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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The Upcoming Year of Faith

The decision of the Holy Father Benedict XVI to convoke a Year of Faith, which will begin on October 11, 2012, is intended “to contribute to a renewed conversion to the Lord Jesus and to the rediscovery of faith, so that the members of the Church will be credible and joy-filled witnesses to the Risen Lord in the world of today—capable of leading the many people who are seeking it to the ‘door of faith.’”[1] The Roman Pontiff’s decision is a source of joy and a call to our personal responsibility; it offers us a marvelous opportunity to grow in our personal relationship with Christ, and to help many others to draw closer to him.

Following the Roman Pontiff’s indications, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has published a Note with Pastoral Recommendations for the Year of Faith. This document invites all the members of the Church to strive during the coming months to rediscover and “share that which is most dear to us: Christ Jesus, the Redeemer of mankind, Universal King, ‘leader and perfecter of faith’ (Heb 12:2).”[2] In addition, the Note mentions some activities that will be carried out in the whole Church and suggests others that could be promoted by the Bishops’ Conferences, by the dioceses, and in the parishes, associations, movements, etc.

In this regard, the Prelate of Opus Dei has arranged for the celebration of a special opening ceremony—Solemn Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament—in the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, on Saturday, October 13. Similar ceremonies will take place in the chapels and oratories of numerous centers entrusted to the Prelature throughout the world.

In the formative activities offered by the Prelature, ideas and suggestions will be provided to help each person take full advantage of this ecclesial event. Several months ago, the Prelate disposed that in the time before the beginning of this event, the faithful of the Work should ask “the Holy Spirit to prepare the minds and hearts of all the baptized so that we may live the Year of Faith with greater depth.” Specifically he suggested that, during these months, we frequently “read the Catechism of the Catholic Church and its Compendium to take advantage of the riches of those texts, and to encourage others to acquire these books.”
Responding to Bishop Echevarría’s request, the faithful and cooperators of the Prelature have organized conferences in preparation for the Year of Faith. In the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, a conference was held entitled “Word and Witness in the Communication of the Faith,” and at the University of Navarra a study day was held on the “New Evangelization.” Similar initiatives have been organized in many countries where the Prelature is now working. These include days of study and meditation, courses, formational seminars, and activities of a spiritual nature especially planned for this Year, which will end on the feast of Christ the King in November 2013.

On the website www.opusdei.org materials for the study and spread of the Faith will be offered, which will have as their point of reference the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Some of these initiatives are mentioned in this issue of Romana. Others will be reported on in the next issue, which covers the second half of 2012. All these activities are just a small contribution in light of the great number of initiatives organized by Catholics throughout the world. In any case, the Year of Faith is meant to help each Catholic, in his or her own life, to follow Christ more closely and to assist those around us to do so. “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.”[3]

The faithful of Opus Dei in their personal apostolate will help many people to meditate on those words of St. Josemaría: “Stir up that fire of faith. Christ is not a figure that has passed. He is not a memory that is lost in history. He lives! Jesus Christus heri et hodie, ipse et in saecula, says Saint Paul. Jesus Christ is the same today as he was yesterday and as he will be forever.”[4]


[2] Ibid.

[3]
Reproduction of a manuscript greeting sent by Pope Benedict XVI to Bishop Javier Echevarría for his 80th birthday

Al Venerato Fratello Monsignor

Javier Echevarría

Prelato dell’Opus Dei

nella ricorrenza del suo 80° genetliaco rivolgo fervidi auguri e, ricordandone il lungo e zelante ministero a servizio del Vangelo e della Chiesa, invoco su di lui, per intercessione della Vergine Santa e di San Josemaría Escrivá, una rinnovata effusione di doni celesti, mentre di cuore gli imparto una speciale Benedizione Apostolica, che volentieri estendo alle persone affidate alle sue cure pastorali.

Dal Vaticano, 14 Giugno 2012

Benedetto XVI

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

• The Roman Pontiff
• The Roman Curia
The Roman Pontiff

The Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul, Vatican Basilica (June 29, 2012)

Your Eminences,
Brother Bishops and Priests,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are gathered around the altar for our solemn celebration of Saints Peter and Paul, the principal Patrons of the Church of Rome. Present with us today are the Metropolitan Archbishops appointed during the past year, who have just received the Pallium, and to them I extend a particular and affectionate greeting. Also present is an eminent Delegation from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, sent by His Holiness Bartholomaios I, and I welcome them with fraternal and heartfelt gratitude. In an ecumenical spirit, I am also pleased to greet and to thank the Choir of Westminster Abbey, who are providing the music for this liturgy alongside the Cappella Sistina. I also greet the Ambassadors and civil Authorities present. I am grateful to all of you for your presence and your prayers.

In front of Saint Peter’s Basilica, as is well known, there are two imposing statues of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, easily recognizable by their respective attributes: the keys in the hand of Peter and the sword held by Paul. Likewise, at the main entrance to the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, there are depictions of scenes from the life and the martyrdom of these two pillars of the Church. Christian tradition has always considered Saint Peter and Saint Paul to be inseparable: indeed, together, they represent the whole Gospel of Christ. In Rome, their bond as brothers in the faith came to acquire a particular significance. Indeed, the Christian community of this City considered them a kind of counterbalance to the mythical Romulus and Remus, the two brothers held to be the founders of Rome. A further parallel comes to mind, still on the theme of brothers: whereas the first biblical pair of brothers demonstrate the effects of sin, as
Cain kills Abel, yet Peter and Paul, much as they differ from one another in human terms and notwithstanding the conflicts that arose in their relationship, illustrate a new way of being brothers, lived according to the Gospel, an authentic way made possible by the grace of Christ’s Gospel working within them. Only by following Jesus does one arrive at this new brotherhood: this is the first and fundamental message that today’s solemnity presents to each one of us, the importance of which is mirrored in the pursuit of full communion, so earnestly desired by the ecumenical Patriarch and the Bishop of Rome, as indeed by all Christians.

In the passage from Saint Matthew’s Gospel that we have just heard, Peter makes his own confession of faith in Jesus, acknowledging him as Messiah and Son of God. He does so in the name of the other Apostles too. In reply, the Lord reveals to him the mission that he intends to assign to him, that of being the “rock,” the visible foundation on which the entire spiritual edifice of the Church is built (cf. Mt 16:16-19). But in what sense is Peter the rock? How is he to exercise this prerogative, which naturally he did not receive for his own sake? The account given by the evangelist Matthew tells us first of all that the acknowledgment of Jesus’ identity made by Simon in the name of the Twelve did not come “through flesh and blood,” that is, through his human capacities, but through a particular revelation from God the Father. By contrast, immediately afterwards, as Jesus foretells his passion, death and resurrection, Simon Peter reacts on the basis of “flesh and blood”: he “began to rebuke him, saying, this shall never happen to you” (16:22). And Jesus in turn replied: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me...” (16:23). The disciple who, through God’s gift, was able to become a solid rock, here shows himself for what he is in his human weakness: a stone along the path, a stone on which men can stumble — in Greek, skandalon. Here we see the tension that exists between the gift that comes from the Lord and human capacities; and in this scene between Jesus and Simon Peter we see anticipated in some sense the drama of the history of the papacy itself, characterized by the joint presence of these two elements: on the one hand, because of the light and the strength that come from on high, the papacy constitutes the foundation of the Church during its pilgrimage through history; on the other hand,
across the centuries, human weakness is also evident, which can only be transformed through openness to God’s action.

And in today’s Gospel there emerges powerfully the clear promise made by Jesus: “the gates of the underworld,” that is, the forces of evil, will not prevail, “non praevalebunt.” One is reminded of the account of the call of the prophet Jeremiah, to whom the Lord said, when entrusting him with his mission: “Behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land. They will fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you - non praevalebunt -, for I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you!” (Jer 1:18-19). In truth, the promise that Jesus makes to Peter is even greater than those made to the prophets of old: they, indeed, were threatened only by human enemies, whereas Peter will have to be defended from the “gates of the underworld,” from the destructive power of evil. Jeremiah receives a promise that affects him as a person and his prophetic ministry; Peter receives assurances concerning the future of the Church, the new community founded by Jesus Christ, which extends to all of history, far beyond the personal existence of Peter himself.

Let us move on now to the symbol of the keys, which we heard about in the Gospel. It echoes the oracle of the prophet Isaiah concerning the steward Eliakim, of whom it was said: “And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open” (Is 22:22). The key represents authority over the house of David. And in the Gospel there is another saying of Jesus addressed to the scribes and the Pharisees, whom the Lord reproaches for shutting off the kingdom of heaven from people (cf. Mt 23:13). This saying also helps us to understand the promise made to Peter: to him, inasmuch as he is the faithful steward of Christ’s message, it belongs to open the gate of the Kingdom of Heaven, and to judge whether to admit or to refuse (cf. Rev 3:7). Hence the two images — that of the keys and that of binding and loosing — express similar meanings which reinforce one another. The expression “binding and loosing” forms part of rabbinical language and refers on the one hand to doctrinal decisions, and on the other hand to disciplinary power, that is, the faculty to impose and to lift excommunication. The parallelism “on earth... in the heavens” guarantees
that Peter’s decisions in the exercise of this ecclesial function are valid in the eyes of God.

In Chapter 18 of Matthew’s Gospel, dedicated to the life of the ecclesial community, we find another saying of Jesus addressed to the disciples: “Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 18:18). Saint John, in his account of the appearance of the risen Christ in the midst of the Apostles on Easter evening, recounts these words of the Lord: “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven: if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (Jn 20:22-23). In the light of these parallels, it appears clearly that the authority of loosing and binding consists in the power to remit sins. And this grace, which defuses the powers of chaos and evil, is at the heart of the Church’s mystery and ministry. The Church is not a community of the perfect, but a community of sinners, obliged to recognize their need for God’s love, their need to be purified through the Cross of Jesus Christ. Jesus’ sayings concerning the authority of Peter and the Apostles make it clear that God’s power is love, the love that shines forth from Calvary. Hence we can also understand why, in the Gospel account, Peter’s confession of faith is immediately followed by the first prediction of the Passion: through his death, Jesus conquered the powers of the underworld, with his blood he poured out over the world an immense flood of mercy, which cleanses the whole of humanity in its healing waters.

Dear brothers and sisters, as I mentioned at the beginning, the iconographic tradition represents Saint Paul with a sword, and we know that this was the instrument with which he was killed. Yet as we read the writings of the Apostle of the Gentiles, we discover that the image of the sword refers to his entire mission of evangelization. For example, when he felt death approaching, he wrote to Timothy: “I have fought the good fight” (2 Tim 4:7). This was certainly not the battle of a military commander but that of a herald of the Word of God, faithful to Christ and to his Church, to which he gave himself completely. And that is why the Lord gave him the crown of glory and placed him, together with Peter, as a pillar in the spiritual edifice of the Church.

Dear Metropolitan Archbishops, the Pallium that I have conferred on
you will always remind you that you have been constituted *in* and *for* the great mystery of communion that is the Church, the spiritual edifice built upon Christ as the cornerstone, while in its earthly and historical dimension, it is built on the rock of Peter. Inspired by this conviction, we know that together we are all cooperators of the truth, which as we know is one and “symphonic,” and requires from each of us and from our communities a constant commitment to conversion to the one Lord in the grace of the one Spirit. May the Holy Mother of God guide and accompany us always along the path of faith and charity. Queen of Apostles, pray for us!

Amen.

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**Address to participants in a course organized by the Apostolic Penitentiary (March 9, 2012)**

Dear Friends,

I am very glad to meet you on the occasion of the annual Course on the Internal Forum organized by the Apostolic Penitentiary. I address a cordial greeting to Cardinal Manuel Monteiro de Castro, Major Penitentiary, who has presided at your study sessions for the first time as such, and I thank him for his cordial words.

I likewise greet Bishop Gianfranco Girotti, Regent, the Penitentiary personnel and each one of you who with your presence remind everyone of the importance of the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the life of faith, highlighting both the constant need for an adequate theological, spiritual and canonical training in order to be confessors and, especially, the constitutive bond between sacramental celebration and Gospel proclamation.

In fact, the Sacraments and the Proclamation of the Word must never be conceived as separate; on the contrary, “Jesus says that the proclamation
of the Kingdom of God is the goal of his mission; this proclamation, however, is not only a ‘discourse’ but at the same time includes his action; the signs and miracles that Jesus works show that the Kingdom comes as a present reality and in the end coincides with his very Person, with his gift of himself.... The priest represents Christ, the One sent by the Father, he continues his mission, through the ‘word’ and the ‘sacrament,’ in this totality of body and soul, of sign and word” (General Audience, May 5, 2010).

This totality, rooted in the very mystery of the Incarnation, suggests to us that the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is itself a proclamation and therefore a path to take for the work of the New Evangelization.

In what sense then is sacramental confession a “path” for the New Evangelization? First of all because the New Evangelization draws its lifeblood from the holiness of the children of the Church, from the daily journey of personal and community conversion in order to be ever more closely conformed to Christ. Then there is a close connection between holiness and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, witnessed by all the saints of history. The real conversion of our hearts, which means opening ourselves to God’s transforming and renewing action, is the “driving force” of every reform and is expressed in a real evangelizing effort. In confession, through the freely bestowed action of divine Mercy, repentant sinners are justified, pardoned and sanctified and abandon their former selves to be reclothed in the new.

Only those who have let themselves be profoundly renewed by divine grace are able to bear within them — and hence to proclaim — the newness of the Gospel. In his Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte, Blessed John Paul II said: “I am also asking for renewed pastoral courage in ensuring that the day-to-day teaching of Christian communities persuasively and effectively presents the practice of the Sacrament of Reconciliation” (no. 37).

I would like to reassert this appeal, in the awareness that the New Evangelization must acquaint the people of our time with the face of Christ “as mysterium pietatis, the one in whom God shows us his
compassionate heart and reconciles us fully with himself. It is this face of Christ that must be rediscovered through the Sacrament of Penance” (ibid.).

In an age of educational emergency in which relativism is calling into question the very possibility of an education understood as a gradual introduction to knowledge of the truth, to the profound sense of reality, hence as a gradual introduction to the relationship with the Truth which is God, Christians are called to proclaim energetically the possibility of the encounter between today’s people and Jesus Christ, in whom God made himself so close that he may be seen and heard.

In this perspective the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which begins with a look at one’s actual condition in life, contributes uniquely to achieving that “openness of heart” which enables one to turn one’s gaze to God so that he may enter one’s life. The certainty that he is close and in his mercy awaits the human being, even one who is involved in sin, in order to heal his weakness with the grace of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, is always a ray of hope for the world.

Dear priests and dear deacons who are preparing for the priesthood, in the administration of this sacrament you are given, or you will be given, the possibility of being instruments of an ever renewed meeting of people with God. All who turn to you, precisely because of their condition as sinners, will experience within them a profound desire: the desire for change, the desire for mercy and, ultimately, the desire for the encounter with Christ and for him to embrace them once again.

You will therefore be collaborators and protagonists of a great many possible “new beginnings,” as many as the penitents who come to you, bearing in mind that the authentic meaning of every “newness” does not consist so much in the abandonment or excision of the past. Rather it consists in welcoming Christ and in opening yourselves to his Presence, ever new and ever capable of transforming and illuminating all the patches of shade and ceaselessly unfolding new horizons.

The New Evangelization, therefore, also begins in the confessional! That is, it begins in the mysterious encounter between the endless question
of human beings, a sign within them of the Creator Mystery and God’s Mercy, the only adequate response to the human need for infinity.

If the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is this, if the faithful have a real experience of that Mercy which Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ has given to us, they themselves will become credible witnesses of that holiness which is the aim of the New Evangelization.

If all this is true for the lay faithful, dear friends, it acquires even greater importance for each one of us. The minister of the Sacrament of Reconciliation collaborates with the New Evangelization in the first place by renewing himself, his own awareness that he is a sinner and is in need of receiving sacramental pardon. In this way may be renewed the encounter with Christ, which was begun in Baptism and has found its specific and definitive form in the sacrament of Orders.

This is my hope for each one of you: may the newness of Christ always be the center and reason for your priestly existence, so that those who meet you through your ministry may exclaim as did Andrew and John “we have found the Messiah” (Jn 1:41). In this way, every Confession, from which each Christian will emerge renewed, will be a step ahead in the New Evangelization. May Mary, Mother of Mercy, Refuge for us sinners and Star of the New Evangelization, accompany us on our way. I thank you warmly and I willingly impart my Apostolic Blessing to you.

Easter Vigil Homily, St. Peter's Basilica (April 7, 2012)

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Easter is the feast of the new creation. Jesus is risen and dies no more. He has opened the door to a new life, one that no longer knows illness and death. He has taken mankind up into God himself. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,” as Saint Paul says in the First Letter to the Corinthians (15:50). On the subject of Christ’s resurrection and our resurrection, the Church writer Tertullian in the third century was bold
enough to write: “Rest assured, flesh and blood, through Christ you have gained your place in heaven and in the Kingdom of God” (CCL II, 994). A new dimension has opened up for mankind. Creation has become greater and broader. Easter Day ushers in a new creation, but that is precisely why the Church starts the liturgy on this day with the old creation, so that we can learn to understand the new one aright. At the beginning of the Liturgy of the Word on Easter night, then, comes the account of the creation of the world. Two things are particularly important here in connection with this liturgy. On the one hand, creation is presented as a whole that includes the phenomenon of time. The seven days are an image of completeness, unfolding in time. They are ordered towards the seventh day, the day of the freedom of all creatures for God and for one another. Creation is therefore directed towards the coming together of God and his creatures; it exists so as to open up a space for the response to God’s great glory, an encounter between love and freedom. On the other hand, what the Church hears on Easter night is above all the first element of the creation account: “God said, ‘let there be light!’” (Gen 1:3). The creation account begins symbolically with the creation of light. The sun and the moon are created only on the fourth day. The creation account calls them lights, set by God in the firmament of heaven. In this way he deliberately takes away the divine character that the great religions had assigned to them. No, they are not gods. They are shining bodies created by the one God. But they are preceded by the light through which God’s glory is reflected in the essence of the created being.

What is the creation account saying here? Light makes life possible. It makes encounter possible. It makes communication possible. It makes knowledge, access to reality and to truth, possible. And insofar as it makes knowledge possible, it makes freedom and progress possible. Evil hides. Light, then, is also an expression of the good that both is and creates brightness. It is daylight, which makes it possible for us to act. To say that God created light means that God created the world as a space for knowledge and truth, as a space for encounter and freedom, as a space for good and for love. Matter is fundamentally good, being itself is good. And evil does not come from God-made being, rather, it comes into existence only through denial. It is a “no.”
At Easter, on the morning of the first day of the week, God said once again: “Let there be light.” The night on the Mount of Olives, the solar eclipse of Jesus’ passion and death, the night of the grave had all passed. Now it is the first day once again—creation is beginning anew. “Let there be light,” says God, “and there was light”: Jesus rises from the grave. Life is stronger than death. Good is stronger than evil. Love is stronger than hate. Truth is stronger than lies. The darkness of the previous days is driven away the moment Jesus rises from the grave and himself becomes God’s pure light. But this applies not only to him, not only to the darkness of those days. With the resurrection of Jesus, light itself is created anew. He draws all of us after him into the new light of the resurrection and he conquers all darkness. He is God’s new day, new for all of us.

But how is this to come about? How does all this affect us so that instead of remaining word it becomes a reality that draws us in? Through the sacrament of baptism and the profession of faith, the Lord has built a bridge across to us, through which the new day reaches us. The Lord says to the newly-baptized: Fiat lux — let there be light. God’s new day—the day of indestructible life, comes also to us. Christ takes you by the hand. From now on you are held by him and walk with him into the light, into real life. For this reason the early Church called baptism photismos—illumination.

Why was this? The darkness that poses a real threat to mankind, after all, is the fact that he can see and investigate tangible material things, but cannot see where the world is going or whence it comes, where our own life is going, what is good and what is evil. The darkness enshrouding God and obscuring values is the real threat to our existence and to the world in general. If God and moral values, the difference between good and evil, remain in darkness, then all other “lights”, that put such incredible technical feats within our reach, are not only progress but also dangers that put us and the world at risk. Today we can illuminate our cities so brightly that the stars of the sky are no longer visible. Is this not an image of the problems caused by our version of enlightenment? With regard to material things, our knowledge and our technical accomplishments are legion, but what reaches beyond, the things of God and the question of good, we can no longer identify. Faith, then, which reveals God’s light to us, is the true
enlightenment, enabling God’s light to break into our world, opening our eyes to the true light.

Dear friends, as I conclude, I would like to add one more thought about light and illumination. On Easter night, the night of the new creation, the Church presents the mystery of light using a unique and very humble symbol: the Paschal candle. This is a light that lives from sacrifice. The candle shines inasmuch as it is burnt up. It gives light, inasmuch as it gives itself. Thus the Church presents most beautifully the paschal mystery of Christ, who gives himself and so bestows the great light. Secondly, we should remember that the light of the candle is a fire. Fire is the power that shapes the world, the force of transformation. And fire gives warmth. Here too the mystery of Christ is made newly visible. Christ, the light, is fire, flame, burning up evil and so reshaping both the world and ourselves. “Whoever is close to me is close to the fire,” as Jesus is reported by Origen to have said. And this fire is both heat and light: not a cold light, but one through which God’s warmth and goodness reach down to us.

The great hymn of the Exsultet, which the deacon sings at the beginning of the Easter liturgy, points us quite gently towards a further aspect. It reminds us that this object, the candle, has its origin in the work of bees. So the whole of creation plays its part. In the candle, creation becomes a bearer of light. But in the mind of the Fathers, the candle also in some sense contains a silent reference to the Church. The cooperation of the living community of believers in the Church in some way resembles the activity of bees. It builds up the community of light. So the candle serves as a summons to us to become involved in the community of the Church, whose raison d’être is to let the light of Christ shine upon the world.

Let us pray to the Lord at this time that he may grant us to experience the joy of his light; let us pray that we ourselves may become bearers of his light, and that through the Church, Christ’s radiant face may enter our world (cf. LG 1). Amen.
Letter to German Bishops' Conference President about the

Your Excellency, Dear Archbishop,

During your visit on 15 March 2012, you informed me that there is still no unanimity among the bishops of the German-speaking world with regard to the translation of the words “pro multis” in the Eucharistic Prayers of the Mass. There seems to be a risk that in the new edition of Gotteslob that is due to be published shortly, some parts of the German-speaking world wish to retain the translation “for all,” even if the German Bishops’ Conference should agree to use “for many,” as requested by the Holy See. I promised that I would write to you on this important matter, in order to circumvent a division of this kind at the very heart of our prayer. This letter that I am addressing through you to the members of the German Bishops’ Conference will also be sent to the other bishops of the German-speaking world.

Let me begin with a brief word about how the problem arose. In the 1960s, when the Roman Missal had to be translated into German, under the responsibility of the bishops, there was a consensus among exegetes to the effect that the word “many” in Is 53:11f. is a Hebrew expression referring to the totality, “all.” It would follow that the use of the word “many” in the institution narratives of Matthew and Mark is a Semitism and should be translated “all.” This argument was also applied to the Latin text that was being translated directly, and it was claimed that “pro multis” points beyond the Gospel narratives to Is 53 and should therefore be translated “for all.” This exegetical consensus has collapsed in the meantime: it no longer exists. In the official German translation of the Scriptures, the account of the Last Supper includes the words: “This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, that is poured out for many” (Mk 14:24; cf. Mt 26:28). This highlights something very important: the rendering of “pro multis” as “for all” was not merely a translation but an interpretation, a well-founded interpretation then as now, but an interpretation nevertheless, something more than a translation.
In a certain sense, this combination of translation and interpretation was one of the principles that governed the translation of liturgical books into modern languages immediately after the Council. It was realized how remote the Bible and liturgical texts were from the linguistic and conceptual world of people today, so that even in translation they were bound to remain largely unintelligible to worshippers. It was a new development that the sacred texts were now being made accessible to worshippers in translation, and yet they would remain remote from their world, indeed that remoteness was made manifest for the first time. So it seemed not only justifiable but even necessary to build interpretation into the translation and in this way to speak more directly to the listeners, whose hearts and minds these words were intended to reach.

Up to a point, the principle of translating the content rather than the literal meaning of key texts is still justified. Since I constantly have to say liturgical prayers in a variety of languages, though, it strikes me that the different translations sometimes have little in common and that often the common text underlying them can scarcely be detected. Some banal elements have also crept in, which are real impoverishments. So over the years it has become increasingly clear to me personally that as an approach to translation, the principle of structural as opposed to literal equivalence has its limits. In accordance with insights of this kind, the instruction for translators *Liturgiam Authenticam*, issued on March 28, 2001 by the Congregation for Divine Worship, shifted the focus back onto the principle of literal equivalence, without of course requiring a one-sided verbalism. The important insight underpinning this instruction is the above-mentioned distinction between translation and interpretation. It is necessary both for Scripture and for liturgical texts. On the one hand, the sacred text must appear as itself as far as possible, even if it seems alien and raises questions; on the other hand the Church has the task of explaining it, so that within the limits of our understanding, the message that the Lord intends for us actually reaches us. Not even the most sensitive translation can take away the need for explanation: it is part of the structure of revelation that the word of God is read within the exegetical community of the Church — faithfulness and drawing out the contemporary relevance go together. The word must be presented as it is, with its own shape,
however strange it may appear to us; the interpretation must be measured by the criterion of faithfulness to the word itself, while at the same time rendering it accessible to today’s listeners.

In this context, the Holy See has decided that in the new translation of the Missal, the words “pro multis” should be translated as they stand, and not presented in the form of an interpretation. In the place of the interpretative explanation “for all,” the simple rendering “for many” must appear. Let me take the opportunity to point out that neither Matthew nor Mark uses the definite article, so it is not “for the many,” but “for many.” If this decision makes a great deal of sense, as I hope it does, in terms of the fundamental relationship between translation and exegesis, I am also aware that it poses an enormous challenge to those with the task of explaining the word of God in the Church, since to the ordinary church-goer it will almost inevitably seem like a rupture at the heart of the sacred. They will ask: did Christ not die for all? Has the Church changed her teaching? Can she do so? May she do so? Are there reactionary forces at work here to destroy the heritage of the Council? We all know from experience of the last fifty years how deeply the alteration of liturgical forms and texts touches people’s souls. How greatly perturbed people will be, then, by a change in the text at such a key moment. This being so, when the decision was made to opt for the translation “many,” in view of the difference between translation and explanation, it was established at the same time that a thorough catechesis would be needed to prepare the way for this translation in the various language regions: the bishops would have to help the priests, and through them the lay faithful, to understand exactly what this is about. Prior catechesis is the essential condition for adoption of the new translation. As far as I am aware, no such catechesis has yet taken place in the German-speaking world. The purpose of my letter is urgently to ask all of you, my dear Brother Bishops, to develop a catechesis of this kind, to discuss it with the priests and to make it available to the lay faithful.

The first element in such catechesis would have to be a brief explanation as to why the word “many” was rendered as “all” in the translation of the Missal prepared after the Council: in order to express unequivocally, in the sense willed by Jesus, the universality of the salvation
that he brought. The question immediately arises: if Jesus died for all, then why did he say “for many” at the Last Supper? And why do we retain these words of Jesus for the institution? Here it must be added straight away that according to Matthew and Mark, Jesus said “for many,” while according to Luke and Paul he said “for you,” which seems to narrow the focus even further. Yet it is precisely this that points towards the solution. The disciples know that Jesus’ mission extends beyond them and their circle, they know that he came to gather together the scattered children of God from all over the world (Jn 11:52). Yet this “for you” makes Jesus’ mission quite concrete for those present. They are not simply anonymous elements within some vast whole: each one of them knows that the Lord died precisely for me, for us. “For you” covers the past and the future, it means me, personally; we, who are assembled here, are known and loved by Jesus for ourselves. So this “for you” is not a narrowing down, but a making concrete, and it applies to every eucharistic community, concretely uniting it to the love of Jesus. In the words of consecration, the Roman Canon combined the two biblical formulae, and so it says “for you and for many.” This formula was then adopted for all the Eucharistic Prayers at the time of the liturgical reform.

Once again, though, we ask: why “for many”? Did the Lord not die for all? The fact that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, is the man for all men, the new Adam, is one of the fundamental convictions of our faith. Let me recall just three Scriptural texts on the subject: God “did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all,” as Paul says in the Letter to the Romans (8:32). “One has died for all,” as he says in the Second Letter to the Corinthians concerning Jesus’ death (5:14). Jesus “gave himself as a ransom for all,” as we read in the First Letter to Timothy (2:6). So the question arises once more: if this is so clear, why do we say “for many” in the Eucharistic Prayer? Well, the Church has taken this formula from the institution narratives of the New Testament. She says these words out of deference for Jesus’ own words, in order to remain literally faithful to him. Respect for the words of Jesus himself is the reason for the formulation of the Eucharistic Prayer. But then we ask: why did Jesus say this? The reason is that in this way Jesus enables people to recognize him as the Suffering Servant of Is 53, he reveals himself as the figure to whom the prophecy
refers. The Church’s respect for the words of Jesus, Jesus’ fidelity to the words of “Scripture”: this double fidelity is the concrete reason for the formulation “for many.” In this chain of respectful fidelity, we too take our place with a literal translation of the words of Scripture.

Just as we saw earlier that the “for you” of the Luke-Paul tradition does not restrict but rather makes concrete, so now we recognize that the dialectic “many” — “all” has a meaning of its own. “All” concerns the ontological plane — the life and ministry of Jesus embraces the whole of humanity: past, present and future. But specifically, historically, in the concrete community of those who celebrate the Eucharist, he comes only to “many.” So here we see a threefold meaning of the relationship between “many” and “all.” Firstly, for us who are invited to sit at his table, it means surprise, joy and thankfulness that he has called me, that I can be with him and come to know him. “Thank the Lord that in his grace he has called me into his Church.” Secondly, this brings with it a certain responsibility. How the Lord in his own way reaches the others — “all” — ultimately remains his mystery. But without doubt it is a responsibility to be directly called to his table, so that I hear the words “for you” — he suffered for me. The many bear responsibility for all. The community of the many must be the lamp on the lamp-stand, a city on the hilltop, yeast for all. This is a vocation that affects each one of us individually, quite personally. The many, that is to say, we ourselves, must be conscious of our mission of responsibility towards the whole. Finally, a third aspect comes into play. In today’s society we often feel that we are not “many,” but rather few — a small remnant becoming smaller all the time. But no — we are “many”: “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues,” as we read in the Revelation of Saint John (7:9). We are many and we stand for all. So the words “many” and “all” go together and are intertwined with responsibility and promise.

Your Excellency, dear Brother Bishops, with these thoughts I have tried to set out the basic content of the catechesis with which priests and laity are to be prepared as soon as possible for the new translation. I hope that all of this can at the same time nourish a deeper participation in the Holy Eucharist and thus take its place within the great task that lies ahead
of us in the “Year of Faith.” I hope too that the catechesis will be presented soon and will thus become part of the renewal of worship that the Council strove to achieve from its very first session.

With paschal blessings, I remain

Yours in the Lord,

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

At the Mass for the Pope's 85th Birthday (April 16, 2012)

Your Eminences,

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On the day of my birth and of my Baptism, 16 April, the Church’s liturgy has set three signposts which show me where the road leads and help me to find it. In the first place, it is the Memorial of St Bernadette Soubirous, the seer of Lourdes; then there is one of the most unusual Saints in the Church’s history, Benedict Joseph Labre; and then, above all, this day is immersed in the Paschal Mystery, in the Mystery of the Cross and the Resurrection. In the year of my birth this was expressed in a special way: it was Holy Saturday, the day of the silence of God, of his apparent absence, of God’s death, but also the day on which the Resurrection was proclaimed.

We all know and love Bernadette Soubirous, the simple girl from the south, from the Pyrenees. Bernadette grew up in the France of the 18th-century Enlightenment in a poverty which it is hard to imagine.

The prison that had been evacuated because it was too insanitary, became — after some hesitation — the family home in which she spent her childhood. There was no access to education, only some catechism in preparation for First Communion. Yet this simple girl, who retained a pure
and honest heart, had a heart that saw, that was able to see the Mother of the Lord and the Lord’s beauty and goodness was reflected in her. Mary was able to appear to this girl and through her to speak to the people of the time and beyond it.

Bernadette could see with her pure and genuine heart. And Mary pointed out the spring to her: she was able to discover the spring of pure and uncontaminated living water; water that is life, water that gives purity and health. And down the centuries this living water has become a sign from Mary, a sign that shows where the sources of life are found, where we can purify ourselves, where we can find what is uncontaminated. This sign is all the more important in our time, in which we see the world so anxious and in which the need for water, pure water, becomes pressing. From Mary, the Mother of the Lord, from her pure heart, pure and genuine life-giving water also wells: water which in this century — and in centuries to come — purifies and heals us.

I think we can consider this water as an image of truth that comes to us in faith: not simulated but rather uncontaminated truth. Indeed to be able to live, to be able to be pure, we need to have within us a longing for pure life, for undistorted truth, for what is not contaminated by corruption, a longing to be unblemished. So on this day, this little Saint has always been a sign for me, who has shown me where the living water we need comes from — the water that purifies us and gives life — and a sign of how we ought to be: with all our knowledge and all our skills, although they are necessary, we must not lose our simple hearts, the simple gaze of the heart that can perceive the essential, and we must always pray the Lord to preserve in us the humility that enables the heart to remain clairvoyant — to see what is simple and essential, the beauty and goodness of God — and in this way to find the spring from which flows the purifying life-giving water.

Then there is Benedict Joseph Labre, the pious mendicant pilgrim of the 18th century who, after failing several times, at last found his vocation to go on pilgrimage as a beggar, without anything, without any support and keeping for himself nothing he received except what he absolutely needed. He was a pilgrim travelling across Europe to all the European shrines, from Spain to Poland and from Germany to Sicily: a truly
European Saint! We can also say: a rather unusual Saint who begging, wandered from one shrine to another and wanted to do nothing other than to pray and thereby bear witness to what counts in this life: God. Of course, his is not an example to emulate, but a signpost, a finger pointing to the essential. He shows us that God alone suffices; that beyond anything in this world, beyond our needs and capacities, what matters, what is essential is to know God. He is enough on his own. And this “only God,” he shows us in a dramatic way. At the same time, this truly European life that, from shrine to shrine, embraces the entire continent of Europe makes it clear that whoever opens to God does not estrange himself from the world and from men, but rather finds brothers, because God causes all borders to fall, God alone eliminates the borders because, thanks to him, we all are brothers and sisters, we belong to one another. He makes it clear that the oneness of God means, at the same time, brotherhood and reconciliation among men, the demolition of frontiers that unites us and heals us. In this way he is a Saint of peace, just as he was a Saint without demands, who died deprived of all but blessed with everything.

And then, finally, we come to the Paschal Mystery. The same day on which I was born, thanks to my parent’s concern, I was also reborn through water and the Holy Spirit, as we have just heard in the Gospel. First, there is the gift of life that my parents gave me in very difficult times, and for which I thank them. But it cannot be taken for granted that human life in itself is a gift. Can it really be a beautiful gift? Do we know what will befall man in the dark days ahead — or in the brighter days that could come? Can we foresee to what troubles, what terrible events he might be exposed? Is it right to simply give life like this? Is it responsible or too uncertain? It is a problematic gift, if it is left to itself. Biological life is in itself a gift, but it is surrounded by a great question. It becomes a true gift only if, along with it, we are given a promise that is stronger than any evil that could threaten us, if it is immersed in a power that ensures that it is good to be human, that there will be good for this person no matter what the future brings. Thus, with birth is associated rebirth, the certitude that, truly, it is good to be alive, because the promise is stronger than evil. This is the meaning of rebirth by water and the Holy Spirit: to be immersed in the promise that only God can make — it is good that you exist, and you can
be certain of that whatever comes. With this assurance I was able to live, reborn by water and the Holy Spirit. Nicodemus asks the Lord: “How can an old man possibly be reborn?” Now, rebirth is given to us in Baptism, but we must continually grow in it, we must always let ourselves be immersed by God in his promise, in order to be truly reborn in the great, new family of God which is stronger than every weakness and than any negative power that threatens us. Therefore, this is a day of great thanksgiving.

The day I was baptized, as I said, was Holy Saturday. Then it was still customary to anticipate the Easter Vigil in the morning, which would still be followed by the darkness of Holy Saturday, without the Alleluia. It seems to me that this singular paradox, this singular anticipation of light in a day of darkness, could almost be an image of the history of our times. On the one hand, there is still the silence of God and his absence, but in the Resurrection of Christ there is already the anticipation of the “yes” of God, and on the basis of this anticipation we live and, through the silence of God, we hear him speak, and through the darkness of his absence we glimpse his light. The anticipation of the Resurrection in the middle of an evolving history is the power that points out the way to us and helps us to go forward.

Let us thank the good Lord for he has given us this light and let us pray to him so that it might endure forever. And on this day I have special cause to thank him and all those who have ever anew made me perceive the presence of the Lord, who have accompanied me so that I might never lose the light.

I am now facing the last chapter of my life and I do not know what awaits me. I know, however, that the light of God exists, that he is Risen, that his light is stronger than any darkness, that the goodness of God is stronger than any evil in this world. And this helps me to go forward with certainty. May this help us to go forward, and at this moment I wholeheartedly thank all those who have continually helped me to perceive the “yes” of God through their faith.

Finally, Cardinal Dean, a warm thank you for your words of brotherly friendship, for all the collaboration during all these years. And a special thank you to all the collaborators over the 30 years in which I have been in
Rome, who have helped me to carry the weight of my responsibilities. Thank you. Amen.

Torna ai contenuti

Homily at the Ordination of Priests, St. Peter's Basilica (April 29, 2012)

Venerable Brothers,
Dear Ordinands,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Roman tradition of celebrating priestly ordinations on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, Good Shepherd Sunday, contains a great wealth of meaning linked to the convergence of the Word of God, the liturgical Rite and the Easter Season in which it is placed. The figure of the shepherd in particular, so important in Sacred Scripture and naturally very relevant to the definition of the priest, acquires its full truth and clarity on the face of Christ, in the light of the Mystery of his death and Resurrection. Dear Ordinands, you too will always be able to draw from these riches every day of your life, and your priesthood will thus be continuously renewed. This year the Gospel passage is the central one from Chapter 10 of John and begins precisely with Jesus’ affirmation: “I am the Good Shepherd.”

This is immediately followed by the first fundamental characteristic: “the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn 10:11). So, we are led straight to the centre, to the summit of the revelation of God as the Shepherd of his people; this centre and summit is Jesus, Jesus himself who dies on the cross and rises from the tomb on the third day, rises with all his humanity and thereby involves us, every man and woman, in his passage from death to life. This event — the Pasch of Christ — in which he completely and definitively fulfills the pastoral work of God, is a sacrificial event. The Good Shepherd and the High Priest therefore coincide in the person of Jesus who laid down his life for us.
But let us also briefly note the first two Readings and the Responsorial Psalm (Ps 118 [117]). The passage from the Acts of the Apostles (4:8-12) presents to us St Peter’s testimony before the rulers of the people and the elders of Jerusalem after the miraculous healing of the cripple. Peter says with great candor: Jesus “is the stone which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the head of the corner”; and he added, “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (vv. 11-12). Then in the light of Christ’s Paschal Mystery, the Apostle interprets Psalm 118[117], in which the person praying gives thanks to God who has answered his cry for help and has saved him. This Psalm says: “the stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes” (Ps 118[117]:22-23). Jesus lived this very experience: being rejected by the leaders of his people and rehabilitated by God, placed as the foundational stone of a new temple, of a new people that was to praise the Lord with the fruits of justice (cf. Mt 21:42-43) Therefore the First Reading and the Responsorial Psalm, which is the same Psalm 118[117], vividly evoke the paschal context and, with this image of the stone rejected and re-habilitated, draw our gaze to Jesus dead and Risen.

The Second Reading, from the First Letter of John (3:1-2), speaks to us instead of the fruit of Christ’s Pasch: our having become children of God. In John’s words you can still hear his great wonder at this gift; not only are we called children of God but “so we are” (v. 1). Indeed, man’s filial condition is the fruit of the saving work of Jesus. With his Incarnation, with his death and Resurrection and with the gift of the Holy Spirit he has inserted the human being into a new relationship with God, his own relationship with the Father. For this reason the Risen Jesus says: “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (Jn 20:17). It is a relationship that is already totally real but not yet totally revealed: it will be in the end when — if God pleases — we shall see his face without a veil (cf. v. 7).

Dear Ordinands, this is where the Good Shepherd wishes to lead us! It is here that the priest is called to lead the faithful entrusted to his care: to true life, to life in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10). Let us therefore return to the Gospel and to the Parable of the Good Shepherd. “The Good Shepherd
lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn 10:11). Jesus insists on this essential trait of the Good Shepherd who is he himself: that of “laying down his life.” He repeats it three times and at the end concludes with the words: “for this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father” (Jn 10:17-18).

This is clearly the qualifying feature of the shepherd, just as Jesus interprets it in the first person, in accordance with the will of the Father who sent him. The biblical figure of shepherd-king mainly involves the task of governing, keeping united and guiding the People of God. The whole of this regal role is totally fulfilled in Jesus Christ in the sacrificial dimension, in the offering of life. In a word, it is brought about in the mystery of the Cross, that is, in the supreme act of humility and oblative love. Abbot Theodore the Studite, said: “By the Cross we, the sheep of Christ, have been gathered into one flock, destined for the sheepfolds of heaven” (Discourse on the Precious and Life-Giving Cross of Christ, PG 99, 699).

The formulas of the Rite for the Ordination of Priests that we are celebrating give us this orientation. For example, among the questions that concern the “commitments of the chosen ones,” the later, with a culminating and in a certain way concise character, says: “Are you resolved to consecrate your life to God for the salvation of his people, and to unite yourself more closely every day to Christ the High Priest, who offered himself for us to the Father as a perfect sacrifice?” The priest is in fact the one who is uniquely inserted into the mystery of Christ’s Sacrifice through a personal union with him, in order to extend his saving mission. This union, which happens in the Sacrament of Orders, seeks to become closer every day through the generous response of the priest himself. This is why, dear Ordinands, in a little while you will answer this question, saying: “I am, with the help of God.”

The celebrant then says in the explanatory Rites, at the moment of the anointing with chrism: “The Father anointed our Lord Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. May Jesus preserve you to sanctify the Christian people and to offer sacrifice to God.” And then in the
presentation of the bread and the wine he says: “Accept from the holy people of God the gifts to be offered to him. Know what you are doing, and imitate the mystery you celebrate: model your life on the mystery of the Lord’s cross.” It is very obvious that for the priest celebrating Holy Mass every day does not mean carrying out a ritual function but rather fulfilling a mission that involves his life entirely and profoundly in communion with the Risen Christ who continues to realize the redeeming sacrifice in his Church.

This Eucharistic and sacrificial dimension is inseparable from the pastoral dimension and constitutes the nucleus of truth and of the saving power on which the effectiveness of every activity depends. Of course, we are not speaking of effectiveness solely at the psychological or social level, but rather of the vital fruitfulness of God’s presence at the profound human level. Preaching itself, good works and the actions of various kinds that the Church carries out with her multiple initiatives would lose their salvific fruitfulness were the celebration of Christ’s Sacrifice to be lacking. And this is entrusted to ordained priests. Indeed, the priest is called to live in himself what Jesus experienced personally, that is, to give himself without reserve to preaching and to healing man of every evil of body and of spirit, and then, lastly, to sum up everything in the supreme gesture of “laying down his life,” for human beings, which finds its sacramental expression in the Eucharist, the perpetual memorial of Jesus’ Passover. It is only through this “door” of the Paschal Sacrifice that the men and women of all time can enter eternal life; it is through this “holy way” that they can undertake the exodus that leads them to the “promised land” of true freedom, to the “green pastures” of never ending peace and joy (cf. Jn 10:7,9; Ps 77[76]:14, 20-21; Ps 23[22]:2).

Dear Ordinands, may this word of God illuminate your entire life. And when the burden of the cross becomes heavier, know that this is the most precious time, for you and for the people entrusted to you: by renewing your “I am, with the help of God,” you will be cooperating with Christ, the High Priest and Good Shepherd, in tending his sheep — even only one stray sheep, but for which there are great festivities in heaven! May the Virgin Mary, Salus Populi Romani, always watch over each one of you and over your journey. Amen.
Homily at the 7th World Meeting of Families in Milan (June 3, 2012)

Dear Brother Bishops,

Distinguished Authorities,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is a time of great joy and communion that we are experiencing this morning, as we celebrate the eucharistic Sacrifice: a great gathering, in union with the Successor of Peter, consisting of faithful who have come from many different nations. It is an eloquent image of the Church, one and universal, founded by Christ and fruit of the mission entrusted by Jesus to his Apostles, as we heard in today’s Gospel: to go and make disciples of all nations, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:18-19). With affection and gratitude I greet Cardinal Angelo Scola, Archbishop of Milan, and Cardinal Ennio Antonelli, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family, the principal architects of this VII World Meeting of Families, together with their staff, the Auxiliary Bishops of Milan and all the other bishops. I am pleased to greet all the Authorities who are present today. And I extend a warm welcome especially to you, dear families! Thank you for your participation!

In today’s second reading, Saint Paul reminds us that in Baptism we received the Holy Spirit, who unites us to Christ as brothers and sisters and makes us children of the Father, so that we can cry out: “Abba, Father!” (cf. Rom 8:15,17). At that moment we were given a spark of new, divine life, which is destined to grow until it comes to its definitive fulfilment in the glory of heaven; we became members of the Church, God’s family, “sacrarium Trinitatis” as Saint Ambrose calls it, “a people made one by the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,” as the Second Vatican Council teaches (Lumen Gentium, 4). The liturgical Solemnity of the Holy Trinity that we are celebrating today invites us to contemplate this mystery, but it also urges us to commit ourselves to live our communion with God and with one another according to the model of Trinitarian communion.
We are called to receive and to pass on the truths of faith in a spirit of harmony, to live our love for each other and for everyone, sharing joys and sufferings, learning to seek and to grant forgiveness, valuing the different charisms under the leadership of the bishops. In a word, we have been given the task of building church communities that are more and more like families, able to reflect the beauty of the Trinity and to evangelize not only by word, but I would say by “radiation,” in the strength of living love.

It is not only the Church that is called to be the image of One God in Three Persons, but also the family, based on marriage between man and woman. In the beginning, “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply’” (Gen 1:27-28). God created us male and female, equal in dignity, but also with respective and complementary characteristics, so that the two might be a gift for each other, might value each other and might bring into being a community of love and life. It is love that makes the human person the authentic image of the Blessed Trinity, image of God. Dear married couples, in living out your marriage you are not giving each other any particular thing or activity, but your whole lives. And your love is fruitful first and foremost for yourselves, because you desire and accomplish one another’s good, you experience the joy of receiving and giving. It is also fruitful in your generous and responsible procreation of children, in your attentive care for them, and in their vigilant and wise education. And lastly, it is fruitful for society, because family life is the first and irreplaceable school of social virtues, such as respect for persons, gratuitousness, trust, responsibility, solidarity, cooperation. Dear married couples, watch over your children and, in a world dominated by technology, transmit to them, with serenity and trust, reasons for living, the strength of faith, pointing them towards high goals and supporting them in their fragility. And let me add a word to the children here: be sure that you always maintain a relationship of deep affection and attentive care for your parents, and see that your relationships with your brothers and sisters are opportunities to grow in love.

God’s plan for the human couple finds its fullness in Jesus Christ, who raised marriage to the level of a sacrament. Dear married couples, by means
of a special gift of the Holy Spirit, Christ gives you a share in his spousal love, making you a sign of his faithful and all-embracing love for the Church. If you can receive this gift, renewing your “yes” each day by faith, with the strength that comes from the grace of the sacrament, then your family will grow in God’s love according to the model of the Holy Family of Nazareth. Dear families, pray often for the help of the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, that they may teach you to receive God’s love as they did. Your vocation is not easy to live, especially today, but the vocation to love is a wonderful thing, it is the only force that can truly transform the cosmos, the world. You have before you the witness of so many families who point out the paths for growing in love: by maintaining a constant relationship with God and participating in the life of the Church, by cultivating dialogue, respecting the other’s point of view, by being ready for service and patient with the failings of others, by being able to forgive and to seek forgiveness, by overcoming with intelligence and humility any conflicts that may arise, by agreeing on principles of upbringing, and by being open to other families, attentive towards the poor, and responsible within civil society. These are all elements that build up the family. Live them with courage, and be sure that, insofar as you live your love for each other and for all with the help of God’s grace, you become a living Gospel, a true domestic Church (cf. Familiaris Consortio, 49). I should also like to address a word to the faithful who, even though they agree with the Church’s teachings on the family, have had painful experiences of breakdown and separation. I want you to know that the Pope and the Church support you in your struggle. I encourage you to remain united to your communities, and I earnestly hope that your dioceses are developing suitable initiatives to welcome and accompany you.

In the Book of Genesis, God entrusts his creation to the human couple for them to guard it, cultivate it, and direct it according to his plan (cf. 1:27-28; 2:15). In this indication of Sacred Scripture we may recognize the task of man and woman to collaborate with God in the process of transforming the world through work, science and technology. Man and woman are also the image of God in this important work, which they are to carry out with the Creator’s own love. In modern economic theories, there is often a utilitarian concept of work, production and the market. Yet
God’s plan, as well as experience, show that the one-sided logic of sheer utility and maximum profit are not conducive to harmonious development, to the good of the family or to building a just society, because it brings in its wake ferocious competition, strong inequalities, degradation of the environment, the race for consumer goods, family tensions. Indeed, the utilitarian mentality tends to take its toll on personal and family relationships, reducing them to a fragile convergence of individual interests and undermining the solidity of the social fabric.

One final point: man, as the image of God, is also called to rest and to celebrate. The account of creation concludes with these words: “And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it” (Gen 2:2-3). For us Christians, the feast day is Sunday, the Lord’s day, the weekly Easter. It is the day of the Church, the assembly convened by the Lord around the table of the word and of the eucharistic Sacrifice, just as we are doing today, in order to feed on him, to enter into his love and to live by his love. It is the day of man and his values: conviviality, friendship, solidarity, culture, closeness to nature, play, sport. It is the day of the family, on which to experience together a sense of celebration, encounter, sharing, not least through taking part in Mass. Dear families, despite the relentless rhythms of the modern world, do not lose a sense of the Lord’s Day! It is like an oasis in which to pause, so as to taste the joy of encounter and to quench our thirst for God.

Family, work, celebration: three of God’s gifts, three dimensions of our lives that must be brought into a harmonious balance. Harmonizing work schedules with family demands, professional life with fatherhood and motherhood, work with celebration, is important for building up a society with a human face. In this regard, always give priority to the logic of being over that of having: the first builds up, the second ends up destroying. We must learn to believe first of all in the family, in authentic love, the kind that comes from God and unites us to him, the kind that therefore “makes us a ‘we’ which transcends our divisions and makes us one, until in the end God is ‘all in all’ (1 Cor 15:28)” (Deus Caritas Est, 18). Amen.
Inauguration of the Judicial Year of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota (January 21, 2012)

Dear Members of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota,

It is cause of joy for me to receive you today in this annual encounter, on the occasion of the inauguration of the judicial year. I extend my greetings to the College of Prelate Auditors, starting with the Dean, Bishop Stankiewicz, whom I thank for his words. Cordial greetings also to the Officials, the [Rotal] Advocates, and other collaborators, and to all those who are present. On this occasion, I renew my esteem for the delicate and precious ministry which you carry out in the Church and which requires an ever-renewed effort, account taken of the impact it has on the salus animarum of the People of God.

In the appointment of this year, I would like to begin with one of the most important ecclesial events which we will experience in a few months. I am referring to the Year of Faith, which, following in the footsteps of my Venerable Predecessor, the Servant of God Paul VI, I wanted to proclaim upon the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council. That great Pontiff—as I wrote in the Apostolic Letter of Indiction—established for the first time that period of reflection “fully conscious of the grave difficulties of the time, especially with regard to the profession of the True Faith and its correct interpretation.”[1]

Following a similar exigency, I go on to the subject matter which more directly concerns your service to the Church, today I would like to reflect upon a primary aspect of the judicial ministry, namely the interpretation of canonical law with respect to its application.[2] The connection to the theme just touched upon — the right interpretation of the Faith — certainly cannot be reduced to a mere semantic assonance, considering that Canon Law grounds its foundation and its very meaning in the Truths of the Faith, and that the Lex Agendi cannot but mirror the Lex Credendi. The question of the interpretation of canonical law, moreover, constitutes a rather vast and complex subject, in front of which I will limit myself to making some observations.
All things considered, the hermeneutics of canonical laws is most closely tied to the very understanding of the law of the Church. Were one to tend to identify Canon Law with the system of the laws of the canons, the understanding of that which is juridical in the Church would essentially consist in the comprehending of that which the legal texts establish. At first glance, this approach would appear to hold Human Law entirely in value. However the impoverishment which this conception would bring about becomes manifest: with the practical oblivion of the Natural Law and of the Divine Positive Law, as well as the vital relationship of every Law with the communion and the mission of the Church, the work of the interpreter becomes deprived of vital contact with ecclesial reality.

In most recent times, some currents of thought have warned against an excessive attachment to the laws of the Church, starting with the Codes, judging them, as a case in point, to be a manifestation of Legalism. As a consequence, hermeneutical paths had been proposed which grant an approach more consonant with the theological foundations and goals, also pastoral, of the canonical norm, leading to a juridical creativity in which a singular situation would become the decisive factor to ascertain the authentic meaning of the legal precept in a concrete case. Mercy, Equity, the Oikonomia so dear to the Oriental Tradition, are some of the concepts invoked in such interpretative operations. It is immediately appropriate to note that this framework does not overcome the Positivism which it denounces, limiting itself to substituting it [Positivism] with another in which interpretive human work rises to the level of protagonist in establishing that which is juridical. It lacks the meaning of an objective law which one is to seek, because it remains at the mercy of considerations which claim to be theological or pastoral, but in the end are exposed to the risk of arbitrariness. In such a manner, legal hermeneutics becomes emptied: in the end, it does not take interest in understanding the provision of law, from the moment that it can be dynamically adapted to any whichever solution, even that which is opposed to its letter. Certainly there is in this case a reference to living phenomena, of which, however, one does not grasp the intrinsic juridical dimension.

There exists another way in which the proper understanding of canonical law opens the road to an interpretative work which inserts itself
into the search for the truth about the Law and justice in the Church. As I wanted to highlight to the Federal Parliament of my Country, in the Reichstag of Berlin, true law is inseparable from justice. The principle is obviously valid also to the Canon Law, in the sense that it cannot be shuttered within a merely human system of norms, but must be connected to a just order of the Church, in which a higher law is in effect. Seen through this lens, Human Positive Law loses the primacy which one would want to attribute to it, since law is no longer simply identified with it; in this, however, Human Law is held in value inasmuch as it is an expression of justice, above all for how much it declares as Divine Law, but also for that which it presents as a legitimate determination of Human Law.

In such a manner, a legal hermeneutics which may be authentically juridical is rendered possible, in the sense that, by placing itself in harmony with the very signification of the law, the crucial question can be posed as to what is just in each case. It would be appropriate to observe, in this respect, that in order to grasp the true meaning of the law one must always seize the very reality that is being disciplined, and that not only when the law is primarily declarative of the Divine Law, but also when it constitutively introduces human rules. These are, in fact, to be interpreted also in the light of the reality being regulated, which always contains a nucleus of the Natural Law and the Divine Positive Law, with which every norm must be in harmony in order to be rational and truly juridical.

In such realistic prospectiveness, the interpretative undertaking, at times arduous, takes on meaning and purpose. The use of the interpretive means foreseen by the Code of Canon Law in can. 17, beginning with “the proper meaning of the words considered in their text and context,” is no longer a mere logical exercise. It has to do with an assignment that is vivified by an authentic contact with the comprehensive reality of the Church, which allows one to penetrate the true meaning of the letter of the law. Something then occurs, similar to what I said about the inner process of St Augustine in biblical hermeneutics: “the transcending of the letter has rendered the letter itself credible.” In such a manner, also in the hermeneutics of the law is it confirmed that the authentic horizon is that of the juridical truth to love, to seek out and to serve.
It follows that the interpretation of canonical law must take place within the Church. This is not a matter of mere external circumstance, subject to the environs: it is a calling to the same *humus* of Canon Law and the reality regulated by it. *Sentire cum Ecclesia* takes on meaning also within the discipline, by reason of the doctrinal foundations that are always present and operative within the legal norms of the Church. In this manner, is also applied to Canon Law that hermeneutics of renewal in continuity of which I spoke in reference to the Second Vatican Council 5, so closely bound to the current canonical legislation. Christian maturity leads one to love the law ever more and want to understand it and to apply it faithfully.

These foundational approaches are to be applied to all categories of interpretation: from scientific research on Canon Law, to the work of those who labor in the juridical sector in judicial or administrative seats, all the way to the quotidian seeking of just solutions in the lives of the faithful and of communities. A spirit of docility in welcoming laws is needed, seeking to study with honesty and dedication the juridical tradition of the Church in order to enable oneself to identify with it and also with the legal provisions enacted by Pastors, especially pontifical laws as well as the legal dispositions issued by Pastors, not to mention the Magisterium on canonical questions, which is *per se* binding concerning that which it teaches regarding the Law.\[^6\] Only in this manner may cases be identified in which concrete circumstances require an equitable solution in order to obtain the justice which the general human norm was not able to foresee, and may one be able to exhibit in a spirit of communion what may serve to improve the legislative system.

These reflections acquire a special relevance in the area of laws regarding the constitutive act of Matrimony and its consummation, and the reception of Holy Orders, and of those [laws] pertaining to the respective Processes. Here harmony with the true meaning of the law of the Church becomes a question of broad and profound practical impact on the lives of persons and communities, and it requires special attention. In particular, also to be applied are all juridically binding means which tend to ensure that unity in the interpretation and in the application of laws which is asked for by Justice: the Pontifical Magisterium specifically concerning this
area, contained above all within the Allocutions to the Roman Rota; the jurisprudence of the Roman Rota, upon which relevance I have already had the opportunity to speak to you[7]; the Norms and the Declarations issued by other Dicasteries of the Roman Curia. Such hermeneutical unity in that which is essential does not diminish in importance in any way the functions of local tribunals, the first ones called to address complex real situations that are found in every cultural context. Each one of these, in fact, is obliged to proceed with a sense of true reverence in the presence of the truth regarding the Law, striving to practice in an exemplary manner, in the application of judicial and administrative institutes, communion in discipline, the essential aspect of the unity of the Church.

Bringing myself to the conclusion of this moment of encounter and reflection, I would like to recall the recent innovation — which Monsignor Stankiewicz referred to — by virtue of which were transferred to an Office located at this Apostolic Tribunal the competencies for procedures of dispensation from ratified and non-consummated Matrimony and cases concerning the nullity of Sacred Ordination.[8] I am certain that there will be a generous response to this new ecclesial effort.

Encouraging your precious work, which requires faithful, quotidian, and strong commitment, I entrust you to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Speculum Iustitiae, and willingly do I impart my Apostolic Blessing.


[2] Cf. can. 16, § 3 cic; can. 1498, § 3 cceo.


Homily at the Mass at Bicentennial Park, Guanajuato, Mexico (March 25, 2012)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am very pleased to be among you today and I express my sincere gratitude to the Most Reverend José Guadalupe Martín Rábago, Archbishop of León, for his kind words of welcome. I greet the Mexican Bishops, and the Cardinals and other Bishops present here, and in a special way those who have come from Latin America and the Caribbean. I also extend a warm greeting to the authorities that are with us, as well as all who have gathered for this Holy Mass presided by the Successor of Peter.

We said, “A pure heart, create for me, O God” (Ps 50:12) during the responsorial psalm. This exclamation shows us how profoundly we must prepare to celebrate next week the great mystery of the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord. It also helps us to look deeply into the human heart, especially in times of sorrow as well as hope, as are the present times for the people of Mexico and of Latin America.

The desire for a heart that would be pure, sincere, humble, acceptable to God was very much felt by Israel as it became aware of the persistence in its midst of evil and sin as a power, practically implacable and impossible to overcome. There was nothing left but to trust in God’s mercy and in the hope that he would change from within, from the heart, an unbearable, dark and hopeless situation. In this way recourse gained ground to the infinite mercy of the Lord who does not wish the sinner to die but to
convert and live (cf. Ez 33:11). A pure heart, a new heart, is one which recognizes that, of itself, it is impotent and places itself in God's hands so as to continue hoping in his promises. Then the psalmist can say to the Lord with conviction: “Sinners will return to you” (Ps 50:15). And towards the end of the psalm he will give an explanation which is at the same time a firm conviction of faith: “A humble, contrite heart you will not spurn” (v. 19).

The history of Israel relates some great events and battles, but when faced with its more authentic existence, its decisive destiny, its salvation, it places its hope not in its own efforts, but in God who can create a new heart, not insensitive or proud. This should remind each one of us and our peoples that, when addressing the deeper dimension of personal and community life, human strategies will not suffice to save us. We must have recourse to the One who alone can give life in its fullness, because he is the essence of life and its author; he has made us sharers in the same through his Son Jesus Christ.

Today’s Gospel takes up the topic and shows us how this ancient desire for the fullness of life has actually been achieved in Christ. Saint John explains it in a passage in which the wish of some Greeks to see Jesus coincides with the moment in which the Lord is about to be glorified. Jesus responds to the question of the Greeks, who represent the pagan world, saying: “Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (Jn 12:23). This is a strange response which seems inconsistent with the question asked by the Greeks. What has the glorification of Jesus to do with the request to meet him? But there is a relation. Someone might think — says Saint Augustine — that Jesus felt glorified because the Gentiles were coming to him. This would be similar to the applause of the multitudes who give “glory” to those who are grand in the world, as we would say today. But this is not so. “It was convenient that, before the wonder of his glorification, should come the humility of his passion” (In Joannis Ev. 51:9: PL 35, 1766).

Jesus’ answer, announcing his imminent passion, means that a casual encounter in those moments would have been superficial and perhaps deceptive. The Greeks will see the one they wished to meet raised up on the cross from which he will attract all to himself (cf. Jn 12:32). There his
“glory” will begin, because of his sacrifice of expiation for all, as the grain of wheat fallen to the ground that by dying germinates and produces abundant fruit. They will find the one whom, unknown to them, they were seeking in their hearts, the true God who is made visible to all peoples. This was how Our Lady of Guadalupe showed her divine Son to Saint Juan Diego, not as a powerful legendary hero but as the very God of the living, by whom all live, the Creator of persons, of closeness and immediacy, of heaven and earth (cf. *Nican Mopohua*, v.33). At that moment she did what she had done previously at the wedding feast of Cana. Faced with the embarrassment caused by the lack of wine, she told the servants clearly that the path to follow was her Son: “Do whatever he tells you” (*Jn* 2:5).

Dear brothers and sisters, by coming here I have been able to visit the monument to Christ the King situated on top of the Cubilete. My venerable predecessor, Blessed Pope John Paul II, although he ardently desired to do so, was unable on his several journeys to this beloved land to visit this site of such significance for the faith of the Mexican people. I am sure that in heaven he is happy that the Lord has granted me the grace to be here with you and that he has blessed the millions of Mexicans who have venerated his relics in every corner of the country. This monument represents Christ the King. But his crowns, one of a sovereign, the other of thorns, indicate that his royal status does not correspond to how it has been or is understood by many. His kingdom does not stand on the power of his armies subduing others through force or violence. It rests on a higher power than wins over hearts: the love of God that he brought into the world with his sacrifice and the truth to which he bore witness. This is his sovereignty which no one can take from him and which no one should forget. Hence it is right that this shrine should be above all a place of pilgrimage, of fervent prayer, of conversion, of reconciliation, of the search for truth and the acceptance of grace. We ask Christ, to reign in our hearts, making them pure, docile, filled with hope and courageous in humility.

From this park, foreseen as a memorial of the bicentenary of the birth of the Mexican nation, bringing together many differences towards one destiny and one common quest, we ask Christ for a pure heart, where he as Prince of Peace may dwell “thanks to the power of God who is the power
of goodness, the power of love”. But for God to dwell in us, we need to listen to him; we must allow his Word to challenge us every day, meditating upon it in our hearts after the example of Mary (cf. Lk 2:51). In this way we grow in friendship with him, we learn to understand what he expects from us and we are encouraged to make him known to others.

At Aparecida, the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean saw with clarity the need to confirm, renew and revitalize the newness of the Gospel rooted deeply in the history of these lands “on the basis of a personal and community encounter with Jesus Christ which raises up disciples and missionaries” (Final Document, 11). The Continental Mission now taking place in the various dioceses of this continent has the specific task of transmitting this conviction to all Christians and ecclesial communities so that they may resist the temptation of a faith that is superficial and routine, at times fragmentary and incoherent. Here we need to overcome fatigue related to faith and rediscover “the joy of being Christians, of being sustained by the inner happiness of knowing Christ and belonging to his Church. From this joy spring the energies that are needed to serve Christ in distressing situations of human suffering, placing oneself at his disposition and not falling back on one’s own comfort” (Address to the Roman Curia, December 26, 2011). This can be seen clearly in the saints who dedicated themselves fully to the cause of the Gospel with enthusiasm and joy without counting the cost, even of life itself. Their heart was centred entirely on Christ from whom they had learned what it means to love until the end.

In this sense the Year of Faith, to which I have convoked the whole Church, “is an invitation to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the only Saviour of the world […]. Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy” (Porta Fidei 6, 7).

Let us ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to assist us in purifying our hearts, especially in view of the coming Easter celebrations, that we may enter more deeply the salvific mystery of her Son, as she made it known in this land. And let us also ask her to continue accompanying and protecting her Mexican and Latin American children, that Christ may reign in their lives
and help them boldly to promote peace, harmony, justice and solidarity. Amen.

Message for the 46th Annual Congress on Social Communication (January 24, 2012)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we draw near to World Communications Day 2012, I would like to share with you some reflections concerning an aspect of the human process of communication which, despite its importance, is often overlooked and which, at the present time, it would seem especially necessary to recall. It concerns the relationship between silence and word: two aspects of communication which need to be kept in balance, to alternate and to be integrated with one another if authentic dialogue and deep closeness between people are to be achieved. When word and silence become mutually exclusive, communication breaks down, either because it gives rise to confusion or because, on the contrary, it creates an atmosphere of coldness; when they complement one another, however, communication acquires value and meaning.

Silence is an integral element of communication; in its absence, words rich in content cannot exist. In silence, we are better able to listen to and understand ourselves; ideas come to birth and acquire depth; we understand with greater clarity what it is we want to say and what we expect from others; and we choose how to express ourselves. By remaining silent we allow the other person to speak, to express him or herself; and we avoid being tied simply to our own words and ideas without them being adequately tested. In this way, space is created for mutual listening, and deeper human relationships become possible. It is often in silence, for example, that we observe the most authentic communication taking place between people who are in love: gestures, facial expressions and body language are signs by which they reveal themselves to each other. Joy, anxiety, and suffering can all be communicated in silence — indeed it
provides them with a particularly powerful mode of expression. Silence, then, gives rise to even more active communication, requiring sensitivity and a capacity to listen that often makes manifest the true measure and nature of the relationships involved. When messages and information are plentiful, silence becomes essential if we are to distinguish what is important from what is insignificant or secondary.

Deeper reflection helps us to discover the links between events that at first sight seem unconnected, to make evaluations, to analyze messages; this makes it possible to share thoughtful and relevant opinions, giving rise to an authentic body of shared knowledge. For this to happen, it is necessary to develop an appropriate environment, a kind of ‘eco-system’ that maintains a just equilibrium between silence, words, images and sounds.

The process of communication nowadays is largely fuelled by questions in search of answers. Search engines and social networks have become the starting point of communication for many people who are seeking advice, ideas, information and answers. In our time, the internet is becoming ever more a forum for questions and answers — indeed, people today are frequently bombarded with answers to questions they have never asked and to needs of which they were unaware. If we are to recognize and focus upon the truly important questions, then silence is a precious commodity that enables us to exercise proper discernment in the face of the surcharge of stimuli and data that we receive. Amid the complexity and diversity of the world of communications, however, many people find themselves confronted with the ultimate questions of human existence: Who am I? What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope? It is important to affirm those who ask these questions, and to open up the possibility of a profound dialogue, by means of words and interchange, but also through the call to silent reflection, something that is often more eloquent than a hasty answer and permits seekers to reach into the depths of their being and open themselves to the path towards knowledge that God has inscribed in human hearts.

Ultimately, this constant flow of questions demonstrates the restlessness of human beings, ceaselessly searching for truths, of greater or lesser import, that can offer meaning and hope to their lives. Men and women cannot rest content with a superficial and unquestioning exchange
of skeptical opinions and experiences of life — all of us are in search of truth and we share this profound yearning today more than ever: “When people exchange information, they are already sharing themselves, their view of the world, their hopes, their ideals” (Message for the 2011 World Day of Communications).

Attention should be paid to the various types of websites, applications and social networks which can help people today to find time for reflection and authentic questioning, as well as making space for silence and occasions for prayer, meditation or sharing of the word of God. In concise phrases, often no longer than a verse from the Bible, profound thoughts can be communicated, as long as those taking part in the conversation do not neglect to cultivate their own inner lives. It is hardly surprising that different religious traditions consider solitude and silence as privileged states that help people to rediscover themselves and that Truth which gives meaning to all things. The God of biblical revelation speaks also without words: “As the Cross of Christ demonstrates, God also speaks by his silence.

The silence of God, the experience of the distance of the almighty Father, is a decisive stage in the earthly journey of the Son of God, the incarnate Word .... God’s silence prolongs his earlier words. In these moments of darkness, he speaks through the mystery of his silence” (Verbum Domini, 21). The eloquence of God’s love, lived to the point of the supreme gift, speaks in the silence of the Cross. After Christ’s death there is a great silence over the earth, and on Holy Saturday, when “the King sleeps and God slept in the flesh and raised up those who were sleeping from the ages” (cf. Office of Readings, Holy Saturday), God’s voice resounds, filled with love for humanity.

If God speaks to us even in silence, we in turn discover in silence the possibility of speaking with God and about God. “We need that silence which becomes contemplation, which introduces us into God’s silence and brings us to the point where the Word, the redeeming Word, is born” (Homily, Eucharistic Celebration with Members of the International Theological Commission, October 6, 2006). In speaking of God’s grandeur, our language will always prove inadequate and must make space for silent contemplation. Out of such contemplation springs forth, with all
its inner power, the urgent sense of mission, the compelling obligation “to communicate that which we have seen and heard” so that all may be in communion with God (1 Jn 1:3). Silent contemplation immerses us in the source of that Love who directs us towards our neighbors so that we may feel their suffering and offer them the light of Christ, his message of life and his saving gift of the fullness of love.

In silent contemplation, then, the eternal Word, through whom the world was created, becomes ever more powerfully present and we become aware of the plan of salvation that God is accomplishing throughout our history by word and deed. As the Second Vatican Council reminds us, divine revelation is fulfilled by “deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them” (Dei Verbum, 2). This plan of salvation culminates in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the mediator and the fullness of all revelation. He has made known to us the true face of God the Father and by his Cross and Resurrection has brought us from the slavery of sin and death to the freedom of the children of God.

The fundamental question of the meaning of human existence finds in the mystery of Christ an answer capable of bringing peace to the restless human heart. The Church’s mission springs from this mystery; and it is this mystery which impels Christians to become heralds of hope and salvation, witnesses of that love which promotes human dignity and builds justice and peace. - Word and silence: learning to communicate is learning to listen and contemplate as well as speak. This is especially important for those engaged in the task of evangelization: both silence and word are essential elements, integral to the Church’s work of communication for the sake of a renewed proclamation of Christ in today’s world. To Mary, whose silence “listens to the Word and causes it to blossom” (Private Prayer at the Holy House, Loreto, 1 September 2007), I entrust all the work of evangelization which the Church undertakes through the means of social communication.

Torna ai contenuti
General Audience for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18, 2012)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins today. For more than a century it has been celebrated every year by Christians of all Churches and ecclesial communities in order to invoke the extraordinary gift for which the Lord Jesus himself prayed at the Last Supper, before his Passion: “that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (Jn 17:21).

The practice of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was introduced in 1908 by Fr. Paul Wattson, the founder of an Anglican religious community who later entered the Catholic Church. The initiative received the blessing of Pope St. Pius X and was later promoted by Pope Benedict XV, who encouraged its celebration throughout the Catholic Church with the Brief Romanorum Pontificum of February 25, 1916.

The Octave of Prayer was developed and perfected in the 1930s by Abbé Paul Couturier of Lyons, who supported the prayer “for the unity of the Church as Christ wants her and in conformity with the instruments that he desires.” His last writings show that Abbé Couturier saw this Week as a means which enables Christ’s universal prayer “to enter and penetrate the entire Body of Christians”; it must grow until it becomes “an immense, unanimous cry of the entire People of God,” asking God for this great gift. Moreover the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is in itself one of the most effective expressions of the impetus the Second Vatican Council gave to the search for full communion among all Christ’s disciples.

May this spiritual event that unites Christians of all traditions increase our awareness that the true unity for which we strive cannot be solely the result of our own efforts but, rather, will be a gift from on high, to be ceaselessly prayed for.

Every year the booklets for the Week of Prayer are compiled by an ecumenical group from a different region of the world. I would like to reflect here on this point. This year the texts have been proposed by a joint
group of representatives of the Catholic Church and of the Polish Ecumenical Council, comprised of various Churches and ecclesial communities of the country. The documentation was then revised by a committee made up of members of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. This work done in two phases, is a further sign of the desire for unity that motivates Christians and of the awareness that prayer is the main way to attain full communion since if we are united in our orientation to the Lord we are on our way to unity.

The theme of this year’s Week—as we have heard—was taken from the First Letter to the Corinthians: “We shall all be changed... by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-58), his victory will transform us. This theme was suggested by the large Polish ecumenical group, as I mentioned, which, reflecting on its experience as a nation, chose to emphasize how strong the support of the Christian faith is in trials and upheavals, such as those that have marked the history of Poland. After much discussion, a theme was chosen which focuses on the transforming power of faith in Christ and in particular in the light of its importance to our prayers for the visible unity of the Church, the Body of Christ.

The inspiration for this reflection was drawn from St Paul’s words to the Church in Corinth. He speaks of the transitory nature of what belongs to our life in the present, marked too by the experience of the “defeat” of sin and death, in comparison with what Christ’s “victory” over sin and death in his Paschal Mystery brings to us.

The particular history of the Polish nation, which experienced periods of democratic coexistence and religious freedom, as in the 16th century, was marked in the last centuries by invasions and defeats, the constant struggle against oppression, and the thirst for freedom. It was all this that led the ecumenical group to reflect more deeply on the true meaning of “victory”—what victory is—and of “defeat.” Concerning “victory” understood in triumphalistic terms, Christ suggests to us a very different road that does not pass through dominance and power. Indeed, he says: “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all” (Mk 9:35).
Christ speaks of a victory through suffering love, reciprocal service, help, new hope, and practical comfort given to the lowliest, to the forgotten, to the outcast. For all Christians the loftiest expression of this humble service is Jesus Christ himself, the total gift that he makes of himself, the victory of his love over death, on the cross, that shines in the light of Easter morning.

Only if we let ourselves be transformed by God, only if we undertake to convert our life and if the transformation is brought about in the form of conversion can we share in this transforming “victory.” This is the reason why the Polish ecumenical group considered St Paul’s words: “We shall all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-58) particularly appropriate for the theme of its meditation.

The full and visible Christian unity that we long for demands that we let ourselves be transformed and that we conform ever more perfectly to the image of Christ. The unity we pray for requires an inner conversion that is both common and personal. It is not merely a matter of cordiality or cooperation, it is necessary above all to strengthen our faith in God, in the God of Jesus Christ, who spoke to us and made himself one of us. It is necessary to enter into new life in Christ, who is our true and definitive victory; it is necessary to open ourselves to one another, understanding all the elements of unity that God keeps for us and gives us ever anew; it is necessary to be aware of the urgent need to bear witness among the people of our time to the living God, who made himself known in Christ.

The Second Vatican Council made the ecumenical search the centre of the Church’s life and activity: “The Sacred Council exhorts all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism” (Unitatis Redintegratio, no. 4). Blessed John Paul II underlined the essential nature of this task, saying, “This unity, which the Lord has bestowed on his Church and in which he wishes to embrace all people, is not something added on, but stands at the very heart of Christ's mission. Nor is it some secondary attribute of the community of his disciples. Rather, it belongs to the very essence of this community” (Encyclical Ut Unum Sint, no.9).
Hence the ecumenical task is a responsibility of the entire Church and of all the baptized, who must develop the partial communion that already exists among Christians and make it grow into full communion in truth and in charity. The prayer for unity is consequently not restricted to this Week of Prayer but must become an integral part of our prayers, of the life of prayer of all Christians, in every place and in every time, especially when people of different traditions meet and work together for the victory, in Christ, over all that is sin, evil, injustice and the violation of human dignity.

Since the birth of the modern ecumenical movement, more than a century ago, there has always been a clear awareness that the lack of unity among Christians is an obstacle to a more effective proclamation of the Gospel, because it endangers our credibility. How can we give a convincing witness if we are divided?

Of course, the fundamental truths of the faith unite us far more than they divide us. Yet the divisions remain, and also concern various practical and ethical issues, giving rise to confusion and diffidence, undermining our ability to transmit the saving word of Christ. In this sense, we should remember the words of Bl. John Paul II who spoke in his Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* of the damage to Christian witness and to the proclamation of the Gospel that is caused by the lack of unity (cf. nos. 98, 99 98, 99). This presents an important challenge to the New Evangelization, which will be all the more fruitful when all Christians proclaim together the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and give a common response to the spiritual thirst of our time.

The Church’s journey, like that of the peoples, is in the hands of the Risen Christ, victorious over death and over the injustice that he suffered in the name of all. He makes us share in his victory. He alone can transform us and change us from weak and hesitant people into strong and courageous in doing good. He alone can save us from the negative consequences of our divisions. Dear brothers and sisters, I invite everyone to join together more intensely in prayer during this Week for Unity, so that the common witness, solidarity and collaboration among Christians may increase, in the expectation of the glorious day on which we shall profess together the faith handed down by the Apostles and celebrate
Homily at the Plaza de la Revolución, Havana, Cuba (March 28, 2012)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

“Blessed are you, Lord God…, and blessed is your holy and glorious name” (Dan 3:52). This hymn of blessing from the Book of Daniel resounds today in our liturgy, inviting us repeatedly to bless and thank God. We are a part of that great chorus which praises the Lord without ceasing. We join in this concert of thanksgiving, and we offer our joyful and confident voice, which seeks to solidify the journey of faith with love and truth.

“Blessed be God” who gathers us in this historic square so that we may more profoundly enter into his life. I feel great joy in being here with you today to celebrate Holy Mass during this Jubilee Year devoted to Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre.

I greet with cordial affection Cardinal Jaime Ortega y Alamino, Archbishop of Havana, and I thank him for the kind words which he has addressed to me on your behalf. I extend warm greetings to the Cardinals and to my brother Bishops in Cuba and from other countries who wished to be in this solemn celebration. I also greet the priests, seminarians, men and women religious, and all the lay faithful gathered here, as well as the civil authorities who join us.

In today’s first reading, the three young men persecuted by the Babylonian king preferred to face death by fire rather than betray their conscience and their faith. They experienced the strength to “give thanks, glorify and praise God” in the conviction that the Lord of the universe and of history would not abandon them to death and annihilation. Truly, God never abandons his children, he never forgets them. He is above us and is able to save us by his power. At the same time, he is near to his people, and through his Son Jesus Christ he has wished to make his dwelling place
among us in.

“If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (Jn 8:31). In this text from today’s Gospel, Jesus reveals himself as the Son of God the Father, the Saviour, the one who alone can show us the truth and give us genuine freedom. His teaching provokes resistance and disquiet among his hearers, and he accuses them of looking for reasons to kill him, alluding to the supreme sacrifice of the Cross, already imminent. Even so, he exhorts them to believe, to keep his word, so as to know the truth which redeems and justifies.

The truth is a desire of the human person, the search for which always supposes the exercise of authentic freedom. Many, without a doubt, would prefer to take the easy way out, trying to avoid this task. Some, like Pontius Pilate, ironically question the possibility of even knowing what truth is (cf. Jn 18:38), claiming is incapable of knowing it or denying that there exists a truth valid for all. This attitude, as in the case of scepticism and relativism, changes hearts, making them cold, wavering, distant from others and closed. There are too many who, like the Roman governor, wash their hands and let the water of history drain away without taking a stand.

On the other hand, there are those who wrongly interpret this search for the truth, leading them to irrationality and fanaticism; they close themselves up in “their truth”, and try to impose it on others. These are like the blind scribes who, upon seeing Jesus beaten and bloody, cry out furiously, “Crucify him!” (cf. Jn 19:6). Anyone who acts irrationally cannot become a disciple of Jesus. Faith and reason are necessary and complementary in the pursuit of truth. God created man with an innate vocation to the truth and he gave him reason for this purpose. Certainly, it is not irrationality but rather the yearning for truth which the Christian faith promotes. Each man and woman has to seek the truth and to choose it when he or she finds it, even at the risk of embracing sacrifices.

Furthermore, the truth which stands above humanity is an unavoidable condition for attaining freedom, since in it we discover the foundation of an ethics on which all can converge and which contains clear and precise indications concerning life and death, duties and rights, marriage, family
and society, in short, regarding the inviolable dignity of the human person. This ethical patrimony can bring together different cultures, peoples and religions, authorities and citizens, citizens among themselves, and believers in Christ and non-believers.

Christianity, in highlighting those values which sustain ethics, does not impose, but rather proposes Christ’s invitation to know the truth which sets us free. The believer is called to offer that truth to his contemporaries, as did the Lord, even before the ominous shadow of rejection and the Cross. The personal encounter with the one who is Truth in person compels us to share this treasure with others, especially by our witness.

Dear friends, do not hesitate to follow Jesus Christ. In him we find the truth about God and about mankind. He helps us to overcome our selfishness, to rise above our vain struggles and to conquer all that oppresses us. The one who does evil, who sins, becomes its slave and will never attain freedom (cf. Jn 8:34). Only by renouncing hatred and our hard and blind hearts will we be free and a new life will well up in us.

Convinced that it is Christ who is the true measure of man, and knowing that in him we find the strength needed to face every trial, I wish to proclaim openly that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life. In him everyone will find complete freedom, the light to understand reality most deeply and to transform it by the renewing power of love.

The Church lives to make others sharers in the one thing she possesses, which is none other than Christ, our hope of glory (cf. Col 1:27). To carry out this duty, she must count on basic religious freedom, which consists in her being able to proclaim and to celebrate her faith also in public, bringing to others the message of love, reconciliation and peace which Jesus brought to the world. It must be said with joy that in Cuba steps have been taken to enable the Church to carry out her essential mission of expressing her faith openly and publicly. Nonetheless, this must continue forwards, and I wish to encourage the country’s Government authorities to strengthen what has already been achieved and advance along this path of genuine service to the true good of Cuban society as a whole.

The right to freedom of religion, both in its private and in its public dimension, manifests the unity of the human person, who is at once a
citizen and a believer. It also legitimizes the fact that believers have a contribution to make to the building up of society. Strengthening religious freedom consolidates social bonds, nourishes the hope of a better world, creates favourable conditions for peace and harmonious development, while at the same time establishing solid foundations for securing the rights of future generations.

When the Church upholds this human right, she is not claiming any special privileges for herself. She wishes only to be faithful to the command of her divine founder, conscious that, where Christ is present, we become more human and our humanity becomes authentic. This is why the Church seeks to give witness by her preaching and teaching, both in catechesis and in the schools and universities. It is greatly to be hoped that the moment will soon arrive when, here too, the Church can bring to the fields of knowledge the benefits of the mission which the Lord entrusted to her and which she can never neglect.

A shining example of this commitment is found in the outstanding priest Félix Varela, teacher and educator, an illustrious son of this city of Havana, who has taken his place in Cuban history as the first one who taught his people how to think. Father Varela offers us a path to a true transformation of society: to form virtuous men and women in order to forge a worthy and free nation, for this transformation depends on the spiritual, in as much as “there is no authentic fatherland without virtue” (Letters to Elpidio, Letter 6, Madrid 1836, 220). Cuba and the world need change, but this will occur only if each one is in a position to seek the truth and chooses the way of love, sowing reconciliation and fraternity.

Invoking the maternal protection of Mary Most Holy, let us ask that each time we participate in the Eucharist we will also become witnesses to that charity which responds to evil with good (cf. Rom 12:51), offering ourselves as a living sacrifice to the one who lovingly gave himself up for our sake. Let us walk in the light of Christ who alone can destroy the darkness of error. And let us beg him that, with the courage and strength of the saints, we may be able, without fear or rancor but freely, generously and consistently, to respond to God. Amen.
The Roman Curia

Decree of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints recognizing the heroic virtues of the Servant of God, Álvaro del Portillo (June 28, 2012)

CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM
ROMANA
et PRAELATURAE PERSONALIS SANCTAE CRUCIS et OPERIS DEI
BEATIFICATIONIS et CANONIZATIONIS
SERVI DEI
ALVARI DEL PORTILLO Y DIEZ DE SOLLANO
EPISCOPI TITULARIS VITENSIS
PRAELATI PRAELATURAE PERSONALIS SANCTAE CRUCIS ET OPERIS DEI
(1914 — 1994)

________________________________________
DECRETUM SUPER VIRTUTIBUS

«Vir fidelis multum laudabitur» (Prv 28, 20). Sacrae haec Scripturae verba in luce ponunt eminentiorem virtutem Episcopi Alvari del Portillo, nempe fidelitatem: inconcussam imprimis fidelitatem erga Deum, in prompta ac generosa adimpletione voluntatis Eius, erga Ecclesiam dein et Romanum Pontificem necnon erga sacerdotium, deinde vero erga
christianam vocationem in omni temporis momento omnibusque rerum adiunctis.

«Fidelitas per tempus perseverans nomen est amoris», dixit Benedictus XVI (Homilia in sanctuario Beatissimae Virginis Mariae de Fatima, die 12 mensis Maii anno 2010). Dei Servus omnibus christifidelibus caritatis et fidelitatis exemplo fuit. Ipse enim integre et sine ulla exceptione assimilavit in suaque vita expressit Operis Dei spiritum, qui omnes vocat ad plenitudinem amoris Dei ac proximi quae reperimus ac officiorum quae vitae nostrae cotidiana velut tramam constituunt. «Laborem sanctificare, in labore sese sanctificare, alios mediante laboro sanctificare»: recte asseri potest haec verba aptissime referre Servi Dei operositatem qua doctor machinarius, qua sacerdos ac demum qua Episcopal. In quocumque enim actuositatis genere sese totum impendebat, apprime sciens se salvificam Ecclesiae missionem participare per fidelem suorum ciusque diei officiorum adimpletionem.


Operam quoque dedit multiplicibus muneribus a Sancta Sede sibi concreditis: in Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II munere functus est Secretarii Commissionis De disciplina cleri et populi christiani, quae redactionem Decreti Presbyterorum Ordinis curavit et fuit insuper Peritus Commissionum De Episcopis et dioecesium regimine necnon De religiosis. Nominatus est dein Consultor Sacrae Congregationis Concilii, Qualificator Supremae Congregationis Sancti Officii et Consultor Pontificiae Commissionis Codici Iuris Canonici Recognoscendo; fuit
quoque Iudex in Tribunali pro causis sub competentia Congregationis pro Doctrina Fidei necnon eiusdem Congregationis Consultor. Fuit insuper Secretarius Commissionis de Institutis Saecularibus apud Sacram Congregationem de Religiosis et cooptatus est in coetum Consultorum Congregationis pro Clericis, Pontificii Consilii de Communicationibus Socialibus et Congregationis de Causis Sanctorum.


Pastoralis zelus Alvari del Portillo in moderamine Operis Dei, per annos 19 protracto, eo praesertim respexit ut magis magisque extenderetur apostolatus Praelaturae fidelium in Ecclesiae servitium: eo quidem tempore actuositas Operis Dei in viginti novas Nationes stabiliter dilatata est.

Pastoralis haec sollicitudo Dei Servum duxit quoque ad multa peragenda itinera ut Praelaturae fideles aliosque viros ac mulieres cuiuslibet condicionis roboraret in vita eorum spirituali et in apostolatu. In eo impulso evangelizationis promovendo, ipse curavit semper ut actuositas apostolica Praelaturae in servitium singularum ecclesiarum particularium exerceretur. Fructus etiam sedulae eius curae de sacerdotali institutione fuit creatio Pontificiae Universitatis Sanctae Crucis in Urbe, quam Sanctus Iosephmaria expetierat. Scripta edidit de re iuridica, theologica ac spirituali, praesertim circa sacerdotium et laicatum, quae inter Laici et fideles in Ecclesia, Consecratio et missio sacerdotis, Vita Deo omnino dicata.
Considerationes circa personam Iosephmariae Escrivá de Balaguer, Colloquium circa Operis Dei Conditorem.

Servi Dei deditio missioni explendae sibi concreditae radicabatur in profundum sensum filiationis divinae, quo ductus identificationem cum Christo quaerebat se totum fidenti animo committens voluntati Patris, amore plenus erga Spiritum Sanctum, sine intermissione orationi vacans, Sanctissima Eucharistia necnon tenero amore erga Beatissimam Virginem Mariam roboratus.

Heroice se gessit in perferendis aegritudinibus — quas ut Christi Crucem respiciebat —, in carcere per aliquot tempus perdurante persecutione religiosa in Hispania (annis 1936-1939) et in subeundis impugnationibus propter suam fidelitatem erga Ecclesiam. Vir erat profundae bonitatis et affabilitatis, qui pacem ac serenitatem in alios transfundebat. Nemo memorat aliquem eius gestum inurbanum vel impatientiae motum ante res adversas neque verbum vituperationis vel recusationis propter difficulties: ipse enim a Domino didicerat parcere, pro persecutoribus orare, bracchia sua more sacerdotis extendere, omnes hilari vultu magnaque clementia excipere.

Servi Dei amor erga Ecclesiam apparebat in omnimoda eius communione cum Romano Pontifice et cum Episcopis: fuit semper filius fidelissimus Petri successoris, indiscusse adhaerens eius personae eiusque magisterio. Insuper, in describenda figura huius Pastoris, praetermitti omnino nequeunt alia quaedam lineamenta, qualia sunt vividissima eius sollicitudo erga Operis Dei fideles, humilitas, prudentia, fortitudo, gaudium, simplicitas, sui abnegatio et ardens desiderium lucrandi animas Christo, quod exprimebatur quoque in lemmate eius episcopali: Regnare Christum volumus!

Sanctitatis fama Servi Dei, iam ample diffusa eo adhuc vivente, universalem extensionem post eius mortem attinxit. Circa Servi Dei vitam, virtutes ac sanctitatis famam instructi sunt — ab anno 2004 ad annum 2008 — duo processus aeque principales apud Tribunal Vicariatus Urbis et apud Tribunal Praelaturae, necnon octo processus rogatoriales in dioecesibus Europae, Americae Septentrionalis ac Meridionalis et Australiae. Congressus peculiaris Consulturam Theologorum, qui locum
habuit die 10 mensis Februarii anno 2012, omnium consensione affirmative respondit ad dubium propositum circa heroicitatem virtutum et famam sanctitatis Servi Dei. Ponente Em.mo D.no Card. Antonio Cañizares Llovera et me, Card. Angelo Amato, moderante, sententiam faventem tulerunt Em.mi ac Exc.mi Congregationis de Causis Sanctorum Membra in Sessione Ordinaria coadunati die 5 mensis Iunii anno 2012.

Facta de hisce omnibus Summo Pontifici Benedicto XVI accurata relatione ab infrascripto Cardinali Praefecto, Beatissimus Pater, accipiens rataque habens Congregationis de Causis Sanctorum vota, hodierna die sollemniter declaravit: Constare de virtutibus theologibus Fide, Spe et Caritate tum in Deum tum in proximum, necnon de cardinalibus Prudentia, Iustitia, Temperantia, Fortitudine, iisque adnexis in gradu heroico, atque de fama sanctitatis Servi Dei Alvari del Portillo y Diez de Sollano, Episcopi tit. Vitensis, Praelati Praelaturae personalis Sanctae Crucis et Operis Dei, in casu et ad effectum de quo agitur.

Hoc autem decretum publici iuris fieri et in acta Congregationis de Causis Sanctorum Summus Pontifex referri mandavit.


ANGELUS Card. AMATO, S.D.B.
Praefectus
L. + S.
+ MARCELLUS BARTOLUCCI
Archiep. tit. Mevaniensis
a Secretis

Torna ai contenuti

Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary granting a plenary indulgence on the occasion of the Seventh World Meeting of Families (May 27, 2012)
PAENITENTIARIA APOSTOLICA

DECRETUM

quo conceditur donum Indulgentiarum christifidelibus occasione VII Mundialis Familiarum Congressus, a die XXX vertentis mensis Maii usque ad diem III Iunii Mediolani celebrandi.

FAMILIARE CONSORTIUM, occasione adstantis VII Mundialis Congressus Familiarum Mediolani, celebrabitur sub proposito “Familia, labor et dies festus”, eo intento fine ut apta significentur media, quibus inter se componantur necessitates familiae, laboris ac dierum festorum, in primis diei dominicae, hebdomadalis Paschae, quae quidem est dies Domini et hominis, dies familiae et totius communitatis.

Quo autem christifideles animo ad illum eventum melius disponantur, Sanctissimus in Christo Pater, Benedictus Divina Providentia Papa XVI libenter concedit Indulgentiarum donum, iuxta sequentem indicem, si, vere paenitentes et caritate compulsi, in familiam sanctificandam incumbunt, ad exemplum Sanctae Familiae Iesu, Mariae, Ioseph.

Plenaria conceditur christifidelibus Indulgentia, lucranda sub sunti condicionibus (sacramentali confessione, eucharistica communione et oratione ad mentem Summi Pontificis), animo quidem elongato a quocumque peccato, si cui ex sacris functionibus decursu dicti VII Mundialis Familiarum Congressus, necnon sollemni eiusdem conclusioni, devote interfuerint.

Christifideles, qui illi eventui interesse nequeunt, plenariam consequi valebunt Indulgentiam, eisdem sub condicionibus, si, spiritu conjuncti cum fidelibus Mediolani praesentibus, Orationem Dominicam, Symbolum Fidei et alias preces, ad fines supra indicatos a Divina Misericordia implorandos, in familia pie recitaverint, praesertim dum Sanctissimi Verba instrumentis televisificis et radiophonicos propagabuntur.

Partialis denique conceditur Indulgentia christifidelibus, corde saltem contrito assequenda, quoties tempore supra indicato pro familiarum bono preces fuderint.

Praesenti pro hac vice valituro. Non obstantibus in contrarium facientibus quibuscumque.
A translation of the Decree of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints recognizing the heroic virtues of the Servant of God, Álvaro del Portillo (June 28, 2012)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS
ROME
and the PERSONAL PRELATURE of the HOLY CROSS and OPUS DEI
BEATIFICATION and CANONIZATION
OF THE SERVANT OF GOD
ÁLVARO DEL PORTILLO Y DIEZ DE SOLLANO
TITULAR BISHOP OF VITA
PRELATE OF THE PERSONAL PRELATURE OF THE HOLY CROSS AND OPUS DEI
(1914 — 1994)

DECREE ON THE VIRTUES

*Vir fidelis multum laudabitur* ([Prov 28:20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Prov%2028%3A20)). These words of Sacred Scripture manifest the most characteristic virtue of Bishop Álvaro del
Portillo: fidelity. He lived an unquestioned fidelity to God, carrying out his will promptly and generously; fidelity to the Church and the Pope, fidelity to his priesthood, and fidelity to his vocation as a Christian in every moment and circumstance of his life.

“Faithfulness over time is the name of love,” said Pope Benedict XVI (Homily at the Shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Fatima, May 12, 2010). The Servant of God was a living example of charity and fidelity for all Christians. He lived the spirit of Opus Dei wholeheartedly, in an exemplary way, without exceptions or shortcuts of any kind. Opus Dei calls Christians to seek the fullness of the love of God and of neighbor through the sanctification of the ordinary tasks that make up their day. “To sanctify one’s work; to sanctify oneself in that work and to sanctify others through that work”: this is the way to describe the intense life of the Servant of God, first as an engineer, then in his priestly ministry and lastly as a Bishop. In each and every activity he carried out, he gave himself completely, knowing that that was where he was meant to collaborate in the saving mission of the Church.

The Servant of God was born in Madrid on March 11, 1914 of devout and God-fearing parents, the third of eight siblings. He earned doctorates in Civil Engineering, in History and in Canon Law. In 1935, when he was 21 years old, he joined Opus Dei. The Founder, St. Josemaría, soon discovered in him a most effective collaborator. On June 25, 1944 he was ordained a priest. From then onwards he dedicated himself to his priestly ministry. The very day he was ordained St Josemaría chose him as his confessor. In 1946 he established his residence in Rome to assist the Founder in the governance and expansion of Opus Dei. He was Secretary General of Opus Dei (1939-1946 and 1956-1975), Counselor for Italy (1948-1951), Procurator General (1946-1956), and Rector of the Roman College of the Holy Cross (1948-1954).

He diligently carried out many tasks entrusted to him by the Holy See: during the Second Vatican Council he was appointed Secretary of the Commission De disciplina cleri et populi christiani, which drafted the decree Presbyterorum ordinis. He was also an Expert of the Commissions De Episcopis et diœcesium regimine and De religiosis. After the Council he was made Consultor of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, Qualificador
of the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office and Consultor of the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Code of Canon Law. He was a Judge of the Tribunal for the causes that fall under the competence of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and Consultor of the same Congregation. He was also Secretary of the Commission for Secular Institutes within the Sacred Congregation for Religious, Consultor of the Congregation for Clergy, of the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications and of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

On September 15, 1975 he was elected as the first successor to St. Josemaría as head of Opus Dei. The central element of his program of governance was continuity in the application of the teachings of the Founder. Furthermore, he dedicated his best energies in carrying out one particular task quite desired and largely prepared by St. Josemaría: obtaining the proper canonical configuration to reflect the founding charism of Opus Dei. This was achieved on November 28, 1982 when Blessed John Paul II erected Opus Dei as a Personal Prelature and appointed Álvaro del Portillo as Prelate. On January 6, 1991 the Servant of God received the episcopal consecration from the Roman Pontiff. Early on the morning of March 23, 1994, a few hours after returning from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the Lord called his Servant to Himself. That same day Blessed John Paul II attended the wake, and, after praying in silence, recited out loud the hymn *Salve Regina*.

During his nineteen years as the head of Opus Dei, Álvaro del Portillo’s pastoral zeal fostered the spread of the apostolates of the faithful of the Prelature in the service of the Church to twenty new countries.

His apostolic concern led him to make trips to many different countries, with a view to encouraging the faithful of the Prelature and many other men and women of all walks of life in their spiritual life and apostolate. In his work of evangelization, he tried to ensure that the apostolic activity of the Prelature was always carried out in the service of the local Church. In his concern for the doctrinal formation of priests, he founded the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, a project which St. Josemaría had encouraged. He wrote numerous juridical, theological and spiritual works of note concerning the priesthood and the laity, such as *Faithful and Laity in the Church; Consecration and Mission of the*
The Servant of God based his dedication to the mission he received on a deep sense of divine sonship. This led him to seek to identify himself with Christ in a trusting self-abandonment to the will of the Father and love for the Holy Spirit. He sought to be constantly immersed in prayer, strengthened by the Eucharist and by a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

He displayed heroism in facing illness, in which he saw the Cross of Christ, in his brief imprisonment during the period of religious persecution in Spain (1936-1939), and in the mistreatment received on account of his fidelity to the Church. He was a man of profound goodness and affability, sowing peace and serenity to those around him. No one can recall an uncourteous gesture, signs of impatience, nor words of vituperation or protest in response to the difficulties he encountered. Rather, he learned from the Lord to forgive, to pray for one's persecutors and to open his priestly arms welcoming one and all with a smile and with great mercy.

The Servant of God demonstrated his love for the Church by his constant union with the Roman Pontiff and with the Bishops: he was always a most faithful son to the Successor of Peter, faithfully adhering to his person and teaching. In describing the figure of this Pastor, what stands out above all is his vigorous solicitude for all the faithful of Opus Dei. His humility, prudence, fortitude, joy, his simplicity, his self-abnegation and his ardent desire to win souls for Christ can be all summed up in his episcopal motto: *Regnare Christum volumus!* (We want Christ to reign!)

The fame of holiness of the Servant of God, already recognized during his own lifetime, spread throughout the whole world in the years following his death. Between 2004 and 2008 two canonical processes *æque principales* were carried out regarding the life, virtues and reputation of holiness of the Servant of God at the Tribunal of the Vicariate of Rome and the Tribunal of the Prelature, as well as eight rogatory inquiries in different dioceses of Europe, North America, South America and Australia. A special Congress of Theological Censors took place on February 10, 2012, and gave a
unanimous positive response against proposed doubts regarding the heroic exercise of virtue and reputation of holiness of the Servant of God. The members of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints gave a favorable opinion at the Ordinary Congregation convened on June 5, 2012, over which I, Cardinal Angelo Amato, presided, in which the Relator was His Eminence Cardinal Antonio Cañizares Llovera.

Upon presentation of the summary of the different phases of the process to the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI by the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, the Holy Father, accepting and ratifying the evaluation of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, today solemnly declared: Clear evidence exists as to the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, towards both God and neighbor, as well as the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude, with their associated virtues, in heroic degree, and of the reputation of holiness of the Servant of God Álvaro del Portillo y Diez de Sollano, titular Bishop of Vita, Prelate of the Personal Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei; this is established in this case and for purposes attendant thereon.

The Holy Father has ordered that this Decree be made public and be recorded in the acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Given in Rome on the 28th day of June in the year of the Lord, 2012.

ANGELUS Card. AMATO, S.D.B.

Prefect
L. + S.

+ MARCELLUS BARTOLUCCI

Titular Archbishop of Mevania

Secretary
PRELATE

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New Circumscriptions

Establishment of New Circumscriptions

On April 7, 2012, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, erected the quasi-region of Cameroon, formerly a delegation dependent on the Prelate, with the following decree:

Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA
Dei et Apostolicæ Sedis gratia
Prælatus
DECRETUM
Cum Delegatio Cammaruniæ, a Prælato dependens, eum progressionis gradum attigerit, qui requiritur ut in Quasi-Regionem erigatur.

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

De Consilii Generalis atque Assessoratus Centralis consensu, Prælaturæ Quasi-Regionem Cammaruniæ erigo atque erectam declaro.

Datum Romæ, ex Ædibus Curiæ Prælatitiae, die 7 mense aprili, anno 2012.

+ XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA
Prælatus Operis Dei
Rev.mus D. Dr. Ernestus Burkhart
Curiaæ Prælatitiae Cancellarius

Torna ai contenuti

Appointments
Appointments

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

Decrees

Some Decrees

Decree of appointment of the Regional Vicar of Kazakhstan:

Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRIA

Dei et Apostolicæ Sedis gratia

Prælatus

DECRETUM

Præsentibus his litteris te, Rev.dum D.num D.rem Emmanuelem López-Barajas González, nominamus atque constituiimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Delegatione Cazastaniae, cum omnibus et singulis iuribus et obligationibus huic officio adnexis.

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

Datum Romæ, ex Ædibus Curiæ Prælatiaæ, die 12 mense maio anno 2012.

+ XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA

Prælatus Operis Dei

Rev.mus D. Dr. Ernestus Burkhart
Activities of the Prelate

Pastoral Trips

During the first half of the year, Bishop Echevarría had the opportunity to visit the African continent again, traveling to Cameroon, and also to make trips to Spain and Slovakia.

From April 9 to 15 the Prelate visited Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, as he had in 1998. Included in this issue is an interview he gave to a Cameroon newspaper. On this occasion he also traveled to Douala, the country’s second most important city. In both places he took the opportunity to visit the ecclesiastical authorities, in addition to meeting with the people of the Prelature in that country and a good number of cooperators and friends who take part in Opus Dei’s formational activities.

On Sunday, April 29, the Prelate celebrated Holy Mass on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the University of Navarra Hospital in Pamplona. The Eucharistic ceremony took place in the university’s sports center. Concelebrating were the vicar general of the Prelature, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz; the Vicar of Opus Dei in Spain and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Navarra, Msgr. Ramon Herrando; the Vicar of Opus Dei for the Delegation of Pamplona, Rev. Rafael Salvador; and the Director of the Chaplaincy of the University Hospital, Rev. Narciso Sánchez.

Among those participating in the celebration were the Government delegate, Carmen Alba; the Mayor of Pamplona, Enrique Maya; and the
Councilor of Education in the Government of Navarra, José Iribas. Representing the University of Navarra were the Rector, Ángel J. Gómez-Montoro; the Permanent Commission, made up of all of the Vice-Rectors; as well as the members of the Counsel of Directors of the University Hospital, headed by the Director General, José Andrés Gómez Cantero; the medical director, Doctor Nicolás García; the subdirector, Doctor Esperanza Lozano; the subdirector, Doctor Jorge Quiroga; the director of nursing, Carmen Rumeu; and the director of operations, Iñigo Goenaga.

The Chancellor had special words for all the professionals working in this institution, and emphasized the ultimate aim of their work: alleviating the suffering of the sick and raising up their work as an offering to God, as the homily included in this issue stresses.

The evening before the Mass, a get-together with the Chancellor was held in the same place, with the attendance of a large number of those who work in the hospital.

From May 18 to 20, Bishop Echevarría made a pastoral visit to Bratislava, Slovakia. During those days he had numerous meetings with families and friends who take part in apostolic initiatives organized by people of Opus Dei. He urged everyone to carry out an apostolate filled with optimism, to pray for and follow the indications of Benedict XVI, and to correspond joyfully and generously to God in their daily life.

During a family gathering, the Prelate encouraged everyone to seek sanctity in the ordinary activities of each day. He reminded them that they should be grateful for all those who offered their lives for the faith during the Communist rule and religious persecution.

Opus Dei’s stable apostolic work in Slovakia began in June 1996. The Prelate stressed several times that the Founder of Opus Dei, long before the fall of Communism, “visited” Slovakia in his mind and heart, praying for the persecuted Christians of this nation. The apostolic fruit now being gathered, he said, is also a result of that prayer.

On Saturday the 19th, the Prelate went to visit Archbishop Stanislav Zvolensky of Bratislava. He also was able to have a get-together with thirty diocesan priests and seminarians from the Czech Republic and Slovakia. He urged them to strengthen their own spiritual life and that of the
On Sunday, Bishop Echevarría also had a chance to see some property on the outskirts of Bratislava where a center will be built for retreats and other formational activities.

Words at the Closing of the World Meeting of Families in Milan (June 3, 2012)

At the conclusion of the Seventh World Meeting of Families celebrated in Milan, Italy, on June 3, the Prelate of Opus Dei issued the following statement:

“I thank our Lord for these days of grace that have taken place in Milan together with the Holy Father.

“To see the Pope joyfully immersed in a crowd of hundreds of thousands of families from all over the world, has made me think of the Church and its unity as a family of the children of God: all distinct, but all united by their filiation to the same Father.

During the meeting we have realized once again how the family represents the essential school of love, understanding, fidelity, peace. I am sure that these “bright and cheerful” Christian homes (as St. Josemaría liked to call them) will help spread throughout the world the abundant fruit of this World Meeting with the Successor of Peter.”

Intervention at the Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas (June 29, 2012)
Bishop Javier Echevarría, an honorary member of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas, spoke on June 29 in the plenary session. His address was entitled: “St. Thomas Aquinas and University Formation in the Thought of Blessed John Paul II.” He spoke on the relationship between faith and reason in the university, with a view to a better professional service to society. His lecture also stressed the metaphysical dimension in the cooperation between reason and faith, between human knowledge and theological science. He concluded by thanking Blessed John Paul II for his broad vision in restructuring the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas, with an eye towards future challenges.

Ordinations

On Saturday, February 18, Bishop Echevarría ordained as deacons, in preparation for their future priestly ministry, three faithful of the Prelature. The ceremony was held in the Church of St. Josemaría in Rome.

During his homily, the Prelate exhorted them to have a great spirit of service, to be “a carpet on which the others can walk softly.”

On Saturday May 5, the Prelate ordained thirty-five deacons as priests. The ceremony took place in St. Eugene's Basilica in Rome.

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Audience with the Holy Father Benedict XVI (January 30, 2012)

On Monday, January 30, the Holy Father received Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, in an audience.
Message regarding the earthquake in Emilia-Romagna, Italy (May 22, 2012)

Upon returning to Rome after a brief trip, I was made aware of the extent of the damage caused by the earthquake that has struck the provinces of Modena and Ferrara. I am writing these lines in order to be even closer to my children and their relatives who may be affected.

As soon as I received the news through the media, I entrusted to our Lord all those who have lost their lives, their families, the injured and anyone who has suffered moral or material damage.

I have also gone to the intercession of St. Josemaría, with whom I myself traveled several times through this region. I prayed for all those living there, asking that the damage and losses might be limited, although we all know—even when we find it hard to comprehend—that God always continues to assist us with the heart of a Father.

I beseech our Heavenly Mother to give strength to the rescuers and those who are assisting in the plans of intervention arranged by the authorities, and that she help everyone not to lose hope.

I send my blessing, united as always to that of St. Josemaria and our beloved Don Álvaro.

Pastoral Letters

Letter of February, 2012

My dear children: may Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!
I am happy to inform you that the Holy Father received me in an audience two days ago, on January 30th. As on other occasions, I went to this meeting accompanied by your prayers. In expressing to him the desire of the faithful and Cooperators of the Prelature to be loyal to God, I assured him once again of your constant prayer for him and for his intentions. The Pope, as always, was very affectionate. He expressed his thanks for the service that the Work is providing to the Church and asked me to transmit his blessing to the faithful and their apostolic endeavors throughout the world.

Let us always strive to make known the teachings of his magisterium, with an eagerness to offer our total assistance to our Holy Mother the Church. Let us try each day to make a reality of that aspiration prayed by St. Josemaría: *Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam*. Love the Roman Pontiff very much, and do all you can to help prepare for the *Year of Faith* that he will proclaim within a few months, in order to grow in this virtue and reach many people.

The previous week, with the feast of the conversion of St. Paul, the octave for Christian unity came to an end. Let us give thanks to God for the progress that little by little is being made here, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and let us ask the Paraclete that his grace may be ever more effective in moving the hearts of those who glory in the name of Christian, so that the longing expressed by Jesus at the Last Supper may be fulfilled: *ut omnes unum sint, sicut tu, Pater, in me et ego in te!* \[1\] That all may be one, as you, Father, in me and I in you!

From the very beginning of Opus Dei, St. Josemaría disposed that we pray in the Work every day this petition *pro unitate apostolatus*. And over the years he insisted on the importance of this prayer, urging us to “pray it because we live it.” Our Father ardently desired that the supplication for the unity of all who believe in Christ—even more, of all mankind—be assisted by the effort to make it a reality, first of all, in our own life.

Our brothers and sisters in the faith, the first Christians, left us a clear teaching: *they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.* \[2\] We have often stopped to consider this summary of the history of the early Church. Our Father frequently went
back to this text, and even had it engraved on the frieze of one of the first oratories of the Work; and he did the same thing in that of the Pensionato, in Rome, when he had those words inscribed on the wall. He always said that “the spirit of Opus Dei is the spirit of early Christianity;”[3] and he encouraged us to strive at every moment to act with the same consistency as those who opened up the path of the Church.

Pope Benedict XVI, in commenting on the characteristics that “define the first Christian community of Jerusalem as a place of unity and love,”[4] highlighted the fact that St. Luke was not merely describing something in the past. Rather the evangelist “presents this community to us as a model, as a norm for the Church today, since these four characteristics must always constitute the Church’s life.”[5] Indeed, fidelity to the teaching of the apostles, the union of hearts and souls, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and steadfastness in prayer are the pillars of authentic Christian life, essential for the Church to fully carry out her mission in the world.

In this context of prayer for unity, I would like to refer specifically to the charity which united those women and men. As St. Luke also states, “now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul.”[6]

The union of Christians is a gift of the Holy Spirit, which we have to beseech him for with steadfast prayer. But that prayer has to be seasoned with charity. Let us be convinced, as the Holy Father says, that “our quest for unity can be realistically conducted if the change takes place within us first of all and if we let God act, if we let ourselves be transformed into the image of Christ, if we enter into new life in Christ who is the true victory. The visible unity of all Christians is always a task that comes from on high, from God, a task that demands the humility of recognizing our weakness and of receiving the gift... The unity that comes from God therefore demands of us the daily commitment to open ourselves to each other in charity.”[7]

St. Augustine taught that “pride engenders division, while charity is the mother of unity.”[8] We have to be aware of the reality that each of us bears within the risk of disunity, because we all have the sad tendency to exalt our own ego, which is the greatest enemy of unity. Therefore one could not be a good instrument if one’s thoughts were centered selfishly on
oneself, if one were carried away by pride, or failed to struggle to uproot personal defects. In contrast, sincere charity, lived without any pretense, as St. Paul recommends, tightens the bonds that preserve and secure fraternity among people who are very different from one another, without restricting the legitimate diversity of ideas and ways of acting. Therefore, sincere petition for the unity of Christians has to be accompanied by a humility and charity shown in deeds. “Attaining this unity and preserving it,” said our Founder, “is a difficult task, which is nourished by acts of humility, self-renunciation, silence, knowing how to listen and to understand, being nobly interested in the good of one’s neighbor, knowing how to always forgive when necessary: how to love truly, with deeds.”

For a Christian, one’s relationship with all those encountered on one’s path is never reduced to mere courtesy or good manners, but rather is an expression of the Love, with a capital L, that God himself pours into our hearts. Therefore charity, affection, is not merely a matter of feelings, although these play an important role in our actions, since we are not just spirits but men or women of flesh and blood. Nevertheless, we all need to purify our feelings: what perhaps begins as altruistic love runs the risk of becoming the product of one’s selfishness, the search for one’s own excellence, the disordered satisfaction of one’s ego.

In his encyclical Deus Caritas Est, Pope Benedict XVI writes: “Sentiments come and go. A sentiment can be a marvelous first spark, but it is not the fullness of love.” Our feelings need to be purified, brought to maturity through self-denial; only then will sentiment “become love in the full meaning of the word.”

Our only model is Jesus Christ. Therefore Christian charity means loving as he loved us: even to the complete surrender of his life to the Father, out of love and for our salvation. He left us as a testament at the Last Supper: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” In those first Christian communities this new commandment was put into practice to such an extent that the pagans remarked in surprise: “See how they love one another!”
True Christian charity, a participation in the Love that filled to overflowing the heart of the Incarnate Word, is imbued with sacrifice; it doesn’t seek its own affirmation, but the good of others. And it becomes a task that we can never view as finished: we have to learn to love, looking at the example of our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, and of the saints who have loved God and their neighbor the most. Let us feel the responsibility of beginning and beginning again each day, many times a day, with small details of service and sacrifice for the others (and at times, in things of greater importance), which others perhaps will not realize, but which do not pass unnoticed to our Father God. Let us recall the insistence with which St. Josemaria directed to us those words of the prophet: *discite benefacere*, learn to do good. Let us learn to finish well whatever we do.

And by doing so, “love of neighbor is thus shown to be possible in the way proclaimed by the Bible, by Jesus. It consists in the very fact that, in God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know. This can only take place on the basis of an intimate encounter with God, an encounter which has become a communion of will, even affecting my feelings. Then I learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ.”

This way of behaving certainly requires (I don’t mind repeating it) the effort to leave aside our own ego, to forget about ourselves. Charity and humility are closely united; and their mature fruit is unity. “When we sincerely see ourselves as nothing; when we understand that, without God’s help, the weakest and most puny of creatures would be better than we are; when we see we are capable of every kind of error and every kind of abomination; when we realize we are sinners, even though we are earnestly struggling to turn our back on our many infidelities, how could we possibly think badly of others? Or how could we harbor fanaticism, intolerance or haughtiness in our hearts?

“Humility leads us as it were by the hand to treat our neighbor in the best way possible, that is, being understanding towards everyone, living at peace with everyone, forgiving everyone; never creating divisions or barriers; and behaving—always!—as instruments that foster unity.”
Charity, as every virtue, has to be lived with order. Therefore, without discriminating against anyone, it needs to first of all be directed towards those we have around us: our own family, friends, colleagues at work, neighbors and acquaintances. Thus we help make the unity of the Church more solid and we assist—relying on prayer—in making the deeply desired union of all Christians a reality. How do we treat those whom God has placed close to us? What specific deeds of cheerful service every day do we provide to each one? Do we strive to ensure that at home, in the workplace, in our circle of friends, others sense the good aroma of Christ of sincere friendship, of human affection imbued with God’s love?

“The principal apostolate we Christians must carry out in the world,” wrote St. Josemaría, “and the best witness we can give of our faith, is to help bring about a climate of genuine charity within the Church. For who indeed could feel attracted to the Gospel if those who say they preach the Good News do not really love one another, but spend their time attacking one another, spreading slander, and quarrelling?”

Our Lord asks us to carry out a sowing of understanding and forgiveness in every sector of society. He calls each Christian to this task, and expects it of all men and women. This sowing is possible if we are spurred by Christ’s charity, which knows how to make compatible differences of character, education and culture, in the unity of the Mystical Body, without any fissures. “The Apostle [St. Paul] is not condemning diversity. Each person has his own gift from God, some in one thing, some in another (see 1 Cor 7:7). These differences, however, must serve the good of the Church. I feel moved right now to ask our Lord (and if you wish you can join in my prayer) not to permit uncharitableness to sow its cockle in the Church. Charity is the salt of the Christian apostolate. If it should lose its taste, how can we come to the world and proclaim: ‘Here is Christ?’”

In two weeks, on February 14th, we will commemorate in the Work the anniversary of the extension of the apostolic work to women, in 1930, and the foundation of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, in 1943. Our Father viewed that coinciding of dates, in different years, as a sign of Divine Providence, which wanted to strongly emphasize the unity of Opus Dei. Let us give thanks for this divine gift, which each and every one of us should foster and defend, first of all in our own lives, and also in our
surroundings.

Let us pray for all the pastors of the Church, so that all men and women, with Peter, the visible Head of the Mystical Body, may go to Jesus through Mary. Let us not cease to cry out to the Holy Spirit for the full incorporation of Christians and of all humanity in the unity of the Catholic Church, so that our Lord’s words may be fulfilled: “I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd.”[21]

I don’t want to end without an explicit remembrance of our beloved Don Alvaro, who celebrated his saint’s day on the 19th. From his response to God we can learn so much, including how to take great care of this supernatural family to which our Lord has called us—the Church, the Work—and to spend our lives happily in this effort, as did the first successor to St. Josemaría at the head of Opus Dei.

As always, accompany me in my intentions; specifically, in a special way, pray for the sons of mine, Associates of the Prelature, who will be ordained as deacons on the 18th.

With all my affection, I bless you,
Your Father
+ Javier
Rome, February 1, 2012

[5] Ibid.
My dear children: may Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!

The arrival of May always fills our souls with a special joy. The joy of Easter is reinforced by the beginning of several weeks dedicated especially to our Lady in many countries. And how could children fail to be filled with joy on sensing their mother’s presence in a special and closer way? It is only natural that this should happen. As an early Church writer assured us, our Lady, during her visit to St. Elizabeth, “by her words... caused a river of divine gifts to spring forth for her cousin as from a fountain. Indeed, where the one who is ‘full of grace’ is present, everything is filled with joy.”[1]
Today I want to consider once again with you some of the reasons for joy and gratitude that this fifth month of the year brings us. Already the first day, the feast of St. Joseph the Worker (which we commemorate today), is a cause of true gaudium, of deep joy for the women and men who, like ourselves, need to seek personal sanctification and carry out apostolate in their professional work and through their daily activities. I recall our Father’s joy when this liturgical memorial was begun, for (as he wrote in one of his homilies), “this feast, which ratifies the divine value of work, shows how the Church publicly echoes those central truths of the Gospel which God wants to single out for special consideration in our own time.”[2]

The feast of St. Joseph the Worker invites us to remember the transcendent value of honest professional work that is well done, as was the work the Holy Patriarch carried out for many years. As an indispensable prerequisite, it needs to be done with supernatural and human perfection, that is to say, with the desire of giving glory to God and serving our neighbor, independently of the importance society attributes to it. How often I heard St. Josemaría say that the divine value of human work depends on the love for God with which it is done, on the spirit of service with which it is begun and finished.

I want to take advantage of this letter to ask you to pray for the 35 deacons of the Prelature whom I will ordain as priests in four days. In previous years, each of these men tried to attain sanctity and be apostolic in the context of his secular profession. From now on, priestly work will become for them, so to speak, their “profession,” to which they will dedicate all the hours of their day, with the immense joy of knowing themselves to be our Lord’s instrument in applying the redemption to souls. Let us pray that they live as holy, learned and joyful priests, with a sporting spirit in the supernatural field, as St. Josemaría wanted: “priest-priests, priests through and through.”[3]

Another cause of joy for me has been the pastoral trip I made to Cameroon in Easter week—a country that offers so much hope for the Church in Africa and throughout the world. And, more recently, the days I spent in Pamplona for the fiftieth anniversary of the Navarra University Hospital. In the past five decades, countless people—doctors, nurses,
administrative personnel—have dedicated themselves to caring for the sick with a Christian spirit. And thousands of patients have regained their health, and learned to offer their sufferings to God; and some have offered their death, in close union with Jesus Christ on the Cross. I give thanks to God with all my heart—you too join me in doing so—because St. Josemaría’s solicitude for the sick, shown right from the beginning of the Work and even earlier, found a channel in this great undertaking that our Founder personally urged forward, and in so many similar initiatives that have arisen throughout the years in various countries.

However, my daughters and sons, the month of May speaks to us above all of our Lady’s continual presence on the path of the Church and of every Catholic. So it’s only logical that we try to draw out the greatest possible spiritual and apostolic fruit from the coming weeks.

In first place, I would like to consider the much loved Marian custom of the May pilgrimage. Tomorrow, the 2nd, is the anniversary of St. Josemaría’s pilgrimage to the Shrine of our Lady of Sonsoles in 1935, accompanied by two of his sons, thus starting this Marian custom in the Work. Since then, how many thousands of shrines and sanctuaries of our Lady throughout the world have been visited with piety, following the footsteps of our Father! Let us ask him to help us make the pilgrimage with the same recollection and trust in our Mother, with the same apostolic spirit as he did. And, in so doing, let us also invite a friend, colleague or relative to accompany us in this filial sign of affection for our Lady.

Towards the middle of the month, we will celebrate both the feast of our Lady of Fatima and the anniversary of the novena that St. Josemaría made to Our Lady of Guadalupe in 1970: two memories that should spur us to put great care into our times of mental prayer and our vocal prayers, especially the Rosary, so strongly recommended by our Lady to the three young shepherds. Let us have a holy ambition in our apostolic intentions, beseeching Mary for the Church and the Pope; for the fruitfulness of the Year of Faith we are preparing to celebrate; for the renewal of Christian life throughout the whole world.

The 17th, which this year falls on the Solemnity of the Ascension of our Lord, is the twentieth anniversary of our Father’s beatification. What
memories of the marvels of grace this date brings us, shared with Blessed John Paul II and with our beloved Don Alvaro! What a marvelous opportunity to increase our gratitude to God and our eagerness to follow the example of the faithful instrument that Heaven chose to found Opus Dei!

During the following days of the month, we can closely accompany our Lady in preparing for the feast of Pentecost, which this year is celebrated on Sunday the 27th. St. Josemaría urged us to apply ourselves personally during this time (or even after the feast) to our meditation on the ten day devotion to the Holy Spirit. It is vitally important that we remain very close to our Lady during those days, learning from her how to have greater intimacy with the Sanctifier of our soul.

A few weeks ago, reflecting on our Lady’s presence in the Cenacle at Jerusalem with the apostles and the holy women, awaiting the coming of the Paraclete, Benedict XVI said that “with Mary begins the earthly life of Jesus, and with Mary the first steps of the Church also begin.”[4] God wanted his Son to become flesh in the most pure womb of the Virgin, and our Lord gave her to us as Mother beside the Cross. Therefore, when the first disciples gathered in the Cenacle awaiting the promised Consoler, the Holy Virgin was found among them, “imploring by her prayers the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the Annunciation.”[5]

The Pope points out that “the presence of the Mother of God with the Eleven after the Ascension is not, therefore, a simple historical record of something that happened in the past. Rather, it takes on a significance of great value, for she shares with them the most precious possession she has, the living memory of Jesus, in prayer. And she shares with them as well the mission of Jesus: to preserve the memory of Him and so preserve his presence.”[6]

It is not hard to imagine that, in the time between our Lord’s Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit, the disciples, having the Mother of Jesus at their side, listened with great piety to her recounting of so many memories that she conserved in her heart: the Annunciation and the birth in Bethlehem; the dangerous months of Herod’s persecution, and the years living and working in Nazareth; the happy times of our Lord’s
preaching and miracles during his public life, and the sad hours of his passion, death and burial. And then the joy of the resurrection, the apparitions in Judea and Galilee, the Master’s final instructions…. The Holy Spirit used Mary’s recounting of so many marvelous deeds to prepare the apostles and the other disciples for the fullness of Pentecost.

What a good school, my daughters and sons, the Cenacle is! A school of prayer, where Holy Mary is the matchless teacher. “Teacher of prayer,” our Father said; and also “Teacher of hidden and silent sacrifice.” Our Lady is present there listening closely to the Paraclete’s inspirations and teaching those first disciples to listen to God in the recollection of their prayer. “Venerating the Mother of Jesus in the Church means, therefore, to learn from her to be a community that prays: this is one of the essential notes of the first description of the Christian community sketched out in the Acts of the Apostles (see Acts 2:42). Frequently people turn to prayer for difficult situations, for personal problems that lead them to have recourse to God for light, consolation and help. Mary invites us to broaden the dimensions of prayer, to direct ourselves to God not only in our personal needs, but also in a united way, persevering and faithful, with ‘one heart and soul’ (Acts 4:32).”

This is a mission our Lady entrusts to those who want to be faithful children of hers: to teach others to direct themselves to God at every moment, not only for urgent needs or in difficult situations. “For some of you, all this may sound quite familiar; for others, it may be something new; for everybody, it is demanding. As for me,” wrote St. Josemaría, “as long as I have strength to breathe, I will continue to preach that it is vitally necessary that we be souls of prayer at all times, at every opportunity and in the most varied of circumstances, because God never abandons us. It is not a proper Christian attitude to look upon friendship with God only as a last resort. Do we think it normal to ignore or neglect the people we love? Obviously not! Those we love figure constantly in our conversations, desires and thoughts. We hold them ever present. So it should be with God.”

We find Mary on Calvary, “at the foot of the Cross, praying. This is nothing new for Mary. She has always acted like this, as she fulfilled her duties and looked after her home. As she went about the things of this
earth she kept her attention on God. Christ... wanted us also to have the example of his Mother, the most perfect of creatures, she who is full of grace, to strengthen our desire to lift our eyes up to the love of God at every moment.”[11]

Now, from Heaven, where she lives glorified in body and soul, our Lady continues being very close to each one of us, fulfilling to the letter the mission that Jesus gave her in the person of St. John: “Woman, behold your Son.”[12] “Let us entrust to her all the moments of our personal and ecclesial life,” recommends Benedict XVI, “among them that of our final passage from this earth. Mary teaches us the need for prayer and tells us that only with a constant, intimate, loving bond with her Son, will we be able to leave behind ‘our house,’ our selfish concerns, in order to reach even the furthest corner of the world, announcing everywhere our Lord Jesus Christ, Savior of the world.”[13]

Do we pray the Dominus tecum of the Ave Maria with the daily piety our Father had? How insistently do we ask our Lady to help us make good use of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit?

Continue being closely united to my intentions, which are summed up in an intense prayer for the Church, for the Pope, for priests and religious, for the holiness of the entire Christian people. Let us ask the Holy Spirit, through our Lady’s intercession, to enkindle in everyone, pastors and faithful, an eagerness to fulfill at every moment the Most Holy Will of God.

And accompany me on the trip I am planning to make to Slovakia in a few days, so that there too the spirit of Opus Dei may spread more and more, sowing in all sectors a love for the Church and a desire to sanctify oneself and to sanctify others in the midst of one’s ordinary tasks. You can’t imagine the insistent piety with which our Father prayed for that land in 1968, when people there tried to free themselves from the yoke of Marxism.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father,

+ Javier
Rome, May 1, 2012


[8] Ibid., no. 509.


Torna ai contenuti

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**Homilies**

**Mass in Suffrage for Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, St. Eugene's Basilica, Rome (March 23, 2012)**

My dear sisters and brothers:

1. Today is the eighteenth anniversary of the transit to heaven of our beloved Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei. We are united here, in this Holy Mass, to ask the Blessed Trinity to grant him the prize
he so greatly longed for: to contemplate God face to face forever.

We are preparing to celebrate Easter, the most important feast in the liturgical year. As we draw close to the goal, the liturgy invites us to pray: “Holy Father, who in your sacraments provided the remedy for our weakness, grant that we may receive with joy the fruits of redemption and reflect them in a renewal of our life.”[1]

Each of us is frequently confronted with the evidence of our own weakness. At times this is due to our lack of health, to daily setbacks, to unexpected problems that arise in our work or family, to projects that don't turn out as we had hoped. In other moments, it will involve failures in our spiritual life since, despite all our desires to do good, we discover that we still have many imperfections, and that we offend God by our sins, our omissions, our lukewarmness.

As St. Josemaría wrote, “Expecta Dominum, hope in the Lord (Ps 26:14). Live by hope, full of faith and love. What does it manner that we are made of clay, if all our hope is placed in God? And if at a certain moment you should fall or suffer some setback (not that it has to happen), all you have to do is to apply the remedy, just as, in the normal course of events, you would do for the sake of your bodily health. And then: off to a fresh start!”[2]

Our personal weaknesses should not discourage us. Jesus has provided the opportune remedies: the sacraments, as the collect prayer from today’s Mass reminds us. In this regard, we can recall here one of the precepts of the Church: the confession and communion that every Catholic is obliged to fulfill during Eastertide. We should try to prepare ourselves very well personally, and also help others to do so, who perhaps approach the fonts of supernatural life only infrequently.

Bishop del Portillo often urged us to carry out an “apostolate of Confession.” He was well aware of the importance of the sacrament of divine mercy, the inexhaustible source of grace and the absolutely indispensable condition for preserving Christian life and maintaining its vigor. He had learned this from St. Josemaría and communicated it in turn to the faithful of Opus Dei and to many friends and cooperators of the
Prelature. It seems very timely to me that we pray today for the grace to awaken, in all who need it, the desire to make a good confession.

2. Being close to God brings joy and peace; therefore the Church encourages us to receive “with joy the fruits of redemption.”[3]

Don Alvaro’s life was characterized by the peace and joy that he sowed around him. All those who knew him testify that, after spending time with him, even very briefly, they found themselves more serene when they returned to their habitual work or their family, because Don Alvaro communicated to souls the peace he had in his heart. That peace was the fruit of grace, but also of the struggle in his spiritual life, striving to overcome evil with an abundance of good, as he had learned from the Founder of Opus Dei.

I recall that in this Basilica of St. Eugene, in the homily he gave on the occasion of World Youth Day in 1985, he invited the young people present to rebel against those who were trying to implant in them a materialistic vision of life. His words continue to be very timely, and we too can take advantage of them:

“What is the meaning of the rebellion I am inviting you to undertake? It means refusing to obey those who sow evil and injustice. It means being ready to take a clear stand, not remaining in an ambiguous neutrality when confronted with the impositions that damage human dignity. It means, and this is the rebellion of the children of God, not being afraid to give witness to Christ’s Cross in the face of a world shackled in selfishness. Rebel against the false prophets of peace who cry out against war and, at the same time, finance the slaughter of those who are waiting to be born. Love God and all men and women, for Love is the new name of the rebellion against evil.”[4]

In the upcoming month of October, coinciding with the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of Vatican II, the Year of Faith convoked by Benedict XVI will begin. It is the desire of the Pope that “this Year... 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... 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, 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.”[5]

3. St. John recounts that, on one occasion, some of Jesus’ relatives, who did not believe in him, insisted that he show his glory openly. Leave here, his relatives told him, and go to Judea, that your disciples may see the works you are doing. For no man works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.[6] But Jesus did not listen to them; he was not seeking his own glory but that of his Father. Later—and this was added by the text that we heard in the Gospel—after his brethren had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private.[7]

This Gospel passage was deeply engraved on the heart of St. Josemaria, who meditated and preached on it frequently. He understood very well the Master’s lesson and, applying it to the life of every Christian, invited us to always foster humility in our own life. We should not seek our own glory, but rather God’s glory: Deo omnis gloria! And he encouraged us to practice the discretion Jesus teaches us in this Gospel passage. It is a discretion that does not mean being secretive; rather it means not calling attention to ourselves through our actions, not “sounding a trumpet,” acting with the naturalness of one who strives to serve God as he wants to be served.

This is the how Don Alvaro del Portillo always lived. In spite of having so many virtues and gifts, both in the natural order and in the supernatural, he made his own the motto of our Founder: “to hide and disappear so that only our Lord shines forth.”[8] Here too we should try to imitate him.

I don’t want to end without reminding you that today the Pope is beginning a pastoral trip that will take him to Mexico and Cuba. We are all very aware of the importance of this visit to those countries, where people will see and hear the Holy Father perhaps for the first time. Many doors—in hearts and in society—could open themselves to the Word of God, through the word and the love of the Vicar of Christ.

Let us pray, then, for the spiritual fruit of the Pope’s trip. Many of us recall the first words of his predecessor, Blessed John Paul II, when, in the now distant 1978, he invited the leaders of nations and all men and women
of good will to open wide the doors to Christ. We will do the same today as we offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

We do so going to the intercession of Mary Most Holy, Mother of the Church and of all mankind, and to that of St. Josemaría and all the saints. May our Lord, multiplicatis intercessoribus, thanks to the help of so many intercessors, answer our prayers. Amen.

[1] Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent. Collect. Throughout this homily, which was given in Italian, reference is made several times to this prayer. Since both the English and Spanish translation differ quite a bit here from the Italian, we have translated directly from the Italian to respect the sense of the homily.


[7] Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent, Gospel (Jn 7:10).


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**At the Mass In Coena Domini on Holy Thursday in the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, Rome (April 5, 2012)**

( *This homily addressed to a group of young men from a number of different countries is reproduced in the four languages in which it was delivered*)

1. My dear brothers and my dear sons,
In a few moments, we will celebrate the liturgy of Our Lord’s Last Supper with his Apostles, during which He instituted the Holy Eucharist. The Sacrifice of the Cross is so important for the salvation of the human race that — as Blessed John Paul the Second once wrote — “Jesus Christ carried it out and returned to the Father only after having left us the means to participate in it as if we had been present.”[1]

The way that we participate in that Sacrifice is, precisely, the Holy Eucharist. That is why, when He took the bread in His hands, Our Lord said: "this is my body, which is given up for you. Do this in memory of me. And likewise the cup, after supper, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Lk. 22: 19-20)

The Eucharist is the greatest demonstration of God’s love: the giving of Himself as food for his followers, to make them one with Him. There, in that love of Christ, we were present; each one of us is present. Give us, Lord, a heart full of supernatural love and human affection, able and eager to give thanks for your divine love. Let us ask of Him that in every time, place, and circumstance, we may always bear in mind that, in Holy Communion, we truly receive Him. It is easy to see why Saint Josemaría, because of his great love for the Eucharist, would always think in these terms: "Jesus and I, Jesus and I..." because it is absolutely certain that Jesus does not want to leave us all alone.

If we give a Eucharistic meaning to our day, we will work better, finishing things well. We will have a stronger sense of fraternity with our brothers and sisters. And we will have apostolic desires to bring Christ to our friends, our relatives and all mankind. Because a Christian must take a profound interest — as Saint Josemaría did — in every soul throughout the whole world and throughout all of history.

2. Soffermiamoci ora su queste parole che il Signore aggiunge dopo la transustanziazione, attraverso la quale il pane e il vino si trasformano nel Suo Corpo e nel Suo Sangue. "Fate questo in memoria di me" (Lc 22, 19). Con questo mandato, Gesù Cristo costituì gli Apostoli in sacerdoti del Nuovo Testamento, in modo tale che essi e i loro successori nel ministero potessero rendere presente il Sacrificio della Croce in ogni tempo e in ogni
luogo. Per questo oggi, Giovedì Santo, è un giorno propizio per chiedere al Signore che mandi molti e santi sacerdoti alla Chiesa.

È un modo molto concreto di rinnovare l’anima sacerdotale che tutti noi, laici e sacerdoti, abbiamo ricevuto nel Battesimo. Consideriamo questa meravigliosa realtà, perché è qui che si riassume il desiderio del Signore di accompagnarci di continuo, di santificarci e di farsi collaborare con Lui nella santificazione degli altri.

Dobbiamo essere uomini che amano la Santa Messa, che vivono la Santa Messa durante la celebrazione eucaristica e anche nel corso della giornata. Per riuscirci, il Signore ha voluto rimanere in tutti i tabernacoli del mondo. Che efficacia racchiude la Messa, e che efficacia avrà la nostra esistenza quotidiana, se sapremo essere uomini che amano il Sacrificio eucaristico e che sono pazzamente innamorati di Gesù Cristo! È sorprendente che questo Dio onnipotente sia allo stesso tempo un Dio umile, misericordioso, che vuole servirsi degli uomini — di noi, di te — affinché la forza della grazia arrivi a molte persone. Tu ed io, uniti al Sacrificio del Signore, possiamo arrivare dappertutto, fino alle ultime estremità della terra.


Se sistemiamo bene i nostri impegni, in modo che — come diceva nostro Padre — la Santa Messa sia veramente "il centro e la radice" della nostra esistenza, finiremo per unire il lavoro, lo studio, il riposo e tutte le nostre attività nobili, al Sacrificio del Calvario, a Cristo sulla Croce, che ha aperto le sue braccia all’umanità di tutti i tempi.
3. La vie eucharistique change la conduite du chrétien. D’abord elle nous donne la force pour que, en contemplant l’amour que Jésus nous manifeste et en méditant sur notre réponse concrète, nous nous décidions à lutter contre les tentations, même si elles sont très agressives; nous alimenterons ainsi notre désir de corriger nos défauts personnels, également ceux du caractère, ceux dont nous considérons qu’ils sont justifiés parce que nous disons: "je suis comme ça."

Regardons davantage Jésus Christ, l’Emmanuel, le Dieu avec nous, Le Maître qui est toujours à nos côtés; si nous le faisons sincèrement, nous verrons comment le Christ nous accepte tels que nous sommes, pour nous faire progresser. Remplissons-nous de confiance, de joie, de certitude dans la victoire, car Il ne nous repousse pas, mais Il nous comprend et nous pardonne, lorsque nous sommes contrits et que nous avons recours à Lui dans la Confession. Là, dans ce sacrement de la miséricorde divine, Jésus nous purifie, nous élève, nous fortifie:Il nous aime davantage et Il nous comble de force pour la noble lutte que nous devons combattre –une guerre d’amour et de paix- dans ce monde qui est le nôtre.

Augmentons chaque jour notre faim de l’Eucharistie, spécialement dans les prochains mois, lorsque nous célébrerons l’Année de la foi convoquée par le Saint-Père.

L’invitation de Jésus Christ à ses disciples pour qu’ils aillent avec Lui au Cénacle, Il nous l’adresse maintenant à nous, à chacun en particulier. Ce n’est pas une invitation à assister à quelque chose de prodigieux, même si c’est le cas! Nous ne pouvons nous limiter à cette approche: le Seigneur veut que nous entrons corps et âme dans ce don de lui-même, qui est le don de Dieu lui-même, parce qu’Il veut donner une transcendance éternelle à toute notre existence, une force apostolique à tout ce que nous faisons.

4. No lo olvidemos: tanto vale nuestra vida cuanto seamos hombres de oración. Y no hay oración más alta, más eficaz, que vivir la Misa y vivir de la Misa, uniéndonos al Sacrificio de Cristo y adorándole en el altar y después en el Sagrario. Siempre que san Josemaría se acercaba al Tabernáculo, en tantos momentos de la jornada, hacía un profundo acto de fe. Hagamos nosotros lo mismo, cuando le visitemos en una iglesia o en un oratorio.
Escribía nuestro Padre: "Señor, yo creo firmemente. ¡Gracias por habernos concedido la fe! Creo en Ti, en esa maravilla de amor que es tu Presencia Real bajo las especies eucarísticas, después de la consagración, en el altar y en los Sagrarios donde estás reservado. Creo más que si te escuchara con mis oídos, más que si te viera con mis ojos, más que si te tocaría con mis manos. Jesús Sacramentado, que nos esperas amorosamente en tantos Sagrarios abandonados, yo pido que en los de nuestros Centros te tratemos siempre bien, rodeado del cariño nuestro, de nuestra adoración, de nuestro desagravio, del incienso de las pequeñas victorias, del dolor de nuestras derrotas."[3].

Nuestra Señora fue el primer Sagrario, cuando recibió en su seno virginal al Verbo de Dios hecho hombre. Luego, mientras permaneció en la tierra, después de la ascensión del Señor al cielo, asistiría a la Misa que celebraba Juan, el discípulo amado, que el Señor mismo le había confiado. Pidamos a nuestra Madre que sepamos tratar a Jesucristo con aquella pureza, humildad y devoción con que Ella lo acogió en su seno purísimo; con los cuidados que le dispensó en Nazaret; con el amor que le manifestó durante la vida pública; con la intensidad con que participó en su Pasión y Muerte, colaborando con Él, como nueva Eva, en la restauración de la vida sobrenatural en nuestras almas. Así sea.


At the Easter Vigil, the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, Rome (April 7, 2012)

1. Sorelle mie e figlie amatissime.

Lumen Christi! Deo gratias! Così abbiamo cantato all’inizio della Veglia Pasquale, dopo questo giorno, il Sabato Santo, nel quale il silenzio della
terra per la morte del Signore rende più evidente il nostro bisogno di Lui. Vieni, Gesù, vieni!, gli diciamo.

Cristo è la “Luce che illumina ogni uomo, che viene a questo mondo” (Gv 1, 9). Senza di Lui, nulla ha senso; le più brillanti manifestazioni dello spirito umano, i risultati più importanti dal punto di vista materiale, non sono altro che fuochi di artificio, che brillano un istante per spegnersi subito, senza dare luce duratura all’ambiente né calore di vita a questo nostro mondo. Lo segnala san Giovanni quando, nel prologo del suo vangelo, scrive che il Verbo “era nel mondo, e il mondo fu fatto per mezzo di lui, eppure il mondo non lo riconobbe” (Gv 1, 10).

Questo è, purtroppo, in molti aspetti, il panorama del mondo contemporaneo. Bisogna riconoscerlo senza pessimismo, come un dato di fatto che, con la grazia di Dio, possiamo e dobbiamo cambiare. Per questo è venuto Cristo sulla terra, per questo è morto ed è risorto, per questo ha inviato lo Spirito Santo, in modo che rimanga con noi per sempre.

La Chiesa, nella liturgia di questa notte, ci mostra che, con la resurrezione del Signore, è cambiato tutto. All’inizio della veglia, questo tempio si trovava con le luci spente: un’immagine dell’oscurità del mondo, immerso nel peccato prima dell’incarnazione, morte e risurrezione del Figlio di Dio. Nell’accendere il cero pasquale con il fuoco nuovo della pietra, simbolo di Cristo, e nel propagare la sua fiamma dappertutto, le tenebre scompaiono, tutto acquista rilievo e novità, sebbene la nostra esistenza sembri sempre la stessa. In realtà non è così, perché è stata illuminata, trasfigurata, dalla Luce con la maiuscola. Perché “a quanti l’hanno accolto, ha dato potere di diventare figli di Dio: a quelli che credono nel suo nome” (Gv 1, 12).

2. Ce jour est un jour de joie toute particulière. La mort et la résurrection de Jésus Christ ont apporté la joie au monde entier. Les mots que l’Évangile nous répète reflètent bien cela, à propos de la réaction des Apôtres face aux apparitions du Ressuscité: "Gavisì sunt discipuli viso Domino" (Jn 20, 20), les disciples se remplirent de joie en voyant le Seigneur.

Arrêtons-nous sur le comportement des Douze. Pendant la Passion, et
dans les heures qui ont suivi, ils ont fait la profonde expérience de leur faiblesse. Cela était normal, parce qu’ils avaient abandonné Jésus. Seul le disciple aimé et quelques femmes l’accompagnèrent — avec Marie — au pied de la Croix; malgré leur douleur intense, elles restèrent fidèles en ces moments d’obscurité. La raison en est simple: Ils s’étaient réunis autour de la Mère du Seigneur, Et dans le cœur de celle-ci la lumière de la foi et de l’amour continuait de briller toujours. Avec la Très Sainte Vierge toutes les difficultés se surmontent, tous les doutes, toutes les hésitations.

Après la résurrection, tout change. La découverte du tombeau vide, le témoignage des saintes femmes et, finalement, les apparitions du Seigneur ressuscité, retournent complètement les disciples. Ils se rendent compte alors que le Maître continue de les aimer, mais aussi qu’il donne une nouvelle sûreté à leur vie, une préparation pour recevoir le Paraclet, qui les rendra décidés et apostoliques: comme l’affirmait saint Josémaria, des personnes, "sans peur de la vie et sans peur de la mort."

3. Each one of you, like the holy women about whom the Gospel speaks today, must decide to seek Jesus, with a decision that is always being renewed. In the struggle to identify ourselves with Jesus, St. Josemaría distinguished four steps: "seeking Him, finding Him, getting to know Him, and loving Him. Perhaps — he added — you realize that you are only at the first stage. Seek Him with hunger, seek Him within yourselves with all your strength. If you make this effort, I dare to guarantee that you have already found him, and that you have begun to speak with Him and to love Him and to hold your conversation in heaven."[1]

The attitude of those women is very instructive. They respect the Sabbath rest. But, as soon as dawn breaks, they run to the tomb to finish the pious task of anointing the Lord’s body. Love, true love, is always in a hurry. Let us not allow Jesus to pass by our side — He is always doing so — without paying any attention to Him. We have to share our whole existence with Him. Then, if we are truly seeking Him, everything we do acquires an apostolic dimension. We will feel the overwhelming need to speak to others about God, precisely because we are trying to speak with Him at all times.
Lord, since You do not leave us, may we never leave You. We want to accompany You always, even when walking with You becomes difficult, or we find ourselves in darkness, or when the routine of seemingly identical days threatens to obscure Your presence as You pass among us. If we are looking for You, You always come out to meet us. And if you make us wait, it is to test the quality of our love, which, if it is true, is purified and strengthened by difficulties.

4. La Resurrección de Cristo nos ha traído una vida nueva. El Maestro deposita toda su confianza en los discípulos de entonces y de siempre. También ahora nos dice, como a aquellos primeros:  \textit{euntes, docete!} (Mt 28, 19), id y enseñad a todas las gentes. Si caminamos con Cristo, si compartimos nuestra existencia con Él, respondiendo a su llamada, necesariamente daremos tono apostólico a nuestro quehacer. Somos enviados del Señor para ser testigos suyos en este siglo XXI que nos ha tocado vivir. No sólo con una conducta coherente con nuestra fe —que es algo fundamental—, sino también con la palabra, superando los respetos humanos que, a veces, tratan de hacernos callar.

Seguramente muchas de vosotras participasteis en la Jornada Mundial de la Juventud del año pasado. Constituyó una manifestación de fe para el mundo entero. Como decía el Papa hace unos días, "aquel espléndido encuentro sólo puede entenderse a la luz de la presencia del Espíritu Santo en la Iglesia. Él no deja de infundir aliento en los corazones, y continuamente nos saca a la plaza pública de la historia, como en Pentecostés, para dar testimonio de las maravillas de Dios."[2] Así tenemos que vivir los cristianos, a toda hora. Estamos embarcados en una aventura capaz de satisfacer las expectativas de un corazón joven como el vuestro, que no se conforma con una vida rutinaria, sino que busca la verdadera alegría.

Todos estamos comprometidos en esta tarea, prosegúía Benedicto XVI en el encuentro que acabó de recordar. "Alguno podría suponer —decía— que esto no tiene nada que ver con él o que es una empresa que supera sus capacidades y talentos, Pero no es así. En esta aventura nadie sobra. Por eso, no dejéis de preguntaros a qué os llama el Señor y cómo le podéis ayudar. Todos tenéis una vocación personal que Él ha querido proponeros para vuestra dicha y santidad."[3]
Meditad serenamente qué espera el Señor de cada una, qué os está pidiendo en estos momentos. Escuchad su voz y seguidla, ¡sin miedo!, porque Él sólo desea lo mejor para cada una, para cada uno.

Al final de la Vigilia, saludaremos a la Virgen con el canto del Regina caeli. Que nuestra felicitación a María por la resurrección de Jesucristo vaya acompañada del propósito, firme y sincero, de no dejar nunca solo a su Hijo, de seguirle decididamente por los caminos de la tierra, llevando con nosotros, en pos de Él, a muchas otras personas. Así sea.


[3] Ibid.

At the Mass for the 50th Anniversary of the Hospital of the University of Navarra (April 29, 2012)

1. My dear brothers and sisters:

Today, the Fourth Sunday of Easter, the Church’s liturgy is centered on Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd, who cares for his sheep, who goes out in search of the lost or injured one and brings it back to the fold. This had been announced by the prophet Ezekiel many centuries beforehand, putting these words on the Lord’s lips: I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak (Ezek 34:15-16).

The first reading echoes this solicitude of the Good Shepherd. Peter and John had just cured a paralytic at the Temple gate. When the leaders of the people questioned them about the cure, they responded: if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a cripple, by what
means this man has been healed, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that [it was] by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth (Acts 4:9-10).

Caring for the sick with Christian charity, offering them the available remedies, has always been a distinctive mark of Christ’s disciples. As Blessed John Paul II wrote: “Born of the mystery of Redemption in the Cross of Christ, the Church has to try to meet man in a special way on the path of his suffering. In this meeting man ‘becomes the way for the Church,’ and this way is one of the most important ones.”[1]

We are celebrating this Holy Eucharist with the desire to give thanks to God for the fifty years of service provided to society by the University of Navarre Hospital, and to implore divine blessings on those who work there and on those who are seeking to recover their health. The place where we are holding our liturgical celebration is a bit unusual: the sports complex of the university. It is a structure intended for sports, for joyful and healthy recreation which, while strengthening the body, can also invigorate the soul, when it helps to create and develop bonds of friendship that bring one closer to God. It is one more university building within the campus, together with others that house the library, the classrooms, the laboratories, and the university hospital itself. Our Mass is taking place (as St. Josemaría Escrivá said in his unforgettable “campus” homily in 1967) amid the setting of daily life: one of study and research, of fraternity and healthy living.

The hospital was born at the urging of the Founder of this university, who was one of those holy priests whom the Holy Spirit brings forth in the Church to guide us by their example and teaching, to give witness in the world to Christ, the Good Shepherd of all men and women. Therefore the Founder of Opus Dei, right from the beginning of the Work, showed a special solicitude for the sick.

2. Let us pause now to consider the Gospel of this Mass. Let us contemplate Jesus and listen to what he is telling us. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:11). And let us meditate on the reality that, on the Cross, he showed us the full extent of his love, since he voluntarily accepted suffering and death for us
and for our salvation, to redeem us from the slavery of sin. Thanks to this self-surrender, to the Master’s holocaust, the last word no longer belongs to sin, suffering and death. What in the eyes of men seemed a failure, is now seen as the greatest triumph in history. As we prayed in the responsorial Psalm: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone (Ps 117[118]:22).

In the Eucharistic celebration this unlimited generosity of the Good Shepherd is made clear to us. In each Mass the very Sacrifice of Calvary, with all of its redemptive strength, is made sacramentally present. This is what the Founder of the Work experienced one day in 1931, while celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar. In the depths of his soul, he heard our Lord telling him, without the noise of words: I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself (Jn 12:32). “And I understood,” he wrote afterwards, “that it will be the men and women of God who will raise up the Cross, with Christ’s teachings, to the pinnacle of all human activities... And I saw our Lord triumph, drawing all things to himself.”[2]

The Christian life always brings with it the Cross. As a young, recently ordained priest, St. Josemaría spent many hours at the bedside of the sick, accompanying them and consoling them in their suffering, offering them his human warmth and the precious gift of the sacraments. He saw in them the lovable and suffering Christ, burdened with our sorrows and sufferings, and he felt impelled to console the Christ he saw in the sick.

A few years before, in 1928, our Lord had made him see Opus Dei, a path of sanctification in professional work and in the ordinary circumstances of a Christian; and since then he dedicated his days to carrying out the task God had entrusted to him. Faithful to that spirit, he urged forward—among many other apostolic activities— the beginning of the University of Navarra: a civil initiative imbued with a Catholic spirit, carried out by men and women whose passionate love for world spurs them to strive to contribute the best that they possess: their training in the sciences and humanities, their zeal to serve, and the joy of their faith, the happiness of having found Christ.
As I just reminded you, in St. Josemaría’s heart the sick always held a privileged place. When he saw himself forced to cut back on the frequency of his visits to the hospitals of Madrid, in order to dedicate himself to the work that God was asking of him, the consolidation of Opus Dei, he wrote down some words that express this quite forcefully: “My Jesus does not want me to leave him. He reminded me that he is nailed to a hospital bed....”[3] Perhaps that is why he put special effort into seeing to it that one of the first schools at the University of Navarra would be medicine, and that a teaching hospital would be opened, although he knew very well how difficult it would be to make it a reality.

Today we want to thank our Founder for his faithfulness, and also the women and men who, with their generous and full availability, made possible the realization of those aspirations of St. Josemaría, as well as all those who today are continuing that task. Given the impossibility of naming all of them, I will limit myself to recalling a few persons, now deceased, who in some way will represent the others: Professors Jimenez Vargas and Ortiz de Landázuri, who put all of their effort into bringing forward the school of medicine and the University Hospital; Dr. Mari Carmen Adalid and Amelia Fontán, who helped to begin the school of nursing. All those involved in the beginnings were moved by the desire of attaining holiness, which St. Josemaría had taught them.

One event in the life of Dr. Ortiz de Landázuri illustrates very well that desire. One of his biographers says that when he moved from Granada to Pamplona with his whole family, the well-known professor Carlos Jimenez Diaz, his teacher and a leading light in Spanish medicine, asked him: “If you had to choose between being a saint and winning the Nobel prize, which would you choose?” Eduardo’s response was quick and clear: “Don Carlos, there is no contradiction; if I want to be holy, I have to work as if I were trying to win the Nobel prize.”[4]

3. The Founder of our university saw in the ordinary activities of the hospital an excellent opportunity for each person to exercise the priestly soul proper to all Christians. Responding on one occasion to the question of a traumatologist about how to avoid routine in one’s professional activity, he suggested, “have presence of God. Invoke the Mother of God, as you are already doing. Yesterday I was with a sick person whom I love
with my whole heart of a father, and I understood the great priestly work that you doctors are doing. You have to exercise that priesthood. When you wash your hands, when you put on your surgical gown, or your gloves, think about God and the royal priesthood St. Peter speaks of. Then there will be no routine: you will do good to bodies and to souls.”[5]

St. Josemaría encouraged people to view reality in all its richness, without limiting themselves to the technical aspects, although he considered these indispensable. His gaze went deeper: to the people with whom one works, to those whom one serves, whom one has to understand, and console, and cure. Therefore he greatly valued the work of the nurses, always available to attend to the patients with an extraordinary professional preparation and a welcoming human warmth. This profession, while requiring great technical training, offers many opportunities to exercise one’s priestly soul. As Benedict XVI teaches, “The true measure of humanity is essentially determined in relationship to suffering and to the sufferer. This holds true both for the individual and for society. A society unable to accept its suffering members and incapable of helping to share their suffering and to bear it inwardly through ‘com-passion’ is a cruel and inhuman society.”[6]

St. Josemaria once told a nurse at the hospital who had asked him how to do her work better: “Your work is a priesthood, as much and even more so than that of the doctors... because you are always close to the sick person. The doctor comes, and then goes away; doctors keep the sick people in mind but don’t always have them right there in front of them. So I think that to be a nurse is a special Christian vocation. But to fulfill that vocation as perfectly as possible, you nurses need a solid technical and scientific preparation, and also a very great refinement: the refinement that this school and the University of Navarra Hospital are well-known for.”[7]

St. Josemaría was convinced that the sick had to be cared for with full respect for their dignity, both from the medical point of view as well as the spiritual and human ones. Therefore this hospital gives as much importance to the pleasant atmosphere, and the laundry and cooking services, as to the most sophisticated diagnostic or surgical techniques. I am sure that our Lord looks with special affection on those who, in these tasks, combine their technical training with a creative love that helps make the
burden of sickness more bearable.

Both medical science and human warmth, combined in a family atmosphere, are important for alleviating suffering when it is possible to do so. Certainly suffering is one of mankind’s treasures on earth, and we should never despise it.[8] But St. Josemaría also insisted, with common and supernatural sense, on a basic rule of prudence and charity: “Physical suffering should be alleviated, when possible. There is enough suffering in life already! And when it can’t be removed, then one offers it up.”[9]

4. In its fifty years of existence, the University of Navarra Hospital has become an institution at the forefront of health services. At the same time, each day here, as a great “sanctuary,” as it were, a pure offering very pleasing to God is raised up to heaven, on the part of the men and women, the sick people and health professionals, who—each from their own place—give witness to the reality that a priestly soul and a lay professional mentality complement each other perfectly. I see the university hospital, if you will allow me to use this expression, as a great “factory” of science and holiness. Its contribution to the improvement of health assistance to many people is now significant; and its importance for the future is also very relevant, since we Catholics are called to rediscover the most adequate paths for the new evangelization of civil society, which needs to overcome old mechanistic models closed to the spirit, in order to open itself fully to the service of each person in all of his or her humanity.

We who realize we are children of God have much to contribute to the world in which we live. During Easter time, the liturgy helps us to be aware of who we are and what is expected of us. As we heard in the second reading, taken from the first letter of St. John: Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be (1 Jn 3:2). We are bearers of hope for this world darkened by discouragement as a result of the material and spiritual crisis society is undergoing. As children of God, we are, in words of St. Josemaría, “bearers of the only flame that can light up the paths of the earth for souls, of the only brightness which can never be darkened, dimmed, or overshadowed.”[10]

Let us turn to our Lady, whom the Church invokes as Salus Infirmorum, Health of the Sick. We ask Mary to teach us, as she did John,
the beloved disciple, whom she received as her son beside Jesus’ Cross, to
discover the Christian meaning of suffering and of fairest Love. May we
learn to place Christ at the summit of all our activities, with our work that
is well done, so that its fruits will pour forth abundantly on the world,
bringing health of body and salvation of soul. Amen.

no. 3.


Torna ai contenuti

At the Ordination of 35 New Priests of the Prelature, St. Eugene's Basilica, Rome (May 5, 2012)

Dear brothers and sisters,

Dear ordinands,
1. The entry antiphon for the Holy Mass sums up the meaning of today’s liturgical celebration. By the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, God had promised: “I will give you shepherds after my own heart, and they will guide you with wisdom” (cf. Is 61:1). And indeed, once more the Lord is faithful to his promise. Thirty-five deacons of the prelature of Opus Dei are about to receive priestly ordination, which makes the priesthood of Christ present in this world.

We give thanks to God for the immeasurable love he has shown us. Not only did he send his Only-begotten Son onto this earth to redeem us from our sins, but he has also wished to make his redeeming Sacrifice present among us, until the end of the world, through the Holy Mass. This is the principal mission that is entrusted to priests, sacramentally identified with the Eternal High Priest. The Holy Father Benedict XVI recalled this in a priestly ordination last Sunday. “The priest,” he said, “is called to live in his own flesh what Jesus Christ experienced personally: that is, to give himself wholly to preaching and healing all the ills of mankind, in body and spirit, and finally to sum up everything in the supreme gesture of ‘giving his life’ for men, a gesture which finds its sacramental expression in the Eucharist.”[1]

2. The Second Vatican Council laid down in the following way the tasks entrusted to priests: “To preach the Gospel, to feed the faithful and to celebrate divine worship as true priests of the New Testament.”[2] The readings of the Mass refer in one way or another to these same points.

We have heard how St Paul, after his conversion, went to Jerusalem, where “he tried to join the disciples; but everyone was afraid of him” (Acts 9:26). The persecution headed by Saul against that Christian community was still very recent, and—very understandably—people did not trust him. But thanks to the testimony of Barnabas, who knew very well what had happened at the gates of Damascus, the doubts were dissipated. Barnabas “told them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and how he had preached openly in the name of the Lord in Damascus. Then he came and went with them in Jerusalem, speaking clearly in the name of the Lord” (Acts 9:27—28).
The Acts of the Apostles refer to the first preaching of the apostles several times. This insistence indicates that, if we are to carry out the mission of passing on the Christian message, we cannot be held up by human considerations, nor be afraid of being criticized because of our faith and our Christian conduct, even when the environment is negative. All of us, priests and laity, can and must learn from this lesson. Like the first disciples, in the face of situations that contradict the Church’s teachings, we have to say: “We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).

Indeed, as Christians we are all called to the apostolate, through the witness of our lives and with our words. Besides, very often the people we meet have never heard about Jesus Christ, or have forgotten Him. The Year of Faith which begins this October will be a good opportunity for us to share more fully in the Church’s evangelizing mission. In this connection there come to my memory some words of St Josemaría—directed to priests, but they are apt for all of us. He said: “They should see you speaking with faith, in the presence of Jesus Christ. … Then the people will move, and God will shower abundant graces on the souls of the faithful, and on you too.”[3]

3. In the Gospel, Jesus compares himself to a vine planted by his heavenly Father; and he adds that all of us baptized are branches. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; for cut off from me, you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5).

Without the Lord’s help, without the intervention of the Holy Spirit, our lives and our actions will be worthless from a supernatural point of view. And if this is true of us all, how much more can it be said of priests. We know that the Lord has not wished the power of the sacraments to depend on the personal holiness of the minister. It is Jesus who gives us the grace: for this reason, whenever anyone baptizes or administers the other sacraments, it is Christ himself who acts through his visible instrument.[4] But there is no doubt that the grace will be more abundant, will encounter fewer obstacles in reaching souls, if the sacred ministers—as the Church prays in the rite of ordination—seek sincerely to be “ever more united to Christ the High Priest, who offered Himself as a sacrifice to the Father on our behalf, consecrating themselves to God, together with Him, for the
salvation of the world.”[5] As our Father wrote in an early note: “Priest: your work is not just to save souls, but to sanctify them.”[6]

Let us continue meditating on the Lord’s words: “Remain in me and I in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit on its own if it does not remain in vine, so you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me” (Jn 15:4). St Paul, to whom our Founder had so much devotion, repeated: Sollicite cura teipsum (2 Tim 2:15), “Take care of yourselves,” try to improve your spiritual lives constantly. The Pope insisted on this same point last Sunday: the “Eucharistic—sacramental dimension is inseparable from the pastoral dimension, and constitutes the core of its truth and its saving power. … The very preaching, the works, the gestures of different kinds that the Church carries out with its multiplicity of initiatives would lose their saving fruitfulness, if the celebration of Christ’s Sacrifice were missing.”[7]

4. Let us look now at the third priestly task in which the Lord makes you share: to guide souls through spiritual direction and other pastoral activities. St John passes on to us the Lord’s command: “This is his commandment: that you believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and that you love one another, in accordance with the commandment that he gave us” (1 Jn 3:23).

This mandatum novum, promulgated by Jesus at the Last Supper, assumes a special meaning in your case. “Pastoral charity” is the new name of this commandment of the Lord for you: you must love like Christ the Shepherd, who laid down his life for his sheep. In this context, another teaching of St Josemaría is very up-to-date: “My priest sons, in order to carry out completely, faithfully, the duties of your ministry, you will need a big heart, a universal heart, capable of being understanding towards the miseries of those around you, and your own miseries. … This is our life: to love, to say truly, with deeds: caritas mea cum omnibus vobis! (1 Cor 16:24), my love for all souls. This way of behaving will make you into contemplatives, in constant conversation with God.”[8]

Perhaps it will be difficult to behave like this on some occasions, but do not forget that we are never alone. The Holy Spirit is dwelling in our souls: He is the one who will give us the energy to come out of ourselves in order to give ourselves to the others, because the love of Christ is urging us on:
caritas Christi urget nos (2 Cor 5:14). And if the temptation of disheartenment were to arise at some moment, when we see our personal faults, let us think of those other words of St John, written for us, and which will help us to renew each day our resolution to serve unconditionally: “In this we will know that we are in the truth, and we will calm our hearts in his presence, even if our hearts reproach us with something, because God is greater than our hearts and he knows everything” (1 Jn 3:19—20).

This precept has to give us great peace. God knows us very well; he is not ignorant of the deepest aspirations of our hearts, or of our weakness, and he loves us with all his infinite love. Let us abandon ourselves, full of trust, in the hands of our Lord, the Good Shepherd, who cares for us and gives us back our health through God’s ministers.

Before I finish, I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to the parents, the brothers and sisters, the families of the new priests-to-be for the important role they have played in the priestly vocation of these men. I ask you all to pray for them, that they be priests according to the measure of the Heart of Jesus.

As always—it is a duty—I invite you to pray with affection and thanksgiving for the Holy Father, Benedict XVI, united to his person and his intentions; for the bishops in communion with the Pope; for all the priests and deacons of the Church; and for the candidates to the priesthood throughout the world. Let us make our own the plea of St Josemaría: “Pray for priests, those today and those who are to come, that they may love their brothers—all men—truly, more each day, and without any discrimination, and that they may know how to make themselves beloved by them.”[9]

The fact that this ordination is being celebrated in the first days of May, the month dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, is a clear invitation to us to pray through the intercession of the one who is Mother of God and our Mother. We beg her to look after these brothers of ours, and after all priests who will be ordained over the centuries in order to make present, in the Church and in the world, the fruits of the saving work of her Son Jesus, the Good Shepherd who gave his life for his sheep. Amen.

On the Feast Day of St. Josemaría, St. Eugene's Basilica, Rome (June 26, 2012)

Thirty-seven years ago we gathered in this basilica for Holy Mass on the occasion of St. Josemaría’s passage to heaven. In those first years we offered suffrages for his soul, in spite of our conviction that he was the one who was interceding before God for us. Since his beatification and canonization we now celebrate the Mass in honor of this great servant of God, who wanted to always place himself at the service of the Church and all souls.

In 1975 we came with our hearts overwhelmed by the sorrow of our physical separation from St. Josemaría, despite the fact that all of us who knew him were fully convinced that our Lord had taken his soul to rejoice in his presence. A clear sign of this, among other expressions, was the large number of people—cardinals, archbishops, bishops and so many faithful—who came to pray before his body.

When his beatification was decreed, my beloved predecessor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, chose the texts that we had to present to the Congregation for Divine Worship for the Mass we are celebrating today,
doing so with great devotion. St. Josemaría deeply loved Sacred Scripture, and Bishop del Portillo proposed readings and a Gospel text he had so often meditated on and recommended to others to do likewise, drawing out the richness of the Old and New Testament teachings. In these texts each of us can find the certainty that we are always accompanied by God, who will never abandon us. It is we, instead, who unfortunately sometimes distance ourselves from God’s love.

I would now like to look more closely at the content of these texts.

Back in 1948, when I first met Opus Dei, my attention was drawn to the acuteness and sensitivity with which St. Josemaría read that passage from Genesis about the love that God infused into the creation of the world. All the material creatures were at the service of the first human pair, Adam and Eve, who were called to take an active role in the divine endeavor: precisely so that they would maintain their dialogue with the Lord, Yahweh commanded them to work. Sacred Scripture says that man was put into Paradise “ut operaretur” (Gen 2:15), so that he work.

Following this divine inspiration, St. Josemaría repeated untiringly that work is not a punishment. After the original fall of our progenitors, we experience fatigue, which is a punishment; but work in itself is a dialogue with our Lord, it is the hinge on which the ordinary life of every man and woman turns. It is possible, therefore, to sanctify oneself in work, to sanctify work, and to sanctify others with our work. This is a responsibility that no one should forget. I can tell you that St. Josemaría not only struggled to live this commandment of God with exquisite refinement, but that he sought to be a contemplative with unity of life. That is to say, he sought union with God not only in prayer, but turned work into prayer: in those moments he raised his heart to God to express his gratitude and offer even his exhaustion for the salvation of his soul and that of all people. And let us not forget that looking after one’s own family in household tasks is also work.

The second reading is a passage from St. Paul’s epistle to the Romans (see Rom 8:14-17) which reveals the marvel of our divine filiation. We have to consider this splendid reality every day with gratitude and a desire to correspond to God’s love, who loves us more than any earthly father, more
than all the fathers and mothers of the world put together. And he tells us: “you are my daughter, you are my son” (see Ps 2:7).

Let us meditate on this nearness. Let us reflect on this love of God, who is always with us and follows closely all that we do. We have to try to fulfill our various duties with the certainty that, if we correspond to God’s love, we can carry them out in any circumstance. I recall perfectly well how St. Josemaría told us—referring also to people who don’t belong to Opus Dei—that in any circumstance, at any moment, we should keep God present, with an ever greater gratitude for having become children of our Father God in Christ, and sustained by the help of grace, sanctify everything we are doing at each moment.

Our beloved Don Alvaro, a great servant of the Church and souls, suggested that among the texts approved (as I said earlier) by the Congregation for Divine Worship, the Gospel reading should be the narrative of the first miraculous catch of fish. St. Josemaría’s face and eyes—and I can say this with full certainty, because I witnessed it so often—lit up when he considered that our Lord asks us, as he did Peter, for our poor boat, for our life.

We cannot excuse ourselves, saying: I am so weak, I am so miserable. No. It is God who is asking for our boat in order to speak to everyone, so that we can lead them to discover that they can and should aspire to intimacy with God, to sanctity. St. Josemaría would stop to consider this scene, where Jesus gets into Peter’s boat and from there begins to speak as a Teacher, but as a Teacher who does not humiliate, as a Teacher who provides light, who addresses all the concerns of his brothers, of his sisters. Afterward he turns to Peter with that marvelous request: “Put out into the deep!” (Lk 5:4). Row out into the sea, pull the oars, head far out to where the fish are. At the beginning, Peter’s thoughts were the same as ours sometimes are. He was an expert in fishing and usually worked at night to try to catch fish. That night they had not caught anything, absolutely nothing. But on seeing Christ’s concern and confidence in us, he obeyed; he rowed with all the others towards the open sea and followed the Teacher’s suggestion: “Let out your nets for a catch” (ibid.).
We cannot hide behind false excuses. With all our limitations, we can cast our Lord’s net, so that many people discover his friendship. And the miracle will be repeated. In that sea in which they had not caught anything, “They enclosed a great shoal of fish; and their nets were breaking” (Lk 5:6). So many fish that they could not haul in the nets alone, and called to those in the other boat for help. St. Josemaría drew out from this episode this teaching: obedience leads to fraternity, and fraternity leads to obedience, to docility, it opens the path to grace.

My brothers and sisters, let us strive to carry out our work with docility to grace. If we live in this way, if we act faithfully, we can be certain that not only will we ourselves come closer to our Lord, but we will bring others closer too. For they will see our happiness, our peace, our confidence—because our Lord will never leave us—and they will ask themselves and ask us: How do you manage to live like that? And we will explain to them that living as children of God brings a great advantage, not only for us, but also for other people. If they too try to live in this way, they will experience in their own lives that they never lose the peace and joy that comes from being close to our Lord.

We have seen how Peter, astonished at the miracle he had just witnessed, tells Jesus, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.” (Lk 5:8). I recall how St. Josemaría, understanding perfectly Peter’s astonishment, put it differently: “Lord, don’t leave me, follow me closely, because without you I can’t do anything.” He also understood why Peter, in his bewilderment, told our Lord that he wasn’t worthy to be with him. But thanks to his mercy, to God’s love, all of us have become worthy of being with God, because he has given us the sacraments to provide a remedy for our mistakes and weaknesses. Try to carry out the apostolate of Confession; speak with your friends, with your relatives, about the marvel of a God who forgives because he loves, because he understands.

I ask you finally to pray, as always, for the Holy Father Benedict XVI. As his daughters and sons, we have the duty to support him, to help him with our prayer, with our work, with our joy and peace.

I also ask you to pray for the bishops and priests of the whole world, and to raise your voices as daughters and sons to tell our Lord: “send us
many seminarians who want to be saints through their priestly ministry.”

We also go to our Lady, Mother of God and our Mother, to tell her that we want to be faithful to our Lord’s commands, that we want to always be united to Christ, and that we want to be men and women who know how to turn their life into a constant apostolate. People are waiting for us. With Mary we can reach the furthest corner of this earth of ours, so thirsting for God’s mercy and love.

Praised be Jesus Christ!

Addresses

Address at the opening of the judicial phase, at the Tribunal of the Prelature, of the Cause of Canonization of Dora del Hoyo, Rome (June 18, 2012)

In the Post-Synodol Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini, the Holy Father Benedict XVI wrote: “The interpretation of Sacred Scripture would remain incomplete were it not to include listening to those who have truly lived the word of God: namely, the saints. Indeed, “viva lectio est vita bonorum” (St. Gregory the Great). 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.”[1]

Thus “every saint is like a ray of light streaming forth from the word of God.”[2] And among “the great currents of spirituality in the Church’s history,” among the “rays of light” that illuminate the lives of men and women, the Pope said that an important place is held by “Saint Josemaría Escrivá in his preaching of the universal call to holiness.”[3]
From October 2, 1928 on, the founder of Opus Dei taught that “Professional work—and the work of a housewife is one of the greatest of professions—is a witness to the worth of the human creature. It provides a chance to develop one’s own personality; it creates a bond of union with others; it constitutes a fund of resources; it is a way of helping in the improvement of the society we live in, and of promoting the progress of the whole human race. For a Christian, these grand views become even deeper and wider. For work, which Christ took up as something both redeemed and redeeming, becomes a means, a way of holiness, a specific task which sanctifies and can be sanctified.”[4]

Dora del Hoyo was the first woman called by God to follow St. Josemaría and strive to attain sanctity in and sanctify work in the home understood as a professional work in the middle of the world. On January 10, 2004, in the homily at her funeral Mass, I said that “Dora had great importance for Opus Dei.” I am more and more convinced of the fundamental role this woman has had and will have in the life of the Church and society.

Immediately after her death, clear signs began to be seen of the solidity and extent of the reputation for sanctity that this Servant of God enjoyed. From then on, I have received more than three hundred accounts ad futuram memoriam, sent spontaneously by persons—faithful of the Prelature and others—who had known Dora, to testify to and document the exemplariness of her Christian life.

Also from that first moment reports have arrived of graces and favors attributed to her intercession. More than three hundred of these have now been received, coming from 25 countries around the world.

This abundant documentation provides reliable evidence of the extent of the reputation for holiness and the fama signorum of the Servant of God Dora del Hoyo. It is a reputation “manifested spontaneously and not artificially produced,” and that is “stable, constant, spread among people worthy of credence, extended among a significant part of the people of God.”[5]

For these reasons, and since the required time has passed, by a decree dated February 11, 2010, I named Bishop José Luis Gutiérrez as Postulator
of the Cause of Canonization of Dora del Hoyo. On October 2, 2011, in accord with current legislation,[6] he presented me with the official petition to open the Cause.

On January 22, 2011, I designated two Censors,[7] to examine the writings of the Servant of God. On that same day, I also appointed three Peritos in re historica et archivistica,[8] who after careful research in the archives and the study of the existing documents have shown, beyond any reasonable doubt, the Christian exemplariness of her life here on earth.

In addition, on October 11, 2011 I issued an edict[9] inviting the faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei who had any news of use in relation to the cause, whether favorable or unfavorable, or writings of Dora del Hoyo or documents referring to her person and deeds, to make these known with complete freedom, in order to enable the investigation to go forward to a final result that will make the truth completely clear.

Finally I notified the Bishops’ Conference of Lazio and the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints of my desire to begin this Cause of Canonization, so that if there were any objection on their part they would inform me. The nihil obstat received from them are dated February 28 and May 31, 2012, respectively.

God called Dora del Hoyo to work in tasks similar to those carried out by our Lady in the home at Nazareth. I am sure that the Christian example of this woman, with her total fidelity, will help to foster the ideal of a spirit of service and the importance for society of the family, the authentic “domestic Church,” which she incarnated with her generous and cheerful daily work, following the teachings of St. Josemaría. I entrust the work of this Tribunal to the intercession of the Founder of Opus Dei, of whom the Servant of God was a most faithful daughter. Amen.


[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.


Inauguration of an exposition prepared by Romano Cosci at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome (March 20, 2012)

My dear friends:

First of all, I would like to thank Professor Romano Cosci and his son Michele for enabling many people, through the work of their hands, to get to know Christ more deeply, and also to know better his faithful disciple, St. Josemaría, whose only aim was to serve our Lord, to serve the Church, to serve all souls.

In the previous presentations the topic of the artists’ hands has already been mentioned. Personally, it makes me very happy that these artists—Romano and his son Michele—have managed to give expression to the love we can show God through art. And I would like to add something you may not know. The hands of St. Josemaría were very expressive, so much so that two cardinals (who have been in heaven now for many years) who knew St. Josemaría said that his hands made holiness visible. They didn’t say this just to be polite, since St. Josemaría wasn’t present and they were speaking to other people. But it was true. St. Josemaría’s hands, which each day with deep emotion became a throne for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, spoke of God through their gestures. They not only spoke of God, but also brought God closer to people.
I think, therefore, that hands can truly help us to understand that we can turn our life into prayer. Artists with their works of art raise up a splendid prayer. We can bring it about that our prayer and our deeds are a masterpiece, provided that we always seek to offer them to God.

Having reached the middle of Lent (we are now in the fourth week), the artist Romano Cosci offers this exposition with a very evocative title: “Walking Alongside Christ.” As we draw close to the goal of Easter, which marks the victory of our Lord over sin and death, the contemplation of the holy face of Jesus—a suffering or glorious face, but always joyful—impels us to hasten our steps on the final leg of the journey that will reach its destination on Easter Sunday.

For many centuries, in Old Testament times, it was rigorously forbidden to make any images or representations of the invisible God. The coming of God into the world, through the incarnation of the Word, radically changed this. An icon of Jesus in the various moments of his life on earth becomes in a certain sense, as Blessed John Paul II said, “like a sacrament of Christian life, since in it the mystery of the incarnation becomes present. In it the mystery of the Word made flesh is reflected in a way that is ever new, and man—the author and at the same time participant—is gladdened by the sight of the Invisible.”[1]

The artist expressly wished to include in the exposition some of his works related to St. Josemaría, the founder of Opus Dei and the inspirer of this university. The life of the saints is also a reflection of divine holiness; their representations help us to follow Jesus more surely, since they show us that holiness is truly accessible to everyone. This is exactly the message of St. Josemaría, who insisted that ordinary life is the setting for our encounter with God.

I would like to make a small parenthesis here. Romano Cosci came to know St. Josemaria so intimately, one could say, because he dealt on various occasions with the person who knew the founder of Opus Dei most deeply and lived most closely with him: Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, who liked to be considered the “shadow” of St. Josemaria. The shadow does not distort, but rather always accompanies the protagonist.
Bishop del Portillo went several times to see Romano Cosci while he was sculpting statues of St. Josemaría. He always returned very happy because—also thanks to his conversation with Michele—he saw in them, not only artists, but especially men who through their work were trying to pray and to be united to a person who was so close to God.

We give thanks to Bishop del Portillo (we are in a hall dedicated to him) because he was the architect of continuity in the succession to St. Josemaría, and he carried out the founder’s will with the diligence of an artist faithful to his creative inspiration.

Now I continue.

For centuries in the Eastern Catholic Church, the art of icons has been greatly developed. It is well known that the artists, before beginning their work, dedicated time to prayer and fasting, asking God for inspiration to represent his mysteries in a worthy way. The founder of Opus Dei was very aware of this venerable tradition. From the earliest times of the Work he encouraged painters, sculptors, and other artists, to facilitate the piety of the faithful through their art. And not only that: he exhorted them to pray before beginning their work. I recall an episode from the fifties of the last century, which I myself witnessed. St. Josemaría asked one of the Prelature’s faithful, an artist, to pray a Credo every day before beginning to sculpt a crucifix. Thus when the sculpture was finished, he said, it would be easier for him to make an act of sorrow and love while looking at our Lord on the Cross.

Benedict XVI has said the same thing. I ask you to pray every day for him, more each day, to help and assist him, realizing that he is watching over each one of us. The Pope remarked in an address to artists gathered in the Sistine Chapel: “An essential function of genuine beauty... is that it gives man a healthy ‘shock,’ it draws him out of himself, wrenches him away from resignation and from being content with the humdrum—it even makes him suffer, piercing him like a dart, but in so doing it ‘reawakens’ him, opening afresh the eyes of his heart and mind, giving him wings, carrying him aloft.”[2]

I think that this should be the deepest desire of the artist involved in religious iconography: to strengthen the faith of believers, to give wings to
their hope, to prompt them to love God with their whole being. Thus St. Josemaría’s ardent desire will be made a reality: “Bring the whole world, all the human values which attract you so strongly—friendship, the arts, science, philosophy, theology, sport, nature, culture, souls—bring all of this within that hope: the hope of Christ.”[3]

With this hope, I now have the joy of inaugurating the exposition of the works of Maestro Romano Cosci presented on the premises of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.


Torna ai contenuti

Articles and Interviews

Interview granted to La Nouvelle Expression, Douala, Cameroon (April 13, 2012)

“Opus Dei, an Expression of God’s Love for Mankind”

Bishop Echevarría, this is the third time you have come to Cameroon, following your trips in 1989 and 1998. What does our country represent particularly for you and the Work?

St. Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, felt a great love for Africa. I was given the gift of working for many years at his side, and I saw the great interest with which he followed Opus Dei’s first steps on this continent: first in Kenya, more than fifty years ago, and after that in Nigeria. His first successor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, was the one who
oversaw the beginning of Opus Dei in Cameroon, in 1988. In my opinion, the countries of Africa, and Cameroon in particular, are a great hope for the Church. Pope Benedict XVI has a lot of confidence in this continent and also a lot of confidence in your country, as we saw during his visit to Cameroon in 2009 and in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Africa Munus*.

**Since your last visit here, what changes have especially impressed you, speaking particularly about the Work?**

I see that the apostolic work has grown and I give thanks to God. Many people take part in the apostolic activities of Opus Dei, and not only in Yaoundé or in Douala, as was the case when I made my last visit, but also in other cities such as Edea, Buea, Bamenda…. People here are asking us to go to the East, to the North…. I’m also very happy to see that the faithful of the Work who have been born in other places have become as much Cameroonians as those who come from here, and that all are working in union with the bishops of the dioceses (that is the goal of Opus Dei’s apostolic work: to assist the dioceses), as I have been able to verify when meeting with Archbishop Victor Tonyé Bakot of Yaoundé,

**Unfortunately, many people don’t know very much about Opus Dei. Could you explain what the Work is to us?**

The message of Opus Dei is simply an expression of God’s love for all men and women, to help them live and spread the fullness of the Christian message. The specific focus of the message of Opus Dei consists in putting the accent on the sanctification of work and of all the ordinary circumstances in life.

For a consistent Christian, to fulfill God’s will, to be a saint, there is no need to abandon the world. Work, the ordinary occupations of each day (family life, our relationships with others, our life of work) become a means and an opportunity to live, sometimes in a heroic way, love for God and our neighbor.

**What message (or messages) are you carrying in your suitcase for us Cameroonians who are Christians, and especially for the members of Opus Dei?**

The same message that St. Josemaría preached right from 1928, when Opus Dei was founded. Each Christian, each faithful of Opus Dei (we
don't consider ourselves better than others) should struggle to be a consistent Christian in all the circumstances of one's life: in one's work, doing it well, never falling into the danger of corruption, which does such great damage to society here; in one's family, following the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth. And specifically, those who are preparing for marriage should pay close attention to what the Holy Father said when he was here in Cameroon about the need to respect one's future spouse, knowing that it is in marriage, between a man and a woman, where the mystery of human love is fully expressed. Cameroon is a marvelous country. I ask our Lady, Queen of Apostles, Queen of Cameroon, that Christ's message may continue to flourish here, thanks to the apostolate and testimony of all Catholics, closely united to the Holy Father and to the bishops.

Torna ai contenuti

"Discovering God in Work" Osservatore Romano (June 28, 2012)

On other anniversaries we have already made some remarks about the readings of the Mass of St Josemaría. Today I would like all of us to focus on the message passed on to us by the Founder of Opus Dei: the sanctification of ordinary life, just as Jesus Christ preached, and as it is presented in the passages from the Book of Genesis, St Paul’s Letter to the Romans, and the Gospel of today’s Mass.

Let’s look at the last part of the passage from Genesis that we have just heard. “The Lord God took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it” (Genesis 2:15). The invitation to work, to complement the work of creation, is the primordial vocation of every woman and every man. Rightly, then, did St Josemaría say that any honest work is “an indispensable means which God has entrusted to us here on this earth. It is meant to fill out our days and make us sharers in God’s creative power. It enables us to earn our living and, at the same time, to reap ‘the fruits of eternal life’” (St Josemaría, Friends of God, 57). In these
words, he invites us to discover God anew, both in important jobs and in our everyday tasks, which can become a solid base for our personal holiness.

This primordial dimension of work is the deepest reason why everyone has a right to a job that will enable them to earn their living and provide for their families. Unfortunately, many countries at present are suffering under the scourge of unemployment, which is causing so much worry and difficulty to countless families. We should pray for the civil authorities and those who hold public office, at every level, that, enlightened by divine Wisdom, they may discover and apply appropriate measures to bring their respective countries out of the present crisis, while fully respecting the dignity of the individual and the common good. Let us entrust this intention to God through the intercession of St Josemaría, the apostle of the sanctification of work.

We are children of God!

The second reading reminds us, in the words of St Paul, that we Christians are children of God, guided by the Holy Spirit. From this fact St Paul draws an immediate conclusion: “The spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again; it is the spirit of sons, and it makes us cry out: ‘Abba, Father!’” (Rom 8:15).

Paul is keenly aware of the fears and anguish of the society of his time, subject as it was to the many, mostly malignant, forces that characterized ancient paganism. As a result, explains Benedict XVI in one of his encyclicals, people lived in terror although they had many gods; “but their gods,” says the Pope, “had proved questionable, and no hope emerged from their contradictory myths. Notwithstanding their gods, they were ‘without God’ and consequently found themselves in a dark world, facing a dark future” (Benedict XVI, Spe Salvi, no. 2). Christians, however, as children of God, know that their future is filled with light. “It is not that they know the details of what awaits them,” the Holy Father continues, “but they know in general terms that their life will not end in emptiness. Only when the future is certain as a positive reality does it become possible to live the present as well” (Benedict XVI, Spe Salvi, no. 2).

We should often meditate on this fact: I am a son, a daughter, of God. In view of this gift we will naturally try to give a supernatural dimension to
everything we do. St Josemaría often used to say that when what is supernatural refers to human beings, it becomes something fully human. If we correspond with grace, we are in a position to have an ongoing conversation with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in every situation and all our activities.

This great marvel of our faith should give us the courage, my dearest sisters and brothers, to face up to life’s inevitable difficulties, including the current economic crisis and shortage of jobs, calmly, and trusting in God. Sustained by that conviction we can make our own the words of the responsorial psalm: “Praise the Lord, all you peoples!” in response to the promises God himself makes to us: “Ask, and I will bequeath you the nations, put the ends of the earth in your possession” (Ps 2:8). But we must pray with faith and perseverance that unemployment and the resulting sufferings may come to an end. In firm union with the Will of God, who guides all events for the good of those who believe in him, we can say: “Serve the Lord with awe and trembling; pay him your homage... Blessed are they who put their trust in God” (Ps 2:11-12).

In the Gospel we have once again contemplated the marvel of the miraculous catch of fish. From the human viewpoint the command given by Jesus — to cast the nets in broad daylight after a fruitless night’s work — seemed pointless and ridiculous. What was more, Peter and the others were fishermen by trade; they knew their job, and the darkest corners of Lake Tiberias held no secrets for them. Nevertheless, they obeyed: “If you say so, I will pay out the nets” (Lk 5:5). Don’t you marvel at Peter’s faith? We too need faith in order to face life’s ups and downs, especially the ones that ask us for a generous response to God’s plans.

The Year of Faith

In a few months’ time, in October, we will begin the Year of Faith announced by the Pope. How are we preparing for it? Do we make explicit acts of the virtue of faith before receiving the Sacraments of Confession or Holy Communion? Do we turn to God in prayer, with faith, when facing the manifold duties of our ordinary life of work? Are we trying to bring the people we love, our friends, fellow-students and coworkers, closer to God?
Let’s not forget — because it’s true — that God wants to use every single one of us to bring others to know him, talk to him and love him.

Look and see how faith opens all doors wide and reveals new horizons where the sky had seemed dark. This is the lesson of this Gospel passage. Obeying our Lord’s command, Peter and his companions threw out their nets. Jesus Christ is inviting us too to sanctify ourselves in all of life’s ordinary circumstances, and to throw out the nets of apostolate into the sea of the world.

"Happy Birthday, Holy Father!" for Pope Benedict XVI's 85th Birthday, Famiglia Cristiana, Italy (March 28, 2012)

The birthday of one’s father is always a joyful occasion for the children. This is what we who are the Church’s sons and daughters now experience with the birthday of Benedict XVI. I recall with emotion the day of his election, seven years ago, when he first addressed the expectant crowd in St. Peter’s square, and referred to himself as a “simple and humble worker in the Lord’s vineyard.”

This is how the Pope is carrying out his Petrine ministry, with the serenity of one who abandons himself completely in God’s hands. It is an example for all of us, and we feel encouraged by this Father of ours, humble and close to each one of us, to build up the Church as the place of unity and love described by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles.

Omnis cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam, “all with Peter to Jesus through Mary,” St. Josemaria so often prayed. The Pope, the successor of Peter, is always the visible source and foundation of the Church’s unity. We know that, united to him, we find ourselves united and close to Jesus, our Savior. Ours is a unity of hearts with a special joy, above all now that we celebrate the birthday of the Pope, a few days before the anniversary of his election as Roman Pontiff.
The Holy Father’s untiring dedication in the service of the Church “moves” us in the most literal sense of the word: it moves our affections and also our will to be more faithful to Benedict XVI. He has dedicated his whole life to God: right from his youth, when he sensed God’s call to the priesthood; and later, over the years, contributing with his intellectual gifts to a deeper theological grasp of the Church’s doctrine and with his activity as an apostle and pastor to stirring up the faith in the hearts of many people. Now, as Pontiff, he continues with this mission, grounding his ministry in the celebration of the Eucharist and in prayer, realizing that only with Christ’s grace can the Church carry out the task our Lord has entrusted to her.

Congratulations, Holy Father! We love you deeply, with a filial affection, and we ask God to grant you abundant graces, and to fill your ministry with fruits of sanctity for the Church and with peace for civil society.

Bishop Javier Echevarría
Prelate of Opus Dei.

Torna ai contenuti
ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA
St. Josemaría parish in Madrid is now five years old

The parish of St. Josemaría Escrivá, in Aravaca, Madrid, is now five years old. Established in June 2007, its first steps were assisted by three institutions—a hospital and two homes for the elderly—that provided space for celebrating Mass and other pastoral needs.

On January 7, 2009, work began on a provisional church, with a capacity for about three hundred people. Constructed with the help of many families and institutions, this site will be used for the next few years, while the necessary resources are gathered to build the definitive church. It was inaugurated on May 17, 2009, the anniversary of the beatification of the founder of Opus Dei.

The sanctuary is presided over by a reredos in which each scene is inspired by an aspiration or phrase from the Scripture in which St. Josemaría saw summarized the spirit and mission God had entrusted to him. This provisional building has two confessional, and whenever the church is open a priest is available to administer the sacrament of forgiveness.

Besides Holy Mass and the administration of the other sacraments, the parish offers many other activities: catechesis for children, young people and adults; courses of family development; groups of social volunteers; and an “employment market” that so far has obtained positions for seventy people. Every Thursday after the 8:30 evening Mass, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed for adoration.

The Prelate of Opus Dei visited the parish on July 5, 2009, taking advantage of one of his brief trips to Madrid.

Other New Publications

Works of St. Josemaría
In the first half of 1912, the first Latvian edition of *Christ Is Passing By* was published in Riga. In Mexico two new printings of *The Way* (the 55th and 56th Mexican printings) were published. The 11th Japanese printing of *The Way* has also been published (with a new translation, based on notes from the critical-historical edition of the book), the 85th Spanish printing, the 16th in Polish, the 7th Peruvian, the 4th in traditional Chinese and the 2nd in Ukrainian (the first edition actually printed in Ukraine since the earlier one had been printed in Germany). In Italy the 12th edition of the trilogy *The Way, Furrow, and The Forge* has also been printed.

The 5th Costa Rican and the 27th Mexican printings of *Holy Rosary* were published., The 1st Colombian and the 3rd Costa Rican editions of *Via Crucis* were printed, as well as an Italian version for electronic devices. Along the same lines, digital editions of the works of St. Josemaría in Spanish have been available for several months from Apple and Amazon.

For the Year of Faith, in Mexico a large printing has been made of the homily “Life of Faith,” included in the book *Friends of God*. By the end of June more than 10,000 copies had already been distributed; its printing and distribution will continue until the end of the Year of Faith in November of 2013.

**Works about St. Josemaría**

*Ciudad Nuevo* has published, for distribution throughout all of Latin America, the book *15 Days with Josemaría Escrivá* by Guillaume Derville. This edition includes a prologue by journalist Jorge Rouillon entitled “Josemaría Escrivá: A Latin-American Saint.”

In the United Kingdom, the Catholic Truth Society published *A Man Who Knew How to Forgive*, by Francesc Faus, a translation of the Brazilian original. Brazil, in its turn, has sent to the bookstores a translation of the biography of St. Josemaría written by Michele Dolz.

In Spain the book *366 Quotes from St. Josemaría Escrivá* (Edibesa) was published, an anthology of texts selected by Eleuterio Fernandez Guzmán. Also the third printing of Vol. I of *Vida Cotidiana y Santidad en la
enseñanza of san Josemaría, by Ernst Burkhart and Javier López, has been published.


The Saint Josemaría Institute has prepared a guide about the movie There Be Dragons, directed by Roland Joffé. The movie, which recreates some aspects of St. Josemaría’s life within the framework of a fictional narrative, is being distributed as a DVD after its run in movie houses. The aim of the guide is to offer useful information for debate sessions and movie clubs. It can be downloaded from the website of the Saint Josemaría Institute: www.stJosemaría.org.

In Indonesia the first edition of Seirama Langkah Tuhan. Biografi Santo Josemarí Escrivá (Obor), has been published. This is the Indonesian translation of At God’s Pace, a biography of St. Josemaría written by François Gondrand.

In Peru, the Panamericana TV television network has transmitted the documentary Qué bien se está en el Perú, on devotion to the founder of Opus Dei in that country. The video, made by Dígito Identidad, collects testimonies of people from various cities who speak about favors received through St. Josemaría’s intercession. The favors are quite varied in scope: extraordinary cures, help in regard to work, in the family, in financial matters, etc.

Torna ai contenuti

Devotion throughout the world

Andorra celebrates the 75th anniversary of the passage of a saint

The founder of Opus Dei passed through Andorra from December 2 to 10,1937, after a number of days of tense marches through forests and
mountains. The event has been documented by Alfred Llahi and Jordi Piferrer, who in 2010 published *Andorra: tierra de acogida*, a day-to-day reconstruction of the stay by St. Josemaría and his companions in the principality: “The message of St. Josemaría harmonizes perfectly with the principality of Andorra,” says Llahi, “since Andorra is a symbol of peace, freedom and forgiveness.”

On June 30, in Prats de Gastó, a public gathering took place sponsored by the Association of Friends of the Pallerols Pathway from Rialb to Andorra (Sant Julià de Lòria). The central ceremony was a Mass in honor of St. Josemaría presided over by the Archbishop of Seu d’Urgell and Co-Prince of Andorra, Most Rev. Joan Enric Vives. This act inaugurated the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the stay of the founder of Opus Dei in the small Pyrenean state.

**A monstrance for the parish with the parishioners’ jewelry**

On June 1, the Vicar of the delegation of Opus Dei in Valencia celebrated Holy Mass in the parish of St. Josemaría Escrivá in that city and blessed a new monstrance. The monstrance was crafted by a silversmith from Seville using jewels donated during the last five years by the parishioners themselves. The 32-inch high monstrance will be used at solemn celebrations.

**The prayer card of St. Josemaría in Aranés**

The valley of Arán, in the far northwest Catalanian Pyrenees, is the only Spanish Pyrenean valley that flows into the Atlantic. There the river Garonne is born, which traverses southern France and empties into the Atlantic at Bordeaux. This valley has a strong personality and even its own language: Aranés. The prayer card of St. Josemaría has just been printed for the first time in this language, translated by Frederic Vergés. The “val d’Aran,” as it is known in its own language, has more than 10,000 inhabitants. The principal source of income is tourism, which centers on mountain sports, particularly skiing, and the area’s artistic and scenic charms. Monthly days of recollection and other activities of Christian formation organized by people of Opus Dei have been held there for a number of years.
Exposition of Romano Cosci’s works

The artist Romano Cosci, 73 years-old, works out of a studio in Tuscany, Italy. He has painted and produced sculptures of St. Josemaría for churches in various countries. His best-known sculpture of the founder of Opus Dei is the 16-foot tall statue installed in 2005 in a niche on the exterior wall of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. His exposition *In cammino con Cristo: l’arte come visione della fede*, held at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome from March 20 to 30, included a section dedicated to St. Josemaría, a frequent subject of his work. In connection with the exposition, Cosci held a meeting with students and professors, where he responded to their questions and displayed his rapid sketching techniques. He also presented the university with a statue of our Lady that he sculpted, which has been installed in the Alvaro del Portillo Hall. The Prelate of Opus Dei, Chancellor of the University, inaugurated the exposition with an address included in this issue, and also blessed the statue of our Lady.

A Plaza in Calabria

In Gizzeria, an Italian town in the province of Catanzaro, Calabria, a plaza has been dedicated to St. Josemaría Escrivá. The Calabrian region, in the far south of the country at the toe of the “boot,” has a deeply-rooted devotion to the founder of Opus Dei. Many localities have given his name to streets or plazas, and even to schools, health centers, etc.

A statue in the São Paulo cathedral

A bronze statue of St. Josemaría has been installed in a side chapel of the Metropolitan Cathedral of São Paulo, Brazil. The ceremony of blessing and installation took place on June 23, following a Mass in honor of the founder of Opus Dei. Auxiliary Bishop Milton Kenan, of São Paulo, celebrated the Mass and blessed the statue.

Torna ai contenuti

Exchange of Letters with Cardinal José María Bueno Monreal
The sixth volume of *Studia et Documenta*, published by the Saint Josemaría Historical Institute in Rome, contains, among many other items, letters documenting the friendship between St. Josemaría and Cardinal José María Bueno Monreal. Their long and friendly relationship (1939-1975) is shown in the exchange of letters presented here, accompanied by critical annotations and preceded by a extensive introduction by Professor Santiago Martinez Sanchez, specialist in contemporary history.

In a separate article, historian Fr. Fernando Crovetto offers another previously unpublished document: the report by Juan Jimenez Vargas on the beginning of the work of St. Raphael (1933-1935), that is, the activities of Christian formation for young people that St. Josemaría carried out from as early as the years before the war in Spain.

The first part of this issue is dedicated monographically to the relationship between the founder of Opus Dei and four intellectuals: José María Albareda, Rafael Calvo Serer, Bishop José López Ortiz, and Msgr. Willy Onclin. The first of these, a faithful of Opus Dei, was a protagonist in Spanish scientific life for almost thirty years, both for his research work in the field of soil science, and for his work as Secretary of the National Spanish Research Council from its creation in 1939 until 1966. In 1960 he was ordained as a priest. Pablo Pérez López, professor of contemporary history, recalls the first years of his contact with St. Josemaría, from 1935 to 1939, and the especially difficult moments when they lived in the same place, fleeing from religious persecution during the Spanish Civil War.

In that same issue, Onésimo Diaz, specialist in twentieth century cultural and political history, relates the first contacts of St. Josemaría with Rafael Calvo Serer, professor of history and a well-known journalist, whose political activism led to a confrontation with the Franco regime that resulted in the closing of the newspaper *Madrid*, of which he was editor. Calvo Serer was also a member of Opus Dei, and (like Albareda) was inspired by St. Josemaría's teachings to carry out, with complete freedom and a deep Christian spirit, an incisive cultural and political activity.

Fr. José Carlos Martín de la Hoz, theologian and historian, discusses the figure of Bishop López Ortiz, an historian of law as well as a bishop.
His ties with Josemaría Escrivá lasted more than fifty years, and were marked by a deep friendship.

The fourth intellectual was the Belgian canonist, Willy Onclin. Father Jean-Pierre Schouppe, a professor of canon law, sketches his friendship with the founder of Opus Dei since their meeting during the years of the Second Vatican Council. Onclin, a professor at the Louvaine, was one of the principal authors of the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

The section Estudios y Notas opens with an article by historian Luis Cano that summarizes the efforts of the founder of Opus Dei in Rome in the summer of 1946, during his first trip to the Eternal City. That first Roman stay was also his first contact with two of the principal protagonists in the history of the Church in the twentieth century: Pope Pius XII and one of his closest collaborators, Archbishop Giovanni Battista Montini, the future Pope Paul VI.

The next article, written by the historian Mercedes Montero, describes the situation of women in Spanish universities between 1910 and 1936, in the context of point 946 of The Way. Montero has discovered the author of a phrase St. Josemaría employs in this point and documents the hopeful and realistic view that already in those years the founder of Opus Dei had about the important mission of women in university life.

The historian Jaume Aurell, in a long study, confronts a prevailing “myth” about Opus Dei’s role in Franco Spain, and contrasts the reality of the Work with its public image in certain quarters. Called a “dangerous novelty” or “heresy” by one sector of postwar Catholicism, it came to be viewed as a conservative and even reactionary organization. Aurell looks at the elements that made up this negative “black legend” about Opus Dei, and the mechanisms that govern the formation of these simplified views of persons and institutions.

This volume also offers up-to-date news about Opus Dei and its founder and a bibliographic section, with a general bibliography about Bishop Alvaro del Portillo.
Romanian website for St. Josemaría

The St. Josemaría website has now been put online in a new language: Rumanian. The Rumanian language, like others of southern Europe, is derived directly from Latin, despite the fact that Rumania is separated from the other Romance language communities by Slavic-speaking countries. There are 21.5 million Rumanians although many of them live outside the country. Most Rumanians (86%) belong to the Orthodox Church, but there are also a significant number of Catholics and Protestants. The country has some ten million internet users. Thanks to this website, many of them, as well as other Rumanian-speaking internet users, such as those in the Moldavian Republic and other countries, will be able to access the writings, teachings, and news related to St. Josemaría.

Eucharistic celebrations on the dies natalis of St. Josemaría Escrivá

To facilitate participation in the Masses celebrated throughout the world for June 26, the liturgical commemoration of St. Josemaría, an interactive map was placed on the www.josemariaescriva.info website, featuring all the cities in which a Mass would be celebrated in honor of St. Josemaría.

Among these Eucharistic celebrations, we will mention here only the Mass that was presided over by José Luis Mumbiela, bishop of the diocese of the Most Blessed Trinity in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Concelebrating with him was Rev. Manuel López-Barajas, Regional Vicar of the Prelature of Opus Dei in Kazakhstan, with a large number of people in attendance.

Critical-Historical Edition of Conversations
On June 26 the Critical-Historical edition of Conversations with St. Josemaría Escrivá, was published in Spanish, with 574 pages. This is the third volume of the complete works of St. Josemaría, published by Rialp. The authors are José Luis Illanes and Alfredo Méndiz.

José Luis Illanes is the director of the St. Josemaría Escrivá Historical Institute, and a doctor in law and theology. He has been a professor at the University of Navarra, at the School of Theology of Northern Spain, and at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome. He is also a member of the Pontifical Theological Academy of Rome and of other academic associations.

Alfredo Méndiz is a doctor in history and assistant director of the St. Josemaría Escrivá Historical Institute. He is the author of numerous articles on the history of the Church.

St. Josemaría and Guatemala

To commemorate the 110th anniversary of St. Josemaría’s birth, a traveling exposition featuring his life and work was held in Guatemala. The exposition, entitled “St. Josemaría — Path through Guatemala,” includes a series of panels and pictures—and some items of personal use—that give graphic testimony to the life of the saint and his relationship with Guatemalans, as well as a video with unpublished footage taken during his stay in Guatemala in 1975. It also includes a brief presentation of some corporate apostolic works of Opus Dei in Guatemala, as well as the life of the Servant of God, Dr. Ernesto Cofiño Ubico, a Guatemalan doctor and supernumerary member of the Prelature who died in 1991, and whose process of Canonization has been opened.

It was inaugurated on February 18 in the Exposition Hall of the National Palace of Culture, in Guatemala City. The inaugural ceremony was presided over by Archbishop Oscar Julio Vian, of Guatemala City, and by the Regional Vicar of Opus Dei, Msgr. Francis Wurmser. This first exposition was open for four days, coinciding with the days on which the
founder of Opus Dei was in Guatemala in 1975. More than 5,000 people visited it.

Since then the exposition has been held in various places. In March and April it was shown in two commercial centers of Guatemala City, and in May it moved to the city of Escuintla, where its opening was presided over by the bishop of the diocese, Most Rev. Victor Hugo Palma.

Over 10,000 people have now seen the exposition and come to know St. Josemaria and his message better. During the second half of 2012, there are plans to bring the exposition to other cities in the country’s interior.

Torna ai contenuti
News
Publications of Interest

Sur les ailes de l’aurore. Pureté, mariage et célibat apostolique (editorial Lethielleux / Parle et Silence, Paris). In this essay, Msgr. Guillaume Derville offers a meditation on St. Josemaría’s positive and demanding teaching on chastity.

Translations

Viver a Missa, a Portuguese translation of the book by Bishop Javier Echevarría on the Holy Mass, has been published by Lucerna (Cascais).

A translation into Spanish of the biography of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, entitled Missión Cumplida, by Hugo de Azeveda, has been published by Palabra in Madrid.

In Germany Adamas Verlag of Cologne has published a translation of the book Ordinary Work, Extraordinary Grace by Scott Hahn under the title Gewöhnliche Alltag, Aussergewöhnliche Gnade.

Biographies of faithful of Opus Dei

Salvador Bernal has written a new book about the Venerable Alvaro del Portillo entitled Álvaro del Portillo: una semblanza personal, which has been published by Eunsa, Pamplona.

The Italian publisher Ares has brought out a biography of Montse Grases written by Msgr. Flavio Capucci, postulator of the servant of God's cause of canonization, as well as of those of St. Josemaría and of the Venerable Alvaro del Portillo, and director of this bulletin. The book is entitled Sono così felice: Montserrat Grases una ragazza verso gli altari.

In Mexico, in the city of Guadalajara, Jalisco, a biography has been written about Arturo Alvarez Ramírez, an Associate of Opus Dei, by Javier Galindo Michel.

A web page on personal prelatures

During this first half of 2012 a group of canonists has placed on the web a site in Spanish that offers abundant documentation about the organization of the Church in personal circumscriptions such as personal prelatures. In the bibliography that this web page offers one can find many
documents and articles referring to the prelature of Opus Dei. The web address is www.prelaturaspersonales.org.

Entitled Prelatures, ordinariates and other personal circumscriptions, the new site answers questions about these structures of the Church’s hierarchical organization, and tries to clarify exactly what they mean. The coordinator of the page is the canonist José Antonio Araña; regular collaborators include Santiago Álvarez, Miguel Ángel Ortiz, and Paul Hayward.

A documentary on Opus Dei in Chile: 7 stories

On Good Friday at midday, the Megavision channel broadcast the documentary Opus Dei in Chile: 7 Stories. The reportage followed seven Chileans who try to seek God in their daily life by living the spirit of Opus Dei. Each of the protagonists allowed the camera to accompany them for several days to show their family life, their working day, and how the message of St. Josemaría helps them to live their Christian life. The documentary, which reflects the variety of faithful in the Prelature and the development of the apostolic work in the country, required more than 40 hours of filming.

Patricio, a mining engineer, and his wife Carmen Gloria, prayed for years to find God. Enrique is a well-known decorator who tries to sanctify the world of art. Clarissa contributes to the support and education of her family by cooking in a high school. Lilian, a mathematics teacher, converted at the age of 47, when she discovered she was a daughter of God and exchanged the rebelliousness of “Che Guevara” for that of St. Josemaría.

Other stories included in this documentary produced by Alejandro Schlesinger are those of Fr. Sandro, parish priest in the community of Angol; Anastasia, a lawyer who tells how our Lord asked her for the complete dedication of her life; and Alvaro, a young corporate finance analyst and university professor.
Beginning of the investigative phase of the Cause of Canonization of Dora del Hoyo

On June 18, Bishop Javier Echevarría presided in Rome at the session opening the investigative phase of the canonical process on the life and virtues of Dora del Hoyo. The ceremony took place on the premises of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.

Dora del Hoyo was born in Boca de Huergano (León, Spain), in 1914. After completing elementary school, she began working as a domestic employee, work that she carried out with professionalism and passion up until a few weeks before her death on January 10, 2004.

In 1939 she moved to Madrid. After working in the homes of various families, in 1944 she began to exercise her profession in La Moncloa, the university residence where she met St. Josemaría. In March 1946 she asked for admission to Opus Dei. In December of that year she moved to Rome.

From the time of her death up until the present, more than three hundred people—most of them women who practiced the same profession as she did—have written testimonies detailing how Dora’s Christian example has helped them in their own lives. In addition, written testimonies of more than 450 favors from God ascribed to her intercession have been received.

Having fulfilled the required provisions of canon law and verified the solidity of the evidence on the exemplary nature of Dora’s Christian life, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, has decided to begin the juridical investigation of her life and virtues, for which he has formed a tribunal. The decree of appointment of the tribunal can be found in this issue of Romana, as well as the address opening this procedural stage.

Every cause of canonization is meant to assist the Christian life of the faithful. This cause allows one to understand better someone who made of her daily life a continuous act of self-giving to God, in joyful service in household tasks.

Dora decided to dedicate her life to work that she considered fundamental for the Church, the family, society, and for every person. She
was convinced that in order to attain “a happy world,” one has to begin by creating a serene home, putting care into tasks that contribute decisively to creating an environment of harmony and good humor.

Her colleagues give testimony to the professional prestige she enjoyed. Keep pots and pans clean or serving at table were for her an opportunity to love. She strove to find God in the apparently trifling, but truly heroic, offering of her work that was well-done, with affection, one day after another, right up to the end of her life. The written recollections of Dora’s life also emphasize her good taste and elegance.

Torna ai contenuti

Article by Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz in Palabra: “The lay faithful and the new evangelization”

The new evangelization, urged by John Paul II and Benedict XVI, points to the very mission of the Church, which can be summed up precisely as the traditio Evangelii, the transmission of the Gospel. Here the word “Gospel” is understood not only in its intellectual content, but in its broad Pauline meaning of “the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith” (Rom 1:16). The new evangelization of countries and environments already evangelized in the past, but now in great measure secularized, presents particular demands, necessarily connected to the Church’s permanent salvific mission. At the same time, the complex reality in which we live requires new pastoral and apostolic initiatives, adequate to the challenges presented by modernity and post-modernity.

The laity’s participation in evangelization

One of the dimensions of the royal priesthood of the faithful, to which St. Peter refers (see 1 Pet 2:4-10), is the prophetic function: “that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (Ibid.). This “declaring” is what transmitting the Gospel means. The laity’s participation in the Church’s mission does not mean primarily or principally that they are to share in the functions of the sacred
ministers, although this is possible and, at times, useful. Furthermore, the ministers themselves do not encompass the entire mission, but they too participate in it. Both share the weight and honor of the Church’s whole mission: the *traditio Evangelii*. But each carries it out partially, according to their proper function in the Church.

What is specific to the laity’s participation in the task of evangelization was expressed as follows by Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium*, 35: “Christ, the great Prophet, who proclaimed the Kingdom of his Father both by the testimony of his life and the power of his words, continually fulfills his prophetic office until the complete manifestation of glory. He does this not only through the hierarchy who teach in his name and with his authority, but also through the laity whom he made his witnesses and to whom he gave understanding of the faith (*sensus fidei*) and an attractiveness in speech so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life.” The evangelizing capacity and responsibility (the *munus propheticum*) of the lay faithful is not delegated by the hierarchy, but comes directly from Jesus Christ, through Baptism and Confirmation.

The understanding of the faith (*sensus fidei*), which *Lumen Gentium* points to as the immediate origin of the exercise of the lay faithful’s prophetic function, is the capacity conferred on believers through theological faith and the gifts of the Holy Spirit to assent to revealed truths, to discern with ease what is in conformity or not in conformity with that revelation, to grasp its deepest implications (not through theological reflection but spontaneously, by a kind of connaturality), and to apply the faith to one’s life. The grounding of the laity’s prophetic function in the *sensus fidei* also highlights the fact that this is not a participation in the magisterial mission proper to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but a direct participation in the prophetic *virtus* of Jesus Christ, at the same time as its exercise is carried out “under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority” (*Lumen Gentium*, 12).

The “attractiveness in speech” to which *Lumen Gentium* also refers, is not a matter only or principally of the “attractiveness” of a pleasant or humanly convincing speech, but above all of the assistance of the Holy Spirit who, without conferring any official authority on the evangelizing word of the laity, makes it as a vehicle of the Word of God and, as such,
not only a transmitter of ideas, but an efficacious force in transmitting the faith that saves.

The evangelizing task’s essential dependence on faith and the help of the Holy Spirit brings us to the indispensable service that only the ministers of the Church can and should provide to the laity, through preaching the Word of God with Christ’s authority, in its various forms, and the celebration of the sacraments. For the Church is a priestly people organically structured, which carries out its mission in the world with a distinction of functions that are at the same time interdependent.

*In daily family and social life*

As we saw in the words cited above from *Lumen Gentium*, it is in the context of their daily life that the lay faithful exercise their specific evangelizing role. In the words of one who, according to John Paul II, was a precursor of Vatican II in his teaching on the laity, “The layman’s specific role in the mission of the Church is precisely that of sanctifying secular reality, the temporal order, the world, *ab intra*, in an immediate and direct way” (St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Conversations*, no. 9).

The laity’s prophetic function, as well as that of the pastors, is a participation in the *munus propheticum Christi*, and Christ is the Revealer and the Revelation of God, not only through his words but also through all of his works. Therefore, and not only as a matter of human effectiveness, evangelization has to be carried out with the witness of one’s life and with one’s word, and the evangelizing mission of the laity has its own characteristics—and a special efficacy—in the fact of being carried out within secular realities.

In ordinary life, with its varied family, professional and social relationships, the lay faithful have ample scope to announce the Gospel through their life and words, contributing—each in the measure of his or her possibilities—to orienting social and professional institutions, the means of communication, etc., with the spirit of Christ. Especially important here is the transmission of the Gospel from person to person, in a dialogue of sincere friendship, like leaven in a mass of dough: acting as “a leaven in the world” (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 2).

This way of transmitting the Gospel is of particular efficacy, also
because it responds to an important anthropological reality: interpersonal
dialogue, whereby one seeks to transmit to another person a good that one
has received. This apostolic dialogue arises naturally when there is sincere
friendship. This is not a matter of instrumentalizing friendship, but of
helping one’s friends share in the great good of faith in Christ. As Benedict
XVI said in his homily at the solemn beginning of his pontificate, “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” (April 24, 2005).

The transmission of the Gospel always requires—and in a special way
in interpersonal dialogue—respect for the intimacy and freedom of
everyone, a respect that is a demand of justice and charity. The contrary,
trying to impose one’s own convictions by trickery or violence, is obviously
opposed to the spirit of the Gospel. That type of proselytism—one that
fails to respect freedom—is completely unacceptable. Nevertheless,
proselytism in its original and proper meaning is not only something good,
but a necessary demand of the evangelizing mission that Jesus entrusted to
his disciples. In fact, for Christians, the word “proselytism” has meant and
frequently means missionary activity. Even in civil contexts—juridical and
political—proselytism is viewed positively as an intrinsic component of
religious freedom.

*Facing the challenges of de-Christianized societies*

The new evangelization in countries of ancient Christian tradition
faces grave, complex and varied challenges. The most radical one is the
spread of atheism in its various forms and religious indifference, which are
affecting the faith of not a few of the baptized, producing in them at least a
loss of the meaning that the existence of God should have in their lives.
There are many possible ways to confront this challenge, but the essential
thing is that each one understands and teaches others that the Gospel is
not only or primarily a collection of truths and moral norms. It is not
merely a system of thought and of conduct. The Gospel is, above all, Jesus
Christ himself (see 1 Cor 1:24).

The existence of God can be known, although with difficulty, by
human reason alone, and in the new evangelization it is useful to
sometimes confront, in one way or another, the great philosophical question of God's existence. Nevertheless, the key thing is to make known Jesus Christ who died and arose, showing—at a level that is possible and adequate in each case—the historical truth of his Resurrection, which is the most decisive “demonstration” of God’s existence.

Without trying to list all the challenges, theoretical and practical, confronted by the new evangelization (not only by the laity, of course, but by the whole Church), one of the most radical ones is the relativistic mentality in its multiple expressions. In the task of evangelization it is always good to begin with the shared aspects upon which we can establish a sincere dialogue with others. This is the case, for example, of the widespread awareness of human rights. It is not difficult to make people see that, if one fails to recognize absolute values (and ultimately God), not even the concept of human rights makes sense. Law itself, in all its expressions, will be nothing but—according to the description given by Karl Marx—“a decorative apparatus of power.”

To confront these and other challenges, a solid doctrinal formation is needed; but this is not enough. Evangelization, and personal apostolate in general, requires that word and dialogue be united to the testimony of a consistent Christian life. Therefore, building on the foundation of Baptism and the strength of Confirmation, an intense sacramental life is needed (the Eucharist, Penance); and also prayer, the indispensable condition for personal identification with Christ, which will awaken in the laity their own apostolic responsibility. Thus they will become aware, as Benedict XVI has recently written, that “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)” (Porta Fidei, no. 7).

—Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Vicar General of Opus Dei,
Vice Chancellor of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross,
Consultor to the Congregation for the Clergy and the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization
The Year of Faith at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

On March 12 and 13, the School of Theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross organized an international conference on “Communicating the Faith,” considered from the specific perspective of the relationship between word and witness. This meeting was intended to contribute to preparation for the Year of Faith, as well as for the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization.

In the morning sessions, questions of anthropology, history, exegesis, fundamental and pastoral theology were considered. In the afternoons, round tables were held to exchange experiences on ways to live one’s “witness” to Christian life in various environments. On the first day, after an intervention by Archbishop Salvatore Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization, the round table considered Christian witness in the field of art. On the following day it dealt with Christian witness in the political arena. Prominent figures from Italian public life took part in both discussions.

In addition, and also in preparation for the Year of Faith, the School of Theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross organized an international congress for the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council. It took place on May 3 and 4 and was presided over by Cardinal Reinhard Marx, Archbishop of Munich, with the title “The permanent value of a reform for the new evangelization.” A hundred specialists and researchers from various universities took part, who offered a reading of the Second Vatican Council according to “the hermeneutic of reform, of renewal within the continuity of the one Church,” to which Benedict XVI referred in his discourse to the Roman Curia on December 22, 2005.

The speakers, some twenty in total, considered the history of the redaction of each Council document and their reception in the post-Conciliar period. Speakers included the liturgist Helmut Hoping from the
University of Freiburg, who spoke on the Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium; Msgr. David M. Jager, OFM from the Pontifical Antonian University, who commented on the Declaration Nostra Aetate; Prof. Manfred Spieker from the University of Osnabrück, who analyzed the Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes; and Prof. Gerardo del Pozo from the Ecclesiastical University of St. Damasus, Madrid, who spoke about the Declaration Dignitatis Humanae. Also speaking were Professor Ramon Villar, from the University of Navarra; Prof. José Maria La Porte, Dean of the School of Institutional Communication at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, and Miguel De Salis, from the same university. Professor Johannes Grohe, from the organizing committee of the Congress, entitled his presentation “The ecumenical nature of the Second Vatican Council in the context of the ecumenical councils.”

Some Diocesan Assignments Received by Priests of the Prelature

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

Promulgation of the Decree on the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Alvaro del Portillo

On June 28, the Holy Father Benedict XVI authorized the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints to promulgate decrees relating to 16 causes of canonizations. Among them was the decree on the heroic virtues of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo (1914-1994), Prelate of Opus Dei. As a result, Bishop del Portillo received the title of Venerable.
On April 2, 2009, the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints had decreed the validity of the informative processes, and on June 12 of that same year had named, as relator of the *positio*, Father Cristoforo Bove, OFM Conv., who presented it on February 19, 2010. This comprised three volumes (*Informatio* on the virtues, *Summarium* and *Biographia documentata*), with a total of 2,530 pages.

On February 10, 2012, the special Congress of theological consultors of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints gave a unanimous positive response to the question about the heroic exercise of the virtues by the Servant of God Bishop Álvaro del Portillo.

Upon learning the news, announced by the press office of the Holy See, Bishop Echevarría said:

“The declaration of the heroic virtues of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo is a motive of thanksgiving to God: gratitude for this exemplary pastor who loved our Lord and his Church and those around him, and who prayed for all mankind. He strove at every moment to fulfill faithfully God’s will.

“Don Alvaro is remembered by so many men and women as a person, a priest of peace and loyalty to his commitment of love for God; he was closely united to the Church and the Roman Pontiff. He served St. Josemaría Escrivá with joy and total generosity; his brothers and sisters—later his sons and daughters—in Opus Dei; his relatives; friends and colleagues. With his preaching he helped hundreds of thousands of people from many different countries to which he made pastoral trips to find happiness in faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

“I also have received abundant testimony to the fact that many people go to him all over the world to ask for help for their personal needs, and those of their family, work situation and friends. All unanimously attest that he radiated peace, joy, simplicity, a Christian spirit, and apostolic outlook.”

Torna ai contenuti

**New Centers of the Prelature**
Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei has erected a center dependent on the General Council in Rome.

The Vicar of Opus Dei for the delegation of Seville has erected a center of the Prelature in Almodóvar del Río, Córdoba, Spain.

UNIV Audience with the Pope

On April 4, Benedict XVI received the university students in Rome who were taking part in the UNIV 2012 Forum, during a general audience with thousands of other pilgrims.

The Pope reminded them of St. Josemaría’s words: “Everything that is done out of Love acquires greatness and beauty” (The Way, no. 429). And he added: “My dear friends, you have come to Rome to live an experience of faith during Holy Week, an experience of friendship and spiritual enrichment. I invite you to dedicate these days to deepening your knowledge of Jesus, responding to the call of love that he is addressing to each one of you.”

At the conclusion of the audience, Professor Stefan Mückl from the University of Freiburg, president of UNIV 2012, gave the Holy Father a letter in which the students thanked him for his recent pastoral trip to Mexico and Cuba.

“Hundreds of thousands of young people have come to be with you,” the text of the letter reads, “and one could say that we are surprised to realize that we are not just a few, that we can count on the help of many of our own age and with the support of this common father of ours who is the Pope. With you, we are beginning to prepare ourselves spiritually for the coming Latin American rendezvous: World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro.”

The UNIV Forum gathers thousands of university students from all over the world each year in Rome. The 2012 gathering was the 45th in the series, and had as its topic “The power of beauty.” Speakers included the musician Ennio Morricone, the Japanese artist Etsuro Sotoo, who has been working for years on finishing the Basilica of the Holy Family in
Barcelona, and the American writer and theologian Scott Hahn.

The Prelate received a manuscript greeting from the Holy Father for his 80th birthday

This is a translation of the handwritten greeting reproduced on one of the first pages of this issue, sent to Bishop Javier Echevarría by Benedict XVI, for his 80th birthday:

To our Venerable Brother Bishop

Javier Echevarría

Prelate of Opus Dei

On his 80th birthday, I send warm congratulations and, recalling his long and zealous ministry in the service of the Gospel and the Church, I invoke upon him, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and of St. Josemaría Escrivá, a new outpouring of heavenly gifts, while I cordially impart a special apostolic Blessing, which I gladly extend to the people entrusted to his pastoral care.

From the Vatican, June 14, 2012.

Pontifical appointments

On February 29, 2012, Rev. Luis Felipe Navarro, was named Deputy Commissioner of the Special Commission for the treatment of cases of dispensation from the obligations arising from ordination to the diaconate or priesthood.

On June 18, 2012, the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, SDB, has appointed Rev. Miguel Ángel Ortiz Ibarz and Rev. Hector Franceschi as consultors for the Office of the Tribunal of the
The University Hospital of Navarra: 50 years of service

To celebrate its 50th anniversary, the University of Navarra Hospital celebrated a gala benefit concert in the Baluarte Auditorium of Pamplona on December 16, 2011. The money raised will go to the “Children against Cancer” foundation, which carries out cancer research and helps poor families from all over the world to pay for treatment at the University Hospital.

During these past 50 years, more than 600,000 consultations have taken place in the hospital. Each year it provides care to 70,000 patients in one of its 35 specialties and performs 11,500 surgical operations. The University Hospital has 300 beds and a staff of 2,000 professionals.

The focal point of all the hospital’s medical activity is the patient with his or her personal dignity. Its Christian ideals imbue all of its work, and foster its professional and human values.

The doctors receive a demanding and continually updated training, and also teach at the Medical School of the University of Navarra. In their work they employ advanced technologies that include PET nuclear imaging, the Da Vinci robot, etc. The nurses and service personal number 900 employees, a number that shows that the welfare of the patient forms part of the cure. Both patients from the public health system and private patients receive medical care; in many cases the latter come through insurance plans.

The School of Medicine, the CIMA (Center for Applied Medical Research) and the Hospital permit the integration of teaching, research, and medical assistance. “Research is done through the patients and for the patients. Teaching is done via the patients and in the environment of the patients,” explains Nicolas Garcia, medical director of the center. The
research work there is centered especially in four areas: treatment with stem cells, personalized medicine, predictive medicine, and bio-engineering.

For this anniversary, the hospital has opened a web page where, among other items, one can find a video with the Prelate’s homily on April 29 that we include in this issue of Romana.

Cooperators of Opus Dei: A lighted Lamp

The Information Office of Opus Dei has published a brief brochure that explains what a cooperator is and how he or she can help and be helped by becoming a cooperator. The brochure also includes many testimonies from people all around the world.

The Cooperators of Opus Dei form an association linked to the Prelature and, without belonging to Opus Dei, they participate in its apostolates in many different ways. They help with their prayer, their sacrifices, their professional work, and their financial efforts.

The seal of the association of cooperators of Opus Dei reflects its mission: a cross and a lighted lamp, similar to those found in the Christian catacombs. In the introductory text of the brochure, the Prelate of Opus Dei says:

“...In one of the Gospel parables, a lighted lamp symbolizes the light of faith expressed in good works (Mt 25:1-13).

“The world will always need men and women who bring the light of Christ to others, sowing peace and joy through deeds of charity. I ask our Lord that each of the cooperators may bring to today’s society a spirit of concord and service shown in deeds.

“Thanks be to God, many educational and social endeavors have arisen all over the world with the help of members of Opus Dei, cooperators and many other people of good will. In the years ahead, other initiatives will have to be planned and made a reality with the aim of serving specific local needs, for the cultural and spiritual benefit of society.
“In praying each day for the cooperators, as do all the members of Opus Dei, I ask God to reward their generous help, and to lead them to an ever deeper knowledge of the consoling Truth of Christ.”

Torna ai contenuti

Close of the diocesan phase of the Cause of Canonization of the servant of God Encarnación Ortega Pardo

On January 20, Archbishop Ricardo Blázquez Perez, of Valladolid, concluded the diocesan phase of the process of canonization of the servant of God Encarnación Ortega Pardo (1920-1995), a faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei since 1941.

The Archbishop emphasized that “this celebration has much to tell us.” He referred to her “proximity in time and space,” since Encarnita lived for more than twenty years in Valladolid; and he emphasized her exemplary life, in which she harmonized her work in the field of fashion with her apostolate.

Archbishop Blázquez said that Encarnación Ortega “received God’s touch after assisting at a day of recollection preached by St. Josemaria, founder of Opus Dei,” and that her life was an eloquent witness to love for God, including her way of confronting sickness.

During the ceremony the boxes containing the more than five thousand pages with the documentary and testimonial evidence gathered by the tribunal since March of 2009 were closed and sealed, and they will be sent for study to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints.

According to the postulator of the Cause, Father José Carlos Martin de la Hoz, “the zeal of the servant of God for the advancement of women, without distinctions of any form, her bringing forward tasks of formation, social assistance and education, and her work in the field of fashion to foster the dignity of women, make her a good example for the evangelization of the world in which we live.”
Encarnación Ortega was one of the first women of Opus Dei, and worked closely with the Founder, both in Madrid and Rome until 1961, the year when she returned to Spain. She spent the last twenty-five years of her life in Valladolid.

In 1980 she was diagnosed with cancer. She lived with her sickness for fifteen years, without letting it slow the rhythm of her work. Her life of piety led her to convert human friendship into an opportunity to help others draw closer to Christ. She died with a reputation for holiness in Valladolid on December 1, 1995. Since then, that reputation has been extending throughout the whole world and many people have obtained graces and favors from God through her intercession.
INITIATIVES
Family Farm Schools: an effective formation for finding a first job

With the aim of helping to improve the quality of life for families living in the countryside by offering professional, cultural, human, and spiritual formation, the Family Farm Schools (EFAs in Spanish, for Escuelas Familiares Agrarias) were started in Spain some fifty years ago. Modeled on the French Maisons Familiales Rurales, whose history began in the thirties of the last century, the EFA system of instruction was pioneering and innovative in Spain. The training at first was directed to helping students carry out their work better, which for the great majority was of an agrarian and family nature. Later, the areas of instruction were broadened to include other specialties required in the rural environment such as hospitality, health, mechanics, etc.

Some of the EFAs now also provide secondary education, as well as courses to constantly update workers’ training and skills. Families are invited to take part in classes directed towards acquiring a solid culture and an appreciation of the importance of growing in human virtues. A Christian vision of the person and the world underlies all the activity of the EFAs.

Origin and development

The origin of these initiatives dates back to St. Josemaría Escrivá, who saw the need to help improve the living and working conditions of people in rural areas. In the sixties in Spain, many of these people had a difficult life. St. Josemaría encouraged a group of professionals to put within reach of rural families effective means to improve their professional and human preparation, as well as their Christian life. The founder of Opus Dei in his youth had had close contact with the rural environment, and was very aware of the need to bring the Christian message to those living there.

Joaquin Herreros and Felipe Gonzalez de Canales played a big role in the initial creation and development of the EFAs, with the help of their own families, specialized technicians and local business people. Together with Francisco Molina, in 1967 they began the first two schools in two locations in the province of Seville: Lora del Rio (the Molino Azul EFA)
and Brenes (the Casablanquilla EFA). Soon afterwards, having quickly confirmed the value of these farm schools, they began others in various parts of Spain.

Today twenty-six institutions of this type are operating in Spain, but the model has leaped over borders and one can now count by the dozens the EFAs existing throughout the world. As a consequence, the specializations offered have been greatly multiplied. Now not only courses in agriculture, stock raising, and forest cultivation are offered, but also courses in grapevine culture, management of natural resources, hostelry and tourism, childhood education, and even supplementary health care and dental hygiene.

In Spain, EFA La Serna, in Bolaños de Calatrava (Ciudad Real), now offers classes in secondary school studies, business management, cooking and food preparation. EFA Piñeiral, in Arzua (La Coruña), has courses in baking and confectionary, business, commercial management and marketing. EFA La Noria, in Pinseque, Sarragosa, offers practical nursing and dental hygiene. EFA Torrealuda, in Llombai, Valencia, offers secondary studies and diagnostic imaging. EFA El Soto, in Chauchina, Granada, has courses in forestry and nature conservation, agroecological production, landscape resources, and professional safety.

In Spain, the EFAs are grouped into various federations: Western Andalusia, Eastern Andalusia, Aragon, Castille La Mancha-Madrid, Catalonia, Extremadura, Galicia, and Valencia. In 1978, the National Union of Family Farm Schools (UNEFA in Spanish) was formed, which presently includes most of the centers in Spain that are carrying out professional formation and assistance in rural areas.

In turn, UNEFA forms part of AIMFR (Asociacion Internacional Maison Familiale Rurale), an international association that includes 353 schools in Latin-America, 129 in Africa, 6 in Asia and 531 in Europe. UNEFA also offers advice to new EFAs that arise in Latin-America, and tries to foster awareness of the needs of third world countries.

*Mission and working method*

The working method of the EFAs is based on a close tie with local businesses. The combination of classes with apprenticeship in the fields,
the factory, the workshop, etc., is a strong spur to the formation of the young people.

Another pillar of the working method is the close relationship between the family and school. The participation of families in the activities of the center gives the EFAs a special link to the parents in the education of their children.

The contribution of these schools transcends the theoretical content in the classrooms, and aims is to further the formation of the students as persons. Therefore responsible freedom is fostered, as well as a concern for professional ethics and growth in human virtues.

The EFAs contribute to the development of the areas where they are located, not only through the training given to young people but also through courses for updating professional skills. Their influence also extends to many people who in a variety of ways take part in its activities: teachers and families, parents of students, alumni, collaborators and friends.

Since an integral element of these centers is a concern for Christian formation, the spiritual attention provided has been entrusted to the Prelature of Opus Dei. Besides the professional formation imparted, the schools strive to foster the students’ Christian and human virtues, including honesty, respect for others, defense of freedom, and industriousness.

Testimonials

Fernando de la Calle, Chief of the Microbiology Department of PharmaMar, has had close ties with one of the EFAs. He says that “we have hired three or four girls from there and I can truly say that, in my view, we are very luck to have this center nearby.”

Nares Muñoz, personnel director of Our Lady of Solitude and Mt. Carmel, a residence for the elderly in Madrid, says that whenever they have to hire more staff, the EFAs “are always our point of reference.”

Cristina Garcia, who studied at the El Gamonal EFA, says that “the stress placed on work and effort at the EFA center has really helped me in my life.”
Some interesting statistics

About 23% of the Spanish population lives in rural areas. In the total world population, this figure reaches more than 45% (World Factbook).

In 1970, 29% of the rural population dedicated itself to agriculture in Spain. Today that number is less than 5% (UNEFA statistic).

The teaching staff of the EFAs in Spain is made up of well-qualified personnel who are committed to the project’s goals. An important labor exchange is provided by the broad network of collaborating businesses (about 3,000). EFA graduates enjoy a high level of success in finding professional employment. Those currently taking classes number about 5,000.

With more than 70,000 graduates already, these schools have helped to form many young people and families in the rural areas of Spain, and to make it possible for them to raise their standard of living. They have also contributed to the development of the rural areas in which they are located, helping to prevent depopulation and migration to cities.

In 2005, Rialp Publishers published the book Roturar y sembra” [To plow and sow]. In it, Felipe Gonzales de Canales and Jesús Carnicero recount the history of the development of these schools, and emphasize the influence of St. Josemaría in their origin.

In Brief

Murcia, Spain

Publicizing “Caritas in Veritate”

On February 9, the Foundation for Education and Development presented the DVD “10 Ideas about the Encyclical Caritas in Veritate in Las Claras Cultural Center. Over a hundred business people attended. This DVD of five minutes duration is aimed at increasing interest in the encyclical and the social doctrine of the Church among those who work in
the world of business. The brief documentary is available to the public on YouTube.

**London**

Reflections on school culture

“Dangerous Schools for Boys: Winning Hearts and Minds.” Under that title, the Thomas More Institute of London organized a symposium on May 24-25 on the frequent disconnect between pre-adolescent and adolescent boys and formal school education. The symposium focused on five key influences at work here: lessons to be drawn from gang culture; changing attitudes to masculinity in society at large, and, with this, the Arts; the climate within the classroom; the escapism of virtual reality; and factors icharacter formation. Among the experts taking part were professors of education, a representative from the national Department of Education, and the headmasters of two prestigious private high schools. The role of the tutor in the education of young people was also considered at length.

**Paraná, Brazil**

A Family Album

In recent years the Institute for Teaching and Development has promoted a program for strengthening the family, which is offered to associations of parents and teachers, family clubs, educational institutions, university faculties, etc. Entitled “A Family Album,” the program’s methodology includes both traditional classes for couples, and movie forum sessions coordinated by moderators. The film being viewed is interrupted from time to time to foster the exchange of impressions about the attitudes and values the family drama is presenting. Those attending identify with the problems raised by the actors and reflect on their own lives. Among topics discussed are questions related to patience, fortitude, conjugal love, the value of good friends and advisors. The main stress in on the virtues of fidelity, prudence and perseverance, key virtues in any relationship that seeks to be lasting. Among many other institutions, the program has been held in associations of parents and teachers at various high schools, in the Federal University of Paraná, and in the Federal University of Technology of Paraná, with hundreds of participants.
Montevideo, Uruguay

An island in Casavalle

“Where one lives cannot be allowed to determine how one lives.” This is how the director of the Center for Integral Development explains the premise for this corporate work of apostolate run by the women’s branch of Opus Dei. Currently it provides assistance to more than 600 families in Casavalle, a district known for its extreme poverty and the lowest educational indicators in the country. Its mission is the social and cultural development of children and families through the educational, occupational and communitarian advancement of women. The resources to cover the annual budget are obtained through the support of 103 companies and contributions from individuals and foundations.

Cadi (the program’s acronym in Spanish) includes the largest preschool educational center in Uruguay, for 600 children under three years of age. The youngest take part in a “workshop” designed to stimulate their awakening powers, together with their parents, to fortify the bond between them, and making use of the assistance of early childhood specialists when necessary.

In addition, a youth club offers extracurricular activities (study, English, computers, music) to 120 girls between the ages of five and twelve. In the Casavalle district there are many barriers to overcome. Over 70% of the young people have left school and are not seeking employment; among whom are 3,000 girls between 15 and 19. Once the school day is finished, Cadi offers formative opportunities such as multimedia management, which was begun this year. Ninety percent of those taking part obtain employment. There is also a high percentage of girls who, now graduates and often working, undertake new studies, because they discover they can surpass their expectations.

San Jose, Costa Rica

At the service of literature teachers

Since 2007, training workshops have been held in San Jose, Costa Rica, for teachers of Spanish language and literature. These workshops are offered at the Educational Research Institute of the University of Costa
Rica, and analyze the works of Latin American writers. Over the past few years, more than three hundred teachers have been helped to give a Christian perspective to the study of literary works in the plan of studies of the Ministry of Public Education.

In imparting these sessions the organizers are helped by the research of an international network of writers, and they benefit from the Central American Conference on Written Culture promoted annually by some faithful of Opus Dei together with other people. The aim of these classes is to give teachers the instruments needed to analyze literary works. It also gives them an opportunity to know classical and contemporary writers, whose work is published annually in Encuentros y Coloquios. This journal seeks to foster literature and literary criticism that accords with the dignity of the human person. Last January this project received a “Declaration of Educational Interest” from the Ministry of Education.

**Rome**

The art of preaching

The need to express one’s thoughts effectively is also felt by priests. To help meet this need, the Center for Priestly Formation at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross organized the *Ars Predicandi* seminar.

This seminar took place between February and April in eight sessions imparted by Professors Albert Gil, professor of the Theory of Translation and Rhetoric at the University of the Saar (Germany), and Rev. Sergio Tapia, teacher of Techniques of Oral Discourse and Media Training at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.

Throughout the course, both the virtues that the preacher should acquire, and the means at priests’ disposal to communicate the Gospel message more effectively were considered. Also discussed were the techniques for effective public speaking and the different types of sacred oratory. One idea that permeated the cycle was the need to put the *ars predicandi* at the service of the new evangelization, as Pope Benedict XVI has constantly stressed.

**Buenos Aires**

Art, history, and religion in dialogue
In December 2011, the Diploma Course in Argentinean Culture, presented by the University Study Center (CUDES) concluded. The course was aimed at providing a general knowledge of Argentinean culture, especially in the fields of art, history, and religion. Music, painting, theater, literature, architecture, and film are some of the subjects dealt with by major speakers in a weekly two-hour session. The course was directed by Dr. Pedro Luis Barcia, president of the Argentinean Academy of Letters and professor at the Austral University.

The initiative arose in 2010, coinciding with the Bicentennial of the First Patriotic Government of Argentina. It also organized guided tours to such places as the Argentinean Academy of Letters, the National Museum of Fine Arts, the Teatro Colon, a synagogue (conducted by Rabbi Abraham Moguilevsky), a mosque, etc. Considerable interest was shown in the visit to the home of the writer, Victoria Ocampo.

Lecturers included prestigious historians such as Lucia Galvez, Maria Saenz Quesada, Nestor Ruiz Moreno and Luis Alberto Romero; outstanding fiction writers and essayists such as Abel Posse, Pablo de Santis and Marcos Aguinis; specialists in the visual arts, whether as scholars, collectors, dealers, or journalists, such as Alberto Belluci, Juan Cambiaso, Ignacio Gutierrez Zaldivar and Alicia de Arteaga. In addition, speaking about the Catholic Church, the Protestant confessions, Judaism, and Islam were Nestor Auza, Ana Woites, Gloria Williams de Padilla, Gabriel Minkowicz, Ricardo Elia and Hilario Wynarczyk. Also speaking on philosophical topics were priests such as Francisco Leocata and Victor Manuel Fernandez, rector of the Catholic University of Argentina.

To close the course, the students spent a day at La Chacra in Bella Vista, the place where St. Josemaria resided during his stay in Argentina in 1974. Msgr. Mariano Fazio, Vicar of the Prelature of Opus Dei in Argentina, reflected on the relations between Church and state in the history of Argentina. In a relaxed atmosphere, the participants shared a lunch and were able to ask the speaker many questions.

Auckland, New Zealand

Social Project in Christchurch
In January 2012, Glenrowan Study Centre, in Auckland, organized a group of young New Zealanders to help out at the “Eleazar Children’s Farmstay” near Christchurch. This institution provides assistance to school children who experience difficulties concentrating at school. The powerful earthquake in February 2011 had caused widespread damage, and frequent aftershocks were still being felt in January 2012. Various buildings required repairs and the main building at the “Farmstay” needed a new coat of paint. The volunteers came from Auckland, Wellington, Hamilton, and Christchurch. The boys who come to “Farmstay” on weekends and during vacations are given an opportunity to work on the farm and care for the animals, and also to improve their social relationships.

**Tetuan, Morocco**

**Solidarity Work Camp**

The past several years, the Amura Club in Madrid has organized work camps for high school students in Morocco, in collaboration with various social assistance institutions. The latest one took place in Tetuan, a city in the north of the country with more than 300,000 inhabitants. The goal was to help out in the Dari Center, which houses orphaned children, some of them with physical or mental deficiencies. This center was founded by a Catholic religious, and later continued by a Muslim pharmacist. During the work camp those taking part were able to see at close hand the needs of others, and for the children of the orphanage they were days of special joy and diversion.

**Cheshire, England**

**Dialogues on Christian marriage**

From March 19 to 21, a symposium for priests was held at Thornycroft Hall under the title “The Rechristianization of Marriage, the Family, and the Education of Children for the Next Generation.” Cardinal James Stafford, Major Penitentiary emeritus, spoke on the topic “A man and a woman, united in one flesh.” Other conference speakers were Mary Killeen, director of studies on marriage and the family at the Maryvale Institute in Birmingham; David Kingsley, specialist in pediatric psychiatry; Louise Kirk, editor and translator of the program “Alive to the World”;
Msgr. Gordon Read, Judicial Vicar and Chancellor of the Diocese of Brentwood; and Father Robert Farrell.

**Curitiba, Brazil**

Ten days in *The Forge*

In December 2011, the Sumaré Center of University Studies, in São Paulo, organized a work camp in Curitiba, Paraná. The work involved renovation of the site of the *Instituto Forja* (The Forge Institute), an educational initiative promoted by a group of faithful of Opus Dei and cooperators for needy children in an outlying section of the city. The Institute offers young people the opportunity to receive both a broad extracurricular formation and professional preparation, with courses in computers and gardening, along with classes on ethics. The Forge Institute provides personal accompaniment to each student, and seeks to maintain close contact with the boys' families, offering advice and orientation. The university students carried out various projects, including painting buildings and installing water pipes. The students themselves helped seek the financial resources and the materials needed for the project.

**Valencia, Spain**

Professional training

On May 24, the graduation ceremony was held for the students from the fifth graduating class of Xabec, a center for professional formation dedicated to providing training in industrial installation and maintenance. A representative from the autonomous government distributed the diplomas and congratulated the 72 students “for their effort and work during these past two years, and for the recognition they were receiving today.” Xabec, a corporate apostolate of Opus Dei, is aimed at fostering the effective incorporation into the work force of young people, the unemployed, and immigrants.

**Bogotá, Colombia**

A Corpus Christi procession

On May 17, a Corpus Christi procession was held at the Sabana University. At each of the stations benediction with the Blessed Sacrament
was accompanied by the singing of the University choir, making the
ceremony an invitation to pray. Both the stations and the entire procession
route were richly decorated with flowers. Many students helped out in the
decorations. It was a good opportunity to offer God thanks that, just a year
after two devastating floods paralyzed the campus, the university was once
again able to function normally.

Almaty, Kazakhstan

University women, protagonists of their future

Each year hundreds of girls move to the city of Almaty to study in one
of its many universities. For some time, the Irtysh Cultural Center has
been offering them supplementary formation. In 2011, the “Business Boot
Camp” was born, which offers the students the possibility to meet
professionals who inform them of the work possibilities that little by little
are opening up to them. Speakers include business managers, economists,
and specialists in human resources and communication. These session also
consider topics such as making work and family compatible, viewing work
as service to others, and cultivating broader interests that go beyond the
confines of one’s own profession.

Madrid

Conference in Santillana

On November 23, 2011 the 25th Conference on Communication took
place in the Santillana Student Residence. This year the topic considered
was “An economic crisis or a moral crisis? Economic information and new
models.” More than fifty students took part in the sessions. One of the
round tables featured the participation of Iñaki Garay, Associate Publisher
of the newspaper Expansión, José Antonio Vega, Assistant Publisher of the
newspaper Cinco Dias, and Ignacio Sanchez Camara, professor of
Philosophy of Law. Another round table dealt with the question: “Where
is the exit from the crisis?” Taking part were Jose Gonzalez-Orbaneja,
president of Madrid’s Press Association, Enrique Quemada, Delegate
Counselor of a corporate finance company, and Francisco Cabrillo,
Professor of Applied Economics at the Complutense University of Madrid.

Benin City, Nigeria
A day of creativity

During this semester, the Tiebe Cultural Center organized a series of seminars for students on artistic creation at the University of Benin. One of the sessions dealt with “a taste for art.” The speaker spoke about the innate gift many people have for artistic expression, although, he stressed, certain artistic skills are learned over time and require practice. The series also included a creativity workshop. This was a full day dedicated to artistic creation, rest periods, and at the end an exposition of the artistic works produced. Each person was asked to present his work with a well-thought-out explanation. As a final contribution a poem entitled “Beauty, the beautiful” was read. It told the story of a philosopher who asked himself about beauty, its source and its meaning. After developing many ideas, the poet ends by praising the Almighty, infinite Beauty, the cause of everything that is beautiful.

Valencia, Spain

Almudi “Theology Dialogues”

For the fourteenth consecutive year, the Almudi Priests’ Library, promoted by priests of Opus Dei, has organized “Theology Dialogues” in conjunction with the Theological School of Valencia. The current edition was held in the auditorium of the Theological School on March 6 and 27 and on April 24, with the title “On the Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church.” The closing session, entitled “The Word of God in the Life of the Priest: Prayer and Homily,” was given by Cardinal Robert Sarah, president of the Pontifical Council Cor unum.

In his address, the cardinal encouraged the priests to emphasize “the centrality of Christ” in their homilies, not only with their words, but also with their “tone, expression, joy, simplicity and enthusiasm,” since “the faithful can sense the celebrant’s true love for Christ.” Thus, “it should be clear to the faithful that what interests the preacher is to show forth Christ.”

Piura, Peru

Conference on movies and philosophy
The school of humanities at the University of Piura dedicated the 12th edition of its philosophy conference to reflecting on the art of the cinema. All cinematographic art transmits a message, employing varying techniques of rhetoric to do so. Professor Genera Castillo discussed aspects of this effort in her analysis of the 2005 movie “Pride and Prejudice.” Also speaking was Professor Alejandro Machacuay, who discussed “The Color of Paradise” (1999). Castillo reflected on personal and family goals in the framework of 18th century English culture, while Machacuay focused on the symbolism of the protagonist, a blind child, in the Iranian movie.

Rome

Communicating the faith through persons, faces, and stories

Over 300 people from 44 different countries took part in the Eighth Professional Seminar of Offices of Church Communication. The topic was “Communicating the Faith: Persons, Faces, Stories.” The seminar, organized by the School of Institutional Social Communications at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome, was meant for directors of offices of communication, spokespersons, and other communication professionals. Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, inaugurated the meeting. He said that “in the supermarket of options, typical of today’s culture, it is possible—as Pope Benedict XVI teaches—to transmit a faithful, integral, and at times long-suffering message, knowing that we are not offering a commercial product; we are witnesses to a person, Christ, in the present-day world.”

Sydney, Australia

In preparation for the Year of Faith

As a way of taking up Benedict XVI’s invitation to prepare for the Year of Faith, Creston College, a women’s university residence at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, dedicated its annual Easter seminar to the topic of Apologetics. Most of the participants had been present when Pope Benedict XVI called young people to give witness to their faith during the Mass closing the 2008 World Youth Day at Randwick Racetrack, only a few yards from Creston. The College chaplain encouraged the young women to rediscover (or to discover) the riches, beauty, and legacy of the faith. He pointed to the positive influence of Christianity on culture,
including on science, although some question this reality today. Other presentations and round tables dealt with the need to foster unity with other Christians, and possible ways to overcome the dictatorship of relativism and secularism. Many young women made the resolution to reread the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Some of them remarked that they now understood the need to study philosophy, especially metaphysics, to be able to go more deeply into the truths of the faith.

**Rome**

**Friendship between Jews and Catholics**

The Second Vatican Council marked a milestone in the relations between Jews and Catholics. Dialogue, mutual acquaintance, friendship, the riches of diversity, are some of the central points of the meeting between the Catholic and Jewish worlds held on June 13, in a climate of cordiality, to consider relations between Israel and the Holy See. The gathering, which took place at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, was organized by the Catholic Association of Friends of Israel. Speakers included the Israeli ambassador to the Holy See, Mordechay Lewy; the Bishop of Frosinone-Veroli-Ferentino, Most Rev. Ambrogio Spreafico; Professor Amnon Ramon, from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Professor Alberto Melloni, from the John XXIII Foundation for Religious Sciences; and Professor Raymond Cohen, from the University of Jerusalem. Also present were Cardinal Raffaele Farina, archivist and librarian emeritus of the Holy Roman Church, and the chief rabbi of the Jewish Community of Rome, Riccardo Di Segni. The latter expressed his gratitude for the gathering and his desire that “this kind of event be spread among a larger public” and with “a more communitarian participation,” and that “the next one be held in Jerusalem.”

**San Salvador**

**Citalá High School**

In January 2012, Citalá High School opened its doors in the city of San Salvador. Citalá means “the place where stars abound” in Maya Chorti, the indigenous language originally spoken in the country. The school will provide secondary education to boys of limited financial resources. It has
begun with a group of ninety students in the first year of secondary school. The school will grow each year until it includes all the high school grades. Its activities take place in the afternoon and evening, and make use of the facilities of Lamatepec High School run by a group of parents, among them faithful of the Opus Dei Prelature. To finance the new school, a Board of Patrons has been set up to seek the necessary funds through donations and the help of private businesses. This will allow the parents to pay only a small tuition. The school has a chaplain and the students are provided with formation in Christian values and personal tutoring in addition to their academic training.

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Guaymura University Residence

On February 29, Julieta Castellanos, president of Honduras’s National University (Universidad Nacional Autónoma), gave the 2012 inaugural lecture in the Guaymura University Residence. Under the title “2009-2013: Transformation of the National Autonomous University of Honduras,” she spoke about the growth and improvement of the university, which has received broad praise throughout the country and which the speaker herself has overseen. She also made reference to aspects that are key to any process of change and growth in the various professions. At the end she carried on an extended discussion with the residents and special invited guests.

Pirarajá, Uruguay

With students from the Miradores Study Center

From February 18 to 22, a group of 58 university students from the Miradores Study Center carried out a social project in the Pirarajá area, a poor region in the interior of the country. The goal of this social initiative was both to provide help to those in need and to foster in the university students a sense of social responsibility that will influence the future exercise of their profession. The work carried out involved repairs and painting in three different sites: the public health clinic, a chapel, and a family home. The students were able to count on the financial help of businesses and individuals in this project. The young people were especially grateful for the warm gesture from the people living in Pirarajá, who provided the group with food as a token of gratitude for the work that was
Madrid

Tenth anniversary of the Laguna Hospice

The Laguna Palliative Care Center has now spent a decade striving to reduce suffering. To commemorate this anniversary, the Vianorte-Laguna Foundation organized a ceremony to express gratitude for the help received over this period. The president of the foundation and the director general of Laguna recalled the support of all the collaborating entities and emphasized especially the help of the Acciona company in the construction of the present hospital building, as well as the generous initiative of the Fernando Duran Auction House, which in honor of the tenth anniversary sponsored a Solidarity Auction entitled “A Role for Remembrance.” The benefits were earmarked entirely for the treatment and care of people with Alzheimers and advanced illnesses. Thirty-three well-known contemporary artists, including Antonio López, Rafael Canogar, Martin Chirino and Pello Irazu, each created a unique and original work—a painting, photograph, or sketch—especially for this charity auction.

Catania, Italy

Youth tackling a crisis

The Káthane Cultural Center in Catania began in 1982, promoted by some members of Opus Dei with the help of other people. A group of women students and professionals between the ages of 18 and 30 have just begun a volunteer initiative to respond to the crisis faced by families in today’s society. This association for family solidarity, called Quid familia, is organized by young women from various universities and receives the support of the social assistance services.

In order to respond to the difficulties of mothers who need to reconcile a job and their family, Quid familia offers day care facilities, looked after by some of the mothers. It also offers extra-curricular educational activities, and help to resolve painful matrimonial crises. Another need it seeks to meet is that of the elderly, by providing assistance to the residents of the Msgr. Santo Bellia Rest Home in Catania. In addition, the new association offers courses of training in social assistance. The one on February 17, for
example, dealt with the topic of altruism and empathy in providing assistance to others. Along with its cultural and social activities, the center also offers many opportunities to grow in one’s Christian formation.

Brazilia

Family formation

With the support of the “Brazilian Institute for the Family,” a family activity entitled *Folia em família* [family festival] was organized, offering formation, multi-family gatherings, and entertainment for the children. The event took place in the Chácara Florida, on the outskirts of Brazilia. The program included various talks for families on marriage and on raising children in the practice of the virtues. The case method was used with the involvement of all the participants. More than 100 people attended, between children and adults. After each session, the parents had time to exchange experiences on their children and about their own marriages.

Guatemala City

New oratory in the Kinal Technical School

On March 28, the Vicar of the Prelature of Opus Dei in Guatemala, Msgr. Francis Wurmsen Ordóñez, presided over the blessing of the oratory for the high school building of the Kinal Technical School, a corporative apostolate of Opus Dei. Kinal offers needy young boys the opportunity to obtain a good secondary education, strengthened with Christian values. The construction of the new oratory was begun in connection with the fiftieth anniversary of the school, celebrated in 2011.

Valencia, Spain

Information, ethics, and society

Following last year’s session held in Guadalajara, Mexico, the International Congress of Information Ethics and Law returned to Valencia to celebrate its ninth annual session on November 11-12, 2011, with the title “The ethical and social responsibility of information enterprises.” It was organized by the COSO Foundation together with various Spanish and Latin American universities. In attendance were 54 university professors specializing in the ethics and law of information. The
Congress took place in the Valencian Museum of Illustration and Modernity.
IN PACE
Suffrages for the deceased

In the first half of 2012, 384 faithful of the Prelature and 17 members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross passed away.

The suffrages stipulated by Saint Josemaría have been offered for these deceased. As we continue to pray for them, let us thank God for the example they left us through their fidelity in striving to transform their professional work and the ordinary circumstances of their lives into an occasion for loving God and serving the Church and all souls. Their love for God 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.
A study
Universities Inspired by Catholicism: Identity, Culture, Communication

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The university does not live with its back turned to any uncertainty, to any concern, to any of mankind’s need. It is not its mission to offer immediate solutions. But in studying these problems with scientific depth, it must also move hearts, fight passivity, awaken sleeping forces, and form citizens desirous of constructing a more just society. In this way it will contribute with its universal work to lowering the barriers that prevent mutual understanding among men, to alleviating fear of an uncertain future, to fostering, by its love for truth, justice and freedom, authentic peace and concord among peoples and nations (St. Josemaría Escrivá, Address at the University of Navarra, October 7, 1972).

1. Introduction

This study will consider some questions often pondered by those who work in universities with a Catholic inspiration: What does a university’s “Catholic identity” mean? What are its main manifestations? How should it influence the activities of those who work there? How can this identity be successfully communicated?[1]

These and similar questions can be answered in various ways, depending on one’s viewpoint: historical, juridical, theological, etc. Here we are going to adopt the viewpoint of institutional communication, understood as the process whereby the identity of an institution is formulated in an explicit way, expressed in its corporative culture and public discourse, and projected externally in its public image.[2]

Adopting the perspective of communication will enable us to focus the topic of identity in a practical way: how should a university inspired by Catholicism be viewed by the professionals who run it, the communications media, and its students and alumni.
This is not the moment to consider the historical origin of the university, but we should recall that, born in the thirteenth century in old Europe, universities arose out of the theological studies conducted in the monasteries and great religious orders. Over time, academic centers were created and the university came into being. The first faculties, centered on theology, the humanities, medicine and law, were expanded as new disciplines were incorporated.

The direction of a university is marked by its origin and also by the juridical form it adopts. Here, in a very compressed synthesis, we would like to distinguish three kinds of universities:

a) **Ecclesiastical universities**, erected or approved by the hierarchy of the Church, in which ecclesiastical subjects such as theology and canon law are taught, and in which the formation of priests and candidates for the priesthood is a fundamental part of its mission;

b) Catholic universities, also erected or approved by the hierarchy of the Church, in which non-ecclesiastical subjects are studied as well. These universities are run by Catholic institutions or by lay faithful, who request the approval of the competent ecclesiastical authority. With the required authorization, the condition of being a Catholic university is established by its name, by its statutes, or through a formal juridical commitment;

c) Finally, universities whose outlook is equally Catholic, but which are constituted without “the formal elements proper to the canonical notion of a Catholic university. That is to say, they do not depend on the ecclesiastical hierarchy, nor do they have the official status or the name of “Catholic.” It is these universities that we will call universities of Catholic inspiration.

The reflections contained in the following pages refer chiefly to this third kind of university. St. Josemaría described these initiatives as works “of human, cultural, and social promotion, carried out by citizens who try to illuminate them with the light of the Gospel and warm them with the love of Christ.” Similarly, Alvaro del Portillo characterized them as universities that strive to “make, as an institution, a Christian contribution to the development of culture.”
2. Identity

A. Features that define a university

Universities of Catholic inspiration are, above all, universities in the full sense of the term. Their mission does not modify but rather reinforces their nature as a university: first and foremost, a university inspired by Catholicism seeks to be a good university. Consequently, it could be useful here to highlight some of the key features that should characterize any university, transcending differences among countries and cultures.

The core principles of the “Magna Charta of European Universities” that was signed on September 18, 1988, on the occasion of the ninth centennial of the founding of the University of Bologna, can serve as a useful reference here.\[11\]

In line with that Charta we can list five features that should characterize any university.

a) *Seeking and transmitting the truth*: the university is the result of the joint work of professors who carry out research, teach, and share their discoveries, and students who learn and incorporate the knowledge, attitudes, and habits necessary for their profession and life. The university is the privileged place for rigorous study and research, posing questions in every field of human knowledge. The university recognizes the methodology proper to each discipline, while also inviting dialogue among the various realms of knowledge. The principal intellectual legacy that the university fosters is the habit of seeking the truth, never being satisfied with superficial answers.

b) *Universality*: as its very name indicates, the university implies a universal mentality, open to other persons, ideas and cultures. The international character of the university enriches its points of view and relations between professors and students from different countries and traditions. Universality also implies openness to interdisciplinary efforts and humility with respect to the limits of one’s own discipline.

c) *Freedom*: by its very nature, the university requires independence from political and economic powers, autonomy in the face of conflicting interests, so that research and teaching will develop in accord with sound
educational principles. Freedom within the institution is also a requisite for university work.

d) Harmony: while broadening intellectual and cultural horizons, the university also teaches one how to get along with people who have different viewpoints. The university by its very nature requires a climate of mutual assistance and respect. Being a member of a university requires knowing how to understand others and live in harmony.

e) Service: the university strives to recognize the needs of the society in which it is immersed and to provide adequate solutions. Besides the service provided by contributing to the education of young people and assisting the advancement of human knowledge, universities transmit knowledge that represents a varied and constant service to society.

All these features show the Christian influence that lies at the heart of the origin of the university, which have come to form part of the patrimony of all universities.

B. Elements characterizing a university inspired by Catholicism

We will now look at some features that should configure the Catholic identity of a university in a practical and tangible way. First of all, the harmony between faith and reason, manifested in what we could call “creative fidelity” to the Church’s message. Then we will look at the relationship between a personal and corporate Catholic identity.

a) The harmony between faith and reason

Benedict XVI stresses that “it was not by accident that the Church promoted the universities, for Christian faith speaks to us of Christ as the Word through whom all things were made (cf. Jn 1:3) and of men and women as made in the image and likeness of God. The Gospel message perceives a rationality inherent in creation and considers man as a creature participating in, and capable of attaining to, an understanding of this rationality.”

As John Paul II explains in his Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, faith broadens reason and gives it wings; it leads reason to grasp more deeply the meaning of man and the world, and frees it from the limits of the merely empirical.
Here we can pose an important question: Is it possible to simultaneously respect the integrity of faith and the integrity of human knowing? Isn’t faith a brake on research, impeding reason from advancing courageously in search of the truth?

In his book *Truth and Tolerance*,[15] Cardinal Ratzinger points out that faith is not identified with a specific cultural entity—an ethnic identity, a country, a language—but that it exists in various cultural entities: “as a Christian, one remains a Frenchman or a German, an American or an Indian.” Thus a Christian “lives within two cultural entities: in his historical culture and in the new one of faith, which meet and mingle in him.”

The dominant cultural entity in certain epochs has been ethnicity; at other times the nation. While in today’s world, more and more so, it is one’s profession: a European doctor has many points in common with an American doctor; and the same can be said of a professor or a writer. In any case, returning to Cardinal Ratzinger’s point, for a Christian, this existing together—as a Frenchman and a Catholic, as a doctor and a Catholic—“will never be a complete synthesis; it brings with it the need for continuing processes of reconciliation and purification.” One could even say that, while always avoiding the temptation of a complete rupture, “the tension itself is productive, renewing faith and healing the culture.”

We shouldn’t be surprised here by the use of the word “tension.” The attempt to be fully part of a university and fully Catholic is a difficult one, which can only be resolved within one’s own conscience, through the growth of both one’s Catholic maturity and professional maturity. Both need to develop in harmony, so that the tension is a fruitful one, renewing faith and healing human knowledge and culture.

Creating the required conditions for this fruitful dialogue between faith and reason, between theology and the other fields of human knowing, forms part of the mission of any university, and is an unshirkable goal of a university inspired by Catholicism. This requires that theology be taught at the same scientific level as other disciplines[16] and that it be open to the problems they raise; it also requires that the other disciplines be open to epistemological, anthropological and ethical questions that profoundly
affect the human person. This dialogue, not exempt from tensions, broadens the horizon of the human knowing and frees it from an overly narrow focus.

b) Faithfulness to the Catholic message

This feature of a university with a Catholic identity is perhaps the most obvious one, at least in theory, although experience shows that is not always easy to achieve in practice. Faithfulness here means, above all, respecting the teachings of the Magisterium, both in the classes that are given and in the research that is carried out.

Besides the need to be consistent to the principles that inspire all academic activity, there is also a responsibility to be loyal to the people who choose a university for its Catholic identity, and whose expectations should not be defrauded.

The Catholic Church views fidelity as being completely compatible with freedom. Benedict XVI, when speaking to university professors, stressed “the great value of academic freedom. In virtue of this freedom you are called to search for the truth wherever careful analysis of evidence leads you.”[17] Here freedom is viewed in all its nobility, as a spur to progress in knowledge, and not as the mere absence of limits.

Benedict XVI continued: “it is also the case that any appeal to the principle of academic freedom in order to justify positions that contradict the faith and the teaching of the Church would obstruct or even betray the university’s identity and mission; a mission at the heart of the Church’s munus docendi and not somehow autonomous or independent of it.”[18]

Faithfulness thus entails responsibility. At the same time, it requires going ever deeper into the Church’s teaching, since it is impossible to be in accord with what one only knows superficially. Catholic identity is rooted in the message of Christ set forth by the Catholic Church. Some of the elements of this message have special relevance in the university milieu: for example, the recognition of the dignity and centrality of the human person, created in the image of God. These truths are, as it were, “seeds” that need to be cultivated. This is one of the active and positive dimensions of faithfulness, which should be fostered.
For a university professor, a Catholic identity is a spur to confront courageously the questions that are posed by his or her field of knowledge and teaching activity. The fidelity owed to the Magisterium by a university with a Catholic identity is an active, dynamic, creative fidelity.

As the Pope recently recalled, “the essential task of authentic education at every level is not simply that of passing on knowledge, essential as this is, but also of shaping hearts.” For a university with a Catholic identity “there is a constant need to balance intellectual rigor in communicating effectively, attractively and integrally, the richness of the Church’s faith, with forming the young in the love of God, the praxis of the Christian moral and sacramental life and, not least, the cultivation of personal and liturgical prayer.”[19] Therefore together with the educational work of the professors (in its broadest sense, also through their personal example), an indispensable role is also carried out by the university chaplaincy.

Here it is useful to ask: what about non-Catholics who work or study in a university inspired by Catholicism? Or those who do not profess any religious belief? John Paul II stressed that “these men and women offer their training and experience in furthering the various academic disciplines or other university tasks.”[20] And he added that they have an obligation “to recognize and respect the distinctive Catholic identity of the University.”[21]

In other words, the university is an open and inclusive educational project that people of different religions can share in and make a valuable contribution to the collective effort. Those from a different religious background need to express respect and commitment to the formational work that is carried out there. And the university, in turn, needs to respect the religious freedom of all its members: those professing other beliefs also need to experience that spirit of freedom.

The capacity and willingness to share in the Christian foundations are a prerequisite for working in this kind of university. Specific circumstances can make it inadvisable to incorporate or to continue the presence of persons who, in theory or practice, are not in harmony with the project. And in a positive sense, it is very important to actively seek professionals who have the proper qualifications to carry forward such an endeavor.
c) Personal and corporate Catholic identity

From the subjective point of view, “personal identity” refers to self-awareness, to knowledge and possession of oneself. “Catholic” adds the note of “conscious and voluntary personal adhesion to Christ and his Church.”[22] Therefore “to be and to know oneself to be a Catholic... is not only belonging passively to a religious confession, but voluntary and active participation in the life and mission of the Church.”[23]

The identity of an institution depends above all on the persons who make it up. Universities inspired by Catholicism are institutions that are given life by the Catholics who carry out their work in a way consistent with their faith. Benedict XVI reminded us that the Catholic identity of an educational center “is a question of conviction—do we really believe that only in the mystery of the Word made flesh does the mystery of man truly become clear (see Gaudium et Spes, 22)? Are we ready to commit our entire self—intellect and will, mind and heart—to God? Do we accept the truth Christ reveals? Is the faith tangible in our universities and schools? Is it given fervent expression liturgically, sacramentally, through prayer, acts of charity, a concern for justice, and respect for God’s creation? Only in this way do we really bear witness to the meaning of who we are and what we uphold.”[24]

The first condition for the configuration of the Catholic identity of a university is the presence of Catholics—professors, other professionals, students—who try to make these ideals a reality. Without a sufficient number of Catholics who give it life, a university of Catholic inspiration is an illusion.

But this is not enough. To be lasting, the university’s Catholic identity has to shape its corporate culture: its principles, its values, its professional practices, its very style.[25] The infusion of the identity into the institution’s culture gives it unity, direction and meaning. And it makes it a lasting reality, despite the changes in personnel that naturally occur over time. In short, the corporate culture makes the institution unique and distinguishes it from others.

3. Culture
A Catholic identity is expressed in many ways in the culture of an institution. In the case of a university, these specific features are given expression in the activities carried out there: research, teaching, other corporate activities, relationships.

A. Research

As we have already insisted, research is a crucial task in universities with a Catholic inspiration. What makes the research carried out in these centers distinctive are both the areas or topics of research and the attitudes of the researchers.[26]

First of all, a university’s Catholic identity is reflected in the topics of research, since (without excluding any specific point of investigation, however technical or neutral it might appear) these universities strive to make space for the great questions about God, the world and man that are frequently marginalized in the research carried out in other centers. Therefore the topics chosen for research will not depend solely on external circumstances, such as the availability of financing or areas that are currently “fashionable.” As John Paul II wrote: “Included among its research activities, therefore, will be a study of serious contemporary problems in areas such as the dignity of human life, the promotion of justice for all, the quality of personal and family life, the protection of nature, the search for peace and political stability, a more just sharing in the world’s resources, and a new economic and political order that will better serve the human community at a national and international level. University research will seek to discover the roots and causes of the serious problems of our time, paying special attention to their ethical and religious dimensions.”[27]

The research found in these centers will also have a distinctive character due to the attitudes of those who carry it out. Among these it is worthwhile emphasizing the capacity for dialogue among people from different academic disciplines. Certainly, the effort to unify human knowledge should characterize all universities, not just those with a Catholic orientation. But unfortunately today this quality is being lost owing to the fragmentation of the sciences and the trend towards progressive specialization.
If interdisciplinary openness is a feature that should mark any mature university professor, it holds particular importance for a Catholic. An interdisciplinary approach is a prerequisite for the possibility of dialogue between faith and reason, between theology, philosophy and the other fields of human knowledge. It is an invitation to consider the great topics of anthropology, and provides a vision of the whole which is a premise of a good education. Interdisciplinary openness is shown in certain qualities such as humility, an appreciation for the research of others, respect for different methodologies, ability to work as a team, and a spirit of collaboration.

B. Teaching

Universities are called to make the students the center of their activity. The professors aspire to leave in the students a lasting educational legacy. John Henry Newman described this ideal succinctly: “They form a mentality which lasts a lifetime and whose characteristics are freedom, fairness, serenity, moderation, and wisdom.”

Addressing young university professors, Benedict XVI emphasized 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.”

This deep educational formation takes place first of all through the work of teaching, which starts with the transmission of knowledge but also encourages students to reflect on what they have learned, and to strive to acquire intellectual and ethical habits. The habit of seeking the truth will be the foundation of the students’ future professional life. In universities with a Catholic inspiration, academic formation has to be characterized by the high quality shown in the classes, in personal study, in teamwork, in research, in extra-curricular activities.

We have already noted that the university is a place well-suited to asking questions. And each person feels impelled to raise the most radical and important questions: Who am I? What is the basis of my dignity as a person? Why does evil exist? What will make me happy? Upon the answer to these questions depends the orientation of one’s whole existence. Hence the importance of providing students with a solid philosophical and
theological formation, which will be a foundation for the specialized knowledge that each will acquire in their specific field of study.[34]

A sound personal relationship between professors and students can help foster the maturing of young people. Thus academic counseling is very important. The tutorial system, in its various forms, complements the work carried out through classes and seminars, and adapts the general content to the needs of each student. In the sphere of personal relationships, the example of the instructors has great relevance. Students have a great capacity for observation, and they expect consistency between what is taught and what is lived, and are always more receptive to personal witness than to theoretical discourse.

Finally, it is worthwhile mentioning here an aspect of what St. Josemaría called the “integral formation of young personalities”[35]: the fostering of concern for others. The participation by students in social assistance programs merits special recognition within the university curriculum, since it sows lasting habits among them. For many reasons, this effort to foster service towards the neediest members of society is an essential part of all Catholic university formation.

C. Other corporate activities

The ways in which a Catholic identity is given expression in a university’s activities are, by definition, innumerable: the work environment, the cordial way of dealing with people, responsibility and austerity in the use of resources, etc. Supplementary activities, including cultural and artistic events, leisure and sports, diversion and entertainment, should also all be marked by a joyful Christian spirit of solidarity.

But if one had to highlight a single aspect among so many, it would be the practice of justice and charity. Besides the primary role these virtues have in the hierarchy of Christian virtues, they deeply mark the professional, human and social relations that arise in an institution such as a university. Charity and justice give credibility and depth to the educational task as a whole.

Each member of the university institution has an active role in helping to shape a corporate culture: the most prestigious professors and the least experienced, the administrative and service personnel, those involved in
maintenance and cleaning. This is one of the reasons why unity among all those working in a university is so important.[36] This unity of outlook is compatible with the richness and variety of personalities and backgrounds found in any university.[37]

**D. Relationships**

Universities are not closed in on themselves; they interact in many ways with their surroundings and are fully inserted in the society around them. They have contacts with public authorities, with other educational and cultural institutions, with businesses, with the media. Amid this rich web of relationships, they act in harmony with their mission and corporate values. The principles they uphold are the same, whether acting within or outside the university itself. Experience shows that activities marked by hospitality and friendship are often the first step towards grasping their Christian identity.

Here we could also mention a characteristic highlighted by St. Josemaría in regard to the beginning of the University of Navarra: the spirit of cooperation with other universities. The Founder of Opus Dei said that the University of Navarra is, and sees itself as, one more among all the other Spanish universities, and wants to contribute its grain of sand to the improvement of the university system in the service of society.[38] This attitude excludes any temptation to self-complacency, fosters collaboration, and facilitates relationships.

Having reached this point, let us turn for a moment to the questions asked at the start: What does a Catholic identity bring to a university? As Benedict XVI said in his address at *La Sapienza* University: “What should the Pope do or have to say in a university? Surely he should not try to impose on others, in an authoritarian way, the faith that can only be given in freedom... He has the mission of keeping awake a sensitivity towards truth.”[39]

Fostering sensitivity towards truth. Isn’t this truly the deepest vocation of any university man or woman, the essential mission of any university? Its Catholic inspiration encourages university members to diligently seek and transmit the truth, with a universal vision, to love personal freedom, putting the person at the center of their work.
4. Communication

The Catholic identity of a university is made up of the ensemble of features that determine its way of being, its institutional culture. These features are usually known implicitly. Communication consists precisely in making the implicit explicit by means of words and deeds. Because its Catholic identity has a public character, those who work in these universities have to know and respect its identity, to the extent that they participate in its educational task. Those who wish to study there have the right to be informed before they enroll. With respect to society in general, transparency is today an essential requisite for the functioning of institutions. In all these dimensions, both internal and external, the work of communication has to be planned in an organic, consistent and well thought out way. It cannot be left to improvisation. We will now look at some practical questions related to the communication of a Catholic identity, both within and outside the university.

A. Mission statement

The first expression of the identity of a university inspired by Catholicism is found in the juridical texts, in the statutes by which it is governed, as well as in the contracts, agreements or covenants that establish, if such is the case, its connection with the Church. In addition, the identity is expressed in its statement of principles or mission statement, which sums up the mission and values of the institution. This informative document should be brief, clear and easily understandable.

Mission statements usually include three types of content: generic aspects common to all universities, specific features common to all universities of Catholic inspiration, and particular characteristics proper to each institution.

In accord with its informative purpose, the mission statement should be known to everyone in the university community. For those who work in the university, it constitutes a kind of pact or commitment between the parties regarding work and discipline; but above all this statement contributes to the definition of the collective endeavor. For the students and their families, it is an essential informative element, even before applying for admission: its knowledge allows an informed decision to be
made. The failure to communicate these principles could lead to misunderstandings if the student, upon arrival at the university, encounters something different from what was expected.

In summary, the mission statement is a fundamental document from the point of view of both internal and external communication, the “first word” of its public discourse, of its institutional “narrative.”

B. Dialogue

A Catholic identity by its very nature tends towards dialogue. As Karol Wojtyla said: “Being a Catholic means being convinced of the truth of revelation and of the possibility of dialogue.”[40] The great value given to reason in a Christian anthropology, the conviction that human intelligence can attain the truth, the firmness with which Christians defend their own freedom and that of others, all foster an attitude open to dialogue.

This openness to dialogue raises some practical dilemmas for universities with a Catholic identity. To what extent should the doors of a Catholic university be open to people who dissent from Catholic doctrine and morals, whether theoretically or in their behavior? If a university applies overly broad criteria here, how can one avoid negative repercussions, especially on the students? But if one is too restrictive, how can a university avoid isolating itself, and as a result fail to influence positively the common search for knowledge? We are not referring here to the hiring of those who find themselves in these circumstances (a question we have dealt with earlier), but to invitations extended to take part in activities, conferences and debates.

These dilemmas make clear the existence of an inevitable tension and the need for a constant exercise of prudence. Therefore, perhaps it is worthwhile formulating some general guidelines:

a) In first place, institutions with a Catholic identity are exposed to two simultaneous risks: on the one hand, the danger of watering down this identity through a mistaken concept of dialogue, as though dialogue required renouncing one’s own convictions; and on the other, the danger of irrelevance, through an excessive tendency to isolation or an incapacity to grasp the reasoning of others. Prudence is shown in finding a way to skirt both dangers.
b) Moreover, in public debates between educated persons, one does not persuade by merely setting forth one’s own convictions or arguments. One needs to submit to the “trial” of dialogue, developing argumentative skills and accepting the open and progressive character of the forming of opinions.[41] Thus just as it is logical to hope that non-believing scientists will stay within the limits of their specialty, and not apply to philosophical or theological questions the methodology proper to the experimental sciences, so too a believer who wants to debate a scientific question needs to respect the methodology of the corresponding field of knowledge. For example, if a debate is planned about the constitutionality of a law regarding abortion, one needs to first know the fundamentals of constitutional law; and the same is true if the discussion is centered on the medical or political aspects of the question.[42]

c) Finally, we should not forget that dialogue implies before all else a relationship between persons. The radiation of the Christian spirit is not an ideological or intellectual work, nor much less a political debate. The external projection of Christian identity often takes place through personal relationships. As we have seen in regard to interdisciplinary dialogue, the human sciences tend towards separation, while persons tend towards unity.

These guidelines can be useful for making prudent and successful decisions when dilemmas such as those we have mentioned are posed.

C. Audience addressed

The Catholic identity of a university is communicated through concentric circles. In first place, it has to be known by those who work in the institution. In a certain sense, an institution is the group of people who make it up; it is they who imprint a style, and express the identity in a lived culture. They are the spokespersons and ambassadors of the organization. Therefore internal communication is always the first phase in the process of corporate communication.

Together with the professors and professionals who work in the university, other groups form part of the “internal public,” [43] including the students, alumni and benefactors. Those who feel the responsibility of helping to sustain the academic center financially have the right to be
informed periodically. Also included here would be the families of the students, who merit a special type of communication.

Among those addressed are also the collaborators of the university. This includes, for example, the suppliers, especially those who provide services that entail a direct relationship with other members of the academic community. Here we can also include the businesses with which the university has agreements and the institutions that provide some form of assistance. These too need to be informed about the characteristics of the university, since they form, in the broad sense, part of the educational process. By way of example one might mention the employees of companies subcontracted for cleaning, security, or other kinds of service: these are professionals who may have frequent contact with and more than a little influence on the students.

The external public includes the other universities, and other educational and cultural institutions in the area, the public authorities and regulatory agencies, the media, the shapers of public opinion, and finally society in general. A special mention should be made of potential students, and particularly their families, who have a decisive role in the choice of an educational center and receive its publications with interest.

All of these audiences addressed in the process of communication can also be called “shareholders” or “interest groups”: people who are in some way affected by the decisions or activities of an institution, or whose decisions and actions can have an affect on the organization. To communicate adequately with them, the institution needs to identify them clearly, to know their specific needs and demands, so as to be able to respond to them effectively. This is also true when striving to communicate the university’s Catholic identity.

D. Principles

Communication is effective to the extent that it has a clear and consistent message and aim. In contrast, it is ineffective if it is done in a disjointed way, no matter how much creativity may be involved. This is especially important when it comes to communicating the university’s Catholic identity, a task that has a certain complexity and more than a few nuances.
Here we will enumerate six principles of sound communication, derived both from the nature of the process of institutional communication and from the dynamics involved in transmitting the Christian message:

a) *Transparency*: the first form of transparency is to communicate one’s identity, taking into account the audience addressed. This requires giving a clear account of one’s mission statement and explaining its implications. There also is another form of transparency, a more subtle one, which consists in making known the criteria that are being followed in informing on one’s motives and goals and on the Christian formation one is trying to impart, so that it is clear there are no hidden agendas. In short, one needs to explain clearly what one is doing and also why one is doing it. Transparency creates a climate of freedom and trust.

b) *Consistency*: the most effective communication is that which is verified by deeds, more than by words: the decisions, the style, the customs, the environment of the institution. The consistent and exemplary lives of the professionals involved have much greater communicative effectiveness than declarations of principles. One must not forget that the “mission statement” tries to express in words a reality, a culture, a way of being and working. Consistency gives credibility to communication.

c) *Suitability*: in the task of communicating it is necessary to adapt oneself to one’s audience. The professors, students, parents, etc., each have their own needs that one must meet in a suitable way, with a content, language and channel appropriate for each case.

d) *Continuity*: the relationships a university maintains with many people have a lasting character and are prolonged over a large stretch of time. Therefore the communication plans need to be progressive in nature. The content can be transmitted little by little, during the time that the relationship lasts, so that it is understood and assimilated in depth. The information given at a particular moment, for example, when a student or professional is incorporated to the university, would be of little value if there was a lack of continuity. Isolated information has only fleeting effects.

e) *Participation*: the communication of a Catholic identity does not have a merely informative purpose; it represents an invitation to share in the educational project. One needs to try to avoid divisions being set up
between the professionals working there, invisible walls that separate those who are more active in respect to the mission statement from those who view themselves as mere spectators. All form part of the endeavor, each in his or her own way. The active participation of everyone helps in the fulfillment of the corporative mission.

f) Freedom: a Catholic identity entails beliefs, convictions and attitudes, and therefore has to be communicated and received in a context of freedom. The more relevant the personal implications are of what one wishes to transmit, the more respectful has to be the way of communicating it.

E) Actions

It is impossible to offer an exhaustive and generic list of communication activities suitable for transmitting a Catholic identity. Each university has its own characteristics and every group of professionals presents specific needs.

Perhaps it would be more useful to propose a simple outline that could facilitate the task of transmission and give it a certain organic character. It is a matter of identifying, on the one hand, the audience being addressed (professionals, students, graduates, communications media, etc.); and, on the other hand, various “modes” for the communication process, which entail different channels and attitudes:

a) Informative mode: the most basic way to communicate one’s Catholic identity is to transmit clear and objective information to all the interested parties. To the professionals, students and other members of the “internal public,” since it is a key element to their connection with the university. And to the external public, by means of brochures, informative sessions, or web pages, for all who might be interested.

b) Reflective mode: the characteristics of the university institution and the nature of its Catholic identity make it necessary, besides giving information, to create spaces for reflection—seminars, debates, conferences, lectures—where it is possible to go more deeply into the content of what is communicated, share questions, seek answers. The dialogue between faith and reason is not something theoretical, but is made concrete in an open conversation, from which new light will always
c) **Formative mode:** an essential activity of universities with a Catholic identity is pastoral work. Pope John Paul II stressed the need “to promote the pastoral care of all members of the university community, and to be especially attentive to the spiritual development of those who are Catholics. Priority is to be given to those means which will facilitate the integration of human and professional education with religious values in the light of Catholic doctrine, in order to unite intellectual learning with the religious dimension of life.”[45] Each university establishes the proper means to carry out this task, in accord with its possibilities and needs, and the indications of the competent authority: liturgical and sacramental life, spiritual retreats, etc. In this area the university chaplaincies carry out an essential role.

d) **Popularizing mode:** with activities suited to their nature, such as cultural outreach and intervention in public debates, universities with a Catholic inspiration exercise a broad sphere of influence, especially in the key topics mentioned when speaking about research: life, family, education, justice, ecology, peace. If necessary, one will also need “the courage to speak uncomfortable truths which do not please public opinion, but which are necessary to safeguard the authentic good of society.”[46] With deeds more than with words, universities can be a shining focal point of light.[47]

The results of communicating one’s Catholic identity effectively are not difficult to perceive. Within an institution, it fosters commitment on the part of professionals; it improves the consistency of the educational program, brings added motivation, and helps to create a climate of participation and trust. From the external point of view, the Catholic identity projects an image that attracts professionals and students who seek this type of environment. These advantages also bring with them obligations: everyone expects a university recognized as Catholic to be consistent with its own principles. The expectations here can be very high and call for a sustained effort. This is the other face of a good reputation, which never allows one to rest on one’s laurels.

5. **Catholic identity and governance of the university**

The strengthening of a university’s Catholic identity is a mission shared by all the members of the institution. The Christian inspiration is
called to permeate the corporate culture, and this is possible only through a strong spirit of collaboration. At the same time, the organisms of government have a special responsibility in this regard. Initially, those beginning the educational endeavor set forth the key structural elements: statutes, regulations and mission statement. When this foundational phase is concluded, those in charge have to strive to ensure the continuity of these founding ideals.

Essentially, the governance of an institution entails the progressive development of its mission, with which strategic decisions have to be aligned. A Catholic identity defines the mission of these universities and therefore also inspires their strategies and projects. Therefore, the academic authorities need to integrate into their work of governing the aspects that relate to this Catholic identity, with particular attention to all that refers to the hiring and training of the professional staff.

An important part of government involves setting up mechanisms for evaluation that will show whether the institution is advancing in the right direction. Measures need to be provided for the compiling of data that give precise knowledge of the actual effectiveness of the decisions taken by the administration and that facilitate the required reflection on this data. It is always easier to evaluate tangible elements than intangible ones; it is easier to evaluate its financial status than the university’s fidelity to its mission statement. But difficulties are always an invitation to creativity. It is important to identify the indicators that reveal its real situation in this regard.

Effective evaluation brings with it both knowledge and self-critique. And it is incompatible with self-complacency, and even more so with the self-deception that might stem from a poorly understood desire to avoid problems or transmit a positive image. Such evaluation implies an openness to change, the imagination to explore new paths for improvement, always with the corporate mission in view. In short, it imparts realism to decisions and a capacity for innovation.

**Conclusion**

We have tried here to sketch some key points regarding the communication of a university’s Catholic identity. As we said at the
beginning, a Catholic identity is formulated in an explicit way, and expressed in the corporate culture and public discourse. After this analysis, the reader might be left with the impression that communicating a Catholic identity is an arduous and complex task. However, the opposite is the case: the deepest Catholic identity is one that is lived with the greatest naturalness; the best communication is the simplest and clearest.

We will end with some words of Benedict XVI. Although the Pope was here answering a different question (namely, how faculties of philosophy and theology can fulfill their mission), we can understand it as a response to one of the questions we posed at the beginning: how can we succeed in making its Catholic inspiration permeate the culture of a university and communicate it successfully? “This is a question which must be constantly worked at, and is never asked and answered once and for all. So, at this point, I cannot offer a satisfactory answer either, but only an invitation to continue exploring the question—exploring in company with the great minds throughout history that have grappled and researched, engaging with their answers and their passion for the truth that invariably points beyond each individual answer.”[48]

The question about the Catholic identity of a university and the attempt to answer it correspond to each of the professionals who have chosen the university as a life project. They will always find themselves striving to make progress, spurred by a love for the truth and the example of wise men and women. In showing forth the beauty of a Catholic identity, they are providing a valuable service to the entire university community. And they in turn receive the gift of “a life filled with meaning.”[49]

[1] We will use the phrases “Catholic identity” and “Catholic inspiration” interchangeably in this essay.


[8] The existence of these universities is foreseen in can. 808 of the *Code of Canon Law*. Number 24 of the Second Vatican Council’s Decree *Apostolica Actuositatem* also applies to these universities. As St. Josemaría Escrivá pointed out, “The Council did not intend to declare that confessional centers of teaching were outdated. It simply wanted to make clear that there is another way (which is also more necessary and universal, and which has been lived for many years by the members of Opus Dei), for Christians to be present in the field of education: the free initiative of Catholic citizens who are teachers by profession and who work both in State schools and private centers” (*Conversations*, no. 81). The underlining is ours.

[9] *Conversations*, no. 119. Regarding the teachings of St. Josemaría Escrivá in this area, see Francisco Ponz Piedrafita, *Reflexiones sobre el quehacer universitario*, EUNSA, Pamplona 1988. Also Alejandro Llano,


[11] In that document the European university presidents declared the following: “1) The university is an autonomous institution at the heart of societies differently organized because of geography and historical heritage; it produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture through research and teaching. To meet the needs of the world around it, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power. 2) Teaching and research in universities must be inseparable if their teaching is not to lag behind changing needs, the demands of society, and advances in scientific knowledge. 3) Freedom in research and training is the fundamental principle of university life, and governments and universities, each as far as in them lies, must ensure respect for this fundamental requirement. Rejecting intolerance and always open to dialogue, a university is an ideal meeting-ground for teachers capable of imparting their knowledge and well equipped to develop it by research and innovation and students entitled, able, and willing to enrich their minds with that knowledge. 4) A university is the trustee of the European humanist tradition; its constant care is to attain universal knowledge; to fulfill its vocation it transcends geographical and political frontiers, and affirms the vital need for different cultures to know and influence each other.”


See *Conversations*, no. 73.

Address at the *Catholic University of America*, April 17, 2008. In another place, Benedict XVI pointed out that the university “must be bound exclusively to the authority of the truth. In its freedom from political and ecclesiastical authorities, the university finds its particular function, precisely for modern society as well, which needs an institution of this type” (*La Sapienza*, January 17, 2008).

Ibid.

Benedict XVI, Address to the members of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States (Region XIII), in their visit “*ad Limina Apostolorum*,” May 5, 2012.


Ibid., Part II, Article 4 § 4.


Ibid.

Benedict XVI, Address at the Catholic University of America, Washington April 17, 2008.


“The university, for its part, must never lose sight of its particular calling to be a ‘universitas’ in which the various disciplines, each in its own way, are seen as part of a greater *unum*. How urgent is the need to
rediscover the unity of knowledge and to counter the tendency to fragmentation and lack of communicability that is all too often the case in our schools!” (Benedict XVI, Speech at the Conference of European University Instructors, Rome, June 23, 2007).

[29] “Only by putting the person at the center and making the most of dialogue and interpersonal relations can the specializing fragmentation of disciplines be overcome and the unitive perspective of knowledge be recovered. Naturally, and also rightly, the disciplines tend to specialization, while what the person needs is unity and synthesis” (Benedict XVI, Address at the University of Pavia, April 22, 2007).


[33] In this sense, we can endorse the goals set forth for all Harvard students: “It heightens students’ awareness of the human and natural worlds they inhabit. It makes them more reflective about their beliefs and choices, more self-conscious and critical of their presuppositions and motivations, more creative in their problem-solving, more perceptive of the world around them, and more able to inform themselves about the issues that arise in their lives, personally, professionally, and socially. College is an opportunity to learn and reflect in an environment free from most of the constraints on time and energy that operate in the rest of life” (Harvard University, Report of the Task Force on General Education, February 2007).

[34] See Lluis Clavell, Razón y fe en la universidad: ¿oposición o colaboración? CEU Ediciones, 2010. Among authors discussed there are Alasdair MacIntyre and Benedict Ashley.


[36] “You are the university, united in the common task of finding and transmitting the truth. Never lose sight of the fact that unity, collaboration and mutual assistance are the essence of the university. Unity of knowledge

[37] “The university is a common home, a place of study and friendship; it is a place where one should live in peace with people of different backgrounds and interests which at each moment are expressions of the legitimate pluralism that exists in society” Josemaría Escrivá, in Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y la Universidad, op. cit., p. 139.

[38] See Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y la Universidad, op. cit., p. 64.


[41] The first Encyclical of Paul VI, Ecclesiam Suam, published in 1964, continues to be a key reference point for these questions.


[43] The use of the term “participants” to refer to the members of an organization may be more useful than that of an “internal public” See Alfonso Nieto, Economia della comunicazione istituzionale, FrancoAngeli, Milan 2006.


[46] Ibíd., Part 1, no. 32.


Benedict XV, Discourse in El Escorial, August 19, 2011.