why we put care into the practices of Christian piety with which we try to intertwine each of our days, especially the Holy Mass and prayer, both mental and vocal. We go to the intercession of our Blessed Mother, the guardian angels, the saints who are already rejoicing in God’s presence. We have special recourse to St. Josemaría, who taught us (and so many millions of other people), by his word and example, the paths for drawing close to God in our daily life.

This persevering effort to draw close to our Lord, even when we feel dry and apathetic, will lead us to experience his presence close beside us. I am not speaking here about feelings, but rather about the certainty, born of faith and infused into our soul by the Holy Spirit, that we are truly, by
grace, a living temple of the Most Holy Trinity. As St. Paul so often said, our life unfolds in Christ Jesus. And thus, rooted and grounded in love, we have the power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.[14]

The Pope tells us that “experience and knowledge cannot be separated: the one refers to the other. Moreover, it is essential to emphasize that true knowledge of God’s love is only possible in the context of an attitude of humble prayer and generous availability.”[15] Thus we come to live in Christ; that is, to refer all our jobs and concerns to him, to do everything with the sole purpose of pleasing him, emptying ourselves so that our Lord can live in us. This is St. Paul’s experience of faith: it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.[16]

How forcefully St. Josemaría echoed these inspired words! “If we are faithful to him, Jesus’ own life will somehow be repeated in the life of each one of us, both in its internal development (the process of sanctification) and in our outward behavior.”[17] And on another occasion: “You looked at me very seriously. But at last you understood, when I told you: ‘I want to reproduce the life of Christ in the children of God, by getting them to meditate on it, so that they may act like him and speak only of him.’”[18]

If we strive each day to remain in Christ and to nourish ourselves from Christ, our faith will necessarily become apostolate: we will give witness to our Lord with our actions and our words, with our whole life. And many people will feel drawn to Jesus, in spite of—or better, through—our personal struggle, made up of victories and defeats, which we can turn into triumphs if we go with contrition to God’s mercy, in order to begin again. “If we love God and are humble, if we persevere tenaciously in our struggle, the defeats will never be very important. There will also be abundant victories which bring joy to God’s eyes. There is no such thing as failure if we act with a right intention, wanting to fulfill God’s will and counting always on his grace and our own nothingness.”[19] How abundant are our daily desires for apostolate?

Let us be generous in our struggle to stay close to Christ and try to
bring many souls to him. Let us go to the intercession of St. Josemaría, who is so powerful before God, starting to prepare right now for his feast on June 26th. Let us make him known to many people, holding up our Founder’s example and teaching to their eyes.

Two weeks ago I went to Barcelona; before returning, I did my prayer in the Basilica of Our Lady of Ransom, accompanied by all of you. I asked our Lady that each and every one of us might make our own the words of St. Peter that our Father meditated on deeply here before his first trip to Rome, when seeking to open up a universal canonical path for Opus Dei: ecce nos reliquimus omnia et secuti sumus te; \([20]\) we have left everything and followed you. This phrase has been included in the Gospel so that we Christians can put it into practice in our own behavior and tell it to our friends, for one cannot serve two masters.\([21]\) It was easy to pray there, before the statue of Our Lady of Ransom, accompanied by the whole Work, as St. Josemaría did in 1946 and at other times.

Before finishing, I would like to remind you that on the upcoming 29th, the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul, the Pauline Year will begin, which Benedict XVI has proclaimed to commemorate the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of the Apostle to the Gentiles. In order to follow the Holy Father’s indications regarding the celebration of this bimillenium, I suggest that you get to know better the life and work of this great Apostle, a Patron of the Work, reading and meditating in depth on the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline writings. St. Paul is, for all Christians, a wonderful model of love for Christ, of fidelity to one’s vocation, of burning zeal for souls. Let us entrust to him in a special way the spiritual and apostolic fruit of this year dedicated to him.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father

+ Javier

Rome, June 1, 2008

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1. *Is 12:3.*

March 2008

My dear children: may Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!
Two weeks ago, I had the joy of spending forty-eight hours in The Netherlands. As always on these brief trips (as on other longer ones), I give abundant thanks to God for the tangible reality of the unity of the Work: for the *cor unum et anima una,*[1] one heart and one mind, and yet everyone is different. Our Father, who prayed for this diversity from the beginning, raised many acts of thanksgiving on seeing how it was becoming a reality, and also on seeing that this variety gave rise to a stronger, more joyful unity.

We are drawing close to Holy Week and Easter. Half of Lent has already gone by and we have to speed up our pace. In sporting events, athletes redouble their effort as they get close to the finish line. If they had been conserving their strength, now they pour it out generously, hoping to place well or even win the competition. The thought sometimes goes through my head that time is going more rapidly than our eagerness for sanctity, for conversion, which shouldn't be the case, since we have to go at God’s pace.

Let’s do as the athletes do. What are these weeks but a time of training to arrive well purified at the Easter Triduum, which offers us once more the possibility of participating even more intimately in Christ’s victory over sin and over death? This well-known sporting metaphor, with its Pauline connotations,[2] has been amply developed by the Fathers of the Church. Look at how it was expressed, for example, by St. Leo the Great. Exhorting Christians to redouble their efforts “to gain the crown of victory in the race in the spiritual stadium,”[3] he gave us a reason for expending greater effort during these weeks: “None of us is so perfect and so holy that we cannot be even more perfect and more holy. Therefore, all together, without difference of dignity or distinction of merits, let us run with pious eagerness from where we are to where we have not yet arrived.”[4]

Last month I urged you to be especially vigilant in your spirit of mortification and penance. Today I want to consider the practice of the works of mercy, both material and spiritual, which Lent also gives great importance to. In his message for Lent this year, the Pope centered his talk on almsgiving, stressing that this act of charity, besides providing assistance to the needy, is also an ascetical practice that helps keep the soul detached from material goods.[5]
By going to the aid of those in need, fulfilling the conditions indicated by Jesus in the Gospel, we identify ourselves more and more closely with our Lord, who came to earth to free men from their miseries, above all from sin. At the same time, we offer a service to Jesus, who wanted to identify himself with his smallest brothers and sisters: I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.

In the light of these words of our Lord, we see that the works of charity, and specifically almsgiving, transcend the purely material dimension and show themselves to be, above all, a manifestation of the charity with which God loves us: “Every time when, for love of God, we share our goods with our neighbor in need, we discover that the fullness of life comes from love and all is returned to us as a blessing in the form of peace, inner satisfaction and joy.”

Let us carry out, then, to the extent of each one’s possibilities, this work of charity that is so deeply rooted in the Gospel, to which our Lord himself has united special spiritual fruit. For love covers a multitude of sins, and all of us are very much in need of God’s forgiveness.

As is logical, and this is how the Church has always understood it, charity towards our neighbor cannot be limited to the purely material sphere. In reality there are many who are poor, not in financial terms, but in terms of affection, of love—people who find themselves in a sad loneliness or surrounded by the coldness of indifference. From this perspective, the meaning of St. Josemaría’s constant teaching becomes clear: “Charity consists not so much in giving as in understanding.” This spiritual maxim has many applications in our daily life and is always very timely.

Even though social progress may one day lead to the most important physical requirements of people being met (food, clothes, a place to live, health care, etc.), it will never be able to provide for all the interior needs—affection, understanding, forgiveness, acceptance—that so many people experience. While the first can be addressed by government programs, the second touch on each one’s intimacy, where personal
relationships are indispensable. Here we Christians can play a great role in bringing to others the consolation of Christ’s charity.

“Love—ca\-ritas—will always prove necessary, even in the most just society,” the Pope wrote in his first encyclical. “There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love. Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such. There will always be suffering which cries out for consolation and help. There will always be loneliness. There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbor is indispensable. The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person—every person—needs: namely, loving personal concern.”

We discover this by attentively reading the Gospels. Certainly Jesus was concerned about the multitudes who had nothing to eat, about the sick who came to him to be cured, about the crowds eager to receive his saving doctrine. But he was equally concerned about individuals: he helps the leper who throws himself at his feet begging for health; he speaks privately with Nicodemus, who was seeking the truth; he converses at length with the Samaritan woman by the well at Sichar, to convert her; he welcomes the repentant woman in the Pharisee’s house, filling her soul with God’s forgiveness.

People said of the first Christians, with admiration: See how they love one another! This praise for our first brothers and sisters in the faith should also be heard today, wherever a disciple of the Master is found. St. Josemaría’s advice is very timely: “If you think, looking at yourself now or in so many things you do each day, that you do not deserve such praise; that your heart does not respond as it should to the promptings of God, then consider that the time has come for you to put things right. Listen to St. Paul’s invitation, ‘Let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of one family with us in the faith’ (Gal 6:10), who make up the Mystical Body of Christ.” Therefore, our Father continued, “The principal apostolate we Christians must carry out in the world, and the best witness we can give of our faith, is to help bring about a climate of genuine charity within the Church. For who indeed could feel attracted to the Gospel if
those who say they preach the Good News do not really love one another, but spend their time attacking one another, spreading slander and quarrelling?”[16]

On the upcoming March 15th we will liturgically celebrate the solemnity of St. Joseph, brought forward this year because the 19th is Wednesday in Holy Week. The Patriarch’s life, completely dedicated to caring for Jesus and Mary, speaks to us of a love that reaches total forgetfulness of oneself. When renewing our dedication to God on the 19th, with the marvelous example of this just man, let us meditate deeply on St. John’s insistence that the truth of our love for God is shown in our specific deeds of charity towards our neighbor. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if any one has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth.[17]

In his message for Lent, the Pope reminds us of the widow who threw a few coins into the Temple treasury. That poor woman received Jesus’ praise for her generosity: she offered all that she had. Recalling that this event took place in the days immediately preceding our Lord’s passion and death, the greatest manifestation of God’s love, Benedict XVI suggests: “we can learn to make of our lives a total gift; imitating Him, we are able to make ourselves available, not so much in giving a part of what we possess, but our very selves.

“Cannot the entire Gospel be summarized perhaps in the one commandment of love? The Lenten practice of almsgiving thus becomes a means to deepen our Christian vocation. In gratuitously offering himself, the Christian bears witness that it is love and not material richness that determines the laws of his existence.”[18]

I pray that our devout participation in the liturgical rites of the Holy Triduum will lead us, on the one hand, to renew our sorrow for sin, which was the cause of our Lord’s surrendering himself to the Passion. And on the other hand, that it will deepen our love and gratitude to God, spurring us to make an ever greater effort to provide material and spiritual assistance to those God places at our side. How have you resolved to accompany Jesus
during these days? Are you determined not to overlook even a single gesture of the Master, to stand vigil over his holy Body when it lies in the tomb, with the refinement of your prayer and your expiation, which are two ways of loving?

In addition to these liturgical feasts, we have other commemorations in the month of March. The 11th is the anniversary of the birth of our beloved Don Álvaro; and the 23rd, of his passage to our home in heaven, fourteen years ago now. During the days just prior to this, he walked in the footsteps of our Lord through the Holy Land, leaving us a marvelous example of piety. Let us ask God to grant us, each and every one of us, a fidelity to the spirit of the Work as great as that which shone in the life of this most faithful Father and Shepherd of Opus Dei.

I cannot fail to mention that the 19th is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the implementation of the Pontifical Bull erecting Opus Dei as a personal prelature. We need only cast a glance at the past quarter century to discover (and we don't know all of them!) so many reasons for giving thanks to the Blessed Trinity. Let us put our whole heart into caring for the Work, my daughters and sons, frequently repeating that aspiration of St. Josemaría, completed by his first successor: *Cor Mariae Dulcissimum, iter para et serva tutum!* Most sweet heart of Mary, prepare and preserve a safe path for us! And let us thank the Servant of God John Paul II for having been a docile instrument in our Lord’s hands. St. Josemaría brought this intention to his Mass every day, and we naturally want to unite ourselves to his Eucharistic piety, also taking advantage of the anniversary of his priestly ordination on the 28th of this month.

Today I just finished my retreat. I ask you for the support of your prayers so that I too may undergo a deep conversion this Lent and reach the Easter celebration well purified, enkindled with love for God, for my daughters and sons, and for all souls.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father

+ Javier

Rome, March 1, 2008
Acts 4:32 (Vulg.)

Cf. 1 Cor 9:24-27; Phil 3:12-14.

Leo the Great, Homily 7 on Lent.

Leo the Great, Homily 2 on Lent.


Cf. Mt 6:2-4.

Mt 25:35-36.


1 Pet 4:8.


Cf. Mt 14:13-21; Mk 1:32-34; Mk 6:33-34.

Cf. Mt 8:1-4; Jn 3:1-21; Jn 4:7-30; Lk 7: 36-50.

Tertullian, Apologia, 39.

St. Josemaría, Friends of God, no. 225.

Ibid., no. 226.

1 Jn 3:16-18.


Torna ai contenuti

Homilies

In the Basilica of Loreto (March 1, 2008)
At the Mass celebrated at the inauguration of the Walkway of St. Josemaría at the Shrine of Loreto

1. My dear brothers and sisters, I am deeply moved and filled with joy to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice at the Shrine of Our Lady of Loreto, next to the Holy House, so venerated by the faithful of this country and of the whole world.

Each time that I return to Loreto I feel in my heart a great need to give thanks to God for the infinite and tender goodness that he has shown us in decreeing the incarnation of his Son in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. That the Word became flesh, a man like us, that he walked alongside us on this beloved earth of ours, that he found refuge among the walls of this Holy House, and not only refuge, but also the affection of a holy and very normal Family, is a grace so great that no one would ever have been able to imagine it. Jesus is truly the Emmanuel, the God with us, who loves us with a human heart and asks us to correspond in the same way: loving him with our whole “heart of flesh,” as St. Josemaría liked to say.

We have heard, in the words of the first reading, the prophet’s advice: “Let us hasten to know the Lord!” (Os 6:3). He is listening to us at every moment and we should persevere in daily prayer without becoming discouraged.

2. Through the Eucharist that we are celebrating we want to give thanks to God also for the presence of Mary in the life of St. Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, to whom Loreto—the city, the diocese, and its faithful—have just dedicated a street that leads to the Holy House. This is a very beautiful initiative, which over time will allow so many pilgrims and faithful from the diocese of Loreto to recall how important this shrine was in the life of St. Josemaría Escrivá, and therefore in the history of Opus Dei. He came to the Holy House to pray many times. But an especially important pilgrimage, which he himself defined as “penitential,” was the one undertaken on the vigil of the solemnity of the Assumption of Mary in the year 1951.

When he arrived on August 14, he went immediately to the Holy House to reserve a time to celebrate Holy Mass there the following day, at
9:00 a.m. Twelve years later, in a homily, he recalled that moving moment as follows: “I wanted to say it calmly and reverently, but I hadn’t counted on the crowd’s fervor. I had forgotten that the faith of the people of the region and their love for the Madonna meant there would be a huge crowd for the feast of the Assumption. Their piety was not always entirely correct in its expression, at least from the point of view of the Church’s liturgical regulations. When I would kiss the altar in accordance with the rubrics, three or four local women would accompany me. It was distracting, but certainly moving. I also noticed that above the altar in that holy house, which tradition says was the home of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, these words were written: *Hic Verbum caro factum est*. ‘Here the Word was made flesh.’ Here, on a bit of the earth on which we live, in a house built by men, God dwelt’” (*Christ Is Passing By*, no. 12).

On that trip, St. Josemaría bore a deep uneasiness in his heart, which spurred him to decide to consecrate the whole Work God had entrusted to him to the Most Sweet and Immaculate Heart of Mary. Our Lord had allowed, during those years, the spread of malicious reports and calumnies against Opus Dei, despite all the approvals of the Holy See.

St. Josemaría had a presentiment that some people were drawing up a malicious plot against him and against the Work that God had brought to birth in his hands in the bosom of the Church and with the sole desire of serving the Church. On that August 15, 1951, he didn’t know exactly the extent of the plot nor the identity of those involved. His holy disposition led him to the conviction that they were acting in good faith, and he excused and prayed for them. But he felt the obligation to defend the Work, out of love for God and souls. Without knowing who to have recourse to on earth, he decided to seek the protection of heaven, and he consecrated Opus Dei to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He did this during the celebration of Mass and immediately afterwards, praying on his knees in the small passageway behind the altar. He was so absorbed in prayer, so calm in finding himself like a child in the arms of his mother, that he didn’t notice the many faithful walking by who were stepping on his cassock, which ended up completely covered with dust. Our Lady infused a great serenity into his soul, the certainty that the danger would be avoided thanks to her intercession.
3. As we heard in the responsorial psalm and the Gospel, God cannot refuse anyone who goes to him with humility. He is always ready to receive our petitions. But we must not forget that prayer is sincere when it is humble, when we are ready to accept and fulfill all that God asks of us. This is what happened in that time of suffering for St. Josemaría. Divine mercy received him with Mary’s maternal solicitude, which was manifested to him through a warning and advice from the Cardinal of Milan, Blessed Ildefonso Schuster, and afterwards through the help of Cardinal Tedeschini, and above all through the paternal solicitude of Pope Pius XII. In this way an end was put to the danger.

Join me in giving thanks to the Blessed Virgin, our Mother, not only for that clear intervention of hers, but also for the countless graces she maternally granted to St. Josemaría. Among these I would like to mention the esteem and fraternal friendship that the ecclesiastics who knew St. Josemaría—priests, religious, bishops, cardinals—had for him, especially the Popes who came to know him. They certainly understood that Opus Dei was born in the Church and from the Church, that it is a small part of the Church, and that it has no other aim than that of serving the Church.

This saintly priest always showed an unconditional obedience to the hierarchy, the fruit of his filial love and priestly fraternity. The misunderstandings, such as those that brought him to Loreto in 1951 (a frequent reality in the lives of the saints), highlight even more the maternal embrace with which the Church always received him.

4. He returned to Loreto on a number of occasions. It is wonderful to see the list of saints who have had recourse to Mary in this shrine, among them St. Josemaría. I think that one could apply to all of them the way of praying that our Lord praised in the parable that we have just read at Mass: the prayer of the publican, who “would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’” (Lk 18:13). Our Lord grants a great humility to the saints. They feel themselves to be sinners while they are carrying out great endeavors in the service of the Church and of souls, as was the case with the founder of Opus Dei.

Many souls have learned from St. Josemaría to have an ardent love for
the Church, in accord with each one's personal situation. He wrote in Furrow: “Put your own interests to one side; you will serve others for God, and you will come to the aid of the Church in the field where the battles are being fought today: in the street, in the factory, in the workshop, in the university, in the office, in your own surroundings, amongst your family and friends” (Furrow, no. 14).

What a great need there is today for this service in all fields of human endeavor. Not an angry defense, but a daring evangelization, a personal apostolate in all spheres of civil society. St. Josemaría returned frequently in his thoughts to Loreto. From heaven he constantly accompanies all of you. This is what we ask today, here, of our Lady, the Mother of the Church. Bring it about, our Mother, that the men and women of our time turn their sight to your Son, to the Word, who became flesh and dwelt among us. So be it.

On Holy Thursday, Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, Rome (March 20, 2008)

On Holy Thursday, in
the Prelatic Church of
Our Lady of Peace

1. *In quo, in Christo, est salus, vita et resurrectio nostra, per quem salvati et liberati sumus* (cfr. Gal 6, 14).

Sì, l'amore di Dio è infinito, abbondantissimo, capace di coprire e cancellare tutte le nostre imperfezioni ed i nostri peccati.

Ma vuole anche che ci identifichiamo con Lui, che diventiamo una sola cosa con lo stesso Cristo: per questo è rimasto nell'Eucaristia, che istituisce nell'ultima Cena che oggi facciamo presente.

Gesù ci ama tanto che non mette ostacoli per raggiungerci e perché noi possiamo avvicinarlo. Siamo noi uomini, ciascuno di noi, che non ci
decidiamo a ricambiare allo stesso modo.

A Dio non importa la nostra pochezza, e neppure la sproporzione fra il suo Amore e il nostro. Ma sì desidera che siamo coscienti di quanto ci offre, e vuole che impariamo — così insegnava San Josemaría — ad amare proprio come vuole che amiamo Lui ed il prossimo.

Questo Giovedì Santo, questa Santa Messa, devono essere per noi un'occasione propizia per formulare propositi, per prendere la decisione di non essere uomini dal cuore meschino o addormentato. Pensiamo che Lui, il Salvatore, vuole vivere con noi.

Chiediamogli: Signore, che io veda con i tuoi occhi, che ragioni con la tua generosità, che sappia annunciare il tuo Amore agli altri.

2. The first reading speaks to us about how our offering to the Lord should be. It is represented by the paschal lamb that is offered to God, to free us from all forms of slavery — especially from the slavery of our own ego.

It must be a young lamb, without blemish. We cannot exempt ourselves, though, with the excuse — even though it is true — that we have many faults and failings. For Jesus, with His coming, cleanses us and prepares us to be a pleasing offering to God. Cleanse us, Jesus. Cleanse me. What is more, with the faith of the leper, of the man who was blind from birth, we have come to take hold of Your Goodness, which is always within reach for those who turn to You. Full of confidence, I declare to You: if You wish, You can heal me; You can make me see again.

But we must realize that we too have to love, to listen to the Lord, to be docile to His demands, even though it may be difficult.

It is clear that those sick men were in need; but they admit their neediness, and they turn to the Lord, ready to do whatever He says. All of them benefit from the attention of Jesus, and all of them begin a new stage in their lives, full of joy, committed to telling others about the wonders of God's action. Only the young man who, after his encounter with Jesus, still clings to his treasure, his ego, his comfort, goes away sad — abiit tristis—; with the sadness that always comes from infidelity to what the Lord asks of us.
3. Dans le Psaume que nous venons d'entendre, il y a des mots que saint Josémaria répétait pratiquement chaque jour: «Comment rendrai-je au Seigneur tout le bien qu'il m'a fait?».

La liste de ces bienfaits serait longue. Considérons-en seulement quelques-uns. Tu as reçu le don de la vie. Chacun de nous peut se demander: ma vie est-elle en accord avec ce que le Seigneur attend de moi? avec ce pour quoi il m'a créé: le servir et le louer en tout?

Il nous a donné la foi, pas seulement pour que nous croyions en lui ni pour que nous croyions les vérités révélées; mais aussi pour que nous soyons les fidèles exécuteurs, les gardiens fidèles de ces biens en nous-mêmes. Autour de nous, directement ou non, nos amis, nos collègues, nos proches nous répètent: fais connaître la grandeur de ta foi par ta manière d'être. C'est pourquoi la cohérence chrétienne de notre vie quotidienne est si importante; notre vie de doit pas céder à des arrangements avec ce qui ne vient pas de Dieu.

Ayons la joie d'être apôtres, y compris quand personne ne nous voit. Je pense maintenant à la foi forte et solide de saint Josémaria, quand le Seigneur lui fait voir l'Opus Dei, et qu'il répond dans la certitude que les fruits viendront.

4. Entrando en la escena que hemos leído en el Evangelio, vemos cada uno de tus gestos, Señor, poniendo agua en el recipiente para lavar los pies, ciñéndote la toalla, inclinándote ante Pedro y luego ante cada uno de los otros.

Qué bien se aprecia la sobrenatural naturalidad de tus acciones, y ya tenemos otra lección: nuestra participación en la liturgia debe ser más total, mejor vivida, muy metidos en cada momento: Maestro Bueno, Maestro Santo, Maestro Humilde, muéstranos cómo hemos de ser más delicados en la piedad.

Y, aunque comprendemos la primera reacción de Pedro, te decimos sinceramente con el Apóstol: lávame, Señor, munda me! Limpia mi alma, mi pobre corazón; y haz que también mi comportamiento externo e interno, mi conducta, mis reacciones sean claras, sinceras, amables.
Hazme un gran amante de los Sacramentos, que viva la Confesión y la Eucaristía, con auténtica necesidad. Deseemos ajustar nuestra alma a los requerimientos divinos, apartándonos de todo lo que del Señor nos aparte. Y para conseguirlo, dirijámonos a Santa María, la mujer eucarística, para que nuestra fe nos empuje a ocuparnos siempre de las cosas de Dios; y para que ese afán de vivir con Cristo nos lleve a decirle: adauge nobis fidem, spem et caritatem! Deseemos estar con Cristo, como María, a la hora del sacrificio, y así alcanzaremos —ya en la tierra— el gozo de ser amigos de Dios, que pregustan la felicidad eterna.

Torna ai contenuti

At the Easter Vigil, Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, Rome (March 22, 2008)

At the Easter Vigil
in the Prelatic Church of
Our Lady of Peace

1. Sorelle mie e figlie carissime,

Siamo giunti a questa notte santa, nella quale Gesù passò dalla morte alla vita. La Chiesa ci invita a vegliare in preghiera e a considerare il grande mistero della nostra redenzione. Ogni volta che il Sacrificio eucaristico viene celebrato, il Mistero Pasquale viene a noi reso presente: ma oggi gli atti liturgici cui stiamo prendendo parte ce lo mostrano in una maniera tutta speciale.

La prima parte di questa Veglia si è svolta intorno al cero pasquale. All'inizio della cerimonia, la chiesa si trovava nell'oscurità: era, questo, un segno eloquente della condizione del mondo e della vita umana quando si è lontani da Dio. Quindi, dalla pietra, figura di Cristo, è scaturita una scintilla, un fuoco nuovo, con cui è stato acceso il cero pasquale. Man mano che la processione avanzava, il diacono ha cantato: lumen Christi; e tutti abbiamo risposto: Deo gratias! Da questo unico cero, che rappresenta Cristo, la luce si è diffusa in tutto il tempio, che poco a poco è stato
completely illuminated. We have therefore listened to the paschal precept:

a song of joy, which recalls the great benefits of creation and redemption.

The meaning of this rite is clear. Jesus has said of himself: Ego sum lux mundi. How necessary is this light, in the world and in each of us! Only the light of Christ, gloriously risen, has the power to illuminate hearts and minds. Let us therefore allow this divine light to reach the depths of our souls, to inflame and purify our hearts: thus, we will become capable of illuminating this our world, which so greatly needs the Truth that saves. We want to nourish in us a strong apostolic desire, following in this way the teachings of San Josemaría and the recent indications of the Holy Father.

2. An ancient Hebrew legend recalls the «four great nights» of human history. And tonight, the readings of the Easter Vigil Mass speak to us about all four.

The first is the night of creation, when God created Adam from the dust of the ground, animating him with the breath of life and placing him in Paradise, so that he might cultivate it and watch over it. This is what we contemplate in the first reading (cf. Gen 1:2–2:2).

The second night is described in another reading from Genesis (cf. Gen 22:1-18): the sacrifice of Isaac and the promise made to the patriarch Abraham: because you have not withheld from me your only son, I will bless you and multiply your descendents as the stars of heaven and as the sands of the sea. Already, in this sacrifice, we see prefigured the transcendental sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.

The third night is recounted in the Book of Exodus, when the people of Israel were freed from slavery in Egypt and crossed the Red Sea (cf. Ex 14:15 — 15:1). This is a symbol of Christian baptism, by which we are freed from the slavery of sin.

The fourth night refers to the arrival of the Messiah, who — according to this legend — would come precisely on a Passover evening. As Christians, we know that this fourth night has already arrived: we relive it today in this celebration. It is the night in which Christ, rose from the dead and passed to a glorious and immortal Life. To this Life, we have been
called, and we have to live up to it through our daily Christian conduct: as St. Josemaría constantly preached, no other path is worth-while.

3. Considérons maintenant le grand message que l'Église proclame au monde entier: *surrexit Christus vere, alleluia!* L'Évangile nous raconte ce qui est arrivé dans la matinée de la première Pâques chrétienne (cf r. Mt 28, 1–10). Un groupe de femmes qui avaient suivi Jésus étaient allé au tombeau pour oindre le corps du Seigneur.

Soudain il y eut un grand tremblement, un ange fit rouler la lourde pierre qui fermait l'entrée du sépulcre et les gardiens se trouvèrent comme morts. Les femmes aussi prirent peur à la vue du prodige. Mais l'ange leur dit: ne craignez pas; je sais que c'est Jésus le crucifié que vous cherchez. Il n'est point ici: il est ressuscité comme il l'avait dit. Il les chargea alors de communiquer aux Apôtres cette grande nouvelle.


Ne l'oublions pas. Ne l'oubliez pas, vous autres, femmes, qui jouez un rôle extraordinaire, celui de porter dans votre vie, par votre fidélité à Dieu, cette grande nouvelle: le Christ vit et il veut que nous vivions avec Lui.

4. Nos toca hoy a los cristianos difundir la buena nueva de la resurrección del Señor. Mucha gente lo espera y nos compete a todos hacerlo, pero yo diría que las mujeres tenéis una especial responsabilidad, porque a vosotras, en la persona de aquellas primeras, el Señor os encomienda de manera especial este encargo.

Se necesitan personas fuertes, recias, locamente enamoradas de Dios. Y las mujeres lo sois en grado heroico, cuando queréis. Recordad aquella frase de San Josemaría en Camino: Más recia la mujer que el hombre, y más fiel, a la hora del dolor. —¡María de Magdala y María Cleofás y Salomé! Con
un grupo de mujeres valientes, como éas, bien unidas a la Virgen Dolorosa, ¡qué labor de almas se haría en el mundo! (Camino, n. 982).

El miércoles, el Papa Benedicto XVI os manifestaba que el apostolado «exige el esfuerzo de andar contracorriente, recordando las palabras del Señor: estás en el mundo pero no sois del mundo (Jn 15, 19). Por lo tanto —concluía—, no tengáis miedo cuando sea necesario ser anticonformistas en la Universidad, en el colegio, o en cualquier lugar» (Discurso, 19-III-2008). Al volver a vuestros países, considerad que tenéis que hacer la historia de la Iglesia en el tercer milenio; y ha de ser con la misma vitalidad con que comenzó su camino por la tierra.

¿Que hay dificultades? Lo mismo se decían las mujeres que iban al sepulcro: ¿quién nos quitará la piedra que tapa la entrada? Acudiremos a la oración a hablar con el Señor de esas personas que deseamos acercarle; ofreceremos mortificaciones, y también ratos de estudio o de trabajo; e invocaremos al Espíritu Santo, para que convierta los corazones.

Tenemos, además, un gran aliado: San Josemaría. Si cuando vivía en la tierra estaba consumido por el afán de acercar almas a Dios, ¡qué no hará ahora desde el Cielo! No os desaniméis nunca: llénaos del gaudium cum pace, del optimismo que propicia estar con Jesucristo; y repetid a quienes tratéis que el Señor las espera.

Que la Virgen María os haga perseverar con alegría y fidelidad en el cumplimiento de la misión cristiana. Nuestro Padre decía, y en su nombre os lo repito ahora: ¡vale la pena!

Blessing of the statue of St. Josemaría in the Church of Our Lady of Montalegre, Barcelona (May 16, 2008)

At the blessing of a statue of
St. Josemaría at the Church of
Our Lady of Montalegre
Dear brothers and sisters, my dear daughters and sons:

We are present here.... I was going to say in a small gathering but the reality contradicts my words. We have gone beyond the framework of discretion found in Opus Dei, and this is really a large crowd. We have to give thanks to God because he continues blessing the activities of the Work as a sea that cannot be contained. But at the same time we have to ensure that we don’t fail to realize the need for personal and collective humility.

We are here to give thanks to God for our Father, for this saint who preceded us and who brought us to the path of the Work. Let us indeed give thanks, but I feel sure that our Father would tell all of us, Numeraries, Associates, Numerary Assistants, Supernumeraries and Cooperators: “Yes, I understand that you are giving thanks, but do so with deeds, with a Christian life, with a life that seeks each day to be much closer to our Lord in the struggle of ordinary life—a struggle that helps us to always have the contemplative life that is the message of Opus Dei: sanctifying all our daily circumstances.” Our Father often commented on the Gospel scene with which we are celebrating this brief ceremony today, which has also been included in the Mass in honor of St. Josemaría.

Our Father offered so many considerations about this scene that we could stay here a long time. I just want to mention his wonderful consideration that our Lord has entered into our lives without asking for our permission. And like Peter, we need to have the generosity to give him our poor boat. Let us consider this point carefully. Even if we were to have many good qualities, compared to the infinitely perfect God, it would be very little. We have to let Christ enter our lives, and then set out into the deep, bringing him everywhere we go. Here, in this neighborhood, where thanks be to God an important work of social development is being carried out, we have to help our sisters and brothers to come to know the great adventure of those who realize they are God’s daughters and sons of God and who behave as such.

Since we are not personally any better than the others, we have to realize that the apostolic work here will have greater results to the extent that each of us lets this Christ of ours rule our lives completely. And how will we accomplish this, all of us? Through a total and generous docility in
spiritual direction. We have often heard our Father say: “How effective are
docility and obedience. Those men who were experts in the ways of the sea,
and who nevertheless accepted that indication, which apparently
contradicted the rules of fishing: casting the net in full daylight.” But since
they obeyed, since they were docile, as we too should be, women and men
who are obedient in spiritual direction; as our Father said: “The
effectiveness of obedience: they not only caught fish, and fish in
abundance, but their obedience and charity led them to call the others.” So
on how we behave, on how docile we are to God’s voice, to what we are
being asked to do to go higher, to go towards Him; on this depends
whether many other people, right here, listen to him and understand him.

Let us ask our Lord that we allow him to govern us with generosity,
and that we do so even though he asks a lot of us. And also that we know
how to do what we are asked, because thus we can be sure that we will not
be mistaken.

Let us end by going to the one who is the teacher of obedience, the
teacher of humility. How our Father savored those words that his
daughters repeat and that they have on their lips as a refrain: ancilla
Domini.

Mary, who teaches us everything we need for our Christian life, will
teach us to be good disciples in our apostolate, in the service of others, and
specifically in putting ourselves constantly at the disposition of others.

Here in Catalonia there has to be a lot of apostolic work. It depends on
the availability of each one of you. We cannot let our Lord pass by without
listening to him and telling him: “Whatever you want, Lord.”

At the priestly ordination of 36 deacons of
the Prelature, St. Eugene's Basilica, (May
24, 2008)

At the priestly ordination
My dear brothers and sisters, dear ordinands:

1. Today we are celebrating here in the diocese of Rome the solemnity of Corpus Christi. The joy the Church experiences on this great feast is strengthened by yet another reason to rejoice: the priestly ordination of thirty-six deacons of the Prelature of Opus Dei, from fifteen countries.

In the first reading of the Mass, taken from the Book of Deuteronomy, we listened once again to the words addressed by Moses to the people before entering into the promised land. The great leader of Israel recalls the wonders worked for them by the Lord: freeing them from slavery in Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea, and above all their pilgrimage through the desert. Remember how the Lord your God led you for forty years in the wilderness.

Remember! We too should frequently recall the gifts God has bestowed on us and give him thanks. Among these, there stands out today the gift of these new priests. A gift, in the first place, to the Church and to all mankind; but also a gift to their families, who, with the ordination of their loved ones, receive yet another proof of God’s special affection for them.

Naturally my gratitude is directed in the first place to the Most Holy Trinity, font of all gifts. But it is also directed to the families of the new priests, for their cooperation with the gift of God (a cooperation that shouldn’t cease now) so that the seed of the priestly vocation might take root in the souls of these men. Let us continue praying for them and for all the Church’s ministers, in the first place for Benedict XVI and the bishops in communion with him. Let us beseech Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest, that he bring forth many priestly vocations all over the world. This petition is the responsibility of all the faithful, since the ministerial priesthood is absolutely essential for the Church’s life and mission in the world.

2. Let us return to Moses’ words in the first reading. Do not then
forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery: who guided you through this vast and dreadful wilderness, a land of fiery serpents, scorpions, and thirsty ground where there was no water. Is this a description of our earthly pilgrimage as we travel towards our celestial dwelling place? We too have been brought out of the tyranny of sin through the sacraments of Baptism and Penance. We too have been strengthened by the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, to overcome the devil and sin, symbolized by the serpents and scorpions. We too have walked through a spiritually arid land, but God's grace, like heavenly dew, is always available to us. Indeed, as Moses recalls, the Lord is the one who brought you water from the hardest rock; who in this wilderness fed you with manna that your fathers had not known.

In that water from the rock, in that manna coming down from heaven, the Fathers of the Church recognized an announcement of the grace of the Holy Spirit, able to make fruitful the arid and parched earth. It is a foreshadowing of the sacrament of the Eucharist, in which Christ offers us his Body and his Blood, true food and true drink for the salvation of our souls and of the whole world. Jesus himself, after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, told those who asked him for material food: I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.

As the sequence Lauda Sion, proper to this solemnity, expresses with special richness: ecce panis angelorum, / factus cibus viatorum, / vere panis filiorum, / non mittendus canibus Lo the angel’s food is given / to the pilgrim who has striven. / See the children’s bread from heaven / which on dogs may not be spent.

Let us give thanks to God with the prayer of praise found in the responsorial psalm: Lauda, Ierusalem, Dominum; collauda Deum tuum, Sion. Let us glorify the Lord; let us thank him for all the marvels he has carried out for his people; and let us strive to prepare ourselves better every day to receive Holy Communion, through the frequent purification of our soul in the sacrament of Penance. Let us also formulate the resolution to carry out a constant apostolate of Confession and of the Eucharist.
3. I now would like to direct myself to you, my dear deacons, who in a few minutes will become priests of the new and definitive Covenant sealed on Calvary with the blood of Christ. To you, my sons, the Church entrusts the pastoral care of all the faithful, especially those in the Prelature and all who come to our apostolates seeking spiritual assistance. You will be dispensers of God’s mysteries. With St. Josemaría, our beloved founder, I remind you that the priest is judge, doctor, teacher, father, and shepherd.

You will be judges, in the name and with the authority of Jesus Christ. You will forgive sins in the sacrament of penance, “a tribunal of divine justice and especially of mercy.” As we have learned from St. Josemaría, always be available to administer this holy sacrament.

There you are also a physician of souls; you will cure spiritual illnesses, strengthen the weak, and direct countless people on the path to heaven. To fulfill this task effectively, I exhort you, with our Father, to act “with a motherly hand, with the almost infinite tenderness shown by our own mothers, when they were treating the hurts and injuries, big or little, resulting from our childhood games and falls.”

You will be teachers, through your catechesis and preaching, which will be, as St. Josemaría said, one of your “dominant passions.” Foster the desire to make Christ’s doctrine known, always following faithfully the Church’s magisterium.

You will be fathers of souls. For the priest brings children of God to birth in the bosom of the Church, through Baptism; you give them divine life and you nourish this life in them with the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. A priest can offer souls, in spiritual direction, the good advice of a mother and a father; and, at the moment of departing this world, he accompanies the body to the grave, in the hope of the resurrection of the flesh, while escorting the soul to its heavenly dwelling with his prayers.

You will be shepherds, like Christ, the Good Shepherd, who gave his life for his sheep. Thus, impelled by pastoral charity, always be ready to serve everyone, without demanding any rights, pouring yourselves out joyfully in the service of souls.
4. Before ending, I would like to make my own the recommendations of the Holy Father Benedict XVI during a priestly ordination that he conferred a few weeks ago.

“Dear ordinands,” the Pope said, “in the future you must always think back to this moment, to this gesture that has nothing magical about it and yet is full of mystery, because this is the origin of your new mission. In that silent prayer the encounter between two freedoms comes into being: the freedom of God, who works through the Holy Spirit, and the freedom of man.... The Church, personified by the Bishop standing with his hands extended, asks the Holy Spirit to consecrate the candidate; the deacon, on his knees, receives the imposition of hands and entrusts himself to that mediation. All these gestures are important, but infinitely more important is the invisible, spiritual reality they express, a reality clearly evoked by the sacred silence that envelops everything, internal and external.”[9]

In a moment, I will place my hands on each of you, praying in silence. Then I will invoke the Paraclete in the prayer of consecration, by which God will make you priests of Jesus Christ forever. Be assured that all those present, and many others throughout the world, are accompanying you with their prayers.

Let us unite ourselves wholeheartedly to the Holy Father’s prayer for the Church in China; let us meditate on his words and ask our Lord to hear his petitions.

We entrust these brothers of ours to Mary, Mother of Christians and, in a special way, Mother of priests. May our Lady welcome them as her specially loved sons, just as she did St. John, the beloved disciple, beneath the Cross of Jesus. Amen.

[1] Roman Missal, Solemnity of Corpus Christi, First Reading (Deut 8:2).


On the Feast of St. Josemaría, St. Eugene's Basilica, Rome (June 26, 2008)

On the liturgical feast
of St. Josemaría in
St. Eugene's Basilica

My dear brothers and sisters:

1. “All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Rom 8:14). This is the astonishing truth that we are reminded of in the second reading for today’s Mass, in words of St. Paul to the Romans. This essential truth of our Christian faith was the core of St. Josemaría Escrivá’s preaching, right from the beginning of his vocation. There come to mind the opening lines in his book The Forge: “We are children of God, bearers of the only flame that can light up the paths of the earth for souls, of the only brightness that can never be darkened, dimmed or overshadowed. The Lord uses us as torches, to make that light shine out. Much depends on us; if we respond many people will remain in darkness no longer, but will walk instead along paths that lead to eternal life.”[1]

His awareness of our divine filiation in Christ led St. Josemaría to communicate this great news to all those he met on his earthly journey, encouraging them to set out on the paths to holiness. For, as St. Paul continues, “it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow

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[1] Rom 8:14
heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (*Rom* 8:16-17).

These reflections spur us to give thanks to God, also for having given to the Church the life of St. Josemaría, the instrument he made use of to revive in many souls an awareness of their divine filiation.

We also want to give thanks to God because, within a few days, on June 28, by a decision of the Holy Father, the Pauline Year will begin. It is a very special occasion to meditate on St. Paul's life and teaching, imitating the daring and the complete dedication to Christ that we find in the life of this great apostle.

A new reason to give thanks comes from the fact that today, in the Tribunal of the diocese of Rome, the opening phase of the Cause of beatification and canonization of the Servant of God, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, has been concluded. This is only a first step, but a step that fills us—along with so many other people around the world—with joy. For we see in our beloved Don Alvaro a man of deep integrity, a true Christian, a good shepherd, the most faithful son of St. Josemaría—the one who, with God's grace, followed most closely in his footsteps.

2. Today’s feast, besides reminding us that the call (the Christian vocation!) to holiness is grounded in the reality of our divine filiation, invites us to consider the setting in which this call takes place: our daily ordinary life, and specifically our professional work and family life, which fill the greater part of our days.

Work is certainly a means to provide for our personal and family financial needs. But as St. Josemaría taught us, work should be much more, because “work is born of love; it is a manifestation of love and is directed toward love.”[2]

After forming man from the dust of the earth and breathing life into him, God “took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (*Gen* 2:15). Meditating on this page of Genesis, St. Josemaría was filled with joy and gratitude. “Work,” he wrote, “is man's original vocation. It is a blessing from God, and those who consider it a punishment are sadly mistaken. The Lord, who is the best of fathers, placed the first man in Paradise *ut operaretur*, so that he would work.”[3]
Work, then, is not a punishment—the command to work came before original sin. Rather it is a task conferred upon all men and women, to cooperate with God in the ordered development of material creation. Meditating on this teaching of Sacred Scripture, the founder of Opus Dei saw—with light received from God—the great value of work as a means of holiness and apostolate.

During a conference on St. Josemaría’s teachings, the then Cardinal Ratzinger emphasized his important contribution to the proclamation of the universal call to sanctity, stressed by the Second Vatican Council. He pointed to St. Josemaría’s insistence that “holiness is reached, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, through daily life. Holiness consists in this: living our daily life with our sights fixed on God, shaping all our actions to accord with the Gospel and the spirit of faith. Each and every theological understanding of the world and of history,” he added, “derives from this core reality[4] as many passages in St. Josemaría’s writings “so clearly and incisively show.”[5]

3. The call to assist in the Church’s salvific mission is inseparable from the vocation to sanctity. Today too, as in the times of Jesus, people hunger to hear the word of God. This is the scene that, once more, we have relived in the Gospel reading. Our Lord has gotten into Peter’s boat to speak to the multitude. He makes use of the material help of Simon and the other disciples so that his message might reach further. This is the first way of participating in his evangelising message: providing the Church with the material means needed to work with greater efficacy in the service of souls.

But this effort is not enough. Our Lord also asks us to carry out apostolate, each in accord with our situation and possibilities. The miraculous catch of fish is also a symbol of the apostolic efficacy that comes from obeying the Master’s word. After teaching the multitude, Jesus turned to Peter and the other disciples, and told them: “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch” (Lk 5:4). Simon obeyed our Lord’s order, despite his recent negative experience. And then the miracle occurred: “they enclosed a great shoal of fish” (Lk 5:6).

We too—if we strengthen our friendship with Jesus in personal prayer, if we frequent the sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist, if we go to
our Lady, to the angels and saints, our intercessors before God—will be able to do likewise. But to do so, we also have to sincerely love our friends, our companions, all souls. A Christian has to be apostolic!

There is a great need for men and women seriously dedicated to the task of bringing souls to Christ’s feet, like the first Twelve. I remind you of what the Holy Father said on the day he began his pastoral service in the See of Peter. “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.... 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.”[6]

St. Josemaría invites us to ask ourselves each day: “what have I done today to bring someone to our Lord?” Often it will be a conversation that gives guidance, an invitation to approach the sacrament of Penance, a counsel that helps someone to understand better some aspect of Christian life. And always, the generous offering of prayer and mortification, of work well done; these are the most important means we need to employ, to attain apostolic goals.

Besides being a good intercessor, St. Josemaría is a marvelous model of a man who knew how to convert work into prayer and collaborate with Christ in extending his kingdom. Let us entrust to Mary, our Mother, the specific resolutions we have formulated in these minutes, so that they be fully carried out. Amen.


At the inaugural Mass for the new seat of the Campus Biomedico, Rome, (March 14, 2008)

At the inauguration of the new Campus Biomedico University buildings

1. “The Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” The Church places on our lips today these words from St. Mark’s gospel (10:45), as a summary of the events that we commemorate in Holy Week. Jesus declares that he came not to be served, but to serve. To serve is for Jesus, for the Son, the true way of ruling, of being Lord.

When the disciples argue over which of them should be considered the greatest, he tells them: “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.... I am among you as one who serves” (Lk 22:25-27). After twenty centuries, these words continue being of great timeliness. When Jesus speaks of “service,” he does so accompanied by the example of his deeds. As we just heard a few moments ago: “even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (Jn 10:38).

2. And what are these works of Jesus? His entire life possesses an extraordinary eloquence. He lived in the midst of us doing good to all, speaking familiarly with everyone who approached him, men and women,
Jews and pagans, healthy and sick, poor and rich. He appreciated gestures and words filled with faith, like the sick woman who dared to secretly touch his cloak and was cured; or the boy who offered five loaves and two fishes, which Jesus used to feed the multitude that had followed him for three days.

If we want to imitate the Son of God’s service to all men and women, our daily life offers us countless opportunities. I will recall a few of these here for you, but each of you will know how to find many more in the specific circumstances of your own life: fostering and valuing the good qualities, whether many or few, of those around us; carrying out our work with attention, order and punctuality, since this always affects the work of others in some way or another; assisting anyone who has not been able to finish their own work; helping someone who is confronting family worries; treating everyone with affection, without discrimination; knowing how to command with delicacy, respecting the intellect and will of the one who is obeying (cf. The Forge, no. 727); placing one’s own qualities and talents, without seeking any compensation, at the service of one’s neighbor (cf. Furrow, no.422). It is also the smile that we try to put on when our work becomes more difficult, faithful to the Holy Spirit’s exhortation: “serve the Lord with gladness” (Ps 100:2). By putting into practice these ways of living a spirit of service—specifically here in the Campus Biomedico—we help to create a serene environment, dissipating tensions that could be a source of annoyance and bad humor for others (cf. Furrow, no. 712).

Let us pause to meditate on what St. John tells us about Jesus’ final moments in our midst, shortly before his passion, during the Last Supper. He “rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded” (Jn 13:4-5). As then Cardinal Ratzinger recalled: “The act of the washing of the feet becomes for John a representation of what Jesus’ whole life is: his rising from the table setting aside his garment of glory, bending down to us in the mystery of forgiveness, the service of his human life and death... The life and death of Jesus, and Baptism and Penance are together the divine font opening the way to freedom and giving access to the table of life” (Journey Towards Easter, pp. 94-5).
Jesus came to redeem us and to give us the example of his life. And we are called to accept his grace, making his life our own. He was very clear in this regard. He wants to be imitated and he wants his disciples to make of their lives a true service. To enable us to serve, first he washes us; he purifies us by means of the sacraments that grant the remission of sins: Baptism and Penance. Love the sacrament of Confession, and you will experience the joy of being personally loved by our Lord, who bends down to wash our sins and purifies us.

The gesture of washing the apostles’ feet is for us a symbol of what it means to define Christian life as service. St. Josemaría on one occasion summed up the meaning of Christian life with the expression: *para servir, servir*, which could be translated as “in order to be useful, serve.” Yes, if you want to be useful and effective in your work, imitate Jesus, who “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant” (*Phil 2:7*).

3. We see made a reality today, thanks to the sacrifice and work of so many people, this magnificent hospital and Center for Advanced Research. However, there is a danger that we should be on guard against, namely that of trusting excessively in our own work, in the sophisticated technological innovations in the area of diagnosis, therapy, the basic services, administrative logistics, teaching.

Certainly all of this refined technology requires from each of you an up-to-date professional competence. And the machines that you now have at your disposal require maintenance and care. It would, however, be a mistake to turn yourselves into servants of the machines. You must instead remain faithful to your motto, “science for mankind,” and to the goal that has guided your brief but fruitful history: to be an institution at the service of everyone, and particularly of the sick and of the students, of the whole society, and also among yourselves.

Your pride, therefore, will not so much be that of working in a university or in a hospital equipped with the latest technology, but rather that of forming a team of people who by their professionalism and their human and Christian values, by their whole life, want to be useful, imitating Jesus in a hidden and silent service each day. Science and
technology can contribute greatly to the progress of humanity, but they can also make life less human, and even destroy mankind.

In an address given at the University of Navarre, St. Josemaría Escrivá, the then Chancellor of that university (to which I know you are very grateful for the assistance you have received right from the start), spoke some words that seem particularly appropriate in this context: “This world will certainly not be saved by those who try to drug the life of the spirit, reducing everything to questions of finance or material well-being, but by those who have faith in God and in the eternal destiny of mankind, and who accept the truth of Christ as the light that guides their action and conduct” (Address, May 9, 1974).

Your university is being enriched today by a gift of great artistic, symbolic and emotional value: the bas-relief of our Lady before which the Pope recited the Holy Rosary last March 1, during the Sixth European Day for University Students. This sacred image is precious because it was blessed by the Holy Father, and because it is the fruit of the generosity of one of the many friends of the “Campus.”

For this gift and for the many acts of generosity which have made the Campus Biomedico possible, I thank you with all my heart. I entrust this image of our Lady to you and commend each of you to “Our Lady of the Campus.” Place in her hands all that you hold in your heart, your entire being. Entrust to her maternal care your determination to live a spirit of service in your daily life: in your family, in assistance to patients, in administration, in the operating room, in the classroom, in moments of relaxation, in the cafeteria.

If each of you, with the help of Holy Mary, strives to put this resolution into practice, your small daily efforts will help create in the Campus Biomedico University a culture that will radiate towards the exterior. As Benedict XVI wrote in his encyclical Spe Salvi (no. 26): “It is not science that redeems man: man is redeemed by love.” And a spirit of service can’t be explained if it is not born of love.

Don’t underestimate the greatness of the marvelous human and Christian duty that you have in your hands. May God bless your efforts to transform these buildings into a place where there truly takes root the love
and spirit of service that our time so badly needs: the spirit of a true university family, where everyone—from the Rector down to those who carry out seemingly minor tasks—is equally important, because all are part of the same family.

At the Mass in suffrage of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, St. Eugene's Basilica, Rome (March 17, 2008)

At the Mass for the Repose of the Soul of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo

St. Eugene's Basilica

1. Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Today we are offering the Eucharistic Sacrifice for the soul of the Servant of God Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei, on the fourteenth anniversary of his dies natalis, his birth to a new life in heaven. We are doing so six days before the actual anniversary of his holy death, since March 23 falls on Easter Sunday this year. The fact that we are already in Holy Week should help us to prepare even better for the Sacred Triduum of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord.

The readings for Monday of Holy Week offer a starting point to consider some aspects of the life of my beloved predecessor, and can help us to improve our own Christian conduct. Through the words of the prophet Isaiah, God speaks in the first reading about the Servant of Yahweh. “I have put my Spirit upon him. He will not cry or lift up his voice.... a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.”[1]
The prophecy refers directly to Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior promised to the People of Israel for all mankind. But the Word of God, beyond its literal meaning, which is always fundamental, presents other spiritual meanings.

In this Mass for my beloved predecessor, the words of Isaiah seem especially suited to the person of Don Alvaro. He too, following our Lord’s example, as many people have testified, was outstanding for the gentleness of his heart and his goodness towards all; and at the same time, for his fortitude in carrying out the task our Lord had entrusted to him, without ever feeling himself overwhelmed by the difficulties. These features of his character are well reflected in his untiring work to fulfill the mandate that he received from St. Josemaría: to continue taking the necessary steps so that the Holy See would confer on Opus Dei the canonical figure appropriate to its nature; that is, its becoming a personal prelature, which the Founder of the Work had prepared for before being called to heaven.

This recollection is a very timely one. Indeed, this coming 19th of March is the 25th anniversary of the execution of the Pontifical Bull *Ut Sit*, which transformed Opus Dei into a personal prelature. The execution of the Bull, which took place in this Basilica of St. Eugene, was performed by the Holy Father’s Nuncio to Italy. With that solemn act, Opus Dei’s long canonical path, which St. Josemaría and his first successor had followed with great supernatural vision and a lot of tenacity, was concluded.

I invite everyone to give thanks to the Blessed Trinity, who wished Opus Dei to be born in the Church and from the Church, and who saw to it that this reality, at the right moment, would receive a full and adequate canonical configuration.

2. What lessons can we draw for our own life from what I have just mentioned? One very clear lesson is that of having, every single day, a great trust in God, who wants to make use of us to spread Christ’s kingdom on earth. In spite of our limitations, which are undeniable, with God’s grace we can be successful in our efforts to love Christ, and to make him known and loved by many other people.

The words we have just heard in the first reading are addressed to all Christians: “I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken
you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.”[2] It is our task, we who are Christ’s disciples, to make the good news shine forth, as did the Apostles, in the hearts and the behavior of many other people. With words of St. Josemaría I tell you, and I tell myself: “You have but little love if you are not zealous for the salvation of all souls. You have but poor love if you are not eager to inspire other apostles with your craziness.”[3]

We can ask ourselves: am I aware that our Lord’s call to be apostolic is directed personally to me, and do I meditate on it frequently? How do I try to put it into practice? With which people—friends, relatives, colleagues at work or in school—can I speak about God, without human respect, in order to bring them closer to Jesus? During these days of Easter, perhaps I could invite them to make a good Confession, to assist with greater regularity at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to begin or to strengthen a life of prayer, to take part in days of recollection and other formative activities. Remember our Father’s advice: “Among those around you—apostolic soul—you are the stone fallen into the lake. With your word and your example you produce a first circle... and it another... and another, and another... Wider each time. —Now do you understand the greatness of your mission?”[4]

3. I now direct myself especially to the young people who have come to Rome in great numbers during holy Week, for the traditional UNIV gathering. Of course, the things that I am going to say to them are useful for everyone, but I would like to address specifically the young people.

Your stay in Rome, aside from introducing you to the Eternal City—so filled with Christian memories—should above all help you to discover anew, perhaps this time with greater depth, the greatness of God’s love. Meditate on the steps of Jesus’ passion and death, following him closely in the Way of the Cross; try to react with your mind and your heart. Let yourselves be drawn by him.

In the Gospel of today’s Mass, St. John has transmitted to us a truly moving scene: the anointing of the Master at Bethany. The evangelist tells
us that a supper had been prepared for him there. “Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at table with him.”[5]

At other times in the past, the family at Bethany had put their house at the Lord’s disposition. On this occasion, Mary carried out an act which has always been seen by the Church as a symbol of the complete dedication that Jesus expects of Christians. Mary of Bethany, without any fear of what others might think, “took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment.”[6]

What does this gesture of Mary tell us? Some, such as Judas Iscariot, criticized Mary’s daring, because his heart was devoid of love. To us, on the other hand, it speaks of not being afraid to give everything to God, if he asks it of us, knowing that our Lord has first given his life for us. To answer yes, to tell him that we are ready to follow him for our whole life, is simply to correspond to his love, which is so great that he not only has died and risen for us, but has even wanted to remain for us and with us in the Holy Eucharist.

I am sure that, during these days, God’s call will resound in the depths of many hearts. Don’t be afraid to tell him yes! Our Lord does not ask for more than what we are able to give him.

I remind you of some words of the Holy Father Benedict XVI. A few months ago, in a meeting with young people, the Pope said: “God also seeks young people today. He seeks young people with great hearts who can make room for him in their lives to be protagonists of the New Covenant. To accept a proposal as fascinating as the one Jesus offers us, to make the covenant with him, it is necessary to be youthful within, to be capable of letting oneself be challenged by his newness, to set out with him along new paths.

“Jesus has a fondness for young people, as the conversation with the rich young man clearly shows (cf. Mt 19: 16-22; Mk 10: 17-22); he respects their freedom but never tires of proposing loftier goals for life to them: the newness of the Gospel and the beauty of holy behavior.”[7]

Yes, our Lord awaits a response from each of us. He wants us to give him, at least, a more intense love, which is shown in sacrifice; a renewed
decision to be closer to him; an active desire to be an instrument to bring many other people to him. “Each one of you,” St. Josemaría wrote, “must try to be an apostle of apostles.”

Let us entrust these reflections to the intercession of Don Alvaro, who made such great efforts to bring souls to God. And let us ask the help of our Lady, Mother of the Church and Queen of Apostles, so that all of us may reach the end of Holy Week renewed by God’s grace and filled with desires for apostolate. Amen.


Torna ai contenuti

Articles and Interviews

Interview in The Standard, Kenya (April 23, 2008)

Interview in The Standard,

on the occasion of the official

recognition of the University of
You lived for many years alongside St. Josemaría Escrivá who was the inspiration of Strathmore. Can you tell us a little about his vision of Strathmore?

When St. Josemaría Escrivá accepted, back in 1957, the invitation of Archbishop Gastone Mojaisky Perelli, then Apostolic Delegate resident in Mombasa, to start a university in Nairobi, he was really responding to the universal calling that God had given Opus Dei.

The request of Archbishop Gastone Mojaisky came at an historic moment for Africa and for Kenya in particular. Full independence was only five years away, and the country had a multi-ethnic transitional government in place. St. Josemaría was open to founding a university provided that the government gave a guarantee concerning its independence and autonomy. However, it soon became clear that the project of establishing a university level institution had to be modified. It was the founder himself who suggested starting instead with an institute of higher learning and a students’ residence.

And so it was that Strathmore College began as a new type of special two-year school to serve as a bridge between secondary education and the university.

His idea was that the College and, later, the university should be run by laypeople, good professionals in the field of education, and must adhere to four general guidelines: it would be interracial; it would be open to people of all religions; it would not be classified as a mission school; and students had to pay at least a token amount, in order to make them see the school as something that belonged to them.

The colonial authorities were sceptical about the prospects of a college open to students of every race, tribe, and religion. It was the first such experiment in East Africa. From the outset, nevertheless, it admitted Africans, Europeans and Indians; adherents of all religions, and members of different tribes.

What inspires Opus Dei’s corporate works such as Strathmore
Initiatives such as Strathmore University should not only pursue the highest level of academic excellence, but also aim to provide an integral formation, one that focuses also on the human, moral and spiritual facets of every person.

This universal message of Opus Dei is put into practice in the lives of all who are associated in one way or another with the academic community: professors, students and administrative personnel.

What is your vision of the University?

To paraphrase my predecessor, the late Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, the university should be a place of intense work, where academic developments, technical advances, and new ideas decisively influence the configuration of human society. This effort results in true progress when it respects and loves the nature and dignity of the human person, called to live in unity with all men and women and to journey toward God.

As the Chancellor, what do you expect of students and staff of the University?

There should be a realization in the University of the need to pass on not only technical knowledge but also the joy of being children of God, of living for God. And in the case of Christians, we live for God not only on Sundays when we go to Church, but also in the family and at work.

At the same time, I urge everybody at the University to contribute to making it a true family in which we all love one another: the lecturers, the administrative and support staff and the students: we must live for each other.

What advice would you give to staff and students regarding their involvement in the country’s affairs and the contributions they can make personally?

People in universities usually appreciate and have a lot of enthusiasm for their work. I would invite them to foster an even greater sense of responsibility in their tasks. The country and the world are in need of the example of your research and your teaching, which will encourage many
others to undertake the effort to bring the truth to light, thus contributing to solve the great problems of our society and our times.

**Please tell us something about your family and childhood.**

I was born in Madrid on June 14, 1932, the youngest of eight children. My father was from the Basque region of Spain. He was an industrial engineer and also a professor at the School of Engineering. From him I got my interest in university education.

**How and when did you learn about Opus Dei?**

I was introduced to members of Opus Dei at a student residence on the Calle Diego de Leon in Madrid in 1948. A magazine article about Opus Dei had sparked great interest among the students, and many of us began meeting at the student residence to learn more about its reality and significance. I joined Opus Dei on September 8, 1948.

**When were you ordained priest and where have you served since ordination?**

I was ordained a priest in August 1955. I worked in close collaboration with St. Josemaría Escriva de Balaguer; as his personal secretary, from 1953 until his death in 1975.

When Álvaro del Portillo succeeded Josemaría Escrivá as head of Opus Dei in 1975, I was named General Secretary, a position which until that time had been held by Msgr. del Portillo.

I was elected and appointed Prelate of Opus Dei by His Holiness Pope John Paul II on April 20, 1994. I was ordained Bishop in St. Peter’s Basilica on January 6, 1995.

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**The inauguration of the St. Josemaría Walkway at Loreto (March 1, 2008)**

*At the inauguration of the Walkway of St. Josemaría. Before beginning the Stations of the Cross*
I would like to thank with all my heart the ecclesiastical and civil officials who promoted this initiative. Permit me to say that “it was something that ought to have been done,” because St. Josemaria felt himself to be fully Italian. He loved Italy, and I mean no offense here, even more than Italians do, and this city of Loreto always had a special place in his heart. The reasons are obvious: this is where the Holy House of Nazareth is located, where the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived for so many years. He came here frequently to abandon all his concerns in the heart of the Mother of God and our Mother, in the most varied circumstances.

In reliving the Way of the Cross along this walkway that will now be called San Josemaria, I can’t help recalling that this saint was chosen by God to remind people of all walks of life that “the divine pathways of the earth have been opened up.” Every honest human situation, every type of work, every profession, every ordinary state in life, can be turned into a “pathway of sanctity,” a pathway to heaven, a place for meeting God and serving one’s brothers and sisters. St. Josemaria liked the words way (he made it the title of one of his first books) and street (he often said that Christians have to be saints nell bel mezzo della strada, in the middle of the street). He also liked to contemplate Christ who is passing by along the pathways of the world, doing good.

On this pathway in Loreto one can contemplate the Stations of the Cross. How often he told us that if we wanted to be consistent Christians, and therefore also apostles, we had to find the cross on our path! How many people were taught to love and embrace the holy Cross of Christ as the only path to the Resurrection, to Pentecost and the glory of heaven! He personally lived and encouraged so many people to love the devotion of the Way of the Cross as a means to unite themselves to Christ’s passion and death, and therefore to identify themselves with him. I remember reciting with him and Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo, his first successor as head of Opus Dei, the texts of the Stations of the Cross. And I can still vividly picture his exemplary devotion. He carried with him, written in his notebook, the fourteen Stations of the Cross so that he could often meditate on them, especially during the days of Lent.

He encouraged us to store in our memory, as in a film we can watch
whenever we want, the moments during which the redemption of humanity was accomplished, so that we could always put ourselves into those scenes as one more person there, to foster repentance for our faults, to be close to Jesus, to love him, to listen to God’s call to be co-redeemers with Christ together with Mary, I recall how one day he showed us, with great devotion, a relic of the Holy Cross, and he spoke movingly of our Lord’s passion and death. He told us: “We love the Cross; we should love it sincerely, because where the Cross is Christ is present, with his Love, with his presence that embraces all realities.”

In the prologue to his book on the Holy Rosary he wrote: “The beginning of the way, at the end of which you will find yourself completely carried away with love for Jesus, is a trusting love for Mary.” In the middle of the Way of the Cross, tradition has always the presence of Mary; and at its end, beneath the Cross, stabat Mater there stood the Mother of Jesus, the new Eve with a strength as great as her sorrow, to engender us in faith and the Christian life. At the start, along the way and at the end of our life, Mary never abandons us. Therefore I am especially happy that this Way of the Cross leads to the shrine of the Holy House.

It makes me happy to think that, in the joy of heaven, today’s event will also make St, Josemaria happy, on seeing that his devotion to the Cross, his love for Mary Most Holy, and his words filled with faith in Christ who suffered for our salvation, will help many pilgrims to rise to the altar of God: the God who, in the Holy Mass, fills with joy the perennial youth of the Christian soul. This is the petition and the prayer that, united to St. Josemaria, we direct today to the Mother of God, praying in a special way for all of the people of Loreto.
"The Canonical Configuration of Opus Dei as Foreseen by St. Josemaría," on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Opus Dei Prelature (March 10, 2008)

To describe the juridical structure foreseen by Saint Josemaría for Opus Dei, I must first set out the defining characteristics of what he saw (this is the verb he normally used when referring to it)[1] on October 2, 1928, the date on which the panorama of the Work the Lord wanted of him opened up before his eyes. With this clearly in mind I will follow two threads which we find constantly intertwined throughout the years leading up to the holy death of the Founder. On the one hand, there are the different organizational forms which, without betraying the substance of Opus Dei, and though only of a provisional nature, Saint Josemaría had to accept in order to allow the Work to receive public recognition in the Church, within the limits of the possibilities offered by the law then in force, and to enable him to tackle the organizational needs arising out of the interdiocesan, and later international, scope of the Work; while on the other hand—this is the “intertwining” I was talking about—I will go on to mention the numerous specific points which Saint Josemaría was careful to clarify in relation to the configurations he was forced to accept out of necessity, but always in anticipation of a definitive juridical garment to be established by the Church’s general law—a garment that would suit the entire pastoral phenomenon of Opus Dei naturally and without any awkwardness.[2]

1. The defining characteristics of Opus Dei

After years of prayer, as he waited to discover what he already sensed was God’s will for him, Saint Josemaría, on October 2, 1928, in the course
of some days spent on spiritual retreat, received an “illumination regarding the whole Work.”[3]

What does “illumination regarding the whole Work” mean? It certainly does not mean that when Opus Dei appeared before the Founder’s eyes, every detail was clear as to how it should operate and how it should be organized and governed, or that it came with a set of legal norms ready for use. In this regard Saint Josemaría wrote, years later, in a lengthy document, “The reality of God’s will was very clear. It was necessary, therefore, to do what the Lord enjoined. Afterwards would come the theory and the laws, born of lived experience.”[4]

There are, therefore, two aspects that I would like to dwell on: in the first place, the defining characteristics of the panorama which Saint Josemaría saw on that foundational date of Opus Dei; and afterwards the other features which, by contrast, needed to be shaped with time, through the Founder’s reflection and meditation, while he maintained his constant attitude of docility to God’s inspirations and action in his soul.

**Defining characteristics**

Saint Josemaría did not draw up a list—at least it has not reached us—of the characteristics defining the fundamental nucleus of Opus Dei such as it was presented to him on October 2, 1928. Therefore we need to trace out those essential aspects and characteristics on the basis of the Founder’s writings in the years immediately following that date.

In the first place, what he discovered was an apostolic panorama. In the lives of many Christians all over the world there was a division between their faith and their everyday life of work and earthly occupations. In the face of this, he felt called to promote an institution whose aim would be to provide those who live in the world with a deep awareness of the universal call to holiness that God addressed to them in baptism: an institution, therefore, made up of ordinary Christians who, conscious of the demands involved in their Christian vocation, would strive to put those demands into practice in a full and radical way, while seeking to transmit this discovery of theirs to others. In this way they would spread far and wide the message that the faith can and should permeate the whole of human
life and everything life consists of, especially the demands of professional work, and family and social life in general.

What it involved, therefore, was not some limited and restricted apostolic activity corresponding to the circumstances of the time, but a venture with unlimited horizons: the sanctification of the world and the imbuing of earthly occupations and affairs with the spirit of the Gospel. This panorama embraced everything that was to be found in the ordinary life of any man or woman, with primary importance being given to professional work—of whatever kind it happened to be (before God there are no prestigious or humble tasks)—since work constitutes an essential element of the human person’s relationship with the world.

The Work seen by Saint Josemaría involves a response to a calling, on the part of those who are to carry it out. It is not a limited and restricted apostolic project that people can join simply by devoting part of their life to it. It is a task involving the whole person. This vocation is an invitation to seek sanctity in the world and in one’s own personal circumstances. As the Founder wrote in February 1931, “In the world, in ordinary work, in the duties proper to one’s state, and there and through all of this, saints!” At the same time it is a call to apostolate, not only by example, but also by word, especially through that sort of personal apostolate on a one-to-one basis which the Founder called “apostolate of friendship and confidence.” This is an apostolate that knows no bounds because, to quote Saint Josemaría once more, this time from 1932, “We are interested in all souls […]. For this we must desire to serve everyone out of love for God […] to bring all to holiness: estote perfecti! (all), to fill the world with peace and joy.”

Passing on, then, to the organizational and institutional aspects, we can highlight the fact that this apostolic project included men and women. In 1928, the Founder thought that he should deal only with men, but less than a year and a half later, on February 14, 1930, the Lord showed him that the light he had received was also to be transmitted to women. Thus the apostolate with men and the apostolate with women were each to proceed in a fully autonomous way, but at the same time in unity both of spirit and, later, of institutional structure. These men and women, celibate or married, would share a single, unique vocation, the same for all: a calling
to sanctification of professional work and apostolate in the circumstances of each one’s ordinary life.

Another fundamental characteristic is that the fulfillment of Opus Dei’s task requires the participation of priests and laity in close mutual cooperation: priests who perform the tasks proper to their pastoral ministry and help others in matters of interior life and apostolate, renouncing any desire to stand out, and without ever interfering in the free choices that lay people make in temporal matters.

The importance of formation in all its aspects—spiritual, doctrinal, apostolic, human, and professional—should also be stressed. From this point of view, formation appears as the task that sums up the whole of Opus Dei’s work. As the Founder would often say, Opus Dei’s proper activity is the formation of its members and of those who come to its apostolate, to enable them—since they are citizens like anyone else, with the same rights and duties—to act with Christian outlook in their professional, family and social activities, and to be in a position, with their well-formed conscience, to take their own free decisions in professional, social and political matters, or in more general terms, in all that God has left to the free and responsible choice of men and women. From the very first years of the foundation, Saint Josemaría always insisted on the need for a “common denominator”—the Church’s teaching, the spirit of the Work and the apostolic commitment—with an extremely varied numerator which, as far as freedom in temporal matters is concerned, is not only legitimate but also obvious and desirable, since it is the fruit and consequence of the fact of being the same as other citizens.

Lastly, Opus Dei was born with the characteristics of universality and internationality. On this aspect the Founder wrote in 1934, “Our organization is not for a particular set of circumstances […] nor is it meant to be the answer to the needs of a particular country or historical moment, because right from the start Jesus wanted his Work to be Catholic and universal.”[8] Consequently Opus Dei must have a unitary, interdiocesan organization. Already in 1931 he had written that whoever was in charge would need to have a certain number of people either with him or spread across the world to help him govern Opus Dei, and that the headquarters
of the organization would be established in Rome, the center of the Catholic world.

**Aspects still to be determined**

Up to now I have been sketching out the basic characteristics of Opus Dei as they appear in Saint Josemaría’s writings in the early 1930s: an institution with an apostolic panorama of personal sanctification and the spreading of the universal call to holiness in the world and in the different circumstances of ordinary life, made up of men and women of all social classes, celibate and married, and priests, in unity of vocation and mutual and necessary collaboration in their apostolic endeavor, with an international character, and therefore in need of an organizational and governmental structure corresponding to this requirement of universality.

However, in those first years of its existence the Work was still in what the Founder called its “gestation period,” and there were obviously aspects that little by little needed to be made specific, in response to situations as they arose. To what extent was the configuration of the Work “undetermined”? Saint Josemaría meditated at length on what God was asking, conscious that many of his reflections on the organizational aspects were only approximate. This is evident from his books of Personal Notes, where we frequently find phrases such as: “life itself, in time, will show us the way”; “the Lord will inspire the solution when he chooses”; or, in a general reference in March 1930: “All the notes on these scraps of paper are but the seed. They bear as much resemblance to the completed being, perhaps, as an egg does to the strutting chicken that has hatched from its shell.”

Among the aspects to be defined with time, there was obviously that of a juridical organizational structure capable of embracing Opus Dei with all the defining characteristics set out above. For many years, the existing law of the Church did not offer any satisfactory possibilities. Nevertheless, life flowed on like an ever-swelling river, which needed to be channeled in the most suitable way possible—or rather, in the words of Saint Josemaría, in the least unsuitable way, while the definitive solution was still awaited. For this reason he was obliged to have recourse to different solutions that would suffice to resolve the needs of a particular moment; but at the same
time he felt the weight and responsibility of needing to leave everything arranged in such a way that Opus Dei could eventually obtain the juridical configuration that best suited its nature.

I will now go on to talk about the three juridical configurations which Opus Dei adopted while the Founder was alive.

2. Juridical configurations during the life of the Founder

Pious union (1941)

Until the forced parenthesis of the religious persecution, which reached its peak during the Spanish Civil War (1936—1939), it had been sufficient for Opus Dei to have the approval and blessing of the diocesan Bishop, Leopoldo Eijo y Garay, without any written document. When the conflict ended, Saint Josemaría’s desire to extend the Work to different cities in Spain, and afterwards to other nations, could start to become a reality; but to enable this to happen, it was necessary to have an official recognition of Opus Dei—some formal document that would allow it to present itself as a body recognized by the ecclesiastical authorities.

There were also certain events that made it even more necessary to obtain such recognition. The pastoral novelty of Opus Dei had given rise to hostility and misunderstandings, which developed into a true campaign of calumnies against the Founder and the Work in general. These are sorrowful events, although Saint Josemaría heroically regarded them as an instrument of purification allowed by God so that charity, combined with an understanding for everyone, might take root even more deeply in his own soul and the souls of those who followed him. Needing, therefore, to seek a juridical structure for Opus Dei within the 1917 Code of Canon Law then in force, all that the Founder was able to find were lay associations. Among these there was the pious union, which the law, using a very broad formula, allowed to be established in order to “carry out any work of piety or charity,” which did not in any way undermine the secular character of the members of the Work, who continued to be ordinary Christians. Pious unions could be erected or simply approved by the competent authority. In a conversation with the Bishop of Madrid, Saint Josemaría opted for simple approval, by which he could achieve his objective of obtaining the diocesan Bishop’s official recognition of the
existence of Opus Dei, while at the same time making clear the provisional nature of this solution.

Aware of his duty to clarify the essential characteristics of the Work, including its juridical aspects, the Founder did not limit himself to presenting a request for approval alone, but attached to it a set of Regulations and other short documents containing an outline of what would later be the Statutes of Opus Dei, at that time consisting of fewer than fifty people. In those documents he sketched out a broad general vision of the Work, its aims, its members, and its system of governance, which he already foresaw as operating at universal and national levels.

The 1943 diocesan erection

In 1943 the number of members of Opus Dei had risen to over one hundred. To carry out the Work it was essential that there should be mutual cooperation between laity and priests. In the early years Saint Josemaría made use of the help of a number of priests, but he very soon realized that the priests had to come from the ranks of the laity of the Work. The existence of such priests was already foreseen in the documents attached to the 1941 request for approval of Opus Dei as a pious union; nor was this a purely hypothetical matter, since some members were already carrying out ecclesiastical studies with a view to the priesthood. However, there was still the problem of incardination and the title of ordination. The 1917 Code of Canon Law then in force allowed only two possibilities: every priest had to be attached either to a diocese or to a religious institute, and so-called vagrant clerics were prohibited in the most absolute terms.\[14\]

Canon law also required a title of ordination, to guarantee the decent maintenance of the cleric for the whole of his life.\[15\] For secular clerics one possibility was the title arising from the establishment of a patrimony or perpetual subsidy (pensio),\[16\] which would allow a priest to be incardinated in a diocese while remaining free to devote himself to tasks different from the service of that diocese.\[17\] The Bishop of Madrid offered Saint Josemaría the possibility of making use of this title, but it would have entailed insurmountable difficulties as it offered no guarantee of stability.
for an institution born with a vocation to universality; furthermore the costs would have been prohibitive.

It was in this situation of uncertainty that, on February 14, 1943, the panorama contemplated by the Founder on October 2, 1928—the vision of Opus Dei as an apostolic initiative requiring mutual and full cooperation between laity and priests—again came into sharper focus. Saint Josemaría now understood that the solution was for priests to form, as an integral part of the Work, a priestly nucleus making present the action of Christ, the Head, throughout the whole organism of the institution.

However, it was not easy to translate the light he had received into juridical terms. What was needed was that, within the pastoral phenomenon of the Work, there should be a body of priests who would remain incardinated in it without altering their secular condition, in order to provide pastoral care to the lay members and cooperate with them in the apostolic activities.

I have already mentioned that the 1917 Code of Canon Law only allowed the possibility of a cleric being attached to a diocese or religious institute. There were however certain cases where the Law itself treated certain institutions as being equivalent in iure to a diocese or religious institute. This equivalence applied to what were then called societies of common life without vows—nowadays societies of apostolic life—which were not religious, but were able to have priests attached to them, precisely because their juridical governance was treated as being partly equivalent to that of religious.[18]

With the agreement of the Bishop of Madrid, Saint Josemaría asked for and obtained permission “to transform a small nucleus of our Work, made up of priests and some laymen approaching ordination, into a Society of common life without vows, the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross.”[19] The erection of this small part of the Work as a society of diocesan right took place on December 8, 1943; and inseparably united to it, with the name of Opus Dei, was the association of faithful approved under that same name in 1941, to which the members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross continued to belong.
Admittedly this solution did not reflect the exact reality of the pastoral phenomenon, and was of necessity provisional: in the words of the Founder, “Opus Dei appeared as something secondary: as an association proper to and inseparable from the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, when the fact of the matter is that none of these two parts of our Work is secondary. Both of them are principal.” However, it did allow the ordination of the first three priests belonging to the society, including my beloved predecessor Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, on June 25, 1944, and others in 1946.

**Secular Institute**

The end of the Second World War (1945) made it possible for Opus Dei to start extending to other nations. What became very clear at this point was that the Work needed to be recognized by the Holy See in order to guarantee its universal structure and allow it an interdiocesan and unitary system of governance. In February 1946 the Founder sent Don Álvaro del Portillo, his closest collaborator, to Rome in order to conduct negotiations with the relevant authorities in the Roman Curia. Once it became clear that, under the legislation then in force, it would not be possible to obtain a suitable juridical configuration within the sphere of competence of the Sacred Congregation of the Council—today the Congregation for Clergy—the Founder decided to turn to the Sacred Congregation for Religious, the only Roman Dicastery in a position to grant the desired system of governance. The solution envisaged was that of requesting pontifical recognition—the so-called *decretum laudis*—for the society of diocesan right erected in 1943. However, Saint Josemaría could not claim to be satisfied with this juridical configuration, and he obtained agreement that the problem posed by Opus Dei should be studied in the context of what were called by the generic name of “new forms of Christian life,” which led to the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* of February 2, 1947 by which the figure of the secular Institutes was created. Within this context, on February 24 of the same year, Opus Dei, together with the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, received the *decretum laudis* as a secular Institute of pontifical right; and later, on June 16, 1950 it was given definitive approval by the Holy See. This represented a significant step forward, since the organization established was the whole of
Opus Dei, and not, as previously, the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross with an association (Opus Dei) inseparably united to it. In addition, recognition was given to the full secularity of the members and their condition as ordinary Christians—although some restrictions and difficulties remained.

One of these difficulties stemmed from the fact that, as a secular Institute, Opus Dei was dependent on the Sacred Congregation for Religious, which understood secularity in a very broad sense and included among the secular Institutes a large number of institutions that in reality bore the hallmarks of a religious congregation.[21] This proved to be a source of confusion, and was the reason why, for example, the members of the Work found it difficult in practice to exercise freedom of choice in professional and social matters, because there was the suspicion looming over them that they were acting under the guidance of the leaders of Opus Dei.

The approval of Opus Dei as a secular Institute also involved a series of exceptions to the Church’s general law that could well be described as privileges: above all the presence of men and women in the same institution in unity of governance and spirit, and celibate and married people.

It should also be added that, from the juridical perspective, Opus Dei was placed in the context of states of perfection: these were alien to its spiritual substance, which is centered on each one’s seeking holiness and carrying out apostolate in his or her own state and condition.

For all these reasons, on October 2, 1958 Saint Josemaría wrote a letter to the members of Opus Dei in which, after recalling the essential characteristics of the Work, he said, “In fact we are not a Secular Institute, nor in the future should this name be applied to us.”[22] He went on to say, “I will inform the Holy See, at the proper time, of this situation, of this concern of mine. Then I shall indicate that we ardently desire that steps be taken to reach a proper solution, which will not constitute for us a privilege—something repugnant to our spirit and outlook. Nor will it modify our current relations with local Ordinaries.”[23]

3. Towards a definitive juridical configuration
In the 1960s

In 1960, on the eve of the Second Vatican Council, Saint Josemaría felt that the time had come to make another attempt to obtain a juridical configuration capable of embracing Opus Dei as its nature required, outside the ambit of institutes of perfection, without privileges or exceptions to the Church’s general law. He therefore sent an informal consultation to the Secretary of State, Cardinal Domenico Tardini, asking him to consider the possibility of proposing that Pope John XXIII revise the juridical status of Opus Dei. The proposed solution can be summed up as follows:

a) In the first place, Opus Dei would henceforward depend on the Sacred Consistorial Congregation (today the Congregation for Bishops) through the creation of a prelature nullius, whose headquarters could consist of a single parish.[24]

b) It was also envisaged that the particular law of Opus Dei, which already enjoyed pontifical approval, would be confirmed, and that the election of the President General of the Work would require the confirmation of the Holy See, which would in turn appoint him Prelate of that small territory.

The Secretary of State notified Saint Josemaría that he did not consider it opportune to submit a formal request at that moment. “We are still a long way off,” he added. Saint Josemaría’s comment was that “The seed has been sown that will not fail to bear fruit.”

Less than two years later, in January 1962, the Founder presented the Holy Father John XIII with a formal request for revision of the juridical status of the Work. There were two suggested solutions:

a) To set up Opus Dei as a prelature nullius, providing it with a territory (albeit purely symbolic) in which priests would be incardinated; the particular law of that prelature would, in accordance with the law then in force,[25] be the one already approved for Opus Dei.

b) To entrust the President pro tempore of the Work with an existing or newly-created prelature nullius, with the faculty of incardinating priests of Opus Dei in it.
While the second of these suggested possibilities is the same as the one presented in 1960, the first goes further in that it foresees Opus Dei, as such, being established as a prelature.

In an accompanying note the Founder stated that the juridical system he had had in mind from 1928 was something similar to that of the military ordinariates, made up of secular priests and laity, who because of their particular circumstances needed suitable ecclesiastical juridical provision and spiritual assistance. In our case, he added, the particular features derive from the demands of carrying out secular apostolate at all levels of society with a specific spiritual and intellectual formation.[26]

Once again the reply in this case was negative. Somewhat distressed, Saint Josemaría, in two letters in 1961 and 1962, insisted after mature reflection on the responsibility incumbent upon him to be faithful to the charism received: “Before God our Lord,” he wrote, “I have the obligation of using all upright supernatural and human means to fulfill the holy will of God, in what concerns the foundation of his Work just as He has made me understand it […]. I’m not a young man who writes to you lightly: I have my years and Dominus prope est (Phil 4:5): for me the judgment of the Lord is near.”[27] On February 14, 1964, Saint Josemaría arranged for a statement of conscience to be delivered to the Holy Father Paul VI, in which, among other topics, he included some references to the juridical structure of Opus Dei. A few months later he was granted an audience by the Pope; they discussed the institutional problem and concluded that it would be best to await the end of the Second Vatican Council.

The Special General Congress (1969—1970) and Opus Dei’s new Code of particular law

In the light of the new possibilities opened up by the recently-ended Council,[28] Saint Josemaría convoked a special General Congress for Opus Dei, which took place in two parts, in 1969 and 1970. He saw this Congress not as an assembly of technical experts to work out the juridical solution, but as a profound reflection by the whole of Opus Dei, in union with the Founder, on its proper nature and characteristics. However, accepting a proposal made at the start of the second part in 1970, Saint Josemaría informed the Congress that he had set up a technical
commission of specialists, presided over by Don Alvaro del Portillo and consisting of two subcommittees: one juridical—canonical, the other theological. Once the sessions of the Congress were over, this technical commission continued working, so that on June 25, 1973 Saint Josemaría, in an audience granted by Paul VI, was able to inform the Pope of the progress of the work and was encouraged by the Roman Pontiff to see it through to completion. Finally on October 1, 1974 the Founder approved the project for the new Code of particular law for Opus Dei, in which the terms and provisions that were required by the juridical structure then in force, but were to be eliminated once the desired legal configuration had come into operation, were included in parentheses.

Saint Josemaría died a holy death on June 26, 1975, and did not live to see that desire fulfilled which for so many years had been the object of his concern, prayer and action. I leave it to Cardinal Julián Herranz, who will give the next paper, to describe the subsequent history.

Summary

In the course of my exposition I have attempted to summarize the defining characteristics of Opus Dei and the juridical steps taken by the Founder to obtain a legal configuration which, without ever giving way on those essential points, would allow the Work to carry out its mission in the different phases of its development, within the limited possibilities offered by the law then in force.

In summary I would say that the structure foreseen by Saint Josemaría from the outset, and to which he applied all his energies, needed to correspond—without recourse to privileges or exceptions—to the essential characteristics of Opus Dei, which are the following:

— It is an organic and indivisible unity, made up of men and women, celibate and married, ordinary faithful and ordinary citizens, belonging to Opus Dei in the same degree, without any distinction.

— In the Work, the distinction and relationship between priests and laity is the same as that which applies to the structure of the Church. The words of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 10, are eminently applicable: “Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or
hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated.” And in n. 30 of the same Dogmatic Constitution we read: “[The sacred Pastors] know that they were not ordained by Christ to take upon themselves alone the entire salvific mission of the Church toward the world. On the contrary they understand that it is their noble duty to shepherd the faithful and to recognize their ministries and charisms, so that all according to their proper roles may cooperate in this common undertaking with one mind.”[29]

— Opus Dei needs a universal system of governance; and with the future structure in mind Saint Josemaría foresaw that the relationship with the territorial ecclesiastical hierarchy would continue to be the same as previously, without claiming any greater autonomy, as this would be contrary to the will of God as seen by the Founder.

All of this came to fulfillment with the establishment of the personal prelature. On this day of commemoration and gratitude to the Lord, it only remains for me to express thanks, on behalf of myself and the whole of Opus Dei, to the Servant of God John Paul II, who finally established the Prelature; to Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, Saint Josemaría’s most faithful successor, who guided the Work and labored unstintingly to ensure that the desire of the Founder might be fulfilled; and to all who have contributed over the course of many years with their help, sacrifice and work.

[1] Sometimes there appear expressions such as receiving a light or illumination, etc.


[3] On October 2, 1931, for example, he wrote, “Today, three years ago, I received that illumination regarding the whole Work” (Personal Notes, 306).


[5] Saint Josemaría considered the work of a woman who dedicates all her activity to the care of the family and home to be professional work of
great social importance.


[7] Personal Notes, n. 158.


[11] Saint Josemaría acted from the very first moment in close union with the diocesan Bishop Eijo y Garay, who confirms this in a letter he wrote on May 24, 1941 to Dom Aurelio María Escarré, Coadjutor Abbot of Montserrat, in which he states that Opus Dei, “from the time it was founded in 1928, is so much in the hands of the Church that the diocesan Ordinary, that is to say either the Vicar General or myself, knows and, when necessary, directs all of its steps; both its cries as a newborn creature and its current groans resound in our ears and... in our hearts. Because, believe me, Most Reverend Father, the Opus is truly Dei, from its first idea and in all of its steps and works” (the letter forms part of the close correspondence between the Bishop of Madrid and the Abbot of Montserrat; the original is kept in the abbey archive). “Its current groans”: with these words Bishop Eijo y Garay is referring to the serious attacks then being aimed at Saint Josemaría. In a letter of June 21, 1941 to Abbot Aurelio Escarré, Bishop Eijo y Garay wrote: “It is one of the greatest calumnies against Opus Dei; and I can guarantee you, Most Reverend Father, that it is pure calumny. How could they love the holy Church without loving also the religious state? ... They love it, they venerate and proclaim it a means of salvation for those called by God to it; but they do not feel called to this vocation, but rather to that of sanctifying themselves in the middle of the world and exercising in the world their apostolate.”


[14] Cf. CIC 1917, can. 111.

[15] Cf. CIC 1917, can. 974 § 1, n. 7.
[16] Cf. CIC 1917, can. 979 §§ 1—2.

[17] Cf. CIC 1917, can. 128.


[21] This same affirmation can be found in the works of A. Oberti, J. Beyer, and many others who studied the evolution of secular Institutes from the beginning.

[22] Letter, October 2, 1958, n. 9 (italics in original).

[23] Letter, October 2, 1958, n. 11 (italics in original).

[24] Regarding this possibility, a glimmer of hope had been given by the establishment of the Mission de France as a prelature nullius on August 15, 1954: AAS 46 [1954], pp. 567—574.


[26] In a testimony written after the death of the Founder, Pedro Casciaro recalls that in 1936, Saint Josemaría pointed out to him two tombstones in a church in Madrid, and said, “There you have the future juridical solution of the Work.” The tombstones belonged to two military Vicars general.


[28] The closure of the Second Vatican Council took place on December 8, 1965. On August 6, 1966 the Motu pr. Ecclesiae Sanctae was promulgated. Part I of this document contained the executive dispositions on the conciliar decrees Christus Dominus and Presbyterorum ordinis; while n. 4 outlined the norms on personal prelatures (AAS 58 [1966], pp. 760—761).

[29] This concept was to be described in the CIC 1983, can. 296, as “organic cooperation.”

Torna ai contenuti
Address at the granting of honorary doctorates at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (April 9, 2008)

At the Granting of Honorary Doctorates by the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

Your eminences and most reverend bishops, Esteemed civil authorities, professors, students and all of the personnel of the university, Ladies and Gentlemen:

A cordial greeting to all of you who are participating in the granting of the first honorary doctorates in Institutional Communications by our university. A special greeting with great affection to the new doctors: His Eminence Cardinal Camillo Ruini, Vicar of the Pope for the Diocese of Rome and, for many years, President of the Italian Bishops’ Conference; and the illustrious Professor Alfonso Nieto Tamargo, who collaborated actively, also as a professor, in the birth and development of the School of Institutional Communication.

In today’s ceremony, the merits of the new doctors are intertwined with the academic tradition represented by the biretta, the ring, and the medal, symbols of mastery, of professional prestige and of the bond with our university community. But allow me to go beyond the protocol and reflect with you briefly about the duty that corresponds to a university in the present historical circumstances.

Some words of St. Gregory the Great can help us to consider how ancient and deep is the connection between the Church and communication. This great Pope, who occupied the Chair of Peter between the years 590 and 604, said that “paintings should be introduced into the churches so that those who cannot read can, by looking at the walls, read that which they are not capable of reading in the manuscripts.”[1] This brief observation can be a good example of how communication in the Church has not been a discovery of our own days. In fact, since the beginning, Christians have daringly sought the most
efficacious ways to make the word of God reach, in an understandable way, the greatest number of persons, even those who found themselves physically distant. In this sense, one can affirm with reason that there exists a continual intertwining of the history of the Church and the history of communication, understood in a broad sense.

But the Church does not limit itself to “making use” of the media of communication for its mission of evangelization. John Paul II stated, in a noted passage of the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, that it was necessary to do more: to integrate the Christian message itself into the “new culture” created by the media of communication.[2] The Pope added, perhaps to avoid discouragement and false expectations, that it was a matter of a complicated question, because this “new culture” was a result not so much of content, but more of the new means of communicating, with new languages, with new techniques and with new psychological behaviors.[3] I think, in fact, that anyone who finds himself in one of these fields of research and theorizing, needs patient work and an interdisciplinary approach that only the university environment can offer.

Therefore, it is even more evident that the act of investiture that brings us together today, is not of interest solely to one sphere of knowledge, that of communication, but also to theology, philosophy, and canon law. John Paul II’s invitation is today more timely than ever. It is necessary to realize in our epoch a synthesis between the message, the media of communication, and the cultural context that the many generations preceding us have brought into being.

As a popular philosopher of communication wrote: “What happens if we put a drop of red coloring into a test tube full of clear water? Do we obtain clear water plus a drop of red coloring? Obviously not. We have a new coloration of every molecule of the water. A new media does not just add something; it changes everything. In the year 1500, after the invention of the printing press, we did not have old Europe plus the printing press. We had a different Europe.”[4]

We can ask ourselves now if this metaphor of coloring does not also apply to the effect that the Christian spirit produces in the waters—at times muddied—of our culture. How can one integrate the Christian
message into the “new culture” created by the media of communication. John Paul II himself proposed a way: “We need heralds of the Gospel who are experts in humanity, who know in depth the hearts of the men of today, who participate in their joys and hopes, concerns and sorrows, and at the same time are persons in love with God. For this, we need new saints.”[5]

Along these lines, I would like to underline an aspect upon which Pope Benedict XVI has insisted, that is the positive meaning of the Christian message. He said this explicitly to a group of German language journalists a few months after his election. “Christianity, Catholicism, is not a set of prohibitions, but a positive option. It is very important to help people realize this once again, since today this outlook has almost completely disappeared. We have heard so much talk of what is not permitted that now one has to say: But we have a positive idea to propose.”[6]

St. Josemaría Escrivá, from whose priestly soul and from whose university vocation the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross was born, always had a clear perception of the great human and Christian service that professionals in communication could carry out. In fact, in the academic year 1940-1941 he gave, at the request of a friend and with the encouragement of the Bishop of Madrid, lessons of ethics and deontology in what later became the official school of journalism. He held that the children of God should be present with professionalism, Christian identity, and love of the truth in those places where public opinion is formed. “It is difficult,” this holy priest reminded us, “for people really to live together harmoniously when there is no real information. And real information does not fear the truth and does not allow itself to be led away by motives of intrigue, false prestige or economic advantage.”[7]

This entails, in the academic setting, harmonizing the gift of faith with the daily effort to deepen one's knowledge of the communications field. Thus we will help to “to make the truth lovable,” as our first Chancellor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, advised in the title of a book that collected some of his addresses at this university. How much gratitude we owe to this bishop, so exemplary in his service to the Church and to souls! Following his example, let us entrust these resolutions to our Lord and to Holy Mary, the Seat of Wisdom.
St. Gregory the Great, To the Serene Bishop, Dz 477, PL 77, 1128BC-1129C.


Ibid.


Benedict XVI, August 5, 2005.

St. Josemaría, *Conversations with Josemaría Escrivá*, no. 86.
ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA
Dedication of various squares and streets

The Plaza de San Josemaría en Tegucigalpa, Honduras. On Saturday, May 10, a square dedicated to St. Josemaría was inaugurated in Tegucigalpa. Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga blessed a commemorative monument, decorated with a bronze bas-relief of St. Josemaría and, on the other side, a ceramic image of Our Lady of Suyapa, the Patroness of Honduras.

The Plaza de San Josemaría in Urio, Italy. On May 3 the square fronting the dock of Urio was dedicated to St. Josemaría. The ceremony began with Holy Mass celebrated by Bishop Diego Coletti of Como who concelebrated with Msgr. Lucio Norbedo, the Vicar of the Prelature in Italy, and other priests. Local authorities present included the Prefect of the Province of Como and the Mayors of Carate Urio, Cernobbio, Moltrasio, Lenno, Laglio, and Brierno, towns close to Urio. After Mass, during the inauguration of the recently renovated square, the mayor of Carate Urio, Daniele Maggi, stressed the simplicity and humility of the saint, who is recalled here as an approachable person who sought personal contact with the people of the area.

After some words by Msgr. Norbedo, who recalled his first meeting with St. Josemaría as a young university student in Urio, a bronze plaque in the square was uncovered with the words: “St. Josemaría Escrivá, priest, 1902-1975, Founder of Opus Dei, present in Carate Urio from 1955 to 1973.”

At the end of the ceremony, more than a thousand of those attending went to the Castello di Urio, where a series of guided tours of the historic villa were conducted. There was also a photographic display on the life of the saint. Throughout the year, the Castello hosts activities of Christian formation for men and women of all walks of life.

A square dedicated to St. Josemaría in the city of Santa Ana, El Salvador. A large crowd was present in Santa Ana on May 31 for the inauguration of the Plaza San Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer. A bust of the saint about five feet in height, framed in an elegant architectural setting, gives a special luster to the new plaza. The bust is the work of the sculptor
Miguel Rivera, and was donated by the National Council for Culture and Art. The mayor of the city, Orlando Mena, and the president of the committee for the Plaza San Josemaría, René Arrival, unveiled the bust, which was blessed by Archbishop Fernando Saenz LaSalle of San Salvador.

**A walkway dedicated to St. Josemaría in Loreto, Italy.** On Saturday March 1, the Percorso San Josemaría Escrivá was inaugurated in Loreto. This is a walkway that ascends in seven curves up the hill at Loreto from the bus parking lot to the Shrine. The walkway features 14 plaques by the artist Amalia Mestichelli, representing the Stations of the Cross, with brief commentaries by St. Josemaría at each one.

Present at the ceremony were Archbishop Giovanni Tonucci, the Pontifical Delegate for the Holy House and the Prelate of Loreto, and Bishop Javier Echevarría, the Prelate of Opus Dei, who walked along the new pathway, followed by numerous faithful, in an atmosphere of recollection and piety. At each station the group stopped to listen to paragraphs from St. Josemaría’s book *The Way of the Cross*, read by Alberto Michellini, former TV journalist of RAI and former Deputy of the European Parliament and of the Republic of Italy.[1]

[1] See homily and address on p.61 an p.82.

Torna ai contenuti

**Blessing of a plaque dedicated to St. Josemaría in the "Hospital del Rey," Madrid (January 9, 2008)**

On January 9th, the anniversary of St. Josemaría’s birth, Fr. Jesus Conde, Vicar for Pastoral Work with the Sick in Madrid, accompanied by Fr. Peter Álvarez de Toledo, Vicar of Opus Dei for the Madrid-West Delegation, and the chaplains of the Hospital, Francisco Inez and Enrique del Castillo, blessed an image located in the chapel of the Carlos III Hospital, formerly the Hospital del Rey.
Taking part in the ceremony were doctors, researchers, hospital employees, patients, and other faithful. Next to the sculpture, by the artist Venancio Blanco, a plaque has been placed that reads: “St. Josemaría Escrivá, Founder of Opus Dei, canonized by His Holiness John Paul II on October 6, 2002, and the priests, Fr. José María Somoano and Fr. Lino Vea-Murguía, spiritually attended the sick in the Hospital del Rey with heroism during the 1930's, encouraging them to transform their sufferings into a powerful prayer in God’s eyes.”

The Hospital del Rey is situated in northern Madrid, some four miles from the center of the city. In the thirties this district was outside the city limits. Its name, “The National Hospital for Infectious Diseases,” explains its isolation back then. Treated there were victims of epidemics and contagious diseases, above all tuberculosis, at that time often deadly. Later on new installations were added to the original buildings, which in part have lost their use as a hospital and become the seat of various research centers.

St. Josemaría would ask the sick people there “to offer all their sufferings, their hours in bed, their loneliness—and some of them were very much alone—for the work he was doing,” that is, for Opus Dei, which at that time, he said, was like an infant not yet born.

A sister working at the Hospital del Rey who knew St. Josemaría said, after his death: “When he came to hear confessions and give spiritual assistance to our sick, I saw them waiting for him with joy and hope. I saw them accept suffering and death with a fervor that was very moving to all of us around them.” Almost every Sunday and feast day he celebrated Mass for everyone in the hospital and preached a homily. If the weather permitted, he would celebrate the Eucharist in the garden, in the open air.

New Publications

In the first half of 2008, three biographical sketches of St. Josemaría have been published in Italy. Their authors are: Michele Dolz (Mia madre
la Chiesa [My Mother the Church], Edizioni San Paolo), Massimo Bettetini (Josemaría Escrivá, Edizioni Messagero) and Lorenzo Revojera (San Josemaría Escrivá, Edizioni Elledici-Verlar). Also published was Opus Dei: Un’inchiesta, an investigative report by the journalist Giovanni Minoli which is being distributed together with a DVD produced by Stefano Rizzelli (Rizzoli-Rai Eri).

The German translation of the final volume of the biography of St. Josemaría by Andrés Vázquez de Prada has been completed and published under the title: Der Gründer des Opus Dei, III: Die Römischen Jahre, by Adamas Verlag.

In the Philippines, a translation of The Way in the Hiligaynon language, entitled Ang Dalan, has been published. In Slovenia, the publishing company Celjska Mohorjeva Družba has published Jezus Prihaja Mimo, the first Slovenian edition of Christ Is Passing By. A Slovenian edition of the homily Passionately Loving the World has also been published under the title Strastno Ljubiti Svet.

The book Holy Rosary has been published in Armenian along with two booklets of homilies, the first containing Passionately Loving the World, and the other combining Towards Holiness and A Life of Prayer.

In Poland an audio-CD edition (of 14,000 copies) of The Way of the Cross has been issued.

Torna ai contenuti

Studia et Documenta: Review of the St. Josemaría Historical Institute

The second volume of Studia et Documenta, the review of the Historical Institute of St. Josemaría Escrivá, opens with an article on the theological studies of St. Josemaría and another on his doctorate in law. These are by Francesc Castells and by the author of the critical-historical edition of The Way, Pedro Rodríguez. The section “Documents” collects the correspondence of Emiliano Amann to his parents. He was a resident in DYA, the first student residence opened by St. Josemaría in Madrid,
during the 1935-36 school year. His letters reflect the enthusiasm and sense of mission with which, already in those early years, the spirit of Opus Dei was lived.

There are other studies and notes of an historical character, including an article by Julio Gonzalez-Simancas about St. Josemaría’s care for the sick in Madrid between 1927 and 1931 as a very young priest. The bibliographical section, which occupies over one hundred pages, is made up of reviews and data on volumes published recently and the first part of an exhaustive catalogue of works about St. Josemaría.

Since the publication of the first volume, requests for subscriptions to Studia et Documenta have risen considerably. “Presentations” or introductions of the review have been held in various cities. On April 21, for example, Studia et Documenta was presented at the Chamber of Commerce in Ciudad Real, Spain, in a ceremony that was reported on in the media and that highlighted St. Josemaría’s frequent visits to La Mancha in the years following the Spanish Civil War. Among the cities there that he visited were Ciudad Real, Alcazar de San Juan, Quintanar de la Orden, and Daimiel.

Learning to Love and other documentaries on St. Josemaría

Learning to Love: a Dialogue with St. Josemaría Escrivá. A new DVD produced by Juan Martin Ezratty combines filmed encounters with St. Josemaría and the testimony of various people who try to live his teachings in their daily life. This is an initiative of the Office of Communications of Opus Dei in Argentina.

The Footsteps of a Saint. On January 23 a DVD was officially released in Valencia, Spain, on St. Josemaría’s visit to the city in 1972.

The reportage contains fragments of filmed get-togethers that St. Josemaría held with groups of families, young people, and priests during his 1972 visit. The DVD as a whole offers a good synthesis of the principal
points of his preaching on sanctifying one’s work and daily duties. In addition, some of the people who took part in those gatherings speak about their recollections 35 years later. The DVD also includes a meeting of St. Josemaría with families at the Guadalaviar School.

Photographic displays and other commemorative acts

Photographic displays on the life of St. Josemaría, in Italy:
— Vigevano (Pavia), from January 26 to February 2.
— Sondrio, from April 11 to 13.
— Urio (Como), on May 3, at the Castello di Urio.
— Pavia, from May 20 to 31.
— Lecco, from June 6 to 8.
— Varese, from June 20 to 21.

A conference on St. Josemaría is usually held during these photographic expositions.

A portrait of St. Josemaría at the Lateran Pontifical University of Rome. On March 6 a simple ceremony of presentation of a portrait of St. Josemaría was held at the Lateran University in the presence of Bishop Rino Fisichella, Rector of the University, and of Bishop Javier Echevarría, the Prelate of Opus Dei. Students from the various departments of the university attended the ceremony.

A fresco of St. Josemaría in the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Ponte Buggianese, Tuscany. On April 6, at a Eucharistic celebration presided over by Archbishop Francesco Monterisi, the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Bishops, a mural dedicated to St. Josemaría, by painter Massimo Callossi, was inaugurated at the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Counsel.
Celebration of the 60th anniversary of St. Josemaría Escrivá’s trip to Calabria and Sicily. In Cittadella del Capo, a village on the Tirreno-Cosentina coast, a commemorative conference was held on March 1 in honor of the Founder of Opus Dei, with a stamp designed for the occasion and a photographic and bibliographic display. There was also a presentation of the book La Calabria de Escriva by the journalist and writer Assunta Scorpiniti.

Dedication of the Parish of St. Josemaría in Culiacan, Mexico. On March 14 the new parish Church of St. Josemaría was blessed in the district of Valle Alto. It will provide spiritual attention to some six thousand families. The ceremony was presided over by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to Mexico. Together with numerous ecclesiastical and civil authorities, many faithful of the parish and employees of the construction company were present.

A statue of St. Josemaría for the community of Desenredo, Managua, Nicaragua. The community of Desenredo was ravaged a few years ago by Hurricane Mitch. Thanks in part to the help of an enthusiastic group of volunteers from Valencia, Spain, conditions of life have slowly returned to normal. Recently a chapel dedicated to St. Josemaría has been constructed, with a wooden statue of the saint that was sculpted in Valencia. The statue was solemnly blessed by the pastor, with a procession and a band providing musical accompaniment.

Eucharistic celebrations on the Feast of St. Josemaría

The feast of St. Josemaría, June 26, was celebrated in many countries around the world.

In Africa, devotion to the Founder of Opus Dei has crossed the borders of the places where the Prelature is already established and people have recourse to his intercession in many other countries.

Dakar, in Senegal, was one of the cities which saw the liturgical
memorial of the Founder of Opus Dei celebrated for the first time. The Mass took place in the Piarist Fathers’ Church of the Uganda Martyrs. A Mass was also celebrated in honor of St. Josemaría on the neighboring island of Gorée, in gratitude for favors received by local residents who had recourse to his intercession.

Other African countries where Eucharistic celebrations in connection with June 26th were held include Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Congo Brazzaville, Gabon, Ghana, and Tanzania.

In Barbados, on the other side of the Atlantic, Opus Dei’s stable apostolic work has also not yet begun. Nevertheless, on that island many people pray to St. Josemaría and benefit from his teachings. St. Josemaría’s feast day was celebrated with a Mass there.

In many places, a relic of the saint was used in the blessing of the faithful at the end of the celebration.
News
Masses in suffrage for the soul of Don Alvaro

In Rome, the Mass in suffrage for the Servant of God Álvaro del Portillo on the anniversary of his death was celebrated by Bishop Javier Echevarría in the Basilica of St. Eugene.[1]

Masses were also celebrated for the anniversary of Don Alvaro’s death, on March 23, 1994, in many other cities throughout the world.

In Paraguay, the Bishop of Ciudad del Este, Most Rev. Rogelio Livieres, celebrated a solemn Mass in the Cathedral of Asunción.

In Cebon, the Philippines, numerous faithful participated in the Mass concelebrated by Auxiliary Bishop Julito Cortes, together with several priests.

In San Salvador and in San Juan de Puerto Rico, the respective Archbishops celebrated the Eucharist in suffrage for Bishop Álvaro del Portillo.

As on other anniversaries of his holy death, large numbers of the faithful attended these Masses. By their participation, those present showed their gratitude to God for the life of Don Alvaro, whom they consider an intercessor before the Blessed Trinity.

A book by Bishop Enrique Pelach

A second edition has been issued of the book Abancay: un Obispo en los Andes peruanos [Abancay: A Bishop in the Peruvian Andes]. The author is Bishop Enrique Péchach y Feliu, who is revered in the country for his untiring pastoral activity, his work in fostering vocations (including the founding of two seminaries), and his tenacious social work for the poor and the sick in his diocese.

Bishop Péchach landed in the Peruvian port of Callao in 1957. He was one of the five diocesan priests who went to take care of the new Prelature
of Yauyos, recently created and entrusted to Opus Dei by Pope Pius XII. From then until his death on July 19, 2007, Bishop Pélach remained in Peru.

As a young priest, when finishing his studies in Rome, he met and became a friend of St. Josemaría Escrivá. Shortly thereafter he was the first priest to ask for admission to the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, which St. Josemaría had founded as an association of the clergy intrinsically united to Opus Dei.

Father Pélach was appointed Bishop of Abancay by Pope Paul VI and took possession of the diocesan Cathedral on July 21, 1968. It was in that same Cathedral that his funeral took place on July 21, 2007. In his homily, the current Bishop Isidro Sala said that the heart of Bishop Pélach “has ceased to beat on earth, but it has not ceased to love, because Love with a capital letter—that love with which he loved God and humanity—will never end.”

The current bishop of Abancay recalled “the many hours that Bishop Pélach had ridden on horseback through the mountains of Yauyos and Huarochiri. These were apostolic and missionary travels: giving catechism classes, hearing confessions, celebrating Holy Mass, visiting the sick and the poor.”

Bishop Sala said that “as the first priest of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, he also helped the Work grow and opened up a pathway with his fidelity. He sought sanctity with determination in his ministry as a priest and as a bishop. In Opus Dei, as he himself said, one finds the best place both to live and to die.”

He added that “in difficult times,” he had received from St. Josemaría, “the advice and encouragement to create the diocesan seminary for the formation of priests in this land, which has borne such great fruit.”

Bishop Sala said that his predecessor had “great compassion for the multitude,” which led him “to found many social works such as the Home for the Aged, helped by Mother Celina, a discalced Carmelite. He gathered up in his own car the beggars sleeping in the street. For the care of lepers and the poorest of the sick he created the Santa Teresa Medical Center. He founded residences for students and medical clinics.” And he
did all this, the Bishop of Abancay added, following St. Josemaría’s motto: “to hide and disappear, so that only Jesus shines forth.”

“His love for the poor was of a great evangelical depth: one has to visit Abancay to know the greatness of Enrique’s soul,” wrote Cardinal Juan Luis Cipriani, Primate of Peru, in an article published in the newspaper El Comercio on August 2, 2007.

Cardinal Cipriani in that article also highlighted his “enterprising talent and his simplicity, which could move mountains.” “He brought thousands of men and women of all ages and social conditions to God. He was the same when on a horse or mule in the Andes on a mission at more than 12,000 feet as when smiling at a child, or taking care of someone who was dying, or singing in a low voice of the beauty of the mountains where he was riding. He had a clean soul, transparent and noble, ablaze with love for God and all mankind.”

According to the Cardinal, “he saw the teaching of the faith as a very urgent task, reflected in the monumental work of the Pelach-Kunher Catechism, of which more than 100,000 copies have been sold. Another instrument he provided was the Devocionario Rezar y Cantar [Prayer and Song Book], which thousands of our ‘campesino’ brothers and sisters in the Andean mountains have found useful.”

The book Abancay: un Obispo en los Andes peruanos (Madrid, Rialp, 2008) includes memories of more than 40 years of pastoral work.

50th anniversary of Madrid's Tajmar school and of Jara Boys' Club

Tajamar School began in 1958 in the Vallecas district of Madrid, by express wish of St. Josemaría. In those years the district was not part of the educational network and did not have a single high school. According to official data, 12,800 children lacked access to any schooling. The
surroundings were rubbish-filled lots and shacks. Even today, the district where Tajamar is located has the lowest per capita income in Madrid.

The current location of Tajamar dates from 1962. The previous sites were, successively, some premises in Colonia Erillas (1958); a garage on Eduardo Requenas street (1958-59); and a dairy in the Doña Carlota district.

From the beginning, Tajamar sought to impart to its students a sense of responsibility in their professional work and a Christian view of life. One of its main characteristics is an atmosphere of freedom. The alumni now number more than 20,000; at present about two thousand boys are enrolled. The facilities include a sports school and two advanced technical institutes dedicated to graphic arts and to computer science and logistics.

Tajamar is helped by a foundation that seeks the financing needed to improve its buildings and equipment and to undertake new projects. In the last three years, new construction has included a primary school, a technology building and a sports complex.

Its fiftieth anniversary has been commemorated by the publishing of a book and a DVD, a photographic exposition, various alumni gatherings, and a cross country race.

During April the Jara Boys Club in Madrid celebrated its 50th anniversary. For the occasion a book was published with text and photos of its half-century history. The book was presented on April 3 in a ceremony at the Rafael del Pino Foundation with more than a hundred people attending. It combines a brief history of the Club with recollections of alumni. The commemorative book also includes articles about the educational aims of the Club, and its cultural, sporting and social service activities.

On April 19 a Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated in the Church of the Holy Spirit and a festive gathering was held with the families of the Club's present and past members. At the initiative of a group of the parents, a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Torreciudad was also organized for the weekend of April 25 to 27. Throughout the year, special celebrations were held for alumni from the various years. In addition, an exhibit of the Club’s fifty-year history was set up in one of its rooms.
25th Anniversary of the establishment of the Opus Dei Prelature

The official inauguration ceremony of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei took place on March 19, 1983, in the Roman Basilica of Saint Eugene. Cardinals Sebastian Baggio, Josy Slipyj, Silvio Oddi, James Robert Knox, Umberto Mozzoni, Pietro Palazzini, Opilio Rossi and Mario Luigi Ciappi, OP, participated, as well as Monsignor Giovanni Battista Re, the Assessor of the Secretary of State. The event took place during the solemn Eucharistic celebration presided by Monsignor Álvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei.

Archbishop Romolo Carboni, Apostolic Nuncio to Italy, was the delegate of Pope John Paul II on this occasion. After reading the Bull *Ut sit* and the decree implementing it, the Nuncio handed these documents over to Monsignor del Portillo. Don Alvaro based his homily on the words from which the Bull derives its name, the prayer used by St Josemaría in petition to our Lord. He urged the faithful of the Prelature to make a fervent renewal of their love for, and loyalty to, the Church and the Roman Pontiff.

A Study Conference in Rome

On March 10, 2008, the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome held a symposium to mark the 25th anniversary of the erection of Opus Dei as a personal prelature. The symposium took place in the John Paul II Auditorium in the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome.

Cardinal Camillo Ruini, Papal Vicar for the Diocese of Rome from 1991 to 2008, opened the event by “thanking Opus Dei for the service it gives to the dioceses of the whole world and in particular to Rome itself,” not only through the work of the priests of the Prelature in parishes or in other diocesan services, but above all in the joint effort of priests and laity
in fostering holiness and apostolate. This, he said, “is the most specific and direct pastoral service that Opus Dei offers to the dioceses.”

Throughout his presentation, Cardinal Ruini emphasized the importance of the spiritual support and Christian formation that the Prelature provides. “The objective is to highlight what lay men and women can achieve by striving for holiness and doing apostolate through their own work and in their personal circumstances.”

Cardinal Julian Herránz, President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, discussed the preparatory work of the Apostolic Constitution Ut Sit, by which John Paul II established the Prelature of Opus Dei. He remarked that the process of elaboration of the pontifical Bull demonstrated “the depth and the collegiality of spirit with which John Paul II followed up and directed the work of the Congregation for Bishops.” The number of bishops consulted amounted to 2,084 from 34 nations.

Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, reminded the assembly that the essential activity of the Prelature “is the formation of its faithful and those who wish to be involved in its apostolic activities.” They are thus enabled to act in a Christian way and with personal freedom “in their professional, family, and social life,” while remaining equal with their fellow-citizens. Bishop Echevarría expressed gratitude “to the Servant of God John Paul II, who established the Prelature, to Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, who guided the Work and worked tirelessly to ensure that the desire of the Founder would become a reality, as well as to all who had contributed down the years with their prayer, sacrifice and work.”

Professor Giuseppe Dalla Torre, Rector of the Libera Università Maria Santissima Assunta (LUMSA), analyzed the civil recognition of the Prelature of Opus Dei in various countries.

Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, Vicar General of Opus Dei, spoke about the apostolate ad fidem and ecumenism. He emphasized the fact that the underlying reason for dialogue with non-Christians “is not a desire to assert dominion or to impose one’s own convictions, but rather Christian charity, sincere love for all souls, to whom one wishes to transmit the incalculable good of faith in Christ or the fullness of this faith.”
Personal Prelatures in the Law of the Church

Personal prelatures are one of the organizational tools the Church has at her disposal to provide for pastoral needs (Annuario Pontificio 2008, p.1872).

In the law of the Catholic Church, the juridical form denominated as ‘personal prelature’ was envisaged in the Second Vatican Council (Ad Gentes and Presbyterorum Ordinis). Article 10 of Presbyterorum Ordinis (December 7, 1965), established that “in order to carry out particular pastoral tasks for different social groups in certain regions or nations, or even all over the world,” in the future, “particular dioceses or personal prelatures” could be set up.

The Code of Canon Law deals with personal prelatures in canons 294-297 and also in 265-266. Canon 295 establishes that each personal prelature “is regulated by the statutes given to it by the Apostolic See.” It also indicates that the government of a prelature is entrusted to a Prelate,
as its own bishop. The faithful of the personal prelatures continue to belong to the diocese where they happen to live.

With the Apostolic Constitution *Ut Sit* (November 28, 1982), John Paul II ratified the Statutes of Opus Dei, which form the particular pontifical law for this prelature. The Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* (June 28, 1988) established in article 80 that the Congregation for Bishops would be the competent authority for dealing with personal prelatures. There are also numerous concordats that clarify the juridical nature of personal prelatures in relation to civil law in the different ecclesiastical circumscriptions (cf. the recent publication *El Opus Dei ante el Derecho estatal* [Opus Dei and State Law], Jose María Vázquez García-Peñuela, Editorial Comares, Granada 2007).

*Archbishop Francesco Monterisi: “The Personal Prelature: a framework which enriches the communion of the Church”*

Extracts from an interview published on December 11, 2007 on www.opusdei.org. Archbishop Monterisi is Secretary of the Congregation for Bishops, the Vatican dicastery on which personal prelatures depend.

“The apostolic fruit of Opus Dei benefits the dioceses in which the faithful of the Prelature reside. It has often happened, for example, that the personal apostolate of one of the faithful of Opus Dei has given rise to the conversion of a friend, a colleague or a relative. The commitment of the laity of Opus Dei, their work in apostolic and social activities, their initiatives, are a stimulus for other faithful: this means spiritual growth in the diocese.”

“The figure of the Prelature is not a “formula for independence;: as is sometimes said, but precisely the opposite. It is a concrete response of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to a specific pastoral need. When John Paul II established the Prelature, neither the faithful nor the formational activities of Opus Dei became “independent” of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. On the contrary, the hierarchy has taken over the care of this reality by means of a Prelate appointed by the Pope. The Prelate has the duty of guiding the Prelature in communion with all of the bishops. At the same time, he is obliged to maintain Opus Dei and all of its activities in communion with the Holy Father cum et sub Petro (with and under Peter).
“These years of experiencing the presence of the Prelature of Opus Dei in so many dioceses around the world confirms the reality of an intense apostolic work in communion with the diocesan bishops. This communion is worked out in very different ways and forms, but the wish of the Prelature of Opus Dei, that of being in harmony with all the bishops of the dioceses in which it is active, is always the same. In this sense, one can say, by way of conclusion, that the personal prelature contributes to enriching communion in the Church.”

Pontifical Appointments

On April 22, 2008, Rev. Hugo Barbaro was appointed Bishop of San Roque de Presidencia Roque Sáenz Peña (Argentina).

The Vicariate of Rome concludes the fact-finding phase of the Cause of Canonization of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo (June 26, 2008)

The ceremony took place in Rome’s Lateran Palace on June 26, the liturgical memorial of St. Josemaría Escrivá, whose first successor as head of Opus Dei was Bishop Álvaro del Portillo

Bishop Javier Echevarría, the current Prelate, was present at the ceremony, along with many faithful of the Prelature and friends of Bishop del Portillo, who lived in Rome for almost fifty years, from 1946 until his death in 1994.

Cardinal Ruini explained that “Bishop Echevarría, although he had been recognized by the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints as the competent Bishop to investigate his predecessor’s cause, out of a refined
and rigorous sense of justice, desired that I appoint a Tribunal of the 
Vicariate to receive his deposition and that of some of the other witnesses.”

“I was happy to accede to his request” he continued, “in virtue of which 
I am present here today to formally close the investigative process and 
transmit the documents to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, 
since, as is well known, the diocesan tribunals are only fact-gathering 
bodies, and the only judicial body is the Congregation.”

Bishop Álvaro del Portillo’s process of canonization was opened four 
years ago, on March 5, 2004, and has been carried out in its first phase in 
two tribunals, one organized by the Vicariate of Rome and the other by the 
Prelature of Opus Dei. Some witnesses have also given testimony to 
tribunals in their own dioceses, in accord with established judicial 
procedures.

Cardinal Ruini said that Bishop Álvaro del Portillo was “an example of 
fidelity in following the spirit of sanctification in work and ordinary life,” 
and recalled the principal events of his life: “On July 7, 1935, while still an 
engineering student, he asked for admission to Opus Dei. During the 
tragic events of the Spanish Civil War, he was the person who provided the 
most assistance to the Founder. On June 25, 1944, he was ordained a 
priest, one of the first three priests of Opus Dei....”

“In 1946 he moved to Rome, where he carried out various tasks in 
service of the Holy See,” Cardinal Ruini continued. “He was a consultor to 
various dicasteries, as well as secretary of the Second Vatican Council 
Commission that drafted the decree Presbyterorum Ordinis. In 1975, after 
St. Josemaría’s death, he was called to succeed him as head of Opus Dei.”

Don Álvaro died in Rome on March 23, 1994, just after returning 
from a trip to the Holy Land. John Paul II, who had ordained him as a 
bishop in 1991, went that afternoon to the chapel of repose in the Prelatic 
Church of Opus Dei, dedicated to Our Lady of Peace. His body now lies 
in repose in the crypt of that same church in Rome.

Cardinal Ruini’s remarks included some personal recollections: “I will 
ever forget the affection Don Álvaro showed when he came to visit me at 
the Vicariate. He always gave witness to his dedication to Christ.”
For his part, Bishop Javier Echevarría, Don Álvaro’s successor as Prelate of Opus Dei, said that this “is only a first step, but a step that fills us with joy, because we see in our beloved Don Álvaro an integral man, an authentic Christian, a good shepherd, a most faithful son of St. Josemaría.”

The next stage of the process, once the tribunal of the Prelature concludes its sessions, will be the drawing up of the positio, which is a biography of the Servant of God that shows how he lived the Christian virtues in an heroic manner.

The positio is then sent by the postulator of the cause, in this case Msgr. Flavio Capucci, to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints to be studied and decided upon.

New Centers of the Prelature

The regional vicars of Opus Dei have established new Centers of the Prelature in the following cities:

Barcelona, Berlin, Concepción (Chile), Gerona (Spain), Guadalajara (México), Madrid (three centers), Montevideo, Pereira (Colombia), and Santiago (Chile).

On the anniversary of the death of Professor John Anthony Henry

On May 8 an anniversary Mass was celebrated for the repose of the soul of John Henry, a well-known physician. A few days later a reunion of friends and acquaintances in his memory was held at Netherhall House, a nearby university residence hall directed by Opus Dei.

Shortly after his death many articles and obituaries were published in the media. The British Medical Journal noted, along with his professional
prestige, the fact that he attended Mass daily. The Times added that he had helped many people overcome an addiction to drugs and that his own years of dialysis had given him empathy with the sick. Many of the reviews (in *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, etc.) pointed out his dedication as a member of Opus Dei.

John Henry was born in Greenwich, England, on March 11, 1939, the eldest of six brothers and sisters. He studied medicine at the University of London, and asked for admission as a Numerary at the age of 20. He met St. Josemaría in London in the summer of 1960. In 1969 his kidneys ceased functioning and a dialysis machine had to be installed in his room in Netherhall. On recalling those years, one of the residents said, “I always remember his good humor at the end of the sixties, as director of Netherhall House, undergoing dialysis, exhausted but tenaciously apostolic, always available to everyone. He was a joy to be with.” On various occasions St. Josemaría suggested that he pray for a cure. After St. Josemaría’s death, John continued praying for that intention through his intercession. In May 1976 he received a kidney transplant.

That transplant gave him 31 additional years of life. He was appointed adjunct director of the National Toxicological Service, and later professor of medicine at the University of London (St. Mary’s Hospital). He had a talent for teaching and attained great prestige as a toxicologist. He was always available to journalists, and became well known for his radio and television interviews as an expert on drugs and poisons. In April 2007 his transplanted kidney began to fail. He bore his suffering with a strong supernatural outlook and sense of humor.

Torna ai contenuti

**Interview with Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Vicar General of the Prelature, in ZENIT (March 19, 2008)**

*Interviewed by Miriam Díez i Bosch*

“Opus Dei Opens its Doors to Everyone”
Msgr. Ocáriz (Paris, 1944) is a physicist and theologian. He has authored numerous philosophical and theological publications, especially in the areas of the philosophy of history and Christology. Since 1986 he has been a consultor to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He is also a member of the Pontifical Theological Academy and since April 23, 1994 he has been Vicar General of Opus Dei.

Opus Dei was born to help lay people in their ordinary life. Are lay people truly a part of the prelature of Opus Dei, or is the prelature only for the (relatively few) priests of Opus Dei?

Opus Dei was born precisely to remind everyone, both priests and lay persons, of the universal call to holiness. As Saint Josemaría taught from 1928, the fact that this call is universal and that God calls each person, means that all upright human realities—professional work, family and social relations—can and should be a sanctified and sanctifying reality.

As Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger said when the founder of Opus Dei was canonized, the message of Saint Josemaría Escrivá has helped to correct an erroneous idea of sanctity, as though it were reserved only for the “great.” Sanctity means becoming a friend of God, letting the Other act, the only One who can make this world good and joyful.

The lay people of Opus Dei, both women and men, married or single, are an integral part of the Prelature, just as much as the priests who constitute its clergy. The relation between these sacred ministers and the lay faithful is that proper to the Church.

At the same time, each lay person also belongs to the diocese where he or she lives, just like any other Catholic. As John Paul II said on a number of occasions, referring specifically to Opus Dei, the ministerial priesthood of the clergy and the common priesthood of the lay faithful are united and linked in a unity of vocation and governance to fulfill the Prelature’s mission of evangelization under the guidance of its Prelate.

At this time Opus Dei is the only personal prelature. Do you receive inquiries from other ecclesiastical institutions that would like to become personal prelatures?
At the moment it’s the only personal prelature. However, there are other ecclesiastical circumscriptions in the Church which are delimited on a personal (and not territorial) basis, for various pastoral needs. For instance, there are the apostolic exarchates that exist in some countries to care for faithful of Oriental Rites, the military ordinariates, and a personal apostolic administration erected a few years ago in Brazil.

Only the Holy See can establish a personal prelature. Furthermore, Canon Law lays down that the episcopal conferences that are involved also have to be consulted. Establishing a personal prelature is a pastoral decision, aimed at furthering the Church’s mission in a world characterized by a constant movement of people. For example, in the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortations Ecclesia in America and Ecclesia in Europa, John Paul II refers to personal prelatures as a possible solution for people in need of special pastoral attention, mentioning groups of immigrants in particular.

It is also possible, as happened with Opus Dei, that the action of the Holy Spirit inspires particular apostolic tasks, which give rise to pastoral needs that require the structure of a personal prelature.

I am not aware that Opus Dei has received any consultations from other institutions regarding the possibility of becoming a personal prelature. However, in the context of congresses, pastoral gatherings, etc., people of Opus Dei have sometimes been asked to pass on the experience the Prelature has gathered over the years.

What truth is there to Opus Dei’s alleged independence—autonomy, if you prefer—stemming from the fact that juridically it is a personal prelature?

The reality is exactly the opposite. Erecting a prelature means precisely “dependence.” It means placing a part of the Christian people in pastoral dependence under a member of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. It doesn’t make sense to speak of independence or autonomy, since, on the contrary, Opus Dei depends on a prelate appointed by the Roman Pontiff.

The prelate and his vicars exercise ecclesiastical power in common with the other pastors, under the supreme authority of the Pope, in accord with
the universal law of the Church and the particular law contained in the 
Statutes which the Holy See has established for the Prelature.

I think that the experience of the presence of Opus Dei in so many 
dioceses all over the world should contribute to an understanding, even 
from a practical point of view, that the personal prelatures introduced by 
the Second Vatican Council do not harm the unity of the particular 
churches. On the contrary, their purpose is to serve these churches in the 
general evangelizing mission of the Church.

As Benedict XVI wrote to the present Prelate, Bishop Echevarría, on 
the fiftieth anniversary of his priestly ordination, “when you foster the 
eagerness for personal sanctity and the apostolic zeal of your priests and lay 
people, not only do you see the flock that has been entrusted to you grow, 
but you provide an effective help to the Church in her urgent 
evangelization of present-day society.”

Is it correct to say that there are “Opus Dei bishops”?

It depends what you mean by that phrase. When, as occurs at times, a 
priest of the Prelature’s clergy is called by the Holy Father to the 
episcopate, the same thing happens as with any diocesan priest: he ceases to 
be incardinated in the ecclesiastical circumscription from which he comes, 
although he continues to receive spiritual assistance from the prelature. He 
has the same canonical status as any other bishop.

Obviously, the Prelate of Opus Dei has no power whatsoever over the 
episcopal mission of these bishops.

I imagine that you don’t see any “before and after” in Opus Dei as a 
result of the Da Vinci Code phenomenon.

Clearly not. It makes no sense to think that such a novel could have an 
historical impact great enough to result in a “before and after” in Opus Dei.

On the other hand, it may very well have influenced some people. 
Without ignoring the disorientation that this type of literature could give 
rise to in some readers, I know that many people have decided to make 
contact with the Prelature and its activities of Christian formation precisely 
as a consequence of the information that it gave about the Work, in order 
to calmly counteract the book’s errors.
There have also been very many examples of solidarity with Opus Dei on the part of journalists, writers, and other people who have followed this topic more closely. It has occasioned a marvelous ecclesial solidarity; in times like these one truly senses that the Church is a family.

One sometimes hears people speak of the “power” of Opus Dei. Why do you think this image has arisen?

Despite our personal limitations (we neither are nor see ourselves as “the head of the class”), God has blessed Opus Dei’s work for souls with abundant apostolic fruit. Seen from a human point of view, some might see this as an expression of “strength” or “power.”

In reality, the Work is a small part of the Church, and its “power” comes from its source: from the Gospel, which, as St. Paul writes, is “the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith.” The fruitfulness of the work of Opus Dei’s faithful is caused by the Holy Spirit in the Church and through the Church.

Anyone who comes to an apostolic activity organized by the Prelature—its doors are open to everyone—is offered a broad vista of Christian life. Anyone who comes to the Work seeking human influence or anything other than a spiritual goal would not last very long. He would hear people speaking about love for Jesus Christ and the Church, about Christian commitment, about spiritual life and generous service to others.
INSTITIATIVES

• In Brief
Science for Man: Inauguration of the new buildings of the Campus Biomedico (March 14, 2008)

The beginnings of the Campus Biomedico University date back to September 1988. In that month, after a trip through various countries of northern Europe, Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo spent a few days in Castello de Urio, in the north of Italy. There he mentioned to those accompanying him an aspiration of St. Josemaría's that had yet to be accomplished: his hope that his Italian sons and daughters would establish a hospital in Rome.

From that time on, some faithful of the Work and Cooperators, with the help of many other people, began to work on this project. During those years of preparatory studies, Don Álvaro encouraged its promoters, proposed guidelines, and offered specific suggestions. Those who, thanks to his impetus, had embarked on the adventure of the “Campus” knew that they were not alone in this enterprise.

A gathering of friends

To reach its present state, the Campus Biomedico has had to overcome a series of stages that at first seemed insuperable: the formation of the doctors, nurses, and administrative and technical people on the staff, the financial cost of the buildings and equipment, the search for students, the complex legal approvals… In the face of each of these goals, Don Álvaro's advice from the beginning (“pray, work, have patience when necessary and don't let yourself be overcome by pessimism”) and the constant dedication of many people have made it possible to attain little by little the targets that were set.

Many of the people who sustained the Campus Biomedico during these years—with their prayers and also with their financial contributions—were present at the inaugural ceremonies of the new facilities, which took place on March 14, 2008. From Verona, for example, two busloads of friends of the “Campus” came for the ceremony. People also came from many other Italian cities with groups of supporters. Their presence
represented a large reunion of friends who had shared dreams, joys, struggles and more than a few concerns, now celebrating the happy outcome of their efforts.

Another special note at the inauguration was the presence of many civil authorities: city, regional and national. During the addresses and in personal conversations they expressed their appreciation for the social and formative work that the Campus Biomedico was carrying out for the benefit of many people.

**Growth on Via Longoni**

In 1993, two years after obtaining official recognition from the Italian Government, the Campus Biomedico University began programs in medicine and nursing. Its provisional site was on Via Longoni, in the working class neighborhood of Prenestino. A year later, in the facilities of a private hospital, the work of the university hospital began, which eventually reached a capacity of one hundred and fifty beds.

In 1999 the programs of dietetics, biomedical engineering, and food and nutrition sciences began. An important help was the advice received from the Hospital of the University of Navarre in regard to the handling of the medical, teaching, administrative and human factors in caring for the sick.

From the beginning, efforts were made to incorporate the teachings of St. Josemaría in the care given to patients. Many of the sick expressed their gratitude for the refinement and spirit of service they found there. Besides receiving adequate medical care, many of them learned at the Campus how to bear their suffering with a Christian outlook.

When the time came to move the Campus to its new site, the people in the Prenestino neighborhood requested that at least the ambulatory clinic be retained at Via Longoni.

**The new site in Trigoria**

Trigoria is a semi-rural area in the southern part of Rome which is rapidly urbanizing. In the decade of the nineties, the popular Italian actor Alberto Sordi, now deceased, donated a sizable piece of property in this area to the Campus Biomedico.
The new buildings were completed towards the middle of 2007, so that by the end of that year it was possible to relocate the University Hospital and the Center for Advanced Research in Biomedicine and Bioengineering.

The hospital is in the center of the university campus. It includes ambulatory services, a day-care clinic, consulting rooms, a university residence and, in a separate building, the Health Center for the Aged. It has eighteen operating rooms and, when in full operation, can provide beds for four hundred patients. Since last September, classes for the licentiate in medicine and surgery have been offered. The ideal that has animated the project of the Campus from the beginning has been to teach medical science at the service of man and with permanent respect for his dignity.

The Center for Advanced Research in Biomedicine and Bioengineering, two areas of study that are especially important at present, is located close to the university hospital. This proximity fosters the integration of clinical and research activity. It has eighteen laboratories for research in the biomedical field and another ten for bioengineering. Future plans call for three hundred researchers in fields as diverse as robotics, experimental oncology and biotechnology.

**March 14: inauguration of the new campus**

The day’s activities began at nine-thirty in the morning with the inauguration of Álvaro del Portillo Street. Afterwards, Bishop Javier Echevarría, the Prelate of Opus Dei, celebrated Holy Mass in the hospital chapel. During his homily, he encouraged everyone to keep present the motto of this institution: “Science for man.” At the end of the ceremony, the Salve was sung before a painting of our Lady which had been blessed a few days earlier by Pope Benedict XVI. The Prelate recalled that Pope John Paul II had followed the first steps of the Campus Biomedico with interest and affection, and that his successor is showing it the same solicitous and paternal attention.

A clear sign of this closeness was the presence of Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Holy See's Secretary of State, who blessed the buildings and, together with the other civil and religious authorities present, took a tour of the various teaching and hospital areas. The inaugural addresses were given
in the large vestibule of the polyclinic. Cardinal Bertone emphasized that, in the face of the challenges currently confronting the human person and life, an ever greater responsibility falls on those who work in the medical fields and are called to Christianize this professional sphere.

The President of Campus Biomedico University, Paolo Arullani, stressed the service to the common good that this institution aspires to carry out. The Prelate of Opus Dei, in his address, recalled some words of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo: “I recommend that you work with a spirit of unity and understanding, with optimism. In that way you will overcome all the obstacles with God's help; you will be happy and—what is more important—you will sanctify yourself and help others to be saints, because you will be practicing the commandment of love.” Others who spoke included the Vice-President of the Government, Francesco Rutelli, the present Undersecretary of the Council of Ministers, Gianni Letta, and the President of the Region of Lazio, Piero Marrazzo.

In the afternoon the ceremonies moved to the Center for Advanced Research in Biomedicine and Bioengineering, where the academic year was inaugurated. The inaugural lecture was given by Professor Joaquin Navarro Valls, who spoke about the importance of a proper anthropological vision in medicine. He concluded by saying that it was only in the context of a Christian culture that a unitive conception of the human person was possible, one that includes both body and spirit.

Torna ai contenuti

**In Brief**

Bogotá (Columbia) -- Fourth International Family Conference

Some 600 people from the educational, business and government sectors of Colombia, and from other countries including Mexico,
Venezuela, Ecuador, Brazil, and Peru, took part in the Fourth International Family Conference organized by the Family Institute of La Sabana University. The conference took place in Bogotá and included important national and international speakers who stressed the need to look at the present crisis in a positive way as an opportunity for a change in history.

Ashiya (Japan) -- The legal concept of the person and human life

About 60 people gathered in Seido Language Institute, in Ashiya, on the evening of March 23 to take part in a conference given by Dr. Setsuko Akiba, professor of law and a member of the Pontifical Academy for Life, on the legal concept of the person and the beginning of human life.

Professor Akiba explained that the controversy over questions such as abortion, artificial insemination and cloning, are usually seen as a confrontation between two points of view.

On the one hand, he said, an individualistic tendency finds the highest values in autonomy and the search for one's own happiness. In the framework of a viewpoint closed to the metaphysics of being, these values are defended by positivism and utilitarianism. A position which is radically distinct is the personalist, in which the foundation of the juridical system is the principle of the dignity of each person.

Dr. Akiba reminded the audience of the Japanese “Peace Constitution, grounded firmly in a personalism that insists on the inviolable right to life and the dignity of every person including the smallest and weakest.

Paris (France) -- "May '68: both heritage and stock-taking"
On Saturday May 24, a conference was held in the Garnelles Cultural Center on the theme: “May '68: both heritage and stock-taking.” Participating were Gérard Leclerc, journalist and author of many books; Professor Fabrice Hadjadj, a philosopher and dramatist, and Jean-Pierre le Goff, a philosopher and sociologist from the Georges Friedman laboratory (Paris I-CNRS), author of *Mai 68, l'héritage impossible*, among other titles. Moderator of the colloquium was the philosopher Vincent Aubin. “The walls of May,” “May 68: self-celebration and impossible heritage” and “Nihilism or an irruption of the Spirit” were the titles of the three presentations, which were followed by a lively interchange of questions and answers.

Nairobi (Kenya) -- A United Nations debate in Strathmore

The “Model United Nations” (MNU) is an institution associated with the UN that promotes a forum for university debate on global questions. Each year, representatives from universities all over the world gather to discuss solutions to regional conflicts and questions related to human rights, socio-economic development and the environment. The MNU has seats in each member country of the UN.

On February 16, 2008, there took place for the first time in Strathmore University a debate organized by the Kenya “Model United Nations.” The meeting was a preparation for the debate that would be held in Gigiri [the United Nations headquarters on the outskirts of Nairobi], between March 4 and 7. The five student winners of this debate will participate in the annual meeting of the “Model United Nations” in New York.
Santiago (Chile) -- The Cardinal Archbishop visits Aconcagua Cultural Center

On Friday, June 20, Cardinal Francisco Javier Errázuriz, Archbishop of Santiago, gave an address at Aconcagua Cultural Center.

A large group of university students followed the cardinal's talk with lively interest. He spoke about the Christian roots of the country and the continent in the light of the conclusions of the Latin-American Bishops' Conference at the Shrine of Aparecida and the teachings of Benedict XVI. He encouraged the students to keep alive the valuable patrimony which has inspired the life and culture of Latin America and which arose from the meeting of the Catholic faith and the original ethnic groups. This patrimony is expressed in the local art, music, literature and, above all, in the religious traditions and the special characteristics of the people.

“Love for the suffering Christ,” he said, “love for our Lord present in the Eucharist, a God who is close to the poor and to those who are suffering, devotion to the Blessed Virgin, to the saints and their feastdays, veneration for the Pope and the other pastors, forms the great mosaic of popular religion which is the precious treasure of the Catholic Church in Latin America.” The Cardinal emphasized that “the Holy Father entrusted to us as a Church at Aparecida the great task of safe-guarding and nourishing the faith of the people of God.”

The Archbishop of Santiago concluded his talk by exhorting those present to become involved in the work of strengthening the country's Christian roots.

Cañete (Peru) -- Condoray: women as the key to their own development
Since its start on May 23, 1963, Condoray has tried to foster the human, social and spiritual advancement of women in the province of Cañete.

More than 25,000 women have participated in the development programs of Condoray Center for the Professional Formation of Women, a corporate apostolate of Opus Dei.

On the occasion of its 45th anniversary, a ceremony was held at the seat of the Provincial Government of Cañete followed by a Mass of Thanksgiving at the shrine of Our Lady of Fairest Love, which was attended by rural development workers, teachers, students, friends, and representatives of various organizations.

At the end of Mass, the Apostolic Blessing of His Holiness Benedicts XVI was read, in which he encouraged the Center “to continue its teaching task with wisdom and perseverance.” The Roman Pontiff said that he prayed that “this teaching institution may radiate the love of Christ and foster the integral growth of those taking part, making them faithful witnesses of the Gospel, solicitous collaborators of the Church and builders of a just and peaceful society in solidarity with the poor and needy.”

The center offers the following technical programs, each lasting three years: secretarial, hospitality services administration, and accounting. Condoray also encourages the creation of micro-businesses, through the Center for Women's Business Training, a program that was begun in June of 2005. Since its start, over 1500 women have taken part in courses of training that have helped them to start their own businesses, thus providing income and raising their families' standard of living.

Throughout these 45 years, Condoray has provided educational programs and food assistance to some 20,000 children and has taught over 7,000 women to read using an innovative methodology. The experience of this program resulted in the publication of a new Primer for Literacy in 2003.

Condoray's work of social development has spread beyond the borders of Peru. Since 1985 about 700 university women from Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Paraguay,
Singapore, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland, have come to work in the villages of Cañete. Young women from Lima and other cities of Peru have also helped out in the Condoray rural programs.

Torreciudad (Spain) -- A pilgrimage of Chinese faithful

On May 24, a group of Chinese Catholics living in Spain held a Day of Prayer for the Church in China at the Shrine of Torreciudad. By doing so, they were responding to the call of Pope Benedict XVI, who had asked for prayers for the faithful of that huge Asian country. A statue of Our Lady, Empress of China, was carried by students from Hong Kong and presided over the ceremonies. The Rector of the Shrine took part in the procession along with a Chinese priest who has exercised his pastoral work in Salamanca for the past three years. Among those attending were East Asian families from Madrid, Barcelona and Saragossa.

Almaty (Kazakhstan) -- "Young Citizens Initiative"

Almaty,
Kazakhstan
“Young Citizens Initiative”

For several years, the Kazaja Foundation has been working on social and educational projects aimed at giving formation to women in rural areas. For the young university and professional women who take part in the project, it is a great challenge to transmit what they have learned to people
who have not had the same opportunity, and who through that small stimulus can improve their present living standards to some extent.

Several theoretical sessions on leadership and initiative help the young women to appreciate the relevance of their work. On Saturdays they gather to go by car to the villages of Saimasai, Zhanashar and Amangueldi. On the way there they normally review and speak about the topics they are going to teach, and on the return trip they share their experiences and discuss ways of explaining the concepts better.

Another part of the program is the magazine “Woman Today,” which is published quarterly. The editors gather once a week to discuss the topics and the focus of the articles it will contain. In these meetings they reflect on how to cast the light of the Christian message on problems confronting women today. The publication reaches many people.

The aim of the project and of the magazine is to help many people acquire a vision of solidarity and of true humanity in their work. At the same time, the young women who participate in these social and educational projects grow in their own Christian life.

Rome (Italy) -- International Master's Degree in University Cooperation for Peace and Development

One of the principal challenges of the twenty-first century is peace and international security in the light of the new world order. At present there are problems that can only be resolved through action on a global level. New strategic alternatives are needed to tackle these questions and promote the global public good.

This effort requires international diplomatic, economic and military cooperation, grounded in the promotion of a strong culture of solidarity and respect for human dignity.
This is the context for the International Master's Degree in University Cooperation for Peace and Development, which the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross is offering in conjunction with Rome's Università della Sapienza and the University of Sarajevo. The program, which will included time spent at all three universities, has a multidisciplinary focus that includes studies in Nutrition and Public Health, University Cooperation and Humanitarian Issues, and the Anthropology and Ethics of Cooperation.

Lagos (Nigeria) -- A fashion workshop organized by the Lekki Ladies Club

On June 20 a workshop on fashion was organized by the Lekki Club, with 45 people in attendance. The central theme, “Authentically Fashionable,” was based on the teachings of St. Josemaría Escrivá on daily life as an opportunity for an encounter with God. The workshop was intended to create a forum in which young professionals could make their voices heard in favor of modesty in style as furthering the dignity of women.

Belinda Nwosu, from the Lekki Club, Joy Essien, fashion consultant for The Guardian, and Morenike Taire, fashion editor for The Vanguard, were the principal speakers.

Ms. Nwosu spoke on “Dignity in Fashion: Being Faithful to Oneself.” She emphasized the difference between fashion that tries to attract attention and that which truly generates greater interest in a person. She also pointed out the relationship between the loss of the sense of modesty in women and the deterioration of values in society, reflected in the increase of sexual violence and the lack of civic awareness.

“The Business of Fashion - Who Pulls the Strings?” was the title of the intervention by Joy Essien, who began with some considerations on how the fashion industry has become a business of enormous proportions. She
described the role of the fashion press and distributors in determining what is presented as “fashionable” in the media and then in stores.

The presentation by Morenike Taire, “Fashion and Beauty — What is Appropriate for Me?,” was aimed at helping those present to grasp that elegance means creating a style of one's own which, taking into account the different changes in fashion, presents in a harmonious and serene way one's own appearance. Dressing well is a stimulus for personal creativity and demands the development of good taste.

The workshop concluded with the decision, shared by all the participants, to take a more active role in a new definition of feminine fashion, starting with themselves. The elegant person knows who she is and feels comfortable with herself; she believes in herself and is aware of her true dignity.

Manila (Philippines) -- Work camp in Albay

Maynilad Study Center organized a summer work camp in Santo Domingo, Albay, under the auspices of the Foundation for East Asian Development (FEAD). Twenty-four university students helped renovate a school, painting its walls and installing insulation. The students also gave catechism classes as well as tutorials in English and mathematics to children between the ages of 7 and 12.

With the help of some donors they obtained and transported the required materials. The local officials gave the volunteers a warm welcome and facilitated the work project. At the end of the two week activity, the principal of the school and the teachers personally thanked each volunteer for the service provided to the community.

Each day, before beginning work, the volunteers were able to attend Holy Mass at a nearby church. A priest was available for spiritual direction and confession. The chaplain preached on topics related to their project activities, including sanctification of work, a spirit of service, and the
importance of formation.

There was also an opportunity to get to know the historical and natural patrimony of Albay, especially the Mayon volcano and the ruins of the Cagsawa Church that was destroyed by a volcanic eruption more than a century ago.

Asuncion (Paraguay) -- Workshop on human virtues for mothers

The MASERFA Association (Mothers at the Service of the Family) organized a cycle of talks on Education in the Human Virtues. In eleven meetings the topics covered included: education in the virtues, sincerity, friendship, drawing close to God, affectivity and feelings, and how mothers need especially the virtues of fortitude, patience and hope.

The workshop was directed to young mothers at the stage of the initial formation of their children. The meetings use the case method. Each of the participants analyzes a situation based on real life, and proposes a plan of action.

The program was repeated in a private school in Asuncion. This time it was for fathers of young children. Those taking part appreciated the practicality of the sessions, and the directors of the school asked that the workshop be offered for other age groups.

El Bordo (Argentina) -- An initiative of solidarity

El Bordo is a town of 6400 inhabitants whose main source of income is work on nearby plantations. It has a central square and town hall, two public schools and a public library.
For several years, El Bordo has been the site of a solidarity and social cooperation project thanks to forty university women and young professionals who seek to put the social teaching of the Church into practice. Most of them are students who take part in the means of formation offered by the Opus Dei Prelature at the Montes Grandes Center in San Isidro, Buenos Aires.

The initiative has the support of the town mayor, who has made the Technical School’s housing facilities available for the young women.

Enxomil (Portugal) -- Pastoral conference for priests

Enxomil, a retreat center entrusted to the Prelature of Opus Dei, a few miles from Oporto, hosted the twelfth Pastoral Conference for Priests on April 14th. The topic was “St. Paul and the New Evangelization,” appropriate for the approaching Pauline Year announced by Pope Benedict XVI. The Bishop of Oporto, Manuel Clemente, and his auxiliary bishop, Antonio Taipa, took part along with some 150 priests from many dioceses of Portugal.

In the morning, Bishop Antonio Couto, auxiliary of Braga, spoke about St. Paul as “the model evangelizer.” Using the Apostle's writings, he described the characteristics of authentic evangelization: fidelity to Christ, love for each person, trust in one’s collaborators.

After lunch and some moments of relaxing conversations in the garden, Fr. Hugo dos Santos, chaplain of the Catholic University of Lisbon, spoke about his meetings with the Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew II, and stressed that personal friendship is also an important factor in ecumenism.

In the afternoon, Professor Fr. Francisco Varo gave a conference entitled “The First Christians, Inspiration and Paradigm for the New Evangelization.” Fr. Varo described how our Lord carried out the first evangelization and how the apostles and the first Christians always tried to
spread the Gospel taking into account the way Christ acted.

The Conference was closed by Bishop Manuel Clemente of Oporto, who stressed the challenge of the new evangelization to which all Catholics are called. The Regional Vicar of the Opus Dei Prelature in Portugal, Msgr. José Rafael Espírito Santo, thanked the priests present for their participation in the conference and encouraged them to maintain an optimistic and trusting vision in the face of the pastoral challenges of our day and age.

Sydney (Australia) -- Helping in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

The Phu My orphanage, also known as the Handicapped Orphans Protection Centre of Thi Nghe, is situated in the Bùi Thanh district of Ho Chi Minh City. The orphanage has been the home for thousands of incapacitated Vietnamese children since 1875. The 400 orphans at Phu My suffer from serious infirmities, including cerebral palsy and Down Syndrome. Many of them have to remain in bed permanently and need constant care. The orphanage is run by the sisters of St. Paul of Chartres who admirably maintain an atmosphere of joy, dedication and affection among all the employees.

From January 10 to 31, fifteen volunteers from Nairana Study Centre in Sydney organized a work camp at the orphanage. The group, chiefly made up of older high school boys, decided to dedicate three weeks of their summer vacation to helping the staff at the orphanage.

One of their tasks consisted in repairing a large covered terrace on the third floor of the main building. Over the years the ceiling and walls had deteriorated to such an extent that the terrace had to be closed. The volunteers sandpapered and painted the walls and completely replaced the ceiling of the terrace.
They also helped the staff of the orphanage in their daily work. The children were very grateful when they were brought to the play area and garden in their wheel chairs. The volunteers also helped to feed the children who could not leave their beds. One of them summed up his experience in these words: “I fed a little boy with acute cerebral palsy. He couldn't speak, and almost couldn't move, but he could certainly smile. In that smile I discovered the joy of giving oneself to others and it brought me a happiness that I had never experienced up until that moment.”

Western and Central (Australia) -- Preparing for World Youth Day

Warrane College, in Sydney, organized a work camp in Santa Teresa in the Northern Territory, to prepare for World Youth Day. It was carried out over Easter time, which coincided with the vacation period.

The Warrane College group worked on a public bathhouse, cleaning the baths and walls and painting the building. The group also shared in the life of Santa Teresa in various ways. They visited the school and familiarized themselves with the educational problems there. They also made contact with the members of the community and learned about the difficulties experienced by the aborigine villages in Australia.

The Nairana Study Centre group traveled to the remote town of Broom situated on the west coast of Australia. Broom has a population of 14,000 and is the capital of the Kimberly region of northwest Australia.

The task entrusted to this group of 16 boys was to repair and paint a building that the diocese dedicates to social activities for the poor.

The volunteers also helped out in preparatory sessions for World Youth Day organized by the diocese of Broom. They encouraged the young people to come to Sydney and join up with those who would be coming from all over the world to be with the Holy Father.
Roraima (Brazil) -- Amajari: volunteer work in the heart of the Amazon

In January 2008, during the school vacation period in Brazil, a group of students from several Brazilian university centers took part in a volunteer project in Amajari, in the Brazilian State of Roraima, in the middle of the Amazon jungle.

Of Brazil's twenty-six states, Roraima is the farthest north and the most isolated. It is also one of the poorest, with a large part of the population lacking the most basic services.

The Amajari 2008 project was the initiative of a number of university centers in São Paulo, Ribeirão Preto, and Rio de Janeiro. Its goal was to provide spiritual, medical and dental assistance for a small community in Amajari, and to carry out some much-needed masonry repairs in the local chapel.

For six months beforehand, many students helped with the logistics: sending several tons of construction material donated by benefactors; obtaining donations of medical and dental equipment; planning the repairs in the chapel, etc.

From the first day, the work of medical attention and dental education was begun. The community had not seen a dentist for over a year; and the last doctor had come four years ago. Over 300 people were assisted as well as taking care of two emergency cases.

The pastoral care was also a very important part of the project. The diocese of Roraima, which covers an area larger than France, has only a dozen priests, and many people have to spend months or even years without being able to receive the sacraments. The priest who accompanied the volunteers dedicated many hours to catechesis and the administration of the sacraments. In addition, he visited all the families in the community and celebrated Holy Mass every day.
The volunteers also made repairs to the chapel, provided the community center with a small library, and constructed a small house for the priest who visits periodically.

When they returned to their cities, the volunteers, besides the natural fatigue, brought back with them an experience that was greatly enriching. Some of them, who had been distanced from religious practice, decided to renew their practice of the faith.
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 2008

In the first half of 2008, 329 faithful of the Prelature and 15 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 and neighbor constitutes the meaning and value of their lives, whether outstanding in the eyes of others, or whether quite ordinary, as was true in most cases.

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A STUDY
"The Prelature of Opus Dei’s service to the dioceses," by Cardinal Camillo Ruini


Camillo Cardinal Ruini
Vicar General of His Holiness
for the diocese of Rome

In the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation Pastores Gregis, the Servant of God John Paul II recalled that it is the task of the bishop “tirelessly to promote a genuine pastoral plan and educational task of holiness, in order to carry out the program set forth in the fifth chapter of the Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium about the universal call to holiness.”[1] It is within this wide panorama, which includes not just each bishop but the whole of the Church of today and for all time, that I wish to offer my reflections on the service of Opus Dei to the dioceses.

The mission of the entire Church and of all her faithful is holiness and the recapitulation of all creation in Christ (Jn 12:32 and 1 Cor 15:25-28). Already in the early centuries some Fathers saw the Church as the mundus reconciliatus, the mystery of the fulfillment of salvation in men and women and in the whole of creation. Within this common mission, the bishops have the responsibility of serving the whole People of God along the way towards the fullness of charity. The establishment of Opus Dei as a personal prelature—whose 25th anniversary we are commemorating on this Study Day—had for its purpose “that it [Opus Dei] may always be an apt and effective instrument of the salvific mission which the Church carries out for the life of the world.”[2] How could we not see, in these words of the preamble to the Apostolic Constitution Ut Sit, Opus Dei’s convergence with and service to the mission of entire Church? How could we not see, therefore, its convergence with and service to the mission of every diocese in which it carries out its own particular pastoral mission? In St. Josemaría
Escrivá’s own life we find confirmation of this truth about Opus Dei’s service to God and the whole Church: two events that occurred in 1933 and 1941 respectively. On both occasions the Founder of the Work experienced the temptation of thinking that perhaps it had all been his own invention and that he was deceiving all those women and men. It was only a moment, from which he emerged by the path of abandonment into God’s hands and service to the Church. Immediately afterwards his heart was filled with great peace, confirming the reality that we still have with us today, and enlightening us as to the mission of Opus Dei and its fundamental ecclesiality. Years later, he told a group of young people: “If Opus Dei were not for the Lord and to serve the Church, it would be better for it to be dissolved. I would not want it any longer!”[3]

I have just recalled a “missionary” moment, showing the convergence of Opus Dei’s mission with that of the dioceses, and a moment from the life of the Founder of Opus Dei in which the Church appears as the center that gives light and provides the reason for everything else. In these we can clearly see that the Work’s whole life has always had this fundamental ecclesial dimension. And it is from this perspective—this ecclesial convergence—that I propose to consider the service of Opus Dei to the dioceses.

When we look at the purpose of the Prelature, we see that each one of the faithful aims at sanctification through the practice of the Christian virtues in his or her own state and condition in life, following a specific and clearly secular personal spirituality. Furthermore, the specific mission of the Prelature is addressed to every person, of all conditions and states in life, enabling each one to be united to Christ, to sanctify their work and to play their own proper part in the Church’s mission, carrying out all their activities according to the will of God.[4] In this mission we see a similarity with the mission entrusted to the bishops that I mentioned at the start of this paper: the task of promoting a genuine pastoral plan and educational task of holiness.

I would like to recall at this stage the words which the Servant of God John Paul II addressed to a group of faithful of Opus Dei in 2001: “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.”[5] Apart from the convergence I have been talking about, these words of the Holy Father invite us to a deeper understanding of the meaning of the membership of the laity in their local particular Church and in the Prelature of Opus Dei. Given that the faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei are also faithful of the dioceses where they live, the fruit of the pastoral mission carried out by Opus Dei for the life of the world is present in individuals who are, at one and the same time, faithful both of their own dioceses and of the Prelature. Hence, the fruit of Opus Dei’s mission always remains within the local Churches in which the Prelature of Opus Dei carries out its particular task.

Looking at it in the opposite direction may also help us see this convergence: some of the faithful in a diocese are also faithful of Opus Dei, and this characteristic does not weaken their membership of their own diocese, but in the specific case of Opus Dei actually strengthens it. According to the doctrine proclaimed by St. Josemaría Escrivá, the universal call to holiness means, among other things, that sanctification and the apostolic mission are carried out through the conditions of life and the state of every Christian: in Christian existence as it is. There is no need for isolation, or for dispensing with any of those conditions, or seeking sanctity in parallel with any of them.[6] One such condition is the laity’s membership in a diocese or specific local Church. Thus, practice of virtue and mission take place precisely in their local Church. Their quest for sanctity in daily life and their apostolate are always within the local Church to which they belong, and the fruits always remain in the local Church where they live and carry out their activity.

The same can be said of all those who receive the Christian formation which the Work offers in fulfilling its specific mission. They belong to the diocese where they live, and the fruit of this formation remains as a hope of Christian life for all their brothers and sisters. We should also take into account the apostolate that the faithful of the Prelature carry out with non-Christians who live in the diocese. By this apostolate they enable the Kingdom of God, whose seed is the Church, to grow, and they find
themselves at the forefront of the evangelization of society, culture, the family, the school, and the different professions and conditions of life in which Christ wishes to be loved and known.

The service that Opus Dei renders to the faithful of the dioceses in which it has a presence—whether or not they are actually members of the Prelature—is thus a very direct one. We will consider it under two aspects: insofar as it takes place through the life of each one of the individual faithful in the various aspects of their own existence, and institutionally, through the formation given to the faithful of the dioceses.

The Church offers the world a great testimony of the salvation to which God calls us precisely through the lived existence of its members. In this sense, the prophetic dimension of the Christian message becomes lived truth, by which all can see that holiness itself, God, has come to dwell among us. Indeed, looking at Christian life as a whole, as it is lived in the different environments of society, the business world, work, the family, or culture, we can appreciate the strength and extent of the laity’s mission, to which Opus Dei, as a pastoral phenomenon, contributes in a particular way.

St. Josemaría used to say, “Opus Dei’s most important apostolate is the testimony of the life and conversation of each individual member in his daily contacts with his friends and fellow workers. Who can measure the supernatural effectiveness of this quiet and humble apostolate? It is impossible to evaluate the help we receive from a loyal and sincere friend or the influence of a good mother over her family.”[7] These words apply to all Christians, from the Apostolic era to our own times. The witness of Christian life has a beneficial influence on the life of our brothers and sisters and on all people. It is difficult to express in numbers the mission of the Church, as it is lived out in the life of Christians. Within it is found the sanctifying divine action, along with the freedom of every one of the faithful who, by loving the Church, plays his or her part in the ecclesial mission. This activity is leaven in the dough (Mt 13:33), similar to the missionary activity of the early Christians, which can be seen especially in family life, work, and each Christian’s circle of friendships and acquaintances.
Little by little, this mission leads to a different way of seeing and appreciating life, other people, the world—a vision that is transmitted and becomes lived existence, a true culture that transforms society according to the measure of Christ. There is much more potential and a greater abundance of means and possibilities at this level than at the institutional level (although “institutional” possibilities do exist). But for lay people to be truly the light of the world in which they live, they need a painstaking doctrinal, ascetical, apostolic, human and spiritual formation. In this way they will be in a position to bring together a combination of creativity, grace, freedom, their own capacities, the possibility of dialogue, etc., so that the Kingdom of God becomes a reality in their lives, and all creation is ruled by Christ and offered to the Father through the Holy Spirit. In the words of the well-known Pauline phrase, the aim is *instaurare omnia in Christo* [“to unite all things in Christ”] (*Eph* 1:10). In this regard, Saint Josemaría asserted that “Our task as Christians is to proclaim this kingship of Christ, announcing it through what we say and do.

Our Lord wants men and women of his own in all walks of life. Some he calls away from society, asking them to give up involvement in the world, so that they remind the rest of us by their example that God exists. To others he entrusts the priestly ministry. But he wants the vast majority to stay right where they are, in all earthly occupations in which they work: the factory, the laboratory, the farm, the trades, the streets of the big cities and the trails of the mountains.”[8]

From the institutional perspective the Prelature of Opus Dei also renders valuable service to the dioceses through the courses and formative meetings it organizes, for the purpose of shedding further light on the quest for holiness and apostolate through each one’s work and personal circumstances.

It is not enough for lay people simply to be in the world and for their existence to be interwoven with the things of the world.[9] In order to fulfill their specific mission they need to enlighten the environments in which they live with the grace of God, and for this they need a deep and specific formation, such as that which Opus Dei offers.
Apart from this more institutional aspect, the presence of the Prelature of Opus Dei in a diocese offers opportunities for mutual collaboration, specifically among the clergy. In many dioceses, including Rome, priests incardinated in the Prelature carry out—with the consent of their proper Ordinary—diocesan tasks (as parish priests, curates, defenders of the bond, and judges in diocesan tribunals, etc.). In performing these pastoral supply activities, the priests incardinated in Opus Dei sanctify their pastoral work and do apostolate, that is, they do Opus Dei through these ministerial services. Nonetheless, their more particular and more direct pastoral service to the dioceses is accomplished through the fulfillment of the mission of the Prelature. It is for this purpose, and not to fill diocesan vacuums, that the Prelature was established by the supreme authority. If supply work were to hinder the fulfillment of the mission entrusted to the Prelature, it would defeat the purpose for which it was established. Responsibility for the manner in which such service is rendered, in communion with the diocesan bishops, pertains to the Prelate, who has received the mission of governing this instrument “so that it may be apt and effective.”

As a bishop, together with my brothers in the episcopate, I cannot fail to appreciate these two dimensions of the service of Opus Dei to the dioceses, both of them converging with the wide mission that the Church fulfills in the world. They help directly, and in a most useful way, in raising the spiritual level of every local Church, and they invite us not to consider only the institutional aspects (which may be more quantifiable), nor to concentrate simply on the service that the Work might offer in resolving specific problems within the diocese. A better idea of Opus Dei’s service to the dioceses is obtained when looked at within the wide panorama we referred to at the start of this paper: the educational and pastoral program of holiness which all the bishops receive as a task from the Lord for the whole Church and, more particularly, for the local Church entrusted to them.

Because of this close collaboration between Opus Dei as a hierarchical institution and every diocese, it is necessary to define competencies and stimulate dialogue. On the one hand, in order to ensure the unity of the diocese under the guidance of the diocesan bishop, the Code of Canon Law in can. 297 requires the consent of the diocesan bishop before a
personal prelature exercises its own mission within the diocese; it also provides that the statutes of the Prelature should define the relationship with the Ordinaries of the places where the Prelature operates. On the other hand, it is precisely in order to respect the identity of the mission of the Prelature and to ensure unity of direction for its work that a Prelature—an institution under the jurisdiction of a single Prelate—is created. Specifically, clerics incardinated in the Prelature are at its service, under the jurisdiction of the Prelate.

Within this broader view of the Church’s mission—the salus animarum, which will never be lacking—it seems natural for priests of the Prelature of Opus Dei to participate in the council of priests in each diocese.

In view of these reflections, we can conclude that the activity of Opus Dei in the dioceses in which it operates is something “interior” to them, and helps provide each diocese with the internal diversity that characterizes communion.[11]

It is a service appearing quite naturally within the diocese, without the need for any subsequent “insertion.” The dioceses themselves acknowledge that the fruit of such service is principally in the lived existence of their faithful. It is in those lives that the prophetic dimension of the call to holiness in the middle of the world becomes a reality, and from them that each diocese receives abundant fruits of holiness and apostolic life.

Within the vision of the Church as communion, in which different institutions of the universal Church cooperate in the common mission, it is possible to understand the convergence and importance of this ecclesial service of the Prelature of Opus Dei. Remembering that the clearest truths can shed light on those that are more obscure, we can state that the Petrine service existing within every particular Church is something that can help us understand, albeit in analogous fashion, how the “interior” presence of Opus Dei’s service within the particular Church serves the entire communion of the Churches.


