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

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

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

“The Church is alive—this is the wonderful experience of these days. And the Church is young.”[1] At the end of a fruitful year in the Church, these words proclaimed by Benedict XVI at the beginning of his Pontificate are as timely as ever. The second half of 2011 saw the streets and plazas of Madrid filled during World Youth Day with young people from all over the world. This half-year has also witnessed the warm reception that Germany gave to the Successor of Peter; as well as his return to the African continent, where he presented the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* in Benin. Benedict XVI also visited Ancona and Assisi, in Italy, during these months, and on October 15-16 in Rome was present at the congress “New Evangelizers for the New Evangelization,” focused on the upcoming synod on the new evangelization that will take place in October 2012.

The congress was organized by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, instituted by Benedict XVI at the end of 2010. The goal of this Pontifical Council is that “the entire Church, allowing herself to be regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, may present herself to the contemporary world with a missionary impulse in order to promote the new evangelization... to speak of a ‘new evangelization’ does not in fact mean that a single formula should be developed that would hold the same for all circumstances. And yet it is not difficult to see that what all the Churches living in traditionally Christian territories need is a renewed missionary impulse, an expression of a new, generous openness to the gift of grace. Indeed we cannot forget that the first task will always be to make ourselves docile to the freely given action of the Spirit of the Risen One who accompanies all who are heralds of the Gospel and opens the hearts of those who listen.”[2]

Those who seek to carry out Christ’s missionary mandate—*Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation* (*Mk* 16:15)—will always face obstacles. But these can never slow down the apostolic activity of Christians. The Holy Father announced for the year 2012 a “Year of Faith,” saying that now is the moment “to give a fresh impetus to the mission of the whole Church to lead human beings out of the wilderness in
which they often find themselves to the place of life, to friendship with Christ, who gives us fullness of life.”[3]

This is meant to be a new stimulus, begun already by the Second Vatican Council, in the task of evangelizing which the Church has been carrying out for almost two millennia and which will not conclude as long as there are men and women on earth. Indeed, the Council, by the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* (whose fifth chapter was dedicated to the universal call to holiness), the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and the Decree *Ad Gentes*, as well as the succeeding Pontifical Magisterium (in particular with Paul VI’s Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1974), and John Paul II’s Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (1988) and the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990)) have emphasized that the deep transformations needed by today’s society require a renewed proclamation of the Gospel.

Blessed John Paul II coined the expression “new evangelization” in 1979.[4] Eleven years later he once again took up that term to present a challenge to the universal Church: “Today the Church must face other challenges and push forward to new frontiers, both in the initial mission *ad gentes* and in the new evangelization of those peoples who have already heard Christ proclaimed. Today all Christians, the particular churches and the universal Church, are called to have the same courage that inspired the missionaries of the past, and the same readiness to listen to the voice of the Spirit.”[5] Similarly, in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (January 6, 2001), he pointed to the new evangelization as a mission of high priority for the Church in the third millennium of its history (see no. 40).

This Pope never tired of stressing, right to the end of his life, the responsibility that Christians have to carry out the Church’s mission. In his last trip away from Rome, in 2004 to Loreto, he addressed lay people in a special way: “May you have at heart what the Church has at heart: that numerous men and women of our time be won over by fascination for Christ; may his Gospel shine once more as a light of hope for the poor, the sick, those who hunger for justice; may Christian communities be ever more lively, open and attractive; may our cities be hospitable and livable for all; may humanity follow the paths of peace and brotherhood. It is up to
you lay people to witness to the faith through your own specific virtues: fidelity and gentleness in the family, competence at work, tenacity in serving the common good, solidarity in social relations, creativity in doing useful deeds for evangelization and human promotion. It is also up to you, in close communion with the Pastors, to show that the Gospel is timely and that faith does not tear the believer from history but roots him in it more deeply.[6]

In this issue of Romana, besides a selection of Benedict XVI's writings from the second half of 2011, among which we find the Motu Proprio Porta Fidei convoking the Year of Faith, we include also the long letter from the Prelate dated October 2. Bishop Javier Echevarría stresses there that, in order to carry out the new evangelization Benedict XVI is calling for now, great care should be given to people's doctrinal and apostolic formation, instilling in them an eagerness to win souls for our Lord.[7] He does not hide the fact that “in recent years, this zeal for souls has required greater vigor, to counter the secularism that has made great strides, to the extent of acquiring citizenship status in traditionally Christian countries.”[8] And he makes clear that “infusing the spirit of Christ once again into the roots of these nations is the goal of the new evangelization.”[9]

We should ask our Lord insistently to grant his Church a “new springtime,” a period of conversion and interior growth in every follower of Jesus Christ. This will come about if we rely on the power of prayer: “Help me to cry: Jesus, souls! Apostolic souls! They are for you, for your glory. You'll see how in the end he will hear us.”[10]


See *The Way*, no. 934.


HOLY SEE

• The Roman Pontiff
The Roman Pontiff

Homily at the Mass for the New Evangelization, Vatican Basilica, Rome (October 16, 2011)

Venerable Brothers,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today I celebrate Holy Mass with joy for you who are involved in many parts of the world on the front of the New Evangelization. This liturgy concludes the meeting that called you yesterday to an exchange on the areas of this mission and to listen to several significant testimonies. I myself wished to offer you some thoughts, whereas today I break the bread of the Word and of the Eucharist with you, in the certainty—shared by us all—that without Christ, the Word and Bread of Life, we can do nothing (cf. Jn 15:5). I am glad that this congress fits into the context of the month of October, exactly a week before World Mission Day: this reminds us of the proper universal dimension of the New Evangelization, in harmony with that of the mission ad gentes.

I address a cordial greeting to all of you who have accepted the invitation of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization. In particular, I greet and thank the President of this recently established dicastery, Archbishop Salvatore Fisichella, and his collaborators.

Let us now come to the biblical Readings in which the Lord speaks to us today. The first, taken from the Second Book of Isaiah, tells us that God is one, there is no other; there are no gods other than the Lord and even the powerful Cyrus, Emperor of the Persians, was part of a larger plan that God alone knew and carried ahead. This Reading gives us the theological meaning of history: the epochal upheavals and the succession of great powers are under the supreme domination of God; no earthly power can stand in his stead. The theology of history is an important and essential aspect of the New Evangelization because the people of our time, after the inauspicious season of the totalitarian empires in the 20th century, need to
rediscover an overall look at the world and at time, a truly free, peaceful look, that look which the second Vatican Council communicated in its documents and which my predecessors, the Servant of God Paul VI and Bl. John Paul II, illustrated with their Magisterium.

The Second Reading is the beginning of the First Letter to the Thessalonians and this is already very evocative because it is the oldest letter that has come down to us of the greatest evangelizer of all time, the Apostle Paul. He tells us first of all that one does not evangelize by oneself: in fact he too had collaborators, Silvanus and Timothy (cf. 1 Thess 1:1) and many others. And he immediately adds something else that is very important: that proclamation must always be preceded, accompanied and followed by prayer. Indeed, he writes: “We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers” (v. 2). The Apostle then says he is well aware of the fact that he did not choose the members of the community, but that [God]: “has chosen you,” he says (v. 4).

Every Gospel missionary must always bear in mind this truth: it is the Lord who touches hearts with his word and with his Spirit, calling people to faith and to communion in the Church. Lastly, Paul leaves us a very valuable teaching, taken from his experience. He writes: “our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (v. 5). Evangelization, to be effective, needs the power of the Spirit, who gives life to proclamation and imbues those who convey it with the “full conviction” of which the Apostle speaks. This term “conviction” or “full conviction” in the original Greek is *pleroforia*: a word that does not so much express the subjective, psychological aspect, rather the fullness, fidelity, completeness, in this case of the proclamation of Christ. It is a proclamation which, to be complete and faithful, asks to be accompanied by signs and gestures, like the preaching of Jesus. Word, Spirit and certainty—understood in this way—are therefore inseparable and compete to ensure that the Gospel message is spread effectively.

Let us now reflect on the Gospel passage. It is the text about the legitimacy of the tribute to be paid to Caesar which contains Jesus’ famous answer: “render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (*Mt* 22:21). But, before reaching this point there is a passage that can be applied to those who have the mission of
evangelizing. Indeed, those who are speaking with Jesus—disciples of the Pharisees and the Herodians—compliment him, saying “we know that you are true, and teach the way of God truthfully, and care for no man” (v. 16). It is this affirmation itself, although it is prompted by hypocrisy, that must attract our attention. The disciples of the Pharisees and Herodians do not believe in what they say. They are only affirming it as a captatio benevolentiae to make people listen to them, but their heart is far from that truth; indeed, they want to lure Jesus into a trap to be able to accuse him. For us, instead, those words are precious: indeed, Jesus is true and teaches the way of God according to the truth, and stands in awe of none. He himself is that “way of God,” which we are called to take. Here we may recall the words of Jesus himself in John’s Gospel: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (14:6).

In this regard St. Augustine’s comment is illuminating: “It was necessary for Jesus to say ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life’, when knowing the way by which he went they had to learn where he was going. The way led to truth, it led to life.... And where are we going, but to him, and by what way do we go, but by him? (In Evangelium Johannis tractatus 69, 2). The new evangelizers are called to walk first on this Way that is Christ, to make others know the beauty of the Gospel that gives life. And on this Way one never walks alone but in company, an experience of communion and brotherhood that is offered to all those we meet, to share with them our experience of Christ and of his Church. Thus testimony combined with proclamation can open the hearts of those who are seeking the truth so that they are able to arrive at the meaning of their own life.

A brief reflection also on the central question of the tribute to Caesar. Jesus replies with a surprising political realism, linked to the theocentrism of the prophetic tradition. The tribute to Caesar must be paid because his image is on the coin; but the human being, every person, carries in him- or herself another image, that of God, and therefore it is to him and to him alone that each one owes his or her existence. The Fathers of the Church, drawing inspiration from the fact that Jesus was referring to the image of the Emperor impressed on the coin of the tribute, interpreted this passage in the light of the fundamental concept of the human being as an image of God, contained in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis.
An anonymous author wrote: “The image of God is not impressed on gold, but on the human race. Caesar’s coin is gold, God’s coin is humanity.... Therefore give your riches to Caesar but keep for God the unique innocence of your conscience, where God is contemplated.... Caesar, in fact, asked that his image be on every coin, but God chose man, whom he created to reflect his glory” (Anonymous, Incomplete Work on Matthew, Homily 42). And St. Augustine used this reference several times in his homilies: “If Caesar reclaims his own image impressed on the coin,” he says, “will not God demand from man the divine image sculpted within him?” (En. Ps., Psalm 94:2). And further, “as the tribute money is rendered to him [Caesar], so should the soul be rendered to God, illumined and stamped with the light of his countenance” (ibid., Ps 4:8).

This word of Jesus is rich in anthropological content and it cannot be reduced only to the political context. The Church, therefore, is not limited to reminding human beings of the right distinction between the sphere of Caesar’s authority and that of God, between the political and religious contexts. The mission of the Church, like that of Christ, is essentially to speak of God, to remember his sovereignty, to remind all, especially Christians who have lost their own identity, of the right of God to what belongs to him, that is, our life.

Precisely in order to give a fresh impetus to the mission of the whole Church to lead human beings out of the wilderness in which they often find themselves to the place of life, friendship with Christ that gives us life in fullness, I have decided to proclaim a “Year of Faith,” which I shall have the opportunity to illustrate with a special Apostolic Letter. It will begin on October 11, 2012 on the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and will end on November 24, 2013, the Solemnity of Christ the King. It will be a moment of grace and commitment for an ever fuller conversion to God, to strengthen our faith in him and to proclaim him with joy to the people of our time.

Dear brothers and sisters, you are among the protagonists of the New Evangelization that the Church has undertaken and carries forth, not without difficulties but with the same enthusiasm as the first Christians. To conclude, I make my own the words of the Apostle Paul that we have heard: I give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you
in my prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Virgin Mary, who was not afraid to answer “yes” to the Word of the Lord and, after conceiving in her womb, set out full of joy and hope, always be your model and your guide. Learn from the Mother of the Lord and our Mother to be humble and at the same time courageous, simple and prudent; meek and strong, not with the strength of the world but with the strength of the truth. Amen.

Apostolic Letter Porta Fidei Convoking The Year of Faith, Rome (October 11, 2011)

1. The “door of faith” (Acts 14:27) is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into his Church. It is possible to cross that threshold when the word of God is proclaimed and the heart allows itself to be shaped by transforming grace. To enter through that door is to set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime. It begins with baptism (cf. Rom 6:4), through which we can address God as Father, and it ends with the passage through death to eternal life, fruit of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, whose will it was, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, to draw those who believe in him into his own glory (cf. Jn 17:22). To profess faith in the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is to believe in one God who is Love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8): the Father, who in the fullness of time sent his Son for our salvation; Jesus Christ, who in the mystery of his death and resurrection redeemed the world; the Holy Spirit, who leads the Church across the centuries as we await the Lord’s glorious return.

2. Ever since the start of my ministry as Successor of Peter, I have spoken of the need to rediscover the journey of faith so as to shed ever clearer light on the joy and renewed enthusiasm of the encounter with Christ. During the homily at the Mass marking the inauguration of my pontificate I said: “The Church as a whole and all her Pastors, like Christ,
must set out to lead people out of the desert, towards the place of life, towards friendship with the Son of God, towards the One who gives us life, and life in abundance.”[1] It often happens that Christians are more concerned for the social, cultural and political consequences of their commitment, continuing to think of the faith as a self-evident presupposition for life in society. In reality, not only can this presupposition no longer be taken for granted, but it is often openly denied.[2] Whereas in the past it was possible to recognize a unitary cultural matrix, broadly accepted in its appeal to the content of the faith and the values inspired by it, today this no longer seems to be the case in large swathes of society, because of a profound crisis of faith that has affected many people.

3. We cannot accept that salt should become tasteless or the light be kept hidden (cf. Mt 5:13-16). The people of today can still experience the need to go to the well, like the Samaritan woman, in order to hear Jesus, who invites us to believe in him and to draw upon the source of living water welling up within him (cf. Jn 4:14). We must rediscover a taste for feeding ourselves on the word of God, faithfully handed down by the Church, and on the Bread of Life, offered as sustenance for his disciples (cf. Jn 6:51). Indeed, the teaching of Jesus still resounds in our day with the same power: “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life” (Jn 6:27). The question posed by his listeners is the same that we ask today: “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” (Jn 6:28). We know Jesus’ reply: “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent” (Jn 6:29). Belief in Jesus Christ, then, is the way to arrive definitively at salvation.

4. In the light of all this, I have decided to announce a Year of Faith. It will begin on October 11, 2012, the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, and it will end on the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Universal King, on November 24, 2013. The starting date of October 11, 2012 also marks the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, a text promulgated by my Predecessor, Blessed John Paul II,[3] with a view to illustrating for all the faithful the power and beauty of the faith. This document, an authentic fruit of the Second Vatican Council, was requested by the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in 1985 as an instrument at the service of catechesis[4]
and it was produced in collaboration with all the bishops of the Catholic Church. Moreover, the theme of the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops that I have convoked for October 2012 is “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith.” This will be a good opportunity to usher the whole Church into a time of particular reflection and rediscovery of the faith. It is not the first time that the Church has been called to celebrate a Year of Faith. My venerable Predecessor the Servant of God Paul VI announced one in 1967, to commemorate the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul on the 19th centennial of their supreme act of witness. He thought of it as a solemn moment for the whole Church to make “an authentic and sincere profession of the same faith”; moreover, he wanted this to be confirmed in a way that was “individual and collective, free and conscious, inward and outward, humble and frank.”[5] He thought that in this way the whole Church could reappropriate “exact knowledge of the faith, so as to reinvigorate it, purify it, confirm it, and confess it.”[6] The great upheavals of that year made even more evident the need for a celebration of this kind. It concluded with the Credo of the People of God,[7] intended to show how much the essential content that for centuries has formed the heritage of all believers needs to be confirmed, understood and explored ever anew, so as to bear consistent witness in historical circumstances very different from those of the past.

5. In some respects, my venerable predecessor saw this Year as a “consequence and a necessity of the postconciliar period,”[8] fully conscious of the grave difficulties of the time, especially with regard to the profession of the true faith and its correct interpretation. It seemed to me that timing the launch of the Year of Faith to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council would provide a good opportunity to help people understand that the texts bequeathed by the Council Fathers, in the words of Blessed John Paul II, “have lost nothing of their value or brilliance. They need to be read correctly, to be widely known and taken to heart as important and normative texts of the Magisterium, within the Church’s Tradition.... I feel more than ever in duty bound to point to the Council as the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century: there we find a sure compass by which to
take our bearings in the century now beginning.”[9] I would also like to emphasize strongly what I had occasion to say concerning the Council a few months after my election as Successor of Peter: “if we interpret and implement it guided by a right hermeneutic, it can be and can become increasingly powerful for the ever necessary renewal of the Church.”[10]

6. The renewal of the Church is also achieved through the witness offered by the lives of believers: by their very existence in the world, Christians are called to radiate the word of truth that the Lord Jesus has left us. The Council itself, in the Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, said this: While “Christ, ‘holy, innocent and undefiled’ (Heb 7:26) knew nothing of sin (cf. 2 Cor 5:21), but came only to expiate the sins of the people (cf. Heb 2:17)... the Church... clasp[ing] sinners to its bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal. The Church, ‘like a stranger in a foreign land, presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God,’ announcing the cross and death of the Lord until he comes (cf. 1 Cor 11:26). But by the power of the risen Lord it is given strength to overcome, in patience and in love, its sorrow and its difficulties, both those that are from within and those that are from without, so that it may reveal in the world, faithfully, although with shadows, the mystery of its Lord until, in the end, it shall be manifested in full light.”[11]

The Year of Faith, from this perspective, is a summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Saviour of the world. In the mystery of his death and resurrection, God has revealed in its fullness the Love that saves and calls us to conversion of life through the forgiveness of sins (cf. Acts 5:31). For Saint Paul, this Love ushers us into a new life: “We were buried... with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). Through faith, this new life shapes the whole of human existence according to the radical new reality of the resurrection. To the extent that he freely cooperates, man’s thoughts and affections, mentality and conduct are slowly purified and transformed, on a journey that is never completely finished in this life. “Faith working through love” (Gal 5:6) becomes a new criterion of understanding and action that changes the whole of man’s life (cf. Rom 12:2; Col 3:9-10; Eph 4:20-29; 2 Cor 5:17).
7. “Caritas Christi urget nos” (2 Cor 5:14): it is the love of Christ that fills our hearts and impels us to evangelize. Today as in the past, he sends us through the highways of the world to proclaim his Gospel to all the peoples of the earth (cf. Mt 28:19). Through his love, Jesus Christ attracts to himself the people of every generation: in every age he convokes the Church, entrusting her with the proclamation of the Gospel by a mandate that is ever new. Today too, there is a need for stronger ecclesial commitment to new evangelization in order to rediscover the joy of believing and the enthusiasm for communicating the faith. In rediscovering his love day by day, the missionary commitment of believers attains force and vigour that can never fade away. Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy. It makes us fruitful, because it expands our hearts in hope and enables us to bear life-giving witness: indeed, it opens the hearts and minds of those who listen to respond to the Lord’s invitation to adhere to his word and become his disciples. Believers, so Saint Augustine tells us, “strengthen themselves by believing.”[12] The saintly Bishop of Hippo had good reason to express himself in this way. As we know, his life was a continual search for the beauty of the faith until such time as his heart would find rest in God.[13] His extensive writings, in which he explains the importance of believing and the truth of the faith, continue even now to form a heritage of incomparable riches, and they still help many people in search of God to find the right path towards the “door of faith”.

Only through believing, then, does faith grow and become stronger; there is no other possibility for possessing certitude with regard to one’s life apart from self-abandonment, in a continuous crescendo, into the hands of a love that seems to grow constantly because it has its origin in God.

8. On this happy occasion, I wish to invite my brother bishops from all over the world to join the Successor of Peter, during this time of spiritual grace that the Lord offers us, in recalling the precious gift of faith. We want to celebrate this Year in a worthy and fruitful manner. Reflection on the faith will have to be intensified, so as to help all believers in Christ to acquire a more conscious and vigorous adherence to the Gospel, especially at a time of profound change such as humanity is currently experiencing. We will have the opportunity to profess our faith in the Risen Lord in our
cathedrals and in the churches of the whole world; in our homes and among our families, so that everyone may feel a strong need to know better and to transmit to future generations the faith of all times. Religious communities as well as parish communities, and all ecclesial bodies old and new, are to find a way, during this Year, to make a public profession of the Credo.

9. We want this Year to arouse in every believer the aspiration to profess the faith in fullness and with renewed conviction, with confidence and hope. It will also be a good opportunity to intensify the celebration of the faith in the liturgy, especially in the Eucharist, which is “the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed;... and also the source from which all its power flows.”[14] At the same time, we make it our prayer that believers’ witness of life may grow in credibility. To rediscover the content of the faith that is professed, celebrated, lived and prayed,[15] and to reflect on the act of faith, is a task that every believer must make his own, especially in the course of this Year.

Not without reason, Christians in the early centuries were required to learn the creed from memory. It served them as a daily prayer not to forget the commitment they had undertaken in baptism. With words rich in meaning, Saint Augustine speaks of this in a homily on the *redditio symboli*, the handing over of the creed: “the symbol of the holy mystery that you have all received together and that today you have recited one by one, are the words on which the faith of Mother Church is firmly built above the stable foundation that is Christ the Lord. You have received it and recited it, but in your minds and hearts you must keep it ever present, you must repeat it in your beds, recall it in the public squares and not forget it during meals: even when your body is asleep, you must watch over it with your hearts.”[16]

10. At this point I would like to sketch a path intended to help us understand more profoundly not only the content of the faith, but also the act by which we choose to entrust ourselves fully to God, in complete freedom. In fact, there exists a profound unity between the act by which we believe and the content to which we give our assent. Saint Paul helps us to enter into this reality when he writes: “Man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved” (*Rom* 10:10). The
heart indicates that the first act by which one comes to faith is God’s gift and the action of grace which acts and transforms the person deep within.

The example of Lydia is particularly eloquent in this regard. Saint Luke recounts that, while he was at Philippi, Paul went on the Sabbath to proclaim the Gospel to some women; among them was Lydia and “the Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul” (Acts 16:14). There is an important meaning contained within this expression. Saint Luke teaches that knowing the content to be believed is not sufficient unless the heart, the authentic sacred space within the person, is opened by grace that allows the eyes to see below the surface and to understand that what has been proclaimed is the word of God.

Confessing with the lips indicates in turn that faith implies public testimony and commitment. A Christian may never think of belief as a private act. Faith is choosing to stand with the Lord so as to live with him. This “standing with him” points towards an understanding of the reasons for believing. Faith, precisely because it is a free act, also demands social responsibility for what one believes. The Church on the day of Pentecost demonstrates with utter clarity this public dimension of believing and proclaiming one’s faith fearlessly to every person. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit that makes us fit for mission and strengthens our witness, making it frank and courageous.

Profession of faith is an act both personal and communitarian. It is the Church that is the primary subject of faith. In the faith of the Christian community, each individual receives baptism, an effective sign of entry into the people of believers in order to obtain salvation. As we read in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “I believe’ is the faith of the Church professed personally by each believer, principally during baptism. ‘We believe’ is the faith of the Church confessed by the bishops assembled in council or more generally by the liturgical assembly of believers. ‘I believe’ is also the Church, our mother, responding to God by faith as she teaches us to say both ‘I believe’ and ‘we believe’.”[17]

Evidently, knowledge of the content of faith is essential for giving one’s own assent, that is to say for adhering fully with intellect and will to what the Church proposes. Knowledge of faith opens a door into the fullness of
the saving mystery revealed by God. The giving of assent implies that, when we believe, we freely accept the whole mystery of faith, because the guarantor of its truth is God who reveals himself and allows us to know his mystery of love.[18]

On the other hand, we must not forget that in our cultural context, very many people, while not claiming to have the gift of faith, are nevertheless sincerely searching for the ultimate meaning and definitive truth of their lives and of the world. This search is an authentic “preamble” to the faith, because it guides people onto the path that leads to the mystery of God. Human reason, in fact, bears within itself a demand for “what is perennially valid and lasting.”[19] This demand constitutes a permanent summons, indelibly written into the human heart, to set out to find the One whom we would not be seeking had he not already set out to meet us.[20] To this encounter, faith invites us and it opens us in fullness.

11. In order to arrive at a systematic knowledge of the content of the faith, all can find in the Catechism of the Catholic Church a precious and indispensable tool. It is one of the most important fruits of the Second Vatican Council. In the Apostolic Constitution Fidei Depositum, signed, not by accident, on the thirtieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, Blessed John Paul II wrote: “this catechism will make a very important contribution to that work of renewing the whole life of the Church... I declare it to be a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion and a sure norm for teaching the faith.”[21]

It is in this sense that that the Year of Faith will have to see a concerted effort to rediscover and study the fundamental content of the faith that receives its systematic and organic synthesis in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Here, in fact, we see the wealth of teaching that the Church has received, safeguarded and proposed in her two thousand years of history. From Sacred Scripture to the Fathers of the Church, from theological masters to the saints across the centuries, the Catechism provides a permanent record of the many ways in which the Church has meditated on the faith and made progress in doctrine so as to offer certitude to believers in their lives of faith.
In its very structure, the Catechism of the Catholic Church follows the development of the faith right up to the great themes of daily life. On page after page, we find that what is presented here is no theory, but an encounter with a Person who lives within the Church. The profession of faith is followed by an account of sacramental life, in which Christ is present, operative and continues to build his Church. Without the liturgy and the sacraments, the profession of faith would lack efficacy, because it would lack the grace which supports Christian witness. By the same criterion, the teaching of the Catechism on the moral life acquires its full meaning if placed in relationship with faith, liturgy and prayer.

12. In this Year, then, the Catechism of the Catholic Church will serve as a tool providing real support for the faith, especially for those concerned with the formation of Christians, so crucial in our cultural context. To this end, I have invited the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, by agreement with the competent Dicasteries of the Holy See, to draw up a Note, providing the Church and individual believers with some guidelines on how to live this Year of Faith in the most effective and appropriate ways, at the service of belief and evangelization.

To a greater extent than in the past, faith is now being subjected to a series of questions arising from a changed mentality which, especially today, limits the field of rational certainties to that of scientific and technological discoveries. Nevertheless, the Church has never been afraid of demonstrating that there cannot be any conflict between faith and genuine science, because both, albeit via different routes, tend towards the truth.[22]

13. One thing that will be of decisive importance in this Year is retracing the history of our faith, marked as it is by the unfathomable mystery of the interweaving of holiness and sin. While the former highlights the great contribution that men and women have made to the growth and development of the community through the witness of their lives, the latter must provoke in each person a sincere and continuing work of conversion in order to experience the mercy of the Father which is held out to everyone.
During this time we will need to keep our gaze fixed upon Jesus Christ, the “pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:2): in him, all the anguish and all the longing of the human heart finds fulfillment. The joy of love, the answer to the drama of suffering and pain, the power of forgiveness in the face of an offense received and the victory of life over the emptiness of death: all this finds fulfillment in the mystery of his Incarnation, in his becoming man, in his sharing our human weakness so as to transform it by the power of his resurrection. In him who died and rose again for our salvation, the examples of faith that have marked these two thousand years of our salvation history are brought into the fullness of light.

By faith, Mary accepted the Angel’s word and believed the message that she was to become the Mother of God in the obedience of her devotion (cf. Lk 1:38). Visiting Elizabeth, she raised her hymn of praise to the Most High for the marvels he worked in those who trust him (cf. Lk 1:46-55). With joy and trepidation she gave birth to her only son, keeping her virginity intact (cf. Lk 2:6-7). Trusting in Joseph, her husband, she took Jesus to Egypt to save him from Herod’s persecution (cf. Mt 2:13-15). With the same faith, she followed the Lord in his preaching and remained with him all the way to Golgotha (cf. Jn 19:25-27). By faith, Mary tasted the fruits of Jesus’ resurrection, and treasuring every memory in her heart (cf. Lk 2:19, 51), she passed them on to the Twelve assembled with her in the Upper Room to receive the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:1-4).

By faith, the Apostles left everything to follow their Master (cf. Mk 10:28). They believed the words with which he proclaimed the Kingdom of God present and fulfilled in his person (cf. Lk 11:20). They lived in communion of life with Jesus who instructed them with his teaching, leaving them a new rule of life, by which they would be recognized as his disciples after his death (cf. Jn 13:34-35). By faith, they went out to the whole world, following the command to bring the Gospel to all creation (cf. Mk 16:15) and they fearlessly proclaimed to all the joy of the resurrection, of which they were faithful witnesses.

By faith, the disciples formed the first community, gathered around the teaching of the Apostles, in prayer, in celebration of the Eucharist, holding their possessions in common so as to meet the needs of the brethren (cf. Acts 2:42-47).
By faith, the martyrs gave their lives, bearing witness to the truth of the Gospel that had transformed them and made them capable of attaining to the greatest gift of love: the forgiveness of their persecutors.

By faith, men and women have consecrated their lives to Christ, leaving all things behind so as to live obedience, poverty and chastity with Gospel simplicity, concrete signs of waiting for the Lord who comes without delay. By faith, countless Christians have promoted action for justice so as to put into practice the word of the Lord, who came to proclaim deliverance from oppression and a year of favor for all (cf. Lk 4:18-19).

By faith, across the centuries, men and women of all ages, whose names are written in the Book of Life (cf. Rev 7:9, 13:8), have confessed the beauty of following the Lord Jesus wherever they were called to bear witness to the fact that they were Christian: in the family, in the workplace, in public life, in the exercise of the charisms and ministries to which they were called.

By faith, we too live: by the living recognition of the Lord Jesus, present in our lives and in our history.

14. The Year of Faith will also be a good opportunity to intensify the witness of charity. As Saint Paul reminds us: “So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13). With even stronger words—which have always placed Christians under obligation—Saint James said: “What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled’, without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith” (Jas 2:14-18).

Faith without charity bears no fruit, while charity without faith would be a sentiment constantly at the mercy of doubt. Faith and charity each require the other, in such a way that each allows the other to set out along its respective path. Indeed, many Christians dedicate their lives with love to
those who are lonely, marginalized or excluded, as to those who are the first with a claim on our attention and the most important for us to support, because it is in them that the reflection of Christ’s own face is seen. Through faith, we can recognize the face of the risen Lord in those who ask for our love. “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). These words are a warning that must not be forgotten and a perennial invitation to return the love by which he takes care of us. It is faith that enables us to recognize Christ and it is his love that impels us to assist him whenever he becomes our neighbor along the journey of life. Supported by faith, let us look with hope at our commitment in the world, as we await “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet 3:13; cf. Rev 21:1).

15. Having reached the end of his life, Saint Paul asks his disciple Timothy to “aim at faith” (2 Tim 2:22) with the same constancy as when he was a boy (cf. 2 Tim 3:15). We hear this invitation directed to each of us, that none of us grow lazy in the faith. It is the lifelong companion that makes it possible to perceive, ever anew, the marvels that God works for us. Intent on gathering the signs of the times in the present of history, faith commits every one of us to become a living sign of the presence of the Risen Lord in the world. What the world is in particular need of today is the credible witness of people enlightened in mind and heart by the word of the Lord, and capable of opening the hearts and minds of many to the desire for God and for true life, life without end.

“That the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph” (2 Thess 3:1): may this Year of Faith make our relationship with Christ the Lord increasingly firm, since only in him is there the certitude for looking to the future and the guarantee of an authentic and lasting love. The words of Saint Peter shed one final ray of light on faith: “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet 1:6-9). The life of Christians knows the
experience of joy as well as the experience of suffering. How many of the saints have lived in solitude! How many believers, even in our own day, are tested by God’s silence when they would rather hear his consoling voice! The trials of life, while helping us to understand the mystery of the Cross and to participate in the sufferings of Christ (cf. Col 1:24), are a prelude to the joy and hope to which faith leads: “when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:10). We believe with firm certitude that the Lord Jesus has conquered evil and death. With this sure confidence we entrust ourselves to him: he, present in our midst, overcomes the power of the evil one (cf. Lk 11:20); and the Church, the visible community of his mercy, abides in him as a sign of definitive reconciliation with the Father.

Let us entrust this time of grace to the Mother of God, proclaimed “blessed because she believed” (Lk 1:45).

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter’s, on October 11 in the year 2011, the seventh of my Pontificate.

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI


801.


Torna ai contenuti
Address at the Day of Reflection, Dialogue and Prayer for Peace and Justice in the World, Assisi, Italy (October 27, 2011)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Distinguished Heads and Representatives of Churches, Ecclesial Communities, and World Religions,

Dear Friends,

Twenty-five years have passed since Blessed Pope John Paul II first invited representatives of the world’s religions to Assisi to pray for peace. What has happened in the meantime? What is the state of play with regard to peace today? At that time the great threat to world peace came from the division of the earth into two mutually opposed blocs. A conspicuous symbol of this division was the Berlin Wall which traced the border between two worlds right through the heart of the city. In 1989, three years after Assisi, the wall came down, without bloodshed. Suddenly the vast arsenals that stood behind the wall were no longer significant. They had lost their terror. The peoples’ will to freedom was stronger than the arsenals of violence. The question as to the causes of this dramatic change is complex and cannot be answered with simple formulae. But in addition to economic and political factors, the deepest reason for the event is a spiritual one: behind material might there were no longer any spiritual convictions. The will to freedom was ultimately stronger than the fear of violence, which now lacked any spiritual veneer. For this victory of freedom, which was also, above all, a victory of peace, we give thanks. What is more, this was not merely, nor even primarily, about the freedom to believe, although it did include this. To that extent we may in some way link all this to our prayer for peace.

But what happened next? Unfortunately, we cannot say that freedom and peace have characterized the situation ever since. Even if there is no threat of a great war hanging over us at present, nevertheless the world is unfortunately full of discord. It is not only that sporadic wars are continually being fought—violence as such is potentially ever present and it is a characteristic feature of our world. Freedom is a great good. But the
world of freedom has proved to be largely directionless, and not a few have misinterpreted freedom as somehow including freedom for violence. Discord has taken on new and frightening guises, and the struggle for freedom must engage us all in a new way.

Let us try to identify the new faces of violence and discord more closely. It seems to me that, in broad strokes, we may distinguish two types of the new forms of violence, which are the very antithesis of each other in terms of their motivation and manifest a number of differences in detail. Firstly there is terrorism, for which in place of a great war there are targeted attacks intended to strike the opponent destructively at key points, with no regard for the lives of innocent human beings, who are cruelly killed or wounded in the process. In the eyes of the perpetrators, the overriding goal of damage to the enemy justifies any form of cruelty. Everything that had been commonly recognized and sanctioned in international law as the limit of violence is overruled. We know that terrorism is often religiously motivated and that the specifically religious character of the attacks is proposed as a justification for the reckless cruelty that considers itself entitled to discard the rules of morality for the sake of the intended “good.” In this case, religion does not serve peace, but is used as justification for violence.

The post-Enlightenment critique of religion has repeatedly maintained that religion is a cause of violence and in this way it has fuelled hostility towards religions. The fact that, in the case we are considering here, religion really does motivate violence should be profoundly disturbing to us as religious persons. In a way that is more subtle but no less cruel, we also see religion as the cause of violence when force is used by the defenders of one religion against others. The religious delegates who were assembled in Assisi in 1986 wanted to say, and we now repeat it emphatically and firmly: this is not the true nature of religion. It is the antithesis of religion and contributes to its destruction. In response, an objection is raised: how do you know what the true nature of religion is? Does your assertion not derive from the fact that your religion has become a spent force? Others in their turn will object: is there such a thing as a common nature of religion that finds expression in all religions and is therefore applicable to them all? We must ask ourselves these questions, if we wish to argue realistically and
credibly against religiously motivated violence. Herein lies a fundamental task for interreligious dialogue—an exercise which is to receive renewed emphasis through this meeting. As a Christian I want to say at this point: yes, it is true, in the course of history, force has also been used in the name of the Christian faith. We acknowledge it with great shame. But it is utterly clear that this was an abuse of the Christian faith, one that evidently contradicts its true nature. The God in whom we Christians believe is the Creator and Father of all, and from him all people are brothers and sisters and form one single family. For us the Cross of Christ is the sign of the God who put “suffering-with” (compassion) and “loving-with” in place of force. His name is “God of love and peace” (2 Cor 13:11). It is the task of all who bear responsibility for the Christian faith to purify the religion of Christians again and again from its very heart, so that it truly serves as an instrument of God’s peace in the world, despite the fallibility of humans.

If one basic type of violence today is religiously motivated and thus confronts religions with the question as to their true nature and obliges all of us to undergo purification, a second complex type of violence is motivated in precisely the opposite way: as a result of God’s absence, his denial and the loss of humanity which goes hand in hand with it. The enemies of religion—as we said earlier—see in religion one of the principal sources of violence in the history of humanity and thus they demand that it disappear. But the denial of God has led to much cruelty and to a degree of violence that knows no bounds, which only becomes possible when man no longer recognizes any criterion or any judge above himself, now having only himself to take as a criterion. The horrors of the concentration camps reveal with utter clarity the consequences of God’s absence.

Yet I do not intend to speak further here about state-imposed atheism, but rather about the decline of man, which is accompanied by a change in the spiritual climate that occurs imperceptibly and hence is all the more dangerous. The worship of mammon, possessions and power is proving to be a counter-religion, in which it is no longer man who counts but only personal advantage. The desire for happiness degenerates, for example, into an unbridled, inhuman craving, such as appears in the different forms of drug dependency. There are the powerful who trade in drugs and then the many who are seduced and destroyed by them, physically and spiritually.
Force comes to be taken for granted and in parts of the world it threatens to destroy our young people. Because force is taken for granted, peace is destroyed and man destroys himself in this peace vacuum.

The absence of God leads to the decline of man and of humanity. But where is God? Do we know him, and can we show him anew to humanity, in order to build true peace? Let us first briefly summarize our considerations thus far. I said that there is a way of understanding and using religion so that it becomes a source of violence, while the rightly lived relationship of man to God is a force for peace. In this context I referred to the need for dialogue and I spoke of the constant need for purification of lived religion. On the other hand I said that the denial of God corrupts man, robs him of his criteria and leads him to violence.

In addition to the two phenomena of religion and anti-religion, a further basic orientation is found in the growing world of agnosticism: people to whom the gift of faith has not been given, but who are nevertheless on the lookout for truth, searching for God. Such people do not simply assert: “There is no God.” They suffer from his absence and yet are inwardly making their way towards him, inasmuch as they seek truth and goodness. They are “pilgrims of truth, pilgrims of peace.” They ask questions of both sides. They take away from militant atheists the false certainty by which these claim to know that there is no God and they invite them to leave polemics aside and to become seekers who do not give up hope in the existence of truth and in the possibility and necessity of living by it. But they also challenge the followers of religions not to consider God as their own property, as if he belonged to them, in such a way that they feel vindicated in using force against others. These people are seeking the truth, they are seeking the true God, whose image is frequently concealed in the religions because of the ways in which they are often practiced. Their inability to find God is partly the responsibility of believers with a limited or even falsified image of God. So all their struggling and questioning is in part an appeal to believers to purify their faith, so that God, the true God, becomes accessible. Therefore I have consciously invited delegates of this third group to our meeting in Assisi, which does not simply bring together representatives of religious institutions. Rather it is a case of being together on a journey towards truth, a case of taking a
decisive stand for human dignity and a case of common engagement for peace against every form of destructive force. Finally I would like to assure you that the Catholic Church will not let up in her fight against violence, in her commitment for peace in the world. We are animated by the common desire to be “pilgrims of truth, pilgrims of peace.”

Torna ai contenuti

Homily at the Mass for Latin America, Solemnity of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Vatican Basilica, Rome (December 12, 2011)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

“The earth has yielded its increase” (Ps 67 [66]:6). The Fathers of the Church recognized in this image, taken from the Psalm we just heard and which invites all the peoples and nations to praise the Lord with joy, the Virgin Mary and of Christ, her Son: “The earth is Mary Most Holy, who comes from our earth, our lineage, from this clay, from this mud, from Adam. The earth has yielded its fruit: it first produced a flower... this flower then became a fruit so that we might eat it so that we might eat its flesh. Would you like to know what this fruit is? It is the Virgin Son who proceeds from the Virgin Mother; the Lord from the handmaid; God from man; the Son from the Mother; the fruit from the earth” (St. Jerome, Breviarum in Psalm. 66: PL, 1010-1011). Today, exulting over the fruit of this earth, we too are saying: “Let the peoples praise thee, O God” (Ps 67 [66]:4). We proclaim the gift of redemption gained by Christ and, in Christ, we acknowledge his power and divine majesty.

Moved by these sentiments, I greet fraternally the Cardinals and Bishops who are with us, the various diplomatic representatives, the priests and men and women religious, as well as the faithful gathered here in St. Peter’s Basilica to celebrate with joy the Solemnity of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother and Star of the Evangelization of America. I also remember all those who have joined us in spirit and are praying to God
with us for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, many of whom are celebrating the bicentenary of their Independence at this time and, going beyond the historical, social and political aspects of these events, are expressing anew to the Most High their gratitude for the great gift of faith they received, a faith that proclaims the redemptive mystery of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, so that all the peoples of the earth may have life in Him. The Successor of Peter could not let this occasion pass without expressing the Church’s joy in the many gifts that God, in his infinite kindness, has in these years poured out upon these beloved nations, who so affectionately invoke Mary Most Holy.

The venerated image of the dark-skinned Madonna of Tepeyac, with her sweet and peaceful countenance, imprinted on the tilma of the Indian St. Juan Diego, shows her as “the ever Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God from whom she lives” (From the Office of Readings. Nicán Mopohua, 12th ed., Mexico City, D.F., 1971, 3-19). She reminds us of the “woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child” (Rev 12:1-2). She signals the presence of the Saviour to the indigenous and mestizo population. She always leads us to her divine Son, who is revealed as the foundation of the dignity of every human being, as a love that is stronger than the powers of evil and death, and the fountain of joy, filial trust, consolation and hope.

The Magnificat that we proclaimed in the Gospel “is the song both of the Mother of God and of the Church; the song of the Daughter of Zion and of the new People of God; the song of thanksgiving for the fullness of graces poured out in the economy of salvation and the song of the ‘poor’ whose hope is met by the fulfillment of the promises made to our ancestors” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2619). In an act of gratitude to her Lord and of the humility of his handmaid the Virgin Mary praises God for all that he is doing on behalf of his people Israel. God is the One who deserves all honor and glory, the Mighty One who does marvels for his faithful servant and today continues to show his love to all men and women, especially those who are facing difficult trials.

“Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey” (Zech 9:9), we heard in the First Reading. Since the Incarnation of the Word, the divine Mystery is revealed in Jesus Christ,
who is the contemporary of every human person in every time and place through the Church, whose Mother and model is Mary. Therefore, today we can continue praising God for the wonders he has worked in the life of the people of Latin America and the whole world, revealing his presence in the Son and the outpouring of his Spirit as the newness of personal and community life. God has hidden these things from the “wise and learned,” letting them be known to the humble and simple of heart (cf. Mt 11:25).

By her “yes” to God’s call, the Virgin Mary manifested divine love among men. In this sense she, with her simplicity and maternal heart, continues to indicate the one Light and the one Truth: her Son, Jesus Christ, who is “the definitive answer to the question of the meaning of life, and to those fundamental questions which still trouble so many men and women on the American continent” (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in America, no. 10). Similarly, “by her manifold intercession (she) continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their blessed home” (Lumen Gentium, no. 62).

At this time, as various parts of Latin America are commemorating the bicentenary of their Independence, the process of integration in this beloved continent is progressing, while at the same time it is playing a new role on the world scene. In these circumstances it is important that its diverse people can safeguard the rich treasure of faith and their historical-cultural dynamism, always being the defenders of human life from conception to natural end and promoters of peace; they must likewise care for the family in this genuine nature and mission, at the same time intensifying a vast grass-roots educational campaign that correctly prepares individuals and makes them aware of their capacities in such a way that they can face their destiny with responsibility and dignity. They are likewise called to foster ever more proven initiatives and effective programs that promote reconciliation and fraternity, increase solidarity and care for the environment, at the same time intensifying efforts to overcome poverty, illiteracy and corruption, and to eradicate every form of injustice, violence, criminality, civic unrest, drug trafficking and extortion.

When the Church was preparing to recall the fifth centenary of the
planting of the Cross of Christ in the good soil of the American Continent, on that same soil Bl. John Paul II formulated for the first time a program for a new evangelization, new “in its ardor, in its methods, in its expression” (cf. Address to the CELAM Assembly, March 9, 1983, III: AAS 75, 1983, 778). Because of my responsibility of confirming in the faith, I also want to encourage the apostolic zeal that is now motivating and driving the “continental mission” promoted in Aparecida, so that “Christian faith may become more deeply rooted in the heart of Latin American individuals and peoples as founding event and living encounter with Christ” (Fifth General Conference of the Council of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, Final Document, no. 13). Thus there will be a multiplication of genuine disciples and missionaries of the Lord and a renewal of Latin America and the Caribbean’s vocation to hope. May the light of God shine more and more on the face of each of the sons and daughters of this beloved land and may his redemptive grace guide their decisions so that they may continue progressing untiringly in the building of a society founded upon the development of the good, the triumph of love and the spread of justice. With these fervent desires and sustained by the help of Divine Providence, I intend to undertake an Apostolic Journey to Mexico and Cuba before Easter, to proclaim there the Word of Christ and support the conviction that this is a precious time to evangelize with a true faith, a living hope and an ardent charity.

I commend to the loving mediation of Our Lady of Guadalupe, our heavenly Mother all these intentions and the present situation of the Latin American and Caribbean nations and their progress towards a better future. I likewise invoke upon them the intercession of the many saints and blesseds that the Spirit has raised up throughout the length and breadth of the history of this continent, offering heroic models of Christian virtue in diverse states of life and social milieu, that their example may promote more and more a new evangelization under the gaze of Christ, Savior of man and strength of our soul. Amen.
Dear Sisters and Brothers,

It is moving for me to celebrate this Eucharist, this thanksgiving, with so many people from different parts of Germany and the neighboring countries. We offer our thanks above all to God, in whom we live and move and have our being (cf. Acts 17:28). But I would also like to thank all of you for your prayers that the Successor of Peter may continue to carry out his ministry with joy and faithful hope, and that he may strengthen his brothers in faith.

“Father, you show your almighty power in your mercy and forgiveness,” as we said in today’s Collect. In the first reading we heard how God manifested the power of his mercy in the history of Israel. The experience of the Babylonian Exile caused the people to fall into a deep crisis of faith: Why did this calamity happen? Perhaps God was not truly powerful at all?

There are theologians who, in the face of all the terrible things that happen in the world today, say that God cannot possibly be all-powerful. In response to this we profess God, the all-powerful Creator of heaven and earth. And we are glad and thankful that God is all-powerful. At the same time, we have to be aware that he exercises his power differently from the way we normally do. He has placed a limit on his power, by recognizing the freedom of his creatures. We are glad and thankful for the gift of freedom. However, when we see the terrible things that happen as a result of it, we are frightened. Let us put our trust in God, whose power manifests itself above all in mercy and forgiveness. Let us be certain, dear faithful, that God desires the salvation of his people. He desires our salvation, my salvation, the salvation of every single person. He is always close to us, especially in times of danger and radical change, and his heart aches for us, he reaches out to us. We need to open ourselves to him so that the power of his mercy can touch our hearts. We have to be ready freely to abandon evil, to raise ourselves from indifference and make room for his word. God respects our freedom. He does not constrain us. He is waiting for us to say “yes,” he, as it were, begs us to say “yes.”
In the Gospel Jesus takes up this fundamental theme of prophetic preaching. He recounts the parable of the two sons invited by their father to work in the vineyard. The first son responded: “I will not go’, but afterward he repented and went.” The other son said to the father: “I go, sir; but did not go.” When asked by Jesus which of the two sons did the father’s will, those listening rightly respond: “the first” (Mt 21:29-31). The message of the parable is clear: it is not words that matter, but deeds, deeds of conversion and faith. As we heard, Jesus directs this message to the chief priests and elders of the people of Israel, that is, to the religious experts of his people. At first they say “yes” to God’s will, but their piety becomes routine and God no longer matters to them. For this reason they find the message of John the Baptist and the message of Jesus disturbing. The Lord concludes his parable with harsh words: “Truly, the tax collectors and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the harlots believed him, and even when you saw it, you did not afterward repent and believe him” (Mt 21:32). Translated into the language of the present day, this statement might sound something like this: agnostics, who are constantly exercised by the question of God, those who long for a pure heart but suffer on account of their sin, are closer to the Kingdom of God than believers whose life of faith is “routine” and who regard the Church merely as an institution, without letting it touch their hearts, or letting the faith touch their hearts.

These words should make all of us stop and reflect, in fact they should disturb us. However, this is by no means to suggest that everyone who lives in the Church and works for her should be considered far from Jesus and the Kingdom of God. Absolutely not! On the contrary, this is a time to offer a word of profound gratitude to the many co-workers, employees and volunteers, without whom life in the parishes and in the entire Church would be hard to imagine. The Church in Germany has many social and charitable institutions through which the love of neighbor is practiced in ways that bring social benefits and reach to the ends of the earth. At this moment I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to all those working in Caritas Germany and in other church organizations who give their time and effort generously in voluntary service to the Church. In the
first place, such service requires objective and professional expertise. But in the spirit of Jesus’ teaching something more is needed—an open heart that allows itself to be touched by the love of Christ, and thus gives to our neighbor, who needs us, something more than a technical service: it gives love, in which the other person is able to see Christ, the loving God. So let us ask ourselves, in the light of today’s Gospel, how is my personal relationship with God: in prayer, in participation at Sunday Mass, in exploring my faith through meditation on sacred Scripture and study of the Catechism of the Catholic Church? Dear friends, in the last analysis, the renewal of the Church will only come about through openness to conversion and through renewed faith.

The Gospel for this Sunday, as we saw, speaks of two sons, but behind them, in a mysterious way, is a third son. The first son says “no,” but does the father’s will. The second son says “yes,” but does not do what he was asked. The third son both says “yes” and does what he was asked. This third son is the Only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, who has gathered us all here. Jesus, on entering the world, said: “Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God” (Heb 10:7). He not only said “yes,” he acted on that “yes,” and he suffered it, even to death on the Cross. As the Christological hymn in the second reading says: “Though he was in the form of God, [Jesus] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a Cross” (Phil. 2: 6-8). In humility and obedience, Jesus fulfilled the will of the Father and by dying on the Cross for his brothers and sisters, for us, he saved us from our pride and obstinacy. Let us thank him for his sacrifice, let us bend our knees before his name and proclaim together with the disciples of the first generation: “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:11).

The Christian life must continually measure itself by Christ: “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5), as Saint Paul says in the introduction to the Christological hymn. And a few verses before, he exhorts us: “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same
love, being in full accord and of one mind” (*Phil* 2:1-2). Just as Christ was totally united to the Father and obedient to him, so too the disciples must obey God and be of one mind among themselves. Dear friends, with Paul I dare to exhort you: complete my joy by being firmly united in Christ. The Church in Germany will overcome the great challenges of the present and future, and it will remain a leaven in society, if the priests, consecrated men and women, and the lay faithful, in fidelity to their respective vocations, work together in unity, if the parishes, communities, and movements support and enrich each other, if the baptized and confirmed, in union with their bishop, lift high the torch of un tarnished faith and allow it to enlighten their abundant knowledge and skills. The Church in Germany will continue to be a blessing for the entire Catholic world: if she remains faithfully united with the Successors of Saint Peter and the Apostles, if she fosters cooperation in various ways with mission countries and allows herself to be “infected” by the joy that marks the faith of these young Churches.

To his exhortation to unity, Paul adds a call to humility, saying: “Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (*Phil* 2:3-4). Christian life is a life for others: existing for others, humble service of neighbor and of the common good. Dear friends, humility is a virtue that does not enjoy great esteem in the world of today, or indeed of any time. But the Lord’s disciples know that this virtue is, so to speak, the oil that makes the process of dialogue fruitful, cooperation possible and unity sincere. The Latin word for humility, *humilitas*, is derived from *humus* and indicates closeness to the earth. Those who are humble stand with their two feet on the ground, but above all they listen to Christ, the Word of God, who ceaselessly renews the Church and each of her members.

Let us ask God for the courage and the humility to walk the path of faith, to draw from the riches of his mercy, and to fix our gaze on Christ, the Word, who makes all things new and is for us “the way, the truth, and the life” (*Jn* 14:6): he is our future. Amen.
Dear Young People,

In this celebration of the Eucharist we have reached the high point of this World Youth Day. Seeing you here, gathered in such great numbers from all parts of the world, fills my heart with joy. I think of the special love with which Jesus is looking upon you. Yes, the Lord loves you and calls you his friends (cf. Jn 15:15). He goes out to meet you and he wants to accompany you on your journey, to open the door to a life of fulfillment and to give you a share in his own closeness to the Father. For our part, we have come to know the immensity of his love and we want to respond generously to his love by sharing with others the joy we have received. Certainly, there are many people today who feel attracted by the figure of Christ and want to know him better. They realize that he is the answer to so many of our deepest concerns. But who is he really? How can someone who lived on this earth so long ago have anything in common with me today?

The Gospel we have just heard (cf. Mt 16:13-20) suggests two different ways of knowing Christ. The first is an impersonal knowledge, one based on current opinion. When Jesus asks: “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” the disciples answer: “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” In other words, Christ is seen as yet another religious figure, like those who came before him. Then Jesus turns to the disciples and asks them: “But who do you say that I am?” Peter responds with what is the first confession of faith: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Faith is more than just empirical or historical facts; it is an ability to grasp the mystery of Christ’s person in all its depth.

Yet faith is not the result of human effort, of human reasoning, but rather a gift of God: “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.” Faith starts
with God, who opens his heart to us and invites us to share in his own divine life. Faith does not simply provide information about who Christ is; rather, it entails a personal relationship with Christ, a surrender of our whole person, with all our understanding, will and feelings, to God’s self-revelation. So Jesus’ question: “But who do you say that I am?” is ultimately a challenge to the disciples to make a personal decision in his regard. Faith in Christ and discipleship are strictly interconnected.

And, since faith involves following the Master, it must become constantly stronger, deeper and more mature, to the extent that it leads to a closer and more intense relationship with Jesus. Peter and the other disciples also had to grow in this way, until their encounter with the Risen Lord opened their eyes to the fullness of faith.

Dear young people, today Christ is asking you the same question which he asked the Apostles: “Who do you say that I am?” Respond to him with generosity and courage, as befits young hearts like your own. Say to him: “Jesus, I know that you are the Son of God, who have given your life for me. I want to follow you faithfully and to be led by your word. You know me and you love me. I place my trust in you and I put my whole life into your hands. I want you to be the power that strengthens me and the joy which never leaves me.”

Jesus responds to Peter’s confession by speaking of the Church: “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church.” What do these words mean? Jesus builds the Church on the rock of the faith of Peter, who confesses that Christ is God.

The Church, then, is not simply a human institution, like any other. Rather, she is closely joined to God. Christ himself speaks of her as “his” Church. Christ cannot be separated from the Church any more than the head can be separated from the body (cf. 1 Cor 12:12). The Church does not draw her life from herself, but from the Lord.

Dear young friends, as the Successor of Peter, let me urge you to strengthen this faith which has been handed down to us from the time of the Apostles. Make Christ, the Son of God, the center of your life. But let me also remind you that following Jesus in faith means walking at his side in the communion of the Church. We cannot follow Jesus on our own.
Anyone who would be tempted to do so “on his own,” or to approach the life of faith with kind of individualism so prevalent today, will risk never truly encountering Jesus, or will end up following a counterfeit Jesus.

Having faith means drawing support from the faith of your brothers and sisters, even as your own faith serves as a support for the faith of others. I ask you, dear friends, to love the Church which brought you to birth in the faith, which helped you to grow in the knowledge of Christ and which led you to discover the beauty of his love. Growing in friendship with Christ necessarily means recognizing the importance of joyful participation in the life of your parishes, communities and movements, as well as the celebration of Sunday Mass, frequent reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation, and the cultivation of personal prayer and meditation on God’s word.

Friendship with Jesus will also lead you to bear witness to the faith wherever you are, even when it meets with rejection or indifference. We cannot encounter Christ and not want to make him known to others. So do not keep Christ to yourselves! Share with others the joy of your faith. The world needs the witness of your faith, it surely needs God. I think that the presence here of so many young people, coming from all over the world, is a wonderful proof of the fruitfulness of Christ’s command to the Church: “Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation” (Mk 16:15). You too have been given the extraordinary task of being disciples and missionaries of Christ in other lands and countries filled with young people who are looking for something greater and, because their heart tells them that more authentic values do exist, they do not let themselves be seduced by the empty promises of a lifestyle that has no room for God.

Dear young people, I pray for you with heartfelt affection. I commend all of you to the Virgin Mary and I ask her to accompany you always by her maternal intercession and to teach you how to remain faithful to God’s word. I ask you to pray for the Pope, so that, as the Successor of Peter, he may always confirm his brothers and sisters in the faith. May all of us in the Church, pastors and faithful alike, draw closer to the Lord each day. May we grow in holiness of life and be effective witnesses to the truth that
Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God, the Saviour of all mankind and the living source of our hope. Amen.


Mr. President of the Federal Republic,
Mr. President of the Bundestag,
Madam Chancellor,
Madam President of the Bundesrat,
Ladies and Gentlemen Members of the House,

It is an honor and a joy for me to speak before this distinguished house, before the Parliament of my native Germany, that meets here as a democratically elected representation of the people, in order to work for the good of the Federal Republic of Germany. I should like to thank the President of the Bundestag both for his invitation to deliver this address and for the kind words of greeting and appreciation with which he has welcomed me. At this moment I turn to you, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, not least as your fellow-countryman who for all his life has been conscious of close links to his origins, and has followed the affairs of his native Germany with keen interest. But the invitation to give this address was extended to me as Pope, as the Bishop of Rome, who bears the highest responsibility for Catholic Christianity. In issuing this invitation you are acknowledging the role that the Holy See plays as a partner within the community of peoples and states. Setting out from this international responsibility that I hold, I should like to propose to you some thoughts on the foundations of a free state of law.

Allow me to begin my reflections on the foundations of law [Recht] with a brief story from sacred Scripture. In the First Book of the Kings, it is recounted that God invited the young King Solomon, on his accession to the throne, to make a request. What will the young ruler ask for at this
important moment? Success — wealth — long life — destruction of his enemies? He chooses none of these things. Instead, he asks for a listening heart so that he may govern God’s people, and discern between good and evil (cf. 1 Kg 3:9). Through this story, the Bible wants to tell us what should ultimately matter for a politician. His fundamental criterion and the motivation for his work as a politician must not be success, and certainly not material gain. Politics must be a striving for justice, and hence it has to establish the fundamental preconditions for peace. Naturally a politician will seek success, without which he would have no opportunity for effective political action at all. Yet success is subordinated to the criterion of justice, to the will to do what is right, and to the understanding of what is right. Success can also be seductive and thus can open up the path towards the falsification of what is right, towards the destruction of justice. “Without justice—what else is the State but a great band of robbers?” as Saint Augustine once said. We Germans know from our own experience that these words are no empty specter. We have seen how power became divorced from right, how power opposed right and crushed it, so that the State became an instrument for destroying right—a highly organized band of robbers, capable of threatening the whole world and driving it to the edge of the abyss. To serve right and to fight against the dominion of wrong is and remains the fundamental task of the politician. At a moment in history when man has acquired previously inconceivable power, this task takes on a particular urgency. Man can destroy the world. He can manipulate himself. He can, so to speak, make human beings and he can deny them their humanity. How do we recognize what is right? How can we discern between good and evil, between what is truly right and what may appear right? Even now, Solomon’s request remains the decisive issue facing politicians and politics today.

For most of the matters that need to be regulated by law, the support of the majority can serve as a sufficient criterion. Yet it is evident that for the fundamental issues of law, in which the dignity of man and of humanity is at stake, the majority principle is not enough: everyone in a position of responsibility must personally seek out the criteria to be followed when framing laws. In the third century, the great theologian Origen provided the following explanation for the resistance of Christians
to certain legal systems: “Suppose that a man were living among the Scythians, whose laws are contrary to the divine law, and was compelled to live among them... such a man for the sake of the true law, though illegal among the Scythians, would rightly form associations with like-minded people contrary to the laws of the Scythians.”[1]

This conviction was what motivated resistance movements to act against the Nazi regime and other totalitarian regimes, thereby doing a great service to justice and to humanity as a whole. For these people, it was indisputably evident that the law in force was actually unlawful. Yet when it comes to the decisions of a democratic politician, the question of what now corresponds to the law of truth, what is actually right and may be enacted as law, is less obvious. In terms of the underlying anthropological issues, what is right and may be given the force of law is in no way simply self-evident today. The question of how to recognize what is truly right and thus to serve justice when framing laws has never been simple, and today in view of the vast extent of our knowledge and our capacity, it has become still harder.

How do we recognize what is right? In history, systems of law have almost always been based on religion: decisions regarding what was to be lawful among men were taken with reference to the divinity. Unlike other great religions, Christianity has never proposed a revealed law to the State and to society, that is to say a juridical order derived from revelation. Instead, it has pointed to nature and reason as the true sources of law—and to the harmony of objective and subjective reason, which naturally presupposes that both spheres are rooted in the creative reason of God. Christian theologians thereby aligned themselves with a philosophical and juridical movement that began to take shape in the second century B.C. In the first half of that century, the social natural law developed by the Stoic philosophers came into contact with leading teachers of Roman Law.[2] Through this encounter, the juridical culture of the West was born, which was and is of key significance for the juridical culture of mankind. This pre-Christian marriage between law and philosophy opened up the path that led via the Christian Middle Ages and the juridical developments of the Age of Enlightenment all the way to the Declaration of Human Rights and to our German Basic Law of 1949, with which our nation committed
itself to “inviolable and inalienable human rights as the foundation of every human community, and of peace and justice in the world”.

For the development of law and for the development of humanity, it was highly significant that Christian theologians aligned themselves against the religious law associated with polytheism and on the side of philosophy, and that they acknowledged reason and nature in their interrelation as the universally valid source of law. This step had already been taken by Saint Paul in the Letter to the Romans, when he said: “When Gentiles who have not the Law [the Torah of Israel] do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves... they show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness...” (Rom 2:14f.). Here we see the two fundamental concepts of nature and conscience, where conscience is nothing other than Solomon’s listening heart, reason that is open to the language of being. If this seemed to offer a clear explanation of the foundations of legislation up to the time of the Enlightenment, up to the time of the Declaration on Human Rights after the Second World War and the framing of our Basic Law, there has been a dramatic shift in the situation in the last half-century. The idea of natural law is today viewed as a specifically Catholic doctrine, not worth bringing into the discussion in a non-Catholic environment, so that one feels almost ashamed even to mention the term. Let me outline briefly how this situation arose. Fundamentally it is because of the idea that an unbridgeable gulf exists between “is” and “ought.” An “ought” can never follow from an “is,” because the two are situated on completely different planes. The reason for this is that in the meantime, the positivist understanding of nature has come to be almost universally accepted. If nature—in the words of Hans Kelsen—is viewed as “an aggregate of objective data linked together in terms of cause and effect,” then indeed no ethical indication of any kind can be derived from it. A positivist conception of nature as purely functional, as the natural sciences consider it to be, is incapable of producing any bridge to ethics and law, but once again yields only functional answers. The same also applies to reason, according to the positivist understanding that is widely held to be the only genuinely scientific one. Anything that is not verifiable or falsifiable, according to this understanding, does not belong to the realm of reason.
strictly understood. Hence ethics and religion must be assigned to the subjective field, and they remain extraneous to the realm of reason in the strict sense of the word. Where positivist reason dominates the field to the exclusion of all else—and that is broadly the case in our public mindset—then the classical sources of knowledge for ethics and law are excluded. This is a dramatic situation which affects everyone, and on which a public debate is necessary. Indeed, an essential goal of this address is to issue an urgent invitation to launch one.

The positivist approach to nature and reason, the positivist world view in general, is a most important dimension of human knowledge and capacity that we may in no way dispense with. But in and of itself it is not a sufficient culture corresponding to the full breadth of the human condition. Where positivist reason considers itself the only sufficient culture and banishes all other cultural realities to the status of subcultures, it diminishes man, indeed it threatens his humanity. I say this with Europe specifically in mind, where there are concerted efforts to recognize only positivism as a common culture and a common basis for law-making, reducing all the other insights and values of our culture to the level of subculture, with the result that Europe vis-à-vis other world cultures is left in a state of culturelessness, and at the same time extremist and radical movements emerge to fill the vacuum. In its self-proclaimed exclusivity, the positivist reason which recognizes nothing beyond mere functionality resembles a concrete bunker with no windows, in which we ourselves provide lighting and atmospheric conditions, being no longer willing to obtain either from God’s wide world. And yet we cannot hide from ourselves the fact that even in this artificial world, we are still covertly drawing upon God’s raw materials, which we refashion into our own products. The windows must be flung open again, we must see the wide world, the sky and the earth once more and learn to make proper use of all this.

But how are we to do this? How do we find our way out into the wide world, into the big picture? How can reason rediscover its true greatness, without being sidetracked into irrationality? How can nature reassert itself in its true depth, with all its demands, with all its directives? I would like to recall one of the developments in recent political history, hoping that I will neither be misunderstood, nor provoke too many one-sided polemics. I
would say that the emergence of the ecological movement in German politics since the 1970s, while it has not exactly flung open the windows, nevertheless was and continues to be a cry for fresh air which must not be ignored or pushed aside, just because too much of it is seen to be irrational. Young people had come to realize that something is wrong in our relationship with nature, that matter is not just raw material for us to shape at will, but that the earth has a dignity of its own and that we must follow its directives. In saying this, I am clearly not promoting any particular political party—nothing could be further from my mind. If something is wrong in our relationship with reality, then we must all reflect seriously on the whole situation and we are all prompted to question the very foundations of our culture. Allow me to dwell a little longer on this point. The importance of ecology is no longer disputed. We must listen to the language of nature and we must answer accordingly. Yet I would like to underline a point that seems to me to be neglected, today as in the past: there is also an ecology of man. Man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will. Man is not merely self-creating freedom. Man does not create himself. He is intellect and will, but he is also nature, and his will is rightly ordered if he respects his nature, listens to it and accepts himself for who he is, as one who did not create himself. In this way, and in no other, is true human freedom fulfilled.

Let us come back to the fundamental concepts of nature and reason, from which we set out. The great proponent of legal positivism, Kelsen, at the age of 84—in 1965—abandoned the dualism of “is” and “ought.” (I find it comforting that rational thought is evidently still possible at the age of 84!) Previously he had said that norms can only come from the will. Nature therefore could only contain norms, he adds, if a will had put them there. But this, he says, would presuppose a Creator God, whose will had entered into nature. “Any attempt to discuss the truth of this belief is utterly futile,” he observed.[4] Is it really?—I find myself asking. Is it really pointless to wonder whether the objective reason that manifests itself in nature does not presuppose a creative reason, a Creator Spiritus?

At this point Europe’s cultural heritage ought to come to our assistance. The conviction that there is a Creator God is what gave rise to the idea of human rights, the idea of the equality of all people before the
law, the recognition of the inviolability of human dignity in every single person and the awareness of people's responsibility for their actions. Our cultural memory is shaped by these rational insights. To ignore it or dismiss it as a thing of the past would be to dismember our culture totally and to rob it of its completeness. The culture of Europe arose from the encounter between Jerusalem, Athens and Rome—from the encounter between Israel’s monotheism, the philosophical reason of the Greeks and Roman law. This three-way encounter has shaped the inner identity of Europe. In the awareness of man's responsibility before God and in the acknowledgment of the inviolable dignity of every single human person, it has established criteria of law: it is these criteria that we are called to defend at this moment in our history.

As he assumed the mantle of office, the young King Solomon was invited to make a request. How would it be if we, the law-makers of today, were invited to make a request? What would we ask for? I think that, even today, there is ultimately nothing else we could wish for but a listening heart—the capacity to discern between good and evil, and thus to establish true law, to serve justice and peace. I thank you for your attention!


Homily and Presentation of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to the Bishops of Africa in the “Stade de L’amitié” of Cotonou, Benin (November 20, 2011)

Dear Brother Bishops and Priests,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Following in the footsteps of my blessed predecessor Pope John Paul II, it is a great joy for me to visit for the second time this dear continent of Africa, coming among you, in Benin, to address to you a message of hope and of peace. I would like first of all to express my cordial gratitude to Archbishop Antoine Ganyé of Cotonou, for his words of welcome and to greet the Bishops of Benin, as well as the Cardinals and Bishops from various African countries and from other continents. To all of you, dear brothers and sisters, who have come to this Mass celebrated by the Successor of Peter, I offer my warm greetings. I am thinking certainly of the faithful of Benin, but also of those from other French-speaking countries, such as Togo, Burkina Faso, Niger and others. Our Eucharistic celebration on the Solemnity of Christ the King is an occasion to give thanks to God for the one hundred and fifty years that have passed since the beginnings of the evangelization of Benin; it is also an occasion to express our gratitude to him for the Second Special Assembly of the Synod of African Bishops which was held in Rome a few months ago.

The Gospel which we have just heard tells us that Jesus, the Son of Man, the ultimate judge of our lives, wished to appear as one who hungers and thirsts, as a stranger, as one of those who are naked, sick or imprisoned, ultimately, of those who suffer or are outcast; how we treat them will be taken as the way we treat Jesus himself. We do not see here a simple literary device, or a simple metaphor. Jesus’s entire existence is an example of it. He, the Son of God, became man, he shared our existence, even down to the smallest details, he became the servant of the least of his brothers and sisters. He who had nowhere to lay his head, was condemned to death on a cross. This is the King we celebrate!
Without a doubt this can appear a little disconcerting to us. Today, like two thousand years ago, accustomed to seeing the signs of royalty in success, power, money and ability, we find it hard to accept such a king, a king who makes himself the servant of the little ones, of the most humble, a king whose throne is a cross. And yet, the Scriptures tell us, in this is the glory of Christ revealed; it is in the humility of his earthly existence that he finds his power to judge the world. For him, to reign is to serve! And what he asks of us is to follow him along the way, to serve, to be attentive to the cry of the poor, the weak, the outcast. The baptized know that the decision to follow Christ can entail great sacrifices, at times even the sacrifice of one’s life. However, as Saint Paul reminds us, Christ has overcome death and he brings us with him in his resurrection. He introduces us to a new world, a world of freedom and joy. Today, so much still binds us to the world of the past, so many fears hold us prisoners and prevent us from living in freedom and happiness. Let us allow Christ to free us from the world of the past! Our faith in him, which frees us from all our fears and miseries, gives us access to a new world, a world where justice and truth are not a byword, a world of interior freedom and of peace with ourselves, with our neighbors and with God. This is the gift God gave us at our baptism!

“Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt 25:34). Let us receive this word of blessing which the Son of Man will, on the Day of Judgment, address to those who have recognized his presence in the lowliest of their brethren, with a heart free and full of the love of the Lord! Brothers and sisters, the words of the Gospel are truly words of hope, because the King of the universe has drawn near to us, the servant of the least and lowliest. Here I would like to greet with affection all those persons who are suffering, those who are sick, those affected by AIDS or by other illnesses, to all those forgotten by society. Have courage! The Pope is close to you in his thoughts and prayers. Have courage! Jesus wanted to identify himself with the poor, with the sick; he wanted to share your suffering and to see you as his brothers and sisters, to free you from every affliction, from all suffering. Every sick person, every poor person deserves our respect and our love because, through them, God shows us the way to heaven.
This morning, I invite you once again to rejoice with me. One hundred and fifty years ago the cross of Christ was raised in your country, and the Gospel was proclaimed for the first time. Today, we give thanks to God for the work accomplished by the missionaries, by the “apostolic workers” who first came from among you or from distant lands, bishops, priests, men and women religious, catechists, all those who, both yesterday and today, enabled the growth of the faith in Jesus Christ on the African continent. I honor here the memory of the venerable Cardinal Bernardin Gantin, an example of faith and of wisdom for Benin and for the entire African continent.

Dear brothers and sisters, everyone who has received this marvelous gift of faith, this gift of an encounter with the risen Lord, feels in turn the need to proclaim it to others. The Church exists to proclaim this Good News! And this duty is always urgent! After 150 years, many are those who have not heard the message of salvation in Christ! Many, too, are those who are hesitant to open their hearts to the word of God! Many are those whose faith is weak, whose way of thinking, habits and lifestyle do not know the reality of the Gospel, and who think that seeking selfish satisfaction, easy gain or power is the ultimate goal of human life. With enthusiasm, be ardent witnesses of the faith which you have received! Make the loving face of the Saviour shine in every place, in particular before the young, who search for reasons to live and hope in a difficult world!

The Church in Benin has received much from her missionaries: she must in turn carry this message of hope to people who do not know or who no longer know the Lord Jesus. Dear brothers and sisters, I ask you to be concerned for evangelization in your country, and among the peoples of your continent and the whole world. The recent Synod of Bishops for Africa stated this in no uncertain terms: the man of hope, the Christian, cannot be uninterested in his brothers and sisters. This would be completely opposed to the example of Jesus. The Christian is a tireless builder of communion, peace and solidarity—gifts which Jesus himself has given us. By being faithful to him, we will cooperate in the realization of God's plan of salvation for humanity.

Dear brothers and sisters, I urge you, therefore, to strengthen your
faith in Jesus Christ, to be authentically converted to him. He alone gives us the true life and can liberate us for all our fears and sluggishness, from all our anguish. Rediscover the roots of your existence in the baptism which you received and which makes you children of God! May Jesus Christ give you strength to live as Christians and to find ways to transmit generously to new generations what you have received from your fathers in faith! [In the local Fon language]: May the Lord fill you with his graces!

On this feast day, we rejoice together in the reign of Christ the King over the whole world. He is the one who removes all that hinders reconciliation, justice and peace. We are reminded that true royalty does not consist in a show of power, but in the humility of service; not in the oppression of the weak, but in the ability to protect them and to lead them to life in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10). Christ reigns from the Cross and, with his arms open wide, he embraces all the peoples of the world and draws them into unity. Through the Cross, he breaks down the walls of division, he reconciles us with each other and with the Father. We pray today for the people of Africa, that all may be able to live in justice, peace and the joy of the Kingdom of God (cf. Rom 14:17). With these sentiments I affectionately greet all the English-speaking faithful who have come from Ghana and Nigeria and neighboring countries. May God bless all of you!

Queridos irmãos e irmãs da África lusófona que me ouvis, a todos dirijo a minha saudação e convido a renovar a vossa decisão de pertencer a Cristo e de servir o seu Reino de reconciliação, de justiça e de paz. O seu Reino pode ser posto em perigo no nosso coração. Aqui Deus cruza-se com a nossa liberdade. Nós—e só nós—podemos impedi-lo de reinar sobre nós mesmos e, em consequência, tornar difícil a sua realza sobre a família, a sociedade e a história. Por causa de Cristo, tantos homens e mulheres se opuseram, vitoriosamente, às tentações do mundo para viver fielmente a sua fé, às vezes mesmo até ao martírio. A seu exemplo, amados pastores e fiéis, sede sal e luz de Cristo na terra africana! Amen.

[Dear brothers and sisters of the Portuguese-speaking nations of Africa who are listening to me! I greet all of you and I invite you to renew your decision to belong to Christ and to serve his Kingdom of reconciliation, justice and peace. His Kingdom can be threatened in our hearts. There God comes face to face with our freedom. We—and we alone—can
prevent him from reigning over us and consequently obstructing his Lordship over our families, society and history. Because of Christ, many men and women successfully opposed the temptations of the world in order to live their faith truly, even to martyrdom. Dear pastors and faithful, following their example, be the salt and light of Christ, in the land of Africa! Amen.]

Torna ai contenuti
PRELATE

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Bishop Javier Echevarría Rodríguez, Prelate, to all the faithful of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei.

Immediately after the death of Dora del Hoyo, on January 10, 2004, clear signs began to appear of the strong and widespread reputation for holiness enjoyed by the first numerary assistant in Opus Dei. Since that date I have received hundreds of written and signed accounts sent spontaneously by faithful of the Prelature who lived with Dora and by other persons who knew her. These amply attest to her exemplary Christian life.

Because of these testimonies, we feel compelled to continue the investigation. After having carried out the preliminary steps foreseen by the current norms, I have concluded that conditions are present to introduce the Cause of canonization for Salvadora del Hoyo Alonso (Dora).

Therefore I invite all the faithful of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei to consider whether they have anything useful to report concerning the cause, both favorable and unfavorable to it, as well as anything she may have written or documents referring to her person and deeds, and that they make them known with full freedom, so as to enable the investigation to go forward to a final result that will make the truth completely clear.

Rome, October 11, 2011

+ Javier Echevarría

Prelate
New Circumscriptions

Decree of Expansion of the Delegation of India

On November 12, 2011, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, expanded the Delegation of India, dependent on the Prelate and with its seat in New Delhi, to include from now on India and Sri Lanka, through the following decree:

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

DECRETUM

Perspecto n. 152, §2 Codicis iuris particularis Operis Dei.

Ut provideatur curæ laboris apostolici Prælaturæ in Insula Taprobane, auditis Consilio Generali et Assessoratu Centrali, decreto hoc nostro statuimus ut extendatur territorium Delegationis Indiæ, a nobis dependentis, quæ posthac complectetur territoria Indiae et Taprobanis.

Datum Romæ, ex Ædibus Curiæ Prælatitiae, die 12, mense novembri, anno 2011.

+ XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA

Praelatus Operis Dei
Rev.mus D. Dr. Ernestus Burkhart
Curiæ Prælatitiae Cancellarius
Reg. Gen. R. Lib. VI pag. 43

Appointments

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

Decrees

Decree

Decree of Appointment of the Regional Vicar of Kenya
Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRIA
Dei et Apostolicæ Sedis gratia
Prælatus
DEC RET U M

Præsentibus his litteris te, Rev.dum D.num D.rem Silvanum Obunge Ochuodho, nominamus atque constituimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Quasi-
Regione Keniae, cum omnibus et singulis iuribus et obligationibus huic officio adnexis.

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

Datum Romae, ex Aedibus Curiæ Prælatitiae, die 29 mense septembri anno 2011.

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

Activities of the Prelate

Ordinations

On November 5, in St. Eugene's Basilica in Rome, the Prelate of Opus Dei conferred ordination as deacons on 35 faithful of the Prelature. In his homily, Bishop Echevarría encouraged the deacons and all the faithful to lead a life of intense prayer. As Ferdinand Cancelli wrote in an article published in L'Osservatore Romano on November 16, 2011, a few days after the ordination, the contemplative life (drawing close to God—getting to know him and to know oneself, as St. Josemaria said in no. 91 of The Way) was the central topic in the homily, of which we now offer a few points:

“Prayer is more than just reciting vocal prayers, although this can be very good, as long as it is done calmly and attentively.”
“Naturally, a Christian cannot be satisfied with just this way of turning towards God: we need to carry on a personal conversation with him, one to one; a conversation made up of listening to his voice and speaking in our own words.”

“Benedict XVI has been carrying out a catechesis about prayer. Through it, he seeks to encourage Christians to speak to our Lord, to our Lady, to the saints, in a habitual way, not only in times of need.”

“Our goal has to be to reach the stage when we can become people who know that they are always in God’s presence and who, as a consequence, try to keep up a conversation with him in every circumstance.”

He also told the faithful: “Don't think that this is something very difficult. To pray is to direct our thoughts towards our Creator in a spirit of adoration, thanksgiving, asking for help… Prayer answers to the deepest desires of the human heart, because we have been created to love and serve God on earth, and then to be happy with him forever.”

Citing words of Benedict XVI, he continued: “Nowadays we are taken up with so many activities and duties; for this reason, today more than ever we need to find specific moments to talk to God, ‘moments for silent recollection, to meditate on what the Lord wants to teach us, on how he is present and active in the world and in our life: to be able to stop for a moment and meditate.’”

“The Holy Father recalls that St. Augustine compared meditation to the assimilation of food, and used a verb that recurs throughout the Christian tradition, ‘to ruminate.’”

“In order for the Gospel passages and the mysteries of God to end up becoming something familiar to us, being a guide for our lives and nourishing us spiritually, we have to make them resonate within us.”

“And let us not forget that having frequent recourse to the sacrament of Confession is another way of praying, because God’s forgiveness helps us to pray with peace.”

“If, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we take seriously the times we devote to meditation, we will be amazed at their effect on our lives and the lives of others: we will be more serene and contented, because worries will
Pastoral Trips

After a brief stay in Pamplona from June 30 to July 5, the Prelate of Opus Dei spent part of the months of July and August in France. From there he traveled to the Ivory Coast, from July 7 to 12, and to the Congo, from July 28 to August 4. In both countries he greeted the local ecclesiastical authorities and met with faithful of the Prelature, cooperators and friends, to give them pastoral encouragement. He also visited some apostolic works organized by men and women of Opus Dei with the assistance of others, such as the Yarani Professional School in Abidjan, the Walé Social Medical Center in Yamoussoukro, and the Monkole Medical Center in Kinshasa. In the Ivory Coast, a country trying to overcome a long civil conflict, he insisted especially on the need for reconciliation.

On August 17, the Prelate traveled from Paris to Madrid, where he had catechetical gatherings with thousands of young people who had come from all over the world to participate in World Youth Day. On the 20th and 21st, the Prelate also took part—in the framework of World Youth Day—in the vigil of prayer and the Mass with the Pope at Cuatro Vientos airfield.

On August 18, he visited the Laguna Hospital Care Center, an initiative for people with terminal illnesses who need palliative care. He encouraged the professionals and volunteers at the center to live their Christian vocation with generosity and to see in the sick the image of Christ. He also spent time with the patients, and had words of comfort and a blessing for each of them. Finally he encouraged their families to find support in prayer to bear their sorrow with supernatural outlook.

From August 21 to September 6, the Prelate was once again in Pamplona. After returning to Rome, he traveled to Cologne in October, on
the 14th and 15th, and to Pamplona and Madrid, from the 25th to the 31st. In Pamplona, as Chancellor of the University of Navarra, he conferred three honorary doctorates, an event reported on elsewhere in this issue. In Madrid, on October 29 and 30, in Vistalegre, an auditorium with a capacity for fifteen thousand persons, he had a get-together with many men and women who take part in the formative activities organized by Opus Dei in the Spanish capital.

Torna ai contenuti

Pastoral Letters

Letter of October 2, 2011

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

1. Since receiving the Lord’s apostolic mandate (cf. Mt 28:19-20), the Church has never stopped evangelizing. Many fruits came with the passing of centuries, including, by the grace of God, the Work and each one of her faithful. As in other times, now also a vigorous process of de-Christianization is unfolding in many spheres, bringing with it grave losses for humanity. God has always sent saints to the Church who, with their word and their example, have been able to lead souls back to Christ. As Pope Benedict XVI has written in his encyclical about hope, Christianity is not “only ‘good news’ — the communication of a hitherto unknown content, but one that makes things happen and is life-changing.”[1]

I will now dwell on some aspects of that formation for our spiritual life and for taking part in the “new evangelization,” as Blessed John Paul II defined it.

In 1985, the first successor of our Father wrote us a pastoral letter, encouraging us to participate very actively in this apostolate, and insisting on the need to take great care in personal formation and in extending that work to souls.
Now also Benedict XVI guides Christians along the same paths. The recent creation of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization[2] is a sign of that interest. All of us felt he was addressing us at the recent World Youth Day, when he encouraged young people “to bear witness to the faith wherever you are, even when it meets with rejection or indifference. We cannot encounter Christ and not want to make him known to others. So do not keep Christ to yourselves! Share with others the joy of your faith. The world needs the witness of your faith, it surely needs God.”[3]

FORMATION FOR THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

Like the first Christians

2. As the Work came into the world specifically to bring to mind again the universal call to holiness and apostolate, St. Josemaría declared that “the easiest way to understand Opus Dei is to consider the life of the early Christians. They lived their Christian vocation seriously, seeking earnestly the holiness to which they had been called by their Baptism. Externally they did nothing to distinguish themselves from their fellow citizens.”[4]

At Pentecost, the Paraclete prompted the Apostles and the other disciples to evangelize, reawakening in their minds the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is enough to read the writings of the New Testament to realize how one of the first concerns of the Twelve was to plant the seed of faith and nourish it with their teachings, by word of mouth and by letter. The patient work of formation which our Lord carried out with the Apostles for three years, and which was carried on without interruption by them and their co-workers, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, transformed the ancient world to the point of making it Christian.

Need and importance of formation

3. St. Josemaría encouraged everyone to acquire and constantly improve their own Christian formation, an indispensable requirement for growing in intimacy with Jesus Christ and making him known to other souls. Discite benefacere (Is 1:17), learn to do good, he used to repeat with the words of the prophet Isaiah; “a doctrine may be a marvelous one, with the power to save, but it will all be pointless if there is no one who has been taught how
Since he took his first steps as a priest, he dedicated a lot of energy to the doctrinal formation of the people who approached his pastoral work. Later, with the development of Opus Dei, he intensified that dedication and prepared the necessary means to give continuity to the task of formation: first that of his children, but also that of the countless people — men and women, young and mature, healthy and sick — who showed themselves willing to welcome his message into their souls.

Our Father considered five aspects of formation: human, spiritual, doctrinal-religious, apostolic and professional. He stated that a man, a woman, “matures little by little, and never attains all the human perfection that by nature they are capable of. In a specific area, they may even become the best compared to everyone else, perhaps unsurpassable. But as a Christian, their growth knows no limits.”

Humanly, if we examine ourselves sincerely, we immediately discover that we need to perfect our character, our way of being, acquiring and improving in the human virtues that constitute the basis for the supernatural ones. The same happens in spiritual formation, since it is always possible to progress in the Christian virtues, especially in charity, which is the essence of perfection.

As regards the doctrinal-religious aspect, our knowledge of God and of revealed doctrine can and ought to grow: to conform our intellect, our will and our heart better with the mysteries of the faith, and to assimilate them in greater depth.

The apostolate, in turn, is “a sea without shores,” and preparation is required to proclaim the love of Christ in new environments and in more countries. This was St. Josemaría’s program from the beginning, as is seen in a handwritten note from the first years of the Work: “to know Jesus Christ. To make him known. To take him everywhere.” Professional standing becomes “your ‘bait’ as a ‘fisher of men,’” to extend the reign of Christ — already present in his Church — in society.

The panorama is so vast that we will never be able to say: now I’m formed! “We never say enough. Our formation never ends: all that you
have received up to now”—our Father used to explain—“is the foundation for what will come later.”[8]

Freedom, docility, sense of responsibility

4. Identification with Jesus Christ requires free human cooperation: “God who created you without you, will not save you without you”.[9] This personal response plays an indispensable role, but where the human creature cannot reach, God’s grace can. “The Lord has left us with freedom, which is a very great good and the source of many evils, but it is also the source of holiness and love.”[10] The source of love: only free beings are in a position to love and be happy. Only with difficulty does love grow where coercion rules. And there is no fidelity without the free and firm decision of identifying oneself with the Will of God.

The Church possesses the remedy to cure human weakness, a consequence of sin, which shows itself — among other things — in the lessening of interior freedom. That remedy, divine grace, not only heals natural freedom; it also elevates it to a new and higher freedom. Jesus Christ, in fact, has wrested us from the “bondage to decay to obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom 8:21). “Stand fast therefore,” the Apostle exhorts us, “and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1).

“Ask yourself now,” St. Josemaría invites us, (…) “whether you are holding firmly and unshakably to your choice of Life? When you hear the most lovable voice of God urging you on to holiness, do you freely answer ‘Yes’?”[11] The personal decision we have made to respond to God’s call, in the Church and in the Work, is precisely the reason for our perseverance. Furthermore, that freedom is fully accomplished, and attains all its meaning, only through our loving surrender to the Will of God, like that of Jesus.

“Personal freedom, which I defend and will always defend with all my strength, leads me to ask with deep conviction, though I am well aware of my own weakness: ‘What do you want from me, Lord, so that I may freely do it?’”[12] And our Father adds: “Christ himself gives us the answer: veritas liberabit vos (Jn 8:32), the truth will set you free. How great a truth is this, 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.”[13]

5. On incorporation into Opus Dei, each one freely accepts the commitment to be formed in order to fulfill the mission of the Work in the heart of the Church, and accordingly has grateful recourse to the specific means of formation which St. Josemaría, faithful to the God’s wishes, established.

Let us consider seriously and often that we have “an obligation to form ourselves well doctrinally, an obligation to prepare ourselves so as to be understood, and so that those who hear us may know how to express themselves well later.”[14] Hence the necessity to go to the means of formation, ready to take thorough advantage of them.

As John Paul II pointed out, “some convictions reveal themselves as particularly necessary and fruitful. First of all, there is the conviction that one cannot offer a true and effective formation to others if the individual has not taken on or developed a personal responsibility for formation: this, in fact, is essentially a ‘formation of self’. In addition, there is the conviction that at one and the same time each of us is the goal and principle of formation: the more we are formed and the more we feel the need to pursue and deepen our formation, still more will we be formed and be rendered capable of forming others”.[15]

**HUMAN FORMATION**

6. As regards the human aspect, formation tends to strengthen the virtues and contribute to the shaping of character: our Lord wants us to be very human and very divine, with our eyes fixed on Him, who is “perfect God and perfect man.”[16]

The edifice of holiness rests on human foundations: grace presupposes nature. Therefore the Second Vatican Council recommends the lay faithful to hold in the highest regard “the virtues relating to social customs, namely, honesty, justice, sincerity, kindness, and courage, without which no true Christian life can exist.”[17]
A solid personality is built on the family, the school, the workplace, friendships, and the various situations of human existence. One needs, besides, to learn to conduct oneself nobly and uprightly. In this way, character is improved as a basis for strengthening the faith in the face of internal and external difficulties. There is no shortage of men and women who perhaps “have not had an opportunity to listen to the divine words, or (...) have forgotten them. Yet their human dispositions are honest, loyal, compassionate and sincere. I would go so far as to say that anyone possessing such qualities is ready to be generous with God, because human virtues constitute the foundation for the supernatural virtues.”[18]

Currently it has become more necessary to rediscover the value and necessity of human virtues, since some regard them as opposed to freedom, spontaneity, and to what they wrongly think is “authentic” in man. They forget, perhaps, that those habitual perfections of intellect and will make it easy to act well and honestly, and make living together in society just, peaceful and pleasant.

Even though in some places the atmosphere one breathes makes it difficult to grasp these values, human virtues still do not stop being attractive. In the face of the manifold claims that fail to fill the heart, the human person ends up seeking something that is really worth the effort. Hence, it is to us Christians that the great task falls of showing, first with our own example, the beauty of a virtuous (that is, a fully human) life, a happy life.

At present it is temperance and fortitude that seem to be especially important.

**Temperance**

7. “Temperance is self-mastery.” A self-mastery that is achieved when we realize that “not everything we experience in our bodies and souls should be given free rein. Nor ought we to do everything we can do. It is easier to let ourselves be carried away by so-called natural impulses; but this road ends up in sadness and isolation in our own misery.”[19]

This virtue introduces order and measure into our desires, and the firm and moderate control of reason over our passions. Its exercise is not limited
to sheer denial, which would be a caricature of this virtue. It acts in such a way that delightful good, and the attraction which this arouses, are integrated harmoniously into the overall maturity of the person, into health of soul. “Temperance does not imply narrowness, but greatness of soul. There is much more deprivation in the intemperate heart which abdicates from self-dominion only to become enslaved to the first caller who comes along ringing some pathetic, tinny cow bell.”[20]

Experience shows that intemperance hampers one’s capacity to determine what is truly good. What a pity to see those in whom pleasure is converted into the rule for their decisions! The intemperate person lets himself be guided by the multiple sensations which the environment arouses in him. And leaving to one side the truth about things, and seeking happiness in fleeting experiences which, since they are transient and sense-based and never satisfy completely, but rather cause upset and instability, they send the person into a spiral of self-destruction. By contrast, temperance confers serenity and calm; instead of silencing or denying good desires and noble passions, it restores man’s self-mastery.

The Supernumeraries, with their commitment to create Christian homes, take on a special responsibility in this area. St. Josemaría remarked that parents ought to teach their children “to live soberly (…). It is difficult, but one has to be brave: have the courage to educate in austerity.”[21] The most effective way to transmit this attitude, above all to young children, is example, for they will only understand the beauty of the virtue when they see how you renounce a whim for love of them, or you sacrifice your own rest to look after them, to accompany them, to fulfill your mission as parents. Help them to manage what they use: you will do them a great good. I insist: if you look after temperance in your homes, our Lord will reward your self-denial and sacrifice as mothers and fathers; and there will arise in the heart of your own home vocations dedicated to God.

Fortitude

8. On occasions we experience within us a certain disinclination to effort, to what work, sacrifice, and self-denial imply. Fortitude “ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in
the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions.”

Let us struggle to acquire the habit of conquering in small things: keeping to a timetable, looking after material order, resisting whims, controlling irritations, finishing tasks, etc. Thus we will be able to respond more promptly to the demands of our Christian vocation. Moreover, fortitude will lead us to the good kind of patience: to suffer without making it afflict others, to bear the hardships that result from our own limitations and defects, tiredness, other people’s characters, injustices, or lack of means. “The person with fortitude is one who perseveres in doing what his conscience tells him he ought to do. He does not measure the value of a task exclusively by the benefit he receives from it, but rather by the service he renders to others. The strong man will at times suffer, but he stands firm; he may be driven to tears, but he will brush them aside. When difficulties come thick and fast, he does not bend before them.”

Certainly, firmness is required to undertake, day after day, the task of one’s own sanctification and apostolate in the middle of the world. Obstacles may arise, but the person driven by God’s strength — quoniam tu es fortitudo mea (Ps 30[31]:5), because You, O Lord, are my strength — is not afraid to act, to proclaim and defend his faith, even when this means going against the grain. Let us turn our eyes once more to the first Christians: they encountered numerous difficulties, since the doctrine of Christ appeared — then as now — to be a sign of contradiction (Lk 2:34). Today’s world needs women and men who in their daily conduct offer “the silent and heroic witness of so many Christians who live the Gospel without compromise, doing their duty.”

**Human tone**

9. The zeal to cultivate human virtues will contribute to people’s breathing in the bonus odor Christi (cf. 2 Cor 2:15), the sweet fragrance of Christ. In this context, one sees the importance of “human tone”, friendly and respectful behavior in one’s relationships with others. Let us foster it in the heart of the family, in the workplace, in moments dedicated to entertainment, sport, and rest, even though there too we may at times have to go against the grain. Let us not be afraid if, on occasions, our simple
Christian naturalness “clashes” with the environment, because, as St. Josemaría taught us, that is precisely the naturalness that God is asking of us. [25]

Today there is a pressing need to look after this human tone and to foster it around us. Frequently, in the family and in society, these signs of refinement in conduct are neglected, for the sake of a false naturalness. There are abundant ways of contributing to formation in this field. Example, as always, comes first, although it is also good to make use of personal conversations and talks to groups of people. Respect in one’s dealings with others is shown by dressing decently and respectably, by the topics of conversations and get-togethers, by promoting a joyful spirit of service within the home, the school, and places of entertainment or rest; and by the material care of homes and attention to little things.

It is particularly important to take an interest in acquiring and developing a serious level of culture, suited to each one’s circumstances of education, social sphere, and personal tastes and hobbies. I will merely remind you that an important role is played here by what we read and the good use of time dedicated to appropriate rest.

10. In the Centers of Opus Dei and in the apostolates inspired by faithful of the Prelature, the effort is made to help young people get used to thinking about others, generously, with a desire to serve. Let us encourage them to forge ideals in life that do not keep them restricted within miserly, comfortable and selfish limits. Let us remember how St. Josemaría would encourage us to foster and supernaturalize all the young people’s noble ambitions.

If they cultivate such noble ambitions, with a spirit of striving and sacrifice, then it will be more realistic and accessible for them to appreciate the importance and supernatural meaning of their efforts; it will also be easier to help them advance in their interior life and become suitable instruments in the hands of Christ, at the service of the Church and society.

Many young girls and boys, as John Paul II said on one occasion, “are demanding about the meaning and form of their life, and would like to free themselves from religious and moral confusion. Help them to do so! In
fact, the younger generation is open and sensitive to religious values. They sense — although at times unconsciously — that religious and moral relativism do not bring happiness, and that freedom without truth is a deceptive illusion.”[26] It is very hard for a person who settles for a stunted view of life to acquire true human and Christian formation. Let us not stop encouraging young people to learn how to face up to the problems of this world.

*The human tone of sacred ministers*

11. The exercise of the human virtues is also essential for priests, by the very nature of their pastoral ministry. Priests carry out their work in the middle of the world, in direct contact with a great variety of people who, as Don Álvaro explained, “tend to be stern judges of a priest, and who watch particularly his behavior as a man.”[27]

A priest who is friendly, well-mannered, and available to dedicate his time to others, makes a positive impression on people and shows them that the Christian struggle is attractive.

No circumstance could lead St. Josemaría to lower his lofty view of priests. Although, on the one hand, a priest must make himself all things for all men in order to reach all (cf. *1 Cor* 9:19), on the other hand, he must never forget that he is Christ’s representative among men. Therefore, it is only logical that he strive — within his personal limitations — to make it possible for the other faithful to discover, through his personal behavior, the face of our Lord. Our Founder’s advice to priests is still very timely: that they put care into dressing properly, so that people can always recognize them as Christ’s ministers, as dispensers of God’s mysteries (cf. *1 Cor* 4:1).

The priesthood embraces a priest’s entire life. Precisely for this reason — because he has to show that he is truly and constantly available — a priest has to be easily recognized. And priestly attire (the cassock or clerical suit) distinguishes him very clearly. In today’s society, so impacted by the culture of “image” and also, perhaps, distant from God, the way in which priests dress does not go unnoticed. Therefore the priests of the Prelature who exercise their pastoral ministry in a church habitually wear a cassock there, and also in our Centers. “As regards countries where other customs
prevail, our Father wrote, I have nothing to say. We will always do whatever the Church disposes. Nevertheless, within the house we will always wear the cassock: those who speak about freedom should at least respect our freedom to dress at home the way we want to.”[28]

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

12. This facet has to occupy “a privileged place in a person’s life. Everyone is called to grow continually in intimate union with Jesus Christ, in conformity to the Father’s will, in devotion to others in charity and justice.”[29]

Pope Benedict XVI has reminded us that “in the Church’s most ancient tradition, the process of Christian formation always had an experiential character. While not neglecting a systematic understanding of the content of the faith, it centered on a vital and convincing encounter with Christ, as proclaimed by authentic witnesses.”[30] The life of union with Christ, the search for holiness, is nourished by spiritual aids: knowledge of Catholic teaching, liturgical and sacramental life, and spiritual accompaniment.

Identifying oneself with Christ

13. Under the action of the Holy Spirit, the ways of following Christ within the Church are countless. Our Father wrote: “You should be as different from one another, as are the saints in heaven, for each one has his own very special personal characteristics. —But, also, as alike to one another as are the saints, who would not be saints if each of them had not become identified with Christ.”[31]

Opus Dei, besides the practices of piety — all of them traditional in the Church — which she recommends to her faithful or to those who take part in her apostolic works, transmits a spirit, to take up and give meaning to one’s own life, grounding it on divine filiation in Christ. The axis, the “hinge”, on which the whole endeavor of sanctification rests — one’s own and that of others — is professional work carried out as well as possible, in union with Jesus Christ and with the desire to serve others.

This spiritual assistance facilitates unity of life, because the faithful of the Prelature and the members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross
learn to take advantage of the specific situations in which they find themselves, in order to turn them into an opportunity and means of holiness and apostolate, always acting with the greatest personal freedom in the professional, family, social and political questions that the Church leaves to the personal decision of Catholics.

St. Josemaría said that “it is impossible to distinguish between work and contemplation. You can’t say you spend this much time in prayer, and that much time at work. You spend all your time in prayer, contemplating in God’s presence. Though our vocation may appear to be to the active life, we end up where the great mystics did: ‘I flew aloft so high, so high, that in the end I seized my prey.’ I flew to the heart of God.” [32] How can we fail to find an echo of these teachings in the words that Pope John Paul II addressed to faithful of Opus Dei at Castelgandolfo? “Living united to God in the world, in any situation, trying to improve yourselves with the help of grace and making Jesus Christ known through the witness of your life. What ideal could be more beautiful and exciting? Inserted and mixed in with this joyful and sorrowing humanity, you want to love it, enlighten it, and save it.”[33]

The means

14. The union of work with ascetical struggle, contemplation and the carrying out of an apostolic mission, requires a deep preparation. Therefore Opus Dei offers us a broad range of resources for personal and collective formation. Among the personal ones, special importance attaches to the fraternal chat, which we also call the Confidence, precisely because of its interpersonal nature filled with confidence.

It is a conversation of spiritual direction, situated in the context of fraternal service, in order to live out deeply, with freedom and responsibility, our daily encounter with Christ in the middle of the world. In the pages of the New Testament we see how our Lord wanted to make use of the mediation of men and women in order to help guide souls towards the goal of holiness. When he called St Paul on the road to Damascus, he asked him to go to another man, Ananias, who would tell him what he needed to know about the new path on which he was about to embark (cf. Acts 9:6-19; 22:10-15). Later Paul went to Jerusalem videre
Petrum, to see Peter and to learn from him many aspects of Christian life and doctrine (cf. Gal 1:18). In fact, spiritual direction is a tradition that reaches right back to the first steps of the Church.

In Opus Dei, this spiritual helps people more easily and faithfully assimilate the spirit that our Founder received from God and transmitted to us, and that has been endorsed by the Church as a path of holiness.[34]

15. St. Josemaría explained that, in the Work, personal spiritual direction takes place *in actu*, that is, at the moment when this conversation takes place. This advice is directed to helping us make progress in the Christian life. Our Father sometimes compared spiritual direction to the task of a brother or sister who is concerned about how one’s younger brothers or sisters are doing; or that of a loyal friend moved by the desire to invite others to be better Christians.[35] In short, the Confidence is a conversation between brothers or sisters, and not that of a subject with one’s superior. Those who look after these fraternal chats act with special refinement, fruit of an exclusive concern for the interior life and apostolic tasks of their brothers or sisters, without ever trying to influence them in the temporal concerns — professional, social, cultural, political, etc. — in which each one is involved.

In the Work, the separation between the exercise of jurisdiction and spiritual direction is assured in practice, among other things, by the fact that precisely those who receive chats of spiritual direction (the local Directors and other faithful who are especially prepared, and the priests in the sacrament of Penance) do not have any power of government over the people they are looking after. Local government as such does not refer to persons, but only to the organization of the Centers and apostolic activities; the function of the local Directors, in what refers to their brothers or sisters, is that of fraternal advice. The same individual does not therefore exercise functions both of jurisdiction and of spiritual assistance. In the Prelature, the sole basis of governing authority over persons is the jurisdiction which resides only in the Prelate and in his Vicars.

What then does Opus Dei offer? Fundamentally, spiritual direction to her faithful and to other persons who request it. The faithful of the Prelature, because we aspire to our personal sanctification and the carrying
out of the mission of Opus Dei in the Church, ordinarily do not find any problem in speaking with whichever person the Directors indicate (even though it might be someone younger), always with full freedom and with faith in divine grace which makes use of human instruments. The fraternal chat is not an account of one’s conscience. If in this spiritual direction we are asked about something (and on occasion it could be good and even necessary that this happens), it will be done with great refinement, because no one is obliged, specifically, to say in the Confidence what is matter for confession.

Everything I am telling you, my daughters and sons, will seem obvious to you, but I wanted to recall this in the context of our present-day society, which shows a special sensitivity in regard to people’s privacy, although we also see, in certain sectors, a great deal of lack of modesty and of respect for the privacy of others. We were all told, soon after coming to the Work, that it would never occur to us to call the person who hears our chat “my spiritual director,” simply because, I repeat, this type of personal tie is not found in the Work, nor has it ever been. The one who receives a Confidence transmits the spirit of Opus Dei without adding anything: those with the task of offering this help “disappear” in order to place souls face to face with our Lord, within the characteristics of our path. The path of the Work, our Father said, “is very broad. You can travel on the right or on the left; on horseback, on bicycle, on your knees, on all fours like when you were infants, and even along the curb, only provided you don’t go off the road.”[36]

_The Sacrament of Reconciliation_

16. Besides the fraternal chat, we go — ordinarily, each week — to a priest to receive the spiritual help that is united to sacramental Confession. As you can well understand, we are helped by the confessors assigned to the various Centers, who have been ordained in the first place to serve their sisters and brothers, with total availability, and who (because they know and live the same spirit) have a special preparation to guide us, never to command. This is analogous to someone who goes to — if they have one — their family doctor, rather than to someone they don’t know.
At the same time, as St. Josemaría always made very clear, the faithful of the Prelature, as is true of all Catholics, enjoy full freedom to go to Confession or talk to any priest who has ministerial faculties. You will be surprised that I am reminding you of such an obvious truth, but I want to mention it because it may not be so familiar to those who know nothing about Opus Dei or the spirit of freedom proper to Christ’s followers. Moreover, our Father established that ordinarily it would be different people who assist us in our fraternal chat and in Confession.

*A spirit of initiative and docility*

17. Spiritual direction requires, from those receiving it, the desire to make progress in following Christ. They are the ones who are primarily interested in seeking out this helping hand as frequently as is needed, opening their heart sincerely so that it is possible to suggest goals to them, point out possible deviations, provide them with encouragement in difficult moments, and offer them support and understanding. Therefore they act with a spirit of initiative and responsibility. “The advice of another Christian and especially a priest’s advice, in questions of faith or morals, is a powerful help for knowing what God wants of us in our particular circumstances. Advice, however, does not eliminate personal responsibility. In the end, it is we ourselves, each one of us on our own, who have to decide for ourselves and personally to account to God for our decisions.”[37]

When receiving spiritual direction, in order to respond to the action of the Holy Spirit and to grow spiritually and identify ourselves with Christ, we need to cultivate the virtues of sincerity and docility, which sum up the attitude of the believing soul before the Paraclete. This is what St. Josemaría advised in this regard, addressing all the faithful, whether in the Work or not. “You well know the obligations of your Christian way of life; they will lead you safely and surely to sanctity. You have also been forewarned about the difficulties, or practically all of them, because you can already get a rough idea of them at the beginning of the road. Now I wish to emphasize that you must let yourselves be helped and guided by a spiritual director, to whom you can confide all your holy ambitions and the daily problems affecting your interior life, the failures you may suffer and the victories.
Always be very sincere in spiritual direction. Don’t make allowances for yourselves without checking beforehand; open up your souls completely, without fear or shame. Otherwise this smooth and straight road will become tortuous, and what at first was trivial will end up strangling you like a noose.”[38]

And echoing the teaching of Fathers of the Church and spiritual authors, based on the experience of many years of pastoral practice, he insisted: If the dumb devil gets inside a soul, he ruins everything. On the other hand, if he is cast out immediately, everything turns out well; we are happy and life goes forward properly. Let us always be ‘brutally sincere,’ but in a good-mannered way.[39]

God pours out his grace abundantly on the humility of those who receive with supernatural vision the advice given in spiritual direction, seeing in this help the voice of the Holy Spirit. Only true docility of heart and mind makes progress possible on the path of sanctity, since the Paraclete, with his inspirations and with the advice of those assisting us, “gives a supernatural tone to our thoughts, desires and actions. It is he who leads us to adhere to Christ’s teaching and to assimilate it in a profound way. It is he who gives us the light by which we perceive our personal calling and the strength to carry out all that God expects of us. If we are docile to the Holy Spirit, the image of Christ will be formed more and more fully in us, and we will be brought closer every day to God the Father. ‘For all who are led by the Spirit of God, are sons of God’” (Rom 8:14).[40]

Humility and prudence in giving spiritual direction

18. I want to consider now the dispositions needed by those who assist others in spiritual direction. The most important one is to love others as they are, exclusively seeking their good. Thus their attitude should always be positive, optimistic and encouraging. In addition, they should also foster in themselves the virtue of humility, so as not to lose sight of the fact that they are only an instrument (cf. Acts 9:15), which our Lord wants to make use of for the sanctification of souls.

Moreover, they will put great care into preparing themselves as well as possible to carry out this task, striving to know well the fundamental principles of the spiritual life which souls ordinarily lead, and having a
prudent doubt (that is, not trusting exclusively in their own criteria) if special situations arise. In these cases, besides praying more, they will ask the Holy Spirit for more light, in order to clarify and consider the matter. If necessary, in accordance with the teachings of moral prudence, they can consult people who are more learned, presenting the matter as a hypothetical case and altering the circumstances, so that — in order to ensure that they rigorously safeguard silence of office — the identity of the person involved is protected, and due prudence is always observed.

In the Work, we have always known and expressly accepted that the person with whom we speak fraternally can consult the relevant Director when he or she considers it opportune to do so, so as to be of better assistance to the person involved. In order to make the spirit of freedom and trust even clearer in these situations (which are neither habitual nor frequent), the person receiving the fraternal chat will ask those concerned whether he or she wishes to consult a Director themselves, or whether they prefer that the person who hears their Confidence does so. This way of acting reinforces the refined and prudent practice which has been followed since the beginning.

At the same time, everyone is free to have recourse directly to the Father or to a Regional Director or someone on the Delegation, to speak about their own interior life. This offers us the guarantee that, in receiving spiritual direction in Opus Dei, we will receive what we need and desire: the spirit that St. Josemaría transmitted to us, without any additions or modifications. Nor does this in any way lessen the duty to respect the natural confidentiality involved, which is safeguarded with the maximum care and strictness. A person who was not exemplary on this point would lack a basic disposition required to give spiritual direction.

Those who assist others strive to foster the interior freedom of those souls at every moment, so that they respond willingly to the requirements of God’s love. Spiritual direction, therefore, is offered without trying to “standardize” the faithful of Opus Dei: that would be illogical and a lack of naturalness. The Work “wants us to be very free and diverse. But she wants us to be responsible and consistent Catholic citizens, so that the mind and heart of each of us do not operate unevenly, each going off in its own direction. Rather they should be united and firm, in order to do at every
moment what it is clear has to be done, not allowing themselves to be dragged along — through lack of personality or of loyalty to one's conscience — by passing trends or styles."[41] Naturally, those helping others will have to speak with the strength needed to urge them to travel the path God is marking out for them; but also with great gentleness, because they are not, nor do they consider themselves to be, owners of souls, but rather their servants,: fortiter in re, suaviter in modo. "Prudence demands that the right medicine be used whenever the situation calls for it. Once the wound has been laid bare, the cure should be applied in full and without palliatives (…). We must apply these procedures first to ourselves, and then to those whom, for reasons of justice or charity, we are obliged to help."[42]

The fact that we ourselves have to improve in a specific point shouldn't be a hindrance here. “Can't a doctor who is sick cure others, even if his illness is chronic? Will his illness prevent him from prescribing proper treatment for other patients? Obviously not. In order to cure others, all he needs is to have the necessary knowledge and to apply it with the same concern as he would in his own case.”[43]

Liturgical formation

19. Within the ambit of spiritual formation, and closely united to doctrinal-religious formation, is love for the Church's sacred liturgy, where — above all in the Holy Mass — the work of our Redemption is carried out.[44] “The holy Mass brings us face to face with (…) the central mysteries of our faith, because it is the gift of the Blessed Trinity to the Church. It is because of this that we can consider the Mass as the center and the source of a Christian’s spiritual life.”[45]

The Christian message is “performative”: that is to say, the Gospel, and the liturgy which brings it into our life, is not simply the communication of realities that can be known, but a communication that makes things happen and is life-changing.[46]

No one with common sense and supernatural sense could think that the liturgy is “something for clerics”; or that the clergy “celebrate” and the people simply “attend.” St. Josemaría, far from any such view of the liturgy, encouraged everyone to participate: from a grasp of the intimate connection
between the liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic liturgy, or of the essential element of adoration in the celebration, down to specific details such as the use of a missal by the faithful to facilitate their participation, first from the heart and then with the prescribed words and gestures. I recall having heard that as far back as the thirties of the last century, in order to reinforce this teaching he wanted the Mass to be dialogued, where those attending would respond aloud to the prayers of the priest. This was not a widespread practice back then: there were still thirty years to go to the Second Vatican Council.

Liturgy of the Word

20. The whole of salvation history, and the liturgy which celebrates it and makes it present, is characterized by the initiative of God who calls us and expects from each of us an ongoing response, with a love that then imbues our whole day, striving to ensure that the Sacrifice of the Altar is prolonged throughout the twenty-four hours.

The celebration of the Word in the Holy Mass is a true dialogue that demands a sensitive response. It is God who is speaking to his people, who in turn make this divine word their own, by means of silence, song, etc. They show their adherence to that announcement by professing their faith in the Creed, and filled with trust they place their petitions before the Lord. In the readings, the Paraclete “speaks through human voices so as to make our intelligence come to know and contemplate, so that our will is strengthened and the action is performed.” That these words become a reality in our life depends on God’s grace, but also on the preparation and fervor of the one who reads them and meditates on them, the one who listens to them. “Through the Holy Scriptures, we are led to virtuous actions and to contemplation.”

Here we have a very specific point for examination and improvement. What fruit do we take from those readings each day, in the Holy Mass? Do we savor the prescribed moments of silence after the Gospel, to apply our Lord’s preaching to ourselves? I have written elsewhere: “Many of us have witnessed how St. Josemaría used to get deep inside the readings of the Mass; it even showed in his tone of voice. Not infrequently, after the Holy Sacrifice, he would write down in his notebook the phrases which had
struck him most, so as to pray about them afterwards. And in this way his soul and his preaching were constantly being enriched. Let us try to imitate such a good teacher. God has revealed himself so that we may get to know him more and better; and so that we make him known, in a natural way, without worldly respect.”

The Eucharistic Liturgy

21. In this part of the Mass, the priest does not address principally the faithful gathered there. Rather the spiritual and interior orientation of everyone, both priest and lay faithful, is versus Deum per Iesum Christum, towards God through Jesus Christ. In the Eucharistic liturgy, “the priest and people are certainly not praying to one another, but to the one God. Therefore during the prayer they look in the same direction, towards an image of Christ in the apse, or towards a cross or simply towards heaven, as our Lord did in his priestly prayer on the night before his Passion.” How greatly this helps us to live this common adoration, this going out to meet the Lord, and to fix our eyes on the altar cross!

22. In the Sacrifice of the Altar obedience and piety, intimately united, are essential. They are also fundamental requirements for the liturgy to be the source and summit of the life of the Church and of every Christian. Obedience, first of all, because “the liturgical words and rites (…) are a faithful expression, matured over the centuries, of the understanding of Christ, and they teach us to think as he himself does (cf. Phil 2:5); by conforming our minds to these words, we raise our hearts to the Lord.” Here is a profound reason why we have to obey — to love — each word, each gesture, each rubric, since they bring God’s gift to us: they help us to be alter Christus, ipse Christus.

The Second Vatican Council reminded us that the full effectiveness of the liturgy depends also on everyone, priests and lay faithful, striving to align their hearts with the words that are spoken. Benedict XVI explained that in the liturgy “the vox, words, precede our mind. This is not usually the case: one has to think first, then one’s thought becomes words. But here, the words come first. The sacred Liturgy gives us the words; we must enter into these words, find a harmony with this reality that precedes us (…). This is the first condition: we ourselves must interiorize the
structure, the words of the Liturgy, the Word of God. Thus, our celebration truly becomes a celebration ‘with’ the Church: our hearts are enlarged and we are not just doing anything but are ‘with’ the Church, in conversation with God.”\[54\]

In St. Josemaría’s life piety and obedience are admirably fused, and point to a deep reality: “There is no better way to show how great is our concern and love for the Holy Sacrifice than by taking great care with the least detail of the ceremonies the wisdom of the Church has laid down.

This is for Love: but we should also feel the ‘need’ to become like Christ, not only inside ourselves but also in what is external. We should act, on the wide spaciousness of the Christian altar, with the rhythm and harmony which obedient holiness provides, uniting us to the will of the Spouse of Christ, to the Will of Christ himself.”\[55\]

I would like these very brief considerations about the structure of the Holy Mass to help all of us to foster interest in the liturgy, as nourishment and a necessary part of the spiritual life. How can I fail to recall here that our Founder, as far back as 1930, wrote that everyone in the Work “must make a special effort to follow, with the greatest interest, each and every liturgical regulation, even the ones that seem to have little or no importance. A person who loves does not miss a single detail. I have realized this: those trifling things are in fact something very big: Love. And to obey the Pope, down to the last detail, is the way to love him. And to love the Holy Father means to love Christ and His Mother, our most holy Mother, Mary. And we aspire to this alone: because we love them, we want omnes, cum Petro, ad Iesum per Mariam — that all may go, with Peter, to Jesus through Mary.”\[56\]

FORMATION IN CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

23. Anyone who sincerely loves God feels impelled to get to know him more and better. He or she will not be satisfied with a superficial relationship, but will seek to understand more deeply everything that relates to him. “Our desire to advance in theological knowledge, in sound, firm Christian doctrine is sparked, above all, by the will to know and love God. It likewise stems from the concern of a faithful soul to attain the deepest meaning of the world, seen as coming from the hands of God.”\[57\]
Therefore the formation with which Opus Dei provides her faithful —
considered from the doctrinal-religious point of view — is directed to
helping us acquire the doctrine of the Church and to grasp it more deeply.

Within the same framework — looking at God and at the world —
Blessed John Paul II stressed the current need for formation in Catholic
dogma. “The situation today points to an ever-increasing urgency for a
doctrinal formation of the lay faithful, not simply in a better understanding
which is natural to faith’s dynamism, but also in enabling them to ‘give a
reason for their hoping’ in view of the world and its grave and complex
problems. Therefore, a systematic approach to catechesis, geared to age and
the diverse situations of life, is an absolute necessity, as is a more decided
Christian promotion of culture, in response to the perennial yet always new
questions that concern individuals and society today.”[58]

Right from the beginning of Opus Dei, and even earlier, St. Josemaría
showed a special interest in helping those he was assisting spiritually to go
deeper in their doctrinal-religious formation, because “each of us should try
hard, as far as we can, to study the faith seriously, scientifically.”[59]

24. As St Gregory the Great wrote, “piety is useless if it lacks the
discernment of knowledge”,[60] and “knowledge is empty without the balm
of piety.”[61] Our Founder insisted that the study of doctrine had to be
accompanied by a sincere spiritual life, by intimate conversation with Jesus
in prayer and in the sacraments, and by filial devotion to our Lady. He
taught us that “truth is always, in some sense, sacred, a gift from God, a
divine light that leads us to Him, who is Light by essence. This is
particularly so when we consider truth in the supernatural order. We must
therefore treat it with great respect, lovingly (...). Moreover, we are
convinced that the divine truth we bear within goes far beyond what we can
grasp. Our words are totally inadequate to express all its richness. It is also
possible that we do not fully understand its meaning and we may be merely
playing the role of one who transmits a message without fully
understanding it himself.”[62]

The effort the Prelature makes to assure that all its faithful, and many
other people, acquire a serious doctrinal preparation is very worthwhile —
even more so in moments like the present when the need is seen to be more
urgent. Our Founder’s words spoken many years ago are for us a joyful reality: “the whole Work is like a great catechesis, carried out in a living, simple and direct way in the heart of civil society.”[63]

Fidelity to the Magisterium and freedom in matters of opinion

25. Our doctrinal formation includes all areas from philosophy to theology, to canon law, and so on. By means of this training, which in the case of Numeraries, and many Associates, covers programs that are taught at the pontifical universities, we help to ensure that at every level of society there are people determined to give a living witness to the Gospel in word and deed, “always prepared,” as St Peter writes, “to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15).

In accordance with repeated directives from the Magisterium, in explanations of the different philosophical and theological subjects the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Common Doctor of the Church, is especially relevant. This is how to follow the recommendation of the Second Vatican Council and several Popes: “to penetrate the mysteries of salvation more deeply (…) under the guidance of St. Thomas, and to perceive their interconnections.”[64]

St. Josemaría held to this line and reminded the teachers in charge of the Studium Generale of the Prelature about it. At the same time, with the mentality of being ever open to the progress of theological science, he explained: “We cannot conclude from this that we ought to just limit ourselves to assimilating and repeating all of the teachings of St. Thomas and only his.

We are talking about something very different: We should certainly cultivate the doctrine of the Angelic Doctor, but the way he would do were he alive today. Sometimes it may be necessary to bring to a conclusion what he could only begin. By the same token, we will adopt the views of other authors when they correspond to the truth.”[65]

I have just reminded you, in our Father’s words, of an essential feature of the spirit of Opus Dei: that “corporately we have no other teaching than the teaching of the Magisterium of the Holy See. We accept everything that the Magisterium accepts and we reject whatever it rejects. We believe firmly everything it proposes as an article of faith, and we also make our
own everything which is part of Catholic teaching." And “within this ample doctrine, we each form our own personal criteria.” The Statutes of the Prelature prohibit Opus Dei, as our Founder said, from creating or adopting a philosophical or theological school of its own. As well as showing our love for freedom, this expresses a fundamental ecclesiological fact: that the members of the Prelature are ordinary Christian faithful or ordinary secular priests, with the same spheres of freedom of opinion as other Catholics.

**FORMATION FOR THE APOSTOLATE**

26. A deep knowledge of basic religious truths, as well as the ethical and moral issues that relate more closely to the exercise of our own work, is also important if we are to do a broad apostolate in our professional environment. “The light of the followers of Jesus Christ should not be hidden in the depths of some valley, but should be placed on the mountain peak, so that ‘they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven’” (Mt 5:16).

Certainly there are plenty of people who have a big heart, able to fall in love with God, but who lack the light of doctrine to guide and give meaning to their lives. And Christians have the joyful duty of supplying it. A New Testament passage illustrates this clearly. Obeying the Holy Spirit’s command, the deacon Philip was making his way along the road leading to Gaza. A carriage was going by in which an important person, the minister of the queen of Ethiopia, was returning to his country after worshipping God in Jerusalem. “So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him” (Acts 8:30-31).

It is our task as Catholics to announce, peacefully and perseveringly, the good news of Jesus, and dispel religious ignorance by spreading the teaching that has been revealed to us. “The Christian apostolate — and I’m talking about ordinary Christians, living as one among equals — is a great work of teaching. Through real, personal, loyal friendship, you create in others a hunger for God and you help them to discover new horizons —
naturally and simply, with the example of your faith lived to the full, with a loving word which is full of the force of divine truth."[70]

We must ardently pass on the Truth of Christ, giving others a share in the treasure we have received, so that they can experience that “there is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and to speak to others of our friendship with Him.”[71]

27. In the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, the Second Vatican Council teaches that “The apostolate can attain its maximum effectiveness only through a diversified and thorough formation. This is demanded not only by the continuous spiritual and doctrinal progress of the lay person himself but also by the accommodation of his activity to circumstances varying according to the affairs, persons, and duties involved. (…) In addition to the formation which is common for all Christians, many forms of the apostolate demand also a specific and particular formation because of the variety of persons and circumstances.”[72]

In recent years, this zeal for souls has required greater vigor, to counter the secularism that has made great strides, to the extent of acquiring citizenship status in traditionally Christian countries. Infusing the spirit of Christ once again into the roots of these nations is the goal of the new evangelization.[73] In the Prelature, this work can be summed up as guiding and encouraging each individual to carry out the evangelizing mission they received at Baptism, in the spirit and with the specific means of Opus Dei, through an “apostolate of friendship and trust.”

John Paul II stressed that the world “calls out for credible evangelizers, whose lives, in communion with the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, radiate the beauty of the Gospel. (…) All the baptized, since they are witnesses of Christ, should receive a training appropriate to their circumstances, not only so that their faith does not wither for lack of care in a hostile environment such as the secularist world, but also so that their witness to the Gospel will receive strength and inspiration.”[74]

**Personal apostolate of friendship and trust**

28. Our Lord came to this earth so that all souls might attain eternal life, and he also wants to use his disciples: — *ut eatis:* “go!” he urges
Christians, as he did the Apostles, “and bear fruit, and may your fruit abide” (cf. Jn 15:16). Therefore, my daughters and sons, we have to take his doctrine to the most diverse spheres, since we care about all souls for the sake of our Lord. But it makes sense to start with the ones God has placed closest to us.

In the Opus Dei Prelature, as I said, we give priority to what St. Josemaría called the “apostolate of friendship and trust”: personal contact in which one heart pours into another their knowledge and love of Christ, making it easier for the other to open to the gentle promptings of grace.

Friendship is, and at the same time creates, a communion of feelings and desires. But “where communication principally takes place is in shared life (…); hence sharing life is characteristic of friendship.” With that communication, we take the first step on the path of friendship. Therefore it makes us happy to seize the opportunities offered by our work and social life to make new friends, desiring to help them and also learn from them: friendship is essentially a two-way exchange. Our Father encouraged us to act as Christ passing by on the path of everyday life. “Our Lord wants to make use of us and of our dealings with others, of that capacity of ours which he has given us to love others and to make ourselves loved, so that he can continue making friends on earth.”

Among the features of this way of being useful, one that stands out is our need to learn how to adapt to other people’s capacity and mentality, so that they can understand what they hear. St. Josemaría called this the “gift of tongues”: the effort to make ourselves understood that comes as a fruit of grace, prayer and personal preparation, so that the teaching of the Church resonates in people’s ears with new tones. “You must keep repeating the same things, but in different ways. It is the form that should always be new, varied; not the doctrine.”

What we have to do is imitate Jesus, who expounded the highest teachings in parables, comparisons that everyone could understand, each at their own level. We should foster the desire to present the Christian truths in an attractive way: “let your speech be always gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone” (Col 4:6). We are not aiming to give pat answers, nor put on a show of scholarship, but to
speak with meaningful content, seeking the glory of God and the good of souls.

29. In this context, knowledge of Sacred Scripture — the Old and New Testaments — as the fruit of assiduous reading and attentive meditation, is of fundamental importance. Pope Benedict XVI recently reminded us of this in his Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* on the Word of God in the mission of the Church. There, among other great saints to whom the Lord granted special lights to delve into the spiritual meaning of the Bible, the Pope says that one of these rays of light is manifest in “St. Josemaría Escrivá in his preaching on the universal call to holiness.”[78]

The Roman Pontiff writes that “an important aspect of the Church’s pastoral work which, if used wisely, can help in rediscovering the centrality of God’s word, is catechesis, which in its various forms and levels must constantly accompany the journey of the People of God.”[79] And he shows how “Luke’s description (cf. *Lk* 24:13-35) of the disciples who meet Jesus on the road to Emmaus represents, in some sense, the model of a catechesis centered on “the explanation of the Scriptures,” an explanation which Christ alone can give (cf. *Lk* 24:27-28), as he shows that they are fulfilled in his person. The hope which triumphs over every failure was thus reborn, and made those disciples convinced and credible witnesses of the Risen Lord.”[80] Don’t these words recall our Father’s joyous affirmation, when he preached that “Now the entire world has become an Emmaus, for the Lord has opened up all the divine paths of the earth”?[81]

Remember how he transmitted to us the teachings of this passage from St Luke. He explained that “the whole of Christ’s life is a divine model which we should imitate, but what the Gospels tell us about the scene at Emmaus pertains to us in a very special way.”[82] He also used this scene from the Gospel to talk to us about the personal apostolate of friendship and trust. He emphasized one important characteristic: we must take the initiative, go out and meet people to offer them our friendship and help them in their search for God, while respecting and defending everyone’s privacy and freedom.

On the road to Emmaus, the Risen Christ comes in search of two disciples who were on their way home, discouraged by the painful events
they had witnessed: the Passion and Death of the Lord. This gesture of Jesus teaches us that friendship leads us to share in our friends’ joys and sorrows, to be in solidarity with them and to spend time with them. “As Jesus is walking along, he meets two men who have nearly lost all hope. They are beginning to feel that life has no meaning for them. Christ understands their sorrow; he sees into their heart and communicates to them some of the life he carries within himself.”[83] Similarly, we need to share the concerns, hopes, and difficulties of the people we know, being one among our fellow-workers, without any barrier between us. This is a wonderful feature of the spirit of the Work, which does not take anyone out of his or her place, but invites us to be in the world without being worldly.

That is how we have to behave in the environment in which we live and work, without losing sight of the fact that, if we are faithful, Jesus Christ works in us, and wants to use our example and words to reach other people, while they enrich us with their friendship. It is totally natural for true friends to share their joys, sorrows, and concerns. And, of course, the greatest treasure that a Christian has is precisely the life of Christ. We will talk to them about God, the joy of having him in our soul in grace, and the immense value that only He can give to our human lives.

By acting like this, Christians cooperate effectively in the Church’s evangelizing mission, bringing Christ into the hearts and souls of the people they know, to help set up the Cross on the summit of all human activities.

_Apostolate of family and youth_

30. There are many activities that help spread the kingdom of God more strongly. However, some have objectively greater significance according to the needs of each age and place. The family, the education of young people, and the world of culture, raise, to a large extent, the challenge of the new evangelization to which the Holy Father is urging us.

The family urgently needs its origin to be reaffirmed. God purposely laid the foundation of the family in creation, but unfortunately, the customs and civil laws of many countries are determined to pervert it. This task is of paramount importance, and it is one in which Catholics come
together with people of other faiths, or of no religion at all, aware that supporting the family — a communion of love between a man and a woman, indissoluble, and open to life — is a central pillar that is indispensable for the right ordering of society, and a foundation that is important for people to reach maturity and happiness. In addition to what we can contribute in cooperation with others, we can, for example, personally help husbands and wives to forgive one another and understand better that their life is a gift to the other. And if it is a Christian couple, we can help them to understand that they have a share in a mystery: that of Christ’s union with his Church. This fidelity on the part of both spouses, an expression of true love over time, is also their path to Heaven.

Apostolate with young people will always be a vital challenge for the world and the Church, because the years of youth forge the characters of those who will straighten out the course of society and lead it along the paths traced by our Creator and Redeemer.

In this context, the apostolate of entertainment and good use of leisure time take on special importance. I will limit myself here to reminding you of what I wrote in 2002: that we have to fill with Christian content the “customs, laws, fashion, the media, and artistic expressions. These are all aspects throbbing at the heart of the battle for the new evangelization of society, to which the Holy Father is constantly calling us Christians.”[84]

Apostolate and culture

31. The wide world of thought and culture, science, literature and technology, continues to prove a crucial area that must be illuminated with the light of the Gospel. “Christians are therefore called to have a faith capable of critically confronting contemporary culture and resisting its enticements; of having a real effect on the world of culture, finance, society and politics; of demonstrating that the fellowship between Catholics and other Christians is more powerful than any ethnic bond; of joyfully passing on the faith to new generations; and of building a Christian culture ready to evangelize the larger culture in which we live.”[85]

The apostolates of the Work are “a shoreless sea.” We want to open our arms wide to every single person, like Christ on the Cross. Hence our effort to reach those who are furthest away from God, as taught us by St.
Josemaría, who, as he always repeated, loved the *ad fidem* apostolate. Our Father encouraged us to “make a special effort in the apostolate *ad gentes*, with the Gentiles (...). First, I will repeat as always, through sincere, loyal, humanly good friendship.”

Taking advantage of the multiple contacts that arise in the exercise of our ordinary work in this globalized world, it is easy to dialogue with people of other faiths and beliefs, or those of no religion, wanting to arouse in them the desire to know God better. We will even help people who have a negative attitude towards the Catholic Church, if we treat them gently, patiently, understandingly and affectionately.

“I consider most important,” said Benedict XVI in a speech to the Roman Curia, “the fact that we, as believers, must have at heart even those people who consider themselves agnostics or atheists. When we speak of a new evangelization, these people are perhaps taken aback. They do not want to see themselves as an object of mission or to give up their freedom of thought and will. Yet the question of God remains present even for them, even if they cannot believe in the concrete nature of his concern for us.”

Although only a few people may take a hand directly in such initiatives, we all feel the need to support them with our prayer. Because as children of God in his holy Church, the only desire of our lives is to bring the name of the Lord to all peoples and all cultures, to the farthest corners of the earth (cf. *Acts* 9:15).

**PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND FORMATION**

32. Because ordinary work, in the spirit of Opus Dei, is the hinge of our personal sanctification and the normal setting for our apostolate, it is understandable that the Prelature promotes good professional training. “Study, professional formation of whatever type, is a serious obligation among us.”

In recent times, the Church’s Magisterium has addressed the issue of work (and we all thought of St. Josemaría’s preaching since 1928 as we read it) as the setting for the pursuit of holiness by the lay faithful. It has stressed the need “*to form a spirituality of work* which will help all people to come closer, through work, to God, the Creator and Redeemer, to
participate in his salvific plan for man and the world and to deepen their friendship with Christ in their lives.”[89]

Work and unity of life

33. In his homily “Passionately Loving the World”, St. Josemaría stressed the importance of leading a unified Christian life, bringing together piety, work and apostolate. “I have taught this constantly, using words from Holy Scripture. The world is not evil, because it has come from God’s hands, because it is His creation, because ‘Yahweh looked upon it and saw that it was good’ (cf. Gen 1:7 ff.). We ourselves, mankind, make it evil and ugly with our sins and infidelities. Have no doubt: any kind of evasion of the honest realities of daily life is for you, men and women of the world, something opposed to the will of God.

“On the contrary, you must understand now, more clearly, that God is calling you to serve Him in and from the ordinary, material and secular activities of human life. He waits for us every day, in the laboratory, in the operating theatre, in the army barracks, in the university chair, in the factory, in the workshop, in the fields, in the home and in all the immense panorama of work. Understand this well: there is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it. (…)"

“There is no other way, my children. Either we learn to find our Lord in ordinary, everyday life, or else we shall never find Him. That is why I can tell you that our age needs to give back to matter and to the most trivial occurrences and situations their noble and original meaning. It needs to restore them to the service of the Kingdom of God, to spiritualize them, turning them into a means and an occasion for a continuous meeting with Jesus Christ.”[90]

The formation provided by the Prelature aims to nurture the supernatural spirit everyone needs in order to do their job with the greatest possible human perfection and zeal for service, making it into an instrument of holiness and apostolate. To do that, we must strive to achieve the necessary professional standing among our peers, which comes with commitment and dedication over the years. We each receive our specific professional training together with other citizens, at universities,
training schools, studios, etc., wherever we study or learn a trade. The spirit of the Work impels us to update and improve such training constantly. We all know that we are completely free, both when choosing our job and when exercising it. The Work only teaches us how to sanctify ourselves in our work, without interfering in the decisions connected with it, which we take individually.

It does not matter what type of work we do, provided it is honest. “Which is more important, being a professor at the Sorbonne or doing housework? I’ll tell you that if you are holy, because you are sanctifying yourself in your work, that’s what’s most important.” And St. Josemaría added elsewhere, “When, referring to the cleaners who work at the University of Navarra, I say that I don’t know if their work is equally or still more important than that of the Board of Governors, I’m not joking. I’m simply repeating what I’ve always thought. The task of one of those women, who comes with joy and does everything for love, can be heroic, not at all humdrum, and certainly more effective than that of a great researcher whose only ambition is to see himself in print. I’ll make the point: which is better? It depends on the love and sacrifice you put into your work. But do it self-sacrificingly, happily, cheerfully, willingly — otherwise it would be better not to do it at all.”

Every Catholic has the duty to do all in their power to enable Christ to reign effectively in society, and these holy longings are also shown by trying to acquire the necessary professional standing, as a “lampstand” to let Christ’s light shine forth (cf. Mk 4:21).

Students, for their part, must feel the duty to get good grades. Don’t forget the consideration that St. Josemaría wrote in The Way, which has guided many generations of young people throughout the world: “an hour of study for a modern apostle, is an hour of prayer.”

Right intention

34. At the same time as taking care of our professional training, we must remember responsibly that our job, no matter what it is, always offers us a means for achieving holiness and doing apostolate. It is very necessary not to lose this point of view at the present time, because in today’s highly competitive society it is easy to place our job in the front rank of our
concerns, above our duties to God, our family and other people. I repeat, with our Father: “work to please God, without seeking any human glory. Some people regard work as a means of gaining honors, or of acquiring power or wealth to satisfy their ambition, or as a source of pride in their own achievements.

“The children of God in Opus Dei never regard our daily work as something related to selfishness, vanity or pride. All we see is the possibility of serving everyone for love of God.”[94] Therefore, he added, “a good measure of an upright intention in your work can be found precisely in how well you make use of the social relations or friendships it provides in order to bring those souls closer to God; and, where circumstances allow, even getting to the point of facing them with the problem of their vocation.”[95]

In the context of our professional training, we must necessarily aim for a deep knowledge of those areas of Catholic doctrine most closely related to our own work, or which are particularly topical in our country. Some of these will perhaps be different in different places, but some are relevant everywhere, such as those related to marriage and the family, education, the “Gospel of Life”, bioethics, justice and charity in labor relations... Therefore, the example of uprightness in the fulfillment of our professional, family and community duties is a credible witness that we all have to give. “As a result of your human and Christian uprightness,” I wrote, “many initiatives will begin wherever you live or work, and they will be directly aimed at solving specific social problems in a noble and brotherly cooperation with other men and women of good will. At this very time I am raising up my heart in thanksgiving to our Lord because around the Prelature, with the help of so many Cooperators, both Catholic and non-Catholic, abundant examples of such solidarity are flourishing. They are contributing towards establishing justice and peace on earth and bringing to tens of thousands of people “the strong and soothing balm of love,” as our Father expressed it (Christ is Passing By, 183)”.[96]

Apostolic spontaneity

35. My daughters and sons, I wanted to bring once more before your eyes the fact that “the sole ambition and only desire of Opus Dei and of each of its children is to serve the Church as She wishes to be served within
the specific vocation which the Lord has given to us.”[97] And St. Josemaría often referred to Opus Dei as an \textit{organized disorganization}, because our specific way, willed by God, of working at the Church’s mission is to provide formation to people in different aspects. Arguably, the Opus Dei Prelature devotes all its energies to this task, this catechesis. Then each of you individually, equipped with the training you have received and assimilated, freely and with personal responsibility, seek to infuse the lymph of the Christian spirit into the bloodstream of society.

Replying to a question from a reporter on this characteristic aspect of the Work, our Father explained that “we give primary and fundamental importance to the \textit{apostolic spontaneity of the individual}, to free and responsible initiative guided by the action of the Spirit, and not to organizational structures and tactics imposed from above, from the seat of government.”[98]

Before finishing, I will reiterate what is fundamental: let us put our best efforts, day after day, into our Christian commitment to God and to other people. Let us do our best to be women and men who are absolutely faithful to the Pope, praying continuously for him and his intentions. Let’s live in affective and effective union with the Bishops and all the Catholic faithful. Let’s be filled with optimism and gratefulness to the Lord, as we take part in the new evangelization. And let’s appeal to our Blessed Lady, Queen of the world and Mother of the Church, to obtain for us from Heaven the graces we need.

Naturally, as a special intercessor for all this formational work we invoke St. Josemaría, whose life and teaching embodied the spirit he received from God on October 2, 1928, so that his daughters and sons, and many others, may travel all the paths of the earth, making them divine with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

A very affectionate blessing from
your Father
+ Javier
Rome, October 2, 2011


[13] Ibid.


[16] *Athanasian Creed*.


[19] Ibid., 84.

[20] Ibid.


[22] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1808.


[26] John Paul II, Address to a group of bishops on an ad limina visit, November 18, 1999.


[35] Cf. St. Josemaría, La Abadesa de las Huelgas. Estudio teológico jurídico, Rialp, Madrid 1974, 3rd ed., p. 153. Recently the Congregation for the Clergy has published a document The Priest, Minister of Divine Mercy, March 9, 2011, in which it states explicitly that “[t]here are to be found also well-formed lay faithful (…) who offer this service of counsel along the journey of holiness” (no. 65).


[37] St. Josemaría, Conversations, 93.

[38] St. Josemaría, Friends of God, 15.

[39] Ibid., 188.

[40] St. Josemaría, Christ is Passing By, 135.


[43] Ibid., 161.


[45] St. Josemaría, Christ is Passing By, 87.


[48] St. Josemaría, Christ is Passing By, 89.


[54] Benedict XVI, Meeting with priests from the Diocese of Albano, August 31, 2006.


[57] St. Josemaría, Christ is Passing By, 10.


[59] St. Josemaría, Christ is Passing By, 10.

[60] St Gregory the Great, Moralia, I, 32, 45 (PL 75, 517).

[61] Ibid.


[63] St. Josemaría, Letter March 11, 1940, 47.


St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, 10.


Benedict XVI, Homily at the Mass for the Inauguration of the Pontificate, April 24, 2005.


St. Josemaría, Notes taken from a family gathering, April 1951.
Homilies
Inauguration of the Academic Year,
Pontifical University of the Holy Cross,
Rome (October 10, 2011)

My dear professors, students and administrative personnel at the
University of the Holy Cross:

I am grateful to God for allowing me to be with you here at this
solemn celebration of the Eucharist. As is traditional, the Mass for the
inauguration of the academic year is the votive Mass of the Holy Spirit.
We direct ourselves, then, to the Third Person of the Most Blessed Trinity,
so that all our activity throughout this academic year may be converted into
an act of spiritual worship, offered to God the Father through the
mediation of Jesus Christ.

The first reading of the Liturgy of the Word presents to us the scene of
the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the apostles
on the day of Pentecost. "And there appeared to them tongues as of fire,
distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with
the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave
them utterance."[1] The apostles, who up till that moment had been
frightened, set out to proclaim courageously God's wonders: "Jews and
proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling in our own tongues
the mighty works of God."[2] Moreover, the Spirit of Truth opened their
minds to penetrate more deeply into Christ's teachings, as our Lord himself
had promised: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will
send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your
remembrance all that I have said to you."[3]

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to make us always docile to his divine
inspirations, in order to draw as much fruit as possible from the study of
the ecclesiastical sciences, which help us to go more deeply into the content
of the word of God. In this regard, Benedict XVI, in his post-synodal
Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini, teaches that: "There can be no
authentic understanding of Christian revelation apart from the activity of
the Paraclete."[4]

Therefore the saints, that is, those who truly seek our Lord and are
docile in the highest degree to the action of the Holy Spirit, are also those who understand most deeply the meaning of Sacred Scripture. As the Pope writes in the same Exhortation: “The most profound interpretation of Scripture comes precisely from those who let themselves be shaped by the word of God through listening, reading, and assiduous meditation.”[5] And the Roman Pontiff continues: “Holiness in the Church constitutes an interpretation of Scripture which cannot be overlooked. The Holy Spirit who inspired the sacred authors is the same Spirit who impels the saints to offer their lives for the Gospel. In striving to learn from their example, we set out on the sure way towards a living and effective hermeneutic of the word of God.”[6]

The saints make the word of God alive and timely, because they incarnate it in their lives and, with their various charisms, give a special emphasis to certain specific aspects of Christian revelation, bringing us light for our own journey here on earth. The Pope says that “every saint is like a ray of light streaming forth from the word of God: we can think of Saint Ignatius of Loyola in his search for truth and in his discernment of spirits; Saint John Bosco in his passion for the education of the young; Saint John Mary Vianney in his awareness of the grandeur of the priesthood as gift and task; Saint Pius of Pietrelcina in his serving as an instrument of divine mercy; Saint Josemaría Escrivá in his preaching of the universal call to holiness.”[7]

The person who inspired this university, St. Josemaría, guided by the Holy Spirit, from as early as the twenties of the last century preached forcefully and very attractively a fundamental Gospel teaching: the universal call to holiness, which had been passed over in silence for many centuries in the history of the Church. Let us consider, for example, this reflection from The Way: “Your duty is to sanctify yourself. Yes, even you. Who thinks that this task is only for priests and religious? To everyone, without exception, our Lord said: ‘Be ye perfect, as my heavenly Father is perfect.’”[8] It is this teaching that has led many people to see in the founder of Opus Dei a precursor of the Second Vatican Council, for he loved Sacred Scripture as the “hinge” on which his daily conversation with the Trinity rested.

Let us ask God, then, as we begin a new academic year, through the
intercession of St. Josemaría, that all of us who form part of this university community may learn how to sanctify ourselves through our daily work, a work done with human and supernatural perfection, with the awareness that today, as always, our Lord continues his dialogue with his people and with those to whom he has entrusted his flock.

I would like, finally, to recall another great spiritual teacher, John Paul II, whose recent beatification filled the hearts of the faithful with joy. I want to mention, especially, his total abandonment in our Lady's hands, as Benedict XVI emphasized in the homily at the Mass of Beatification: “Karol Wojtyła took part in the Second Vatican Council, first as an auxiliary Bishop and then as Archbishop of Krakow. 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 Wojtyła: 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 Wojtyła found a guiding light for his life: “Totus tuus ego sum et omnia mea tua sunt. Accipio te in mea omnia. Praebe mibi 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, no. 266).”

We cannot forget that this Pontiff looked upon the work of our Alma Mater with paternal affection, since he saw it as another crossroads for reflection and dialogue that could help professors and students to penetrate more deeply into the mysteries of God, and to spur all of us to feel the need to be true apostles.

Following in the footsteps then of St. Josemaría and of Blessed John Paul II, we too, with renewed energy, place once again in the hands of holy Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, the work of the academic year that is beginning today.
At the inauguration of the academic year, Campus Bio-Medico University, Rome (October 13, 2011)

Dear professors, students, directors, and administrative personnel from the Campus Bio-Medical University of Rome:

Excuse me if I speak at some length. I do so owing to the great affection I feel for you, which would lead me to spend the whole day here if possible. I recall now what I said the first time I celebrated Holy Mass in this place: your strength and joy in your work is found here, hidden in the Tabernacle. But don't forget that this Lord of ours, who gave his life for us and rose so that we might share in his life, is the one who created the world and sustains our whole existence.

We are celebrating the votive Mass of the Holy Spirit in order to beseech him to come into our hearts. Our need for him is so great!
In the first reading we have heard the narrative of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon blessed Mary ever-Virgin and the Apostles, united in prayer in the Cenacle, in Jerusalem. “Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit!”[1]

In the second reading St. Paul tells us: “There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone.”[2]

By these words St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to safeguard their unity, which is an essential characteristic of the Church, and which is brought about by the Holy Spirit, but requires the effort of all the faithful. Unity is indispensable in any apostolic undertaking: through very different activities and duties, we are all called to build something great. It is logical that it be thus from a human point of view as well, since lack of unity would lead, sooner or later, to ineffectiveness and disintegration.

We should not be surprised that, at times, it is not readily apparent how we can find and pursue a common goal in collaboration with those who work at our side. Any project of great size—and the Campus Bio-Medico is unquestionably such—presents many facets, poses complexities, and is viewed by each person from different points of view, not always easy to reconcile. But the important thing is that we always seek each other’s help.

To make progress on the path, it is necessary to seek unity. St. Josemaría puts it very graphically when he writes in The Way: “Do you see? One strand of wire entwined with another, many woven tightly together, form that cable strong enough to lift huge weights.”[3] We Christians have to be like that, in our family and professional life and also in our moments of relaxation. If we are constantly thinking of the others, we will always be happier.

St. Paul offers us further food for thought when he adds that “to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”[4] The message is clear: to attempt to attain a goal by oneself, by our own efforts, can easily lead to failure or to selfishly seeking oneself. In contrast, the
Christian message, which we are called to transmit, requires us to be men and women who are sowers of peace and joy.

The Holy Spirit communicates to each of us particular lights, so that, united by Christ's charity, we can discover and strive to put into practice his will. In other words, only when we are willing to let ourselves be illumined by the light that God also grants to the persons around us, listening with sincere openness to others' points of view, will we receive the light that marks out for us the path we have to travel.

We all know, at least in theory, that God often speaks to us through other people. Let us never forget this truth! Nevertheless, in practice, it can be difficult at times to truly open ourselves to others to ask for advice; we don't know how to listen to them with interest, with the docility of one who is ready to change his own views, if necessary. “When our ideas,” says St. Josemaría, “separate us from other people, when they weaken our communion, our unity with our brothers, it is a sure sign that we are not doing what God wants.”[5]

There comes to mind the words that my predecessor, the Servant of God Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, addressed to all of you in similar circumstances (although many of the students who are present today were infants back then). You can't imagine how much he loved Italy and all the apostolic works in Italy. He felt himself to be completely Roman, and therefore a citizen of every part of Italy and of the whole world.

At the inauguration of the first academic year at the Campus Bio-Medical, almost twenty years ago now, our beloved don Álvaro spoke the following words: “I recommend that you work with a spirit of unity and understanding, with optimism; thus you will overcome the obstacles with God’s help, you will be happy and—what is still more important—you will sanctify yourselves and help the others to sanctify themselves, because you will be living the commandment of love.”[6]

Peace be with you!, our risen Lord says in the Gospel that we have just read: and “the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.”[7] Christian joy is also a fruit of the effort by each of us to see Christ in others, to live, day by day, the commandment of love.

If we direct our thoughts to these years of the Campus Bio-Medico’s
existence, we have to recognize, with deep gratitude to our Lord, that the path already traveled has been quite substantial. The difficulties (which have not been lacking, nor will they ever be in an undertaking such as this one) have been overcome; the work carried out with a spirit of unity, understanding and optimism has shown us the value of the efforts of all the women and men who have helped bring this university forward.

This is the logic that animates the apostolic works promoted by the faithful of Opus Dei, in union with many other people, throughout the whole world. In words of St. Josemaría, I remind you of an important reality: “Understand this well: there is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it.”[8]

Today we can affirm once again that, those who work in an apostolic undertaking, and also a family one, receive the call to discover that something holy, present also in the hearts and minds of the people who assist us.

God’s logic is one of service: “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you,” taught Jesus, addressing his disciples, and therefore every one of us. “Rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves.”[9] Each Christian, by the very fact of having been sought out by Christ, has to be an apostle. Absolutely everyone! Our Lord asks all of us to struggle to be holy in ordinary life and to concern ourselves about the salvation of souls.

“Come, Holy Spirit, come! And from your celestial home, shed a ray of light divine!”[10] As I look at you, the students, and think of all those who have passed and will pass through the classrooms of this university, I feel impelled to invoke, for each and every one of you, the light of the Holy Spirit. May you continue to have great, universal goals, and may you foster in your life a sincere ideal of service, both in your studies and in all the other aspects of your human, professional, and spiritual formation. Ask God for the grace to make of your life something great, and to light up all the
pathways of this earth with the fire of your faith and your love,[11] also when you return home after an exhausting day.

In a recent address, the Holy Father Benedict XVI reminded young people that “in Baptism the Lord, as it were, sets our life alight.” And he invited them to be determined to seek holiness: “Have the courage to apply your talents and gifts for God’s kingdom and to give yourselves—like candle wax—so that the Lord can light up the darkness through you. Dare to be light-bearing saints, in whose eyes and hearts the love of Christ beams and who thus bring light to the world.”[12] Today let us take this invitation as directed to each and every one of us as well.

May our Lady, temple of the Holy Spirit, help us to recognize God’s voice and to keep our minds and hearts open and ready to listen. Then we will receive God’s light, and we will feel urged to bring it to the whole world. Dream and the reality will surpass your dreams.

Amen.

Addresses

Honorary Doctorates Awarded by the University of Navarre (October 27, 2011)

Distinguished authorities,
Faculty members and students,
Ladies and gentlemen:

The reception into our academic family of three well-known figures as honorary doctors is today a new motive of joy and hope for the University of Navarra. Besides experiencing a deep and sincere joy on recognizing their high merits, the academic community is greatly inspired in seeing, as on previous occasions, that these eminent academic figures (from three very important fields of knowledge) have brought light to many people with their outstanding and diligent work.

The three new doctors, each within his own specialty, share a common feature: their deep bond to the university world.

The painter Antonio López, member of the Royal Academy of San Fernando, is one of the leading representatives of contemporary realism in Spain, and the “father” of the hyper-realistic school of Madrid. He studied in the San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts and traveled to Italy, the goal of so many great artists in the past. His work is marked by an acute sense of being a researcher of reality, an attitude which enables him to readily recognize the imprint of God in creatures. Since 2006 he has directed the workshop of figurative painting at the University of Navarre, where he has helped give shape to the artistic vocation of many promising young people.

Cardinal Péter Erdő, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest and President of the European Bishops’ Council, is a clear example of the
opening of the mind to the knowledge of reality in its most disparate aspects. A doctor in theology and in canon law, fields in which he has been a professor at the Esztergom-Budapest seminary, he is a member of the Hungarian Academy of Science and of various Dicasteries of the Roman Curia, to which he has contributed his deep knowledge as a canonist and theologian. Cardinal Erdő’s life is closely linked to the academic community: he was Rector of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University, of which he is currently Chancellor, and has taught Canon Law at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, in Rome.

Professor Joseph Weiler, in turn, is an outstanding expert in the law of the European Union. With extensive ties to the worldwide academic community, he has studied and worked at the universities of Cambridge, Florence, Michigan, Harvard, Singapore and Copenhagen, among others we could mention. Currently he is a full Professor at New York University, as well as a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the author of numerous thought-provoking publications.

The unblemished professionalism of the three new doctors offers us the opportunity to reflect on the task of forming young people and on the effort to broaden the frontiers of human knowledge. The first chancellor of this Alma Mater insisted that the university institution, in order to be fruitful, must first of all never be content with mediocre goals, but aspire ad majora, to the highest realities, to the broadest horizons.

Indeed, on turning its glance upon itself, the university discovers that the lights and shadows of today’s world reflect the task it is called to confront. This panorama brings with it the requirement to exercise a responsible influence upon our own times. And given the challenges that today’s world presents, it calls for a sharpening of one’s vision and a redoubling of one’s efforts, doing so always with a positive spirit. As is the case with this university, this effort is also always grounded on the exercise of the human and Christian virtues.

The values an Alma Mater strives to embody can be summed up in those envisioned by the universitas studiorum right from its beginning, more than seven centuries ago. The daring goal of bringing into harmony the basic fields of human knowledge is an arduous one, best served by the
interchange of knowledge among professors and students in their joint striving for the truth. The *universitas studiorum* entails the “joining together of teachers and students in the ardent search for wisdom.”[1]

We could ask ourselves where the inspiration for such an ambitious goal comes from, an endeavor that has transformed the face of the earth, making it more unified and more human. Among the various and valuable contributions from which the university has benefited, we need to highlight the light-bringing power of Christianity. History bears abundant testimony to the fact that the university was born in the heart of the Church, without which what today we understand as modernity would not exist.

The present-day world is certainly full of challenges. As in earlier periods that were no less difficult, the academic community cannot turn its back on this world of ours, which would be a grave lack of responsibility. Rather it has to courageously confront the various challenges present today, stirring up motives for hope.

“But where,” Pope Benedict XVI asked during the recent World Youth Day, “will young people encounter those reference points in a society which is increasingly confused and unstable? At times one has the idea that the mission of a university professor nowadays is exclusively that of forming competent and efficient professionals capable of satisfying the demand for labor at any given time. One also hears it said that the only thing that matters at the present moment is pure technical ability. This sort of utilitarian approach to education is in fact becoming more widespread, even at the university level, promoted especially by sectors outside the university. All the same, you who, like myself, have had an experience of the university, and now are members of the teaching staff, surely are looking for something more lofty and capable of embracing the full measure of what it is to be human. We know that when mere utility and pure pragmatism become the principal criteria, much is lost and the results can be tragic: from the abuses associated with a science which acknowledges no limits beyond itself, to the political totalitarianism which easily arises when one eliminates any higher reference than the mere calculus of power. The authentic idea of the university, on the other hand, is precisely what saves us from this reductionist and curtailed vision of humanity.”[2]
By sincerely pursuing a renewed eagerness for the truth, we will recuperate the optimism proper to the seeker of wisdom, who strives to decipher the enigmas hidden in the intelligible structures of reality and refuses to remain on the surface of questions. Thus we will help prevent the scattering of knowledge among specialties that are ever more narrow and isolated, as though alien to each other, and reinforce the universal reach of human knowledge. To confront this centrifugal dynamic that leads to disintegration, an interdisciplinary dialogue once again is shown to be indispensable for innovative research.

Only the sapiential approach to nature, to society, and to the human person, to the truth of man’s origin and destiny, can offer a solid foundation for the education of the new generations who crowd the classrooms, libraries, and laboratories. The years that these young people spend in their Alma Mater are decisive for the formation of their intellect and personality. While carefully respecting the students’ freedom, the professors, as I have already stressed, need to enter into personal dialogue with the students, and also among themselves, to broaden cultural horizons and overcome so many moral perplexities in a society that—if people fail to react—finds itself on the verge of losing all its ethical bearings. Far from offering a protective haven, the university has to contribute to strengthening young people’s resolve, so that they confront courageously—now and in the future—the challenge of building a society that is freer, more creative and more united: more Christian. This hope-filled panorama will foster an optimistic and affirmative outlook facing the future.

In addition, the university needs to offer an environment marked by openness to the universal, an attitude that has been present in the academic milieu from its very beginning. The meeting of teachers and students from many different backgrounds and with quite diverse mentalities enriches the university family. By broadening their vision of the world, this permanent dialogue prepares the new generations to work in a global world, which needs to learn how to overcome misunderstandings and prejudices. The university thus becomes a school of peace and mutual understanding, helping to calm passions and uproot violence.

As the founder of the University of Navarra, St. Josemaría Escrivá,
insisted: “This world of ours will be saved—allow me to remind you—not by those who aim to drug the life of the spirit by reducing everything to a matter of economics or material well-being, but by those who have faith in God and in man’s eternal destiny, and who have received the truth of Christ as a light to guide their actions and conduct. Because the God of our faith is not a distant God who contemplates man’s lot with indifference. He is a Father who loves his children ardently, a Creator who overflows with affection for his creatures, and grants human beings the great privilege of being able to love him, and thus transcend all that is ephemeral and transitory.”[3]

In place of giving in to merely pragmatic goals, the university should constantly set forth on the search for truth, a path marked out by a love for the good and the beautiful. Although, in the short run, the attainment of immediate and limited results may seem profitable, the unconditional striving for transcendental values—for truth, goodness and beauty—has shown itself to always be fruitful. Here we find the key to the integral formation of young personalities, which the Founder entrusted to the University of Navarra as its mission.

Passion for the truth overcomes the temptation of relativism, which imposes as its norm of conduct whatever is most pleasing to each person at a given moment. This selfish individualism is the most distant attitude possible from the authentic commitment the university should foster. For just as the truth is the antidote to subjective opinion, openness to the good prevails over opportunistic self-interest, and the delight in beauty far surpasses merely emotional sentimentalism.

University education has to be forged on a deep vision of the human being. An anthropology open to transcendence requires the contribution of the various disciplines, with special emphasis on the humanities. The cultivation and teaching of theology and philosophy helps to ensure that the university is not reduced to a superficial search for information, but rather aspires to attain a balanced and complete vision of the person, while at the same time giving all due value to the applied sciences, which are always indispensable.
In its endeavor to form competent professionals, higher education does not try to provide its graduates with a merely selfish advantage, but to enable them to serve society more fruitfully. It does so by fostering the eagerness to know the truth, enthusiasm for cutting-edge research, a positive and constructive concern to build a more just society.

Young people at the university look to the example of those who have already advanced far on the path of knowledge and service. And they see that—even in an historical moment as complex as our own—it is possible to attain a high professional level through hard work while preserving a great respect for ethical values. Therefore we offer each of the three new doctors honoris causa our most sincere congratulations and gratitude for the shining example of their outstanding career in the search for truth, beauty and goodness. And we entrust the efforts of everyone at the University of Navarra to the protection of our Lady, Mother of Fairest Love.


Torna ai contenuti

Inauguration of the Academic Year, Pontifical University of the Holy Cross Rome, (October 10, 2011)

Your Eminences, Excellencies, and Illustrious Authorities

Professors, students, and all who work at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

Ladies and Gentlemen:

A few weeks ago, in the context of the recent World Youth Day celebrated in Madrid, I had the joy of taking part in the meeting of the
Holy Father with young university professors in San Lorenzo de El Escorial. I am sure that you have read and reread the words of Benedict XVI spoken during those unforgettable days, and that you have deeply assimilated the content of that speech, directed in a special way to us, because you who form part of this University were also present with me in spirit. Nevertheless, I think that the inauguration of this academic year will be even more fruitful if we meditate once again on the Pope’s words, so that they continue being a light that will bring to maturity, in our lives and in our university work, the motto of those days: “Rooted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in the Faith.”[1]

It is a great motive for joy, faith, hope, and optimism to see the positive effect brought about in so many men and women in the world of culture, by the Pope’s effort to make the intrinsic harmony between reason and faith shine forth. A good number of intellectuals, inspired by his magisterium and profoundly influenced by his love for the university, have recognized that a fully human culture can never exclude religion, and that being open to transcendent realities is indispensable for our society.

Another motive for special joy is the fact that this year we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Apollinare Institute for Advanced Religious Studies. The Institute, which Cardinal Pietro Palazzini, of venerable memory, promoted with penetrating pastoral foresight, was erected by the Congregation for Catholic Education on September 17, 1986. In 1988 the Servant of God, Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo, first Chancellor of our University, joyfully supported the petition of Cardinal Palazzini that the Institute be put under the academic guidance of the School of Theology, in order to offer the Church in Italy a well-qualified service in this area as well.

The words of the Pope to which I referred above encourage us to begin this new year of study and work with the deep awareness that we are “a link in that chain of men and women committed to teaching the Faith and making it credible to human reason.”[2] We should do so with the clear conviction that it is not sufficient to limit oneself to teaching or studying the various subjects: faith needs to be lived, incarnated every day.[3]
The orientation of our university work has to contribute to deepening the roots of faith and Christian life in ourselves and in today’s culture. Therefore, we need to be forewarned against the risk of seeing the university’s mission as purely utilitarian, limiting ourselves to forming competent and efficient professionals in the sacred sciences, giving priority to “purely technical skills” in the fields of teaching, pastoral government, church management or institutional communication.[4] No: ours is a much higher aspiration that goes beyond mere utility and immediate pragmatism.

In this “‘house’ where one seeks the truth proper to the human person”[5] — as Benedict XVI likes to define the university — we strive to enkindle and nourish apostolic yearnings and desires for intimacy with God. For as St. Josemaría wrote, “there is no human undertaking which cannot be sanctified, which cannot be an opportunity to sanctify ourselves and to cooperate with God in the sanctification of the people with whom we work.” And he added, in words that can be applied very well to university work: “To work in this way is to pray. To study thus is likewise prayer. Research done with this spirit is prayer too. We are always doing the same thing, for everything can be prayer, all activity can and should lead us to God, nourish our intimate dealings with him, from morning to night.”[6]

I am certain that you professors are convinced, as the Holy Father says, that “young people need authentic teachers: persons open to the fullness of truth in the various branches of knowledge, persons who listen to and experience in their own hearts that interdisciplinary dialogue; persons who, above all, are convinced of our human capacity to advance along the path of truth,”[7] the truth about God, man, society, and the Church.

You know very well that “this lofty aspiration is the most precious gift which you can give to your students, personally and by example,”[8] and always keep in mind that “teaching is not just about communicating content, but about forming young people. You need to understand and love them, to awaken their innate thirst for truth and their yearning for transcendence. Be for them a source of encouragement and strength.”[9] As St. Josemaría stressed on a memorable occasion, “a university properly speaking is not found where, together with the transmission of knowledge, no effort is made to provide an integral formation of the young
personalities.”[10] Therefore I repeat, with the Pope: “Be for them a source of encouragement and strength.”

In addition, those of you here who carry out non-teaching tasks—which are equally important—help to form the students to serve the Church better, by the example of your well-done work, your care for even the smallest details, capable of expressing a great love for God.

And finally I direct myself to you, dear students of this university. May you live “the years of your formation in deep joy, humbly, clear-mindedly and with radical fidelity to the Gospel, in an affectionate relation to the time spent and the people among whom you live.”[11]

At the beginning of the academic year, it seems important to me that all of us recall that the sanctification of university work—the reason why we are united here—entails a love for study, since “we cannot come to know something unless we are moved by love; or, for that matter, love something which does not strike us as reasonable.”[12]

At the same time, we have to love all those—professors, students, non-teaching personnel—with whom we share this task. Limiting oneself to a selfish desire to acquire knowledge would never be an authentic love.

We also know that the touchstone of love is suffering.[13] In moments when studying or getting along with others might seem more difficult, we need to persevere, not simply out of the desire to attain wisdom, but because we have the security that we are loved, “rooted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in the Faith.”

As St. Josemaría urged, the university, rooted firmly in Christ, “knows that objectivity in the search for knowledge justly rejects all ideological neutrality, all ambiguity, all conformism, all cowardice. Love for the truth guides the researcher’s entire life and work, and sustains his strength of spirit in the face of opposition, because this commitment and rectitude does not always receive a favorable reception in public opinion.”[14]

To make progress on the path of sanctification, which leads us to love perseveringly, firmly grounded in faith, one virtue is indispensable, expressly highlighted by Pope Benedict XVI in regard to intellectual and
teaching work: humility, which “protects us from the pride that bars the way to truth.”[15]

If we are humble we will know how to dialogue, because we will know how to listen. And we will be ready to acknowledge our mistakes. For “truth itself will always lie beyond our grasp. We can seek it and draw near to it, but we cannot completely possess it; or put better, truth possesses us and inspires us.”[16]

As St. Josemaría liked to say, humility is the truth,[17] and therefore it is an indispensable virtue for all those with the mission of cooperating in the spread of truth. Let us ask for this gift from Jesus, truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament, when we go to greet him in the Tabernacle, where he presides over this institution, and we will have the assurance of being firmly rooted in him.

Let us invoke our Lord, and also go to our Mother Holy Mary, Sedes Sapientiae, so that she make us humble but efficacious collaborators of her Son in the spread of the truth, throughout this academic year 2011-1012, which I now declare inaugurated.

Torna ai contenuti

Articles and Interviews

Interview on the Italian Eucharistic Congress, Zenit, Rome (September 12, 2011)

*Why is the Eucharist the “center and root of the life of every Catholic?”*

Putting the Eucharist at the center of Christian life means putting Christ at the heart of everything. In the Eucharist we are called to enter into the love of the Blessed Trinity. Making the Holy Mass the center of
our interior life, unites us to Jesus and, in him, to the whole Church, to all mankind.

This was the constant teaching of St. Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, who said: “If the Tabernacle is at the center of your thoughts and hopes, how abundant, my son, will be the fruits of holiness and apostolate!” The Eucharistic Jesus is the culmination of his gift of himself to mankind. Therefore, if we identify ourselves with him, he will transmit to us the same desire to increase our gift of self and our service to others.

*How important, in the charism of Opus Dei, is the practice of Confession and the Eucharist?*

In the spirit of Opus Dei, the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist have the importance the Church gives them: like all Catholics, we try to be penitent and Eucharistic, with the frequent practice of Confession and daily participation in Holy Mass.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is closely linked to the Eucharist. Confession entails the awareness of being sinners, with faith in God’s mercy. Jesus purifies us with his Blood shed on the Cross for us, so that we can participate more faithfully in the Sacrifice of Calvary that is made present each day in the Holy Mass.

Both sacraments fill the soul with joy and peace, just as the good thief, who could see Jesus with his own eyes on Calvary, felt impelled out of contrition to acknowledge his sins, and thus attained eternal salvation.

I insist: Confession has a very important role in Christian life, because it is a sacrament of joy and the entranceway to the peace and happiness found in the Eucharist.

*The [Italian] National Eucharistic Congress is underway. What suggestions do you have on how to make the practice of Confession and Communion more vibrant and widespread?*

The Church has always taught that in the Tabernacle we find strength, the strongest refuge against our fears and worries. It is not enough for each of us, individually, to seek and find our Lord in the Eucharist. We need to “infect,” by our witness, as many other people as possible, so that they too discover this incomparable friendship.
Spiritual communion is a great help in preparing for Eucharistic communion. In order to be men and women who are aware of our divine filiation, we need to receive Christ, if possible, every day.

As far as Penance is concerned, I consider it very important for priests to make themselves generously available to hear confessions: an available confessor, a confessional “with a green light,” is a “hand” reaching out to us for our conversion.

Regarding this point, Benedict XVI recently suggested that we follow “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 Mandich” (Address to the participants in a course organized by the Apostolic Penitentiary, 2011).

“A New Damascus,” an article published in Alfa y Omega, Madrid (July 28, 2011)

Saul of Tarsus, full of zeal for the law of Moses, and bringing letters from the highest authorities in the Jewish capital to the synagogues of Damascus, intended to arrest and bring back to Jerusalem everyone he could find—men and women who were followers of the “Way of Jesus.” But our Lord intervened. As Saul approached Damascus, a blinding light caused him to fall to the ground and he heard a voice: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” The young man replied: “Who are you, Lord?” And the voice told him: “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”

It had all happened so quickly on the way into Damascus. Ever since, that name—Damascus—has been a synonym for conversion, an opening to God’s grace. From that moment, Saul the persecutor—aided by a devout Christian in Damascus, Ananias—became the Apostle Paul. Freely responding “Yes” to the Lord, he was to be a faithful disciple and evangelizer of Jesus with a generous, cheerful struggle until death.

In a way, one could say that for many young men and women every World Youth Day is an opportunity to re-live the Damascus episode. The
Lord Jesus, through the words of his Vicar on earth, Benedict XVI, will speak to those who are ready to hear and provoke in them a new conversion, possibly a deep change in their lives.

From the Pope’s words, heard with faith, could come thousands of decisions to seek Jesus without changing one’s state in life (whether in marriage or apostolic celibacy), and vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

The Lord calls many—everyone, in fact—to the fullness of the Christian life by diverse paths. But it is necessary, as in St. Paul’s case, to have a heart open to God and to others that is acquired and deepened with the help of catechesis and of other persons (like Ananias) who can make sure that the Pope’s words take root in the soul.

Every saint (canonized or not) has had his Damascus, his moment of real conversion to God. Perhaps it was not as dramatic as St. Paul’s, but it was just as effective. It may have simply been a matter of replacing indifference with the gift of self, moving from a life of receiving to a life of giving. But however it happens, it is always accompanied by true happiness, so different from what material satisfactions can give.

I had the good fortune of living for many years close to a saint who said with conviction: “Madrid has been my Damascus. For that is where the scales fell from the eyes of my soul and I saw my mission.” I refer to St. Josemaría Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei.

Although born and raised in a different part of Spain (Aragón), it was in Madrid that God made known to him his mission to show all Christians that ordinary life—woven of hours of work well done, surrounded by family and friends, for the common good of society—can and ought to be a true path to sanctity.

Sensing that God wanted something from him but not knowing what it was, the young Josemaría had prayed for years, Domine, ut videam, “Lord, let me see,” the words of the blind man at Jericho in the Gospel. His soul received that sight on October 2, 1928, precisely in the city of Madrid.
It was through his generous service to the sick in the public hospitals of Madrid and those living in the poorest neighborhoods that his vocation first began to mature. Quite soon he was accompanied by a group of young people who “caught” his human and supernatural enthusiasm, and he began teaching them to sanctify their study, work, and all aspects of their daily life.

Many people have experienced their Damascus in Madrid, a city of saints and martyrs, and lay people who sought to imitate Jesus in their ordinary lives. For a few days, this is the city that will become the world capital of youth.

Above all, it will be the papal city. Benedict XVI guides us and leads us towards the Model of all the saints—Jesus Christ. Let’s give him the warmest of welcomes, praying for the fruitfulness of his pastoral visit and asking especially that many young women and men will sense that he is speaking directly to them and that they experience their Damascus during these days: a direct personal encounter with Jesus that changes their lives for the better.

At the beginning of his pontificate the Pope said: “Whoever lets Christ enter his life loses nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful, and great. Nothing at all! Only with this friendship do the gates of life open wide to the greatest potential of the human condition. Only with this friendship do we experience what is beautiful and what makes us free.”

We must be fully convinced that Christ takes from us nothing that makes life beautiful and great. Rather, He brings it to perfection for the glory of God, the happiness of men, and the salvation of the world.

Have recourse to the intercession of St. Josemaría, who is so closely linked with this city, and of Blessed John Paul II, who inspired the World Youth Days. May they draw down upon us from our Lord, through the intercession of our Lady of Almudena (Patroness of Madrid), showers of grace during these days.

May the Madrid World Youth Day be the Damascus for many young people who are ready to open their lives to Christ and to others, to serve as
Article “Faithfulness and Happiness,”
L’Osservatore Romano, Rome (August 18, 2011)

Madrid 2011, a New Starting Point

Ever since Blessed John Paul II, with great intuition, initiated the first World Youth Day in Rome, 26 years ago, we could say that each of these gatherings has been a “starting point” in the life of thousands of young people. They have come to know Jesus Christ better and have decided to give a new direction to their life, orienting it in a conscientious and mature way towards God and others, with the optimistic Christian vision proper to those who know themselves to be sons and daughters of God. For some of them, over time, that initial enthusiasm encountered the ordinary obstacles of our earthly path. But with God’s grace, many have attained the happiness that comes from being faithful: the “felicidad de la fidelidad,” two words that rhyme in Spanish, as St. Josemaría Escrivá used to say. Faithfulness is nothing other than the maturity of love over time. Indeed, many of the participants in the first world youth days were among the millions of people who came to Rome to say a last good-bye to John Paul II, a “good-bye” that was also a “thank you” and a plea: “continue helping us.”

The years have gone by and, now with Benedict XVI, the world youth days have continued their extraordinary ability to draw young people. This magnetism is not something artificial since, with the successor of Peter, it is Christ himself who is passing by. Christ’s look is directed at many, but, above all, at each individual, and that look is a flame that purifies and a love that calls. Many decisions of true dedication will come about, I am certain, to seek the high goal of Christian holiness in all circumstances: in married life, in apostolic celibacy, without changing one’s state in life, or in
embracing the priesthood or the religious life. The “thank you,” “continue helping us,” reaches heaven, through Peter, to be converted into deeds: “here I am!” “you can count on me!” This is the Christian response to Paul’s exhortation to the Colossians: As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in him (Col 2:6).

In St. Paul’s defense of the faith, in the passage from his letter that has been chosen as the motto for this World Youth Day, the Apostle speaks of vain philosophies and fallacies (Col 2:8). In this world of ours so torn by wars and rebellions linked to the uncertainties and injustices of life (a world we also have to love since it is the place where God in his infinite love has placed us), the world youth days bring us a breath of fresh air. Our global society, marked by technological innovation and constant change, shows that it is sensitive to truth and to hope. And it discovers in its midst so many young Catholics who suddenly recognize that they count for something, for a great deal: that they have to be the soul of society. We believe in God’s love, they say, and here we are.

Youth is a time for hope and adventure, a time for generosity. It is a moment when it is easier to see Christ as “man’s plenitude and the fulfillment of his longing for justice and peace,” as Benedict XVI said this past May 1. Madrid, as in past years Rome, Sydney, Cologne, Krakow, Toronto, Paris, Denver, Manila, Buenos Aires—among other cities—will be for many, I have no doubt, a call to build their life on Christ, to turn their own lives into service to others.

More than 80 years ago, Madrid was for St. Josemaria the place of a special meeting with God. In 1928 he saw that God was calling him to found Opus Dei, and in recalling that episode he would make reference to Christ’s call to Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus: “Madrid was my Damascus,” he would say, “because here the scales fell from the eyes of my soul and I received my mission.”

The young 26-year-old priest began to work untiringly among workers and students. He sought the strength he needed to carry out his mission among the sick and poor in the Spanish capital: spending hours traveling through the poor districts of the city every day, going from one place to another. While he tried to assist and encourage each person, he asked them
to offer their hardships and sufferings for the souls of the young people he was dealing with. The prayer of children, the poor, and the sick is especially pleasing to God. I am certain that those prayers of sick people back in the thirties, as well as those of so many persons who today are uniting their hearts to the World Youth Day, will sustain the young people who are preparing for their meeting with Peter in the streets of Madrid. They are the invisible force that will make Madrid a new Damascus for many.

During those years, St. Josemaría gave a book on the Passion of Christ to a young architecture student; and on the first page, he wrote these words of dedication:

“+ Madrid, May 29, 1933
May you seek Christ
May you find Christ
May you love Christ.”

I think that these brief phrases are a good summary of the experience of these world youth days, which bring Christ to the furthest corners of the world.

“Seeking Christ” defines the first step. Love always begins with a search, which leads to personal contact, intimacy: “It’s like courting,” St. Josemaría used to tell those young people. “A couple need to get to know each other well, for if they don’t, they will not really love each other. And our life is a life of Love” (The Forge, no. 545). One needs to open one’s heart: it’s not something mechanical that can be programmed. Pray that this happens with many young people, with the grace of the Holy Spirit and the help of true human friendship.

“Finding Christ” means being attached to him, ever more closely, as the branch to the vine (Jn 15:1-8). “Being built up in Jesus Christ,” explains Benedict XVI in his message for the 26th World Youth Day, “means responding positively to God’s call, trusting in him and putting his word into practice... Listen to him as a true friend with whom you can share your path in life.”
“Loving Christ,” finally, means finding the strength needed to love others, and to want to love always more. It means being “built up” in Christ, letting the Holy Spirit shape in us the image of the Word Incarnate, who offers himself for all men and women. The Pope’s words challenge us to seek forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, in order to receive Christ’s love—a sacrament that Benedict XVI himself will celebrate in Madrid, as an eloquent testimony to divine mercy. And this love means letting ourselves be loved by Jesus in the Eucharist, so as to bring him afterward to many other people.

I ask Our Lady of Almudena, Mother of God and our Mother, for myself and for everyone, that she obtain for us the joy of a new conversion, a new beginning on the path of faith, so that, knowing ourselves to be weak but at the same time strong in faith (Col 2:7), we may believe in the love of our Father God and feel ourselves to be truly daughters and sons of God in Christ.

+ Javier Echevarría

Prelate of Opus Dei
ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA
Devotion around the world

A plaque

In the archbishop's residence of Pamplona a plaque has been installed to recall the first retreat that St. Josemaría made after his crossing of the Pyrenees. The plaque reads: “In the month of December, 1937, after overcoming great suffering and danger during the religious persecution carried out in some parts of the country, through the unmistakable protection of our Lord and his most Holy Mother, St. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer spent some days of retreat in this Chapel, welcomed with paternal affection by the Most Rev. Marcelino Olaechea, Bishop of Pamplona.” During those days the founder of Opus Dei received abundant graces that filled his heart with overflowing affection for the Holy Eucharist, as mentioned in point 438 of his book The Way. The content of this point is the following: “Mad! Yes, I saw you (in the bishop's chapel, you thought you were alone) as you left a kiss on each newly-consecrated chalice and paten, so that he might find it there, when for the first time he would 'come down' to those Eucharistic vessels.”

A statue

In the parish of the Incarnation of our Lord, in Madrid, a statue of St. Josemaría has been venerated since last April. It is a wooden carving done by the Artemartinez religious art workshop, in Horche, Guadalajara.

Three bells

Shortly after the beatification of John Paul II, in May, three new bells were blessed in the baroque church of San Salvatore in Laura, in the historic central district of Rome. Each has been given the name of a contemporary saint, with a corresponding picture in bas-relief: Blessed John Paul II, St. Pius of Pietrelcina, and St. Josemaría Escrivá.
Dedication of public spaces

During these months, several Italian localities have commemorated the founder of Opus Dei by the dedication of a public space, as for example a square in Gizzeria (Calabria), a park in Messina, and a street in Milazzo (Sicily). A street has also been dedicated to St. Josemaria in Saragossa, the Spanish city where he received his priestly formation and the sacrament of Holy Orders.

The prayer card in new languages

The prayer card of St. Josemaria has been published in Bengali and Marathi, two of the official languages of India. It has also been published in Latin, the universal language of the Church. The translation of the prayer card into Mapuche, done by Professor Jeannette Paillao, was celebrated in the Chilean community of Chol Chol with a popular celebration that was reported on television. The prayer card of St. Josemaria can now be prayed in some sixty languages.

Other commemorations

On the fifth, sixth and seventh of August, the fortieth anniversary of St. Josemaria’s stay in Caglio, in the province of Lombardy, Italy, was commemorated. This is the site of the shrine of the Madonna di Campoe, where the commemorative acts took place. Father Valentino Viganò, pastor of the municipalities of Caglio, Sormano and Rezzago, wanted to celebrate the anniversary with a conference and video of St. Josemaria on Friday, the fifth, and with a photographic exposition on the saint on Saturday the sixth. The commemoration ended on August 7 with a Mass celebrated by Fr. Matteo Fabbri, Vicar of Opus Dei in Italy, in the ancient Romanesque shrine of the Villa Giuliani where St. Josemaria lodged in 1971. When the Mass was over, a plaque was unveiled at the entrance to the Villa, which
recalls that in that house, the founder of the Work felt in his heart, as coming from our Lord, the words “Adeamus cum fiducia ad thronum gloriae ut misericordiam consequamur,” which filled him with peace in moments of interior and exterior difficulties.

The Moncloa University Residence, which was founded under the direct impetus of St. Josemaría in 1943, celebrated the third Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer Conference on the Arts. On this occasion it included the participation of the poet and professor Carmelo Guillén Acosta. In the previous conferences the writers Carlos Pujol and Blanca García-Valdecasas were principal speakers. These conferences, organized by the Foundation Moncloa 2000, aim to bring together well-known writers who are recognized for the quality of their literary work, and for its deep Christian and human meaning.

Torna ai contenuti

New publications

New publications

Works of St. Josemaría

The following translations of works of St. Josemaría have been published for the first time: Friends of God in Arabic; Furrow and Friends of God in Lithuanian, and Holy Rosary and The Way of the Cross in Latvian.

In addition, in Hong Kong there has been published, in traditional Chinese, the interview “Women in Social Life and in the Life of the Church,” included in Conversations with Saint Josemaría Escrivá, and a prayer book with the text of The Way of the Cross (without the points for meditation) and Holy Rosary.

In Peru a special edition of Holy Rosary for children has been published with illustrations by Carmen García Véliz.
The first Chilean edition of *Conversaciones con Mons. Escrivá de Balaguer* has also been published.

*Works about St. Josemaría*

The biography of the founder of Opus Dei by Michele Dolz (*St. Josemaría Escrivá*) has been published in Hong Kong in Chinese (first edition) and in English (second printing). In Chile the book has been re-edited with a new design, 50 new photographs, a report on the two miracles, and a chapter on the canonization. The book is offered for sale together with a DVD on the founder. The Lisbon publisher Lucerna has published the same book in Portuguese.

Another Portuguese publisher, Aletheia, has published the second edition of *Uma Luz no Mundo*, by Hugo de Azevedo, but now with the title *St. Josemaría Escrivá*.

Continuing with new publications in Portuguese, this time in Brazil, the publisher Indaia of São Paulo has published the second edition of the book by Francisco Faus, *São Josemaría Escrivá no Brasil: esboços do perfil de um santo*. This edition includes new photographs.

In Poznan, Poland, the book *Przekroczy Marzenia*, the Polish version of *Dream and your Dreams will Fall Short*, has been published. In this work Fr. Pedro Casciaro presents some of his memories of St. Josemaría. The first edition of this book in Czech, entitled *Ani Ve Snu*, has also been made available to the public.

In St. Albans, England, the second volume of William Keenan’s biography of St. Josemaría was recently published under the title: *The Path through the Mountains: St. Josemaria Escriva and the Origins of Opus Dei*. In the first volume, he narrated the life of the founder of Opus Dei from his childhood until November of 1937. Now he continues from the middle of the Spanish Civil War up to his arrival in Rome in 1946.

In Slovenia, the publisher *Novi Svet* has published the Slovenian translation of *15 Days with St. Josemaría*, by Guillaume Derville.
The publisher Edicep, in Valencia, has offered Spanish speakers a translation of *Un Cammino attraverso il mondo*, by John Wauck, an anthology of texts by the founder of Opus Dei with commentary.

Finally, among the new items deserving mention is *iEscrivá*, an iphone application which not only allows one to consult the published works of St. Josemaría in five languages (Spanish, English, Italian, French and German), but also permits the insertion of personal notes, the fruit of study or reflection. It was developed by the Computer Innovation School in Rome, a center for computer instruction and research.

A University Chair in Rome

On December 12, 2011, at the request of the School of Theology, the Rector of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross has established the Chair of St. Josemaría in the Department of Spiritual Theology. In addition to fostering study of the teachings of the founder of Opus Dei in the area of spiritual theology, the chair will also consider the impact of these teachings on other ecclesiastical and secular disciplines.

Following the footsteps of St. Josemaría in Madrid

A few days before World Youth Day, the web page josemariaescriva.info published a guide to sites in Madrid closely connected with the life of St. Josemaría. The information was divided into four itineraries, each with a map and an explanatory text: one for August 18, another for the 19th, and two for the 20th. The itineraries for each day began at a place close to where the gathering with the Pope would take place, so that the young people could participate in those gatherings and,
either before or afterward, take a walk through the Madrid of St. Josemaría.

Among the places that the guide invited people to walk were the monastery of the Vincentians and the El Sotanillo café (first itinerary); the Foundation for the Sick, the apartment of the Escrivá’s on Martinez Campos street, the DYA Academy, the house of the Marquesa de Onteiro and the Porta Coeli asylum (the second); the General Hospital and the church of St. Elizabeth (the third); and the Bishop’s residence and the Basilica of St. Michael (the fourth). In many cases these sites no longer look like they did when St. Josemaría knew them.

Studying St. Josemaria in Japan

The University of Saint Thomas, situated in the prefecture of Hyogo in Japan, invited Rev. Toshihiro Sakai to coordinate several cycles of classes on the teachings of St. Josemaria. The classes were organized in two courses: an intensive course in the summer (from July 25 to 29), and another held on a weekly basis throughout the academic year. The sessions took place in the classrooms of the new church of Osaka Umeda.

In the summer course, Fr. Toshihiro spoke about the canonization of Justo Ukon Takayama to illustrate the universal call to sanctity, the core of the inspiration that St. Josemaría received from God on October 2, 1928, date of the foundation of Opus Dei. During his classes he spoke about each person’s possibility to be a Ukon Takayama of the twenty-first century.

In the second course, a number of speakers gave presentations throughout the year. In November, Fr. Sakai highlighted various aspects of St. Josemaría’s teachings, reminding people that holiness is not a goal reserved for a few extraordinary beings, but that everyone, with God’s grace, can attain it in their daily life. He cited the example of the married couple Tomás Alvira and Paquita Domínguez, and that of Alexia Gonzalez-Barros, whose biography in Japanese he himself published
several years ago. These three people have all had their cause of canonization begun.

Some thirty people attended the summer course, and around seventy attended the second one. One of the participants remarked: “I learned many things in these classes, especially the real possibility of becoming a saint through my ordinary life. I was also moved by seeing scenes of get-togethers with St. Josemaria, who spoke with great energy about love for Jesus and our Lady.”
News
Marian Family Congress at Torreciudad

On September 17, 2011, the Archbishop of Madrid and president of the Spanish Bishops’ Conference, presided over the 22nd Marian Family Congress at the Shrine of Torreciudad, an event which brought together some 16,000 people from all over the country in a festive and family atmosphere. The congress began at midday with the reading of the Prayer for Families and an offering to our Lady. Then Holy Mass was celebrated on the esplanade of the shrine.

Pope Benedict XVI sent a message to the participants exhorting them “to be a sign of hope for today’s society,” and encouraging spouses “not to give up in their effort to be a point of reference for their children, who need to discover in their constant example the face of true love.”

During the Eucharistic celebration the singing was provided by the choir from the parish of St. Josemaría Escrivá in Valencia, accompanied by the titular organist of the shrine, Maite Aranzabal. During his homily, the Cardinal said that “God is with man in an extraordinarily close and intimate way, so that we human being can make the path of our life a path of salvation and glory.” And he stressed that “to discover God’s closeness we need to take a first step of faith, to believe in Jesus Christ ‘firm in the faith,’ as Benedict XVI said to the young people a few days ago.”

The Archbishop of Madrid, speaking to the families present there, continued: “life is a beautiful and at the same time dramatic story, in which parents need to teach children to struggle, to overcome themselves, to fight against the insidiousness of evil. And victory means holiness, man’s true vocation.” The Cardinal ended by encouraging those present to “trust in our Lady, in Mary’s tender and maternal love, who never abandons us, for she is the Mother of Grace and of Mercy.”

After the Mass several musical events were held. The conference concluded with the traditional offering of children to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the praying of the Rosary in the esplanade, accompanied by the pilgrim statue of Our Lady of Torreciudad, and Benediction with the Holy Eucharist.
National TV channel 13 provided a live transmission of some of these activities in a program presented by Inmaculada Galvan and Fr. Javier A. Sandoica, noted for their work during the World Youth Day. The Conference could also be followed over the internet.

More than 200 volunteers helped out in the organization of the gathering: in providing parking and access to the shrine, in the nursery, in the accommodations for the pilgrims, in the information booths, and in the children’s play area. Dozens of priests manned the confessionals scattered throughout the shrine.

Honorary Doctorates from the University of Navarra in 2011

On October 27, the University of Navarra celebrated the award ceremony investing three outstanding scholars as honorary doctors. Those receiving the degree were the Hungarian Cardinal, Péter Erdő, Archbishop of Budapest; the Law Professor at New York University, Joseph H. H. Weiler; and the painter Antonio Lopez, who could not be present at the ceremony due to illness.

More than 450 officials and academics took part in the event celebrated in the Auditorium of the University and presided over by the Chancellor, Bishop Javier Echevarría. Another 370 people followed the ceremony from classrooms and halls in the Main Building.

The Prelate of Opus Dei emphasized that the three new doctors, each in his own specialty, shared “a deep bond” to the university institution.[1]

In regard to Antonio Lopez, one of the leading representatives of contemporary realism in Spain, and considered the father of the Madrid school of hyper-realism, he said that “his work is marked by an acute sense of being a researcher of reality, an attitude which enables him to readily recognize the imprint of God in creatures.”
Turning to Cardinal Péter Erdő, the Prelate emphasized his deep formation as a canonist and theologian and his close ties to academic life. “He has been, and is, an erudite historian and a great teacher of life.”

Finally he referred to Professor Joseph Weiler as one of the most prominent experts on the law of the European Union. “Currently he is a full Professor at New York University, as well as a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the author of numerous thought-provoking publications.”

The search for knowledge

After the presentation of the sponsors and the granting of the honorary doctorates, each of the new doctors delivered an address. In the case of Antonio Lopez, honored by the School of Architecture, a video produced for the occasion was shown and Juan José Aquerreta, an artist in conjunction with whom the new doctor gave the Painting Workshop at the University of Navarra, read his discourse.

In it he referred to the search for knowledge, which he saw as a shared commitment in his task as an artist and in the work of the university: “This search has been a constant and noble aspiration in mankind’s history. Goodness, beauty, intelligence, health: these ‘great gifts’ are granted by God in an unequal measure that we can never fully understand. But it is moving to see the effort of so many people to improve their life through knowledge.”

With respect to painting, he said: “it is there I have found people who have accompanied me and made me improve, and a kind of work that has connected me closely to the world.”

Inmaculada Jiménez, professor in the School of Architecture at the University of Navarra and the sponsor of Antonio Lopez, remarked that, although the artist was not an architect by profession, the School wanted to grant him its first honorary doctorate because he had taught professionals from this discipline “to view the city in a special way.” And she emphasized “the deeply ‘university’ personality of Antonio Lopez, who himself has said that he dedicated his work to the knowledge of the truth of reality.”

A singularly complete canonist
After receiving the honorary doctorate from the School of Canon Law, Cardinal Erdö (Budapest, 1952) gave a discourse entitled “The Principle of Primacy and its Technical Formulation in Canon Law,” in which he carried out a survey of the canonical expressions of the Petrine primacy. He stated that “this is a constant and fundamental element of the Church's structure, whose juridical timeliness has not been diminished in any way by the Second Vatican Council.”

The sponsor of the new doctor, Professor Eduardo Molano from the School of Canon Law, presented his biography and noted that it included “a long history of service to the Church, in which his excellent theological and juridical preparation has contributed to making him a great pastor and leader.”

Professor Molano emphasized the Cardinal's many contributions to Canon Law: “He is a singularly complete canonist, whose juridical production covers all the fields of canon law.”

*The relation between law and holiness*

For his part, the New York University Professor Joseph Weiler, who received an honorary doctorate from the School of Law, referred in his address to the relationship between law and holiness. “All of us view the ‘rule of law’ as a constitutive element of our paradigm of democratic values. Nevertheless, it is difficult for us to grasp its spiritual value and understand how it can be integrated into the idea of holiness.”

“The perspective of holiness is all-inclusive, it covers all spheres of life. Holiness embraces the family and the rhythms of work; it is central to religious fidelity and to charity in daily life.... The idea of the holy that we find in Leviticus is almost the opposite of Rudolf Otto’s concept of ‘the numinous.’ The Levitical idea is a juridical one. One lives in accord with the Divine by obeying His Law, in which the rational and ethical harmonize with the ineffable and ritual. It is an all-encompassing reality, a project for life.”

Joseph Weiler was praised by his sponsor, Professor Rafael Domingo, who outlined his prestigious professional career marked by “an itinerant and cosmopolitan spirit.” “His is a living synthesis, totally genuine and atypical, combining Jewish tradition, British scholarship, Italian genius and
American innovation, put at the service of the university in the most genuine sense of a community of seekers.” He added that “his supranational constitutionalism has played a key role in the process of the European Union’s integration,” and that “he has transcended the science of Law, to become a true theologian of justice.”

[1] His complete address can be found in the “From the Prelate” section of this issue of Romana.

Pontifical appointments

On September 23, 2011, Msgr. Joaquin Llobell Tuset was appointed Prelate of Honor of His Holiness.

New Centers of the Prelature

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

Aguascalientes, Mexico (2 Centers); Calgary, Canada (2 Centers); Colombo, Sri Lanka (2 Centers); Gijon, Spain; León, Spain; Poznan, Poland; Toluca, Mexico.

A book about Dora del Hoyo, Una luz encendida

Una luz encendida recounts the life of Dora del Hoyo, a woman who sought holiness in domestic tasks. “There is nothing better than to have used my hands to serve others,” she said. The book, published by Palabra, is written by Javier Medina (Portugalete, 1950).
Dora del Hoyo was born in a small village of Castille and Leon, Spain, in 1914. After finishing her elementary studies, she began at a very young age to work as a domestic employee. In 1939 she moved to Madrid, where she distinguished herself by her commitment and the quality of her work. In 1946 she requested admission to Opus Dei, and was the first numerary assistant in the Work. That same year, she moved to Rome. With her prayer and work, she was a great help to St. Josemaría Escrivá and to the expansion of Opus Dei throughout the world. The book gathers many testimonies of how, in exercising her work, Dora was an example for many young women of a person who sought sanctity according to the spirit of Opus Dei.

St. Josemaría had a great appreciation for his numerary assistant daughters, for their professional dedication to the tasks of the home in the centers of Opus Dei. He used to say that their work was, as it were, the “backbone” that supported all the apostolic work. And he added: “Work in the home is of such great importance! Besides, all human work can have the same supernatural quality: there are no great or small tasks; all of them are great, if they are done for love.”

Dora died the day before her 90th birthday. Her mortal remains repose in the Crypt of the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, in Rome, where the Servant of God Alvaro del Portillo, bishop and first successor of St. Josemaria as head of Opus Dei, is also buried. On October 11, 2011, Bishop Javier Echevarría published an edict inviting the faithful of the Prelature and anyone who so desires to provide information regarding the opening of her Cause of Canonization.

Other publishing news

Biographies of faithful of Opus Dei

Iñiguez Herero, José Antonio and Pablo Álvarez, Carlos Martínez, pescadero, Madrid, Palabra, 2011.


Published by the University of Navarra

Juan Flaquer Fuster, Jesus M. Gabirondo Aramendi, Tomás Gómez-Acebo Temes, Diego Gutiérrez, Enrique Reina Martín, Universidad de Navarra. 50 Tecnum: formando personas. San Sebastián, Universidad de Navarra, School of Engineering, 2011. A book commemorating the 50th anniversary of the School of Engineering at the University of Navarra.

Juan Chapa and Eduardo Flandes Aldeyturriaga (coord.), Jutta Burggraf 1952—2010, Pamplona, Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2011. Published on the occasion of the ceremony In Memoriam for Jutta Burggraf, celebrated on November 3, 2011, and organized by the School of Theology, to whose faculty the professor belonged since 1996.

Other publications


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 mortal remains of the Servant of God José María Hernández Garnica to the Church of Santa Maria de Montalegre, Barcelona (November 11, 2011)

The mortal remains of the Servant of God José María Hernández Garnica were transferred from the cemetery of Montjuic to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of the Church of Santa Maria de Montalegre. The ceremony took place on November 11, presided over by the Cardinal Archbishop of Barcelona, Luis Martinez Sistach. José María Hernández Garnica was one of the first three faithful of Opus Dei to receive priestly ordination, and is now in the process of canonization. The ceremony was attended by relatives and friends of his, and by many other faithful.

In his homily, the Cardinal cited St. Paul's Letter to the Romans on the calling of all the baptized to sanctity, saying that this is the first and fundamental vocation. This teaching was stressed by the Second Vatican Council, of which St. Josemaría is a notable precursor. Present at the ceremony were the Episcopal vicar of the district, Msgr. Joan Galtés, along with the members of the Tribunal designated by the Cardinal for this
Fr. Ramon Domenech, OFM, Delegate Judge; Msgr. Alejandro Marzo, Promoter of Justice; Ms. Chiara Rostagno, Actuarial Notary. Also present were the Vicar of the Prelature of Opus Dei in Spain, Msgr. Ramon Herrando; the Vicar of the Prelature of Opus Dei in Catalonia, Fr. Antoni Pujals; the Postulator of the Cause of Canonization, Fr. José Carlos Martín de la Hoz; the rector of the Church of Santa Maria de Montalegre, Fr. Francesc Perarnau; and a dozen other priests. The ceremony ended with the singing of the *Virolai* (a hymn to our Lady of Montserrat).

Fr. José Maria Hernandez Garnica was born in Madrid in 1913, and held degrees in mining engineering and in natural sciences. He defended his doctoral thesis in moral theology at the Lateran Pontifical University of Rome, on “Morality in Systems of Financial Intervention,” directed by the then Professor (later Cardinal) Pietro Palazzini.

He asked for admission to Opus Dei a year before the outbreak of the Spanish civil war, and received priestly ordination in 1944. St. Josemaría especially entrusted to him the pastoral work of assisting the apostolic activities of Opus Dei with women, at the same time as he dedicated himself to many other priestly duties. Later he exercised his priestly ministry in Great Britain, Ireland, France, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, and Holland, adapting himself to very different mentalities and environments.

He died in Barcelona, in 1972, with a reputation for holiness. He had moved to Barcelona some months before this to be treated for the cancer of the tongue that, in the end, he did not survive.

25th Anniversary of the Institute of Religious Sciences at the Apollinare in Rome

Every Christian has a duty to take part actively in public life, in accord with “each one’s possibilities and talents,” said Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco,
president of the Italian Bishops Conference. He was speaking at the
ceremony commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Istituto Superiore di
Scienze Religiose all’Apollinare (ISSRA), celebrated on November 12th at
the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. Also taking part in the
gathering was Professor Sergio Belardinelli from the University of Bologna
who spoke on “Room for Religion in a Postmodern Society.” He stressed
that “in a world which no longer seems to recognize any difference between
truth and error, or worse still, between truth and falsehood, the primordial
task is that of keeping alive the very idea of truth.”

During the academic ceremony, the new master’s program in “Religion
and Society” was announced, slated to begin in January 2012. Professor
Marco Porta, director of the Institute at the University of the Holy Cross,
said that the new master’s program would pay special attention “to the
present day crisis of anthropology, ethics and politics,” along with other
crucial questions including “multiculturalism, religious pluralism, and the
relationship between the Magisterium and the laity who participate
actively in public life.”

The conference continued with a photographic exposition on the
history of the Institute and testimonies from some of the students who
have been formed there. In conclusion, Msgr. Angelo Vincenzo Zani
(Undersecretary for the Congregation for Catholic Education), celebrated
Holy Mass in the Basilica of St. Apollinaris.
In Brief
Fiftieth Anniversary of the Farm School “El Peñon,” Morelos, Mexico

The family farm school El Peñon has completed a half century of educational work. In the nineteen fifties, a group of businessmen, concerned about the lack of educational facilities in the agricultural areas of Mexico, created in Morelos the Asociación Civil Campo y Deporte (Association for Agriculture and Sports), which in turn founded the El Peñon Research Center for Agriculture and Stock-raising in the valley of Amilpas. In 1961, El Peñon gave its first practical course in agriculture and care of farm animals. Ten years later it opened its televised secondary school, which has graduated 1,846 students. And in 1984 it inaugurated a technical school for agriculture and stock-raising, which has seen 706 students graduating. Today about 400 students of high school level make the daily trip from nearby villages and towns to study and take part in sports at El Peñon.

It has been calculated that the total population that El Peñon reaches, with a positive effect on human development and quality of life, is close to three hundred thousand people. Among other things, statistics show that the levels of alcoholism, divorce, teenage pregnancy, and unwed mothers in Jonacatepec, the municipality where El Peñon is located, are the lowest in the state of Morelos.

In the classroom and on the sports field

1998 saw the beginning of the Atlas-El Peñon soccer school, which has already won the Copa Fortaleza, a prestigious tournament in Mexico. “Through sports the boys discover that they have the same level of competence as the young people living in the city... This gives a strong boost to their outlook on life and their ability to relate to others. Winning out in the academic field as well then becomes a realistic goal for them,” said Hector Lucio, the director of El Peñon.

The school fosters the students’ desire to attain excellence in both academics and sports, but above all seeks to foster their human and moral formation. Students receive classes in English, mathematics, biology,
chemistry, etc., and are helped to grasp the importance of key human virtues, in coordination with the students’ parents.

In the academic realm, the ENLACE 2010 test, developed by the Department of Public Education, gave El Peñón’s high school degree first place in the state, both in mathematical skills and reading comprehension. On the national level, El Peñón came in 19th place in mathematics and 45th in reading, which placed it among the top high schools in Mexico. In the school year 2002—2003, El Peñón was recognized by the National Center for Higher Education as having the best secondary school with televised classes not only in Morelos but in the whole country.

Due to deficiencies in English that students at El Peñón still suffered from after their high school course, in the 2006-2007 school year an agreement was made with a prestigious language instruction group, which has enabled the students to graduate now with the required bilingual skills.

**St. Josemaría Escrivá and El Peñón**

The spiritual formation imparted at El Peñón is entrusted to the Prelature of Opus Dei. The aim is to transmit to the students the spirit of work that is well done, out of love for God. St. Josemaria, right from the start, encouraged the formative and educational work being carried out at El Peñón. In 1970, during his stay in Mexico, he visited the school. Referring to the difficult social situation the small farmers faced, he said: “Everyone, yourselves and us, are concerned that you better your life and get out of this situation, so that you don’t have your way blocked by financial difficulties. We are going to help your children acquire the human culture they need; you will see how we will accomplish this together, and that those with talent and a desire to study will reach a high level.”

**The parents**

The School for Parents opened its doors in 1993. It has as its goal to help families reinforce the values that the students learn at El Peñón, as well as to improve communication with the children and to better understand the emotional and social changes that the young people are going through. As Alma, the mother of one of the students, said: “We learn how to talk to them and to get to know them better, since often there hasn’t been good communication, and we haven’t been able to find the
right words to reach them.”

*Commemoration of the Fiftieth Anniversary*

To commemorate El Peñon’s fiftieth anniversary, on November 3 an event was held at the Pan-American Business School (IPADE), one of the principal promoters of this social initiative. The event was attended by major figures from the country’s political life, including Marco Antonio Adame, Governor of Morelos; Heriberto Felix Guerra, from the Secretariat for Social Development in Mexico (SEDESOL); and Ismael Ariza, Municipal President of Jonacatepec and former student of El Peñon, who, accompanied by Msgr. Francisco Ugarte, Vicar of Opus Dei in Mexico, Alfonso Bolio, General Director of IPADE, Hector Lucio, General Director of El Peñon, and Victor Lachica, president of the Foundation, granted awards in recognition of many years of service to workers who have been with El Peñon for the longest time.

During the celebration, Msgr. Ugarte read a letter from the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, sent to El Peñon on the occasion of its fifty years of activity. In part this reads: “On glancing back over these past decades, how many reasons we find to raise or hearts in gratitude to God! Besides the awards and recognitions, you have earned other, more important ones, which should make you proud: the service provided to so many families, the development promoted in your land, and the work carried out with joy and effort.”

The keynote speaker for the event was the Director of the Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development (OCDE) for Mexico and Latin America, José Antonio Ardavín. He recalled the words of St. Josemaría cited above to emphasize that, with the passage of years, that dream is now becoming a reality.

*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

Lima, Peru. Seminar on social responsibility

During October and November, the Los Andes Cultural Center, in Lima, organized a seminar for university students entitled “Inclusive Business Challenges.” Its goal was to foster understanding of the social conflicts that exist in the country, examine their causes, and present possible solutions. The seminar was organized with the assistance of the PAD School of Management at the University of Piura. Those taking part included professors from this institution and business people who are trying to put into practice an equitable way of doing business, attentive to the real needs of the society around them.

Nairobi, Kenya. At the Waruku School
Every Saturday afternoon during the school year, the Faida Club of Nairobi has carried out a personalized study review program in a primary school in the Waruku district. The school, which now has over 300 children, lacks both electricity and a sufficient number of textbooks and other material for the pupils. The girls from Faida Club help the students to come to grips with the subjects they find most difficult. They have also organized collections to buy books and other teaching materials, and make visits to the children’s families.

Warsaw. Reflections on the education of children

The Third Congress on Education organized by the EASSE association took place in Warsaw on October 7 and 8. Some 400 people took part in the sessions, representing 15 countries. They discussed key factors influencing the quality of primary and secondary education, as well as the importance of guaranteeing parents the choice of the educational model for their children.

Madrid. Harambee prize for advancement and equality

On October 27, the NGO Harambee-España awarded the “Harambee Prize for the Advancement and Equality of African Women, 2011” to Christiane Kadjo from the Ivory Coast. This award seeks to honor physical, juridical or moral persons who have carried out a humanitarian, cultural or educational work in benefit of African women and who have fostered greater sensitivity for the rights and equality of women.

This year’s recipient has a degree in Business and Management Sciences from the Higher Institute of Technology in Abidjan. She has
worked in businesses in Ivory Coast and Paris, and in financial institutions such as the BICICI (Banque Internationale pour le Commerce et L'Industrie de la Côte d'Ivoire), where she held various management posts. Later she dedicated herself to the formation and advancement of women in the Ivory Coast. Together with other Ivorians, she created the NGO “Association for Education and Development,” which has constructed centers of professional formation in the poorest districts of Abidjan and Yamoussoukro, the two principal cities of the country, where the majority of the refugees who lost everything in the recent war have congregated. Besides offering professional formation to obtain a degree that provides access to employment, the association organizes numerous short courses for adults aimed at offering women the tools needed to earn their living in a way that respects their dignity. Along with courses in weaving, nutrition, dress making, management, baking, etc., there are others on health, human rights, equality between men and women, literacy, AIDS prevention, etc.

The prize is one of the initiatives organized in various countries by the Harambee project, which originated on October 6, 2002, in connection with the canonization of St. Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei.

São Paulo, Brazil. Catholics in public life

A group of professionals and students gather each week at the Sumaré University Study Center to discuss various social questions in the light of Catholic doctrine. The study group has as its focus the words of Benedict XVI at the Brazilian Shrine of Aparecida, in 2007, where he encouraged the laity to “fill the notable gap, in the political, communications, and university spheres, of voices and initiatives of Catholic leaders with a strong personality and selfless vocation, who are consistent with their ethical and religious convictions” (May 13, 2007).

The participants are university students and recently graduated professionals in the fields of management, law, philosophy and the social sciences. While most are Catholics, members of other Christian groups,
Jews, etc. also take part. They are united by their eagerness to prepare themselves to better defend fundamental human values in social life.

Topics of study have included, for example, the directives of the Holy Father on the relations between Church and State contained in his address to the British Parliament in Westminster Hall on September 17, 2010, and in his recent addresses to the Bundestag in Berlin on September 22, 2011. Besides the weekly gatherings, moderated by Professor Marcus Boeira (a professor of political science, with a doctorate from the University of São Paulo), once a month a chapter of the *Nichomachean Ethics* is studied, in the light of a Thomistic philosophical anthropology.

**São Paulo, Brazil. Symposium on Bioethics**

During the second semester of 2011, the Estela Cultural Center organized its “First Symposium on Bioethics,” aimed especially at professionals in the fields of health and law. This is the first in a series of conferences scheduled to be held each year. The series seeks to provide guidance on the principles of natural law and Christian morality in problems related to bioethics.

Dr. Ieda T. Verreschi, Academic Director of the Federal University of São Paulo and a member of São Paulo’s Regional Medical Council, was the sponsor for this year’s symposium. Coordination was handled by Dr. Marília de Siqueira, a specialist in gynecology and obstetrics. The visiting lecturer was Dr. Elisabeth Kipman Cerqueira, director of the “Jacareí Interdisciplinary Center of Bioethical Studies” in São Paulo.

The lectures focused on a personalist bioethics and the dignity of women, and on the recourse to conscientious objection in certain cases.

**Rio de Janeiro. Seminar for fathers**
The Polaris Boys Club—connected with the Tijuca University Center—is an initiative of fathers who want to take a more direct role in the formation of young people. As its director, Marcelo Martins, explains: “If we want to form young people well, it is of great importance, as St. Josemaría taught, to first assist their parents, so that they can transmit authentic values to their children.” In this regard, one of the first activities of the youth center was a seminar entitled “Love Is Forever,” directed to the boys’ parents. Some 150 people took part, among them teachers and directors of schools from the Tijuca area. After the conference, a number of parents enrolled their sons in the club, and others expressed interest in beginning similar initiatives in other parts of the city.

London. Annual Conference at the Thomas More Institute

The Thomas More Institute in London has inaugurated the “Thomas More Annual Lecture.” The first conference was given by Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Westminster, on December 7th, in the Netherhall House auditorium. The Archbishop began by citing words of Benedict XVI in Westminster Hall on September 17, 2010: “religion is not a problem for legislators to solve but a vital contribution to the national conversation.”

Religion—mankind’s relationship with God—is a necessity of the soul, as St. Thomas More wrote: “Man cannot be separated from God, nor politics from morality.” Archbishop Nichols pointed out three ways in which religion in general, and the Catholic Church in particular, contributes to British society today: first, by solidifying the local community, a community that is both cohesive and open, inspired by universal values and respectful of particular needs; in second place, by helping in the search for the meaning of human life, for “like the environment, we human beings have an ecology that we must respect to survive”; and in third place, by assisting the poor and marginalized—for example, through the diocesan Caritas organization. During the
conference (which was covered by the national press and by various Catholic and local media), the Archbishop reflected in a particular way on the significance of the human ecology suggested by Benedict XVI.

Nairobi, Kenya. Film event in Nairobi

The movie *There Be Dragons*, directed by Roland Joffé, was premiered at Strathmore University on November 21, with the presence of the British director and more than 300 invitees. Among them were Kenyan movie directors, bishops, personalities from the cultural and business sectors, as well as many professors and students from the university. At the end of the showing, and after long applause, Joffé answered questions from the audience. A national film director asked him about the historical background for his best films. Joffé explained that history is important because it demonstrates first of all the value of personal freedom, and the impact that our decisions have. “One learns a lot from history, from the mistakes and horrors of the past,” he said. “At the same time, films with this focus present to the public the profound changes that human sacrifice and love can make, through the hidden heroism of many good people.”

During his stay in the country, Joffé visited three educational institutions begun in response to the impetus of the founder of Opus Dei: Strathmore University, Kianda Girls High School, and Kimlea Girls Training Centre (a rural technical school), all three pioneers of multiracial education in Kenya. Joffé had the opportunity to speak with teachers and students, and also to visit some families who were benefiting from the social and educational activity of these institutions.

During his visit to Kianda Girls High School, a student asked him about the title of his most recent film. “This film,” said Joffé, “is about human weakness—the dragons we all have inside, against which we have to struggle. People today are trying to find a way to control these dragons through science, through diet and nutrition.... In short, we are forgetting about personal freedom and the need to fight against our own defects. Two things are very difficult in life: to love and to forgive. It is easier to hate
than to love. A very beautiful teaching that we find in St. Josemaría is the invitation that he addresses to everyone to do things very well out of love.”

Warsaw. University students in the “Forum Filtrowa”

The Osrodek Akademicki Przy Filtrowej, a corporate apostolic work of Opus Dei dedicated to the formation of university students in Warsaw, organized during the academic year a cycle of conferences under the title “Forum Filtrowa,” on various ethical questions being debated in the university environment. Some of the meetings took place at the center and others in university classrooms, with national and foreign speakers. About a hundred people, mostly professors and students, took part. The Forum continued with a five-day summer course for university students in Krakow.

Palma de Mallorca, Spain. Finance and honesty

More than a hundred people involved in running businesses took part the Eighteenth Study Conference organized by the Ariany University Center in Palma de Mallorca. The conference was held at the Llaüit School, in the ParcBit technological park. Inaugurating the event were the Vice President for Finance of the Balearic Islands, Josep Ignasi Aguilo, the President of the Council of Mallorca, Maria Salom, and the Vice Rector of the Universitat de les Illes Balears, Victor Cerdà.

Sociology Professor Alfredo Rodriguez Sedano, from the University of Navarra, said in his presentation that “the economy functions through trust, and if trust breaks down a recession can easily result.” Professor Rodriguez Sedano emphasized the importance of business people acting
with moral rectitude and transmitting to young people a business culture that seeks to serve society and generate employment. In contrast, when the goal of the majority of businesses becomes that of “earning money in any way possible,” he said, “the economy in the country is severely weakened.”

Oofunato, Japan. With the tsunami victims

During the month of September, twenty-five university and high school students took part in a work camp in the city of Oofunato, in the north of Japan. This was one of the communities most affected by the devastating tsunami after the earthquake the previous March. The organizers of this solidarity project were Seido International Residence (Ashiya), Yoshida Student Center (Kyoto), and Seido Mikawadai Gakuin (Nagasaki). The city’s Center for Volunteers coordinated the clean-up work that the volunteers carried out both in Oofunato and in nearby villages.

Since there were no trains (the rail line was destroyed by the 27 foot high wave), the trip was made by bus (nine hours from Tokyo). More than a hundred students from different parts of the country eventually came to work as volunteers. Many of them took advantage of their weekly day off to travel in the early hours, work during the day, and return that same night to their home city.

The work involved cleaning out the system for collecting rainwater in various villages of the surrounding area. Those students who wished also had an opportunity to attend means of human and spiritual formation. The city residents did everything possible to make the volunteers’ stay as pleasant as possible.

Pamplona, Spain. Antonio Fontán, teacher of freedom
On October 7, the University of Navarra honored Professor Antonio Fontán, who died on January 14, 2010. He was president of the Senate in the first legislative session of the Constituent Cortes and one of the signers, along with the King, of the 1978 Constitution. The ceremony honored a professional life filled with academic and social accomplishments, including the creation of the Institute of Journalism at Pamplona (the present School of Communications). During his lifetime he was recognized as a “Hero of the Freedom of the Press,” receiving an award from the International Press Institute. Various speakers pointed to the Christian humanism permeating Fontán’s life and work. The rector of the University of Navarra, Ángel J. Gomez-Montoro, in closing the ceremony, emphasized the generosity with which Antonio Fontán had served his country through “his unique and multi-faceted gifts in the realm of the university, journalism and politics.”

All the interventions from this academic ceremony are collected in: Yolanda Cagigas Ocejo (coordinator), Academic Ceremony in memory of Prof. Antonio Fontán, Madrid, University of Navarra — Marqués de Guadalcanal Foundation. Another publication related to this commemoration is the collection of letters between Antonio Fontán and Agustin Lopez Kindler, between 1989 and 1909, under the title: Antonio Fontán, confidencias y afanes de madurez, Madrid, Marqués de Guadalcanal Foundation - University of Navarra, Eduardo Fernandez (editor), 2011.

Montevideo, Uruguay. Homage to John Henry Newman

On August 29-30, the first “Conference on Humanism and the University” was held at the University of Montevideo. This first edition was a homage to Blessed John Henry Newman (1801-1890), author of such works as The Idea of a University, Grammar of Assent and An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine. The organizers emphasized Newman’s strong defense of the university as “the appropriate environment for the integral education of the human being,” Newman, founder and first
president of the Catholic University of Dublin, had great hopes for a university committed to the truth.

The main speakers were Pádraic Conway (director of the International Center for Newman Studies and Vice President of University College, Dublin), Msgr. Fernando Maria Cavaller (President of the Association of Friends of Newman in Buenos Aires, Argentina) and Maria del Rosario Athié (professor at the Panamerican University, Guadalajara, Mexico).

The series of conferences seeks to reflect on the importance of the humanities in the integral formation of the person in the search for truth.
IN PACE
Suffrages for the deceased

In the second half of 2011, 364 faithful of the Prelature and 15 members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross passed away.

Suffrages 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.

Torna ai contenuti
A study
St. Josemaría, a Teacher of Forgiveness (Part 2)

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In the first part of this study we discussed St. Josemaría’s teaching about forgiveness, its place in the message of Opus Dei, and how the Founder of the Work lived it personally. Special emphasis was placed on the “liberating newness” of forgiveness and its direct connection with charity. The Christian’s response, says St. Josemaría, should be “to drown evil in an abundance of good” and to open wide one’s arms to all humanity as did Jesus Christ the priest. In this second part we will consider some key ideas from the homily “Christian Respect for Persons and their Freedom.” Then we will look at how St. Josemaría reacted towards calumnies in his own life. Finally, the study will end with a reference to the practice of forgiveness in contemporary society in striving to foster a culture of peace.

1. The homily “Christian Respect for Persons and their Freedom”

a) The overall context


This homily, a meditation on Christian charity, understanding and forgiveness, also includes a reflection on certain events that had left a deep imprint on his own heart, meditated on in the light of charity and a love for freedom and justice.

The connecting thread is the identification of the Christian with Christ in the exercise of charity. “The charity of Christ is not merely a benevolent sentiment for our neighbor... Poured out in our soul by God, charity transforms from within our mind and will. It provides the supernatural foundation for friendship and the joy of doing what is right.”[1] St. Josemaría referred to this progressive transformation of the person who draws close to Christ as “good divinization,”[2] which enables us to overcome evil with good.
The origin of the homily seems to be the misunderstandings that can arise from the “mistaken idea that grants to the public... the right to know and to judge the most intimate details of the lives of others.”[3] He speaks movingly of the twisted interpretation of the actions of other people, who “time and again, over a number of years... have served as a bull’s eye for the target practice of those who specialize in gossip, defamation and calumny.”[4]

St. Josemaría was referring here to his own experience in spreading the message of Opus Dei. The great majority of people understood him, while others who did not share his apostolic methods respected the Founder and his apostolates. “But there will always be a partisan minority who are ignorant of what I and so many of us love. They would like us to explain Opus Dei in their terms, which are exclusively political, foreign to supernatural realities, attuned only to power plays and pressure groups. If they do not receive an explanation that suits their erroneous and twisted taste they continue to allege that here you have deception and sinister designs.”[5]

The calumnies stemmed above all from two sources. First, the inability to understand the novelty of the message of the universal call to holiness in the middle of the world[6] and a certain jealousy regarding the Founder’s apostolic work[7] The second source was the tendency to confuse Opus Dei with a new political or pressure group, erroneously attributing to the Work the free actions of its members in their professional or political activity.[8]

It is in this context that he presents his view of Christian freedom and the right to protect one’s own intimacy, and the harm done to both of these goods by others’ calumnies. At the end, he returns to the connecting thread, charity. When love for God is present, there will also be love for neighbor, respect for each person. “Christian charity cannot be limited to giving things or money to the needy. It seeks, above all, to respect and understand each person for what he is, in his intrinsic dignity as a man and child of God.”[9]

*b) Freedom, the right to defend one's personal privacy and to be oneself*. One of the central messages of St. Josemaría is the call to freedom:[10] the defense of the freedom of the children of God. God created human
beings free and responsible, which in the context of society gives rise to pluralism. Thus understood, pluralism is a source of human richness. [11] But it can also be a source of conflicts, if there are attacks on freedom or if there is a lack of justice and charity. St. Josemaría insisted that we have to respect the intrinsic dignity and freedom of each person, and therefore the pluralism and legitimate differences that can arise.

The right to protect one’s personal privacy, to not be forced to publicize one’s private life, is indispensable to safeguard freedom of action. St. Josemaría spoke of the violation of this right and the need to defend it: “Faced with traders in suspicion who prey on the intimacy of others, we must defend the dignity of every person, his right to peace.”[12]

In his defense of the right to protect one’s privacy and reputation, he invoked the common ground of human dignity, where all persons meet independently of their beliefs. “All honest men, Christians or not, agree on the need for this defense, for a common value is at stake: the legitimate right to be oneself, to avoid ostentation, to keep within the family its joys, sorrows and difficulties. We are defending, no less, the right to do good without publicity, to help the disadvantaged out of pure love, without feeling obliged to publicize one’s efforts to serve others.”[13]

Calling oneself a Christian is no guaranty of acting out of charity: “We cannot be surprised that many persons, even those who think themselves Christians, act in the same way. Their first impulse is to think badly of someone or something. They don’t need any proof; they take it for granted. And they don’t keep it to themselves; they air their snap judgments to the winds.”[14]

The message of Opus Dei needs freedom as one needs oxygen to live. Since it proclaims the universal call to holiness through the sanctification of work, the family and social relationships, freedom is a prerequisite, the only atmosphere suitable for its message.

But not everyone can understand this radical Christian freedom. This failure to understand is also what lies at the origin of many calumnies. On a level visible to all, the first victim is the person’s good reputation. On a deeper level, as St. Josemaría perceived, the true victim is the freedom and respect due to each person.
St. Josemaría was thus led to become an untiring defender of freedom: “You can bear out that 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.”[15]

He then points to the widespread acceptance today of suspicion as the default attitude, the presumption of the other person’s guilt. This acceptance has been aggravated by some people’s misuse of the media, which have become at times true vehicles of injustice. The norm of suspicion seems to be gaining a foothold today in many aspects of personal, social and economic relationships, and trust is a declining value.

St. Josemaría writes: “Thus, for example, a familiar way of arguing assumes that everyone acts from motives that leave something to be desired. Following this gratuitous train of thought, one is obliged to pronounce a mea culpa over his own actions, to indulge in self criticism. And if someone does not sling a ton of mud upon himself, his critics immediately assume that, in addition to being a devious villain, he is also hypocritical and arrogant.”[16]

The words of St. Josemaría resonate today with the same force and timeliness as back then,[17] pointing to the importance of grounding interpersonal relations on truth and charity, as the only way of generating trust in the social body.

c) Charity: from darkness to the light

St. Josemaría then considers the reactions of the person offended, and how to confront calumnies with a Christian spirit, with an attitude of forgiveness. He describes how, by coming to know Jesus, one begins a path of personal transformation that leads to perceiving the dignity of each person, and consequently to a change in one’s outlook and relationships. One begins to live the justice and charity that lead to respecting and loving all men and women, and showing it with deeds.

St. Josemaría compares the effect of charity to the passage from blindness to seeing with a new light. “Among those who do not know
Christ, there are many honest persons who have respect for others and know how to conduct themselves properly and are sincere, cordial and refined. If neither they nor we prevent Christ from curing our blindness, if we let our Lord apply the clay which, in his hands, becomes a cleansing salve, we shall come to know earthly realities and we shall look upon the divine realities with new vision, with the light of faith. Our outlook will have become Christian.”

Considering the scene of the cure of the man born blind narrated by St. John, he focuses on the persons who take part in the cure: Jesus, the disciples and the Pharisees. “Specifically, let us try to see that, when there is love of God, a Christian cannot be indifferent to the lot of other men. He must show respect in his dealings with all men. For he knows that when love shrinks, there arises the danger of thoughtlessly, mercilessly invading the conscience of others.”

Those taking part in the Gospel scene each look at the blind man from the perspective of their own heart. Jesus looks with eyes of mercy and wants to cure him; the disciples ask Jesus what sins were the cause of the man’s blindness, those of the person himself or those of his parents, taking for granted (as was habitual in the religious-cultural context of the time) that anyone suffering from a malady had done something wrong. The Pharisees, in turn, don’t want to accept what their eyes are telling them, and try to “coerce” the reality, to make it conform to their own prejudices.

St. Josemaría describes the gradual transformation of the disciples through their contact with Christ, and the obstinate closure to God on the part of Pharisees. In the former we see how God’s love truly transforms people, changing their way of relating to others. The latter, in closing their eyes to God’s light, are unable to see the blind man as their brother, and expel him from the synagogue, for “this closed mindedness immediately affects our relations with others.”

Thanks to his contact with Christ, the blind man recovered his sight, while the disciples passed from darkness to the light: “As they come to know the Master better, and realize what it means to be a Christian, their thoughts are gradually tempered by understanding.” On their part, the Pharisees refused to let go of their blindness, convinced, like so many
others, that whoever nurtures suspicions is right and is superior to others. Christ restored light to the blind man and transformed his disciples, but was unable to reach the Pharisees, respecting their freedom.

In the final section of the homily, St. Josemaría invites the reader to accept offenses with a Christian spirit, with the resolution “not to judge others, not to doubt their good will, to drown evil in an abundance of good... Let us forgive always, with a smile on our lips. Let us speak clearly, without hard feelings, when in conscience we think we ought to speak. And let us leave everything in the hands of our Father God, with a divine silence... if we are confronted with personal attacks.”

2. Attitude in the face of calumnies

We will now look at how St. Josemaría lived forgiveness in his own life and how he reacted to offenses against his own person.

The calumnies against him began when the Work, founded in 1928, was starting to become known during the thirties in Madrid. After the Spanish civil war, the attacks became especially severe during the forties and fifties. Among others, Bishop Pedro Cantero provides the following witness: “the violence of those calumnies and attacks was such that, if the Work had been something merely human, it would have been destroyed or left in tatters.” The attacks continued in the sixties and right to the end of his life in 1975.

We want to focus on these events for several reasons:

First, the constancy of the calumnies and each new attack required St. Josemaría to live charity and fortitude in a heroic way. The testimonies of those who knew him and his writings show that his attitude in the face of the offenses was always one of charity. As Cardinal Bueno Monreal recalled, “here perhaps Josemaría found an opportunity to mature, growing in the heroic practice of charity.”

Second, this entire period is linked to the foundational work of St. Josemaría: spreading the message of Opus Dei, explaining its spirit, protecting its charism and clarifying its canonical framework within the Church. The calumnies rose up as an obstacle to the expansion of the Work, yet at the same time were intertwined with that first expansion.
The third reason is that the attacks frequently came from other Catholics, including churchmen who (even while disagreeing with his point of view, his apostolic methods, or his spirituality) should have treated him with charity. This fact made these attacks all the more painful, and quite different from those that occurred during the civil war, when he was persecuted simply for being a priest.

In fourth place, the especially offensive nature of calumny. Calumny, in seeking to damage a person’s honor and reputation by spreading false accusations, is an offense against both justice and charity. Once activated by the aggressor, it unleashes damage whose effects escape from his control and take on a life of their own, propagated like a metastasis invading a healthy body. The calumny is repeated, and it is often accepted by others without checking its truth or falsehood. This repetition generates stereotypes and clichés that are very difficult to undo. As the Founder himself foresaw, even today residues of the calumnies unleashed during those years still endure.

Another characteristic of calumny is its potential for psychological violence. Unlike other attacks, which last for a particular period of time and then cease, calumny can endure indefinitely over time, perpetuating the pain. This can produce in the person offended a true psychological torture, and result in a permanent tension.

Finally, we should point out that the rapid expansion of Opus Dei throughout the world shows that the immense majority of people understood the newness of Opus Dei’s message: “Many thousands and millions of people throughout the world have understood this.”

a) Humility

The first attitude that we notice in St. Josemaría is the humility that characterized his entire response to the calumnies. The attacks on his reputation facilitated a progressive detachment from himself, already begun in the preceding years. God made use of the campaigns of defamation to lead him by the hand to humility, purification and identification with Christ in his suffering. Recalling a specific moment of special pain, at the beginning of the forties, he said: “There came a moment when I had to go one night to the Tabernacle... and say: Lord (and how much this cost me,
since I am very proud, and the tears flowed freely) if you don’t need my honor, why should I want it? Since then I don’t give this any importance.”[32]

Grounded on charity and humility, St. Josemaría summed up his response to these attacks in the following program: “forgive, say nothing, pray, work, and smile.”[33]

b) *Forgiving and praying*

St. Josemaría strove to react to calumnies by always forgiving from the first moment[34] and praying for those who attacked you. Well aware of his human weakness and knowing that he was capable of “every horrible deed and mistake,”[35] he realized that God was always forgiving him, holding out his hand to lift him up. And if God is always ready to forgive us like that, Christians should do the same, and always as well.

“I could see that his reaction to the attacks, some of which were quite brutal, was always supernatural and full of charity. But I would like to make clear that this wasn’t in any sense a passive or stoic reaction. He reacted energetically, with a lot of prayer and mortification… and with complete trust in God.”[36]

The great quantity of calumnies could have made him bitter and distrustful, filled with cynicism. But thanks to the forgiveness that he always granted right from the first moment, these attacks only served to make him more understanding towards others. “In these and other similar circumstances, I never saw a reaction of resentment. He was not a man for that, but rather a person who understood, forgave, and forgot.”[37]

We can also mention here the testimony of Bishop Juan Hervás, the founder of Cursillos de Cristiandad. This prelate was the target of calumnies in the fifties of the last century. In the midst of that attack he had to travel to Rome, because he had been accused before the Holy Office. Since he was a friend of St. Josemaría, he took advantage of the trip to visit him.

Years later, in 1976, he recalled the saint’s consoling words to him: “Don’t worry, they are benefactors, because they help to purify us. We have to love them and pray for them.’ He spoke very forcefully when he insisted
on the need to love those who did not understand us, to pray for those who judged us without wanting to get at the truth. And he insisted on the need to pay attention only to the voice of the Church and not to the rumors of the street, and, with God’s help, to keep our heart free of bitterness and resentment. How much good his words did for me! He was speaking about his own experience... That advice carried great conviction because of the authenticity with which he himself had lived it, and continued living it then.”[^38]

As we have already seen, the decision to forgive brings with it a great freedom. This liberation, from the psychological point of view, is reinforced by the fact of praying for the aggressor: it displaces the center of attention from oneself to the other person.[^39] We no longer see ourselves as the “victim,” but put ourselves in the other person’s shoes and perhaps come to understand that we too may have been at fault in the souring of that relationship. Praying for those who attack us also strengthens our decision to forgive and closes the doors on vengeance.

c) A time to be quiet

“And let us leave everything in the hands of our Father God, with a divine silence—‘Jesus was silent’—if we are confronted with personal attacks, no matter how brutal and shameful they might be.”[^40]

St. Josemaría made a distinction between the calumnies that were directed against himself, and those aimed at the Church or Opus Dei.

If they were directed at himself, he didn’t try to defend himself. He opted for the attitude of silence, imitating Christ in his Passion: “He, personally, never defended himself, imitating in an eminent way the example of our Divine Master: Iesus autem tacebat.”[^41]

In Jesus’ silence we see his desire to accept all possible forms of human suffering, giving them a redemptive meaning. Here he seems to take on the suffering of those who are unable to defend themselves against injustice and violence—often they are innocent persons, including children. Christ’s silence gives a voice to those who have no voice. St. Josemaría wanted to identify himself with Jesus here as well, when he could have defended himself and had a right to do so.

The silence we are speaking of is an exterior silence. In his heart there would have been an intense dialogue with God, a progressive identification with Christ.

St. Josemaría kept silent about the defamatory campaigns against him throughout many years. Many specific episodes, with names and dates, went with him to the tomb.

He wanted to instill in his children the same way of acting, and asked the faithful of the Work who were the target of calumnies during the apostolic expansion not to speak about those events among themselves, so as to avoid the temptation of lacking charity towards the persons involved.[43]

d) *A time to speak*

“We will speak clearly, without rancor, when we think in conscience that we should speak.”[44] His readiness to always forgive was far removed from the desire to avoid conflicts or to shirk pointing to errors out of a sentimental charity.

Therefore, when the attacks were not directed against himself, but against the Church or against Opus Dei, his sense of justice led him to intervene and speak to those responsible. St. Josemaría had a deep awareness of his responsibility before God that the foundational charism remain clear and not lose its integrity in being handed on. The calumnies against the Work placed in danger both the spirit and the very existence of the institution, above all in the first moments of its life.

Therefore, as founder, he saw himself with a debt of justice to come to the defense of the Work and of his spiritual children. In these cases, factors distinct from himself came into play: the charism of Opus Dei, the persons who had joined the new foundation and others who participated in its apostolates. “These were moments when unbelievably some persons wanted
to destroy the Work or hinder its development. Josemaría employed all the means to make the truth clear and not leave anyone in error, since this was a requirement of charity. Afterwards, towards the persons involved, he always showed understanding. I never heard him speak badly of anyone.”[45]

He distinguished between forgiveness, justice and the defense of the truth. Forgiving others does not mean renouncing the truth. He forgave those who calumniated him but he did not give up his right to defend and clarify the spirit of the Work. He wrote in 1961: “I have always tried to tell the truth, without pride or disdain, even if those who vilified me were uncouth, arrogant, hostile, bereft of a minimum of humanity.”[46]

Years later, in the 1970’s, in moments of a grave crisis in the heart of the Church, St. Josemaría also gave an example of fortitude and love for the truth in defending publicly, before thousands of people, the Church and the Pope.[47]

e) Working and smiling

One of the effects of calumny is its paralyzing power. It acts like a poison in the central nervous system of the soul. The victims, in seeing their reputation damaged, feel as though the earth were opening under their feet and they have no solid ground to stand on. They “do not know where to turn. They are frightened. They do not believe it is possible, they wonder if the whole thing is not a nightmare.”[48]

Therefore, calumny is a formidable obstacle for someone trying to attain a noble goal, since the temptation is to give up. Together with the understandable dejection it brings, it gives rise to a fear of continuing to act, so as to avoid new attacks. The persistence of calumnies and their spread can also lead to doubts about one’s own goals and the certainty of working for the good: “If so many people are opposed, including churchmen, might it not be I myself who am mistaken?” Truly it is difficult to put oneself in the place of a person who is calumniated, because of the suffering, fears, anxieties and doubts it can generate.

To respond by working overcomes the danger of paralysis that calumny can give rise to. Working helps to avoid sterile complaints, to not waste time criticizing one’s adversaries or become obsessed with the calumny. As
we have already pointed out, his response was never a passive one but a
dynamic response, based on “complete confidence in God,”[49] of prayer
and work. Working meant being able to defend the truth whenever
necessary, and to transmit faith and confidence to his children, urging
forward the development of the apostolates.

As Bishop Santos Moro testified: “I admired his patience and his
determination to continue pressing forward without wavering, carrying out
God’s Will, with absolute trust in Him.”[50]

This attitude showed immense faith in God and in the charism he had
received, great charity in forgiving, firm hope that God would iron out the
difficulties and, as fruit of these three virtues, fortitude, serenity, interior
peace and joy.

Let us stop to consider joy, summed up in the word smiling. Smiling is
a consequence of loving the will of God, who allows the unjust accusation.

Sadness and a lack of serenity and perhaps a lessening of confidence in
God are the natural fruits of calumny, through the position in which it
places its victim. St. Josemaría describes the pain wrought by calumny by
recalling the “story of Susanna, that chaste woman, so falsely accused of
wrong doing by two lustful old men... How often does the trickery of those
moved by envy or intrigue force many noble Christians into the same
corner? They are offered only one choice: offend our Lord or ruin their
reputation. The only acceptable and upright solution is, at the same time,
highly painful. Yet they must decide: ‘Let me rather fall into your power
through no act of mine, than commit sin in the Lord’s sight’ (Dan
13:23).”[51]

It is precisely for this reason that the witness of those who dealt with
him during that period is so striking: “Even now I am amazed at being able
to declare that I never saw him worried; that is to say, you would never
have noticed that he might be passing through a difficult time. There is no
doubt that his faith in God, his hope in the help of his heavenly Father
and, consequently, his cheerfulness and good humor, allowed him not only
not to lose his peace but to infect others with his enormous confidence that
what God wanted would be fulfilled.”[52]
The testimony of Archbishop Pedro Cantero is also very relevant here. “I am surprised to recall now that—no matter what happened—he never lost his characteristic smile. It was not the easy smile of a good natured person for whom everything is going well or who is not aware of what is going on. It was the external manifestation of his interior peace: the peace that comes from embracing, with all the strength of his heart, a cross whose dimensions none of us knows exactly. It was the joy and peace that come from hiding oneself in the wounds of our Lord: from accepting, when truly difficult situations arise, the will of our Father God, who wants to identify us with his Son on the Cross.”[53]

3. Forgiveness and a culture of peace

a) Cultural parameters of forgiveness

The message of forgiveness and its practice among Christians has greatly influenced Western culture and legislation. Nevertheless, the practice of forgiveness today confronts strong cultural currents that distort its nature and make it difficult to understand and, even more, to put into practice.[54]

Let us briefly consider three of these currents, focusing on their impact on forgiveness: relativism, individualism and hedonism.

For relativism, it is personal decision that determines the goodness or evil of one’s acts, with no objective boundaries. This subjective perspective tends to excuse one’s own actions and to blur and erase any guilt. Without the awareness of an offense there can be no guilt, and without guilt there is no need to ask for forgiveness.[55] Relativism leads to the “banalization of evil,” which reinforces the absence of guilt and makes forgiveness meaningless. It hinders the possibility of sharing common principles by which we can recognize others as human beings, even when they offend us.

Individualism, in turn, by exalting the radical autonomy of the human person, also puts up strong barriers to the possibility of forgiveness.[56] Forgiveness in interpersonal relationships requires accepting the existence of a universal fraternity among all men and women as a key part of the truth about the human person in society.[57]
Individualism makes it difficult to put oneself in the place of another person. “The understanding of the great mystery of expiation is blocked by our individualistic image of man. We can no longer grasp substitution because we think that everyman is ensconced in himself alone. The fact that all individual beings are deeply interwoven and that all are encompassed in turn by the being of the One, the Incarnate Son, is something we are no longer capable of seeing.”[58]

For anyone who has to forgive, individualism can lead to a distorted form of forgiveness, to granting it out of the desire for power over others, as though the destiny of the offender were in our hands and his liberation from guilt depended exclusively on us.[59]

The third current making forgiveness difficult today is hedonism, which leads to avoiding suffering at all costs. But forgiving is always a painful process. “Guilt is a reality, an objective force; it has caused destruction that must be repaired... Guilt must be worked through, healed, and thus overcome. Forgiveness exacts a price—first of all from the person who forgives. He must overcome within himself the evil done to him; he must, as it were, burn it interiorly and in so doing renew himself. As a result, he also involves the other, the trespasser, in this process of transformation, of inner purification, and both parties, suffering all the way through and overcoming evil, are made new.”[60]

Asking for forgiveness also has its price: expiation,[61] the restoration of the order damaged by the offense and rediscovering the truth about oneself, betrayed by the offense committed. This is the process of acknowledgment of the truth, repentance, reparation, and the commitment to avoid new offenses.[62]

There are no shortcuts to forgiveness. Trying to attain it, and freedom from the guilt entailed, without assuming the suffering involved, makes forgiveness difficult and also promotes the proliferation of a false forgiveness,[63] which simply perpetuates the wounds opened and prevents the closing of the cycle of offenses.[64]

The overall influence of these cultural currents is to create a society founded on self-interest, which is unable to understand the need for gratuitous acts, and therefore for forgiveness, the gratuitous act par
excellence. As Benedict XVI insists, “the ‘earthly city’ is promoted not merely by relationships of rights and duties, but to an even greater and more fundamental extent by relationships of gratuitousness, mercy, and communion. Charity always manifests God’s love in human relationships as well.” The existence of gratuitous acts guarantees the genuineness of the love present in our own life and in society.

b) Learning how to forgive

Forgiveness has to be practiced in one’s daily life, in marriage, in the family, in school, in one’s friendships, at work, in all situations. Forgiveness should be a daily experience in one’s “lifestyle” as a Christian.

The unity of life that St. Josemaría preached, which is a call to consistency in Christian life, requires living forgiveness always and from the first moment. For if one fails to practice forgiveness in one’s daily life, a small offense can quickly give rise to negative feelings and a lack of communication.

It has sometimes been said that one needs to “learn to forgive.” But perhaps, since charity is the source of forgiveness, it would be better to say that one has to learn to love: to love God and, with his love, to love our neighbor, even if he offends us. A person who doesn’t forgive doesn’t know how to love.

Nevertheless, there can be a real need to learn how to forgive, especially when the emotions unleashed are quite strong and the offense appears too great to set it aside. Then it may indeed be necessary to undergo a learning process: How does one forgive? What steps have to be taken? What needs to take place in one’s own heart?

Many authors from a great variety of perspectives, whether religious, psychological, political or social, coincide on the same points required for forgiveness to take place: truth (recognition); repentance (sorrow for the harm caused); requesting forgiveness from the person offended; the commitment not to offend again; and reparation (reestablishment of the previous situation).
Resentment and revenge trap a person in the past, amid a welter of aggressive emotions. Likewise rejecting forgiveness when it is granted closes one up in the past, and damages present and future relationships. In contrast, forgiveness overcomes the past, through love, truth, justice and suffering, and opens up new opportunities for the future, renewing human relationships. Forgiveness when personally experienced, both granted and received, “bears witness that, in our world, love is stronger than sin.”[74]

“Our responsibility is great, because to be Christ’s witness implies first of all that we should try to behave according to his doctrine, that we should struggle to make our actions remind others of Jesus and his most lovable personality. We have to act in such a way that others will be able to say, when they meet us: this man is a Christian, because he does not hate, because he is willing to understand, because he is not a fanatic, because he is willing to make sacrifices, because he shows that he is a man of peace, because he knows how to love.”[75]


[2] St. Josemaría, The Way: Critical-Historical Edition, point 283: “and you will draw close to God...and know your weakness...and be deified...with a deification which, by bringing you nearer to your Father, will make you more a brother of your fellow-men.” See also the commentary on this point, p. 462.


[4] Ibid., no. 68.

[5] Ibid., no. 70.

[6]
See Alvaro del Portillo, Immersed in God, p. 93.

[7] Peter Berglar points out: “During the forties, a small but very active group... waged a campaign against Opus Dei and Escrivá. Hard to believe, but true, this opposition stemmed in large part from jealousy—a jealousy of the strong apostolic appeal this young spiritual family was exerting throughout Spain. From jealousy to envy is a small step, but a grave one, since it is a crossover from mere weakness to the vice of malice” Peter
It was during this period that some members of Opus Dei began to have public prominence in social and political life. Those who were spreading calumnies claimed that Opus Dei was acting through these persons, following a political strategy. St. Josemaría confronted the situation decisively: “For more than thirty years I have said and written in thousands of different ways that Opus Dei does not seek any worldly or political aims, that it only and exclusively seeks to foster—among all races, all social conditions, all countries—the knowledge and practice of the saving teachings of Christ” (Christ Is Passing By, no. 70). On the teachings of St. Josemaría in regard to Christian formation and freedom in social and political matters, see Ángel Rodríguez Luño, Consciencia cristiana y cultura política en las enseñanzas de San Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer. A conference given during the 46th Congress on Pastoral Questions, Secularismo y cultura de la fe, Castelldaura, 25 and 26 of January, 2011.

St. Josemaría, Christ Is Passing By, no. 72.

For a fuller discussion of the relationship between freedom and apostolic mission, see Martin Rhonheimer, Changing the World: The Timeliness of Opus Dei, Scepter, New York, ch. 4, pp. 93-121.

Freedom is one of the central themes in the message of St. Josemaría. The well-known philosopher Cornelio Fabro wrote: “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” Cornelio Fabro, “A Master of Christian Freedom,” in L’Osservatore Romano, July 2, 1977.

St. Josemaría, Christ Is Passing By, no. 69.

Ibid.

St. Josemaría, Christ Is Passing By, no. 67.

Ibid., no. 84.

Ibid., no. 69.
Today more than ever, due to the rapid spread of information (principally through television and the Internet), the gravity of calumny is even greater because it reaches many more people, as is its banalization or trivialization, due to its frequency and wide acceptance.


Ibid., no. 71.

Ibid., no. 72.

Ibid.

See Alvaro del Portillo, *Immersed in God*, p. 93.

See Andrés Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. II, where this topic is treated at length, especially on pages 334-393.


The calumnies are united to the first expansion because they had the indirect effect of helping make the message of Opus Dei reaching unforeseen persons and places.

“The worst thing, surely, is that these twistings of the truth and this false way of interpreting as evil the most holy realities, will become rooted and embedded in the spirit of many people and perhaps in a whole generation. And they could be the cause of an incredible persistence in not recognizing the truth.” Letter December 29, 1947/ February 14, 1966, no.
“Force yourself, if necessary, always to forgive those who offend you, from the very first moment. For the greatest injury or offence that you can suffer from them is as nothing compared with what God has pardoned you.” St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 452. See the commentary on this point in *The Way, Critical-Historical Edition*, p. 623.


Beato Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer: Un hombre de Dios, Testimony of Fr. Silvestre Sancho Morales, O.P., p. 400. On “forgiving and forgetting,” John Paul II has written. “This does not mean forgetting past events; it means re-examining them with a new attitude and learning precisely from the experience of suffering that only love can build up, whereas hatred produces devastation and ruin. The deadly cycle of revenge must be replaced by the new-found liberty of forgiveness” (John Paul II, Message for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 1997). See also the Compendium of the Catholic Catechism, no. 595: “Even if it seems impossible for us to satisfy this requirement [of forgiving our enemies], the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit can, like Christ, love even to love’s extreme; it can turn injury into compassion and transform hurt into intercession.”


See point 802 of *The Forge*. After referring to those who do us harm as “benefactors,” he says: “Pray to God for them: as a result, you will come to like them.”
The persecution and calumnies broke out with great virulence in Barcelona, in 1941. In May of 1942, St. Josemaría wrote to the director of the only center of Opus Dei then existing in the city: “+ May Jesus bless my sons and watch over them. My dear sons: We should rejoice that our Lord has seen fit to treat us in a divine manner. What can I tell you? Be happy, spe gaudentes [rejoicing in hope]. Bear suffering with charity, with never a word against anyone; In tribulatione patientes! And be filled with a spirit of prayer—orationi instantes! [constant in prayer!]. My sons: the sunrise is already beginning to show, and what a harvest we will have in that blessed Barcelona, with the new day! Be faithful. I bless you. An embrace from your Father, Mariano.” A letter to Rafael Termes Carreró, from Madrid, May 2, 1942, cited in Vázquez de Prada, The Founder of Opus Dei, vol. II, p. 346; for the events in Barcelona, pp. 342-360).

Beato Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer: Un hombre de Dios, p. 56. Testimony of Bishop Abilio del Campo y de la Bárcena. Along the same lines, see Bishop Laureano Castán Lacoma, p. 104.

See Vázquez de Prada, The Founder of Opus Dei, vol. III, where he describes the apostolic trips throughout the Iberian peninsula in 1972, on pp. 457-469, and to South and Central America in 1974 and 1975, on pp. 496-537.

[51] St. Josemaría, Christ Is Passing By, no. 68.


[55] “It seems to me that the core of the spiritual crisis of our time has its roots in the eclipse of the gift of forgiveness... the current moral discussion tends to free mankind from guilt, bringing about a situation in which the conditions for its possibility are never present” (Joseph Ratzinger, “Una compañía en el camino” La Iglesia: Una comunidad en camino, 5, 4, Ed. Paulinas, Madrid 1992, p. 90).

[56] “Forgiving... enacted in solitude or isolation remains without reality and can signify no more than a role played before one’s self” (Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition, University of Chicago Press, 2nd ed., Chicago 1958, p. 237).

[57] The interdependence of all men and women can be seen on the natural plane, for example, in the so-called “Crimes against Humanity,” where those that commit these crimes are viewed as offending not only a particular human being, or a particular juridical order, but all of humanity. The concept of universal fraternity is also found in the Ubuntu, a feature of the African vision of the world, better known today because of its influence on the transition of South Africa to a free society. See Desmond Tutu, Tutu, No Future without Forgiveness, Rider, London, 1999, pp. 34-36.

[58] Benedict XVI, Jesus of Nazareth I, pp. 159-60.


From the point of view of the person offended, forgiveness has to be granted in an unconditional way. It is the offender who does not obtain the forgiveness granted (the freeing from his guilt) if he does not confront the truth and make reparation. When all he elements are present, the way is opened to reconciliation. Forgiveness thus facilitates the path to justice. See *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, USCCB Communications, 2005, no. 518.


“Guilt calls forth retaliation. The result is a chain of trespasses in which the evil of guilt grows ceaselessly and becomes more and more inescapable.... Guilt can be overcome only by forgiveness, not by retaliation” (Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth I*, p. 157).


In the sphere of social work, one should give primacy to justice, since “justice is the primary way of charity or, in Paul VI’s words, ‘the minimum measure’ of it” (Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 6).

The family is the paradigmatic place for gratuitous acts. There young people can experience forgiveness and learn to ask for forgiveness, to grant it, to overcome rancor and revenge, to love in a gratuitous way, to be understanding, to acquire a sense of justice, to respect others. There is a great need to strengthen the family, which is the foundation for learning love and forgiveness.


“Something similar can happen in our dealings with others: at first there is a small, cutting remark, and in the end people can end up cold
shouldering each other, and living in an atmosphere of icy indifference” (St. Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 15).


[71] Christian forgiveness is never merely a technique. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, in explaining Christ’s command to love others *as I have loved you* (*Jn* 13:34), teaches: “It is impossible to keep the Lord’s commandment by imitating the divine model from outside; there has to be a vital participation, coming from the depths of the heart, in the holiness and the mercy and the love of our God.”


[73] The clear parallels with the acts of the sacrament of reconciliation suggest that it can be seen as a model of forgiveness, not only when God is the one who forgives, but also among persons, institutions and even societies.

[74] Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2844.