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
“Open the Doors to Christ”

On May 1, in St. Peter’s Square, an important event for the Church took place: the beatification of John Paul II, the pontiff who led the Church from the second into the third millennium.

In his homily, before an immense multitude of people, Benedict XVI emphasized the faith of his predecessor: a “strong, generous and apostolic faith,” and a gift “for building up Christ’s Church.” He also recalled how, during the almost 27 years of his pontificate, John Paul II had spread forcefully “the universal vocation to the heights of the Christian life, to holiness... All of us, as members of the people of God—bishops, priests, deacons, laity, men and women religious—are making our pilgrim way to the heavenly homeland where the Virgin Mary has preceded us, united as she was in a unique and perfect way to the mystery of Christ and the Church.”

“He has left us a marvelous treasure of doctrine and the example of his pastoral charity,” said the Prelate of Opus Dei in a recent interview published in these pages, a spur to undertake “a new evangelization through ordinary life, through people actively present in all fields of human endeavor, with conduct consistent with their faith.”

The current issue of Romana includes Benedict XVI’s homily during the Beatification Mass of John Paul II, several articles and interviews with Bishop Javier Echevarría, along with the homily at the Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated on May 3 by the Prelate of Opus Dei in St. Eugene’s Basilica, in which hundreds of pilgrims who came to Rome for the beatification took part.

“Every declaration of holiness proclaims the glory of the Trinity,” Bishop Echevarría said on that occasion. “But some, like the beatification of John Paul II, influence millions of people. We saw this when the Lord called him to himself, six years ago, and I am convinced that the same thing will happen in these days. If we invoke with faith the intercession of the new Blessed in all our needs, great and small, personal and collective, a shower of graces will rain down from Heaven for all mankind. Let us ask God that, through his intercession, he may assist the Church and civil
society in their journeys with divine mercy. Let us also pray, full of hope and affection, for Pope Benedict XVI and all the bishops, priests and laity and consecrated religious, and for those who are still seeking the God whom they do not yet know. Let us pray for one another, so that each of us may encounter and love Jesus, the Son of God made man who has died and risen for our salvation.”

As for the whole Church, for the faithful of Opus Dei the beatification was a moment of special gratitude to John Paul II, because, as Bishop Echevarría said in the interview granted to Studi Cattolici, “during his pontificate certain events of special importance for the history of Opus Dei took place. These include the establishment of this part of the Church as a personal prelature, the beatification and canonization of St. Josemaría, and the creation of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.” The Prelate added: “John Paul II was truly the Pope of everyone, a Father sensitive to all the charisms that the Holy Spirit brings forth. I think that, with him, millions of people have felt themselves to be ‘favorite sons and daughters.’ And the faithful of Opus Dei have also felt this, with daily joy and thanksgiving.”

We would like to open this issue of Romana with words of Benedict XVI at the conclusion of his homily on May 1, Divine Mercy Sunday: “Blessed are you, beloved Pope John Paul II, because you believed! Continue, we implore you, to sustain from Heaven the faith of God’s people. You often blessed us in this Square from the Apostolic Palace: Bless us, Holy Father! Amen.”

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Dear Friends,

I am very glad to address to each one of you my most cordial welcome. I greet Cardinal Fortunato Baldelli, Major Penitentiary, and I thank him for his courteous words. I greet Bishop Gianfranco Girotti, Regent of the Penitentiary, the personnel, the co-workers and all the participants in the Course on the Internal Forum which has now become a traditional appointment and an important occasion for deepening the knowledge of topics linked to the sacrament of Penance. I would like to reflect with you on an aspect not sufficiently thought about but which is of great spiritual and pastoral importance: the pedagogical value of Sacramental Confession.

Although it is true that it is always necessary to safeguard the objectivity of the effects of the sacrament and its correct celebration in accordance with the norms of the Rite of Penance, it is not out of place to reflect on how much it can educate the faith of both the minister and the penitent. The faithful and generous availability of priests to hear confessions—after the example of the great saints of the past from St. John Mary Vianney to St. John Bosco, from St. Josemaría Escrivá to St. Pius of Pietrelcina, from St. Joseph Cafasso to St. Leopold Mandic—shows all of us that the confessional may be a real “place” of sanctification.

How does the sacrament of Penance educate? In what sense does its celebration have pedagogical value, especially for ministers? We may start by recognizing that the mission of priests is a unique and privileged observation point, from which it is daily granted to contemplate the splendor of divine Mercy. How often in celebrating the sacrament of Penance the priest witnesses real miracles of conversion which, in renewing “the encounter with an event, a person” (Deus Caritas Est, no. 1), reinforces his own faith!
Basically, hearing confession means witnessing as many *professiones fidei* as there are penitents, and contemplating the merciful God’s action in history, feeling tangibly the saving effects of the Cross and of the Resurrection of Christ, in every epoch and for every person.

We are often faced with true and proper existential and spiritual dramas that find no answer in human words but are embraced and taken up by divine Love, which pardons and transforms: “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow (Is 1:18).

If, on the one hand knowing and, in a certain way, visiting the depths of the human heart, even its darkest aspects, tests the humanity and the faith of the priest himself, on the other, it fosters within him the certainty that it is God who has the last word over human evil and history, it is his Mercy which can make all things new (see Rev 21:5).

Then, how much the priest can learn from exemplary penitents: through their spiritual life, the seriousness with which they carry out their examination of conscience, the transparency with which they admit their sins and their docility to the Church’s teaching and to the confessor’s instructions.

From the administration of the sacrament of Penance we may draw profound lessons of humility and faith! It is a very strong appeal to each priest for knowledge of his own identity. We will never be able to hear the confessions of our brothers and sisters solely by virtue of our humanity! If they approach us, it is only because we are priests, configured to Christ the Eternal High Priest, and enabled to act in his Name and in his Person, to make God who forgives, renews and transforms, truly present. The celebration of the sacrament of Penance has a pedagogical value for the priest, as regards his faith, as well as the truth and poverty of his person, and nourishes within him an awareness of the sacramental identity.

What is the pedagogical value of the sacrament of Penance for penitents? We should state beforehand that first and foremost it depends on the action of Grace and on the objective effect on the soul of the member of the faithful. Of course, sacramental Reconciliation is one of the moments in which personal freedom and an awareness of self need to be expressed particularly clearly. It is perhaps also for this reason, in an epoch
of relativism and of the consequent attenuated awareness of one’s being, that this sacramental practice is also weakened.

Examination of conscience has an important pedagogical value. It teaches us how to look squarely at our life, to compare it with the truth of the Gospel and to evaluate it with parameters that are not only human but are also borrowed from divine Revelation. Comparison with the Commandments, with the Beatitudes and, especially, with the Precept of love, constitutes the first great “school of penance.”

In our time, marked by noise, distraction and loneliness, the penitent’s conversation with the confessor can be one of the few—if not the only—opportunities to be truly heard in depth.

Dear priests, do not neglect to allow enough room for the exercise of the ministry of Penance in the confessional: to be welcomed and heard is also a human sign of God's welcoming kindness to his children.

Moreover the integral confession of sins teaches the penitent humility, recognition of his or her own frailty and, at the same time, an awareness of the need for God’s forgiveness and the trust that divine Grace can transform his life. Likewise, listening to the confessor’s recommendations and advice is important for judging actions, for the spiritual journey and for the inner healing of the penitent.

Let us not forget how many conversions and how many truly holy lives began in a confessional! The acceptance of the penance and listening to the words “I absolve you from your sins,” are, lastly, a true school of love and hope that guides the person to full trust in the God Love, revealed in Jesus Christ, to responsibility, and to the commitment to continuous conversion.

Dear priests, our own prior experience of divine Mercy and of being humble instruments teaches us an ever more faithful celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and profound gratitude to God who “gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:18).

I entrust to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mater misericordiae and Refugium peccatorum, the fruits of your Course on the Internal Forum and the ministry of all Confessors, as I bless you all with great affection.
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

At the General Audiences in the past two years we have been accompanied by the figures of so many saints: we have learned to know them more closely and to understand that the whole of the Church’s history is marked by these men and women who with their faith, with their charity, and with their life have been beacons for so many generations, as they are for us too. The saints expressed in various ways the powerful and transforming presence of the Risen One. They let Jesus so totally overwhelm their life that they could say with St. Paul “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). Following their example, seeking their intercession, entering into communion with them, “brings us closer to Christ, so our companionship with the saints joins us to Christ, from whom as from their fountain and head issue every grace and the life of the People of God itself” (see Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, no. 50).

At the end of this series of Catecheses, therefore, I would like to offer some thoughts on what holiness is. What does it mean to be holy? Who is called to be holy? We are often led to think that holiness is a goal reserved for a few elect. St. Paul, instead, speaks of God’s great plan and says: “even as he (God) chose us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him” (Eph 1:4). And he was speaking about all of us. At the centre of the divine plan is Christ in whom God shows his Face, in accord with the favor of his will. The Mystery hidden in the centuries is revealed in its fullness in the Word made flesh.
And Paul then says: “in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Col 1:19).

In Christ the living God made himself close, visible, audible and tangible so that each one might draw from his fullness of grace and truth (see Jn 1:14-16). Therefore, the whole of Christian life knows one supreme law, which St. Paul expresses in a formula that recurs in all his holy writings: in Jesus Christ. Holiness, the fullness of Christian life, does not consist in carrying out extraordinary enterprises but in being united with Christ, in living his mysteries, in making our own his example, his thoughts, his behavior. The measure of holiness stems from the stature that Christ achieves in us, in as much as with the power of the Holy Spirit, we model our whole life on his.

It is being conformed to Jesus, as St. Paul says: “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom 8:29). And St. Augustine exclaimed: “my life shall be a real life, being wholly filled by you” (Confessions, 10, XXVIII).

The Second Vatican Council, in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, speaks with clarity of the universal call to holiness, saying that no one is excluded: “The forms and tasks of life are many but holiness is one—that sanctity which is cultivated by all who act under God’s Spirit and... follow Christ, poor, humble and cross-bearing, that they may deserve to be partakers of his glory” (Lumen Gentium, no. 41).

However, the question remains: how can we take the path to holiness, in order to respond to this call? Can I do this on my own initiative? The answer is clear. A holy life is not primarily the result of our efforts, of our actions, because it is God, the three times Holy (see Is 6:3) who sanctifies us, it is the Holy Spirit’s action that enlivens us from within, it is the very life of the Risen Christ that is communicated to us and that transforms us. To say so once again with the Second Vatican Council, “the followers of Christ, called by God not in virtue of their works but by his design and grace, and justified in the Lord Jesus, have been made sons of God in the baptism of faith and partakers of the divine nature, and so are truly sanctified. They must therefore hold onto and perfect in their lives that sanctification which they have received” (ibid., n. 40).
Holiness, therefore, has its deepest root in the grace of baptism, in being grafted on to the Paschal Mystery of Christ, by which his Spirit is communicated to us, his very life as the Risen One. St. Paul strongly emphasizes the transformation that baptismal grace brings about in man and he reaches the point of coining a new terminology, forged with the preposition “with”: dead-with, buried-with, raised-with, brought to life-with, with Christ; our destiny is indissolubly linked to his. “We were buried therefore with him by baptism” he writes, “into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead... we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). Yet God always respects our freedom and asks that we accept this gift and live the requirements it entails and he asks that we let ourselves be transformed by the action of the Holy Spirit, conforming our will to the will of God.

How can it happen that our manner of thinking and our actions become thinking and action with Christ and of Christ? What is the soul of holiness? Once again the Second Vatican Council explains; it tells us that Christian holiness is nothing other than charity lived to the full. “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 Jn 4:16). Now God has poured out his love in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (see Rom 5:5); therefore the first and most necessary gift is charity, by which we love God above all things and our neighbor through love of him. But if charity, like a good seed, is to grow and fructify in the soul, each of the faithful must willingly hear the word of God and carry out his will with deeds, with the help of his grace. He must frequently receive the sacraments, chiefly the Eucharist, and take part in the holy liturgy; he must constantly apply himself to prayer, self-denial, active brotherly service and the exercise all the virtues. This is because love, as the bond of perfection and fullness of the law (see Col 3:14; Rom 13:10) governs, gives meaning to, and perfects all the means of sanctification” (see Lumen Gentium, no. 42).

Perhaps this language of the Second Vatican Council is a little too solemn for us, perhaps we should say things even more simply. What is the essential? The essential means never leaving a Sunday without an encounter with the Risen Christ in the Eucharist; this is not an additional burden but is light for the whole week. It means never beginning and never ending a day without at least a brief contact with God. And, on the path of our life
it means following the “signposts” that God has communicated to us in the Ten Commandments, interpreted with Christ, which are merely the explanation of what love is in specific situations. It seems to me that this is the true simplicity and greatness of a life of holiness: the encounter with the Risen One on Sunday; contact with God at the beginning and at the end of the day; following, in decisions, the “signposts” that God has communicated to us, which are but forms of charity.

“Hence the true disciple of Christ is marked by love both of God and of neighbour” (Lumen Gentium, no. 42). This is the true simplicity, greatness and depth of Christian life, of being holy. This is why St. Augustine, in commenting on the fourth chapter of the First Letter of St. John, could make a bold statement: “Dilige et fac quod vis [Love and do what you will]” And he continued: “If you keep silent, keep silent by love: if you speak, speak by love; if you correct, correct by love; if you pardon, pardon by love; let love be rooted in you, and from the root nothing but good can grow” (7,8 PL 35). Those who are guided by love, who live charity to the full, are guided by God, because God is love. Hence these important words apply: “Dilige et fac quod vis,” “Love and do what you will.”

We might ask ourselves: can we, with our limitations, with our weaknesses, aim so high? During the Liturgical Year, the Church invites us to commemorate a host of saints, the ones, that is, who lived charity to the full, who knew how to love and follow Christ in their daily lives. They tell us that it is possible for everyone to take this road. In every epoch of the Church’s history, on every latitude of the world map, the saints belong to all the ages and to every state of life, they are actual faces of every people, language and nation. And they have very different characters.

Actually I must say that also for my personal faith many saints, not all, are true stars in the firmament of history. And I would like to add that for me not only a few great saints whom I love and whom I know well are “signposts,” but precisely also the simple saints, that is, the good people I see in my life who will never be canonized. They are ordinary people, so to speak, without visible heroism but in their everyday goodness I see the truth of faith. This goodness, which they have developed in the faith of the Church, is for me the most reliable apology of Christianity and the sign of where the truth lies.
In the Communion of Saints, canonized and not canonized, which the Church lives thanks to Christ in all her members, we enjoy their presence and their company and cultivate the firm hope that we shall be able to imitate their journey and share one day in the same blessed life, eternal life.

Dear friends, how great and beautiful, as well as simple is the Christian vocation seen in this light! We are all called to holiness: it is the very measure of Christian living. Once again St. Paul expresses it with great intensity when he writes: “grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift…. His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:7, 11-13).

I would like to ask all to open themselves to the action of the Holy Spirit, who transforms our life, to be, we too, as small pieces in the great mosaic of holiness that God continues to create in history, so that the face of Christ may shine out in the fullness of its splendor. Let us not be afraid to aim high, for God’s heights; let us not be afraid that God will ask too much of us, but let ourselves be guided by his Word in every daily action, even when we feel poor, inadequate, sinners. It will be he who transforms us in accordance with his love. Many thanks.

General Audience in St. Peter’s Square
Rome (April 20, 2011)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have now arrived at the heart of Holy Week, the culmination of the Lenten journey. Tomorrow we shall enter the Easter Triduum, the three holy days in which the Church commemorates the mystery of the Passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus.

The Son of God, who, after becoming man in obedience to the Father,
similar to us in all things save sin (see Heb 4:15), accepted to do the Father's will to the very end. He accepted the Passion and the Cross out of love for us, to enable us to share in his Resurrection so that, in him and for him, we might live for ever in consolation and in peace.

I therefore urge you to accept this mystery of salvation and to participate intensely in the Easter Triduum, the fulcrum of the entire Liturgical Year and a time of special grace for every Christian. I invite you in these days to seek recollection and prayer, so as to draw more deeply from this source of grace. In this regard, with a view to the forthcoming celebrations every Christian is asked to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation, a moment of special adherence to the death and Resurrection of Christ, to be able to participate more fruitfully in Holy Easter.

Holy Thursday is the day on which the Institution of the Eucharist and of the Ministerial Priesthood is commemorated. In the morning each diocesan community, gathered round its bishop in the cathedral church, celebrates the Chrism Mass in which the sacred Chrism, the Oil of the Catechumens and the Oil of the Sick are blessed. Starting with the Easter Triduum and throughout the liturgical year these oils will be used for the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, priestly and episcopal Ordination and the Anointing of the Sick.

This emphasizes that salvation, transmitted by the sacramental signs, flows from the very heart of the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Indeed, we are redeemed by his death and Resurrection and, through the sacraments, we draw on that same salvific source.

The priestly promises will also be renewed at the Chrism Mass tomorrow. Throughout the world, every priest renews the commitment he made on the day of his Ordination to be totally consecrated to Christ in exercising his sacred ministry at the service of his brethren. Let us accompany our priests with our prayers.

In the afternoon of Holy Thursday, the Triduum effectively begins with the commemoration of the Last Supper, at which Jesus instituted the Memorial of his Passover, complying with the Jewish Easter rite. In accordance with the tradition, every Jewish family, gathered at table on the
feast of the Passover, eats roast lamb, commemorating the liberation of the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt; thus in the Upper Room, knowing of his imminent death, Jesus, the true Paschal Lamb, offered himself for our salvation (see 1 Cor 5:7).

In pronouncing the blessing over the bread and the wine, he anticipated the sacrifice of the Cross and expressed the intention of perpetuating his presence among the disciples. Under the species of the bread and the wine, he made himself present in a real way with his Body given and his Blood poured out.

At the Last Supper, the Apostles were constituted ministers of this Sacrament of salvation; Jesus washed their feet (see Jn 13:1-25), inviting them to love one another as he had loved them, giving his life for them. In repeating this gesture in the Liturgy, we too are called to witness effectively to the love of our Redeemer.

Lastly, Holy Thursday ends with Eucharistic Adoration, in memory of the Lord’s agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Having left the Upper Room he withdrew to pray, alone before the Father. At that moment of deep communion the Gospels recount that Jesus experienced great anguish, such acute suffering that it made him sweat blood (see Mt 26:38).

In the knowledge of his imminent death on the Cross, he felt immense anguish at the closeness of death. In this situation an element appeared that was of great importance to the whole Church. Jesus said to his followers: stay here and keep watch; and this appeal for vigilance concerns precisely this moment of anguish, of threats, in which the traitor was to arrive, but it concerns the whole history of the Church. It is a permanent message for every era because the disciples’ drowsiness was not just a problem at that moment but is a problem for the whole of history.

The question is: in what does this apathy consist? What would the watchfulness to which the Lord invites us consist of? I would say that the disciples’ somnolence in the course of history is a certain insensitiveness of the soul with regard to the power of evil, an insensibility to all the evil in the world. We do not wish to be unduly disturbed by these things, we prefer to forget them. We think that perhaps, after all, it will not be so serious and we forget.
Moreover, it is not only insensitivity to evil, when we should be watchful in order to do good, to fight for the force of goodness. Rather it is an insensitivity to God: this is our true sleepiness, this insensitivity to God’s presence that also makes us insensible to evil. We are not aware of God—he would disturb us—hence we are naturally not aware of the force of evil and continue on the path of our own convenience.

Nocturnal adoration of Holy Thursday, watching with the Lord, must be the very moment to make us reflect on the somnolence of the disciples, of the defenders of Jesus, of the Apostles, of us who do not see, who do not wish to see the whole force of evil nor do we wish to enter his passion for goodness, for the presence of God in the world, for the love of our neighbour and of God.

Then the Lord began to pray. The three Apostles—Peter, James and John—were asleep but they awoke intermittently and heard the refrain of this prayer of the Lord: “not my will, but your will be done.” What is this will of mine, what is this will of yours of which the Lord speaks?

My will is “that he should not die,” that he be spared this cup of suffering: it is the human will, human nature, and Christ felt, with the whole awareness of his being, life, the abyss of death, the terror of nothingness, the threat of suffering. Moreover, he was even more acutely aware of the abyss of evil than are we who have a natural aversion to death, a natural fear of death.

Together with death, he felt the whole of humanity’s suffering. He felt that this was the cup he was obliged to drink, that he himself had to drink in order to accept the evil of the world, all that is terrible, the aversion to God, the whole weight of sin. And we can understand that before this reality, the cruelty of which he fully perceived, Jesus, with his human soul, was terrified: my will would be not to drink the cup, but my will is subordinate to your will, to the will of God, to the will of the Father, which is also the true will of the Son. And thus in this prayer Jesus transformed his natural repugnance, his aversion to the cup and to his mission to die for us; he transformed his own natural will into God’s will, into a “yes” to God’s will.
Man of himself is tempted to oppose God’s will, to seek to do his own will, to feel free only if he is autonomous; he sets his own autonomy against the heteronomy of obeying God’s will. This is the whole drama of humanity. But in truth, this autonomy is mistaken and entry into God’s will is not opposition to the self, it is not a form of slavery that violates my will but rather means entering into truth and love, into goodness.

And Jesus draws our will—which opposes God’s will, which seeks autonomy—upwards, towards God’s will. This is the drama of our redemption, that Jesus should uplift our will, our total aversion to God’s will and our aversion to death and sin and unite it with the Father’s will: “Not my will but yours.” In this transformation of “no” into “yes,” in this insertion of the creatural will into the will of the Father, he transforms humanity and redeems us. And he invites us to be part of his movement: to emerge from our “no” and to enter into the “yes” of the Son. My will exists, but the will of the Father is crucial because it is truth and love.

Another element of this prayer seems to me to be important. The three witnesses preserved—as appears in Sacred Scripture—the Hebrew or Aramaic word with which the Lord spoke to the Father, he called him: “Abba,” Father. But this term “Abba” is a familiar form of the term “father,” a form used only in the family that was never applied to God. Here we have a glimpse of Jesus’ intimate life, of the way he spoke in the family, the way he truly spoke as the Son with the Father. We see the Trinitarian mystery: the Son speaks to the Father and redeems humanity.

A further observation: the Letter to the Hebrews gave us a profound interpretation of this prayer of the Lord, of this drama of Gethsemane. It says: Jesus’ tears, his prayer, his cry, his anguish, all this is not merely a concession to the weakness of the flesh as might be said. It is in this very way that Jesus fulfilled his office as High Priest, because the High Priest must uplift the human being, with all his problems and suffering, to God’s heights. And the Letter to the Hebrews says: with all these cries, tears, prayers and supplications, the Lord has brought our reality to God (see Heb 5:7ff). And it uses this Greek word “prosferein,” which is the technical term for what the High Priest must do to offer, with raised hands.
It was in this drama of Gethsemane, where God’s power no longer seemed to be present, that Jesus fulfilled his role as High Priest. And it also says that in this act of obedience, that is, of the conformation of the natural human will to God’s will, he was perfected as a priest. Furthermore, it once again uses the technical word for ordaining a priest. In this way he truly became the High Priest of humanity and thus opened Heaven and the door to the resurrection.

If we reflect on this drama of Gethsemane we can also see the strong contrast between Jesus with his anguish, with his suffering, in comparison with the great philosopher Socrates, who stayed calm, without anxiety, in the face of death. And this seems the ideal. We can admire this philosopher but Jesus’ mission was different. His mission was not this total indifference and freedom; his mission was to bear in himself the whole burden of our suffering, the whole of the human drama. This humiliation of Gethsemane, therefore, is essential to the mission of the God-Man. He carries in himself our suffering, our poverty, and transforms it in accordance with God’s will. And thus he opens the doors of Heaven. He opens Heaven: this curtain of the Most Holy One, which until now Man has kept closed against God, is opened through his suffering and obedience. These are a few observations for Holy Thursday, for our celebration on Holy Thursday evening.

On Good Friday we will commemorate the Passion and death of the Lord; we will worship the Crucified Christ, we will share in his suffering with penance and fasting. Looking “on him whom they have pierced” (see Jn 19:37), we shall be able to draw from his pierced heart, from which blood and water flowed as from a source; from that heart from which the love of God for every human being flows, we receive his Spirit. Therefore, on Good Friday, let us too accompany Jesus on his ascent to Calvary, allowing him to guide us right to the Cross and to receive the offering of his immolated Body.

Lastly, on the night of Holy Saturday we shall celebrate the solemn Easter Vigil during which Christ’s Resurrection is proclaimed, his definitive victory over death which calls us to be new men and women in him. In participating in this holy Vigil, the central Night of the entire Liturgical Year, we shall commemorate our Baptism, in which we too were buried
with Christ, to be able to rise with him and take part in the banquet of Heaven (see Rev 19:7-9).

Dear friends, we have endeavored to understand Jesus’ state of mind at the moment when he experienced the extreme trial in order to grasp what directed his action. The criterion that throughout his life guided every decision Jesus made was his firm determination to love the Father, to be one with the Father and to be faithful to him; this decision to respond to his love impelled him to embrace the Father’s plan in every single circumstance, to make his own the plan of love entrusted to him in order to recapitulate all things in God, to lead all things to him.

In reliving the Sacred Triduum, let us also prepare ourselves to welcome God’s will in our life, knowing that our own true good, the way to life, is found in God’s will even if it appears harsh, in contrast with our intentions. May the Virgin Mother guide us on this itinerary and obtain from her divine Son the grace to be able to spend our life for love of Jesus, in the service of our brethren. Thank you.

Homily at the Beatification of Pope John Paul II St. Peter’s Square, Rome (May 1, 2011)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Six years ago we gathered in this Square to celebrate the funeral of Pope John Paul II. Our grief at his loss was deep, but even greater was our sense of an immense grace which embraced Rome and the whole world: a grace which was in some way the fruit of my beloved predecessor’s entire life, and especially of his witness in suffering. Even then we perceived the fragrance of his sanctity, and in any number of ways God’s People showed their veneration for him. For this reason, with all due respect for the Church’s canonical norms, I wanted his cause of beatification to move forward with reasonable haste. And now the longed-for day has come; it
came quickly because this is what was pleasing to the Lord: John Paul II is blessed!

I would like to offer a cordial greeting to all of you who on this happy occasion have come in such great numbers to Rome from all over the world—cardinals, patriarchs of the Eastern Catholic Churches, brother bishops and priests, official delegations, ambassadors and civil authorities, consecrated men and women and lay faithful, and I extend that greeting to all those who join us by radio and television.

Today is the Second Sunday of Easter, which Blessed John Paul II entitled Divine Mercy Sunday. The date was chosen for today’s celebration because, in God’s providence, my predecessor died on the vigil of this feast. Today is also the first day of May, Mary’s month, and the liturgical memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker. All these elements serve to enrich our prayer, they help us in our pilgrimage through time and space; but in heaven a very different celebration is taking place among the angels and saints! Even so, God is but one, and one too is Christ the Lord, who like a bridge joins earth to heaven. At this moment we feel closer than ever, sharing as it were in the liturgy of heaven.

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe” (Jn 20:29). In today’s Gospel Jesus proclaims this beatitude: the beatitude of faith. For us, it is particularly striking because we are gathered to celebrate a beatification, but even more so because today the one proclaimed blessed is a Pope, a Successor of Peter, one who was called to confirm his brethren in the faith. John Paul II is blessed because of his faith, a strong, generous and apostolic faith. We think at once of another beatitude: “Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven” (Mt 16:17). What did our heavenly Father reveal to Simon? That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Because of this faith, Simon becomes Peter, the rock on which Jesus can build his Church. The eternal beatitude of John Paul II, which today the Church rejoices to proclaim, is wholly contained in these sayings of Jesus: “Blessed are you, Simon” and “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe!” It is the beatitude of faith, which John Paul II also received as a gift from God the Father for the building up of Christ’s Church.
Our thoughts turn to yet another beatitude, one which appears in the Gospel before all others. It is the beatitude of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of the Redeemer. Mary, who had just conceived Jesus, was told by Saint Elizabeth: “Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord” (Lk 1:45). The beatitude of faith has its model in Mary, and all of us rejoice that the beatification of John Paul II takes place on this first day of the month of Mary, beneath the maternal gaze of the one who by her faith sustained the faith of the Apostles and constantly sustains the faith of their successors, especially those called to occupy the Chair of Peter. Mary does not appear in the accounts of Christ’s resurrection, yet hers is, as it were, a continual, hidden presence: she is the Mother to whom Jesus entrusted each of his disciples and the entire community. In particular we can see how Saint John and Saint Luke record the powerful, maternal presence of Mary in the passages preceding those read in today’s Gospel and first reading. In the account of Jesus’ death, Mary appears at the foot of the cross (Jn 19:25), and at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles she is seen in the midst of the disciples gathered in prayer in the Upper Room (Acts 1:14).

Today’s second reading also speaks to us of faith. Saint Peter himself, filled with spiritual enthusiasm, points out to the newly-baptized the reason for their hope and their joy. I like to think how in this passage, at the beginning of his First Letter, Peter does not use language of exhortation; instead, he states a fact. He writes: “you rejoice,” and he adds: “you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet 1:6, 8-9). All these verbs are in the indicative, because a new reality has come about in Christ’s resurrection, a reality to which faith opens the door. “This is the Lord’s doing,” says the Psalm (118:23), and “it is marvelous in our eyes,” the eyes of faith.

Dear brothers and sisters, today our eyes behold, in the full spiritual light of the risen Christ, the beloved and revered figure of John Paul II. Today his name is added to the host of those whom he proclaimed saints and blessed during the almost twenty-seven years of his pontificate, thereby forcefully emphasizing the universal vocation to the heights of the
Christian life, to holiness, taught by the conciliar Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*. All of us, as members of the people of God—bishops, priests, deacons, laity, men and women religious—are making our pilgrim way to the heavenly homeland where the Virgin Mary has preceded us, associated as she was in a unique and perfect way to the mystery of Christ and the Church. Karol Wojtyla took part in the Second Vatican Council, first as an auxiliary Bishop and then as Archbishop of Kraków. He was fully aware that the Council’s decision to devote the last chapter of its Constitution on the Church to Mary meant that the Mother of the Redeemer is held up as an image and model of holiness for every Christian and for the entire Church. This was the theological vision which Blessed John Paul II discovered as a young man and subsequently maintained and deepened throughout his life. A vision which is expressed in the scriptural image of the crucified Christ with Mary, his Mother, at his side. This icon from the Gospel of John (19:25-27) was taken up in the episcopal and later the papal coat-of-arms of Karol Wojtyla: a golden cross with the letter “M” on the lower right and the motto “*Totus tuus,*” drawn from the well-known words of Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort in which Karol Wojtyla found a guiding light for his life: “*Totus tuus ego sum et omnia mea tua sunt. Accipio te in mea omnia. Praebe mihi cor tuum, Maria*—I belong entirely to you, and all that I have is yours. I take you for my all. O Mary, give me your heart” (*Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, 266).

In his Testament, the new Blessed wrote: “When, on October 16, 1978, the Conclave of Cardinals chose John Paul II, the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski, said to me: ‘The task of the new Pope will be to lead the Church into the Third Millennium.’” And the Pope added: “I would like once again to express my gratitude to the Holy Spirit for the great gift of the Second Vatican Council, to which, together with the whole Church—and especially with the whole episcopate—I feel indebted. I am convinced that it will long be granted to the new generations to draw from the treasures that this Council of the twentieth century has lavished upon us. As a Bishop who took part in the Council from the first to the last day, I desire to entrust this great patrimony to all who are and will be called in the future to put it into practice. For my part, I thank the Eternal Shepherd, who has enabled me to serve this very great cause in the course
of all the years of my Pontificate.” And what is this “cause”? It is the same one that John Paul II presented during his first solemn Mass in Saint Peter’s Square in the unforgettable words: “Do not be afraid! Open, open wide the doors to Christ!” What the newly-elected Pope asked of everyone, he was himself the first to do: society, culture, political and economic systems he opened up to Christ, turning back with the strength of a titan—a strength which came to him from God—a tide which appeared irreversible. By his witness of faith, love and apostolic courage, accompanied by great human charisma, this exemplary son of Poland helped believers throughout the world not to be afraid to be called Christian, to belong to the Church, to speak of the Gospel. In a word: he helped us not to fear the truth, because truth is the guarantee of liberty. To put it even more succinctly: he gave us the strength to believe in Christ, because Christ is Redemptor hominis, the Redeemer of man. This was the theme of his first encyclical, and the thread which runs through all the others.

When Karol Wojtyla ascended to the throne of Peter, he brought with him a deep understanding of the difference between Marxism and Christianity, based on their respective visions of man. This was his message: man is the way of the Church, and Christ is the way of man. With this message, which is the great legacy of the Second Vatican Council and of its “helmsman,” the Servant of God Pope Paul VI, John Paul II led the People of God across the threshold of the Third Millennium, which thanks to Christ he was able to call “the threshold of hope.” Throughout the long journey of preparation for the great Jubilee he directed Christianity once again to the future, the future of God, which transcends history while nonetheless directly affecting it. He rightly reclaimed for Christianity that impulse of hope which had in some sense faltered before Marxism and the ideology of progress. He restored to Christianity its true face as a religion of hope, to be lived in history in an “Advent” spirit, in a personal and communitarian existence directed to Christ, the fullness of humanity and the fulfillment of all our longings for justice and peace.

Finally, on a more personal note, I would like to thank God for the gift of having worked for many years with Blessed Pope John Paul II. I had
known him earlier and had esteemed him, but for twenty-three years, beginning in 1982 after he called me to Rome to be Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, I was at his side and came to revere him all the more. My own service was sustained by his spiritual depth and by the richness of his insights. His example of prayer continually impressed and edified me: he remained deeply united to God even amid the many demands of his ministry. Then too, there was his witness in suffering: the Lord gradually stripped him of everything, yet he remained ever a “rock,” as Christ desired. His profound humility, grounded in close union with Christ, enabled him to continue to lead the Church and to give to the world a message which became all the more eloquent as his physical strength declined. In this way he lived out in an extraordinary way the vocation of every priest and bishop to become completely one with Jesus, whom he daily receives and offers in the Church.

Blessed are you, beloved Pope John Paul II, because you believed! Continue, we implore you, to sustain from heaven the faith of God’s people. You often blessed us in this Square from the Apostolic Palace: Bless us, Holy Father! Amen.

Mass of Sts. Peter and Paul and Imposition of the Palium on New Metropolitans, Vatican Basilica (June 29, 2011)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

“Non iam dicam servos, sed amicos”—“I no longer call you servants, but friends” (see Jn 15:15).

Sixty years on from the day of my priestly ordination, I hear once again deep within me these words of Jesus that were addressed to us new priests at the end of the ordination ceremony by the Archbishop, Cardinal Faulhaber, in his slightly frail yet firm voice. According to the liturgical practice of that time, these words conferred on the newly-ordained priests the authority to forgive sins. “No longer servants, but friends”: at that
moment I knew deep down that these words were no mere formality, nor were they simply a quotation from Scripture. I knew that, at that moment, the Lord himself was speaking to me in a very personal way. In baptism and confirmation he had already drawn us close to him, he had already received us into God’s family. But what was taking place now was something greater still. He calls me his friend. He welcomes me into the circle of those he had spoken to in the Upper Room, into the circle of those whom he knows in a very special way, and who thereby come to know him in a very special way. He grants me the almost frightening faculty to do what only he, the Son of God, can legitimately say and do: I forgive you your sins. He wants me—with his authority—to be able to speak, in his name (“I” forgive), words that are not merely words, but an action, changing something at the deepest level of being. I know that behind these words lies his suffering for us and on account of us. I know that forgiveness comes at a price: in his Passion he went deep down into the sordid darkness of our sins. He went down into the night of our guilt, for only thus can it be transformed. And by giving me authority to forgive sins, he lets me look down into the abyss of man, into the immensity of his suffering for us men, and this enables me to sense the immensity of his love. He confides in me: “No longer servants, but friends.” He entrusts to me the words of consecration in the Eucharist. He trusts me to proclaim his word, to explain it aright and to bring it to the people of today. He entrusts himself to me. “You are no longer servants, but friends”: these words bring great inner joy, but at the same time, they are so awe-inspiring that one can feel daunted as the decades go by amid so many experiences of one’s own frailty and his inexhaustible goodness.

“No longer servants, but friends”: this saying contains within itself the entire programme of a priestly life. What is friendship? *Idem velle, idem nolle*—wanting the same things, rejecting the same things: this was how it was expressed in antiquity. Friendship is a communion of thinking and willing. The Lord says the same thing to us most insistently: “I know my own and my own know me” (*Jn* 10:14). The Shepherd calls his own by name (see *Jn* 10:3). He knows me by name. I am not just some nameless being in the infinity of the universe. He knows me personally. Do I know him? The friendship that he bestows upon me can only mean that I too try to know him better; that in the Scriptures, in the Sacraments, in prayer, in
the communion of saints, in the people who come to me, sent by him, I try
to come to know the Lord himself more and more. Friendship is not just
about knowing someone, it is above all a communion of the will. It means
that my will grows into ever greater conformity with his will. For his will is
not something external and foreign to me, something to which I more or
less willingly submit or else refuse to submit. No, in friendship, my will
grows together with his will, and his will becomes mine: this is how I
become truly myself. Over and above communion of thinking and willing,
the Lord mentions a third, new element: he gives his life for us (see Jn
15:13; 10:15). Lord, help me to come to know you more and more. Help
me to be ever more at one with your will. Help me to live my life not for
myself, but in union with you to live it for others. Help me to become ever
more your friend.

Jesus’ words on friendship should be seen in the context of the
discourse on the vine. The Lord associates the image of the vine with a
commission to the disciples: “I appointed you that you should go out and
bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide” (Jn 15:16). The first
commission to the disciples, to his friends, is that of setting out—appointed
to go out—stepping outside oneself and towards others. Here we hear an
echo of the words of the risen Lord to his disciples at the end of Matthew’s
Gospel: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” (see Mt
28:19f.) The Lord challenges us to move beyond the boundaries of our own world
and to bring the Gospel to the world of others, so that it pervades
everything and hence the world is opened up for God’s kingdom. We are
reminded that even God stepped outside himself, he set his glory aside in
order to seek us, in order to bring us his light and his love. We want to
follow the God who sets out in this way, we want to move beyond the
inertia of self-centredness, so that he himself can enter our world.

After the reference to setting out, Jesus continues: bear fruit, fruit that
abides. What fruit does he expect from us? What is this fruit that abides:
Now, the fruit of the vine is the grape, and it is from the grape that wine is
made. Let us reflect for a moment on this image. For good grapes to ripen,
sun is needed, but so too is rain, day and night. For noble wine to mature,
the grapes need to be pressed, patience is needed while the juice ferments,
watchful care is needed to assist the processes of maturation. Noble wine is
marked not only by sweetness, but by rich and subtle flavors, the manifold aroma that develops during the processes of maturation and fermentation. Is this not already an image of human life, and especially of our lives as priests? We need both sun and rain, festivity and adversity, times of purification and testing, as well as times of joyful journeying with the Gospel. In hindsight we can thank God for both: for the challenges and the joys, for the dark times and the glad times. In both, we can recognize the constant presence of his love, which unfailingly supports and sustains us.

Yet now we must ask: what sort of fruit does the Lord expect from us? Wine is an image of love: this is the true fruit that abides, the fruit that God wants from us. But let us not forget that in the Old Testament the wine expected from noble grapes is above all an image of justice, which arises from a life lived in accordance with God’s law. And this is not to be dismissed as an Old Testament view that has been surpassed—no, it still remains true. The true content of the Law, its summa, is love for God and for one’s neighbor. But this twofold love is not simply saccharine. It bears within itself the precious cargo of patience, humility, and growth in the conforming of our will to God’s will, to the will of Jesus Christ, our friend. Only in this way, as the whole of our being takes on the qualities of truth and righteousness, is love also true, only thus is it ripe fruit. Its inner demand—faithfulness to Christ and to his Church—seeks a fulfillment that always includes suffering. This is the way that true joy grows. At a deep level, the essence of love, the essence of genuine fruit, coincides with the idea of setting out, going towards: it means self-abandonment, self-giving, it bears within itself the sign of the cross. Gregory the Great once said in this regard: if you are striving for God, take care not to go to him by yourselves alone—a saying that we priests need to keep before us every day (H Ev 1:6:6 PL 76, 1097f.).

Dear friends, perhaps I have dwelt for too long on my inner recollections of sixty years of priestly ministry. Now it is time to turn our attention to the particular task that is to be performed today.

On the feast of Saints Peter and Paul my most cordial greeting goes first of all to the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios I and to the Delegation he has sent, to whom I express sincere thanks for their most welcome visit on the happy occasion of this feast of the holy apostles who
are Rome’s patrons. I also greet the Cardinals, my brother bishops, the ambassadors and civil authorities as well as the priests, the confrères of my first Mass, religious and lay faithful. I thank all of you for your presence and your prayers.

The metropolitan archbishops appointed since the feast of Saints Peter and Paul last year are now going to receive the pallium. What does this mean? It may remind us in the first instance of Christ’s easy yoke that is laid upon us (see Mt 11:29f). Christ’s yoke is identical with his friendship. It is a yoke of friendship and therefore “a sweet yoke,” but as such it is also a demanding yoke, one that forms us. It is the yoke of his will, which is a will of truth and love. For us, then, it is first and foremost the yoke of leading others to friendship with Christ and being available to others, caring for them as shepherds. This brings us to a further meaning of the pallium: it is woven from the wool of lambs blessed on the feast of Saint Agnes. Thus it reminds us of the Shepherd who himself became a lamb, out of love for us. It reminds us of Christ, who set out through the mountains and the deserts, in which his lamb, humanity, had strayed. It reminds us of him who took the lamb—humanity—me—upon his shoulders, in order to carry me home. It thus reminds us that we too, as shepherds in his service, are to carry others with us, taking them as it were upon our shoulders and bringing them to Christ. It reminds us that we are called to be shepherds of his flock, which always remains his and does not become ours. Finally the pallium also means quite concretely the communion of the shepherds of the Church with Peter and with his successors—it means that we must be shepherds for unity and in unity, and that it is only in the unity represented by Peter that we truly lead people to Christ.

Sixty years of priestly ministry—dear friends, perhaps I have spoken for too long about this. But I felt prompted at this moment to look back upon the things that have left their mark on the last six decades. I felt prompted to address to you, to all priests and bishops and to the faithful of the Church, a word of hope and encouragement; a word that has matured in long experience of how good the Lord is. Above all, though, it is a time of thanksgiving: thanks to the Lord for the friendship that he has bestowed upon me and that he wishes to bestow upon us all. Thanks to the people
who have formed and accompanied me. And all this includes the prayer that the Lord will one day welcome us in his goodness and invite us to contemplate his joy.

Homily at the National Congress of Croatian Families Zagreb Racetrack, Croatia (June 5, 2011)

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

In this Mass at which it is my joy to preside, concelebrating with numerous brothers in the Episcopate and with a great number of priests, I give thanks to the Lord for all the beloved families gathered here, and for all the others who are linked with us through radio and television. I offer particular thanks to Cardinal Josip Bozani, Archbishop of Zagreb, for his kind words at the beginning of this Mass. I address my greetings to all and express my great affection with an embrace of peace!

We have recently celebrated the Ascension of the Lord and we prepare ourselves to receive the great gift of the Holy Spirit. In the first reading, we saw how the apostolic community was united in prayer in the Upper Room with Mary, the mother of Jesus (see Acts 1:12-14). This is a picture of the Church with deep roots in the paschal event: indeed, the Upper Room is the place where Jesus instituted the Eucharist and the priesthood during the Last Supper, and where, having risen from the dead, he poured out the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles on the evening of Easter Sunday (see Jn 20:19-23). The Lord directed his disciples “not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4); he asked that they might remain together to prepare themselves to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And they gathered together in prayer with Mary in the Upper Room, waiting for the promised event (see Acts 1:14). Remaining together was the condition given by Jesus for them to experience the coming of the Paraclete, and prolonged prayer served to maintain them in harmony with one another. We find here a formidable lesson for every Christian
community. Sometimes it is thought that missionary efficacy depends primarily upon careful planning and its intelligent implementation by means of specific action. Certainly, the Lord asks for our cooperation, but his initiative has to come first, before any response from us: his Spirit is the true protagonist of the Church, to be invoked and welcomed.

In the Gospel, we heard the first part of the so-called “high-priestly prayer” of Jesus (see Jn 17:1-11a)—at the conclusion of his farewell discourses—full of trust, sweetness and love. It is called “the high-priestly prayer” because in it Jesus is presented as a priest interceding for his people as he prepares to leave this world. The passage is dominated by the double theme of the hour and the glory. It deals with the hour of death (see Jn 2:4; 7:30; 8:20), the hour in which the Christ must pass from this world to the Father (13:1). But at the same time it is also the hour of his glorification which is accomplished by means of the Cross, called by John the Evangelist “exaltation,” namely the raising up, the elevation to glory: the hour of the death of Jesus, the hour of supreme love, is the hour of his highest glory. For the Church too, for every Christian, the highest glory is the Cross, which means living in charity, in total gift to God and to others.

Dear brothers and sisters! I very willingly accepted the invitation given to me by the Bishops of Croatia to visit this country on the occasion of the first National Gathering of Croatian Catholic Families. I express my sincere appreciation for this attention and commitment to the family, not only because today this basic human reality, in your nation as elsewhere, has to face difficulties and threats, and thus has special need of evangelization and support, but also because Christian families are a decisive resource for education in the faith, for the up-building of the Church as a communion and for her missionary presence in the most diverse situations in life. I know the generosity and the dedication with which you, dear Pastors, serve the Lord and the Church. Your daily labor for the faith formation of future generations, as well as for marriage preparation and for the accompaniment of families, is the fundamental path for regenerating the Church anew and for giving life to the social fabric of the nation. May you remain dedicated to this important pastoral commitment!
Everyone knows that the Christian family is a special sign of the presence and love of Christ and that it is called to give a specific and irreplaceable contribution to evangelization. Blessed John Paul II, who visited this noble country three times, said that “the Christian family is called upon to take part actively and responsibly in the mission of the Church in a way that is original and specific, by placing itself, in what it is and what it does as an ‘intimate community of life and love’, at the service of the Church and of society” (Familiaris Consortio, 50). The Christian family has always been the first way of transmitting the faith and still today retains great possibilities for evangelization in many areas.

Dear parents, commit yourselves always to teach your children to pray, and pray with them; draw them close to the Sacraments, especially to the Eucharist, as we celebrate the 600th anniversary of the Eucharistic miracle of Ludbreg; and introduce them to the life of the Church; in the intimacy of the home do not be afraid to read the sacred Scriptures, illuminating family life with the light of faith and praising God as Father. Be like a little Upper Room, like that of Mary and the disciples, in which to live unity, communion and prayer!

By the grace of God, many Christian families today are acquiring an ever deeper awareness of their missionary vocation, and are devoting themselves seriously to bearing witness to Christ the Lord. Blessed John Paul II once said: “An authentic family, founded on marriage, is in itself ‘good news’ for the world.” And he added: “In our time the families that collaborate actively in evangelization are ever more numerous... the hour of the family has arrived in the Church, which is also the hour of the missionary family” (Angelus, October 21, 2001). In today’s society the presence of exemplary Christian families is more necessary and urgent than ever. Unfortunately, we are forced to acknowledge the spread of a secularization which leads to the exclusion of God from life and the increasing disintegration of the family, especially in Europe. Freedom without commitment to the truth is made into an absolute, and individual well-being through the consumption of material goods and transient experiences is cultivated as an ideal, obscuring the quality of interpersonal relations and deeper human values; love is reduced to sentimental emotion and to the gratification of instinctive impulses, without a commitment to
build lasting bonds of reciprocal belonging and without openness to life. We are called to oppose such a mentality! Alongside what the Church says, the testimony and commitment of the Christian family—your concrete testimony—is very important, especially when you affirm the inviolability of human life from conception until natural death, the singular and irreplaceable value of the family founded upon matrimony and the need for legislation which supports families in the task of giving birth to children and educating them. Dear families, be courageous! Do not give in to that secularized mentality which proposes living together as a preparation, or even a substitute for marriage! Show by the witness of your lives that it is possible, like Christ, to love without reserve, and do not be afraid to make a commitment to another person! Dear families, rejoice in fatherhood and motherhood! Openness to life is a sign of openness to the future, confidence in the future, just as respect for the natural moral law frees people, rather than demeaning them! The good of the family is also the good of the Church. I would like to repeat something I have said in the past: “the edification of each individual Christian family fits into the context of the larger family of the Church which supports it and carries it with her.... And the Church is reciprocally built up by the family, a ‘small domestic church’” (Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Participants in the Ecclesial Diocesan Convention of Rome, June 6, 2005). Let us pray to the Lord, that families may come more and more to be small churches and that ecclesial communities may take on more and more the quality of a family!

Dear Croatian families, living the communion of faith and charity, be ever more transparent witnesses to the promise that the Lord, ascending into heaven, makes to each one of us: “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20). Dear Croatian Christians, hear yourselves called to evangelize with the whole of your life; hear the powerful word of the Lord: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19). May the Virgin Mary, Queen of Croatia, accompany you always on your way. Amen! Praised be Jesus and Mary!
Easter Vigil Homily, St. Peter's Basilica, Rome (April 23, 2011)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The liturgical celebration of the Easter Vigil makes use of two eloquent signs. First there is the fire that becomes light. As the procession makes its way through the church, shrouded in the darkness of the night, the light of the Paschal Candle becomes a wave of lights, and it speaks to us of Christ as the true morning star that never sets—the Risen Lord in whom light has conquered darkness. The second sign is water. On the one hand, it recalls the waters of the Red Sea, decline and death, the mystery of the Cross. But now it is presented to us as spring water, a life-giving element amid the dryness. Thus it becomes the image of the sacrament of baptism, through which we become sharers in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Yet these great signs of creation, light and water, are not the only constituent elements of the liturgy of the Easter Vigil. Another essential feature is the ample encounter with the words of sacred Scripture that it provides. Before the liturgical reform there were twelve Old Testament readings and two from the New Testament. The New Testament readings have been retained. The number of Old Testament readings has been fixed at seven, but depending upon the local situation, they may be reduced to three. The Church wishes to offer us a panoramic view of whole trajectory of salvation history, starting with creation, passing through the election and the liberation of Israel to the testimony of the prophets by which this entire history is directed ever more clearly towards Jesus Christ. In the liturgical tradition all these readings were called prophecies. Even when they are not directly foretelling future events, they have a prophetic character, they show us the inner foundation and orientation of history. They cause creation and history to become transparent to what is essential. In this way they take us by the hand and lead us towards Christ, they show us the true Light.

At the Easter Vigil, the journey along the paths of sacred Scripture begins with the account of creation. This is the liturgy’s way of telling us that the creation story is itself a prophecy. It is not information about the external processes by which the cosmos and man himself came into being.
The Fathers of the Church were well aware of this. They did not interpret the story as an account of the process of the origins of things, but rather as a pointer towards the essential, towards the true beginning and end of our being. Now, one might ask: is it really important to speak also of creation during the Easter Vigil? Could we not begin with the events in which God calls man, forms a people for himself and creates his history with men upon the earth? The answer has to be: no. To omit the creation would be to misunderstand the very history of God with men, to diminish it, to lose sight of its true order of greatness. The sweep of history established by God reaches back to the origins, back to creation. Our profession of faith begins with the words: “We believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.” If we omit the beginning of the Credo, the whole history of salvation becomes too limited and too small. The Church is not some kind of association that concerns itself with man’s religious needs but is limited to that objective. No, she brings man into contact with God and thus with the source of all things. Therefore we relate to God as Creator, and so we have a responsibility for creation. Our responsibility extends as far as creation because it comes from the Creator. Only because God created everything can he give us life and direct our lives. Life in the Church’s faith involves more than a set of feelings and sentiments and perhaps moral obligations. It embraces man in his entirety, from his origins to his eternal destiny. Only because creation belongs to God can we place ourselves completely in his hands. And only because he is the Creator can he give us life for ever. Joy over creation, thanksgiving for creation and responsibility for it all belong together.

The central message of the creation account can be defined more precisely still. In the opening words of his Gospel, Saint John sums up the essential meaning of that account in this single statement: “In the beginning was the Word.” In effect, the creation account that we listened to earlier is characterized by the regularly recurring phrase: “And God said...” The world is a product of the Word, of the *Logos*, as Saint John expresses it, using a key term from the Greek language. “Logos” means “reason,” “sense,” “word.” It is not reason pure and simple, but creative Reason, that speaks and communicates itself. It is Reason that both is and creates sense. The creation account tells us, then, that the world is a product of creative Reason. Hence it tells us that, far from there being an absence of reason
and freedom at the origin of all things, the source of everything is creative Reason, love, and freedom. Here we are faced with the ultimate alternative that is at stake in the dispute between faith and unbelief: are irrationality, lack of freedom and pure chance the origin of everything, or are reason, freedom and love at the origin of being? Does the primacy belong to unreason or to reason? This is what everything hinges upon in the final analysis. As believers we answer, with the creation account and with Saint John, that in the beginning is reason. In the beginning is freedom. Hence it is good to be a human person. It is not the case that in the expanding universe, at a late stage, in some tiny corner of the cosmos, there evolved randomly some species of living being capable of reasoning and of trying to find rationality within creation, or to bring rationality into it. If man were merely a random product of evolution in some place on the margins of the universe, then his life would make no sense or might even be a chance of nature. But no, Reason is there at the beginning: creative, divine Reason. And because it is Reason, it also created freedom; and because freedom can be abused, there also exist forces harmful to creation. Hence a thick black line, so to speak, has been drawn across the structure of the universe and across the nature of man. But despite this contradiction, creation itself remains good, life remains good, because at the beginning is good Reason, God’s creative love. Hence the world can be saved. Hence we can and must place ourselves on the side of reason, freedom and love—on the side of God who loves us so much that he suffered for us, that from his death there might emerge a new, definitive and healed life.

The Old Testament account of creation that we listened to clearly indicates this order of realities. But it leads us a further step forward. It has structured the process of creation within the framework of a week leading up to the Sabbath, in which it finds its completion. For Israel, the Sabbath was the day on which all could participate in God’s rest, in which man and animal, master and slave, great and small were united in God’s freedom. Thus the Sabbath was an expression of the Covenant between God and man and creation. In this way, communion between God and man does not appear as something extra, something added later to a world already fully created. The Covenant, communion between God and man, is inbuilt at the deepest level of creation. Yes, the Covenant is the inner ground of
creation, just as creation is the external presupposition of the Covenant. God made the world so that there could be a space where he might communicate his love, and from which the response of love might come back to him. From God’s perspective, the heart of the man who responds to him is greater and more important than the whole immense material cosmos, for all that the latter allows us to glimpse something of God’s grandeur.

Easter and the paschal experience of Christians, however, now require us to take a further step. The Sabbath is the seventh day of the week. After six days in which man in some sense participates in God’s work of creation, the Sabbath is the day of rest. But something quite unprecedented happened in the nascent Church: the place of the Sabbath, the seventh day, was taken by the first day. As the day of the liturgical assembly, it is the day for encounter with God through Jesus Christ who as the Risen Lord encountered his followers on the first day, Sunday, after they had found the tomb empty. The structure of the week is overturned. No longer does it point towards the seventh day, as the time to participate in God’s rest. It sets out from the first day as the day of encounter with the Risen Lord. This encounter happens afresh at every celebration of the Eucharist, when the Lord enters anew into the midst of his disciples and gives himself to them, allows himself, so to speak, to be touched by them, sits down at table with them. This change is utterly extraordinary, considering that the Sabbath, the seventh day seen as the day of encounter with God, is so profoundly rooted in the Old Testament. If we also bear in mind how much the movement from work towards the rest-day corresponds to a natural rhythm, the dramatic nature of this change is even more striking. This revolutionary development that occurred at the very the beginning of the Church’s history can be explained only by the fact that something utterly new happened that day. The first day of the week was the third day after Jesus’ death. It was the day when he showed himself to his disciples as the Risen Lord. In truth, this encounter had something unsettling about it. The world had changed. This man who had died was now living with a life that was no longer threatened by any death. A new form of life had been inaugurated, a new dimension of creation. The first day, according to the Genesis account, is the day on which creation begins. Now it was the day of creation in a new way, it had become the day of the new creation. We
celebrate the first day. And in so doing we celebrate God the Creator and his creation. Yes, we believe in God, the Creator of heaven and earth. And we celebrate the God who was made man, who suffered, died, was buried and rose again. We celebrate the definitive victory of the Creator and of his creation. We celebrate this day as the origin and the goal of our existence. We celebrate it because now, thanks to the risen Lord, it is definitively established that reason is stronger than unreason, truth stronger than lies, love stronger than death. We celebrate the first day because we know that the black line drawn across creation does not last for ever. We celebrate it because we know that those words from the end of the creation account have now been definitively fulfilled: “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31). Amen.

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Words at the Conclusion of the Roman Curia’s Retreat in the

Dear Brothers,

Dear Fr. Léthel,

At the end of this journey of reflection, meditation and prayer in the company of the holy friends of Pope John Paul II, I would like to say to with all my heart: thank you, Fr. Léthel, for your firm guidance and for the spiritual riches you have given us. You have shown the saints to us as “stars” in the firmament of history and, with your enthusiasm and joy, you have inserted us in the circle of these saints and have shown us that it is precisely the “little” saints who are “great” saints. You have shown us that the scientia fidei and the scientia amoris go hand in hand and complete one another, that great reason and great love go hand in hand, indeed that great love sees more than reason alone.

Providence wanted these Exercises to conclude with the Feast of St. Joseph, my personal Patron and the Patron of Holy Church: a humble saint, a humble worker who was made worthy to be the Custodian of the Redeemer.
St. Matthew describes St. Joseph with one word: he was a “just” man, “dikaios,” from “dike,” and in the vision of the Old Testament, as we find it, for example, in Psalm 1; the man who is immersed in the word of God, who lives in the word of God and does not experience the Law as a “yoke” but rather as a “joy”, who dwells in — we might say — the Law as a “Gospel”. St. Joseph was just, he was immersed in the word of God, written and transmitted through the wisdom of his people, and he was trained and called in this very way to know the Incarnate Word — the Word who came among us as a man — and was predestined to look after, to protect this Incarnate Word; this remained his mission for ever: to look after Holy Church and Our Lord.

Let us entrust ourselves at this moment to his care, let us pray that he may help us in our humble service. Let us go ahead courageously under this protection. We are grateful for the humble saints, and let us pray the Lord to make us too humble in our service and thereby holy in the company of the saints.

Once again my thanks to you, Fr. Léthel, for your inspiration. Thank you!

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The Roman Curia

Decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments concerning liturgical worship in honor of Blessed John Paul II (April 2, 2011)

On account of his exceptional virtue acknowledged by the entire Catholic Church throughout the world, the Beatification of Venerable
John Paul II of happy memory is to be celebrated at the Basilica of St Peter in Rome with the Supreme Pontiff Pope Benedict XVI presiding. Given the extraordinary nature of this event and the numerous requests received concerning liturgical worship in honor of the new Blessed at certain times and in certain places, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments sees fit to communicate in a timely manner what has been decided in that respect.

**Mass of thanksgiving**

It has been decided that during the year following the Beatification of John Paul II, that is, until May 1, 2012, it will be possible to celebrate a Holy Mass of thanksgiving in certain places and on certain days. The responsibility of establishing the day or days as well as the place or places for gathering the People of God for this purpose belongs to the Diocesan Bishop. Having considered the local needs and pastoral benefits, one Holy Mass in honour of the new Blessed may be celebrated on any Sunday during the year or on another day of the week designated in numbers 10-13 of the Table of Liturgical Days.

Similarly, in religious communities, it is the responsibility of the Superior General to establish the days and places of such celebrations for the entire religious community.

As far as regards the celebration of Mass, besides the permission to sing the Gloria, the appropriate collect is to be prayed in honour of the Blessed; the other prayers, as well as the Preface, the Antiphons, and the Readings, are to be taken from the “Common of Pastors: For a Pope.” If the celebration falls on a Sunday in Ordinary Time, appropriate texts for the First Reading, Responsorial Psalm, and Gospel may be taken from the “Common of Pastors.”

**Inserting the new Blessed**

*into local liturgical calendars*

The annual celebration of Blessed John Paul II is to be inserted into the liturgical calendars of the Diocese of Rome and all the Dioceses of Poland as a “memorial” to be observed on October 22.
As for the liturgical texts, the Collect and the second reading of the Office of Readings, together with its Response, are to be inserted into the “Proper of Saints.” The other texts are to be taken from the “Common of Pastors: For a Pope.”

With regard to other local calendars, any request that the celebration Blessed John Paul II be observed as an Optional Memorial is to be submitted to this Congregation by a local Conference of Bishops when it involves an entire territory, a Diocesan Bishop when it involves an individual dioceses, and a Superior General when the request pertains to a religious community.

*Dedicating a church to God in honor of the new Blessed*

An indult of the Apostolic See is needed to dedicate a church in honor of Blessed John Paul II (cf. *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae, Praenotanda*, n. 4) unless a celebration in his memory has already been inserted into the local calendar; in this case the indult is not necessary and the memorial is elevated to a liturgical Feast in the church named for the Blessed (cf. *Congregatio de Cultu Divino Sacramentorum, Notificatio de cultu Beatorum*, May 21, 1999, n. 9).

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

*From the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, April 2, 2011.*

Antonius Card. Cañizares

Llovera Praefectus

Iosephus Augustinus

Di Noia, O.P. Archiepiscopus a Secretis

Annexes

Common of Pastors: For a Pope.

Collect

O God, who are rich in mercy
and who willed that the blessed
John Paul the Second
should preside as Pope over your
universal Church,
grant, we pray, that instructed by
his teaching,
we may open our hearts to the
saving grace of Christ,
the sole Redeemer of mankind.
Who lives and reigns.

Karol Józef Wojtyła was born in 1920 in Wadowice, Poland. After his ordination to the priesthood and theological studies in Rome, he returned to his homeland and resumed various pastoral and academic tasks. He became first auxiliary bishop and, in 1964, Archbishop of Krakow and took part in the Second Vatican Council. On October 16, 1978 he was elected Pope and took the name John Paul II. His exceptional apostolic zeal, particularly for families, young people and the sick, led him to numerous pastoral visits throughout the world. Among the many fruits which he has left as a heritage to the Church are above all his rich Magisterium and the promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church as well as the Code of Canon Law for the Latin Church and for the Eastern Churches. In Rome on April 2, 2005, the eve of the Second Sunday of Easter (or of Divine Mercy), he departed peacefully in the Lord.

Common of Pastors: For a Pope.

Office of readings
Second reading
From the Homily of Blessed John Paul II, Pope, for the Inauguration of his Pontificate
(October 22, 1978: AAS 70
[1978], 945-947)

_Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors for Christ!

Peter came to Rome! What else but obedience to the inspiration received from the Lord could have guided him and brought him to this city, the heart of the Empire? Perhaps the fisherman of Galilee did not want to come here. Perhaps he would have preferred to stay there, on the shores of Lake of Genesareth, with his boat and his nets. Yet guided by the Lord, obedient to his inspiration, he came here!

According to an ancient tradition, Peter tried to leave Rome during Nero’s persecution. However, the Lord intervened and came to meet him. Peter spoke to him and asked. “_Quo vadis, Domine_?” — “Where are you going, Lord?” And the Lord answered him at once: “I am going to Rome to be crucified again.” Peter went back to Rome and stayed here until his crucifixion.

Our time calls us, urges us, obliges us, to gaze on the Lord and to immerse ourselves in humble and devout meditation on the mystery of the supreme power of Christ himself.

He who was born of the Virgin Mary, the carpenter’s Son (as he was thought to be), the Son of the living God (as confessed by Peter), came to make us all “a kingdom of priests.”

The Second Vatican Council has reminded us of the mystery of this power and of the fact that Christ’s mission as Priest, Prophet-Teacher and King continues in the Church. Everyone, the whole People of God, shares in this threefold mission. Perhaps in the past the tiara, that triple crown, was placed on the Pope’s head in order to signify by that symbol the Lord’s plan for his Church, namely that all the hierarchical order of Christ’s Church, all “sacred power” exercised in the Church, is nothing other than service, service with a single purpose: to ensure that the whole People of God shares in this threefold mission of Christ and always remains under the power of the Lord; a power that has its source not in the powers of this world, but instead in the mystery of the Cross and the Resurrection.

The absolute, and yet sweet and gentle, power of the Lord responds to the whole depths of the human person, to his loftiest aspirations of
intellect, will and heart. It does not speak the language of force, but expresses itself in charity and truth.

The new Successor of Peter in the See of Rome today makes a fervent, humble and trusting prayer: Christ, make me become and remain the servant of your unique power, the servant of your sweet power, the servant of your power that knows no dusk. Make me a servant: indeed, the servant of your servants.

Brothers and sisters, do not be afraid to welcome Christ and accept his power. Help the Pope and all those who wish to serve Christ and with Christ’s power to serve the human person and the whole of mankind.

Do not be afraid. Open, I say open wide the doors for Christ. To his saving power open the boundaries of states, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilization and development. Do not be afraid. Christ knows “that which is in man.” He alone knows it.

So often today, man does not know that which is in him, in the depths of his mind and heart. So often he is uncertain about the meaning of his life on this earth. He is assailed by doubt, a doubt which turns into despair. We ask you, therefore, we beg you with humility and with trust, let Christ speak to man. He alone has words of life, yes, of life eternal.

Responsory

R/. Do not be afraid. The Redeemer of mankind has revealed the power of the Cross and has given his life for us. * Open, open wide the doors for Christ.

V/. In the Church we are called to partake of his power. * Open, open wide the doors for Christ.

Oration

O God, who are rich in mercy and who willed that the blessed John Paul the Second should preside as Pope over your universal Church, grant, we pray, that instructed by his teaching, we may open our hearts to the saving grace of Christ, the sole Redeemer of mankind. Who lives and reigns.
PRELATE

- New Circumscriptions
- Appointments
- Activities of the Prelate
- Pastoral Letters
- Homilies
- Articles and Interviews
New Circumscriptions

Establishment of New Circumscriptions

On April 14, 2011, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, established the quasi-region of the Congo, formerly a delegation dependent on the Prelate, by means of the following decree.

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

D E C R E T U M

Cum Delegatio Congi, a Prælato dependens, eum progressionis gradum attigerit, qui requiritur ut in Quasi-Regionem erigatur.

Perspectis nn. 150 et 152, §1 Codicis iuris particularis Operis Dei.

De Consilii Generalis atque Assessoratus Centralis consensu, Praelaturæ Quasi-Regionem Congi erigo atque erectam declaro

Datum Romæ, ex Ædibus Curiæ Praelatitiæ, die 14 mense aprili, anno 2011.

+ XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA
Praelatus Operis Dei
Rev.mus D. Dr. Ernestus Burkhart
Curiæ Prælatitiæ Cancellarius
Reg. Gen. R. lib. VI p. 39

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Appointments
Appointments

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

DECRETUM

Præsentibus his litteris te, Rev.dum D.num D.rem Æmilium Aloisium Arizmendi Echecopar, nominamus atque constituimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Regione Peruviae, 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 5 mense aprili anno 2011.

+ XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA
Praelatus Operis Dei
Rev.mus D. Dr. Ernestus Burkhart
Curiæ Prælatitiæ Cancellarius
Reg. Gen. R. lib. VI pag. 41

Decree by which Rev. Jean-Philippe Huet is appointed Vicar of the Delegation of Czechia and Slovakia.

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

DECRETUM
Præsentibus his litteris te, Rev.dum D.num D.rem Ioannem Philippum Huet, nominamus atque constituimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Delegatione Cechiæ et Slovachiae, 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 Curiae Prælatiæ, die 9 mense maio anno 2011.

+ XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA
Praelatus Operis Dei
Rev.mus D. Dr. Ernestus Burkhart
Curiae Prælatitiae Cancellarius
Reg. Gen. R. lib. VI pag. 42

Decree by which Rev. Stephen Lee is appointed Vicar of the Delegation of East Asia.

Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRIA
Dei et Apostolicæ Sedis gratia
Praelatus
D E C R E T U M

Præsentibus his litteris te, Rev.dum D.num D.rem Stephanum Lee, nominamus atque constituimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Delegatione Asiae Orientalis, 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
Decree by which Rev. Justin Gillespie is appointed Vicar of the Delegation of Ireland.

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

D E C R E T U M

Præséntibus his litteris te, Rev. dum D. num D. rem Iustinum Gillespie, nominamus atque constituimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Quasi-Regione Hiberniæ, 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 Curiae Prælatiæ, die 7 mense iunio anno 2011.

+ XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA
Praelatus Operis Dei
Activities of the Prelate

Audience with the Holy Father Benedict XVI (January 31, 2011)

On Monday, January 31, the Holy Father received in audience Bishop Javier Echevarría, the Prelate of Opus Dei.

Priestly Ordinations (May 14, 2011)

On Saturday, May 14, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Echevarría ordained 35 new priests for his presbytery. The ceremony took place in St. Eugene’s Basilica in Rome. “May your life be founded on the Eucharistic Jesus,” the Prelate said to the ordinands during his homily. From today on “the daily celebration of the Eucharist has to be in a special way for you the central moment of each day; the center and root of your life, of every day of your earthly path.”

Bishop Echevarría invited the 35 priests to live at the service of souls “one by one.” In the prayer of the Litany of the Saints, the assembly also invoked the protection of Blessed John Paul II.
Meeting with seminarians at Sedes Sapientiae on the 20th Anniversary of the International Ecclesiastical College (January 16, 2011)

This past January 16, Sunday, Bishop Javier Echevarría celebrated Holy Mass in the International Ecclesiastical College Sedes Sapientiae. A few days earlier, the college had celebrated the twentieth anniversary of its erection by the Congregation for Catholic Education, with a decree dated January 9, 1991.

In his homily, the Prelate recalled the origins of Sedes Sapientiae. It was a desire of St. Josemaría that priests and seminarians from all over the world could come to Rome to receive an in-depth theological and spiritual formation, while also spending time in the Eternal City and growing in love for the Holy Father and in a catholic, universal outlook. With the passage of the years, while the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross was being established, Don Alvaro del Portillo, his first successor, urged forward the start of this seminary, whose formation is entrusted to priests of the Prelature of Opus Dei.

At the end of Mass, Bishop Echevarría had a brief meeting with the seminarians. Almost ninety students are currently receiving formation at Sedes Sapientiae, sent by their respective bishops from 31 different countries and 64 different dioceses.
During the past six months, Bishop Echevarría had the opportunity to visit three European countries and to travel to the city of Cagliari, Sardinia, Italy.

On the 29th and 30th of January, the Prelate was in Brussels, where he encouraged the development of the apostolic work which the faithful of Opus Dei are carrying out in that country.

After Holy Week, on April 26, Bishop Echevarría traveled to Ljubljana, Slovenia. There he had get-togethers with the people of the Prelature in that country, and with a good number of cooperators and friends who take part in Opus Dei’s formational activities. He was also received by the Archbishop of Ljubljana. From Slovenia he went to Zagreb, Croatia, where he visited the Cathedral and then went to various parts of the city to meet with several persons. On April 29, he returned to Rome.

Finally, on June 18, Bishop Echevarría was in Sardinia. Right after his arrival he met with a group of diocesan priests, and suggested to them various ways to grow in their love for God, for the Church, and for the Pope. He also had a dialogue with people who take part in activities at the Asibir Cultural Center and the Castello Academy. Later he visited the Shrine of the Madonna di Bonaria, the Patroness of the Island. Finally, in the Hotel Mediterraneo, he had get-together with many families who came from all over the Island.

Message Concerning the Earthquake in Japan

While making his retreat, Bishop Echevarría sent the following message:

"From the moment that I received the first news of the earthquake in that dear land of Japan, early in the morning of Friday last week, I have not ceased praying and asking others to pray for the people there, uniting myself in heartfelt sorrow to all the families and each person, sharing in the sorrow that this misfortune has brought with it."
"I have offered suffrages for the victims, and also asked our Lord that they might intercede so that the number of dead might be small and so that all the spiritual and human help required may reach those who need it. I feel totally united, with the faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei, to the work being done to help all the persons and families who need it. Therefore I have asked the men and women of the Prelature in that country, closely united to their fellow citizens, besides praying and offering sacrifices for the present situation, to do all they can to assist in the activities aimed at helping those affected by the quake.

"I am also closely united, as are the other faithful of the Prelature, to the prayers of the Holy Father and to the bishops of Japan, also so that everyone in that country may see very clearly that the Catholic Church shares in and wants to provide assistance in everything that affects the Japanese people."

Pastoral Letters

Letter of January 2011

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

Since Christmas Eve, and repeatedly throughout the following days, the liturgy places on our lips the words from a Psalm: Sing to the Lord a new song, sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his Name: tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.[1]

This insistent invitation to joy has a clear source: the birth of the Son of God, who has become man without ceasing to be God, to attain for us true freedom. “But God the Father, in the fullness of time, sent his only-begotten Son to take flesh in Mary ever Virgin, through the Holy Spirit, and re-establish peace. In this way, by redeeming man from sin, we receive
adoption as sons (Gal 4:5) and become capable of sharing the intimacy of God. In this way the new man, the new line of the children of God (cf. Rom 6:45), is enabled to free the whole universe from disorder, restoring all things in Christ (cf. Eph 1:9-10), as they have been reconciled with God (see Col 1:20).”[2]

The Redeemer has brought us, besides countless other gifts, the great gift of freedom, to be able to serve God through love, moved interiorly by the Holy Spirit, who has made us “sons in the Son.”[3] By our incorporation in Christ’s Mystical Body, the fear that had kept us subject to slavery has been cast off completely. As St. Paul reminds us: you were called to freedom... For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.[4]

As St. Josemaría said, commenting on some words from the Gospel, veritas liberabit vos,[5] the truth will set you free: “What is this great truth, which opens the way to freedom and gives it meaning throughout our lives? I will sum it up for you, with the joy and certainty which flow from knowing there is a close relationship between God and his creatures. It is the knowledge that we have come from the hands of God, that the Blessed Trinity looks upon us with predilection, that we are children of so wonderful a Father. I ask my Lord to help us decide to take this truth to heart, to dwell upon it day by day; only then will we be acting as free men. Do not forget: anyone who does not realize that he is a child of God is unaware of the deepest truth about himself. When he acts he lacks the dominion and self-mastery we find in those who love our Lord above all else.”[6]

I like to dwell on so many considerations from our Father because they are “gold coins” that God has placed in our hands. Let us draw all the meaning that is contained in words written by a person who sought only to foster the following of Jesus Christ and service to the Holy Church and souls. Once again I advise you: have more frequent recourse to this treasure, which will unite us closely to the wishes of heaven.

Freedom to love God, and, through him, all mankind, is one of the principal consequences of divine filiation. Therefore we have to defend it, respect it and foster it in all areas of life. This is the theme for the World
Day of Peace that is celebrated today, on the 1st of January. Benedict XVI, in his message entitled *Religious Freedom, the Path to Peace*, directed an urgent call to statesmen, religious leaders, and all men and women of good will, urging them to promote and defend this great good, proper to those who have been created in God’s image and likeness. Together with the good of life, it forms the deepest foundation of all human rights. “In short,” wrote the Pope, “openness to truth and perfect goodness, openness to God, is rooted in human nature; it confers full dignity on each individual, and is the guarantee of full mutual respect between persons. Religious freedom should be understood, then, not merely as immunity from coercion, but even more fundamentally as an ability to order one’s own choices in accordance with truth.”[^7]

We recall here the passionate defense of the divine gift of freedom that St. Josemaría waged his whole life. As our Founder said so clearly in his answer to a journalist’s question: “From its foundation Opus Dei has never practiced discrimination of any kind. It works and lives with everyone because it sees in each person a soul that must be respected and loved. These are not mere words. Our Work is the first Catholic organization which, with the authorization of the Holy See, admits non-Catholics, whether Christian or not, as cooperators. 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. Error is overcome by prayer, by God’s grace, and by study; never by force, always with charity.”[^8]

Unfortunately, the civil right to honor and serve God in accord with the dictates of one’s conscience is today encountering great obstacles in many countries. As the Roman Pontiff lamented, in not a few places “at present, Christians are the religious group which suffers most from persecution on account of its faith”[^9] — a persecution that frequently (and we have recently, once again, been witnesses to this reality) results in martyrdom. “In other places,” the Holy Father continued, “we see more subtle and sophisticated forms of prejudice, of hostility towards believers and religious symbols.”[^10] This also happens in countries with a Christian majority and a centuries-old Christian tradition. Faced with these abuses of power, no honorable man or woman should remain unconcerned. “This
situation is unacceptable, since it represents an insult to God and to human
dignity; furthermore, it is a threat to security and peace, and an obstacle to
the achievement of authentic and integral human development.”[11]

Don’t think that the current situation is new in the world. Perhaps in
our days it is more widespread and takes on new forms, in part because
communication is easier and more rapid, although public opinion does not
always give the importance that it merits to religious intolerance. But this is
not something new in history, as Jesus himself warned: “If the world hates
you, know that it has hated me before you... The servant is not greater than
his master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they
had kept my teaching, they would also keep yours.”[12]

The Old Testament had already foretold that this would happen. Let
us listen once again to St. Josemaría: “Do you remember the second psalm?
“Why do the nations conspire, and the people plot in vain? The kings of
the earth set themselves up and the rulers take council together, against the
Lord and his anointed.” You see: nothing new. People opposed Christ, the
anointed, even before he was born. They opposed him as he went his
peaceable way along the roads of Palestine; they persecuted him and
continue to do so by attacking the members of his real and mystical Body.
Why so much hatred, why are people so easily taken in, why this universal
smothering of the freedom of every conscience?”[13] This is a question that
many people have asked down through the centuries. The answer is found
in Sacred Scripture, especially the Book of Revelation, which—in language
filled with images and symbols—describes the Church’s struggle
throughout the course of history, until Christ comes in glory to take
definitive possession of his kingdom.

“True, many people are bent on injustice. But the Lord insists: “Ask of
me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth
your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in
pieces like a potter’s vessel.” (Ps 2:8-9) That is a strong promise, and it’s
God who makes it. We cannot tone it down. Not for nothing is Christ the
Redeemer of the world; he rules as sovereign, at the right hand of the
Father.”[14] In his Message, the Pope urges us, first of all, to pray: “I ask all
Catholics for their prayers for their brothers and sisters in the faith who are
victims of violence and intolerance.”[15]
Let us go to our Lord each day with true faith and trust, with a sincere petition for all who are suffering persecution—whether hidden or open—because of their religious convictions. In inviting you to do so, I remind you of those words of our Lord that were often on our Father’s lips, and that we recite in the Work every day: *ut omnes unum sint!* — that all may be united as one, out of love for God and respect for those who are made in God’s image. Thus we can help to “build a world in which all are free to profess their religion or their faith, and to express their love of God with all their heart, with all their soul and with all their mind (cf. *Mt 22:37*."

To prevent this yearning for universal fraternity from remaining an ineffective desire, let us strive to treat other Catholics, each one, with the greatest possible understanding and refinement, loving all the paths that lead to God in the heart of the Church. Let us recall that passage from the Gospel about the intolerance of some of Jesus’ apostles (the Holy Spirit had not yet descended upon them) when faced with the actions of persons who were not counted among the disciples. ‘Teacher we saw a man casting out demons in your name and we forbade him, because he was not following us.’ But Jesus said: ‘Do not forbid him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us, is for us.’

As our Father used to say regarding this passage: “My children, never place obstacles to the apostolic work of those who are working for Jesus Christ... We aren’t bothered by anyone. We are very happy to see everyone working apostolically. The world of souls is an immense sea! May you love the apostolic work of others. No one gets in our way.”

Today, and always, it is very important to teach everyone (especially the young generations) to act in this way. For example, what a great work can be done by the father or mother of a family with their children at home, through their example and timely teaching. And a teacher with Christian criteria can do the same at school, and a friend with his or her friends, in the apostolate of friendship and confidence that St. Josemaría taught us to carry out. This is a very effective way to combat “religious fundamentalism and secularism,” which are, as the Pope points out, “alike in that both represent extreme forms of a rejection of legitimate pluralism and the
principle of secularity.”[20] With a constant capillary action, although it may not seem of great importance, the result will be that of the stone thrown in the lake which produces larger and larger circles, each at a greater distance.[21] Do you shun gossip, which unfortunately is so common? Do you truly try to understand others and, when necessary, make a fraternal correction? Do you respect and not coerce the personalities of the others?

Moreover each one, in the use of his or her legitimate civil freedom, should try to exert an influence on society’s customs and laws, with the honorable means available, inviting other people of good will to assist you, even if they do not have faith. For, as Benedict XVI insisted, “religious freedom is not the exclusive patrimony of believers, but of the whole family of the earth’s peoples. It is an essential element of a constitutional state; it cannot be denied without at the same time encroaching on all fundamental rights and freedoms, since it is their synthesis and keystone.”[22]

We are approaching a new anniversary of our Father’s birth. On this date, we can offer him the present of being very faithful to his teachings and spreading them, so that many more people get to know his life and writings better. Those of us who have lived at his side and have known him personally can testify to the truth of these words of his: “I have spent my whole life preaching personal freedom, with personal responsibility. I have sought freedom throughout the world and I’m still looking for it, just like Diogenes trying to find an honest man. And every day I love it more. Of all the things on earth, I love it most. It is a treasure which we do not appreciate nearly enough.”[23] In the life and teachings of this priest enamored of God—and therefore of freedom—we find answers for the longings of so many friends and colleagues who are seeking the good and happiness, and who fail to find them, because no one has shown them where to look.

Before finishing, I would like to share with you my joy from my trip to Bucharest, in Romania, before Christmas. The people of the Work there are joyfully confronting the difficulties that come from the lack of space and the minimum of comfort needed, as our Father stressed, basing himself on the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas. And this has resulted in a lot of fruit for souls. I was there only two days, very intense ones, during which I could touch with my hands, once more, how the spirit of Opus Dei is
taking root in places of very diverse cultures and traditions. Help me to give thanks to God, and continue praying for the Church and for the Pope, closely united to all my intentions, which are many!

With all my affection, I bless you and wish you a 2011 filled with spiritual fruit.

Your Father,

+ Javier

Rome, January 1, 2011


[8] St. Josemaría, Conversations, no. 44.


[10] Ibid.


[14] Ibid., no. 186.


Letter of March 2011

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

“There is nothing so pleasing and desired by God, than that men and women convert to him with sincere repentance.”[1] These words are always very timely, even more so in the upcoming weeks with Lent about to begin. In the liturgy for Ash Wednesday, with words from St. Paul, the Church earnestly exhorts us not to neglect the grace of God that you have received. For he says: At the favorable time, I have listened to you, on the day of salvation I came to your help. Well, now is the favorable time; this is the day of salvation.[2]

In the Christian view of life, “every moment must be favorable and every day must be a day of salvation, but the Church's Liturgy, the Holy Father says, speaks of this in a very special way in the season of Lent.”[3] The weeks that we are preparing for are especially apt for drawing once again closer to God, led by his grace. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to make us discover the seriousness of this call, so that these days do not pass by our soul, as St. Josemaría wrote, “like rain on stones, leaving no trace.”[4] Rather let us beseech him that the waters of his grace may “soak into me,
changing me. I will be converted; I will turn again to the Lord and love him as he wants to be loved.”[5]

We shouldn’t think here only of the conversion of a sinner, who decides to open himself to grace, passing from spiritual death to Life. It also includes the daily changes that lead us to come closer to God, to share more fully in Christ’s life through receiving the sacraments, to foster a spirit of prayer, to place ourselves at the effective service of the spiritual and material good of others. As Benedict XVI said: “Conversion means swimming against the tide, where the "tide" is the superficial lifestyle, inconsistent and deceptive, that often sweeps us along, overwhelms us and makes us slaves to evil, or at least prisoners of moral mediocrity. With conversion, on the other hand, we are aiming for the high standard of Christian living; we entrust ourselves to the living and personal Gospel which is Jesus Christ.”[6]

In the Church, our Lord has provided us with many paths, many ways to foster successive personal conversions, so necessary for Christian life. Let us recall, in words from St. Josemaría, that these spiritual changes have to be carried out perseveringly, and even many times in the course of a single day. “Beginning again? Yes. Every time you make an act of contrition—and you should make many every day—you begin again, because you offer a new love to God.”[7] Do we frequently remember that God is awaiting us right here and now? Do we stop to consider: Lord, what do you want from me? Are we eager to draw closer and closer to Christ?

But I would like to turn now to a specific way of strengthening our friendship with the Blessed Trinity: attending a spiritual retreat, which in many places are more frequent during Lent. Although obviously not offered exclusively during these weeks, the liturgy of this time, with its urgent call to a change of life, invites many Christians to take part during these days in an activity of this type. The same can be said of the monthly days of recollection, which occupy an important place among the means of spiritual formation that the Prelature offers to thousands of people throughout the world.

St. Josemaría pointed out that this spiritual practice has been common in the Church right from the first centuries. Whenever someone sought to
prepare for a mission, or simply sensed a greater need to correspond more fully to the touches of grace, he or she strove to draw closer to God. “The early Christians already made retreats. After Christ’s ascension into heaven, we find the Apostles and a large group of faithful gathered in the Cenacle, in the company of our Lady, awaiting the outpouring of the Paraclete that Jesus had promised them. There the Holy Spirit finds them *perseverantes unanimiter in oratione* (Acts 1:14), immersed in prayer.

“Likewise those souls in the times of early Christianity, who without separating themselves from their life alongside others dedicated themselves to God in their homes; and the anchorites who went out into the desert, to dedicate themselves in solitude to speaking with God…and to work! All Christians sincerely concerned about their soul have in one way or another made a retreat. Because it is a Christian practice.”[8]

From the first years of the Work, our Founder gave great importance to these periods dedicated exclusively to prayer and examination, which are so necessary for keeping one’s interior life enkindled. “What are you and I going to do during these days of retreat?,” he asked on one occasion. And he answered: “we are going to draw very close to our Lord, to seek him out, like Peter, and carry on an intimate conversation with him. Notice that I say “conversation”: a dialogue between two people, face to face, without hiding in anonymity. We need personal prayer, intimacy, direct contact with God our Lord.”[9]

At the beginning of his Pontificate, Benedict XVI once again recommended the practice of spiritual retreats, “particularly those that are made in complete silence.”[10] And in his traditional message for Lent this year, referring to the Gospel on the second Sunday narrating the Transfiguration of our Lord, he said: “It is the invitation to step aside from the noise of everyday life in order to immerse oneself in God’s presence. He desires to hand down to us, each day, a Word that penetrates the depths of our spirit, where we discern good from evil (cf. Heb 4:12), reinforcing our will to follow the Lord.”[11]

In order to draw fruit from these means “of formation and transformation,” as our Father called them, we have to recollect our senses and faculties; otherwise it would be very difficult—not to say
impossible—to discover the lights the Paraclete kindles in the soul and listen to his voice, which suggests to us specific points of struggle in order to follow Christ closely and walk at his pace.

Therefore, my daughters and sons, I advise you not to neglect this feature—silence—on your days of recollection and retreats, adapted as needed to the specific circumstances of those taking part in these means of formation. For the situation is different for those who already have a certain familiarity with spiritual matters, than for those who are taking their first steps in the Christian life. Like the faithful and wise steward of whom the Gospel speaks, we have to know how to give them their portion of food at the proper time.[12]

Therefore, in looking after the various apostolic activities and the persons who come to them, it is good to organize these days of retreat taking into account, with supernatural outlook, the specific situations of those attending, even though this may require multiplying their number. For the same reason, as our Founder always insisted, the days of recollection, circles, etc., should never be cancelled, when fewer people attend than initially expected: even when only one person comes.

In short, as we read in Furrow, the retreat has to be a time of “recollec tion in order to know God, to know yourself and thus to make progress. A necessary time for discovering where and how you should change your life. What should I do? What should I avoid?”[13] During these days of retreat, St. Josemaría tells us, “your examination of conscience should be more searching than the usual nightly moment. Otherwise you miss a great chance to put things right.”[14]

The liturgy of Lent provides abundant material for meditation, as the Holy Father emphasized in his message. The scene of Christ’s temptations in the desert, which we read on the first Sunday, reminds us that “Christian faith, following the example of Jesus and in union with him, entails struggling against the ruling forces who are masters of the darkness in this world (Eph 6: 12), in which the devil is at work and never tires—even today—of tempting whoever wishes to draw close to the Lord.”[15] So we have to consider whether we are preparing ourselves for this combat, making trusting use of the supernatural means. St. Josemaría suggested a
very supernatural tactic: “carry on the war—the daily battles of your interior life—far from the main walls of your fortress.

And the enemy comes to meet you there: in your small mortifications, in your daily prayer, in your orderly work, in your plan of life. And only with difficulty does he come close to the easily-scaled battlements of your castle. And if he does, he arrives exhausted.”[16]

On the following Sunday we hear the voice of our heavenly Father who, pointing to Christ, tells us: This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.[17] We have to strive more diligently to discover, in our periods of personal prayer, what God is saying to each of us, in order to put it into practice. And we need to consider how we are relying on the grace that comes to us through the sacraments, and also on the advice that we receive in personal spiritual direction.

When the third Sunday of Lent arrives, on March 27, the liturgy presents to us “the question that Jesus puts to the Samaritan woman: Give me a drink (Jn 4:7), which... expresses God’s passionate love for every man and woman, and seeks to awaken in our hearts the desire for the gift of a spring of water within, welling up to eternal life (Jn 4:14).”[18] Let us eagerly embrace the call to always be aware that we, his disciples, have to bring his light and grace everywhere: above all, by helping our friends and relatives to reconcile themselves with God through the sacrament of Penance; and also by inviting them to take part in a day of recollection or retreat during these weeks.

We are approaching the solemnity of St. Joseph, patron of the Church and of the Work. Let us prepare ourselves to renew on the 19th our commitment of love with God in the Work, and to pray with confidence to the Holy Patriarch that he obtain from God the grace so that many men and women, of all ages and walks of life, may decide to follow Jesus Christ in Opus Dei.

Also on that day we have a new anniversary of the solemn execution of the Bull Ut Sit, by which the beloved John Paul II erected Opus Dei as a personal prelature, thus specifying the organic cooperation of priests and laity in carrying out the inspiration that our Lord put in the soul of St. Josemaría on October 2, 1928. We have an obligation to be very faithful,
with the awareness that the Holy Spirit wanted the Second Vatican Council to establish this structure, opening up a channel for pastoral needs in the Church.

The 28th is the anniversary of our Father’s priestly ordination. Let us give great thanks to the Blessed Trinity because each of us is truly a child of our Founder’s readiness to receive Christ’s priesthood. Without his generous and total acceptance of the divine will, there would have been no Opus Dei in the Church. The founding of the Work was the answer to the question, “why am I becoming a priest?,” which our Father raised during his seminary years in Saragossa, and which was the deepest reason for his determination to begin and continue that path.

Let us go to his intercession, praying that in every country the number of priestly vocations may increase: faithful men, in love with God, who dedicate themselves joyfully to the service of souls, with full fidelity to the Pope and in close union with their respective diocesan bishops. And also that there not be lacking in the Work the priests needed to take care of the apostolic endeavors that our Lord is asking of us. At the same time, let us pray insistently to the Blessed Trinity that all Catholics, both men and women, may nourish the priestly soul that God has placed in each and every one of us.

Continue praying for the Pope and for those who assist him, especially during the first week of Lent, when spiritual exercises are preached in the Roman Curia. We too will take advantage of those days for our annual retreat. I hope with real eagerness that you will accompany me spiritually during those days. I don’t mind telling you that every day I beseech our Lord that none of us may waste the torrent of graces that God grants us through these means.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father

+Javier

Rome, March 1, 2011


Letter of May 2011

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

In our hearts there still resounds, now and always, the echo of the Church’s joy: surrexit Dominus vere et apparuit Simoni; the Lord has truly risen and has appeared to Simon[1] With this exclamation of supernatural and human joy, the Apostles in the Cenacle at Jerusalem, as the first Christian Easter was ending, received the two disciples who urgently returned from Emmaus in the middle of the night. Cleophas and his
companion told them that Jesus had appeared to them on their way to that village and had even sat at table with them.

How easy it is for us to understand the surprise of those men, witnesses to the Master’s ignominious death! And also why they had not believed the news of the holy women who at the first hour of the morning, next to the Lord’s empty tomb, had received this extraordinary announcement: Do not be afraid; go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me. Nevertheless (how wonderfully close God is to us!), so great was Jesus’ desire to console his own, to restore their faith and joy, that he did not wait for them to reunite in Galilee. That very night he entered the room where they were staying with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, and he greeted them: peace be with you. The disciples were startled and frightened, St. Luke tells us, and supposed that they saw a spirit. And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have.” Then he asked them for something to eat, so that they would be firmly convinced it was really he, the good Master who had triumphed over the devil and over sin, who had broken the chains of death.

During the first week of Easter, the Church has meditated joyfully, once and again, on the Gospel texts that recount for us Christ’s resurrection. She does so with gratitude and deep emotion, filled with faith in her Lord’s victory. This event is unique in mankind’s history, an event that shows us, at the same time, the exemplar of the universal resurrection on the last day. By Baptism we have been incorporated into Christ and made sharers in his death and resurrection. Dead to sin and resurrected to the life of grace, we now walk with a new life, while we await the complete renewal of our being. For, as St. Paul writes, if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Once more we marvel at the omnipotence and mercy of God. Christ’s resurrection did not mean simply a return to a previous life, as was the case with Lazarus, with the daughter of Jairus or with the son of the widow at Naim, whom our Lord called from physical death and extended their earthly existence for a few years until they once again would die. “The New
Testament testimonies leave us in no doubt that what happened in the “Resurrection of the Son of Man” was utterly different. Jesus’ Resurrection was about breaking out into an entirely new form of life, into a life that is no longer subject to the law of dying and becoming, but lies beyond it—a life that opens up a new dimension of human existence. Therefore the Resurrection of Jesus is not an isolated event that we could set aside as something limited to the past, but it constitutes an ‘evolutionary leap’. In Jesus’ Resurrection a new possibility of human existence is attained that affects everyone and that opens up a future, a new kind of future, for mankind.”[6]

In the history of the world, the announcement of Christ’s resurrection is the “good news” par excellence. To bear witness to that fact, the Apostles dispersed throughout the world, after overcoming all their fears. The martyrs were strong under every torment and even death itself. Many confessors and virgins set aside their ambition and comfort here below, to strive with all their strength for eternal goods. And countless ordinary Christians throughout the centuries have raised their eyes to heaven, as they worked with rectitude and love for God and mankind in the concerns of this world.

What makes Christ’s resurrection so special is that his Most Holy Humanity, with his body and soul reunited again, was completely transfigured in the glory of God the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit, as we see clearly in the accounts of his apparitions to his disciples, without thereby ceasing to be a true human nature. It is an event, certainly, that exceeds all our experience. This historical fact, based on the testimony of completely credible witnesses, is at the same time the fundamental object of supernatural faith. As St. Augustine said, “It is no great thing to believe that Christ died... All believe that Christ died. But that He rose from the dead is the belief of Christians. To believe that He rose again, this we deem of great moment.”[7]

Perhaps we sometimes have asked ourselves why Jesus after rising didn’t show himself to everyone so that all would believe in him. Benedict XVI writes: “The origins of anything new have always been small, practically invisible, and easily overlooked. The Lord himself has told us that the ‘kingdom of heaven’ in this world is like a mustard seed, the
smallest of all the seeds (cf. Mt 13:31-32), yet contained within it are the infinite potentialities of God.[8] And he concludes: So it is that the Resurrection has entered the world only through certain mysterious appearances to the chosen few. And yet it was truly the new beginning for which the world was silently waiting.”[9]

Over the centuries, faith in our Lord’s resurrection has spread throughout the world; it has taken root in new cultures and civilizations, with the assistance of believers, members of the Mystical Body journeying on earth. As St. Josemaría insisted so forcefully, now it is up to you and to me, to all Christians, to give witness to Christ with our conduct and our words.

“The Good News of Easter, therefore, requires the action of enthusiastic and courageous witnesses. Each disciple of Christ, and also each one of us, is called to be a witness. This is the precise, demanding and exalting mandate of the Risen Lord. The ‘news’ of new life in Christ must shine out in the life of Christians; it must be alive and active in those who bring it, really capable of changing hearts and the whole of life.”[10] Are we nourishing every day a firm, robust faith in the triumph of our Lord? Does the realization that Christ has truly risen imbue us with confidence on our path? Are we constantly striving to make this known to those around us, on all the crossroads of our earthly journey?

For all these reasons, “Easter is a time of joy—a joy not confined to this period of the liturgical year, but to be found really and fully in the Christian’s heart. For Christ is alive. He is not someone who has gone, someone who existed for a time and then passed on, leaving us a wonderful example and a great memory.

No, Christ is alive. Jesus is the Emmanuel: God with us. His resurrection shows us that God does not abandon his own.”[11]

Jesus Christ, while now with his Father in glory, continues being present in the Church, especially in the Eucharist, and through grace in the heart of every Christian. By Baptism we have received the new life that our Lord possesses in its fullness; the other sacraments bring this supernatural existence to an ever greater perfection. Only with the resurrection of the body will there be fully accomplished in the members of the Mystical Body
the full glorification that our Head, Jesus, now possesses, with his Blessed Mother, who is our Mother also. Nevertheless, as our Founder stressed, already here below “our faith teaches us that man, in the state of grace, is divinized—filled with God. We are men and women, not angels. We are flesh and blood, people with sentiments and passions, with sorrows and joys. And this divinization affects everything human; it is a sort of foretaste of the final resurrection.”[12] Would that there may constantly rise up from our hearts an act of thanksgiving for the realization that we are children of God the Father, in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

This foretaste of final glory shines more brightly in the life of the saints, especially those the Church holds up to us as an example of virtue and offers for our veneration. As is only natural, the final triumph of these brothers and sisters of ours brings us great joy. And our joy is especially strong today, May 1, for the beatification of our beloved John Paul II. Although the great majority of you were not able to come to Rome to take part in this celebration, all of us feel very closely united in our hearts to this great feast of the whole Church.

We all knew this great Pontiff, who spent his life generously for souls right up to his final moments here on earth. We were witnesses to the strength of his faith, to the sureness of his hope, to the ardor of his charity, which embraced all men and women. Moreover in Opus Dei, as I have reminded you on various occasions, we have a great debt of gratitude to the new Blessed; above all because John Paul II was the instrument God used to grant us the Work’s definitive juridical structure and the canonization of St. Josemaría. It is only natural then that we now feel a special joy for his being raised to the altars and thank God for the gift he has granted to the Church. I myself will celebrate a solemn Mass of thanksgiving on the third of May. Unite yourself with greater intensity, if possible, to my Mass on that day, asking for all the intentions that I will present to our Lord through the intercession of the new Blessed.

We are also beginning the month of May. During these weeks, the Church invites us to honor Mary Most Holy in a special way. I suggest that you go to the intercession of our Father and John Paul II, asking them to obtain for us—in these days immediately following the Pope’s beatification—the grace of loving and venerating the Mother of God with
all of our strength. Karol Wojtyla, from his early youth, offered himself entirely to Mary, as the motto inscribed on his episcopal coat of arms expressed: *Totus Tuus*. St. Josemaría as well wanted to be an absolutely faithful subject of the Queen of Heaven. On December 28, 1931, commenting on the custom of the nuns at the St. Elizabeth Foundation on the feast of the Holy Innocents, he wrote: “My Lady, not even for fun do I want you to stop being Mistress and Empress of all creation.”[13]

We too, who are, who want to be completely God’s, have to travel the Marian path that St. Josemaría left us as a legacy. “If you are going to imitate me in anything, he said, let it be in my love for our Lady.”[14] This month offers us a marvelous opportunity to foster Marian devotion, through the traditional May pilgrimage. Let us invite our friends and acquaintances to visit during these days some chapel or shrine of our Lady, praying and contemplating the mysteries of the Rosary. We will do them a great spiritual good, because “to Jesus we always go, and to him we always return,’ through Mary.”[15] Strive to do this pilgrimage with the devotion our Father had on his pilgrimage to Sonsoles. And as he suggested to us years later in his novena to our Lady of Guadalupe, in Mexico, let us bring to our Mother many small roses, those found in the events of each day.

On May 14th, the eve of the fourth Sunday of Easter (also called Good Shepherd Sunday, from the Gospel of the Mass), I will confer priestly ordination on 35 deacons, brothers of yours. As always on these occasions, I ask that we all be very closely united in prayer and in the offering of some sacrifice for the new priests and for the priests of the whole world. Keep the Pope and all the bishops especially present in your prayers, so that we may always imitate the Good Shepherd who gave his life for his sheep.[16]

Right after Holy Week, I made a quick trip to Slovenia and Croatia. In Ljubljana and in Zagreb I met with faithful of the Prelature and with many other people who are benefiting from the spirit of Opus Dei. I give thanks to God because the apostolic work of my daughters and sons is putting down strong roots in those two countries, which our Father prayed so much for. It would be hard to convey to you how much he loved every country, especially those going through difficulties of any kind.
I return to the beginning of this letter. *Surrexit Dominus vere!* “The Risen Christ is journeying ahead of us towards the new heavens and the new earth (cf. *Rev* 21:1), in which we shall all finally live as one family, as sons of the same Father. He is with us until the end of time.”[17] Hidden under the appearances of bread and wine, in a sacramental manner, he has remained in the Holy Eucharist, to listen to our prayers, to console us and fill us with strength. Let us not separate ourselves from his company; and let us bring many others to him, so that they too (forgive me for the digression, but how grateful Don Alvaro was when recalling his First Communion!) may experience the joy of being with Christ, of accompanying Christ, of living in Christ. I don’t have space here to consider all the important dates this month in the history of the Work: we can see how our Lady has shown her care for us! Let us thank her.

With all my affection, I bless you.

Your Father,
+ Javier

Rome, May 1, 2011


Homilies

At the Easter Vigil, the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, Rome (April 23, 2011)

1. Carissime sorelle e carissime figlie

L'annuncio che proclama oggi la Chiesa è colmo di gioia. Nostro Signore Gesù Cristo, dopo aver patito, essere morto e sepolto per salvarci dai nostri peccati, è risorto dai morti, come aveva predetto. «Non è più nel sepolcro», esclama San Josemaría nella sua contemplazione di questo mistero del Rosario. «—La vita ha sconfitto la morte»[1].

Questo annuncio ha cambiato il corso dell'umanità. Lo proclamarono per la prima volta gli angeli, mandati da Dio perché lo facessero conoscere al mondo. E gli angeli lo fanno sapere, in primo luogo, ad alcune donne coraggiose, che si erano recate al sepolcro per imbalsamare il corpo morto di Gesù. Presto, andate a dire ai suoi discepoli: È risuscitato dai morti, e ora vi precede in Galilea; là lo vedrete[2].

Il Santo Padre fa notare che «in questo modo, mediante le donne del Vangelo, quel mandato divino raggiunge tutti e ciascuno perché a loro volta, trasmettano ad altri, con fedeltà e con coraggio, questa stessa notizia:
una notizia bella, lieta e portatrice di gioia»[3]. Dio è con voi, conta su ciascuna di voi: siate coraggiose!

2. L'annonce de la Résurrection doit résonner jusqu'aux extrémités de la terre, jusqu'à la fin des temps. Jésus est ressuscité pour ne plus mourir! Et nous, qui avons été incorporés à sa mort par le Baptême, nous croyons que nous vivrons aussi avec lui[4], afin que comme le Christ est ressuscité des morts par la gloire du Père, nous marchions nous aussi dans une vie nouvelle[5]: la vie des enfants de Dieu.

C'est à nous maintenant de propager cette bonne nouvelle, par la parole et par les œuvres. «La Bonne Nouvelle de Pâques requiert le travail de témoins enthousiastes et courageux. Tout disciple du Christ, y compris chacun d'entre nous, est appelé à être un témoin»[6].

Saint Josemaría s'est fait l'écho du commandement du Seigneur: «“Allez, prêchez l’Évangile... Je serai avec vous...” —Voilà ce qu'a dit Jésus... et il te l'a dit à toi»[7]. Ces mots sont d'une grande actualité, ils le seront toujours, parce que Jésus cherche —comme il y a vingt siècles— des femmes et des hommes qui, partout, portent les fruits de la Rédemption. Comment? Par la sanctification de la vie ordinaire. Le Seigneur veut se servir de votre réponse de chaque jour.

3. Nunca agradeceremos suficientemente a Dios la gracia del Bautismo, donde nos ha hecho hijos suyos. Sin embargo, no basta "estar" en la Iglesia y dejar que pase el tiempo. Hemos de reaffirmar con nuestra lucha, día a día, esa elección que de nosotros ha hecho el Señor, y que nosotros hemos hecho de Él correspondiendo a su gracia.

Dentro de unos instantes renovaremos las promesas bautismales. Cuando, respondiendo a las preguntas litúrgicas, digáis que estás dispuestas renunciar a Satanás y a todas sus seducciones, y que creéis en Dios Padre todopoderoso, en Jesucristo su único Hijo y Señor nuestro, y en el Espíritu santificador, no lo digáis sólo con la boca: que vuestra respuesta, firme y decidida, salga de lo más hondo de vuestro corazón. Pidamos con fe que la Buena Nueva que ha traído Jesús, se extienda hasta el último rincón de la tierra.

Y, para eso, con plena sinceridad, veamos qué significa en concreto ese renunciar al demonio y darnos a Dios, sin componendas de ningún tipo. Si
Jesucristo no ahorró ni una gota de su sangre por nosotros, ¿vamos nosotros a regatearle lo que nos pide? Siempre que le decimos que sí, su Pascua—ese paso de la muerte a la Vida con mayúscula—se reproduce espiritualmente en nosotros, para vivir una auténtica existencia cristiana.

4. For you, these days spent in Rome, close to Christ’s Vicar on earth, are coming to an end. You have prayed here alongside the sacred remains of Saint Josemaría, and surely you have prayed before the tomb of the Servant of God John Paul II, who will be raised to the altars next week.

All of this week’s events have to have a profound impact on your soul, and they must spur your apostolic zeal. In the twenty-first century, you are—like those first women in Jerusalem—bearers of this news that has changed forever the course of history: Jesus has risen; He has conquered sin and death; He has opened up the pathway to eternal happiness, the road to Heaven. Each of you is called to bear witness to this tremendous love that God has shown us.

Spread the word to your friends, to your colleagues and classmates. Don’t be held back by human respects. In order to do this, make use of frequent Confession and invite others to do the same. Go to meet our Lord regularly in the Eucharist. Approach the Blessed Virgin with complete confidence. She was the first to rejoice upon seeing her Son risen, glorious, triumphant. During this Easter time, we pray, Regina cæli, lætare! Queen of Heaven, rejoice! And may we, through her intercession, be filled with that same joy and bear the good news of salvation to the whole world.

[6] Benoît XVI, Discours à l’Audience générale, 7-IV-2010
Mass in suffrage for Don Alvaro March 23 2011

My dear brothers and sisters:

*Scio quod Redemptor meus vivit!* (Job 19:25). I know that my Redeemer lives. These words of Job are an invitation to hope. We have to live and act with the confidence of Christ’s definitive victory over sin and death, which the coming Solemnity of Easter will make present to us. Jesus is the surest Rock of our hope, especially when we have to confront difficult circumstances, at the personal, family, or collective level.

The story of Job is an example for us. That pious man, diligent in offering God sacrifices for sins and in giving alms to the needy, suddenly began to suffer all kinds of evils: from the death of all his children to his complete financial ruin, illness, and the scorn with which he is treated by those closest to him. As the Pope says in one of his encyclicals, “Certainly Job could complain before God about the presence of incomprehensible and apparently unjustified suffering in the world.”[1]

In the face of the suffering that we are often witnesses to, we could be tempted to react in the same way: couldn’t God, who is omnipotent, completely eliminate physical and moral evil, especially when it afflicts those who are most innocent? How can he permit this? As the Holy Father writes: “Often we cannot understand why God refrains from intervening. Yet he does not prevent us from crying out, like Jesus on the Cross: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (Mt 27:46).”[2]

The Book of Job does not resolve the problem of suffering, but it encourages us to abandon ourselves into the hands of our heavenly Father. As St. Josemaria often said, “God knows more!” And oftentimes—always!—what at first seemed absurd, if we make the effort to discover divine Providence behind the appearances, ends up becoming something good. Job too, even without understanding the cause of his misfortunes, accepted God’s will and made the act of faith that we heard in the first reading. “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from
my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another” (Job 19:25-27).

2. These considerations are and always will be very timely. In the face of the sorrowful events which we have witnessed in recent weeks, only faith in our Father God enables us to shed a bit of light on those sorrowful vicissitudes. In reality, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, it is only “through Christ and in Christ [that] the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful. Apart from his Gospel, they overwhelm us. Christ has risen, destroying death by his death; He has lavished life upon us so that, as sons in the Son, we can cry out in the Spirit; Abba! Father!”[3]

We still have vivid images of the tragedy suffered in Japan as a result of the terrible earthquake and the tsunami that followed it. None of us has been unmoved by those events affecting millions of people. We have prayed, and continue to pray, for the victims, for their families, and for all the people who in one way or another have suffered the consequences of the catastrophe.

These natural disasters, as also the wars that affect so many defenseless people (in the Ivory Coast, in Libya, etc., to recall only a few conflicts) can and should help us to raise our eyes to heaven and focus on our definitive dwelling place, on Paradise, where—as Sacred Scripture teaches—God himself will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away (Rev 21:4).

It is humanly logical that such tragedies strike the depths of our heart and awaken in us—as in Job—the question of why. But, at the same time, it is supernaturally logical that we grasp more firmly to our faith. “Our protest,” writes Benedict XVI, “is not meant to challenge God, or to suggest that error, weakness, or indifference can be found in him. For the believer, it is impossible to imagine that God is powerless or that ‘perhaps he is asleep’ (cf. 1 Kg 18:27). Instead, our crying out is, as it was for Jesus on the Cross, the deepest and most radical way of affirming our faith in his sovereign power. Even in their bewilderment and failure to understand the world around them, Christians continue to believe in the ‘goodness and loving kindness of God’ (Titus 3:4). Immersed like everyone else in the
dramatic complexity of historical events, they remain unshakably certain that God is our Father and loves us, even when his silence remains incomprehensible.”[4]

3. Today, the anniversary of the death of the Servant of God Bishop Alvaro del Portillo offers us an opportunity to consider a facet of his rich Christian personality, as a priest and bishop. I am referring here to his great heart, which led him to share the sufferings of all who drew close to him and to transmit a great peace to their souls. We have the testimony of so many people who, after an encounter with my beloved predecessor, after entrusting to him their concerns, left with their peace and tranquility restored.

The source of Don Alvaro’s deep interior peace, and of his capacity to communicate it to others, was his deep faith in God our merciful Father, his trust in Jesus Christ our Savior and in the action of the Holy Spirit. In the “school” of St. Josemaría, he acquired much experience of God’s love for his creatures. He learned, by personal experience, that God permits suffering, trials and sorrows in our lives, because he wants us to become more and more like his Only Begotten Son, who died on the Cross out of love of us.

In a homily given during a Mass at the Youth Jubilee in 1984, Don Alvaro said: “Another cause of sadness can be one’s own suffering and that of others: the sorrows and setbacks, in small and large things, that—in one’s personal life and in human history—are hard to accept and that we don’t seem to be able to find a merely human solution or meaning for. How is it possible to be cheerful when faced with others’ sickness and one’s own, when faced with injustice towards others and when suffering injustice oneself? Wouldn’t cheerfulness here be a false illusion or an irresponsible escapism? No! The answer is given to us by Christ, only Christ! Only in him do we find the true meaning of our own life and the key to human history. Only in him—in his teaching, in his redemptive Cross, whose salvific power becomes present in the Church’s sacraments—will you always find the strength needed to improve the world, to make it more worthy of man, the image of God.”[5]
In the school of St. Josemaría, as I said before, Don Alvaro learned to see Christ’s passion and death as an act of love, the greatest love in history, because it was the love of God made man. We too, in the upcoming days of Easter, and always, want to follow that path: the path of the Cross. As the Founder of Opus Dei said in a homily, “We will not be able to share in our Lord’s resurrection unless we unite ourselves with him in his passion and death. If we are to accompany Christ in his glory at the end of Holy Week, we must first enter into his holocaust and be truly united to him, as he lies dead on Calvary.”[6] Let us meditate therefore on this “Lord, wounded from head to foot out of love for us... At the sight of Christ bruised and broken—just a lifeless body taken down from the Cross and given to his Mother—at the sight of Jesus destroyed in this way, we might have thought he had failed utterly. Where are the crowds that once followed him, where is the kingdom he foretold? But this is victory, not defeat. We are nearer the resurrection than ever before; we are going to see the triumph which he has won with his obedience.”[7]

Christ’s love for us was shown not only by his death on the Cross. “Jesus gave this act of oblation an enduring presence through his institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. He anticipated his death and resurrection by giving his disciples, in the bread and wine, his very self, his body and blood as the new manna (cf. Jn 6:31-33).”[8]

We are now in the time of Lent. Let us prepare ourselves as well as possible to share in Christ’s great victory over sin, suffering, and death. It is the moment to renew the resolutions that perhaps we have made at the beginning of this Liturgical time: more love and attention in our prayers, more perseverance in the fulfillment of our small mortifications, more generosity in offering alms and in practicing other forms of charity. Special emphasis could be given to receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation more fruitfully, with a more diligent preparation and a greater sorrow for our sins. Let us strive to make better use of confession and encourage many people to have recourse to this sacrament.

Let us contemplate Jesus suffering on the Cross, who assures us that he does not want to leave us alone in our sorrows. He suffered for us because he loves us, and to teach us that there is no Christianity, no true
supernatural and human happiness, if we are not ready to embrace the Cross \textit{quotidie}, every day.

Let us go, as always, to the intercession of our Lady so that she might obtain for us form Jesus, with greater abundance, the grace of contrition. Amen.


\[2\] Ibid.

\[3\] Vatican II, Pastoral Const. \textit{Gaudium et Spes}, no. 22.


\[5\] Msgr. Álvaro del Portillo, Homily in the Basilica of St. Paul outside the walls, April 12, 1984.

\[6\] St. Josemaría, \textit{Christ Is Passing By}, no. 95.

\[7\] Ibid.


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Homily for the Mass of Thanksgiving for the Beatification of John Paul II, Basilica of Sant'Eugenio, Rome, May 3, 2011

1. Dear Brothers and Sisters, a great joy brings the Church together today: the joy of the beatification of the beloved Pope John Paul II, whom all of us have listened to, venerated and followed in the long, fruitful years of his ministry as the Supreme Pastor of the Church. The reputation for holiness that he already enjoyed while alive, which helped the Church so much on the occasion of his passing, now takes on a new vigor. The recognition of his heroic virtues and a miraculous cure attributed to his
intercession have opened the way for his inscription in the list of the blessed, which Pope Benedict XVI carried out yesterday. It is right that we make our own the words of the Psalm: "Sing to the Lord a new song, sing to the Lord all the earth Proclaim His glory to the nations, his marvels to all peoples".\[1\]

Every declaration of holiness proclaims the glory of the Trinity. But some, like the beatification of John Paul II, influence millions of people. We saw this when the Lord called him to Himself, six years ago, and I am convinced that the same thing will happen in these days. If we invoke with faith the intercession of the new Blessed in all our needs, great and small, personal and collective, a shower of graces will rain down from Heaven for all mankind. Let us ask God that, through his intercession, He may assist the Church and civil society in their journeys with divine mercy. Let us also pray, full of hope and affection, for Pope Benedict XVI and all the bishops, priests and laity and consecrated religious, and for those who are still seeking the God whom they do not yet know. Let us pray for one another, so that each of us may encounter and love Jesus, the Son of God made man who has died and risen for our salvation.

2. Considering the repercussions that the life and death of John Paul II had on many people, I am reminded of a thought from *The Way*, in which St. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer stresses the importance of responding faithfully to God when He calls. The Founder of Opus Dei wrote: "Many great things depend — don't forget it — on whether you and I live our lives as God wants."\[2\]

This is what has happened in the case of John Paul II. From his youth, he always responded with a firm yes to the repeated calls of the Lord: to be a priest, then to be a bishop, and finally to accept the weight of serving the Church as the successor of Peter. In each case, as the then-Cardinal Ratzinger noted in his funeral Mass homily for the late pontiff, he had to renounce legitimate plans that he had already made. I would like to call attention to the first of those renunciations, without which none of what came later would have occurred.

As a young student, Karol Wojtyla had a great talent and passion for the theater, literature and poetry. When the Lord entered into his life,
calling him in a new way, he left everything to follow his vocation to the priesthood. Who could have imagined, at the time, the transcendent importance of that renunciation, which seemed quite small. And yet, that first yes, pronounced with decision, making a complete gift of self to the Lord, has produced enormous fruit for countless people around the world.

The words of the Gospel of the Mass seem especially relevant. The Lord addressed a question to Peter three times: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" And three times Peter responded with sincerity and, at the same time, with sorrow for his three denials: "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." The petition of Jesus, to entrust Peter with the task of shepherding his sheep and lambs, was this: "Follow me!" Peter followed the Lord, even imitating His death on the cross, here in the city of Rome.

John Paul II always maintained this total dedication. The first years of his pontificate — said Cardinal Ratzinger in the homily referred to earlier — young and full of energy, the Holy Father went to the very ends of the earth, guided by Christ. But afterward, he increasingly entered into the communion of Christ's sufferings; increasingly he understood the truth of the words: 'someone else will dress you.' And in this very communion with the suffering Lord, tirelessly and with renewed intensity, he proclaimed the Gospel, the mystery of that love which goes to the end (cf. John 13:1).

3. The events of these days have left a deep mark on our souls. When you have returned to your daily lives, I recommend that you meditate on these events in your personal prayer, trying to see what God is asking of you: above all, more dedication in your life of prayer and in the sanctification of your work, a greater attention to your family, more apostolic zeal in your dealings with friends and acquaintances.

The month of May, dedicated in a special way to Mary, has just begun. From her, our beloved John Paul II learned to love Jesus even unto the madness of the Cross. While being close to the Cross, he understood that the words of Jesus — Behold your mother — were addressed to him. And like John, he welcomed the Virgen into his house and into the very depths of his soul.

I would like to add that I have always been impressed by the coincidences of love for God that can be seen in the lives of Blessed John
Paul II and Saint Josemaría. Both of them dedicated themselves completely to the Lord through the intercession of the Blessed Virgen; both of them, conscious of their creaturely smallness, were devotees of the Divine Mercy: they recited with great piety those words invoking God as a Merciful Father that are so characteristic of this devotion. I would suggest that you take refuge in the Lord, abandoning your lives and actions into the hands of our heavenly Father.

Let us entrust these resolutions to Holy Mary as well. And since we are weak, we can bring her this month the offering of our aspirations, our work well done, our small mortifications. As Saint Josemaría said in Mexico, before Our Lady of Guadalupe, these things are "little roses, those of ordinary life; common roses but full of the fragrance of sacrifice and of love."[8] In this way, we will become, as John Paul II often said, totus tuus — all yours.

[1] Responsorial psalm (95 [96]: 1, 3)
[4] Ibid.

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At the Mass In Cena Domini on Holy Thursday in the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace Rome (April 21, 2011)
1. Dear brothers and dearest sons.

“Before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”[1]

St. John’s introduction to his narration of the Last Supper moves us and fills us with gratitude. The great moment, the “hour” for which Jesus had come into the world, is about to arrive: the hour of our redemption. Benedict XVI has written that “what is essential about this hour is described by John with two basic ideas: it is the hour of ‘passing’; it is the hour of love ‘to the end.’”[2]

The two expressions explain each other. If the death of Jesus on the Cross, and his subsequent Resurrection, form the path, chosen by God, so that the Holy Humanity of the Lord should enter into the glory of the Father, it is also true that this ineffable moment is the result of love that he shows to the very end, offering his life as a ransom for our sins. Jesus had said, *Greater love no man has than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends.*[3] Now his words will be completely fulfilled. This love to the end, for each and every human being, achieves what seems impossible: it overcomes the barriers of a narrow individualism, closed in on itself by sin, and enters into the realm of the divine, taking all of redeemed mankind with it.

But before taking this great step, through the sacrifice of the Cross, Jesus Christ left us a marvelous memorial. He institutes the sacrament of the Eucharist so that, until the end of time, the Church can always and everywhere make present the sacrifice of his Body and Blood, through the celebration of the Holy Mass. Once again, we have listened to the words of St. Paul: *the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body which is given up for you. Do this in memory of me.’ In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.*[4]

Jesus continues loving us to the end, because every time that the priest celebrates the Sacrifice of the Altar, he gives himself up for us again, now in
a glorious way, by the working of the Holy Spirit. Let us bow down in reverence before this mystery of faith and love, before this miracle of divine omnipotence, participating with devotion—if possible, every day—in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. As St. Josemaría wrote: “to live the Holy Mass means to pray continually, and to be convinced that, for each one of us, this is a personal meeting with God. We adore him, we praise him, we give thanks to him, we atone for our sins, we are purified, we experience a unity with Christ and with all Christians.”[5]

2. *Ubi caritas et amor Deus ibi est!*; là où il y a la charité et l’amour, là se trouve Dieu. Aussi, là où le Seigneur se rend présent — ce qui est le cas de manière toute particulière dans la Sainte Eucharistie — là règne l’amour. Demandons à l’Esprit Saint que, lorsque nous récitons cet hymne, nous arrivions à mieux comprendre le mystère de don de soi que renferme l’institution de l'Eucharistie et du Sacerdoce, même si nous ne pouvons embrasser son infinie grandeur. Voici la réponse limpide de Dieu aux enfants qui ont besoin de lui, y compris à nous qui l’avons offensé. C’est ainsi que le Seigneur se comporte toujours; il nous invite à changer, à être plus surnaturels et, par conséquent, plus humains.

Dans ce mystère, qui n’a d’autre explication que la toute puissance divine et la miséricorde amoureuse de Dieu notre Père, nous pouvons découvrir combien il nous faut aimer davantage encore. En restant parmi nous, en se donnant à chacun jusqu’au bout, Jésus Christ nous incorpore à sa Vie même, pour que nous puissions exercer pleinement la capacité d’aimer qu’il nous a donnée.

Saint Josemaría, toujours plus étonné devant la manière d’agir de notre Dieu, nous poussait à considérer que le Seigneur ne met pas de limites au don de lui-même. Il nous invitait ainsi à considérer comment nous lui répondons, comment nous nous comportons avec lui, comment nous l’écoutons. Nous savons que nous sommes encore loin de lui répondre comme il faut, mais *l’amour se paie avec de l’amour*: nous pouvons toujours commencer et recommencer à l’aimer.

Que tu es grand, Seigneur, toi qui ne te lasses jamais de notre inconstance ni de nos manques de fidélité! Tu es le Médecin qui peux guérir toutes nos maladies spirituelles. Avec des mots de saint Josemaría,
qui t’a tant aimé et qui t’aime, et qui a appris à tant de personnes à suivre ce chemin, nous te disons: «Seigneur, si tu veux — et tu le veux toujours — tu peux me guérir. Tu connais ma faiblesse; je ressens ce symptôme, je souffre de telles faiblesses.... Seigneur, toi qui as soigné tant d’âmes, fais que, en te possédant dans mon cœur ou en te contemplant dans le Tabernacle, je te reconnaissiez comme Médecin divin.»[6]

3. Ci sentiamo nuovamente invitati ad entrare nel Cenacolo di Gerusalemme. Al Signore non dispiace che ci mescoliamo ai Dodici; anzi, desidera che ci accorgiamo di essere trattati con lo stesso amore con cui Lui si rivolse agli Apostoli.

Disponiamoci ad ascoltare sempre il Signore, specialmente nella Santa Messa. Se siamo coerenti, insisto, non ci accontenteremo di andarci la domenica e gli altri giorni di precetto, ma avremo fame di partecipare ogni giorno al Santo Sacrificio, di ricevere Gesù nella Comunione, di farGli visita spesso nel Tabernacolo. Siamo persone che amano questo mistero, che si addentrano nel mistero di un Dio che si dona a tutti noi, a ciascuno di noi.


“Hai già nell’immaginazione, nell’intelligenza, l’intera parabola. E vedi che un tralcio separato dal ceppo, dalla vite, non serve a nulla, non si riempirà di frutti, farà la fine di un pezzo di legno secco, che gli uomini o le bestie calpesteranno, o che verrà gettato nel fuoco...

“Tu sei il tralcio: deducine tutte le conseguenze.”[8]

4. Vivir a fondo la Santa Misa, llegar a ser sarmientos cargados de jugosos racimos, exige que seamos amigos de la Cruz. En el Gólgota, Jesús, Sacerdote y Víctima, ha llevado a cabo la redención de la humanidad. Allí cumplió físicamente, con el derramamiento de su sangre, lo que la noche
anterior había realizado anticipadamente, de modo sacramental, en el Cenáculo. Y espera que nos unamos personalmente a su sacrificio, cada día, ofreciéndole en la Misa nuestras penas y nuestras alegrías, nuestros trabajo y nuestros descanso, nuestra vida entera.

Y luego, durante la jornada, miremos a Jesús crucificado para participar en el diálogo que Él quiere establecer con nosotros. Os aconsejo que llevéis en el bolsillo un pequeño crucifijo, para mirarlo de vez en cuando y renovar el ofrecimiento de vuestra existencia. Es bueno —decía nuestro Padre— “ponerlo sobre tu mesa de trabajo. Y besarlo antes de darte al descanso y al despertar: y cuando se rebele contra tu alma el pobre cuerpo, bésalo también.”  

No hay mejor Maestra de amor a Cristo que la Virgen Santísima. Juan Pablo II, que pronto será beatificado, con intuición profunda, la llamó Mujer eucarística; no sólo porque el Hijo de Dios se encarnó en sus entrañas purísimas por obra del Espíritu Santo, sino porque se mantuvo junto a la Cruz de Jesús, llena de fortaleza y de fe, participando como nadie en el Sacrificio del Calvario. “Nuestro Señor Jesús lo quiere: es preciso seguirle de cerca. No hay otro camino. Esa es la obra del Espíritu Santo en cada alma —en la tuya—: sé dócil, no opongas obstáculos a Dios.”

Tratando a María, siendo hijos buenos de tan buena Madre, nos iremos pareciendo más y más a Jesús, hasta llegar a ser en la realidad existencial de cada día lo que ya somos por el Bautismo: otros Cristos, el mismo Cristo. Así sea.

[4] 1 Cor 11:23-26
[6] Ibid., no. 93.
At the Priestly Ordination of Deacons of the Prelature, St. Eugene’s Basilica, Rome, May 14, 2011

My dear brothers and sisters. Dear ordinands:

I think that the hearts of all of us are filled with joy at the priestly ordination that these brothers of ours are about to receive. While they were being called by name and answered with the _adsum!_—here I am!—there came to my mind the moment when Jesus told his apostles: follow me! (He said the same thing to that young man who did not know how to be generous.) Christ’s face was joyful, filled with happiness, when someone truly decided to follow him. Let us pray for these brothers of ours, so that they be very faithful and respond “here I am!” to all the calls that our Lord will direct to them in their priestly ministry. They will certainly be good shepherds because God’s grace will not fail them.

The image of the shepherd is an important part of biblical and Christian tradition. Already in the Old Testament, the kings, those who protected the people, were called shepherds, following an ancient custom in the Middle East. Moses too, whom God put at the head of his people to free them from slavery in Egypt, had worked as a shepherd, and the same is true of David, whom God himself chose with the promise that from his descendants would come the Messiah. And in the times of the Babylonian exile, the prophets announced that the Lord himself, in his great love, would be the one who would guide the people with knowledge and understanding (see _Jer_ 3:15), through the shepherds he would give them.

These were all allusions, more or less clear, to Christ, our Shepherd, who ascended the cross to give his life for us. St. Peter, as we heard in the second reading, said: “He committed no sin, no guile was found on his
lips... He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 Pet 2:22-24).

During Easter time we commemorate Christ’s victory. Today, I repeat, we thank him with all our heart, because—besides redeeming us—he wanted his Church to have, by means of a specific sacrament, good shepherds who would administer the sacraments to us on the path of our life. Jesus himself, through the bishops and priests, continues now on earth his saving mission, dispensing the grace that he merited for us on the Cross. “By his wounds,” St. Peter concludes in the second reading of the Mass, “you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls” (1 Pet 2:24-25).

How efficacious the Cross of our Lord is! Looking now at the Crucifix, we renew our promise of fidelity, thanking him and telling him that we do not want to leave him alone. As St. Josemaría so often told us: “To be a Christian, and in particular to be a priest—bearing in mind, too, that all of us who are baptized share in Christ’s priesthood—is to be at all times on the Cross.”[1] This is not a tragedy, because it is the path he chose to restore to us the happiness we had lost through sin.

2. A few years ago, when administering the Sacrament of Holy Orders, Benedict XVI highlighted this marvelous passage of the Gospel of the Good Shepherd that we have just heard. Let us pray for him every day; let us pray right now for the Pope, so that our Lord will assist him in governing the whole Church, striving to help all humanity. The Holy Father on that occasion said: “The Lord tells us three things about the true shepherd: he gives his own life for his sheep; he knows them and they know him; he is at the service of unity.”[2] I ask you once more for prayers for these priests who will be ordained in a few moments; and let us also pray for all the priests of the world. May not a single one be without the help of our prayers, of our remembrance, of our assistance.

In the first place, the Gospel tells us that the Good Shepherd gives his life for his sheep. This means that “the mystery of the Cross,” as the Pope says, “is at the center of Jesus’ service as a shepherd: it is the great service that he renders to all of us. He gives himself and not only in a distant past.”[3] Where? In the Holy Mass. For what is the Holy Mass but the
presence of the Sacrifice of Calvary, which is renewed sacramentally on our altars through the mediation of priests? Therefore, my deacon sons, from this moment on, renew the resolution (which you have already made as Christians) to follow closely, very closely the example of our Lord. From today on, the daily celebration of the Eucharist has to be in a special way for you the central moment of each day, the center and root of your life, of every day of your earthly path. May your life be founded on the Eucharistic Jesus.

There come to mind (I have them written down here) some words of St. Josemaría, who passionately loved the priesthood and his brothers in the priesthood: “A priest who says the Mass in this way — adoring, atoning, pleading, giving thanks, identifying himself with Christ and who teaches others to make the Sacrifice of the altar the center and root of the Christian life really will show the incomparable value of his vocation, the value of that character with which he has been stamped and which he will never lose.”[4]

The Good Shepherd—the Pope added, following the Gospel—knows his sheep and they know him. This is the second characteristic stressed by Jesus. The Church, my sons, confers on you the mission of serving all souls, and specifically, in a special way, the faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei, for whose service you are today receiving priestly ordination. You have entered the sheepfold by “the gate,” which is Jesus Christ himself, through the special identification with him conferred in the Sacrament of priestly orders. And this places upon you the duty of being concerned about the souls entrusted to you, one by one.

Recall the advice given by our Father, who prayed so much for you, for his priest sons: “We have to be the canvas, which isn’t seen, so that the others can stand out with the fine gold embroidery of their virtues; you have to know how to place yourselves in the corner, so that your brothers can shine with their sanctified professional work in the world, and you can say: pro eis sanctifico meipsum, ut sint et ipsi sanctificati in veritate (Jn 17:19); out of love for them I sanctify myself, so that they may be sanctified in truth.”[5]
3. A holy concern for the *pusillus grex*, for the little flock that the Church is entrusting to you, leads to the third characteristic highlighted by the Pope: love for unity. St. Josemaría insisted a great deal that priests have to be instruments of unity. Exercise your ministry with this characteristic so fitting for a good shepherd, that you are vigilant for everyone, without distinctions. And also be closely united to the Roman Pontiff and to the pastors of the diocese where you carry out your ministry. Here in Rome, we also pray for the Cardinal Vicar.

Like the other priests of Opus Dei, don’t limit yourself to taking care of the spiritual needs of your sisters and brothers, and of the souls who come to you. Your heart, united to the Heart of Jesus, should urge you to go further, to be available for everyone, going to seek them out.

As St. Josemaría said so clearly: “Thus you will always be instruments of unity and cohesion: with you supernatural outlook on life, with your prayer, with the constant example of your diligent priestly work, with your kind charity, with your mortification, with your devotion to our Lady, with your joy and peace.”[6]

I congratulate with my whole heart the parents, brothers, sisters and relatives of the new priests: you will now have a specially qualified intercessor with our Lord. At the same time, we all have to pray for them more than before, because the responsibility they have taken on is great. I asked you before not to leave Jesus on his own. I also ask you that you don’t leave these brothers of ours on their own, now that they have begun this path of being Christ on earth, through the priestly ministry.

Let us pray that God send abundant priestly vocations, also to the Roman Seminary. Let us ask this of the Blessed Trinity today and every day, through the Blessed Virgin Mary. Our Father recommended, and I will end with this: “Pray that they may be cheerful, hard working, effective; that they may be well trained: and that they may sacrifice themselves joyfully for their brothers, without feeling that they are victims.”[7]

We are now in the month of May. How many things have we told our Lady! How often we have asked her to help us, as the Mother of God and our Mother! Let us entrust to Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ, the
On the Feast Day of St. Josemaría, St. Eugene’s Basilica, Rome, June 25, 2011

Dear brothers and sisters,

As you can well imagine, my heart is filled with gratitude to the Most Holy Trinity for the gift of the life of this holy priest, St. Josemaría. All over the world, hundreds of thousands of people (I don’t think I would be exaggerating if I said millions) go to his intercession for help to sanctify their ordinary life.

We have anticipated by one day the celebration of the liturgical feast of St. Josemaría, because tomorrow, the anniversary of the day he went to heaven, coincides this year with the feast of Corpus Christi. However, this circumstance can help us to prepare better for that great solemnity. St. Josemaría used to look forward to Corpus Christi with great love, and he continued to celebrate it for the whole of the liturgical Octave, adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, thanking him for having stayed with us under the Eucharistic species, making reparation for the offences he receives, and praying for the Pope, the Church and the whole world.
I invite you to unite yourselves in a heartfelt way to the feelings that filled St. Josemaría’s soul to overflowing when he was physically among us. Let us appeal to his intercession, begging him to obtain for us from the Blessed Trinity the grace of being truly “Eucharistic souls”: men and women who really pledge ourselves to make the Holy Eucharist, day after day, into the center of our work, our aspirations and our whole lives.

I am also overjoyed that today is the anniversary of the first ordination to the priesthood of faithful of Opus Dei: my beloved predecessor Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, Fr. José María Hernández Garnica, and Fr. José Luis Múzquiz. The causes of canonization of all three of them are now under way.

2. The liturgical texts of the Mass of St. Josemaría summarize the basic points of the spirit which, inspired by God, he began to spread from October 2, 1928 on. The Opening Prayer sums it up clearly: “proclaiming the universal call to holiness and apostolate” as children of God, in one’s ordinary work and daily life, in order to “serve the work of Redemption with burning love.” Today I would like to dwell on the last aspect, considering the scene of the miraculous catch of fish that we have just listened to.

In this Gospel passage, which tells of the calling of Jesus’ first disciples to the apostolate, we discover the exemplar for the apostolic calling of the Christian faithful whom our Lord seeks out in the practice of their profession. Back in the 1930s, St. Josemaría wrote in The Way: “What amazes you seems natural to me—that God has sought you out in the practice of your profession! That is how he sought the first ones: Peter and Andrew, James and John, beside their nets, and Matthew, sitting in the custom-house....”[1]

Like the good father Jesus talks about,[2] St. Josemaría drew new lights from God’s word, showing how to aspire to holiness in ordinary life, as our beloved Pope Benedict XVI highlights in his Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini.[3] At the same time, St. Josemaría’s preaching follows the furrow opened up by the Fathers of the Church. St. Augustine, commenting on this Gospel scene, said that the Apostles “received from Jesus the nets of the word of God, and cast them into the world as into a
deep sea, gathering in the huge number of Christians that we see with astonishment.” St. Cyril of Alexandria added that “the net is still being cast even now, as Christ calls to conversion people who, in the words of Scripture, are in the middle of the sea—in the middle of the stormy waves of the concerns of this world.” Now it is our turn to continue in this divine catch of fish, in obedience to Jesus’ command, under the guidance of Peter, the captain of the ship. Now, as then, the fruits will be abundant: They netted such a huge number of fish that their nets began to tear (Lk 5:6).

Perhaps at times, as St. Josemaría said, there may come into our head the thought that all of this is very beautiful, but it is only a utopian dream that can never come true, because the sea of the world we live in is so turbulent. No, my brothers and sisters: optimism, assurance, faith! If ever that thought should arise we must reject it right away, and ask our Lord to increase our faith, “in the absolute certainty that our longings will be satisfied by the wonders of God.” The liturgical solemnity of Pentecost, which we celebrated two weeks ago, shows us that nothing is impossible for God: he will fill the nets with fish if we on our part put in first place the supernatural means—prayer, mortification and work done with supernatural and human perfection—and use all the opportunities that arise to bring souls closer to God.

3. Let us now turn to Simon Peter’s reaction. After his initial hesitation—he had been fishing all night and hadn't caught anything—he put his trust in our Lord: At your word I will let down the nets (Lk 5:5). Then the miracle was worked. Benedict XVI points out that “Peter could not yet imagine that one day he would arrive in Rome and that here he would be a ‘fisher of men’ for the Lord. He accepted this surprising call; he let himself be involved in this great adventure: he was generous. He recognized his limits but believed in the one who was calling him and followed the dream of his heart. He said ‘yes,’ a courageous and generous ‘yes,’ and became a disciple of Jesus,” as each of us can do.

The same thing happens to us if we listen to our Lord and put into practice what he tells us, which St. Josemaría paraphrases for us: “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men”; you will be effective and attract souls to God. We should therefore trust our Lord’s words: get into
the boat, take the oars, hoist the sails and launch out into this sea of the world which Christ gives us as an inheritance. ‘Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.’”[8]

The attitude of St. Peter, who places more trust in Jesus than in his own experience, is a valuable lesson for all of us. “We too have a desire for God, we too want to be generous, but we too expect God to be strong in the world and to transform the world on the spot, according to our ideas and the needs that we perceive.”[9] In these words Pope Benedict puts us on guard against the only thing that could lead us to complete failure: placing our trust only, or mainly, in human possibilities or human efforts, and neglecting to have recourse to the supernatural means. This would be a very serious mistake, because God our Lord normally “chooses the way of the transformation of hearts in suffering and in humility. And we, like Peter, must convert, over and over again.”[10]

St. Josemaría urged us to have recourse to our Lady, Queen of Apostles, asking Mary that the nets—our ordinary work, our projects, our relaxation, our friendships—may be filled with effectiveness in the service of the Church. Our Lady will teach us to “live by faith; to persevere with hope; to remain very close to Jesus; to really, really love him; to live out and enjoy our adventure of Love, for we are in love, in love with God; to allow Christ to come aboard our poor boat, and take possession of our souls as Lord and Master.”[11] Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, help us!

[8] St. Josemaría, Christ is Passing By, no. 159.
20th Anniversary of the Sedes Sapientiae International Seminary in Rome (January 16, 2011)

My dear brothers:

We can begin this homily with words from the Liturgy: *gratias tibi, Deus, gratias tibi!* And also: *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes!*\(^{[1]}\)

We give you thanks, Lord, for everything, and in particular for this year in which we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of this seminary, *Sedes Sapientiae*, brought into being to prepare you, and many other men, to become priests.

*Gratias tibi, Deus!* Let us never forget to raise our heart to heaven to give thanks for all the benefits we have received: you, specifically (and I and everyone), for having been called to be another Christ, Christ himself.

The day before yesterday, it was announced that the Venerable Servant of God, John Paul II, would be beatified on the upcoming 1st of May. I recalled immediately that it was he who asked my predecessor to establish this seminary to prepare seminarians from all over the world for the priesthood. You were already present in the prayer, the affection and the paternity of that Servant of God, who at the completion of his life also offered us the testimony of his illness, showing us that, in every place and circumstance, we can and should carry Christ’s Cross, which is the path that leads us to intimacy with God. There also came to mind, at that same moment, the memory of St. Josemaría, a priest who loved and still loves you tenderly. When he realized that God was calling him, he prayed, as a consequence of his vocation, for the seminarians and priests of the whole world throughout his entire life.

When he arrived in Rome he wanted to open some residences for
priests such as this one in order to help, to serve, to learn, since he did nothing without following God’s will, taking advantage of all the resources of grace. St. Josemaría also prayed for you (don’t think that this is just my imagination) so that you would be faithful to your vocation to the priesthood, and so that we would prepare ourselves and live our priesthood with absolute fidelity.

As I mentioned above, John Paul II asked my predecessor to erect this seminary. His Excellency Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, now a Servant of God whose process of beatification is underway, had already contemplated in his heart and soul all the good that would be done here over time. It began, as you know, with a provisional facility, until it became possible to obtain this one, so that you could live better, and so that you could receive a better human, spiritual, apostolic and intellectual formation.

You have a great responsibility, but rather than being overwhelmed by this, it should be for you a spur to carry the Cross of our Lord with elegance and great joy. Meditate on this deeply: our Lord is relying on each one of you—on each one of us—and he constantly grants you his grace, not only so that you may sanctify yourselves but also for the sanctification of others. Recall that passage from St. John’s gospel: non est datus Spiritus ad mensuram. Our Lord is never stingy; he doesn’t haggle over what he wants to give us! He grants us abundant graces to serve him in every circumstance, and also so that other people may come to know him through our life.

The brief sketch I have given of the history of this seminary (which you already know, or should know, since it is the place where you are being formed) is a call to of each one of you to a daily fidelity, which is not limited to the moments when we are happy. We have to be faithful to our Lord also when we encounter difficulties, because he calls us to be joyful also in the face of setbacks.

You are, at this moment, protagonists in the Church’s history. With your lives you are constructing the history of the Church, the history of humanity. Upon each one of you falls the responsibility to make Christ better known, and to ensure that his influence on the contemporary and future world increases. You are preparing to receive the priesthood within a
few years: ask our Lord to help you to act always as good sons of God, as future priests, and that you learn here to be good shepherds, good teachers.

Jesus Christ hasn’t left us; the Master is here with us. Therefore I suggest that you make use of an aspiration, a desire that St. Josemaría often repeated: *Iesu, Iesu, esto mihi semper Iesus!* Jesus, always be Jesus for me, so that I know how to correct myself; so that I know how to see myself in you as in a mirror; so that I may reflect your image, and have you always within me.

Recall, my brothers, the words we read last Monday in the liturgy: *multifariam et multis modis* —God has spoken in many ways through the prophets, through the servants of God. Now, let us never forget it, God is speaking through each one of us. Therefore, as we recalled in today’s liturgy, it is very important that we correspond to God’s grace to be faithful, and thus offer a clear testimony of Christian life to all our brothers and sisters. We have to live with this holy concern: to help everyone with our life.

In the opening prayer we have asked for peace for the world. My brothers, let us pray for peace throughout the whole world, also for countries now undergoing conflicts—specifically, I am thinking of the Ivory Coast. Let us pray for these countries, for the whole world, so that everywhere Christ’s peace may reign. Human peace and God’s peace. If God’s peace is present, there will also be human peace.

Let us also recall what we heard in the first reading. The prophet Isaiah addresses us, on God’s part, with these words: you are my servant, my son. How wonderful! God enables us to live his life. Think of the trust that he has in you: He is relying on you! He wants to be able to count on you! He wants you to be more faithful, to give him your whole life, because he gave his life for you. Let us respond with the resolve to tell him each day with deeds: *Here I am, Lord!* I stand in your presence to give you my answer, that of my complete self-giving.

We have listened today also to St. Paul, who loved Christ Jesus so greatly. My brothers, let us fall in love with Christ, in order to reach, with the Holy Spirit, the Father, and thus share in the life of the Trinity. If we, each day, strive to improve, struggling to be saints, we will not only attain
this blessing for our own life, but we will tell many persons, with the witness of our life, that they too have to struggle to be saints, as St. Paul reminds us. We will tell them that everyone is called to live with God and for God.

We have also heard the Gospel passage that describes how St. John the Baptist acted. Would that we too could walk the same path of humility as the Precursor. He wanted nothing for himself, but only to announce the arrival of our Lord. He will help us to say: Here I am! Behold the Lamb of God!

Let us also strive—with our life, with our humility—to “disappear,” as St. Josemaría used to say, so that our Lord can act though everything we do, so that it is he who receives all the glory, while we are only faithful instruments who know how to “disappear.” Let us strive, with our life, to help people to get to know our Lord. I repeat that this is our responsibility. On your life—on how you conduct yourself, on how I conduct myself—many great things depend. Many people will come closer to our Lord or, on the contrary, pass by with indifference.

Love for God and the desire to get to know him must increase in those around us. We can’t remain closed up on our own interior life. We need to prepare ourselves spiritually and intellectually each day: study intensely, with diligence; strive to go deep into what you are studying, so that you are prepared—and so that people may realize it—to be a source of grace by your knowledge of God.

To whom do we need to turn in order to accomplish all this? To our Lady. We have to be very Marian, following here as well in the footsteps of St. Josemaría and John Paul II. We have to say sincerely, perhaps with different words: totus tuus! I am all yours, my Lady, our Mother, so that you may lead me to full identification with your Son, so that I may know and love him. And so that, through my life, as through yours, Holy Mary, our Mother, the others may come to know and follow our Lord, and love him more and more.

Let us once more give thanks to our Lord for the twentieth anniversary of Sedes Sapientiae, but doing so not only with our external joy, but with our
life, with our prayer, with our expiation… We will give glory to God only if we are men who seek to lead a life of prayer, of expiation, of apostolate.

Also turn your thoughts now to your own country. Pray that the number of people who love God there may grow, in your own country and in the whole world. Let us pray for the whole world, so that many more people may be convinced that one has to live with Christ and for Christ. Amen.

[1] Ps 117:1
[2] See Jn 3:34
[3] Heb 1:1

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Articles and Interviews

Interview Granted to Studi Cattolici, Italy (No. 602, April, 2011)

John Paul II and Opus Dei, by Michele Dolz

We all still retain vivid memories of the interminable lines of people waiting to pay their respects to the mortal remains of John Paul II, and the cry of santa subito that rose up from the square on the day of his funeral. Six years have gone by, and with his beatification now imminent, it is a good moment reflect on his rich legacy. We will speak with Bishop Javier Echevarría, the Prelate of Opus Dei, who had the privilege of being very close to John Paul II during his whole pontificate. As is logical, we will focus especially on the relationship between John Paul II and Opus Dei.

John Paul II and Opus Dei

You experienced very closely John Paul II’s entire pontificate. Could you sum it up for us in a few words?
John Paul II’s activity was so far reaching and his impact so profound that it defies any brief synthesis. He was a unique figure in these recent decades. He showed us once again with deeds that the Pope is “the servant of the servants of God,” the tireless defender of the truth, the advocate for all men and women, whose dignity he defended with all his strength. He made Christ present in our day and age, leading people to seek in Jesus the answer to the ultimate questions about life.

*What is your most vivid memory of John Paul II?*

John Paul II frequently insisted that each man and woman finds their full perfection in self-giving, in dedicating themselves to God and to others. And he himself gave his life to God and the Church with a constant generosity and self-sacrifice. The difference between the Pope so filled with physical strength who took the helm of the Church in 1978, and John Paul II in his final years, bent beneath the weight of fatigue and illness, is a sign not merely of the passage of time, but also of the full measure of his self-giving.

I once accompanied Bishop Alvaro del Portillo to the pontifical apartment at a rather late hour of the evening. While we were awaiting the Pope’s arrival, we heard some steps approaching through a corridor that sounded like someone dragging his feet. It was the Holy Father, very fatigued. Don Alvaro exclaimed: “Holy Father, how tired you are!” The Pope looked at him and, with a firm and friendly voice, replied: “If I were not tired at this hour of the day, it would be a sign that I hadn’t fulfilled my duty.”

*Although impossible to sum up briefly, what has John Paul II left to the Church?*

He has left us a marvelous treasure of doctrine and his example of pastoral charity. What I would highlight in his pontificate is the impulse he gave to a new evangelization through ordinary life, through people actively present in all fields of human endeavor, with conduct consistent with their faith.

*Perhaps that was why he understood Opus Dei so well, whose spirit is sanctification and apostolate in ordinary life.*
I want to make clear that the veneration and gratitude of the faithful of Opus Dei extends to all the Popes, for the work they have carried out for the benefit of the universal Church and because all of them, from Pius XII until today, have been providential for the development of the apostolates of Opus Dei. With John Paul II we have a special debt of gratitude, because it was during his pontificate that certain events of special importance for the history of the Work took place. These include the establishment of this part of the Church as a personal prelature, the beatification and canonization of St. Josemaría, and the creation of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.

Certainly the Pope saw in the Work an effective instrument for evangelization through ordinary life. But, at the same time, I would say that he had no special predilection for Opus Dei. John Paul II was truly the Pope of everyone, a Father sensitive to all the charisms that the Holy Spirit brings forth. I think that, with him, millions of people have felt themselves to be “favorite sons and daughters.” And the faithful of Opus Dei have also felt this, with daily joy and thanksgiving.

*Did John Paul II know Opus Dei before becoming Pope?*

During the Second Vatican Council he was introduced, in the Council Hall, to Don Alvaro del Portillo. But there were no more contacts until 1971, when the young Cardinal from Krakow, Karol Wojtyła, during a synod of bishops in Rome, attended a conference organized by CRIS, the Centro Romano d’Incontri Sacerdotali, with the assistance of some priests of Opus Dei. On that occasion he was asked to give an interview about the priesthood for a publication of CRIS, since people were interested in hearing the voice of a bishop who was suffering under the Communist tyranny. He wrote down the questions and a few weeks later sent thirty-one hand-written pages, in Polish. At the beginning of each page—the paper was of very poor quality—he had written an aspiration, *Totus Tuus*, and some verses taken from the sequence of the Holy Spirit: *Veni Sancte Spiritus… Dulce refrigerium… In labore requies… O lux beatissima… Reple cordis intima…*

In 1974 the CRIS invited him to give one of the conferences in a series entitled *The Ennobling of Man and Christian Wisdom*. The topic dealt with
by Cardinal Wojtyla was Evangelization and the Inner Man. It was a lecture of great depth, and contained a reference at the end to an expression of Msgr. Escrivá de Balaguer on how to imbue the world with Christ’s peace: “sanctify work, sanctify oneself in work, and sanctify others through work.” The text was later published in a book together with other interventions of his. When he became Pope, John Paul II would sometimes give copies of this book to people who visited him.

Four years later, Cardinal Wojtyla came to Villa Tevere, the central headquarters of Opus Dei, to have lunch with Don Alvaro. It was a very friendly meal. Afterwards, when we went to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the Cardinal knelt on a wooden kneeler that is conserved there as a relic because it was used by Pius VII and by St. Pius X. And also by St. Josemaría, to whom some relatives of St. Pius X had given the kneeler as a gift. When Don Alvaro mentioned this to him, Cardinal Wojtyla immediately got off the kneeler and knelt on the floor after having kissed the relic. It was a spontaneous gesture of humility which I have never forgotten.

He had great affection for Don Alvaro, especially after his election to the Chair of Peter. Holy people understand each other very well.

Could you tell us any memories of your first meetings with the new Pope?

The first meeting took place unexpectedly on the day following the election, on October 17, 1978. Bishop Andrea Deskur, a Polish bishop who was then President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, and who was a good friend of Don Alvaro, and an even closer friend of Karol Wojtyla since his youth, had been hospitalized at the Gemelli Polyclinic as the result of a stroke suffered a few days before.

The day of the Pope’s election, Don Alvaro called him by telephone. He didn’t want to give him the good news directly, so as not to provoke any possibly dangerous emotion. He limited himself to asking him: “Andrea, do you know who has been elected Pope?” Deskur responded: “They couldn’t have made a better choice.” And he added: “Tomorrow I will see him.” Don Alvaro thought the patient must be a bit delirious: how could the newly-elected Pope leave the Vatican?

The next day Don Alvaro went to visit his friend. I went with him. And
we were very surprised, on leaving the sick person’s room, to be told that we had to wait in a corner with some other people, because the Pope had just arrived and the exit from the floor had been blocked. It was even a greater surprise when John Paul II came up to Don Alvaro and gave him a big hug. Don Alvaro was filially moved, and on kissing the ring of the new Pontiff, he saw that he held a rosary in his hand.

Those days at the beginning of the new pontificate were very intense. We were able to see the Pope with a frequency we would not have imagined possible. For example, Don Alvaro made a visit to the Shrine of La Mentorella, close to Rome, to entrust the new Pope to our Lady’s intercession. And while there, leaning on the hood of the car, he wrote a post card to John Paul II in which he expressed his desire to assist him with his prayer. He placed at his disposal the more than sixty thousand Masses that were offered by the faithful of Opus Dei each day for the intentions of the head of the Work; it was, he said, the greatest support he could give him. A few days later he received a telephone call from the Pope himself. He wanted to thank him for that gesture, and by the tone of his voice one could sense his deep gratitude for the treasure that had been placed in his hands, a reflection of the Pontiff’s great love for the Eucharist.

On October 28, John Paul II received him for the first time in an informal audience. Don Joaquin Alonso and myself were also present, and we could see how the Pope listened with great attention and affection to what Don Alvaro was telling him. I recall that he said confidently, striking the table with an affectionate thump of his fist, that the Church would overcome all her difficulties with the help of our Lady, the first opus Dei, the most important work of God. Don Alvaro said that he too fully shared that hope. Also on that occasion, Don Alvaro told him that because of the Sede Vacante caused by the unexpected death of John Paul I, he had not been able to receive the letter which the new Pontiff, the previous Patriarch of Venice, had wanted to send for the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of Opus Dei. Msgr. del Portillo added that he had understood very well that Opus Dei was not, in fact, a secular institute and that he would have to find the proper juridical solution. Referring to that letter, John Paul II said: “La facciamo!” We will do it!
On December 5 of that year, Don Alvaro informed him that he had prepared for him the traditional gift of oranges that Poles usually give as a present on St. Nicholas Day, December 6. The Pope was surprised that he knew about that custom and gave him an appointment for the following day. Together with the oranges we brought him various books of St. Josemaría. The Pope had these books placed in the office where some of his assistants helped in the preparation of his addresses.

These “unprogrammed” meetings seem very characteristic of John Paul II who, especially at the beginning, surprised everyone with his direct way of relating to people. But were there also official audiences?

Naturally, among other reasons because we wanted to request of the Holy Father—as I have already mentioned—the conclusion of Opus Dei’s canonical path, which Paul VI had also shown himself open to in the first audience that he granted to Don Alvaro del Portillo. And, in fact, the Pope took the steps necessary to reach that goal.

At the same time, I retain an especially pleasant memory of those first months. For the feast of the Epiphany in 1979, the ordination in St. Peter’s Basilica was set to take place of the Pope’s successor in the Archdiocese of Krakow, Archbishop Macharski. The Holy Father wanted to celebrate it at the altar of the Confession, but it was suggested to him that the altar of the Cathedra might be better, because it would be difficult to fill the Basilica with people and it would be awkward if there were not enough people there. I don’t know who suggested to the Pope that he contact Msgr. del Portillo, to ask him to encourage many people to attend the episcopal ordination. During those days we were making a pastoral trip through various European countries. In Switzerland we received word of this from Rome. Seeing this request from the Pope, as he did on other occasions, Don Alvaro made every effort to mobilize the people of the Work, and asked them to do the same with their friends, to fill the Basilica. And in fact it was filled. Don Alvaro himself did not participate in the ceremony, since he wanted those attending to direct their affection entirely to John Paul II and the new archbishop. At the end of the celebration the Pope expressed his thanks to Opus Dei. It was the first time that a Pope had made a public reference to the Work in St. Peter’s Basilica.
There were other occasions on which the Pope counted on the help of the faithful of Opus Dei to mobilize many people.

Above all, in those first moments. Later the Holy Father was able to count on the support of many other faithful children as well.

I recall that John Paul II wanted, right from the start, to celebrate Mass for university students in St. Peter’s, as he had been doing in Krakow. We did what we could to help him to inaugurate that tradition. Don Alvaro suggested printing personal invitations that would include, besides information about the Mass, a good number of hours for confessions in the Basilica, and he said he would call dozens of confessors asking them to help out. This initiative turned out to be a great success.

During one of the lunchtime invitations that we received from the Pope in the pontifical apartment, Don Alvaro spoke about the need to foster confessions, in order to help people re-encounter our Lord, encouraging priests and laity to take part in this apostolate. To illustrate what he was saying, he told some anecdotes about the good results obtained around the world with this method of helping souls. John Paul II, with a smile of agreement, said: “You remind me of those good zealous pastors of my time, who spent their lives in this way to look after souls, whom they loved with all their strength.” At other times, in similar conversations, the Pope said, referring to the faithful of Opus Dei, both laity and priests: “You have the charism of Confession.” I know that he said the same thing to other people, with reference to the Work, because they mentioned to us.

I imagine that similar situations were repeated on John Paul II’s trips throughout the world, wherever there were members of Opus Dei.

In all parts of the world, the faithful of the Prelature, like other Catholics, naturally showed him their affection and support. The Pope knew how to win the hearts of everyone, and all over the world he drew people’s affection and enthusiasm.

In the first years of his pontificate, the final work was done for erecting Opus Dei as a personal prelature. Could you tell us something about this?

Both Paul VI and John Paul I had already expressed their intention of concluding the canonical path of the Work, but our Lord called them
before they could take up the question. John Paul II took an interest in it very early on. He put the study in the hands of Cardinal Sebastiano Baggio, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, and a “paritetic” (mixed) commission was appointed, made up of experts in Canon Law from the Holy See and from Opus Dei. The Pope followed all of its steps attentively, and knew the particulars very well. The technical canonical details are well known. Here I would like to highlight the paternal interest that the Holy Father showed for the process, while at the same time leaving the canonists full freedom to study the questions involved. He was also very paternal—and not simply prudent—in confronting the difficulties caused by the objections of some bishops, which were understandable in dealing with a new canonical figure. He himself oversaw this study, seeing to it that those objections were considered and adequately resolved.

**To what extent did John Paul II intervene in the government of Opus Dei? Did he make suggestions?**

The most important one, clearly, was erecting Opus Dei as a personal prelature, an act by which he placed this part of the Church, made up of lay people and priests, men and women of all walks of life, under the jurisdiction of a prelate so that—also with its priests—it would serve the universal Church better, in communion with the particular churches. He also suggested apostolic initiatives to the Prelate, since he was very much convinced of the effectiveness of the personal apostolate of each of the faithful of Opus Dei and of those who—persons from all social spheres—take part in the apostolic activities of the Work.

It was at an express request of the Pope that the international seminary *Sedes Sapientiae* was established in Rome, in order to form priests who could later take on tasks of formation in seminaries all over the world, including those that had just attained their freedom after the period of Soviet domination.

John Paul II began speaking of the new evangelization at least as early as 1981, but it was in 1985 when he gave a strong impetus to this pastoral priority, above all in the countries of Western Europe and North America, where the symptoms of secularism were growing alarmingly. A symbolic date is October 11, 1985, the day on which the Holy Father concluded an
Extraordinary Synod of Bishops held in Rome, inviting the Church to a renewed missionary impetus. In a conversation with the Prelate, John Paul II stressed this priority of his. Don Alvaro immediately provided the support that he could, and in a pastoral letter dated December 25 of that same year he urged everyone to collaborate with all their strength in this task, which was particularly important in the countries of Old Europe, the United States and Canada.

From then on, he redoubled his pastoral efforts in this regard, with frequent trips to European countries. Between 1987 and 1990 he extended this effort to Asia and Oceania, North America and Africa.

The Pope invited Don Alvaro to begin the activities of the Work in the Scandinavian countries. And, of course, in Poland. He pointed out that it was very important to spread among the people of God in Poland the need for personal spiritual direction, and he knew that this was practiced assiduously in Opus Dei.

The Pope continued encouraging Don Alvaro to assist the evangelizing mission with the spirit proper to Opus Dei—as he later did with me—right to the end of his life. On January 13, 1994, he granted an audience in which the Prelate informed him about the development of the apostolic work of the faithful of Opus Dei and the many initiatives that were being planned. The Pope insisted on the need to continue striving to assist the new evangelization of society. Don Alvaro left those audiences very encouraged, with a renewed awareness of the need to always live—as he had seen in St. Josemaria—in full union with the successor of Peter and the other bishops.

In those audiences, the Pope gave him various suggestions, together with encouragement to continue in the apostolic undertakings that were already being carried out. For example, he recommended that an effort be made to carry out a deep apostolate with intellectuals, encouraging them in their work and showing them that faith and reason do not travel along separate paths, much less opposed ones. John Paul II thought that intellectuals were key persons for the new evangelization, and he was concerned that they be given special pastoral care. In the same way he considered it a priority to evangelize those who had positions of responsibility in the political and economic spheres, since that is the most
effective way to improve the situation of everyone, first of all the most needy. He also encouraged the faithful of the Prelature and many other people who work in business schools, saying: “If those who study these subjects become Christians and are converted, it will be easier to eradicate poverty.”

And did Don Alvaro ever give suggestions to the Pope about the Church?

On a few occasions, the Holy Father asked him for his opinion. As early as the end of 1978, when he was weighing the expediency of making a trip to Mexico for the CELAM meeting (it was a rather delicate situation), the Pope mentioned to Don Alvaro, in the presence of other people, that he had heard various opinions on this question. He was clearly asking him for his opinion. With all simplicity, Don Alvaro suggested that he make the trip, for it would be a great good for the Church in Mexico, in Latin America, and in the whole world. Don Alvaro’s tone of voice made it clear that whatever decision the Pope decided on in the end would be fine as far as he was concerned. The trip was carried out with the extraordinary results that we all know. Naturally, the Pope must have also consulted with other people and with the offices of the Roman Curia.

After the trip to Mexico he invited us to lunch and joyfully told us many details about his visit. He didn’t speak about his own efforts, but about the faith and response shown by the Mexican people for the visit of St. Peter’s successor.

Don Alvaro several times suggested to John Paul II that he write a letter or an exhortation on St. Joseph, in order to foster the faithful’s devotion and to ask St. Joseph to protect the Church. So he was very happy when the Apostolic Exhortation Redemptoris Custos was published on August 15, 1989.

I remember another suggestion related to piety. We had invited a Spanish canon of the Chapter of St. Peter to lunch, Msgr. Pedro Altabella. During lunch the topic came up of the good for souls being done by the practice of permanent exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in some churches. Don Joaquin Alonso remarked that it would also do great good if that custom could be started in St. Peter’s, and Don Alvaro gave his vigorous support to the suggestion. The canon liked the suggestion so
much that he said he would make sure it was passed on in altissimis, to the highest level. In a short time the Eucharistic worship in the Vatican Basilica that has produced such marvelous fruit began. The year this took place was 1981.

In regard to these suggestions, I have heard that some member of Opus Dei had something to do with the mosaic of Our Lady, Mother of the Church, now clearly visible in St. Peter’s Square.

Every year a few thousand students who attend activities at centers of Opus Dei throughout the world, come to celebrate Easter in Rome. In 1980, during a meeting with John Paul II, a student told him that in looking around St. Peter’s Square he had noticed that it was adorned with many statues of saints but that there was no image of our Lady. “Perhaps one could be put there, Holy Father,” he suggested. The Pope replied immediately: “Molto bene, molto bene!” When he heard about it, Don Alvaro asked the architect Javier Cotelo to give some thought to where an image could be put in the plaza where it would be visible to everyone. Javier drew up a proposal with a mosaic on a corner of the Apostolic Palace. The Pope liked the idea a lot and ordered that it be carried out.

On December 8, 1981, the Holy Father blessed the mosaic and said: “Today, on the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, we will pray the Angelus for the first time, before the Most Blessed Virgin, Mother of the Church, who looks out on St. Peter’s Square from the mosaic, installed on an angle of this Apostolic Palace. In this marvelous Square one image was missing… Now I will bless the mosaic of the Virgin Mother of the Church, with the wish that all who come to this square of St. Peter will raise their eyes to her and, with filial trust, greet her with a prayer.”

Two days later, the Pope invited Don Alvaro to concelebrate Mass in his private chapel and have breakfast with him. He wanted to express his appreciation for his help in making the image of our Lady a reality. Later, the Pope sent him, as a memento, the full-scale drawing used in making the mosaic.

All these recollections reflect a very cordial relationship with the Pope.

John Paul II showed us many signs of paternal affection, too many to recall them all here. But there comes to mind now Don Alvaro’s 70th
birthday, on March 11, 1984. He received a picture of our Lady of Czestochowa with a hand-written message from the Pope, with an affectionate greeting. I think that everyone who dealt closely with John Paul II saw that he was a man who “knew how to love.”

Did the Pope visit any center of Opus Dei?

In his plan of pastoral visits to the parishes in Rome, he included the three that were entrusted to Opus Dei and he visited the centers attached to them. Perhaps the most interesting anecdote here is that, when he was still in good health, he went several times to a conference center of the Work in Abruzzo, called Tor d’Aveia. The property is situated on the side of a mountain, with easy access to pleasant excursions and even skiing. Naturally, the Pope needed to relax from time to time, and there he could do so very discreetly. Tor d’Aveia is a little over an hour from Rome by car, and he made the trips without anyone noticing it. It provided the Pope with a good opportunity to rest. The women of the Work in charge of the center were able to have some get-togethers with him and his secretary, but they never told anyone so that no one would bother the Pope. Don Alvaro himself only went there once to welcome him. John Paul II also went once to another conference center that we use in Ovindoli, not far from there, with a ski slope nearby.

You were often invited to eat in the Pope’s residence. What did you speak about on those occasions?

About many different topics, in an informal context: the situation of the Church, the apostolate of the faithful of Opus Dei in various countries, etc.

On one of those occasions he gave Don Alvaro a small edition of the New Testament which he later used during his trips, expressly to remember the Roman Pontiff. He didn’t use it otherwise because the typeface was so small.

Do you have any memories connected with the assassination attempt in 1981?

At that moment we were gathered with the Prelate’s Council for the apostolate with women. As soon as we heard the news, he interrupted the
meeting and we went to the Gemelli Hospital. Don Alvaro, invited by Msgr. Angelini, was able to join some members of the Curia, while the doctors were operating on the Holy Father.

Don Alvaro immediately asked the whole Work to pray for the Pope. We went to the Gemelli hospital frequently, although we knew we wouldn’t be able to visit him. But we wanted to pray for him and to be close to him physically.

For his trip to Mexico, Don Alvaro had given the Pope a cassette with Mexican songs. They were love songs that the people also sang to Our Lady of Guadalupe. Well, on the first day we were allowed to visit the Holy Father in the polyclinic, we found him listening to those songs on a tape player. “They help me to pray,” he said. We had no advance notice that we would be able to see him, but the Pope himself had asked that we be shown to his room. Don Alvaro put his hand on the Pope’s arm with a filial gesture, and noted that he had a very high fever. The visit was quite short, but one sensed there that the whole Church was praying for Peter, as in Jerusalem, and that Peter was offering everything for Christ’s Church.

We haven’t said anything about the beatification and canonization of St. Josemaria, both carried out by John Paul II.

The Pope was very happy to elevate the founder of the Work to the altars. As you recall, before the beatification in 1992 misunderstandings arose that resulted in some controversy. These were blows by the devil’s tail to impede what was, as John Paul II said soon after the beatification, “a great manifestation of faith.” At the end of the ceremony, John Paul II himself expressed his joy at seeing so many thousands of people recollected in prayer, and he told Don Alvaro, who accompanied him as he walked towards the Basilica: “Now I understand why some sectarians didn’t want this manifestation of faith to take place.” The Pope added that he was very grateful to God for the opportunity to celebrate that ceremony, in which he also beatified Mother Bakhita, a Canossian nun, because it had helped bring to the world’s attention the tragic situation of the Church in the Sudan. In short, what has remained recorded for history is the good being done for the whole Church by devotion to St. Josemaria. And the Pope was very aware of this.
In the canonization, the Pope defined St. Josemaría as “the saint of the ordinary,” very much in harmony with his hope to evangelize society through ordinary life: in the domestic church that each family is, in work, in sports and in social relationships.

*John Paul II himself was also the target of some people’s criticism. How did the Pope confront this opposition?*

He was very supernatural and happy to carry the cross. Moreover, he was very determined and continued walking straight ahead seeking the good of the Church. Don Alvaro once had the opportunity to participate in praying the rosary with the Pope, accompanied by a number of people. On that occasion Mother Teresa of Calcutta was also there. At the end, the Pope introduced Don Alvaro to Mother Teresa, who thanked him, because priests of the Work had taken good care of her nuns in various parts of the world. Then the Pope said to her, half jokingly and half seriously: “Mother, why is there so much criticism of the Pope and of Opus Dei while everyone says good things about Mother Teresa?” And she responded with great sincerity: “Pray for me, so that I be humble.”

*John Paul II also went to pray before the mortal remains of Don Alvaro on the day of his death. Can you tell us something about those moments?*

On March 11, 1994, his 80th birthday, Don Alvaro received a handwritten message from John Paul II written on a photograph: “To our esteemed and beloved brother Alvaro del Portillo, who with gratitude to God is celebrating his eightieth birthday, in expression of my warm appreciation for his faithful work in the service of the Church, and imploring abundant heavenly graces for a ministry that will continue for many years to produce abundant fruit, I impart an affectionate and special apostolic blessing, extending it also to all the priests and laity of the Prelature.”

On the evening of March 22, 1994, we had just returned from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and a few hours later, on the morning of the 23rd, God called to himself the Prelate of Opus Dei. I communicated the news to Msgr. Stanislaw Dziwisz, John Paul II’s private secretary, at about six thirty in the morning. Don Stanislaw told me that he would communicate it to the Holy Father, and that they would pray for the
eternal rest of the Prelate to God in their Mass. We had a nice surprise when the Prefect of the Pontifical Household, Msgr. Monduzzi, called us at about ten in the morning, to inform us that the Holy Father wanted to come in the afternoon to pray before Don Alvaro’s body. I won’t go into the details of this visit, but I do want to emphasize the interest shown by John Paul II. He asked me when and where Don Alvaro had said his last Mass, since he knew he had just returned to Rome on the previous day. When I told him that it was at eleven in the morning in the Cenacle, I was surprised when the Pope quickly calculated the time elapsed between the hour of the Mass and his going to heaven. At the end I thanked him for the visit, which was so unusual, but the Pope interrupted me saying: “It was a duty, it was a duty.”

And after your appointment as Prelate in 1994, did you yourself have a similar relationship with John Paul II?

The Pope continued to be equally paternal and affectionate. For example, he telephoned me personally to announce my appointment as Prelate. I visited him on various occasions to inform him about the development of the apostolates of the Work and was able to see his joy. A few months after the appointment, he conferred on me ordination as a bishop. After the year 2000 the Pope was already quite sick, but he continued receiving me in audience with a certain frequency, to hear news of the apostolic activities of the Work all over the world. Three days after the death of the Pope, I went with Don Joaquin Alonso to pray before his mortal remains in St. Peter’s Basilica, and to greet Don Stanislaw, who invited us to pray in his private chapel and later encouraged us to go up to the terrace of the apostolic palace. He wanted to show us the immense stream of people who were coming to pay their final respects to the Pope and all the television transmitters from all over the world installed around St. Peter’s Square. Shortly afterwards, he gave me one of John Paul II’s cassocks, so that we could keep it as a relic.

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Article “A Shower of Graces,” for the beatification of John Paul II, Avvenire, Italy (May 4, 2011)

A great happiness reigns in the Church today: the joy of the beatification of the beloved Pope John Paul II, whom all of us have listened to, venerated and followed in the long, fruitful years of his ministry as the Supreme Pastor of the Church. The reputation for holiness that he already enjoyed while alive, which helped the Church so much on the occasion of his passing, now takes on a new vigor. The recognition of his heroic virtues and a miraculous cure attributed to his intercession opened the way for his inscription in the list of the blessed, which Pope Benedict XVI carried out on May 3.

Every declaration of holiness proclaims the glory of the Trinity. But some, like the beatification of John Paul II, influence millions of people. We saw this when the Lord called him to Himself, six years ago, and I am convinced that the same thing will happen in these days. If we invoke with faith the intercession of the new Blessed in all our needs, great and small, personal and collective, a shower of graces will rain down from Heaven for all mankind.

Considering the repercussions that the life and death of John Paul II had on many people, I am reminded of a thought from The Way, in which St. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer stresses the importance of responding faithfully to God when He calls. The Founder of Opus Dei wrote: “Many great things depend — don’t forget it — on whether you and I live our lives as God wants.”

This is what has happened in the case of John Paul II. From his youth, he always responded with a firm yes to the repeated calls of the Lord: to be a priest, then to be a bishop, and finally to accept the weight of serving the Church as the successor of Peter. In each case, as the then-Cardinal Ratzinger noted in his funeral Mass homily for the late pontiff, he had to renounce legitimate plans that he had already made.

John Paul II always maintained this total dedication. “In the first years of his pontificate — said Cardinal Ratzinger in the homily referred to
earlier — young and full of energy, the Holy Father went to the very ends of the earth, guided by Christ. But afterward, he increasingly entered into the communion of Christ's sufferings; increasingly he understood the truth of the words: 'someone else will dress you.' And in this very communion with the suffering Lord, tirelessly and with renewed intensity, he proclaimed the Gospel, the mystery of that love which goes to the end (see Jn 13:1).

I would like to add that I have always been impressed by the coincidences of love for God that can be seen in the lives of Blessed John Paul II and Saint Josemaría. Both of them dedicated themselves completely to the Lord through the intercession of the Blessed Virgen; both of them, conscious of their creaturely smallness, were devotees of the Divine Mercy: they recited with great piety those words invoking God as a Merciful Father that are so characteristic of this devotion.

Let us entrust these resolutions to Holy Mary as well. In this way, we will become, as John Paul II often said, *totus tuus* — all yours.

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**Interview granted to the magazine Famiglia Cristiana, Italy (February 20, 2011)**

*An interview of the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, about his new book, Vivir la Santa Misa [Living the Holy Mass].***

Bishop Echevarría, the struggle to place the Mass at the center of each day is a marvelous challenge. But why is it so important to give priority to the Mass, and what is the secret to living it well?

The Mass is an action of God that enables us to participate in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ—not as spectators or observers, but as actual participants. That’s why I wanted to use the expression “living” the Holy Mass in the book’s title, to convey the complete human and spiritual involvement that the Mass requires.
In the book you speak of the danger of “ritualism.” How can this be avoided?

“Ritualism” means forgetting what is really taking place on the altar. How would we react if we were told, “Today you have an opportunity to be on Calvary close to Jesus”? Or, “Today you will meet the Risen Christ”? How should we prepare ourselves if we truly believe this? So, in the same way, how should we prepare for each Mass?

You lived at St. Josemaría’s side for more than twenty years. What aspect of his personality surprised you the most?

St. Josemaría knew how to love people in an extraordinary way. Just a glance was enough for him to discern what each person needed. He had the intuition only mothers have. At the same time, he was a true father: everything he taught us we had already seen in his example. It was so clear that he was a priest who was seeking God at every moment.

How did he celebrate Mass?

He was always aware that Christ, not the priest, is the protagonist in the Eucharist. This certainty led him to celebrate the rubrics faithfully, never trying to be “original.” He wanted only Jesus to shine forth, not himself. He used to say that the Mass was “work” for him, that it required a great effort, sometimes an exhausting one given the intensity with which he lived it. He gave to each small gesture the full supernatural meaning it has.

The Mass continues in daily life?

When the celebration is over, the Mass hasn’t ended. It accompanies us all throughout the day. Food nourishes us by being transformed into ourselves. But the Eucharist—spiritual food—transforms us into Jesus. Thus our entire day—united to the Sacrifice of the Altar—becomes a continuous Mass that makes everything we do—our work, rest, family and social relations—something pleasing to God.

What is Opus Dei all about?

Within the Church, Opus Dei’s job is to remind us that all the baptized are called to sanctity in daily life. St. Josemaría used to say that there is something divine hidden in the most ordinary situations, and that it is our job to find it. No human act should be an obstacle to friendship
with God. Moreover, it is precisely in the circumstances of each day that God asks us to find him.

*Can one compare the Prelature of Opus Dei to a big global diocese that depends directly on the Pope?*

Saying this could lead to some misunderstandings: for example, seeing a personal prelature as a particular Church separated from the local Church. On the contrary, the Prelature of Opus Dei tries to reinforce communion among the local Churches; the apostolic work that Opus Dei’s faithful—lay people and priests—carry out always involves active cooperation with each diocese. The lay faithful of Opus Dei are also under the jurisdiction of the local bishop, just like other Catholics.

*After the founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá, and his first successor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo (whose process of beatification is underway), you have directed Opus Dei for the past fifteen years. How do you try to pass on the inheritance of two saints?*

When one lives alongside holy people, one comes to understand the secret of having peace in the heart: maintaining a constant dialogue with God. And so, in spite of our very evident deficiencies, our defects, He is always at our side ready to overlook them. By always counting on God, the life of a Christian becomes immune to so many of the worries and anxieties that afflict people today.

*Can you mention something from St. Josemaría’s life that people might not have heard about?*

I often served his Mass. It left a deep impression on me the first time he asked me to pray that he would never get used to celebrating such a sublime action. It’s something he often asked me to do.

*Where is Opus Dei growing?*

Thank God, faithful and cooperators of Opus Dei are present in the most varied places—from the skyscrapers of Wall Street to the shanty towns in Brazil. A great thirst for God is evident everywhere. There are even faithful of Opus Dei in several Chinese cities. Last year the Prelature’s apostolate began taking root in Indonesia, and it is also present in other predominantly Muslim countries because some of its faithful travel there
for professional reasons. The Middle East, the Holy Land, Lebanon, and Africa all present special challenges. I have in mind here especially the Ivory Coast, as well as Congo and Nigeria. Everywhere problems are overcome thanks to a faith lived out in practice, with a concern for the common good, seeking to overcome different viewpoints by a constructive attitude.

*How do you see faith spreading in today’s world?*

What’s needed today are witnesses to the faith. In the face of the relativism that seems to be imposing itself on the West, as well as the divisions, wars and poverty that afflict so many parts of the world, people are needed who are ready to “roll up their sleeves” and show others the reality of the Gospel, not with lectures or theories but in daily life.

*How does Opus Dei relate to the world of youth?*

When St. Josemaría began the Work, he had a group of young university students and workers at his side. Formational activities for young people are one of our priorities. In Italy and everywhere there are numerous university residences and cultural centers for men and for women that provide opportunities to grow humanly and spiritually: learning to study and to be good friends while enriching one's personality, with a constructive and discerning mentality, always behaving as God’s children. This educational work is always carried out in cooperation with their families. Furthermore, parents who belong to Opus Dei sponsor schools, youth clubs, and other useful initiatives for their children, as happens in many Italian cities.
For years now, young people and not so young have been testifying to the way John Paul II's words, example and warmth brought them to Christ. God used him to help some of them to pursue holiness in marriage or celibacy in the world, and others in the priesthood or religious life. What sometimes gets called the “John Paul II generation” numbers many thousands.

What was the secret of this extraordinary Pope’s effective evangelizing? Karol Wojtyla was obviously a tireless defender of human dignity, a caring pastor, a credible communicator of the truth, and a father to believers and non-believers alike. But the Pope who guided us from the second millennium into the third was above all someone who was in love with Jesus Christ to the point of total identification with him.

One of his biographers wrote, “If you want to know who John Paul II is, you need to see him praying, especially in his chapel, in private.” This is exactly the case. One of the last photographs taken of him shows him in his private chapel, following the Stations of the Cross televised from the Coliseum. On that Good Friday in 2005 John Paul II could not take part in person as he had done in previous years — he could no longer walk or even speak. But the photograph shows how intensely he was experiencing it. Holding a large wooden crucifix tightly in his hands, the Pope embraces Jesus on the Cross, holds the figure of Jesus to his heart, and kisses it. That image of John Paul II, old and ill, united to the Cross, speaks just as eloquently as his rousing words and his exhausting travels.

The soon-to-be-beatified Pope was heroic in carrying out Christ’s command to his disciples, “Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to every creature” (Mk 16:15). In his zeal to reach the furthest corner of Africa, America, Asia, Australasia and Europe, John Paul II was not thinking of himself. What drove him was his desire to spend himself in the service of other people, his eagerness to demonstrate the dignity of every human being, created in the image and likeness of God and redeemed by Christ, and to pass on the Gospel message.

"The Pope who guided us from the second millennium into the third was above all someone who was in love with Jesus Christ to the point of total identification with him."
On one occasion, in the evening, Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo, the then prelate of Opus Dei, and I went to the Pope’s apartment. We waited for the Pope to arrive, and heard some tired, dragging footsteps approaching along the corridor. It was John Paul II, looking exhausted. Msgr. del Portillo exclaimed, “Holy Father, how tired you are!” The Pope looked at him and explained gently, “If I weren’t tired at this time of day, it would mean I hadn’t done my duty.”

His zeal for souls led him to take the message of Christ to the furthest corners of the world. Is there anyone on earth who has taken as many people’s hands as he did in their lives, or looked as many people in the eyes? The effort it cost him, humanly and spiritually, was another way for him to embrace and unite himself with Christ on the Cross.

The universal reach of John Paul II’s heart not only led him to what could be termed “external” action; his spirit was “internally” active as well, so that he made everyone’s needs his own. Every day, from his private chapel in the Vatican, he travelled as a pilgrim through the whole world. So when a journalist once asked him how he prayed, he answered quite naturally that “every day the pontiff must open his prayer, his thought, his heart to the entire world.” In his prayer, he explained, there emerged “a geography of communities, churches, societies, and also of the problems that trouble the world today.” And like that, the Pope “sets forth before God all the joys and hopes as well as the grieves and anxieties that the Church shares with humanity today.”

"That image of John Paul II, old and ill, united to the Cross, speaks just as eloquently as his rousing words and his exhausting travels."

The universal outreach of his heart, and the sense of mission that drove him, led him to dialogue with all kinds of people. This became evident in the Jubilee Year 2000 — he met children, young people, adults and the elderly; sportspeople, artists, rulers, politicians, policemen and soldiers; agricultural laborers, university lecturers and students, prisoners and sick people; families, people from the world of entertainment, emigrants and travellers.

Karol Wojtyla’s whole life-story can be read as a continual process of taking the Gospel to the most varied sectors of human society: to families,
the school, the factory, the theatre, literature, cities of skyscrapers and shanty-towns. His own story taught him clearly that it is possible to make Christ present in all circumstances, including the tragic times of the world war, and totalitarian rule in his home country. In the most diverse scenes of modern life, John Paul II brought Jesus Christ’s light to all mankind. His life teaches us how to discover God in the circumstances we live in.

In one of his works St Josemaría Escrivá contemplates Jesus on the Cross as the Eternal Priest who “opens his arms to the whole human race.” I think John Paul II’s journey on earth was an exemplary copy of this Lord who welcomes all men and women into his heart, pouring out love and mercy on every single one, especially the sick and disabled.

In its essence, Christian life means trying to be configured with Christ. John Paul II accomplished this in a truly outstanding way. Through his heroic response to grace, through the joy he felt at being a child of God, people of every race and from every walk of life saw the face of the Risen Christ shining in him.

It seems to me that the photo I referred to earlier offers a graphic synthesis of John Paul II’s life — a Pope tired out by the length of his time of service to souls, who directs the world’s gaze to Jesus on the Cross, to enable each and every person to find there the answers to their deepest questions. The life of the soon-to-be-beatified Pope is, then, an example of a life that is transparently Christian, letting Jesus’ face and merciful attitude show through his own life. I think that that is the reason and secret of his effectiveness in evangelizing. And I am convinced that — as I pray will happen — his beatification will unleash in the world and the Church a tidal wave of faith and love, the desire to serve others, and gratitude to God our Lord.

On 1 May, in St Peter’s Square, under the loving eyes of our Lady, Mother of the Church, we will be able to say again, in union with Benedict XVI, “we want to tell the Lord a heartfelt ‘thank you’ for the gift of this Pope and to say ‘thank you’ to the Pope himself for all that he did and suffered” (General audience, 18 May 2005). We who knew him in this life now have the joyful responsibility of making him known to future generations.
ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA
Eucharistic celebrations of the dies natalis of St. Josemaría Escrivá

To help people find information about the thousands of Masses celebrated for June 26, liturgical memorial of St. Josemaría Escrivá, an interactive map was provided on the www.josemariaescriva.info web page, with links to Mass times and places in cities all around the world.

Cornelio Fabro and St. Josemaría Escrivá, L’Osservatore Romano (June 25, 2011)

Article by Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Vicar General of Opus Dei.

This year is the centennial of the birth of Cornelio Fabro, who was born in Flumignano, Italy, on August 24, 1911, and died in Rome on May 4, 1995. Fr. Fabro was a Stigmatine religious, and a great philosopher and university professor. For me, his memory is also closely tied to his relationship with St. Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, although they never met.

Fr. Fabro frequently mentioned the sorrow he felt in not having personally met St. Josemaría, whom he knew and greatly admired through his writings. This knowledge was increased by his friendship with Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, the first successor of St. Josemaría, and with other members of the Opus Dei Prelature, especially with the philosopher Carlos Cardona.

Cornelio Fabro’s admiration and veneration for St. Josemaría were, in a certain sense, intuitive. The founder’s message seemed to him to have the charm of the Gospel sine glossa, as I heard him say more than once. This admiration increased, from the intellectual point of view as well, through his attentive reflection, which penetrated right to the core of any question. I think that was the reason why Cornelio Fabro, already in the early ’70’s, encouraged us to carry out the plan of St. Josemaría that later became a reality in the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.
I cannot fail to recall with sincere gratitude the desire, frequently expressed by Fr. Fabro (and carried out with the authorization of his Superiors) to donate to our University his impressive library: impressive not only in quantity (some 30,000 volumes), but above all in quality. And I cannot fail to mention here the marvelous seminars that he gave for the students and professors at the University of Holy Cross.

Fabro dedicated several works to commenting, with his habitual rigor, on some of the central elements of St. Josemaría’s teachings. I will refer here to only two of these, which I consider of special importance. First of all, the article entitled El primado existencial de la libertad [The existential primacy of freedom], which developed and amplified a shorter text published in L’Osservatore Romano in 1977 under the title Un maestro de libertad cristiana [A teacher of Christian freedom].

Fr. Fabro (who, as is well known, studied and wrote a great deal on the topic of freedom) perceived and explained very well the profound originality with which St. Josemaría helps us to penetrate into the knowledge of this great gift of God, both in the order of nature and, even more, in that of grace: the freedom of the children of God, which Christ has won for us. “Only the Christian who is completely docile to the impulses of grace is truly and completely free,” he wrote. “This Gospel message shines with a special light in the teachings of the founder of Opus Dei. It is a paradox, the greatest paradox in our existence. But in Christianity, the highest truths always appear in a paradoxical form. Thus the true, that is to say the ‘real’ freedom of man, wounded by sin and weakened in spirit, is to be found in true, that is to say ‘real’ obedience to God, through renouncing oneself and the spirit of the world, through the suffering of the present life, and through nostalgia for eternal life.”

He went on to say: “in perfect harmony with the Second Vatican Council, the founder of Opus Dei sets forth, as the first good that has to be respected and fostered by Christians, precisely personal freedom; so that the primacy of freedom is not only recognized in doctrine, but lived in practice, also with respect to other people.” However, as Fabro concludes, “the existential primacy of Christian freedom preached with such energy by Msgr. Escrivá does not leave man abandoned to his own strength, but is inseparable from the realization that one can only reach Christ through the
Cross and under the guidance and help of our Lady, Mother of God, of Christ, and our Mother.”

The other text by Fr. Fabro to which I would like to refer is entitled El templo de un Padre de la Iglesia [The mettle of a Father of the Church]. This is a wide-ranging analysis of the central themes in the founder of Opus Dei’s writings, based on works of his that had been published up to that time (1992). This very detailed study led Fr. Fabro to the conclusion that St. Josemaría “unites mystical intuition with the most secure doctrinal orthodoxy, thus leading the reader, gently but firmly, along the path of ardent contemplation and incisive apostolate. It does not seem excessive to say that, in our days, these works constitute an inexhaustible source of inspiration for a new dawn of God’s Church in the world.”

The widespread secularization seen in today’s world, to be sure, is an obstacle to the salvific presence of the Church in the world. In reflecting on the thought of the founder of Opus Dei, Fr. Fabro writes that “to the challenge of secularization, the Church responds with Escrivá in the most radical and effective manner: not entrenching the Christian behind a barricade raised to defend oneself nor foolishly embracing a culture hostile to the faith; but rather affirming that the incarnation of the Word is the perennially timely foundation for man’s transformation into Christ, and through man’s work, of all creation.”

The depth with which Cornelio Fabro captured the central aspects of the spiritual message of St. Josemaría shows the keenness of his speculative mind. Fr. Fabro himself said that his philosophical activity had developed in three basic directions. The first was that of interpreting and going deeper into the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, which led to what Fabro called essential Thomism, centered in the rediscovery of being as act and the corresponding notion of participation. A second direction was the study of modern and contemporary philosophy, which led him to study with special rigor the close tie between atheism and the philosophy of immanence. The third was a defense of Kierkegaard’s opposition to Hegel, with a Kierkegaardian defense of personal freedom and the choice to commit oneself to the Absolute, that is, to God.
These three directions all converged and cannot be seen as merely the rejection of modern thought. In Cornelio Fabro's intellectual itinerary, we encounter an immense effort to preserve whatever is of value in modern thought in the light of Christian realism. Here too we can see a real harmony with the insights of St. Josemaría, who wrote: “Since you want to acquire a Catholic or universal mentality, here are some characteristics you should aim at: a breadth of vision and a deepening insight into the things that remain alive and unchanged in Catholic orthodoxy; a proper and healthy desire, which should never be frivolous, to present anew the standard teachings of traditional thought in philosophy and the interpretation of history; a careful awareness of trends in science and contemporary thought; and a positive and open attitude towards the current changes in society and in ways of living” (Furrow, no. 428).

In regard to the depth with which Fr. Fabro captured the central elements of the teachings of St. Josemaría, one must also take into account that Fabro, while a philosopher, was also a theologian, and not only by reason of his preparation for the priesthood and his later studies and publications, but also and above all because he always saw his dedication to philosophy as something inseparable from his priestly life: as a service to the Truth who is Jesus Christ. A few days after the 50th anniversary of his priestly ordination, in a letter dated April 25, 1985, Fr. Fabro told me: “Divine Providence and the constant protection of the Mother of God have always helped me, and especially in the moments of greatest risk and suffering. I see it a sign of divine mercy. *Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo*. I await with confidence, and I would even say with a serene joy, the coming of ‘the One who is to come.’ Fifty years of continual striving, in the service of the truth, with my eyes fixed on my own wretchedness, but also with infinite gratitude for such a high goal, with a hope that will not be disappointed.”
Recent months have seen the publication of the fifth Croatian edition of *The Way* (revised), the second Slovenian edition, and the fiftieth Mexican edition. *Holy Rosary* has been published in the ninth Italian edition, the fourth Costa Rican one (book and two CD audios), the second Russian edition, by a Franciscan publisher, and the first Mexican audio book. *The Way of the Cross* is now available in the sixth Italian edition, the fourth Mexican version in audio book form, and the first version in English published in India. In addition, the fifth Peruvian edition of *Furrow* was also published.

A Chilean edition of *In Love with the Church* (which includes the homilies “Loyalty to the Church,” “The Supernatural Aim of the Church,” and “A Priest Forever”) has been published by the Center for Studies of Christian Culture. It has an introduction by the Vicar of the Prelature in Chile, Msgr. Sergio Boetsch.

In the United States, Scepter Publishers has begun selling e-book versions of almost all the works of St. Josemaría in English.

Thanks to an agreement between the Centro Diffusione Media and Ares publishers, *Cammino* is now available in more than 200 kiosks in Rome.

*Books about St. Josemaría*

The second volume of *Vida cotidiana y santidad en la enseñanza de san Josemaría* (Rialp), by Javier Lopez Diaz and Ernst Burkhart is now available in bookstores. The first volume is already in its second printing. The third and final volume will be published soon.

New publications in Spain include: Cardinal Julian Herranz Casado, *Dios y audacia: mi juventud junto a san Josemaría* (Rialp); Ernesto Juliá Diaz, *El santo de lo ordinario: impresiones de la vida cotidiana junto a san Josemaría Escrivá* (Cobel); Rafael Hernandez Urigüen, *Juego, ecología y trabajo: tres temas teológicos desde las enseñanzas de san Josemaría Escrivá* (Eunsa); Jaime Fuentes, *Luchar por amor: recuerdos de san Josemaría Escrivá, Fundador del Opus Dei* (Cobel: first Spanish edition of a book published in Uruguay ten years ago); Ignacio Gomez-Sancha, *100 preguntas sobre “Encontrarás dragones”* (Palabra); Francisco Faus, *Un hombre que sabía perdonar* (Associacion d’Amics del Cami de Pallerols de Rialb a Andorra, with
versions in Catalanian and in Spanish). The publishers Quadrante, in Brazil, and Scepter, in the U.S., have published translations of the same book in Portuguese and English. Scepter has also recently published *The Man of Villa Tevere* by Pilar Urbano, a translation of *El Hombre de Villa Tevere*.

In Peru, the Asociación Infobrax has brought out the fourth edition of the book *San Josemaría Éscritá, Fundador del Opus Dei*, by Antonio Ducay Vela. Meanwhile the publisher JEL Könyvkiado has published *A Mindennapi élet szentje: Beszélgetés az Opus Dei alapítójáról*. [Készítette: Cesare Cavalleri], the first Hungarian edition of *Immersed in God: Saint Josemaría Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei, as Seen by His Successor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo [an Interview with Cesare Cavalleri]*.

Finally, in Italy there was recently published *San Josemaría in terra lombarda: con lo sguardo rivolto alla Madonnina 1948-1973*, by Lorenzo Revojera (Àncora Editrice).

**St. Josemaría on-line**

In recent months, the web pages [www.Josemaríaescriva.info](http://www.Josemaríaescriva.info) and [www.opusdei.org](http://www.opusdei.org) have been enriched with multimedia sections that help to better understand St. Josemaría’s life and message.

The first of these now offers an “interactive timeline” on the life of St. Josemaría and the history of Opus Dei, with photographs, videos, and brief texts. The number of languages in which one can view this page has also been increased, since Dutch and Croatian have now been added to the eight languages previously available.

Among the new features of the second web page are two short videos about St. Josemaría: “Who was Josemaría Escrivá?” and “Josemaría Escrivá in the Spanish Civil War,” along with a photo gallery with many photos from the saint’s life.

The message of St. Josemaría is also reaching more people thanks to the social networks. An example is the @sJosemaría account on Twitter,
which although only a few months old already has over 600 followers and 1,000 tweets.

St. Josemaría in Barbastro

The Entrearcos Cultural Center in Barbastro is located on the site of the house where St. Josemaría was born. In February 2011 this entity published the *Guia sobre san Josemaría in Barbastro*, a detailed guidebook on eight places in the city closely tied to St. Josemaría’s childhood. It includes two maps of Barbastro, a brief history of the city, and some documents of interest that show the founder of Opus Dei’s great appreciation for his native town.

Cardinal of Madrid presents the Critical-Historical Edition of Holy Rosary

In the same place where St. Josemaría wrote his work *Holy Rosary* in 1931—the Church of the Royal Monastery of St. Elizabeth—the new critical-historical edition of the book was formally presented. Edited by Pedro Rodríguez, it includes an extensive historical and theological introduction (with ample space dedicated to the “theology of the rosary”), numerous illustrations and photographs, and above all the text and critical-historical commentary on St. Josemaría’s work.

The ceremony was presided over by Archbishop Cardinal Antonio María Rouco Varela, who said that *Holy Rosary* is “a book that helps us to savor and contemplate the life of Christ.” Also taking part in the presentation were Pedro Rodríguez, professor emeritus at the University of Navarra’s School of Theology, Miguel Angel Garrido, Professor of the Theory of Literature, and Jose Luis Illanes, director of the St. Josemaría Escrivá Historical Institute.
“Inspired to Love”

A new documentary on how St. Josemaría’s message has been an inspiration for many people has been launched through the www.inspiradoparamar.org and www.inspiredtolove.org sites. Starting from the story of a Finnish mother whose son converted to Catholicism and joined Opus Dei, twenty-two people from many different countries explain how the message of the “saint of the ordinary” has given new meaning to their life. The documentary includes filmed scenes from get-togethers with St. Josemaría.

The above sites also provide various places where one can leave a testimony on the internet. Through videos, photographs, and brief texts, people from all walks of life can share with others the “inspiration to love” that they have received from St. Josemaría. Many comments are also being posted in the various social media in which the documentary has an account.

St. Josemaría on the screen

On March 25 the movie There be Dragons by Roland Joffe was screened in Spain. The story, set in the Spanish civil war, is centered on the research of a journalist, Robert (Dougray Scott), into the life of Josemaría Escrivá (Charlie Cox). While carrying out his work, Robert discovers that his Father, Manolo (Wes Bentley), with whom he has had no contact for eight years, was a friend of Escrivá during his childhood. The founder of Opus Dei thus becomes one of the protagonists in the film, which includes scenes from his childhood and his attitude towards the war.

After its screening in Spain, There Be Dragons traveled to theaters in the United States (May 6), Portugal (May 19) and Turkey (May 27), and will soon be shown in Latin America, Canada, the United Kingdom, China, India, the Philippines, and in some of the English-speaking
countries of Africa.

The movie was widely discussed in the press and on the internet. The commentaries stressed, among other things, the striking exposition of the human drama of forgiveness, the convincing representation of the life of a contemporary saint, the insightful analysis of evil, and the need to struggle to overcome the obstacles that everyone encounters in life.

In Rome the movie was presented on March 21 at the North American College before eminent personalities of the Church and the world of culture. Present were the director, Roland Joffé, and one of the producers, Ignacio Gomez-Sancha.

*There Be Dragons* has already had a big impact on the lives of many people. The St. Josemaría web page has several testimonies from people, including actors taking part in the film, who have made important changes in their lives, or who have come to see the priesthood in a more positive light.

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A photo biography

“With each photograph, a small piece of history.” This was the idea that inspired a new book with photos from St. Josemaría’s life, published in Italy by Lindau publishers: *San Josemaría Escrivá: Una biografia per immagini del fondatale dell’Opus Dei*. The author, Bruno Mastroianni, has worked in the field of communication for several years. Besides publishing frequently in the press, he is a university professor.

The book covers the successive stages in St. Josemaría’s life—childhood, vocation, foundation and development of the Work, apostolic trips. Several pages are devoted to Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, first successor of St. Josemaría, and to the history of Opus Dei in Italy.
New volume of Studia et Documenta

The fifth volume of Studia et Documenta, the review of the St. Josemaría Escrivá Historical Institute, has been published. This volume contains, among other articles, two brief biographical sketches of faithful of Opus Dei--Juan Jimenez Vargas (1913–1997), and Dora del Hoyo (1914–2004)--and a recounting of St. Josemaría’s meetings with ecclesiastical personalities during the years of the Second Vatican Council.

The documentation section contains an account of the audiences that the first members of Opus Dei in Rome had with Pius XII; a note on the pilgrimage that St. Josemaría made in 1935 with two faithful of Opus Dei to the shrine of our Lady of Sonsoles, in Avila; and a letter on personal prelatures written in 1983 by Cardinal Sebastiano Baggio, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, to Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo.

Four articles look at apostolic initiatives urged forward by St. Josemaría in the fifties and sixties: a school of hotel management (Kibondeni) in Kenya; a business school in Spain that today enjoys great prestige (IESE); and two student residences, Müngersdorf and Netherhall House, in Germany and England respectively.

The volume ends with two contributions, one literary in emphasis and the other linguistic, about The Way, and a general bibliographic section.

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Other news

Harambee organizes a literary competition for the European Year of the Volunteer

In honor of the European Year of the Volunteer, Harambee Africa International, in collaboration with the Fondazione RUI, has organized a literary competition among Italian students with the title: “A Story about Africa.” The goal was to write a story situated in Africa that will help foster knowledge about and solidarity with the African continent. The awarding
of prizes took place in Rome, in the Palazzo Madama, seat of the Italian Senate, on May 12.

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**In Guaydil school**

The Guaydil girls school, in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, held in January the first St. Josemaría Week, an event they hope to turn into a tradition. It included a traveling exposition on the life and message of St. Josemaría in which teachers and students took part, a St. Josemaría Trophy volleyball tournament in which almost all of the grades participated, and a Mass held in the Guaydil chapel for families and friends of the school.

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**Prayer card in Mapudungún**

Adding to the list of 56 languages in which the prayer for the intercession of St. Josemaría is available, a prayer card has just been published in Mapudungún, a Mapuche language spoken in various regions of Chile. The translation, originally made by a teacher in an intercultural high school, was edited by persons whose mother-tongue is Mapuche. The event received mention in the press as an example of the recognition of aboriginal cultures.

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**St. Josemaría in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Abandoned**

The Archbishop of Valencia, Carlos Osoro Sierra, blessed a portrait of St. Josemaría in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Abandoned on April 19. Participating in the ceremony were the regional vicar of Opus Dei in Spain, Msgr. Ramon Herrando; the rector of the Basilica, Fr. Juan Bautista Anton; and the vicar of the delegation of Opus Dei in Valencia, Fr. Jorge Nava. Msgr. Ramon Herrando, in the name of the Prelate of Opus Dei, expressed his gratitude for the interest and effort of the Archbishop, the
rector of the Basilica and many other persons who assisted in the installation of the painting in a place so beloved by Valencians. He said he was also very happy that “the ceremony coincided with the 75th anniversary of St. Josemaría’s first visit to Valencia on April 20, 1936.” This date can be seen, Msgr. Herrando noted, as the date of the beginning of Opus Dei’s apostolic activity in Valencia, the first city to which St. Josemaría extended his apostolic work in service of the Church after the Work began in Madrid, in 1928.

The painting by José Manuel Pozo Serrano brings to life St. Josemaría’s devotion to Our Lady of the Abandoned, whom he always visited whenever he traveled to Valencia. It is installed on the stairs leading to the niche behind the altar where the statue of our Lady stands, close to other paintings of saints and Popes who sought the intercession of the Mare de Déu dels Desemparats.

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**The footsteps of a saint in Valladolid**

*Throughout his life, St. Josemaría visited the city of Valladolid more than sixty times. A photographic exhibit entitled “St. Josemaría and Valladolid: The footsteps of a saint” was made available to the public in an exhibition site in the city. Many residents of Valladolid, proud of St. Josemaría’s close relationship with their city (the third in which a Center of Opus Dei was established), attended the exhibit.*

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**A DVD about the crossing of the Pyrenees**

In Spain a new documentary has been produced about the passage of St. Josemaría and his handful of young companions through the Pyrenees in 1937 during the Spanish Civil War. Its title is *Cruzando la noche. Caminos difíciles en tiempos dramáticos*. The video offers a vivid account of the harsh war conditions and exhausting marches through the mountains of that risky endeavor.
St. Josemaría and Blessed John Paul II for young people

More than a hundred young people took part, in Rome, in a conference on Blessed John Paul II and St. Josemaría Escrivá. The presentations, for which prizes were awarded, were meant to focus on the key challenges these two men placed before young people. The winning exposition was by the Ipar Youth Club of Bilbao, under the title “John Paul II: when it is prudent to be daring.”

Among those invited to the conference were the journalist Paloma Gomez-Borrero, a specialist in the Pontificate of John Paul II, and Fr. John Wauck, a professor at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, who acted as an advisor to Roland Joffé during the filming of the movie There Be Dragons, inspired by the life of St. Josemaría.

Devotion throughout Italy

Two photographic expositions on the life of St. Josemaría were held in Italy, one in Bergamo and the other in Verona. Also two streets and a plaza—in Montesilvano (Pescara), Enna, and Cernobbio (Como), respectively—were dedicated to the founder of Opus Dei. A sign of special devotion was the inauguration of a painting representing St. Josemaría and St. Joseph in a church in Naples.

Devotion in Colombia

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has issued a Decree dated October 20, 2010, by which the celebration of the feast day of St. Josemaría Escrivá is permitted on June 26 in all the dioceses of Colombia as a memoria ad libitum (optional memorial).
On Saturday, June 25, a Mass was celebrated in the Holy Spirit parish church of Garzón (Huila), Colombia, and a painting of St. Josemaría was solemnly enthroned on the occasion of his liturgical feast.

Remembering St. Josemaría in Almaty

On May 8, José Luis Mumbiela, till then rector of the Karaganda seminary, was ordained bishop of the diocese of the Most Holy Trinity in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendia, was the principal consecrator. Also present at the ceremony were bishops from various countries and more than forty priests. Bishop Mumbiela was born in 1969 in Monzón, Spain, and was ordained a priest in 1995, incardinated in the diocese of Lérida. In 1998 he moved to Kazakhstan.

The new bishop wanted to have St. Josemaría Escrivá included in the singing of the Litanies, in gratitude for the formation he had received in the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, along with the recently beatified John Paul II. He also mentioned both of these figures at the end of the Mass: “St. Josemaría Escrivá often said that we Christians, to find our path to God, should unite ourselves with the head and heart of the Vicar of Christ. That is why I have chosen as my Episcopal motto the words of John Paul II ‘Open wide the doors to Christ,’ words that were later repeated by Pope Benedict XVI.”
News
Mater Ecclesiae: The Mosaic in St. Peter’s Square

The following is an article by the architect Javier Cotelo published in L’Osservatore Romano on June 14, 2011:

One of the most recent architectural features in St. Peter’s square is the mosaic dedicated to Mary Mater Ecclesiae, inscribed with the words Totus Tuus, a sign of Pope John Paul II’s immense affection for our Lady.

I had the privilege of knowing something about the origin of the decision to put up this mosaic, a reflection of Blessed John Paul II’s special relationship with young people and his deep sense of gratitude.

During Holy Week in 1980, Pope John Paul II received in audience several thousand young people who came to Rome for the UNIV Conference, an international meeting of university students who take part in activities at centers of Opus Dei throughout the world. This yearly event, which began in 1968, combines the desire to spend the Holy Week Triduum in Rome, the city of Peter, with activities of cultural enrichment for the students.

At the end of the audience, one of the young people there, Julio Nieto, told the Holy Father that among all the statues in St. Peter’s square, he couldn’t find any image of our Lady, and that therefore the square was incomplete. “Good, very good! We have to put the finishing touch on the square,” John Paul II replied.

This conversation reached the ears of Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo, St. Josemaria’s successor as head of Opus Dei. Msgr. Del Portillo, moved by the desire to put into effect without delay what he considered a wish of the Holy Father, asked me to start thinking about a suitable place for an image of our Lady in the square, adding that it could be dedicated to Mary Mater Ecclesiae. At the time I was working as an architect in Rome and had the good fortune of living close to the Prelate of Opus Dei in Viale Bruno Buozzi.

After several weeks and a number of visits to the square to find a suitable site, I suggested to Msgr. Del Portillo a possible solution,
supplying photo-montages and sketches. My suggestion was that a window on the corner of the building between the courtyard of St. Damasus and the square might be replaced by a mosaic of our Lady.

On June 27, 1980, the proposal was sent to the Holy Father, with texts, drawings and photographs, and the sketches of elevations and cross-sections that are reproduced on this page. After several months went by without receiving a reply, another copy of the material was sent to the Holy Father through his then-secretary Msgr. Stanislaw Dziwisz.

A few months later, John Paul II was shot in St. Peter's square and, as he himself said, his life was preserved thanks to Mary’s protection. As a sign of gratitude, he wanted to put an image of our Lady in St. Peter’s square. The Roman Pontiff’s desire resulted in the proposal of Msgr. Del Portillo being looked at closely by the competent authorities in the Vatican, and the site suggested there was chosen as the location for the image of Mary Mater Ecclesiae.

The mosaic (inspired by the Madonna della colonna from the Constantinian basilica) was installed on December 7, 1981 and, on the following day, after praying the Angelus, John Paul II blessed it. He expressed his desire “that all who come to St. Peter’s Square may raise their eyes to Mary, to greet her with filial trust and prayer.”

I have often thought of this event as another example of John Paul II’s special relationship with young people. I still find it amazing that the Pope's words, “we have to put the finishing touch on the square,” addressed to a university student a year and a half earlier, had now become a reality.

Three days later, on December 11, the Pope invited Msgr. Del Portillo to concelebrate Mass in his private chapel and to have breakfast. He wanted to let him know his great joy on blessing the image in the square and to thank him for providing the idea for its location.

A few days later, the Holy Father thoughtfully sent him the drawing of the mosaic, in black and white, which was used to guide the placement of the colored pieces. This drawing, shown in the photograph, is now in the central offices of the Prelature of Opus Dei.
It was Pope Paul VI who, in November 1964, announced his wish to end the sessions of the Second Vatican Council “with the joy of honoring our Lady with the title Mother of the Church, Mater Ecclesiae.” And Paul VI added: “This title will help us to honor Mary Most Holy, loving Queen of the world, source of unity as our Mother, and tender hope of our salvation.” This image, so closely united to the memory of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II, is a good reminder for all Christians, upon seeing it, to ask her to protect all her children in the Church.

Conclusion of the Marian Year

February 14 saw the conclusion of the Marian Year convoked by Bishop Javier Echevarría in thanksgiving for the 80 years since our Lord let St. Josemaría see that the apostolate of Opus Dei was also to include women. In the letter he wrote at the beginning of the month, the Prelate encouraged the faithful of the Prelature to take advantage of all of the graces granted through our Lady’s intercession and to give thanks to God for all his mercies with a contrite and humble heart, purified through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

New Centers of the Prelature

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

Asunción, Paraguay; Ciudad del Este, Paraguay (2 centers); Haifa, Israel; Seoul, Korea (2 centers).

Pontifical Appointments

On March 29, 2011, Msgr. Antonio Miralles was reappointed Consultor of the Congregation for the Doctrine for the Faith “in aliud quinquennium.”

On May 19, 2011, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz was appointed Consultor of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization.

And on June 18, 2011, Msgr. Miguel Delgado Galindo was appointed Subsecretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

News of the Cause of Canonization of the Servant of God, José Luis Muzquiz

This past June 2, the Canonization Cause of José Luis Muzquiz (1912-1983) was formally opened in the pastoral center of the Archdiocese of Boston. He was one of the first three faithful of Opus Dei to receive priestly ordination, in 1944. Fr. Joseph (as many called him) laid the groundwork for beginning the activities of the Work in the United States, Canada, Japan, and Venezuela. Since his death his reputation for sanctity has grown steadily. The historian John Coverdale recently published a biographical sketch of his life under the title Putting Down Roots: Father Joseph Muzquiz and the Growth of Opus Dei, a translation of which is now available in Spanish, as mentioned below.

Publications of interest

Cosi normale, cosi speciale: Vita di Marcello Marano. This biography by Marco Paganini (Milan, Ares 2010), recounts the life of the Milanese, Marcello Marano, a telecommunications engineer, and professor of physics
at the Polytechnic Institute of Milan. He died suddenly at the age of 28, in December of 2002. He lived his Christian vocation in Opus Dei in an exemplary manner as an Associate member, through his affection for his family and friends, and his dedication to his work in the area of laser and photonic research.

Other recent books are:


Some diocesan assignments entrusted to priests of the Prelature

You can read the full text of "Romana" by subscribing to the print edition.

Transfer of the remains of the Servant of God José Maria Hernández Garnica to the Church of Montalegre

The mortal remains of the Servant of God Jose Maria Hernández Garnica (1913-1972), will soon be transferred from the cemetery of
Montjuïc to the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament of the Church of Santa Maria de Montalegre, in Barcelona. This decision—authorized by the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, in accord with the Cardinal Archbishop of Barcelona, Lluís Martínez Sistach—was announced on June 21 during a colloquium with Teresa Temes Hernández, the niece of the Servant of God, and is the result, above all, of the growing reputation for holiness of Fr. José Maria.
INITIATIVES

- In Brief
Social Development at Metro Achievement Center: A Legacy of St. Josemaría

M. Sharon Hefferan

Director of Metro Achievement Center

Guided by St. Josemaría Escrivá’s passion for social development and the education of youth, the Metro Achievement Center opened its doors twenty-five years ago in the heart of Chicago’s inner city. Metro is one example among many social initiatives inspired by Opus Dei throughout the world where people with limited access to economic and educational opportunities receive academic support and an encouragement for their Christian life.[1]

Metro began with only a few girls (the 40 attending the first summer program in 1985), and now assists over 500 Chicago girls between the ages of eight and 18 each year. Since its founding, the center has served more than 5,000 young women. Metro’s mission is to motivate and educate these young women through after-school and summertime programs to become better students and virtuous individuals. Key to our approach is the integration of academic enrichment classes with a character education program based on the human virtues.

Why does Metro stand out among hundreds of educational enrichment programs in the city of Chicago? Without a doubt, Metro’s ability to effectively serve numerous inner-city families in this great metropolis is owed in a particular way to St. Josemaría’s vision of social development. While providing a well-rounded educational experience for our students, our curriculum is grounded in two social teachings of the Church: the dignity of the person and the recognition of parents as the primary educators of their children. Discovering specific ways to reinforce and reflect these teachings forms an important part of our mission and institutional culture.[2]

Historical and environmental background

Rising immigration and population shifts in Chicago greatly impact the social and educational institutions in this third-largest city of the United
States. As young professionals move into revitalized and upgraded neighborhoods, lower income residents, many of whom are African-American families, are often displaced to other areas of the city or beyond its borders. Simultaneously, growing numbers of Latin Americans migrate into the city, thereby shaping Chicago’s ethnic profile. Since 2000, government and not-for-profit programs that aim to serve minority populations have grown exponentially in an attempt to provide these groups with adequate economic, educational and social services.

Chicago public high schools have long been notorious for their high drop-out rate. An estimated 30% of high school students quit before they graduate. In response to this astounding statistic, which is twice as high as the drop-out rate for the state of Illinois as a whole, there are now over 600 after-school academic programs in the city, each aiming to keep students in school and learning. Eighty-three percent of public school students come from low-income families and are disproportionately from minority populations: African-American (44%) and Hispanic (41%). Metro directly serves this student population.

Students from over 125 public, parochial, and independent schools look to Metro for academic enrichment. Sixty-three percent of these students come from the public school system and more than 95% are from minority backgrounds (Hispanic, African-American, and Asian). Since 2000, 100% of Metro’s high school students have graduated from high school and continued on to college, most of them the first in their families to attend a college or university.

More than social action

The center is located just west of the financial district of Chicago. Students must leave their neighborhoods and travel across the city to attend Metro. Meeting and socializing with students from other neighborhoods and different schools helps to break down racial prejudices and neighborhood rivalries, thus building a spirit of unity and solidarity. In a 1966 New York Times interview, St. Josemaría spoke of the value of the work that Midtown (Metro’s counterpart for boys) was doing in Chicago, “An important part of its work consists in bringing together, in an atmosphere of friendship and collaboration, the different ethnic groups that
live there.” Similarly, by connecting inner-city students with hundreds of volunteers from the corporate community and major universities, Metro girls are introduced to new and varied social environments. The diversity of individuals is a microcosm of Chicago’s urban community. Experience has shown that the social exposure girls receive at Metro equips them to handle with greater ease and confidence the new and diverse social settings they later find at the university or at work in their profession.

Historically, Catholics and other concerned citizens have joined forces to find just solutions to help the poor and needy. The work of Metro can be best understood as more than a “just solution.” It is, rather, a “work of mercy.” This phrase most accurately describes our efforts and captures the spirit of St. Josemaría’s social concern. Mercy goes beyond justice. Mercy encourages us to serve and to meet the needs of others out of love rather than strict duty. A work of mercy consequently includes the dimension of compassion; a concern for the poor and underprivileged which is at the same time both human and spiritual. The fifth Beatitude reminds us: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy (Mt 5:7).” Seeing all mankind as one race, the race of the children of God, was St. Josemaría’s vision for humanity and for charitable works. This conviction shapes our education model in numerous ways. Our site is located centrally and we make a concerted effort to admit and mix students from different ethnic neighborhoods rather than offer our services to one particular ethnic population. Most importantly, we treat each individual girl with the respect she deserves as a child of God, which provides the context for all of our educational work at Metro.

For a social program to be a work of mercy, a Christian spirit is essential. Several years ago, a benefactor of educational programs that Opus Dei organized in Lithuania reminded us of this. She commented: “I'm glad to hear that your summer program includes the option for the girls to attend catechism classes. There are plenty of wonderful agencies providing social services. But Opus Dei is here to help people get closer to God.” Her perspective brought to mind well-known words of St. Josemaría directed to those who strive to help the needy: “Until now you had not understood the message that we Christians bring to the rest of men: the hidden marvel of
the interior life. What a wonderful new world you are placing in front of them!"[7]

We now turn our attention to three areas where St. Josemaría's vision regarding the dignity of each person as a child of God shapes the charitable work done at Metro. First, we consider educational development from both a human and spiritual perspective; second, how faith can be fostered in a secular setting; and lastly, the importance of inculcating personal responsibility for building solidarity.

Unity of the human and divine

St. Josemaría often spoke of “unity of life,” a harmony among the different facets of a person's life founded on a single guiding principle--that we are children of God. Unity of life leads to the conviction that the human and divine dimensions of our existence are distinct but intertwined and inseparable. The unity between the human and divine is reinforced in several ways at Metro.

Our academic curriculum reinforces basic reading, writing, mathematics and science skills as well as classes in the humanities. Students also benefit from individual tutoring and homework help. Interactive classes in the fine arts and sports offer students the opportunity to develop social skills and improve physical fitness. In addition to academic support, character-building classes for students and their parents are essential to Metro's program and focus on human virtues such as responsibility, generosity, and sincerity. Each girl also receives individual mentoring that provides practical advice on how to put the human virtues into practice. These classes in academic and human formation are complemented by an optional religious education program that emphasizes the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

Unity of life is also fostered by encouraging students to work well, not just for themselves, but with an eye to serving others and the common good. A mother put it this way: “You teach our children that it is still good to be good.” The idea that one can turn work into prayer simply by working well and offering it to God is often a new discovery for our staff and students.

A Christian attitude toward material things is another way we foster
 unity of life. Finding ways to incarnate what St. Josemaría referred to as “Christian materialism” is an ongoing effort on the part of our staff. “Authentic Christianity, which professes the resurrection of all flesh, has always quite logically opposed ‘dis-incarnation,’ without fear of being judged materialistic. We can, therefore, rightfully speak of a ‘Christian materialism’, which is boldly opposed to that materialism which is blind to the spirit.”[8]

In this spirit, the staff strives to keep the facility clean, orderly and home-like in appearance, knowing that this fosters interior serenity and a willingness to serve others. Dedicating space in our center to a chapel, a parent room, and a living room is a material way of highlighting the importance that God, parents and family have in our lives. We entrust our work with families to the Holy Family; our chapel has an image of Jesus, Mary and Joseph that reflects St. Josemaría's great love for the “Trinity on earth.” While professional women serve as mentors to our girls, an image of the Virgin Mary in each of the classrooms and common areas serves as a reminder of Mary's protection and love for each of us.

Our comprehensive approach to education—educating the mind, heart, body and soul—emphasizes the link between the human and divine in each person and contributes to personal growth. At Metro we prefer to speak of “self-worth” rather than “self-esteem,” because true self-esteem springs naturally from a girl's awareness of her personal dignity and value as a daughter of God. St. Josemaría's keen appreciation for the unity that should exist within each person has a great influence on the academic programs and other activities at Metro.

*Fostering faith in a secular setting*

In the United States we find great respect for religion and openness to faith. In the spring of 2008, Benedict XVI spoke of this reality during his Apostolic trip to the United States: “This country has a long history of cooperation between different religions in many spheres of public life...members of different religions come together to enhance mutual understanding and promote the common good.”[9]

Metro’s work is directed and carried out by lay Catholics working alongside people of many different faiths. It is not an ecclesial work but
rather a collaborative effort of individuals who share a concern for improving education, and, in turn, the economic and social condition of those in need. In 1967, St. Josemaría spoke with *Time Magazine* and underscored the importance of Christians and non-Christians working together to promote activities that benefit society and that “are open to everyone, without any kind of racial, religious or ideological discrimination.”[10] St. Josemaría challenged lay people to feel *personally* responsible for discovering solutions to society’s problems; for example, raising the standards of low-income families and immigrants is not a task meant to be left to clerics and religious.

Fortunately, Metro can count on the assistance of almost 200 professional women and university volunteers who engage their hands, heads, and hearts by serving inner-city children. Seventy-six percent of the funds Metro needs to operate and support the academic and personal growth of our students come from corporations, foundations, special events, and individuals. The families we serve contribute five percent of Metro’s operating budget, and investments make up most of the difference.[11]

While Metro’s academic and character-building classes are the core of our curriculum and are offered weekly to all students, monthly religious education classes are available to those students interested in learning more about the Catholic faith. Students must freely choose to attend the classes and must “opt-in” with parental permission to lively instructional sessions. Metro does not ask families about their religious affiliation, yet approximately 85% of students choose to take part in these discussions. A chaplain offers spiritual guidance to all interested Metro students, staff, and volunteers. Because of St. Josemaría’s appreciation and respect for people of all religious backgrounds, one finds at Metro a natural and positive approach to faith, and to religious formation. When a professional woman or university student tutors and helps a child academically, she often discovers in the process something deeper: friendship and the love of God. There is always a great respect for persons of all religious views and beliefs. It is precisely within the “faith friendly” environment at Metro that students, their parents and our volunteers often discover—or rediscover—the Christian faith. In recent years, through the example and help of Metro staff, some volunteers and students were baptized or received into the
Church, and parents who had never received the sacrament of Matrimony experienced the joy of receiving this grace.

Part of Metro’s effort to facilitate the connection between faith and life is manifested by our placement of a chapel in the middle of our academic space. Students, parents and volunteers are invited to stop in and pray at any time. For the staff, our chapel is a magnet drawing us to pray for the many individuals who walk through our doors each day. We can say that, for those promoting this institution, the Tabernacle is the center, without Metro thereby losing its secular character, since it is not an ecclesiastical initiative, but one of citizens—some faithful of the Prelature, others not—who in the use of their freedom and independently of their religious beliefs, carry out this social activity.

The chapel, situated in the heart of our facility serves as a constant reminder of how natural our relationship with God should be in the midst of the simple and ordinary things in life, especially study, work, friendship, and volunteer service. Some time ago a Jewish businessman visited Metro and remarked that, being a spiritual man, he was pleased to see how we had included faith in our vision of the person; he also held faith to be an essential aspect of human dignity and happiness.

Priority of the individual over the institution: personal responsibility for building solidarity

Every society is a labyrinth of elaborate structures and institutions. Financial and commercial institutions influence and regulate our monetary well-being. Global networks of communication and technology institutionalize and revolutionize the way we work and communicate. Already in the 20th century, Church institutions developed global structures to provide aid for the needy. Yet it is worth reflecting on the fact that Jesus always reached out to individual souls, healing and comforting them one by one. The parables of Christ highlight the value of each person, who is loved directly and sought out individually by their merciful Father God.

Although Metro is indeed an institution, it is most importantly a vehicle for connecting individuals. St. Josemaría would warn members of Opus Dei against developing an institutional or collective mentality which
would lead one to lose sight of the primacy of persons and their families when operating social or educational initiatives, including those that help the less fortunate. There are abundant examples in the Gospels where Jesus Christ cures and reaches out to souls personally, and we too are only effective when we realize we are personally responsible for fostering development and when we strive to pray and work at serving individual persons. While it is true that Metro is dependent on the generosity of corporations and foundations for its financial sustainability, behind every business entity Metro recognizes individuals. In *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict XVI expresses the priority of the individual in this way, “In development programs, the principle of the centrality of the human person, as the subject primarily responsible for development, must be preserved.”[12]

St. Josemaría said that the answer to injustice lies with individuals who act justly. If individuals are just, then over time the structures and institutions that employ them will be just.[13] He affirmed that one must serve not only with justice but above all with charity: “Justice alone is never enough to solve the great problems of mankind… The dignity of man, who is a son of God, requires much more. Charity must penetrate and accompany justice, because it sweetens and deifies everything: ‘God is love.’”[14] When reflecting upon the racial problems in the United States, St. Josemaría explained the connection between justice and charity in this way: “A Christian cannot be satisfied with merely respecting the rights of others. He has to see in every man a brother to whom he owes sincere love and disinterested service.”[15]

Ultimately, friendship is the context and medium for social integration at Metro. This personal approach, with its focus on the concern for each person’s academic, personal, social, economic and spiritual well-being, helps the children we work with blossom into the strong and caring adults they were created to be. Precisely because of our conviction that people, not structures, are what really count, each girl in our program receives a great deal of individual attention from staff, teachers, tutors and mentors. We aim to make our own what Benedict XVI highlighted as one of the essential elements of Christian and ecclesial charity: “Yet, while professional competence is a primary, fundamental requirement, it is not of itself sufficient. We are dealing with human beings, and human beings
always need something more than technically proper care. They need humanity.”[16]

Every year, thanks to the dedication of approximately 200 volunteers working with 500 families, personal attention continues to be the mainstay of the Metro Achievement Center. The Gospel reminds us that patience, kindness, and hope are among the manifestations of a love that endures.[17]

In short, we can say that St. Josemaría’s unconditional love for each person as a child of God is the vision that shapes the work of Metro in the inner-city of Chicago. His perspective encourages Christians to discover and present positive solutions: “A son of God cannot entertain class prejudice, for he is interested in the problems of all men. And he tries to help solve them with the justice and charity of our Redeemer.”[18] His conviction that true human development can only take place when there is an appreciation for the human person in his or her totality, body and soul, gives our work of mercy the impetus and strength to build up our communities from within. Our indispensable work of education is always effective when we treat persons with the full awareness that they are children of God.


[6] “... brothers we are, children of the same Father, God. So there is only one race, the race of the children of God. There is only one color, the color of the children of God. And there is only one language, the language...
which speaks to the heart and to the mind, without the noise of words, making us know God and love one another.” St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 106.


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**Introduction**

The initiatives described in the present section are activities of an educational, social, or cultural nature. They have been begun by faithful of the Prelature and cooperators, with the help of many other people, Catholics and non–Catholics. Those who undertake and direct these activities—taking on full responsibility, also for their financial aspects—are
seeking to respond to the needs of their country or neighborhood, without any discrimination based on race, religion, or social status.

The Prelature of Opus Dei, through agreements with the promoters or through the statutes of each entity, contributes to the development of these social initiatives by providing Christian doctrinal and moral orientation and priestly service, always with full respect for people's freedom of consciences.

In Brief

Casa Blanca, Uruguay -- Work camp in Paysandú

In March, 48 university students who take part in formative activities of the Prelature arrived at Casa Blanca, located in the impoverished Paysandú district some 240 miles from the capital of Uruguay. Here they spent five days repairing a small chapel over a hundred-years-old, and visited needy families in the area. Among other things, they replaced the roof of a house for a family without financial means. They also began work on a site for a future rural school. The young volunteers, with the help of people from the area, cut down some trees and bushes to clear several fields. Donations from individuals and businesses provided the funds to carry out these repairs. Working alongside the people of Casa Blanca was an enriching experience and they were able to get to know the current situation of the village and determine the most urgent projects for the future.
Paris -- Seminar for French journalists in Rome

On 7-9 April, at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, a seminar was held for journalists, organized by the Information Office of Opus Dei in France. Under the title “Challenges of Benedict XVI’s Pontificate,” the goal was to offer fifteen French-speaking religious information professionals keys to the understanding of the Catholic Church.

Those attending had the opportunity of listening to people who work closely with Benedict XVI, such as Father Federico Lombardi, Director of the Holy See’s Press Office, and Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications. Also taking part were Bishop Jean Lafitte, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Family and Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

The French journalists also had an opportunity to exchange impressions and experiences with the Rome correspondents of major newspapers and “Vaticanists.”

The seminar included talks by professors from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. These activity-filled days provided the occasion for a fruitful dialogue between leaders of the Church and information professionals.

Carania, Peru -- Social work by university students

From the 2nd to the 13th of January, 2011, the Los Andes Cultural Center organized a work camp for university students in Carania, in the province of Yauyos, located at 3,500 meters (11,500 feet). This activity forms part of a broader project to assist development in that part of the Andes, organized by the Valle Grande Rural Institute and the Zabalketa
NGO. The twenty university students taking part helped dig a mile-long trench for pipes that will carry water to the community. With the help of people from the Carania area, and despite the adverse weather, the project was completed successfully.

Canals, Spain -- Presentation of the book Memorias de Escora (1959-2009)

On April 8, in the Exposition Hall in Canals (Valencia), the presentation of the book *Memorias de Escora (1959-2009)* by Rafael López took place. The author was one of the first members of this youth club for extracurricular and free-time educational activities. At the end photographs of activities held there were shown.

The four hundred page book is a collection of commemorative events organized on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of this youth club in Canals, which was started at the urging of St. Josemaria.

To commemorate the Golden Anniversary other initiatives were also organized. For example, the Peña Himalaya de Escora (Escora’s mountain climbing club) put on an exposition of photographs of excursions during this half century and placed a statue of our Lady of Sorrows, blessed by the village pastor, on the highest peak of Canals, the Atalaya. Many people from the nearby area have already made pilgrimages there.

Rome -- The lay faithful: reality and perspective

On April 7-8, a conference was held in Rome on “The lay faithful: reality and perspective,” organized by the School of Canon Law at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.
The president of the organizing committee, Professor Fr. Luis Navarro, explained that “the Second Vatican Council clearly highlighted the role of the laity, as faithful immersed in secular reality and called to holiness and to share closely in the Church’s mission to bring life to the world.” Professor Navarro said that “a well-formed laity aware of its duties towards society is a light for the world.”

Presiding over the sessions was Cardinal Stanislaw Rylko, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. Those taking part included Archbishop Francesco Coccopalmerio, president of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts; Professor Giacomo Canobbio from the Theological School of Northern Italy, Milan; Professor Guzman Carriquiry, current undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity; Professors José Ramón Villar and Maria Blanco, from the University of Navarra, and the sociologist Sergio Belardinelli from the University of Bologna. A round-table discussion was also held each day with representatives from various ecclesial groups (the Neocatechumenal Way, the Charismatic Renewal, the Focolari Movement, and the Community of St. Egidio), and Christian lay people who hold positions of responsibility in public life: journalists, politicians, cultural figures, etc.

Montevideo, Uruguay -- Social action in Quebracho

The area of Quebracho has 2500 inhabitants, whose livelihood comes from the cultivation of grain, vegetable farming and stock-raising. At the request of the mayor, 24 students went there from Montevideo, during the month of January, to paint various public buildings in the town and also the homes of some elderly people without financial means, as well as two parish halls. The students also gave classes and organized activities for some 60 children in the poorest section of the district.
Rome -- Conference on the Beatification of John Paul II

“The beatification of John Paul II: public opinion and *sensus fidei*” was the theme of the Study Conference organized by the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, this past April 1, in connection with the beatification of John Paul II, which would take place a month later. The work was inaugurated by Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. The former director of the Press Office of the Holy See, Joaquin Navarro-Valls, also gave a presentation.

The second part of the conference included a round table with the participation of journalists, Vatican specialists, and teachers of communications, moderated by Professor Diego Contreras, dean of the School of Institutional Communication at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. Taking part were Luigi Accattoli, from the newspaper *Corriere della Sera*; Aldo Maria Valli, Vatican specialist for Italian Public Television news; Marina Ricci, from the news department of Channel 5-Mediaset; Elisabetta Lo Iacono, professor of Journalism at the San Buenaventura School of Theology, and Giovanni Tridente, professor of information ethics at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.

A few weeks earlier, on March 9, at the same site, the postulator for the cause of canonization of John Paul II participated in one of the colloquia organized by the School of Communication at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. Msgr. Slawomir Oder said that Karol Wojtyla “made the Gospel, the word of God, known with his life.” The postulator said that “when John Paul II could no longer speak, because he had lost this ability, he still transmitted—despite his human powerlessness—the strength of his faith.” For “holiness is a process, a response to the grace of God,” and whoever “takes refuge in him, allows his heart to be transformed.”
Rome -- Personal spiritual formation in seminaries

To provide effective spiritual formation for seminarians, the formative program needs to be integrated with the interior freedom of the candidates for the priesthood. This formational work is also facilitated by the adoption of uniform criteria, accepted by the educators, from the rector and persons in charge of formation at the seminary up to the bishop, who is the one with the ultimate responsibility for priestly formation. These and other topics were discussed in the study week on “The personal spiritual formation of seminarians,” organized from February 7 to 11 by the Center for Priestly Formation at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.

Taking part were rectors of seminaries, spiritual directors and formation directors from various ecclesial contexts. The speakers stressed once again the clear criteria for formation set forth by John Paul II and Benedict XVI, in the Apostolic Exhortation Pastores Dabo Vobis and the “Letter to Seminarians.”

The interchange of experiences focused on celibacy, pastoral charity and prayer in forming persons who see the meaning of their life as one of self-giving, constantly practicing the virtues with a heart joyfully centered in Christ.

Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski, Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, was present at the meeting. Among the speakers were Professor Eduardo Baura, director of the Center for Priestly Formation; Professor Luis Romera, rector of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross; Msgr. Francesco Cavina, from the Secretariat of State; Professor Alvaro Granados, teacher of Pastoral Theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross; Professor Enrique de la Lama, professor of Church History at the University of Navarra; Bishop Jose Maria Yanguas of Cuenca, Spain; Dr. Franco Poterzio, professor of Psychiatry at the University of Milan; Bishop Salvatore di Cristina of Monreale, Italy; and Professor Paul O’Callaghan, from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.
Eight workshops were held on the following topics: “Knowing the seminarians background and environment”; “Preparatory year and discernment”; “Is self-formation compatible with guided formation?”; “Proposals for forming superiors and formation directors”; “The style of life of the seminarian within and outside the seminary (social life, vacation periods, friendships, Internet)”; “Interiorization of the option for celibacy: obstacles and means to persevere”; “Spiritual direction outside the seminary”; “Spiritual direction after the seminary.”

Yaounde, Cameroon -- "Instructing Instructors" Program

This program, an initiative of the CEPS (Centre pour la Promotion Sociale), has been carried out for several years in Mehandan, a district on the outskirts of Yaoundé.

The program has several stages. The first consists in giving formation to a group of university girls in business management and planning; then their work is evaluated, and the best go to different villages to train women in the management of their economic activities.

In 2009, 35 girls received this formation, which they then passed on to more than a hundred women in five rural villages: Mehandan, Nkolnda, Nkolngok, Nsimalen and Lobé. Later, 83 village women had access to a microcredit program to begin a small business or upgrade what they were already doing, with a monthly follow-up of each one for a period that varied between six months and a year. This involved appraising how the training was assisting the overall development of each person in a number of different contexts: family, moral, social, financial, etc. The women appreciate the training they receive and the accompaniment they are offered.

In 2010 the same project was carried out. The 38 girls taking part gave classes to some 100 women. The villages involved were Mehandan III, Nkolnda II, Nkol-Mefou, Ekoko II and Benebalot, and the impact
continued to be positive. Now we are beginning the follow-up stage. The university girls receive a certificate when they finish their project. They themselves see the importance of receiving formation in order to later be able to give formation to women of low income so that they can improve their standard of living.

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Premiá de Mar, Spain -- Being Christian in today's pluralistic society

The 46th annual Castelldaura theological and pastoral conference was held on January 25-26 in Premiá de Mar, with the topic “Secularism and a Culture of Faith.” The conference was organized by the Rosselló Priests’ Center in Barcelona, with some 150 priests from the various dioceses of Catalonia taking part.

Fr. Albert Barceló, director of the Priests’ Center, said that “the objective of these yearly meetings is to foster the on-going formation of the clergy. It’s an opportunity to share one’s pastoral experiences and enjoy some hours of true communion and priestly fraternity.” The conferences, which began in 1965, have dealt in the past with such topics as the eradication of poverty, secularism, the family, bioethics, communication, the priesthood, ecumenism, the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the figure of St. Paul, and catechesis.

The speakers this year included Archbishop Jesus Sanz Montes of Oviedo, Msgr. Angel Rodriguez Luño (dean of the School of Theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross), Fr. Ignasi Fuster (professor at the Catalonia School of Theology), journalist Mari Paz Lopez (Rome correspondent for La Vanguardia up until 2009), Dr. Joan de Dou (a psychiatrist), and the philosopher Jaume Nubiola (University of Navarra).
Piura, Peru -- Specialized seminar for journalists

The School of Communication and the Biomedical Research Group at the University of Piura held a specialized seminar for journalists during October and November, 2010. Its aim was to offer up-to-date information on science and bioethics to journalists from the city of Piura and the surrounding region. At the same time, it offered reflections on the anthropological foundations of modern-day life. Twenty-seven communicators from the press, radio and television media took part.

The seminar included a talk by Doctor Genara Castillo on “Anthropology as a basis for a correct understanding of today’s world.” Dr. Victor Morales spoke on the origins of scientific knowledge, while Dr. Gerardo Castillo discussed the cultural implications of recent advances in gynecology. Finally, an address by Dr. Jaime Millas dealt with the question of stem cells.

The speakers sought to confront the multiple concerns of journalists on a broad range of current topics, including abortion, contraception, homosexuality, and the origin of life. In the closing session, the journalists asked the University of Piura to continue offering these informative and formative initiatives.

Valencia, Spain -- Spiritual direction and accompaniment

“Spiritual direction and accompaniment” was the title of the thirteenth annual “Dialogues in Theology,” organized by the Almudi Priests’ Library and the St. Vincent Ferrer School of Theology in the diocese of Valencia.

The theme was an in-depth consideration of Benedict XVI’s message on March 12, 2009 to the Apostolic Penitentiary: “Spiritual direction also contributes to forming consciences. Today there is a greater need than in the past for wise and holy ‘spiritual teachers’: this is an important ecclesial
service. This of course requires an inner vitality which must be implored as a gift from the Holy Spirit in intense and prolonged prayer and with a special training that must be acquired with care.”

Among those taking part as speakers in this year’s dialogue were: Cardinal Antonio Maria Rouco, Archbishop of Madrid; Bishop Agustín Cortés of San Feliu de Llobregat; Dr. Aurelio Castilla, a psychiatrist; Fr. Jesús Higueras, pastor of Santa Maria de Caná, in Madrid; and Fr. Miguel Navarro, director of formation at the Royal Seminary College of El Patriarcha, Valencia. The sessions took place in the auditorium of the St. Vincent Ferrer School of Theology.

Nairobi, Kenya -- Honorary doctorate awarded by Strathmore University

On Friday, June 24, Olga Marlin, one of the first women who arrived in Kenya to begin the apostolic work of Opus Dei there, received a doctorate in Literature honoris causa from Strathmore University. The new doctor was born in New York on November 12, 1934, and graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1956, with a Master of Arts degree. In 1957 she received a Diploma in Education from University College, Dublin, and in 1960 moved to Kenya. Her desire to instruct African women led her to begin, together with other women, Kianda College in 1961, a secretarial college open to women of all races, which in 1993 became part of Strathmore University. Dr. Marlin also fostered many initiatives for the promotion of women in Kenya, Uganda, and Nigeria. The Kianda Foundation has given rise to Kibondeni College, Kimlea Girls Technical Training Centre, Tewa Training Centre and many other initiatives for the development of women. In 2002 she published To Africa with a Dream, with the story of her calling to Opus Dei and the beginning of its apostolic work in Kenya. The book has since gone through several printings and has been translated into a number of different languages.
Guatemala City -- 50 Years for Kinal

The Kinal Technological Training Center in Guatemala City celebrated its 50th anniversary on March 11. The commemoration began with a Mass of Thanksgiving presided over by Archbishop Oscar Julio Vian in the cathedral. Concelebrating were the Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Guatemala, Msgr. Francis Wurmser Ordoñez, and the chaplain of the educational center. The cathedral was filled with students, their families and teaching personnel, and many others who have generously supported this work throughout the years.

Kinal is a corporate apostolate of Opus Dei which offers secondary and technical education in the areas of automotive mechanics, industrial electricity, industrial electronics, computer programming and technical design. In addition, through its Advanced Technical School, it trains adults who have been working without a recognized certification in these areas.

Every year Kinal provides the country with more than 200 specialized technicians. Some obtain part time work which enables them to carry out university studies, while others work full time.

The Kinal Foundation raises and administers a generous scholarship fund. Each student pays the amount that his family can contribute, which is jointly determined by the family and the administrators of Kinal on the basis of a socioeconomic study.

In the Mayan language, Kinal means the “place where fire is born” or “place of light.” It is a reference to the large number of volcanoes that tower over the geography of Guatemala, and that are seen as a symbol of strength and majestic nobility. The present facilities, inaugurated in 1987, include 28 classrooms, 9 workshops, 11 specialized laboratories, 7 computer labs, an oratory, library, auditorium and cafeteria.

Nairobi, Kenya -- Strathmore's Golden Anniversary
On March 6 a Mass was held at Strathmore School in Nairobi, to mark the school's golden anniversary. The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Anthony Muheria of Kitui, an alumnus of Strathmore. More than 3,000 people attended, including many alumni, family members and friends. Concelebrating were Archbishop Emeritus Raphael Ndingi of Nairobi, Fr. Peter Castiella, Regional Vicar Secretary of Opus Dei in Kenya, and priests from various countries, including Rwanda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Uganda.

In his homily, Bishop Muheria emphasized the sanctity of marriage, the importance of family unity and the responsibility of parents to transmit the faith to their children, first of all through their own good example. Bishop Muheria also expressed gratitude to St. Josemaría, through whose encouragement Strathmore began as the first multiracial and interreligious institution of higher learning in English-speaking Africa.

Torreciudad, Spain -- The Shrine of Torreciudad displays a new web page

The new web page for the Shrine of Torreciudad has three main sections: “What is Torreciudad,” “Organizing your Trip,” and “In Support of the Shrine.”

The first section offers background information for people who have not yet visited the shrine: devotion to the Virgin Mary, the shrine’s historical origins, and its relationship to St. Josemaría and Opus Dei. This section also includes information about the Music Department (which organizes the International Organ Cycle), and about the Mariological Institute, which publishes the theological review Scripta de Maria.

The section “Organizing your Trip” provides the information needed by those who plan to visit the shrine: timetables, maps, climate information, how to get there, hotels and other lodging in the area, places of interest nearby, etc. There is a special section for groups (schools,
parishes, travel agencies) and another for family celebrations; it also offers a virtual visit to the shrine with the help of 360° images.

The third section is for people who already know Torreciudad and want to help make its activities known: a video channel, photo galleries, a digital bulletin, messages to our Lady, a quarterly journal, etc.

The sections “News” and “Visitors” offer those who visit the shrine a chance to speak about their experiences, with links to Facebook and Twitter. The website also provides a schedule of activities at the shrine for the next twelve months and special activities at Torreciudad, such as World Youth Day, the Way of Santiago, and solidarity projects.
IN PACE
Suffrages

In the first half of 2011, 332 faithful of the Prelature and 18 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.

In addition to the names of all who have died during this period, we have gathered a few biographical details about some of the deceased, which give an idea of the variety of circumstances and situations in which the faithful of Opus Dei live. For reasons of space, we are not including this data in the other cases, but we must not forget that we have a debt of gratitude towards all of them for the example of fidelity they have left us. These brief sketches will help us live the Communion of Saints better with those who have preceded us to heaven.

You can read the full text of "Romana" by subscribing to the print edition.

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St. Josemaría, Teacher of Forgiveness (Part 1)

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This study focuses on some aspects of St. Josemaría’s teachings on forgiveness and their relevance in fostering a peaceful co-existence. Because of its length, it will be published in two parts, in numbers 52 and 53 of Romana. The founder of Opus Dei invites us to rediscover forgiveness and to learn how to love: to love God and, through him, our neighbor, also when we are offended. The words and example of St. Josemaría help us to go deeper into the beauty of forgiveness and to learn to exercise it. In the second part of the study, we will look at the meaning that St. Josemaría found behind misunderstanding and injustice, expressed so forcefully in the homily “Christian Respect for Persons and their Freedom.” We will also consider his habitual attitude in the face of offenses, and end with a reference to the practice of forgiveness in contemporary society and its concern to foster a culture of peace.

1. Rediscovering the “liberating newness” of forgiveness

Christ’s message about forgiveness was revolutionary in his time and continues being so today. It brought a complete change to the old paradigm of an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. [1] The Christian message, by grounding human relationships on love, taught that forgiveness, like the love of God from which it arises, does not have any measure or limit. How should we forgive? As God has forgiven us. How many times should we forgive? “As many as seven times? I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.”[2] Whom must we forgive? All men and women, since Jesus’ command “love your neighbor”[3] broadened the scope and embraced everyone, including one’s enemies[4] and any offensive act. The law of vengeance was transmuted into the “logic of love.”[5]

Mercy and forgiveness are proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount;[6] this is “so important that it is the only [petition] to which the Lord returns and which he develops explicitly.”[7] It is also emphasized in the Our Father.[8] It lies at the core of Jesus’ message,[9] sealed by one of his last acts
on earth, when he forgave the violent death to which he was condemned.\[10\]

We need to forgive because God forgave us first. We have to love “as he loved us.”\[11\] “God’s forgiveness becomes in our hearts an inexhaustible source of forgiveness in our relationships with one another.”\[12\] As God forgave me from the cross, with a Love that reaches the “limits of love,”\[13\] so we have to forgive, going right to the furthest limit.

Forgiveness is part of divine mercy and, as St. John Chrysostom says, “nothing makes us resemble God so much as always being ready to forgive.”\[14\] Therefore whoever forgives reflects God’s image with greater clarity.

To forgive is to reply with good after receiving an evil. It is an especially intense giving of oneself, which ennobles the human person. Forgiveness does not leave things as they were before, but rather renews the relationship, purifying and deepening it. Thus Christ’s death on the cross renews and elevates God’s relationship with mankind and of men and women with one another. Between the cross and the resurrection came forgiveness.

In every offense we are attacked by an evil that could give birth to another evil within us. Indeed, this is the evil that everyone has to overcome. Forgiveness prevents revenge, calms the feelings, and purifies the memory. On the part of the one who is forgiven, forgiveness enables that person to overcome both the offense committed as well as the co-responsibility for the new sin that could arise in the person offended.

The willingness to forgive protects both truth and justice, the “prerequisites for forgiveness.”\[15\] It opens the path to healing wounds and makes reconciliation possible. To construct a truly human society, we need to recover the true nature of forgiveness.

This is a great challenge, since some cultures have not yet received the message of forgiveness, and there are post-Christian societies around us in which the true features of forgiveness have become blurred, reduced to a superficial religious sentiment. Moreover, to forgive others can be difficult and at times might even seem impossible.\[16\] Nevertheless, “no community can survive without forgiveness.”\[17\]
It seems as though today, two thousand years after Christ came into the world, just as he said about marriage, he is telling us: “from the beginning it was not so.”[18] In a world ravaged by conflicts, human beings are capable of more; their dignity as children of God requires overcoming the recourse to vengeance, resentment and hate. The gift of self should also lead to restoring the human relationships that have been broken or undermined.

Nevertheless, since the nineties of the last century a new interest in forgiveness has arisen, a rediscovery of its importance.[19] This has largely been the result of the scars left by the armed conflicts, terrorism, and violations of human dignity that have occurred during recent decades. The violence has in many cases ceased, but not its effects.

Governments, international organizations and local communities have tried to repair the damage by recourse to judicial actions, principally condemnations and economic reparations. But it was soon realized that to truly cure the damage caused the responses have to reach the deepest level of the human person—the same level that the offense reached, namely the radical dignity of every human being. It is impossible to reach the deepest level of the person only with these measures, which are often centered more on the offender and the state’s social order than on the person offended, and which may also be insufficient since the offenses one is confronting may be irreparable.

Therefore the actions of the judicial system, although necessary, are not enough, nor are financial reparations.[20] The realization of this insufficiency has led in recent years to an important evolution of the right to reparation in the area of human rights. This evolution consists, among other aspects, in trying to ensure that the reparations offer global responses to the damage caused, including, in addition to economic losses, others of a different nature and scope.[21]

This new approach involves concepts such as recognition, truth, repentance, personal transformation, restoration of dignity, remembering, overcoming sorrow, the need for liberation from guilt and from the desire for revenge, from hatred, etc. These elements transcend the boundaries of human justice, and lead one by the hand, as it were, to forgiveness,
forgotten up until that moment, when not undervalued because of its religious dimension.\textsuperscript{[22]}

By this unexpected route, forgiveness and its curative and “liberating and newness”\textsuperscript{[23]} has become the focus of new studies which consider it from the psychological, anthropological, religious, or sociological point of view. In these works, forgiveness is seen as the solution not only for world-shaking conflicts, but also as a recourse for resolving everyday conflicts.\textsuperscript{[24]} “Asking for and offering forgiveness is a path that accords very well with human dignity, and at times it is the only path for resolving situations scarred by old and violent hatreds.”\textsuperscript{[25]}

It is in this context that we will consider the figure of St. Josemaría as a man who knew how to forgive. How he viewed forgiveness and how he lived it present us with guidelines that can serve as a framework for the present study.

In first place, our attention will be drawn to the charity that he lived to a heroic degree. Second, we will consider the message of the universal call to holiness, especially the tie between a lay mentality, freedom, understanding and forgiveness. In third place, the attacks against his person that he suffered during his life, principally in the form of calumnies and misunderstandings. Here we will look at some aspects of the homily “Christian Respect for Persons and their Freedom,”\textsuperscript{[26]} which has some of his most extensive considerations on the question of misunderstandings and injustices among men.\textsuperscript{[27]} Then, taking up some testimonies of those who knew him, we will consider the attitudes he adopted towards those offenses.

He was also a man who was attentive to the historical, cultural, and intellectual currents of the twentieth century, and found himself immersed in the passions unleashed by the Spanish Civil War. To analyze the period of that conflict would go beyond the purpose of our study, as would the overall context of his life in the twentieth century as an epoch of armed conflicts and violence. But we do want to highlight the heroic consistency of his charity in always seeking forgiveness and reconciliation among men, no matter how extraordinary the situation.\textsuperscript{[28]}

We will end the study with a look at the practice of forgiveness in contemporary society and the “culture of peace.”
2. The Great Love

a) *Drowning evil in an abundance of good*

The deepest root of St. Josemaría’s ability to forgive has to be sought in his love for God. Having interiorized the double precept of charity, he loved God above all things and therefore also his fellow men and women in a true and practical way.

In 1957, in a conversation with one of his spiritual sons, he referred to the double commandment and its internal consistency: “It seems as though I can hear someone saying: loving God above all things is easy, but loving one’s neighbor, friends and enemies…. That’s really difficult! If you truly love God ‘ex toto corde tuo, ex tota anima tua, et ex tota fortitudine tua,’ with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength (Deut 6:5), then the love for your neighbor that you find so difficult will be a consequence of the Great Love; and you won’t feel yourself an enemy of anyone.”

He sensed very deeply God’s love for him and how he had forgiven him throughout his whole life. This led him to deep gratitude and to identification with Christ in loving everyone above any other consideration, overturning any barriers with the force of his affection.

He transmitted around him an atmosphere of love, valuing each person as a child of God, as the bearer of a “core” of dignity that not even sin can erase. He knew how to focus on the positive qualities in each person. He had a great dislike for any partiality towards persons, and never allowed himself to look down on others.

Thus he viewed forgiveness as a consequence of charity rather than as an added duty, going so far as to say that “I haven’t had to learn how to forgive, because our Lord has taught me how to love.” He saw charity as the source of forgiveness and forgiveness as a form of love. Perhaps the deepest form, since sometimes it can be the most difficult one to carry out. But so great was his charity that he didn’t need to forgive because he didn’t consider himself offended. He recognized and was saddened by the evil present in the offense, as a sin against God. As a man with a heart he also “felt” it, but charity from the first moment annulled any rancor, hatred, or revenge.
He followed the counsel of St. Paul: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good,”[35] which he paraphrased in this way: “Let us drown evil in an abundance of good.”[36]

b) *The home that I have seen*

The first place where Josemaría experienced forgiveness granted and bestowed was in his family, the home where he grew up. His parents, don José and doña Dolores, formed a Christian home where forgiveness was an integral and natural part. His family was for him a school of forgiveness and mercy, where he learned how to forgive. Josemaría as a child witnessed how his parents forgave grave injustices—a forgiveness granted with naturalness and discretion. His parents strove never to speak about unjust deeds before their children, so as to prevent any lack of charity towards those responsible.[37]

Through his parents’ example, he learned to live a charity that went beyond justice, a special openness of heart towards the most needy,[38] and a readiness to ask others for forgiveness and to grant it, always doing so in a discreet way.

c. *Unity of life*

Closely linked to charity is one of the key concepts of his spiritual teaching: unity of life. He reminded all Christians that love for God makes it possible to unify every aspect of our life, that we cannot allow any divorce between our faith and our daily life.[39] St. Josemaría warned of the danger “of living a kind of double life. On one side, an interior life, a life of relation with God; and on the other, a separate and distinct professional, social and family life, full of small earthly realities.”[40]

Applied to forgiveness this means that we have to put into practice what the Catechism calls “unity of forgiveness,”[41] since “love, like the Body of Christ, is indivisible; we cannot love the God we cannot see if we do not love the brother or sister we do see.”[42] The *Our Father* highlights the importance of forgiveness, first in our relationship with God and then with other men and women.

Unity of life applied to forgiveness has many consequences. We will refer to some that seem most relevant in regard to St. Josemaría.
The first is that he forgave *everyone* and lived this demand in its most heroic form, forgiving even his enemies. Forgiveness of one’s enemies is especially difficult, because of the passions involved and the lack of human strength to do so, and thus the need to ground it on charity. St. Josemaría carried the commandment of love further, so to speak, than forgiveness, for he always said that he did not have enemies, that he did not feel animosity towards anyone. In his ability to forgive we see his desire, not only to overcome any negative reaction at being offended, but to reach the heart of the offending person and convert him.\([43]\)

He did not consider as enemies those who attacked him;\([44]\) nor, in the context of daily life, those who were far from him in their beliefs, their way of thinking and acting, their political or social opinions, etc. These questions can frequently lead to a distancing and even a rupture between people, both in families and in society. In this second sense, one can have more enemies than it seems at first sight; or, at least, if not enemies, people towards whom one is indifferent or even shows disdain for when, consciously or unconsciously, one falls into discrimination and refuses to accept certain persons or groups of persons.

St. Josemaría was also quick to “ask for forgiveness” and rectify if he had offended someone. Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, his closest collaborator for almost forty years, recalled that when he made a mistake “he immediately rectified the matter and, when this was called for, apologized... The quickness with which he made amends was truly remarkable, and he did not hesitate to do so in public if he felt that was called for. This was an outstanding characteristic of his behavior. And it was his desire that everyone should experience this ‘joy of making amends’.”\([45]\)

He never used his authority as founder as an excuse to not ask for forgiveness; moreover, he realized that precisely because of his authority he should be more attentive to doing so. In line with his message of seeking sanctity in ordinary things, he would also ask pardon for small offenses, mistakes, or misunderstandings that could arise in the life of someone with authority over others, who had to work with many people and make decisions in regard to formation and the development of Opus Dei.
Another expression of unity is that St. Josemaría asked the faithful of the Work and those who drew close to the apostolates of Opus Dei to do likewise. He never lowered the goal: everyone had to learn to forgive and to ask for forgiveness, doing so for love of God.\[46\]

The “unity of forgiveness” is also seen in the close relationship between our being forgiven and the growth of our own readiness to forgive. A person who is forgiven is more readily disposed to forgive others. When God pardons us, our love for him grows and we see more clearly the need to forgive others. And when we forgive others, we come to realize that we too need forgiveness, and our self-knowledge grows. The “unity of forgiveness” helps to heal all human relationships. The one who always forgives finds his own readiness to forgive strengthened; he comes to know himself better, has more control over his own weaknesses and learns to understand those of others.

 Forgiving is one of the areas where the breakdown of unity of life among Christians is shown most clearly. The absence of forgiveness, or a forgiveness filtered by discrimination, is a symptom of paganization, of a lack of love of God, a thermometer of weakness in Christian life. Therefore, in trying to make the true face of God known, perhaps today more than ever we need to be aware of the great evangelizing force found in the testimony of forgiveness.

d. *A priest of Jesus Christ*

St. Josemaría’s priesthood is also at the heart of his teaching and personal example about the centrality of charity and forgiveness in Christian life.

Among other aspects that could be considered here, we will mention two. The first is expressed clearly in one of his homilies: “What is the identity of the priest? That of Christ.”\[47\] And in his identity with Christ, a priest, who has been ordained to serve everyone, has to open his arms wide to all humanity, loving, understanding and forgiving everyone. “Neither on the right nor on the left nor in the center. As a priest I strive to be with Christ. Both of his arms—not just one—were outstretched on the Cross. I freely take from every group whatever seems to me good and helps me to keep my heart and my two arms open to all mankind.”\[48\] The growth of
this identification in his priestly soul is the source and the ultimate reason for his love for others and the reason why all who came to him found a merciful welcome and the strength they needed.

The second aspect is his love for the sacrament of reconciliation, both for administering it and receiving it. As Bishop Del Portillo wrote: “He had a real passion for administering the sacrament of penance... He preached incessantly on this sacrament.”[49] He heard the confessions of thousands of people during his lifetime, and he himself went to confession each week. He insisted that priests should go to confession frequently and dedicate time to administering the sacrament of forgiveness.

The priest asks pardon from God for his own sins in confession; and he forgives in the name of Christ the sins of others when he administers the sacrament of forgiveness. He also needs to ask for forgiveness from others if he has offended them and to grant it if they have offended him. The priest is an “expert in forgiveness,” and is the human being who touches most closely both the mercy of God and human weakness. This closeness shapes the heart and soul of the priest, configuring it to “a God who forgives.”[50]

In conclusion we can say that St. Josemaría saw clearly, and always made it a reality in his own life, that the identity of the priestly ministry was based on two characteristics: love for the Mass and for the sacrament of forgiveness. Christ is nailed to the cross and from there, as fruit of his sacrifice, he forgives. In the Mass a priest is identified with Christ whose arms are open wide to all mankind and, in administering forgiveness, with Christ who forgives from the cross.

3. **At the hear of his foundational message**

   a. *A message of love and peace*

   The third area where we can find clear features of forgiveness and understanding is in the foundational message of Opus Dei itself. We see an example of this in the following words:

   “The Work of God has come to spread through the whole world the message of love and peace that the Lord has bequeathed to us, to invite all human beings to respect human rights... I see the Work projected through
the centuries, ever young, elegant, attractive, and fruitful, defending the peace of Christ, so that everyone can possess it.”[51]

In his writings and preaching, he stressed the dignity and equality of every human being, along with peace, reconciliation, forgiveness, understanding, coexistence, love of freedom, and freedom of consciences, rejecting any use of violence to try to win over others.

In a homily given in 1967 on the campus of the University of Navarra, St. Josemaría said: “A Christian ‘lay outlook’ of this sort will enable you to flee from all intolerance, from all fanaticism. To put it in a positive way, it will help you to live in peace with all your fellow citizens, and to promote this understanding and harmony in all spheres of social life. I know I have no need to remind you of what I have been repeating for so many years. This doctrine of civic freedom, of understanding, of living together in harmony, forms a very important part of the message of Opus Dei.”[52]

b. Lay mentality and the rejection of fanaticism

In the text just cited, St. Josemaría links lay mentality (that is to say, the mentality of the ordinary Christian who follows Christ in the midst of everyday activities) to freedom, harmony, and the rejection of fanaticism. Intolerance is an affliction we also suffer from today, and whose influence makes itself felt in the areas of politics, culture, religion, etc. Its effects sow the seeds of violence and damage freedom and the ability to live in harmony.

St. Josemaría summed up lay mentality in three conclusions, which offer the Christian a framework for acting in civil life and which lead:

“to being sufficiently honest, so as to shoulder one’s own personal responsibility;

“to being sufficiently Christian, so as to respect those brothers in the Faith who, in matters of free discussion, propose solutions which differ from those which each one of us maintains;

“and to being sufficiently Catholic so as not to use our Mother the Church, involving her in human factions.”[53]

Lay mentality, grounded in one’s own freedom and that of others and in responsibility, leads to a commitment to living alongside others with
harmony and understanding, and with loyalty to one’s own convictions. Living in harmony is not a matter of everyone having the same convictions or no one having any convictions. Lay mentality fosters a more peaceful culture less prone to conflicts, not by ignoring them or thinking that truth doesn’t exist, but by the way in which differences are confronted.[54]

Lay mentality takes on even richer hues in light of the universal call to holiness, the principal message spread by St. Josemaría through Opus Dei, which points to the dignity of every man and woman, created in the image of God. Christians aware of this dignity have their heart open to everyone without discrimination of any kind. Moreover, this call is given in the middle of the world, precisely in the place where conflicts arise and where they should be resolved.[55]

A consistently lived charity prevents Christians from falling into fanaticism towards their fellow citizens, whether or not they are brothers and sisters in the faith. “There is nothing further from the Christian faith than fanaticism—that unholy alliance of the sacred and the profane, whatever guise it takes.”[56]

The rejection of fanaticism also means that there is no legitimate response to fanaticism with fanaticism. Trying to overcome an evil with another evil only results in continuing the cycle of revenge and violence. Vengeance is not a true solution to any problem. Evil is overcome by good, falsehood by truth. The spread of the truth has to be accompanied by charity.

At the same time, lay mentality is completely opposed to passivity or inhibition. It leads to exercising one’s rights, to fulfilling one’s civic duties, to committing oneself to the truth, to practicing one’s faith in private and in public, and to striving to transform society.

In the inevitable contrast between the action of the Christian in the world and a paganized society, there is put to the test the harmonizing of truth and charity. It is precisely there, in daily action, where Christians become aware of the importance of their evangelizing role, for they are the ones who, working with freedom and responsibility, have to fuse truth and charity in each specific case.
Ex 21:23-25; Lev 24:18-20. Before the coming of Christ, the Talion had already been superceded by Roman Law, which opened the possibility of arranging a monetary reparation between the offended and the offender, thus avoiding the application of the Talion, which only came into play in the absence of an agreement. Later the pact became obligatory, and the offense became a source of obligations, supplanting even more fully the Talion. Cf. D’Ors, Derecho Privado Romano, (Roman Private Law, 10th ed., Eunsa, Pamplona 2010, §378.

Mt 18:21-22.

Mk 12:29-31.

See Mt 5:43-44.


Mt 5:3 and 11-12.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (henceforth cited as CCC), no. 2841.

Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4. In the Our Father of Matthew, Jesus, immediately after reciting it, as in the Beatitudes, returns once more to the idea of forgiveness (Mt 6:14).

“We must note that Christ, in revealing the love-mercy of God, at the same time demanded from people that they also should be guided in their lives by love and mercy. This requirement forms part of the very essence of the messianic message, and constitutes the heart of the Gospel ethos.” John Paul II, Dives in Misericordia, November 30, 1980, no. 3.

Lk 23:34.

Jn 13:34.


Cf. CCC, no. 2843.

St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on St. Matthew, 19, 7.

John Paul II, Message for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 1997. For
the relationship between forgiveness and justice see also John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, nos. 12 and 14. In no. 14 he says: “It is obvious that such a generous requirement of forgiveness does not cancel out the objective requirements of justice. Properly understood, justice constitutes, so to speak, the goal of forgiveness.”

[16] “I am fully aware that forgiveness can seem contrary to human logic, which often yields to the dynamics of conflict and revenge. But... if the Church dares to proclaim what, from a human standpoint, might appear to be sheer folly, it is precisely because of her unshakable confidence in the infinite love of God.” John Paul II, Message for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 1997.


[20] “Be convinced that justice alone is never enough to solve the great problems of mankind. When justice alone is done, don’t be surprised if people are hurt. The dignity of man, who is a son of God, requires much more.” St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 172.


[22] “The discoverer of the role of forgiveness in the sphere of human activities was Jesus of Nazareth. The fact that he made this discovery in a religious context and articulated it in religious language is no reason to take it less seriously in a strictly secular sense.” Hannah Arendt, *La condición humana* (The Human Condition), Barcelona 2005, p. 258.


St. Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, nos. 67-72..

In *The Way*, in the chapters *Charity* and *Tribulations*, the author dedicates a good number of points to gossiping, negative criticism, and calumny and what the reaction of a Christian should be in the face of these.

Along these lines, see the letter he wrote to his spiritual sons during the Spanish Civil War, in which he described an encounter on a train between Utrera and Salamanca: “A second lieutenant who had suffered terrible harm to his family and to his estate at the hands of the reds, said that he would soon have his vengeance. I told him that I too have suffered as he has, in both my family and my estate, but that I want the reds to live and be converted. These Christian words had a strong impact on his noble soul, consumed with a desire for violence, and he became more thoughtful. I recollected myself as best I could, and, as is my custom, invoked all the guardian angels.” Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei, Vol. 2: God and Daring*, Scepter, New York 2003, 277-278. (Letter to his sons in Burgos, from Cordoba, April 19, 1938.)

See *Mt* 22:37-40.

“The theology of charity in *The Way* has the triple sequence of the New Testament: the love God has for us, the “love of God” (of man for God), the love for others (for God’s sake). St. Josemaría, “The Way” a
Critical-Historical Edition Prepared by Pedro Rodríguez, Historical Institute of Josemaría Escrivá, Scepter, London — New York, 2009. Introduction to the chapters “Love of God” and “Charity.” As the author of the Critical-Historical edition points out in this introduction, “both blocks are one single supernatural reality; they are the two ‘acts’ of one virtue—charity—as theological tradition testifies.”


[32] “He was understanding and cordial toward everyone. He could deal quite affably even with extremely annoying individuals... he did not discriminate between persons.” Alvaro Del Portillo, Immersed in God, Scepter, NY 1996, pp. 144-147.

[33] St. Josemaría, Furrow, no. 804: “That friend of ours with no false humility used to say: ‘I haven’t needed to learn how to forgive, because the Lord has taught me how to love.’”

[34] Mariano Trueba was a student of St. Josemaría in 1929 at the Cicuendez Academy in Madrid. He says that “one day, the Founder of Opus Dei appeared at the Academy with his cassock covered with plaster or lime. What had happened was that when he was on the streetcar, a construction worker got on who brushed against him apparently to dirty him with his work clothes, to the entertainment or cowardly compliance of the rest of the travelers. When he reached his destination, the Servant of God took the worker by the shoulders and very calmly said, ‘My son, let’s finish the job.’ And he gave him a strong hug, which ended with his whole cassock being covered with chalk. The Servant of God then quietly got off the street car, to everyone’s surprise and admiration.” Artículos del Postulador, cit., p. 216.


[37] The dishonest behavior of one of the associates of the company that his father ran led to the family’s financial ruin. However Don José always
reacted with charity: “That Christian gentlemanliness lies in the fact that he forgave, right away and with the best will, those who caused his financial ruin. He prayed for them and refrained from ever bringing up the subject, lest the family feel resentment toward them. In addition, once the company had been legally decreed bankrupt and it was obvious that its assets were not sufficient to pay off the creditors, he checked to see if he had an obligation, in strict justice, to compensate them from his private funds. And although he was told that he definitely had no moral obligation to do this, the honorable man nevertheless acted according to his own sense of justice and ‘sold all that he had in order to pay the creditors.” Vazquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei: Vol. I, The Early Years,* cit., pp. 42-43.

[38] “Both husband and wife taught their children to practice charity with deeds and without ostentation, sometimes simply by the giving of spiritual counsel, at other times with the addition of some alms.... ‘Don José,’ says Pascual Albás, ‘was a great almsgiver. Every Saturday there was a long line of poor people who came looking for alms, and he always had something for each of them.” *The Founder of Opus Dei, Vol. I, The Early Years,* p. 22.

[39] The concept of unity of life is also found in the recent Magisterium: “The Second Vatican Council has invited all the lay faithful to this *unity of life,* by forcefully decrying the grave consequences in separating faith from life, and the gospel from culture.” *Christifideles Laici,* no. 59.

[40] *Conversations with St. Josemaría Escrivá,* no. 114.

[41] *CCC,* no. 2842.

[42] *CCC,* no. 2840.

[43] “One day several months after the war had ended, Father Josemaría had to take a taxi in Madrid, and, as was his custom, began to speak to the driver about God, about the importance of sanctifying one’s work, and about the need to leave behind the tragedy that Spain had just passed through. The driver said nothing until Father Josemaría had reached his destination. Then he said, ‘Listen, where were you during the time of the war?’ ‘In Madrid,’ the priest answered. ‘Too bad they didn’t kill you!’ Staying calm, Father Josemaría asked him, ‘Do you have any children?’ And when the driver nodded yes, he added a good tip to the fare and said,
‘Here, buy some candy for your wife and your children.’” The Founder of Opus Dei, Vol. II, cit., p. 278.

[44] See the commentaries to points 836—838 in The Way: Historical-Critical Edition, cit. In the commentary on point 838, this text of St. Josemaría is cited: “I don’t think that I have any enemies. I have met, in my life, persons who have harmed me, done positive harm. But I don’t believe they are enemies: I am very small to have them. Nevertheless, from now on they are all included in the category of my benefactors, to be commended every day to God” (Apuntes intimos, Cuaderno 4, no. 357, October 28, 1931.)

[45] Del Portillo, Immersed in God, pp. 82—83.

[46] “He told us, on February 19, 1959, about his reply to someone who told him that his father was going to put up a cross, to commemorate the place where an uncle of his had been murdered during the Spanish Civil War. —‘Well, tell your father that it will not be the Cross of Christ, but the cross of hatred, because it will only serve to recall that some people murdered others. Advise him to use that money for alms to have Masses said for both parties. We have to know how to forgive!’” Julian Herranz, Dios y audacia: Mi juventud junto a san Josemaría, Rialp, Madrid 2011, pp. 140-141.

[47] St. Josemaría, Homily “A Priest Forever” in In Love with the Church, no. 38.

[48] Conversations with St. Josemaría, cit., no. 4.


Ibid., no. 17.

[54] “Let us really love all men; let us love Christ above all; and then we cannot avoid loving the rightful freedom of others, living in harmony with them.” St. Josemaría, Christ Is Passing By, no. 184.

[55] “In fact, every area of the lay faithful’s lives, as different as they are, enters into the plan of God who desires that these very areas be the ‘places in time’ where the love of Christ is revealed and realized for both the glory of the Father and service of others.” John Paul II, Christifideles Laici, no. 59.

[56] St. Josemaría, Christ Is Passing By, no. 74.

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