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

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

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

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EDITORIAL
The New Evangelization

The Year of Faith, which the Holy Father Benedict XVI announced in October 2011, is now a reality. The whole Church has begun a time of special grace during which all the faithful have been invited to rediscover the beauty of Revelation, and to let ourselves be transformed by the power of faith.

On various occasions, Benedict XVI has pointed to the timeliness of the Year of Faith: ‘Whereas in the past it was possible to recognize a unitary cultural matrix, broadly accepted in its appeal to the content of the faith and the values inspired by it, today this no longer seems to be the case in large swathes of society, because of a profound crisis of faith that has affected many people.’[1]

Not a few people would like to reduce Christianity to a teaching acceptable in some of its elements—fraternity, concern for the poor, etc.—but antiquated in others given the mindset of people today. On the other hand, there are many people—including those who express skepticism regarding Christianity—who are sincerely seeking an answer to the question about the meaning of their life. At times that yearning can lead to a religion made more or less to one’s own measure; in other cases, people give up trying to find an answer. But whatever the case, all human beings seek happiness and cannot quench the thirst for God in the soul. For as St. Augustine wrote, “you have created us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you” (Confessions, 1, 1, 1.).

Therefore this panorama, far from leading to discouragement, should spur us to lend our strength to the task of a new evangelization in order to present to people the Gospel in all its fullness. Our faith not only helps people recognize the questions they harbor in their heart, but offers them a truth that surpasses their deepest expectations.

God “in his love, through the work of the Holy Spirit, creates in us the necessary conditions so that we can recognize his Word.”[2] But recognizing God’s Word requires that first it be known: how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? (Rom 10:14-15).
The Year of Faith is a spur to evangelization, as Bishop Javier Echevarría stresses in his lengthy pastoral letter of September 29, 2012, which is reproduced in this issue of Romana. God is counting on each of the faithful to help those around them to get to know the faith in its fullness, so that they discover the strength of a life that lets itself be guided by the light of the Christian message. These months will thus be turned into an opportunity for personal conversion and apostolate: an opportunity to confront the future more closely united to Christ, letting ourselves be guided in everything by his will. This is what the first Christians did: naturally, without any outward display, by the consistency between their faith and their deeds, they changed the pagan world.[3]

In striving to go more deeply into the riches of Catholic doctrine, Benedict XVI has pointed to two great treasures: the teachings of the Second Vatican Council (“a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning”[4]) and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. If we want to be authentic witnesses to the faith, we need to know it and live it integrally. Otherwise, especially in today’s world, it is easy to fall into “a certain syncretism and religious relativism, blurring the truths to believe in as well as the salvific uniqueness of Christianity.”[5]

The Pope is dedicating his Wednesday audiences to explaining the core principles of our faith, showing us that they are truths we should base our life on. Reading the content of those addresses is a specific way to “let these truths of faith fill our soul until they change our life,”[6] as well as providing us with opportunities and topics of conversation with others. The words of the Roman Pontiff will thus be for us a marvelous guide for evangelization in the contemporary world.

HOLY SEE

- The Roman Pontiff
- The Roman Curia
Homily at the Mass for the Opening of the Year of Faith, The Vatican (October 11, 2012)

Venerable Brother Bishops,

Dear brothers and sisters:

Today, fifty years from the opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, we begin with great joy the Year of Faith. I am delighted to greet all of you, particularly His Holiness Bartholomeus I, Patriarch of Constantinople, and His Grace Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury. A special greeting goes to the Patriarchs and Major Archbishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches, and to the Presidents of the Bishops’ Conferences. In order to evoke the Council, which some present had the grace to experience for themselves—and I greet them with particular affection—this celebration has been enriched by several special signs: the opening procession, intended to recall the memorable one of the Council Fathers when they entered this Basilica; the enthronement of the Book of the Gospels with the same book that was used at the Council; the consignment of the seven final Messages of the Council, and of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which I will do before the final blessing. These signs help us not only to remember, they also offer us the possibility of going beyond commemorating. They invite us to enter more deeply into the spiritual movement which characterized Vatican II, to make it ours and to develop it according to its true meaning. And its true meaning was and remains faith in Christ, the apostolic faith, animated by the inner desire to communicate Christ to individuals and all people, in the Church’s pilgrimage along the pathways of history.

The Year of Faith which we launch today is linked harmoniously with the Church’s whole path over the last fifty years: from the Council, through the Magisterium of the Servant of God Paul VI, who proclaimed a Year of Faith in 1967, up to the Great Jubilee of the year 2000, with which
Blessed John Paul II re-proposed to all humanity Jesus Christ as the one Savior, yesterday, today and forever. Between these two Popes, Paul VI and John Paul II, there was a deep and complete convergence, precisely upon Christ as the centre of the cosmos and of history, and upon the apostolic eagerness to announce him to the world. Jesus is the centre of the Christian faith. The Christian believes in God whose face was revealed by Jesus Christ. He is the fulfillment of the Scriptures and their definitive interpreter. Jesus Christ is not only the object of the faith but, as it says in the Letter to the Hebrews, he is “the pioneer and the perfecter of our faith” (12:2).

Today’s Gospel tells us that Jesus Christ, consecrated by the Father in the Holy Spirit, is the true and perennial subject of evangelization. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor” (Lk 4:18). This mission of Christ, this movement of his continues in space and time, over centuries and continents. It is a movement which starts with the Father and, in the power of the Spirit, goes forth to bring the good news to the poor, in both a material and a spiritual sense. The Church is the first and necessary instrument of this work of Christ because it is united to him as a body to its head. “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (Jn 20:21), says the Risen One to his disciples, and breathing upon them, adds, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (v.22). Through Christ, God is the principal subject of evangelization in the world; but Christ himself wished to pass on his own mission to the Church; he did so, and continues to do so, until the end of time pouring out his Spirit upon the disciples, the same Spirit who came upon him and remained in him during all his earthly life, giving him the strength “to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed” and “to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk 4:18-19).

The Second Vatican Council did not wish to deal with the theme of faith in one specific document. It was, however, animated by a desire, as it were, to immerse itself anew in the Christian mystery so as to re-propose it fruitfully to contemporary man. The Servant of God Paul VI, two years after the end of the Council session, expressed it in this way: “Even if the Council does not deal expressly with the faith, it talks about it on every
page, it recognizes its vital and supernatural character, it assumes it to be whole and strong, and it builds upon its teachings. We need only recall some of the Council’s statements in order to realize the essential importance that the Council, consistent with the doctrinal tradition of the Church, attributes to the faith, the true faith, which has Christ for its source and the Church’s Magisterium for its channel” (General Audience, March 8, 1967). Thus said Paul VI in 1967.

We now turn to the one who convoked the Second Vatican Council and inaugurated it: Blessed John XXIII. In his opening speech, he presented the principal purpose of the Council in this way: “What above all concerns the Ecumenical Council is this: that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine be safeguarded and taught more effectively…. Therefore, the principal purpose of this Council is not the discussion of this or that doctrinal theme… a Council is not required for that… [but] this certain and immutable doctrine, which is to be faithfully respected, needs to be explored and presented in a way which responds to the needs of our time” (AAS 54 [1962], 790,791-792). So said Pope John at the inauguration of the Council.

In the light of these words, we can understand what I myself felt at the time: during the Council there was an emotional tension as we faced the common task of making the truth and beauty of the faith shine out in our time, without sacrificing it to the demands of the present or leaving it tied to the past: the eternal presence of God resounds in the faith, transcending time, yet it can only be welcomed by us in our own unrepeatable today. Therefore I believe that the most important thing, especially on such a significant occasion as this, is to revive in the whole Church that positive tension, that yearning to announce Christ again to contemporary man. But, so that this interior thrust towards the new evangelization neither remain just an idea nor be lost in confusion, it needs to be built on a concrete and precise basis, and this basis is the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the place where it found expression. This is why I have often insisted on the need to return, as it were, to the “letter” of the Council—that is to its texts—also to draw from them its authentic spirit, and why I have repeated that the true legacy of Vatican II is to be found in them. Reference to the documents saves us from extremes of anachronistic
nostalgia and running too far ahead, and allows what is new to be welcomed in a context of continuity. The Council did not formulate anything new in matters of faith, nor did it wish to replace what was ancient. Rather, it concerned itself with seeing that the same faith might continue to be lived in the present day, that it might remain a living faith in a world of change.

If we place ourselves in harmony with the authentic approach which Blessed John XXIII wished to give to Vatican II, we will be able to realize it during this Year of Faith, following the same path of the Church as she continuously endeavors to deepen the deposit of faith entrusted to her by Christ. The Council Fathers wished to present the faith in a meaningful way; and if they opened themselves trustingly to dialogue with the modern world it is because they were certain of their faith, of the solid rock on which they stood. In the years following, however, many embraced uncritically the dominant mentality, placing in doubt the very foundations of the deposit of faith, which they sadly no longer felt able to accept as truths.

If today the Church proposes a new Year of Faith and a new evangelization, it is not to honor an anniversary, but because there is more need of it, even more than there was fifty years ago! And the reply to be given to this need is the one desired by the Popes, by the Council Fathers and contained in its documents. Even the initiative to create a Pontifical Council for the promotion of the new evangelization, which I thank for its special effort for the Year of Faith, is to be understood in this context.

Recent decades have seen the advance of a spiritual “desertification.” In the Council’s time it was already possible from a few tragic pages of history to know what a life or a world without God looked like, but now we see it every day around us. This void has spread. But it is in starting from the experience of this desert, from this void, that we can again discover the joy of believing, its vital importance for us, men and women. In the desert we rediscover the value of what is essential for living; thus in today’s world there are innumerable signs, often expressed implicitly or negatively, of the thirst for God, for the ultimate meaning of life. And in the desert people of faith are needed who, with their own lives, point out the way to the Promised Land and keep hope alive. Living faith opens the heart to the
grace of God which frees us from pessimism. Today, more than ever, evangelizing means witnessing to the new life, transformed by God, and thus showing the path. The first reading spoke to us of the wisdom of the wayfarer (cf. Sir 34:9-13): the journey is a metaphor for life, and the wise wayfarer is one who has learned the art of living, and can share it with his brethren—as happens to pilgrims along the Way of Saint James or similar routes which, not by chance, have again become popular in recent years. How come so many people today feel the need to make these journeys? Is it not because they find there, or at least intuit, the meaning of our existence in the world? This, then, is how we can picture the Year of Faith, a pilgrimage in the deserts of today’s world, taking with us only what is necessary: neither staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money, nor two tunics—as the Lord said to those he was sending out on mission (cf. Lk 9:3), but the Gospel and the faith of the Church, of which the Council documents are a luminous expression, as is the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published twenty years ago.

Venerable and dear Brothers, 11 October 1962 was the Feast of Mary Most Holy, Mother of God. Let us entrust to her the Year of Faith, as I did last week when I went on pilgrimage to Loreto. May the Virgin Mary always shine out as a star along the way of the new evangelization. May she help us to put into practice the Apostle Paul’s exhortation, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom […] And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col 3:16-17). Amen.

Torna ai contenuti

Address at the Signing of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Ecclesia In Medio Oriente” Basilica of St. Paul in Harissa, Lebanon (September 14, 2012)

Mr. President, Your Beatitude,
Venerable Patriarchs,

Dear Brother Bishops, and

Members of the Special Council

of the Synod of Bishops for the

Middle East,

Distinguished representatives of the Various religious confessions, the world of culture, and civil society,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Dear Friends:

I thank Patriarch Gregorios Laham for his words of welcome, and the Secretary-General of the Synod of Bishops, Archbishop Nikola Eterovic, for his introduction. My warm greetings go to the Patriarchs, to all the Eastern and Latin Bishops assembled in this beautiful Cathedral of Saint Paul, and to the members of the Special Council of the Synod of Bishops for the Middle East. I am also gratified by the presence of the Orthodox, Muslim and Druze delegations, as well as those from the world of culture and from civil society. The happy coexistence of Islam and Christianity, two religions that have helped to shape great cultures, is what makes for the originality of social, political and religious life in Lebanon. One can only rejoice in this circumstance, which must absolutely be encouraged. I entrust this wish to the religious leaders of your country. I greet with affection the beloved Greek Melkite community with gratitude for your welcome. Your presence makes my signing of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Medio Oriente all the more solemn; it testifies that this document, while addressed to the universal Church, has a particular importance for the entire Middle East.

Providentially, this event takes place on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, a celebration originating in the East in 335, following the dedication of the Basilica of the Resurrection built over Golgotha and our Lord’s tomb by the Emperor Constantine the Great, whom you venerate as saint. A month from now we will celebrate the seventeen-
hundredth anniversary of the appearance to Constantine of the Chi-Rho, radiant in the symbolic night of his unbelief and accompanied by the words: “In this sign you will conquer!” Later, Constantine signed the Edict of Milan, and gave his name to Constantinople. It seems to me that the Post-Synodal Exhortation can be read and understood in the light of this Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, and more particularly in the light of the Chi-Rho, the two first letters of the Greek word “Christos.” Reading it in this way leads to renewed appreciation of the identity of each baptized person and of the Church, and is at the same time a summons to witness in and through communion. Are not Christian communion and witness grounded in the Paschal Mystery, in the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Christ? Is it not there that they find their fulfillment? There is an inseparable bond between the cross and the resurrection which Christians must never forget. Without this bond, to exalt the cross would mean to justify suffering and death, seeing them merely as our inevitable fate. For Christians, to exalt the cross means to be united to the totality of God’s unconditional love for mankind. It means making an act of faith! To exalt the cross, against the backdrop of the resurrection, means to desire to experience and to show the totality of this love. It means making an act of love! To exalt the cross means to be a committed herald of fraternal and ecclesial communion, the source of authentic Christian witness. It means making an act of hope!

In examining the present situation of the Church in the Middle East, the Synod Fathers reflected on the joys and struggles, the fears and hopes of Christ’s disciples in these lands. In this way, the entire Church was able to hear the troubled cry and see the desperate faces of many men and women who experience grave human and material difficulties, who live amid powerful tensions in fear and uncertainty, who desire to follow Christ—the One who gives meaning to their existence—yet often find themselves prevented from doing so. That is why I wanted the First Letter of Saint Peter to serve as the framework of the document. At the same time, the Church was able to admire all that is beautiful and noble in the Churches in these lands. How can we fail to thank God at every moment for all of you (cf. 1 Thess 1:2; Part One of the Post-Synodal Exhortation), dear Christians of the Middle East! How can we fail to praise him for your
courage and faith? How can we fail to thank him for the flame of his infinite love which you continue to keep alive and burning in these places which were the first to welcome his incarnate Son? How can we fail to praise and thank him for your efforts to build ecclesial and fraternal communion, and for the human solidarity which you constantly show to all God’s children?

Ecclesia in Medio Oriente makes it possible to rethink the present in order to look to the future with the eyes of Christ. By its biblical and pastoral orientation, its invitation to deeper spiritual and ecclesiological reflection, its call for liturgical and catechetical renewal, and its summons to dialogue, the Exhortation points out a path for rediscovering what is essential: being a follower of Christ even in difficult and sometimes painful situations which may lead to the temptation to ignore or to forget the exaltation of the cross. It is here and now that we are called to celebrate the victory of love over hate, forgiveness over revenge, service over domination, humility over pride, and unity over division. In the light of today’s Feast, and in view of a fruitful application of the Exhortation, I urge all of you to fear not, to stand firm in truth and in purity of faith. This is the language of the cross, exalted and glorious! This is the “folly” of the cross: a folly capable of changing our sufferings into a declaration of love for God and mercy for our neighbor; a folly capable of transforming those who suffer because of their faith and identity into vessels of clay ready to be filled to overflowing by divine gifts more precious than gold (cf. 2 Cor 4:7-18). This is more than simply picturesque language: it is a pressing appeal to act concretely in a way which configures us ever more fully to Christ, in a way which helps the different Churches to reflect the beauty of the first community of believers (cf. Acts 2:41-47: Part Two of the Exhortation); in a way like that of the Emperor Constantine, who could bear witness and bring Christians forth from discrimination to enable them openly and freely to live their faith in Christ crucified, dead and risen for the salvation of all.

Ecclesia in Medio Oriente provides some elements that are helpful for a personal and communal examination of conscience, and an objective evaluation of the commitment and desire for holiness of each one of Christ’s disciples. The Exhortation shows openness to authentic
interreligious dialogue based on faith in the one God, the Creator. It also seeks to contribute to an ecumenism full of human, spiritual and charitable fervor, in evangelical truth and love, drawing its strength from the commandment of the risen Lord: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:19-20).

The Exhortation as a whole is meant to help each of the Lord’s disciples to live fully and to pass on faithfully to others what he or she has become by Baptism: a child of light, sharing in God’s own light, a lamp newly lit amid the troubled darkness of this world, so that the light may shine in the darkness (cf. Jn 1:4f. and 2 Cor 4:1-6). The document seeks to help purify the faith from all that disfigures it, from everything that can obscure the splendor of Christ’s light. For communion is true fidelity to Christ, and Christian witness is the radiance of the paschal mystery which gives full meaning to the cross, exalted and glorious. As his followers, “we proclaim Christ crucified … the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:23-24; cf. Part Three of the Exhortation).

“Fear not, little flock” (Lk 12:32) and remember the promise made to Constantine: “In this sign you will conquer!” Churches of the Middle East, fear not, for the Lord is truly with you, to the close of the age! Fear not, because the universal Church walks at your side and is humanly and spiritually close to you! It is with this hope and this word of encouragement to be active heralds of the faith by your communion and witness, that on Sunday I will entrust the Post-Synodal Exhortation Ecclesia in Medio Oriente to my venerable brother Patriarchs, Archbishops and Bishops, and to all priests, deacons, men and women religious, the seminarians and all the lay faithful. “Be of good cheer” (Jn 16:33)! Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, the Theotókos, I invoke God’s abundant gifts upon all of you with great affection! God grant that all the peoples of the Middle East may live in peace, fraternity and religious freedom! May God bless all of you!

Torna ai contenuti
Homily at the Celebration of Holy Mass in the Plaza of Our Lady Of Loreto, Italy (October 4, 2012)

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

On 4 October 1962, Blessed John XXIII came as a pilgrim to this Shrine to entrust to the Virgin Mary the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, due to begin a week later. On that occasion, with deep filial devotion to the Mother of God, he addressed her in these words: “Again today, and in the name of the entire episcopate, I ask you, sweetest Mother, as Help of Bishops, to intercede for me as Bishop of Rome and for all the bishops of the world, to obtain for us the grace to enter the Council Hall of Saint Peter’s Basilica, as the Apostles and the first disciples of Jesus entered the Upper Room: with one heart, one heartbeat of love for Christ and for souls, with one purpose only, to live and to sacrifice ourselves for the salvation of individuals and peoples. Thus, by your maternal intercession, in the years and the centuries to come, may it be said that the grace of God prepared, accompanied and crowned the twenty-first Ecumenical Council, filling all the children of the holy Church with a new fervor, a new impulse to generosity, and a renewed firmness of purpose” (AAS 54 [1962], 727).

Fifty years on, having been called by divine Providence to succeed that unforgettable Pope to the See of Peter, I too have come on pilgrimage to entrust to the Mother of God two important ecclesial initiatives: the Year of Faith, which will begin in a week, on October 11, on the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, and the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which I have convened this October with the theme “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith.” Dear friends, to all of you I offer my most cordial greetings. I thank the Most Reverend Giovanni Tonucci, Archbishop of Loreto, for his warm words of welcome. I greet the other bishops present, the priests, the Capuchin Fathers, to whom the pastoral care of this shrine is entrusted, and the religious sisters. I also salute Dr. Paolo Niccoletti, Mayor of Loreto, thanking him for his courteous words, and I greet the representatives of the government and the civil and military
authorities here present. My thanks also go to those who have generously offered their assistance to make my pilgrimage possible.

As I said in my Apostolic Letter announcing the Year of Faith, “I wish to invite my brother bishops from all over the world to join the Successor of Peter, during this time of spiritual grace that the Lord offers us, in recalling the precious gift of faith” (Porta Fidei, 8). It is precisely here at Loreto that we have the opportunity to attend the school of Mary who was called “blessed” because she “believed” (Lk 1:45). This Shrine, built around her earthly home, preserves the memory of the moment when the angel of Lord came to Mary with the great announcement of the Incarnation, and she gave her reply. This humble home is a physical, tangible witness to the greatest event in our history, the Incarnation; the Word became flesh and Mary, the handmaid of the Lord, is the privileged channel through which God came to dwell among us (cf. Jn 1:14). Mary offered her very body; she placed her entire being at the disposal of God’s will, becoming the “place” of his presence, a “place” of dwelling for the Son of God. We are reminded here of the words of the Psalm with which, according to the Letter to the Hebrews, Christ began his earthly life, saying to the Father, “Sacrifices and offering you have not desired, but you have prepared a body for me… Behold, I have come to do your will, O God” (10:5,7). To the Angel who reveals God’s plan for her, Mary replies in similar words: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). The will of Mary coincides with the will of the Son in the Father’s unique project of love and, in her, heaven and earth are united, God the Creator is united to his creature. God becomes man, and Mary becomes a “living house” for the Lord, a temple where the Most High dwells. Here at Loreto fifty years ago, Blessed John XXIII issued an invitation to contemplate this mystery, to “reflect on that union of heaven and earth, which is the purpose of the Incarnation and Redemption,” and he went on to affirm that the aim of the Council itself was to spread ever wider the beneficent impact of the Incarnation and Redemption on all spheres of life (cf. AAS 54 [1962], 724). This invitation resounds today with particular urgency. In the present crisis affecting not only the economy but also many sectors of society, the Incarnation of the Son of God speaks to us of how important man is to God, and God to man. Without God, man ultimately chooses selfishness over solidarity and love, material things over values,
having over being. We must return to God, so that man may return to being man. With God, even in difficult times or moments of crisis, there is always a horizon of hope: the Incarnation tells us that we are never alone, that God has come to humanity and that he accompanies us.

The idea of the Son of God dwelling in the “living house,” the temple which is Mary, leads us to another thought: we must recognize that where God dwells, all are “at home”; wherever Christ dwells, his brothers and sisters are no longer strangers. Mary, who is the Mother of Christ, is also our mother, and she open to us the door to her home, she helps us enter into the will of her Son. So it is faith which gives us a home in this world, which brings us together in one family and which makes all of us brothers and sisters. As we contemplate Mary, we must ask if we too wish to be open to the Lord, if we wish to offer our life as his dwelling place; or if we are afraid that the presence of God may somehow place limits on our freedom, if we wish to set aside a part of our life in such a way that it belongs only to us. Yet it is precisely God who liberates our liberty, he frees it from being closed in on itself, from the thirst for power, possessions, and domination; he opens it up to the dimension which completely fulfills it: the gift of self, of love, which in turn becomes service and sharing.

Faith lets us reside, or dwell, but it also lets us walk on the path of life. The Holy House of Loreto contains an important teaching in this respect as well. Its location on a street is well known. At first this might seem strange: after all, a house and a street appear mutually exclusive. In reality, it is precisely here that an unusual message about this House has been preserved. It is not a private house, nor does it belong to a single person or a single family, rather it is an abode open to everyone placed, as it were, on our street. So here in Loreto we find a house which lets us stay, or dwell, and which at the same time lets us continue, or journey, and reminds us that we are pilgrims, that we must always be on the way to another dwelling, towards our final home, the Eternal City, the dwelling place of God and the people he has redeemed (cf. Rev 21:3).

There is one more important point in the Gospel account of the Annunciation which I would like to underline, one which never fails to strike us: God asks for mankind’s “yes”; he has created a free partner in dialogue, from whom he requests a reply in complete liberty. In one of his
most celebrated sermons, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux “recreates,” as it were, the scene where God and humanity wait for Mary to say “yes.” Turning to her he begs: “The angel awaits your response, as he must now return to the One who sent him… O Lady, give that reply which the earth, the underworld and the very heavens await. Just as the King and Lord of all wished to behold your beauty, in the same way he earnestly desires your word of consent… Arise, run, open up! Arise with faith, run with your devotion, open up with your consent!” (In Laudibus Virginis Matris, Hom. IV,8: Opera Omnia, Edit. Cisterc. 4, 1966, p.53f). God asks for Mary’s free consent that he may become man. To be sure, the “yes” of the Virgin is the fruit of divine grace. But grace does not eliminate freedom; on the contrary it creates and sustains it. Faith removes nothing from the human creature, rather it permits his full and final realization.

Dear brothers and sisters, on this pilgrimage in the footsteps of Blessed John XXIII—and which comes, providentially, on the day in which the Church remembers Saint Francis of Assisi, a veritable “living Gospel”—I wish to entrust to the Most Holy Mother of God all the difficulties affecting our world as it seeks serenity and peace, the problems of the many families who look anxiously to the future, the aspirations of young people at the start of their lives, the suffering of those awaiting signs or decisions of solidarity and love. I also wish to place in the hands of the Mother of God this special time of grace for the Church, now opening up before us. Mother of the “yes,” you who heard Jesus, speak to us of him; tell us of your journey, that we may follow him on the path of faith; help us to proclaim him, that each person may welcome him and become the dwelling place of God. Amen!

Torna ai contenuti

Apostolic letter in the form of a “Motu Propio” Latina Lingua instituting the Pontifical Academy of Latinity (November 10, 2012)
1. The Latin language has always been held in very high esteem by the Catholic Church and by the Roman Pontiffs. They have assiduously encouraged the knowledge and dissemination of Latin, adopting it as the Church’s language, capable of passing on the Gospel message throughout the world. This is authoritatively stated by the Apostolic Constitution Veterum Sapientia of my Predecessor, Blessed John XXIII.

Indeed the Church has spoken and prayed in the languages of all peoples since Pentecost. Nevertheless, the Christian communities of the early centuries made frequent use of Greek and Latin, languages of universal communication in the world in which they lived and through which the newness of Christ’s word encountered the heritage of the Roman-Hellenistic culture.

After the fall of the Roman Empire of the West, the Church of Rome not only continued to use Latin but, in a certain way, made herself its custodian and champion in both the theological and liturgical sectors as well as in formation and in the transmission of knowledge.

2. In our time too, knowledge of the Latin language and culture is proving to be more necessary than ever for the study of the sources, which, among others, numerous ecclesiastical disciplines draw from, such as, for example, theology, liturgy, patristics and canon law, as the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council teaches (cf. Decree Optatam Totius, n. 13).

In addition, precisely in order to highlight the Church’s universal character, the liturgical books of the Roman Rite, the most important documents of the Papal Magisterium and the most solemn official Acts of the Roman Pontiffs are written in this language in their authentic form.

3. Yet in today’s culture, the danger of an increasingly superficial knowledge of Latin may be noted in the context of the widespread weakening of humanistic studies. This is also a risk in the context of the philosophical and theological studies of future priests. Moreover in our own world, in which science and technology play such an important role, there is a renewed interest in the Latin culture and language and not only on those continents whose culture is rooted in the Greco-Roman heritage. This attention seems all the more meaningful since it not only involves
academic and institutional sectors but also concerns young people and scholars from very different nations and traditions.

4. It therefore appears urgently necessary to support the commitment to a greater knowledge and more competent use of Latin, both in the ecclesial context and in the broader world of culture. In order to give relevance and resonance to this undertaking the use of didactic methods in keeping with the new conditions and the promotion of a network of relations between academic institutions and scholars is particularly appropriate so as to make the most of the rich and multiform patrimony of the Latin civilization.

To contribute to attaining these goals following in the footsteps of my venerable Predecessors, today, with this Motu Proprio, I establish the Pontifical Academy for Latin, under the Pontifical Council for Culture. It is governed by a President assisted by a Secretary, who are appointed by me, and by an Academic Council.

The Latinitas Foundation, erected by Paul VI with the Chirograph Romani Sermonis of 30 June 1976 is hereby replaced.

I order that this Apostolic Letter in the form of a Motu Proprio, with which I approve the attached Statutes ad experimentum, for five years, be published in L'Osservatore Romano.

Given at St Peter's in Rome on 10 November 2012, the Memorial of St Leo the Great, the eighth year of my Pontificate.

BENEDICTUS PP XVI

Statutes of the Pontifical Academy for Latin

Article 1

The Pontifical Academy for Latin, with headquarters in Vatican City State, is established for the promotion and appreciation of the Latin language and culture. The Academy is linked to the Pontifical Council for Culture on which it depends.

Article 2
§1. The aims of the Academy are:

a) to encourage the knowledge and study of Latin—language and literature, classical and patristic, Medieval and humanistic—in particular at the Catholic institutions for formation at which both seminarians and priests are trained and taught;

b) to promote the use of Latin in various contexts, both as a written and as a spoken language.

§ 2. To achieve the said aims the Academy intends:

a) to publish and to organize meetings, study congresses and exhibitions;

b) to set up and support courses, seminars and other training projects in coordination with the Pontifical Institute for Advanced Latin Studies;

c) to teach the young generations a knowledge of Latin, also through the modern means of communication;

d) to organize exhibitions, shows and competitions;

e) to plan other activities and initiatives necessary for attaining the goals of the institution.

Article 3

The Pontifical Academy for Latin consists of the President, the Secretary, the Academic Council and Members, who are also known as Academicians.

Article 4

§ 1. The President of the Academy is appointed by the Supreme Pontiff for a five-year term. The office of the President may be extended for a second five-year term.

§ 2. It is the task of the President:

a) to represent the Academy legally before any judicial or administrative authority, of either the Church or the State;

b) to convocate and to chair the Academic Council and the Assembly of Members;
c) to take part as a Member in the meetings of the Coordinating Council of the Pontifical Academies and to maintain relations with the Pontifical Council for Culture.

d) supervise the Academy’s work

e) take care of the ordinary administration with the assistance of the Secretary, and in matters of extraordinary administration with the advice of the Academic Council and of the Pontifical Council for Culture.

Article 5

§ 1. The Secretary is appointed by the Supreme Pontiff for a five-year term and may be extended for a second five-year term.

§ 2. The President delegates the Secretary to replace him in the case of absence or impediment.

Article 6

§ 1. The Academic Council consists of the President, the Secretary and five Councillors. The Councillors are elected by the Assembly of Academics for a five-year term that may be extended.

§ 2. The Academic Council, which is chaired by the President of the Academy, deliberates on the more important matters that concern the Academy. It approves the agenda in view of the Assembly of Members that is to be held at least once a year. The Council is convoked by the President at least once a year and, in addition, whenever it is requested by at least three Councillors.

Article 7

The President, with the consent of the Council, may appoint an Archivist, with the duties of librarian, and a Treasurer.

Article 8

§ 1. The Academy consists of no more than 50 Ordinary Members known as Academicians, who are scholars and connoisseurs of Latin, language and literature. They are appointed by the Secretary of State. When they reach the age of 80, the Ordinary Members become “emeritus.”

§ 2. Ordinary Academicians take part in the Assembly of the Academy
convoked by the President. Academicians emeritus may take part in the Assembly but are not entitled to vote.

§ 3. The President of the Academy, having heard the opinion of the Council, may appoint as well as Ordinary Academicians other Members, known as Correspondents.

Article 9

The patrimony of the superseded Fondazione Latinitas and its activities, including the redaction and publication of the Review Latinitas, are transferred to the Pontifical Academy for Latin.

Article 10

Although not expressly prescribed, reference is made to the norms of the Code of Canon Law in force and to the laws of Vatican City State.

Apostolic letter in the form of a “Motu Proprio” Intima Ecclesiae Natura on the service of charity (November 11, 2012)

Introduction

“The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (kerygma-martyria), celebrating the sacraments (leitourgia) and exercising the ministry of charity (diakonia). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable” (Deus Caritas Est, 25).

The service of charity is also a constitutive element of the Church’s mission and an indispensable expression of her very being (cf. ibid.); all the faithful have the right and duty to devote themselves personally to living the new commandment that Christ left us (cf. Jn 15:12), and to offering our contemporaries not only material assistance, but also refreshment and care for their souls (cf. Deus Caritas Est, 28). The Church is also called as a whole to the exercise of the diakonia of charity, whether in the small
communities of particular Churches or on the level of the universal Church. This requires organization “if it is to be an ordered service to the community” (cf. ibid., 20), an organization which entails a variety of institutional expressions.

With regard to this diakonia of charity, in my Encyclical Deus Caritas Est I pointed out that “in conformity with the episcopal structure of the Church, the Bishops, as successors of the Apostles, are charged with primary responsibility for carrying out in the particular Churches” the service of charity (No. 32); at the same time, however, I noted that “the Code of Canon Law, in the canons on the ministry of the Bishop, does not expressly mention charity as a specific sector of episcopal activity” (ibid.). Although “the Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops explored more specifically the duty of charity as a responsibility incumbent upon the whole Church and upon each Bishop in his Diocese” (ibid.), there was still a need to fill the aforementioned lacuna and to give adequate expression in canonical legislation to both the essential nature of the service of charity in the Church and its constitutive relationship with the episcopal ministry, while outlining the legal aspects of this ecclesial service, especially when carried out in an organized way and with the explicit support of the Bishops.

In view of this, with the present Motu Proprio I intend to provide an organic legislative framework for the better overall ordering of the various organized ecclesial forms of the service of charity, which are closely related to the diaconal nature of the Church and the episcopal ministry.

It is important, however, to keep in mind that “practical activity will always be insufficient, unless it visibly expresses a love for man, a love nourished by an encounter with Christ” (ibid., 34). In carrying out their charitable activity, therefore, the various Catholic organizations should not limit themselves merely to collecting and distributing funds, but should show special concern for individuals in need and exercise a valuable educational function within the Christian community, helping people to appreciate the importance of sharing, respect and love in the spirit of the Gospel of Christ. The Church’s charitable activity at all levels must avoid the risk of becoming just another form of organized social assistance (cf. ibid., 31).
The organized charitable initiatives promoted by the faithful in various places differ widely one from the other, and call for appropriate management. In a particular way, the work of Caritas has expanded at the parish, diocesan, national and international levels. Caritas is an institution promoted by the ecclesiastical Hierarchy which has rightly earned the esteem and trust of the faithful and of many other people around the world for its generous and consistent witness of faith and its concrete ability to respond to the needs of the poor. In addition to this broad initiative, officially supported by the Church’s authority, many other initiatives have arisen in different places from the free enterprise of the faithful, who themselves wish to help in various ways to offer a concrete witness of charity towards those in need. While differing in their origin and juridical status, both are expressions of sensitivity and a desire to respond to the same pressing need.

The Church as an institution is not extraneous to those organized initiatives which represent a free expression of the concern of the baptized for individuals and peoples in need. The Church’s Pastors should always welcome these initiatives as a sign of the sharing of all the faithful in the mission of the Church; they should respect the specific characteristics and administrative autonomy which these initiatives enjoy, in accordance with their nature, as a manifestation of the freedom of the baptized.

Alongside these, the Church’s authority has, on its own initiative, promoted specific agencies which provide institutionally for allocating donations made by the faithful, following suitable legal and administrative methods which allow for a more effective response to concrete needs.

Nevertheless, to the extent that such activities are promoted by the Hierarchy itself, or are explicitly supported by the authority of the Church’s Pastors, there is a need to ensure that they are managed in conformity with the demands of the Church’s teaching and the intentions of the faithful, and that they likewise respect the legitimate norms laid down by civil authorities. In view of these requirements, it became necessary to establish in the Church’s law certain essential norms inspired by the general criteria of canonical discipline, which would make explicit in this sector of activity the legal responsibilities assumed by the various subjects involved, specifying in particular the position of authority and coordination.
belonging to the diocesan Bishop. At the same time, the norms in question need to be broad enough to embrace the significant diversity of the institutions of Catholic inspiration which are engaged as such in this sector, whether those originating from the Hierarchy or those born of the direct initiative of the faithful, received and encouraged by the local Pastors. While it was necessary to lay down norms in this regard, there was also a need to consider the requirements of justice and the responsibility of Bishops before the faithful, with respect for the legitimate autonomy of each institution.

**Dispositive Part**

Consequently, upon the proposal of the Cardinal President of the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*, and after consultation with the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, I establish and decree the following:

Art. 1.- § 1. The faithful have the right to join in associations and to establish agencies to carry out specific charitable services, especially on behalf of the poor and suffering. To the extent that these are linked to the charitable service of the Church’s Pastors and/or intend to use for this purpose contributions made by the faithful, they must submit their own Statutes for the approval of the competent ecclesiastical authority and comply with the following norms.

§ 2. Similarly, it is also the right of the faithful to establish foundations to fund concrete charitable initiatives, in accordance with the norms of canons 1303 of the Code of Canon Law (CIC) and 1047 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO). If foundations of this type correspond to the characteristics set forth in § 1, they will also observe, congrua congruis referendo, the provisions of the present law.

§ 3. In addition to observing the canonical legislation, the collective charitable initiatives to which this Motu Proprio refers are required to follow Catholic principles in their activity and they may not accept commitments which could in any way affect the observance of those principles.

§ 4. Agencies and foundations for charitable purposes promoted by Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life are required to comply with these norms, and they must follow the prescriptions of
canons 312 § 2 CIC and 575 § 2 CCEO.

Art. 2.- § 1. The Statutes of each charitable agency referred to in the preceding article must also contain, in addition to its institutional offices and structures of governance in accordance with canon 95 § 1 CIC, the guiding principles and objectives of the initiative, the management of funds, the profile of its workers, as well as the reports and information which must be presented to the competent ecclesiastical authority.

§ 2. A charitable agency may use the name “Catholic” only with the written consent of the competent authority, as laid down by canon 300 CIC.

§ 3. Agencies promoted by the faithful for charitable purposes can have an Ecclesiastical Assistant appointed in accordance with the Statutes, according to the norm of canons 324 § 2 and 317 CIC.

§ 4. At the same time, the ecclesiastical authority must bear in mind its duty to regulate the exercise of the rights of the faithful in accordance with canons 223 § 2 CIC and 26 § 2 CCEO, and thus to avoid the proliferation of charitable initiatives to the detriment of their activity and effectiveness with regard to their stated goals.

Art. 3. - § 1. With regard to the preceding articles, it is understood that the competent authority at the respective levels is that indicated by canons 312 CIC and 575 CCEO.

§ 2. For agencies not approved at the national level, even though they operate in different Dioceses, the competent authority is understood to be the diocesan Bishop of the place where the agency has its principal office. In any event, the agency has the duty to inform the Bishops of other Dioceses where it operates and to respect the guidelines for the activities of the various charitable agencies present in those Dioceses.

Art. 4. § 1. The diocesan Bishop (cf. canon 134 § 3 CIC and canon 987 CCEO) exercises his proper pastoral solicitude for the service of charity in the particular Church entrusted to him as its Pastor, guide and the one primarily responsible for that service.

§ 2. The diocesan Bishop encourages and supports the initiatives and works of service to neighbor in his particular Church, and encourages in
the faithful the spirit of practical charity as an expression of the Christian life and sharing in the mission of the Church, as indicated in canons 215 and 222 CIC and 25 and 18 CCEO.

§ 3. It is the responsibility of the diocesan Bishop to ensure that in the activities and management of these agencies the norms of the Church’s universal and particular law are respected, as well as the intentions of the faithful who made donations or bequests for these specific purposes (cf. canons 1300 CIC and 1044 CCEO).

Art. 5. - The diocesan Bishop is to ensure that the Church enjoys the right to carry out charitable activities, and he is to take care that the faithful and the institutions under his supervision comply with the legitimate civil legislation in this area.

Art. 6. - It is the responsibility of the diocesan Bishop, as indicated by canons 394 § 1 CIC and 203 § 1 CCEO, to coordinate within his territory the different works of charitable service, both those promoted by the Hierarchy itself and those arising from initiatives of the faithful, without prejudice to their proper autonomy in accordance with their respective Statutes. In particular, he is to take care that their activities keep alive the spirit of the Gospel.

Art. 7. § 1. The agencies referred to in Article 1 § 1 are required to select their personnel from among persons who share, or at least respect, the Catholic identity of these works.

§ 2. To ensure an evangelical witness in the service of charity, the diocesan Bishop is to take care that those who work in the Church’s charitable apostolate, along with due professional competence, give an example of Christian life and witness to a formation of heart which testifies to a faith working through charity. To this end, he is also to provide for their theological and pastoral formation, through specific curricula agreed upon by the officers of various agencies and through suitable aids to the spiritual life.

Art. 8. - Wherever necessary, due to the number and variety of initiatives, the diocesan Bishop is to establish in the Church entrusted to his care an Office to direct and coordinate the service of charity in his name.
Art. 9. - § 1. The Bishop is to encourage in every parish of his territory the creation of a local Caritas service or a similar body, which will also promote in the whole community educational activities aimed at fostering a spirit of sharing and authentic charity. When appropriate, this service is to be established jointly by various parishes in the same territory.

§ 2. It is the responsibility of the Bishop and the respective parish priest to ensure that together with Caritas, other charitable initiatives can coexist and develop within the parish under the general coordination of the parish priest, taking into account, however, the prescriptions of Article 2 § 4 above.

§ 3. It is the duty of the diocesan Bishop and the respective parish priests to see that in this area the faithful are not led into error or misunderstanding; hence they are to prevent publicity being given through parish or diocesan structures to initiatives which, while presenting themselves as charitable, propose choices or methods at odds with the Church’s teaching.

Art. 10. - § 1. It is the responsibility of the Bishop to supervise the ecclesiastical goods of the charitable agencies subject to his authority.

§ 2. It is the duty of the diocesan Bishop to ensure that the proceeds of collections made in accordance with canons 1265 and 1266 CIC and canons 1014 and 1015 CCEO are used for their stated purposes [cf. canons 1267 CIC, 1016 CCEO].

§ 3. In particular, the diocesan Bishop is to ensure that charitable agencies dependent upon him do not receive financial support from groups or institutions that pursue ends contrary to Church’s teaching. Similarly, lest scandal be given to the faithful, the diocesan Bishop is to ensure that these charitable agencies do not accept contributions for initiatives whose ends, or the means used to pursue them, are not in conformity with the Church’s teaching.

§ 4. In a particular way, the Bishop is to see that the management of initiatives dependent on him offers a testimony of Christian simplicity of life. To this end, he will ensure that salaries and operational expenses, while respecting the demands of justice and a necessary level of professionalism, are in due proportion to analogous expenses of his
§ 5. To permit the ecclesiastical authority mentioned in Article 3 § 1 to
exercise its duty of supervision, the agencies mentioned in Article 1 § 1, are
required to submit to the competent Ordinary an annual financial report in
a way which he himself will indicate.

Art. 11. - The diocesan Bishop is obliged, if necessary, to make known
to the faithful the fact that the activity of a particular charitable agency is
no longer being carried out in conformity with the Church’s teaching, and
then to prohibit that agency from using the name “Catholic” and to take
the necessary measures should personal responsibilities emerge.

Art. 12. - § 1. The diocesan Bishop is to encourage the national and
international activity of the charitable agencies under his care, especially
cooparation with poorer ecclesiastical circumscriptions by analogy with the
prescriptions of canons 1274 § 3 CIC and 1021 § 3 CCEO.

§ 2. Pastoral concern for charitable works, depending on circumstances
of time and place, can be carried out jointly by various neighboring Bishops
with regard to a number of Churches, in accordance with the norm of law.
When such joint activity is international in character, the competent
Dicastery of the Holy See is to be consulted in advance. For charitable
initiatives on the national level, it is fitting that the Bishop consult the
respective office of the Bishops’ Conference.

Art. 13. - The local ecclesiastical authority retains the full right to give
permission for initiatives undertaken by Catholic agencies in areas of his
jurisdiction, with due respect for canonical norms and the specific identity
of the individual agencies. It is also the duty of the Bishop to ensure that
the activities carried out in his Diocese are conducted in conformity with
ecclesiastical discipline, either prohibiting them or adopting any measures
needed in cases where that discipline is not respected.

Art. 14. - Where appropriate, the Bishop is to promote charitable
initiatives in cooperation with other Churches or Ecclesial Communities,
respecting the proper identity of each.

Art. 15. - § 1. The Pontifical Council Cor Unum has the task of
promoting the application of this legislation and ensuring that it is applied
at all levels, without prejudice to the competence of the Pontifical Council for the Laity with regard to associations of the faithful as provided for in Article 133 of the Apostolic Constitution Pastor Bonus, the competence of the Secretariat of State’s Section for Relations with States, and the general competences of other Dicasteries and Institutes of the Roman Curia. In particular, the Pontifical Council Cor Unum is to take care that the charitable service of Catholic institutions at the international level is always to be carried out in communion with the various local Churches.

§ 2. The Pontifical Council Cor Unum is also competent for the canonical establishment of charitable agencies at the international level; it thus takes on the responsibilities of discipline and promotion entailed by law.

I order that everything I have laid down in this Apostolic Letter issued Motu Proprio be fully observed, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, even if worthy of particular mention, and I decree that it be promulgated by publication in the daily newspaper L’Osservatore Romano and enter into force on December 10, 2012.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter’s, on November 11, in the year 2012, the eighth of my Pontificate.

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

Torna ai contenuti

Message for the 46th World Day of Peace, The Vatican, (December 8, 2012)

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

1. EACH NEW YEAR brings the expectation of a better world. In light of this, I ask God, the Father of humanity, to grant us concord and peace, so that the aspirations of all for a happy and prosperous life may be achieved.

Fifty years after the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, which
helped to strengthen the Church’s mission in the world, it is heartening to realize that Christians, as the People of God in fellowship with him and sojourning among mankind, are committed within history to sharing humanity’s joys and hopes, grief and anguish, as they proclaim the salvation of Christ and promote peace for all.

In effect, our times, marked by globalization with its positive and negative aspects, as well as the continuation of violent conflicts and threats of war, demand a new, shared commitment in pursuit of the common good and the development of all men, and of the whole man.

It is alarming to see hotbeds of tension and conflict caused by growing instances of inequality between rich and poor, by the prevalence of a selfish and individualistic mindset which also finds expression in an unregulated financial capitalism. In addition to the varied forms of terrorism and international crime, peace is also endangered by those forms of fundamentalism and fanaticism which distort the true nature of religion, which is called to foster fellowship and reconciliation among people.

All the same, the many different efforts at peacemaking which abound in our world testify to mankind’s innate vocation to peace. In every person the desire for peace is an essential aspiration which coincides in a certain way with the desire for a full, happy and successful human life. In other words, the desire for peace corresponds to a fundamental moral principle, namely, the duty and right to an integral social and communitarian development, which is part of God’s plan for mankind. Man is made for the peace which is God’s gift.

All of this led me to draw inspiration for this Message from the words of Jesus Christ: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Mt 5:9).

_Gospel beatitude_

2. The beatitudes which Jesus proclaimed (cf. Mt 5:3-12 and Lk 6:20-23) are promises. In the biblical tradition, the beatitude is a literary genre which always involves some good news, a “gospel,” which culminates in a promise. Therefore, the beatitudes are not only moral exhortations whose observance foresees in due time—ordinarily in the next life—a reward or a
situation of future happiness. Rather, the blessedness of which the beatitudes speak consists in the fulfillment of a promise made to all those who allow themselves to be guided by the requirements of truth, justice and love. In the eyes of the world, those who trust in God and his promises often appear naïve or far from reality. Yet Jesus tells them that not only in the next life, but already in this life, they will discover that they are children of God, and that God has always been, and ever will be, completely on their side. They will understand that they are not alone, because he is on the side of those committed to truth, justice and love. Jesus, the revelation of the Father’s love, does not hesitate to offer himself in self-sacrifice. Once we accept Jesus Christ, God and man, we have the joyful experience of an immense gift: the sharing of God’s own life, the life of grace, the pledge of a fully blessed existence. Jesus Christ, in particular, grants us true peace, which is born of the trusting encounter of man with God.

Jesus’ beatitude tells us that peace is both a messianic gift and the fruit of human effort. In effect, peace presupposes a humanism open to transcendence. It is the fruit of the reciprocal gift, of a mutual enrichment, thanks to the gift which has its source in God and enables us to live with others and for others. The ethics of peace is an ethics of fellowship and sharing. It is indispensable, then, that the various cultures in our day overcome forms of anthropology and ethics based on technical and practical suppositions which are merely subjectivistic and pragmatic, in virtue of which relationships of coexistence are inspired by criteria of power or profit, means become ends and vice versa, and culture and education are centered on instruments, technique and efficiency alone. The precondition for peace is the dismantling of the dictatorship of relativism and of the supposition of a completely autonomous morality which precludes acknowledgment of the ineluctable natural moral law inscribed by God upon the conscience of every man and woman. Peace is the building up of coexistence in rational and moral terms, based on a foundation whose measure is not created by man, but rather by God. As Psalm 29 puts it: “May the Lord give strength to his people; may the Lord bless his people with peace” (v. 11).

Peace: God’s gift and the fruit of human effort
3. Peace concerns the human person as a whole, and it involves complete commitment. It is peace with God through a life lived according to his will. It is interior peace with oneself, and exterior peace with our neighbors and all creation. Above all, as Blessed John XXIII wrote in his Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, whose fiftieth anniversary will fall in a few months, it entails the building up of a coexistence based on truth, freedom, love and justice.\[^2\] The denial of what makes up the true nature of human beings in its essential dimensions, its intrinsic capacity to know the true and the good and, ultimately, to know God himself, jeopardizes peacemaking. Without the truth about man inscribed by the Creator in the human heart, freedom and love become debased, and justice loses the ground of its exercise.

To become authentic peacemakers, it is fundamental to keep in mind our transcendent dimension and to enter into constant dialogue with God, the Father of mercy, whereby we implore the redemption achieved for us by his only-begotten Son. In this way mankind can overcome that progressive dimming and rejection of peace which is sin in all its forms: selfishness and violence, greed and the will to power and dominion, intolerance, hatred and unjust structures.

The attainment of peace depends above all on recognizing that we are, in God, one human family. This family is structured, as the Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* taught, by interpersonal relations and institutions supported and animated by a communitarian “we,” which entails an internal and external moral order in which, in accordance with truth and justice, reciprocal rights and mutual duties are sincerely recognized. Peace is an order enlivened and integrated by love, in such a way that we feel the needs of others as our own, share our goods with others and work throughout the world for greater communion in spiritual values. It is an order achieved in freedom, that is, in a way consistent with the dignity of persons who, by their very nature as rational beings, take responsibility for their own actions.\[^3\]

Peace is not a dream or something utopian; it is possible. Our gaze needs to go deeper, beneath superficial appearances and phenomena, to discern a positive reality which exists in human hearts, since every man and woman has been created in the image of God and is called to grow and
contribute to the building of a new world. God himself, through the incarnation of his Son and his work of redemption, has entered into history and has brought about a new creation and a new covenant between God and man (cf. Jer 31:31-34), thus enabling us to have a “new heart” and a “new spirit” (cf. Ez 36:26).

For this very reason the Church is convinced of the urgency of a new proclamation of Jesus Christ, the first and fundamental factor of the integral development of peoples and also of peace. Jesus is indeed our peace, our justice and our reconciliation (cf. Eph 2:14; 2 Cor 5:18). The peacemaker, according to Jesus’ beatitude, is the one who seeks the good of the other, the fullness of good in body and soul, today and tomorrow.

From this teaching one can infer that each person and every community, whether religious, civil, educational or cultural, is called to work for peace. Peace is principally the attainment of the common good in society at its different levels, primary and intermediary, national, international and global. Precisely for this reason it can be said that the paths which lead to the attainment of the common good are also the paths that must be followed in the pursuit of peace.

Peacemakers are those who love, defend and promote life in its fullness

4. The path to the attainment of the common good and to peace is above all that of respect for human life in all its many aspects, beginning with its conception, through its development and up to its natural end. True peacemakers, then, are those who love, defend and promote human life in all its dimensions, personal, communitarian and transcendent. Life in its fullness is the height of peace. Anyone who loves peace cannot tolerate attacks and crimes against life.

Those who insufficiently value human life and, in consequence, support among other things the liberalization of abortion, perhaps do not realize that in this way they are proposing the pursuit of a false peace. The flight from responsibility, which degrades human persons, and even more so the killing of a defenseless and innocent being, will never be able to produce happiness or peace. Indeed how could one claim to bring about peace, the integral development of peoples or even the protection of the environment without defending the life of those who are weakest, beginning with the
unborn. Every offence against life, especially at its beginning, inevitably causes irreparable damage to development, peace and the environment. Neither is it just to introduce surreptitiously into legislation false rights or freedoms which, on the basis of a reductive and relativistic view of human beings and the clever use of ambiguous expressions aimed at promoting a supposed right to abortion and euthanasia, pose a threat to the fundamental right to life.

There is also a need to acknowledge and promote the natural structure of marriage as the union of a man and a woman in the face of attempts to make it juridical equivalent to radically different types of union; such attempts actually harm and help to destabilize marriage, obscuring its specific nature and its indispensable role in society.

These principles are not truths of faith, nor are they simply a corollary of the right to religious freedom. They are inscribed in human nature itself, accessible to reason and thus common to all humanity. The Church’s efforts to promote them are not therefore confessional in character, but addressed to all people, whatever their religious affiliation. Efforts of this kind are all the more necessary the more these principles are denied or misunderstood, since this constitutes an offence against the truth of the human person, with serious harm to justice and peace.

Consequently, another important way of helping to build peace is for legal systems and the administration of justice to recognize the right to invoke the principle of conscientious objection in the face of laws or government measures that offend against human dignity, such as abortion and euthanasia.

One of the fundamental human rights, also with reference to international peace, is the right of individuals and communities to religious freedom. At this stage in history, it is becoming increasingly important to promote this right not only from the negative point of view, as freedom from—for example, obligations or limitations involving the freedom to choose one’s religion but also from the positive point of view, in its various expressions, as freedom for—for example, bearing witness to one’s religion, making its teachings known, engaging in activities in the educational, benevolent and charitable fields which permit the practice of religious
precepts, and existing and acting as social bodies structured in accordance with the proper doctrinal principles and institutional ends of each. Sadly, even in countries of long-standing Christian tradition, instances of religious intolerance are becoming more numerous, especially in relation to Christianity and those who simply wear identifying signs of their religion.

Peacemakers must also bear in mind that, in growing sectors of public opinion, the ideologies of radical liberalism and technocracy are spreading the conviction that economic growth should be pursued even to the detriment of the state’s social responsibilities and civil society’s networks of solidarity, together with social rights and duties. It should be remembered that these rights and duties are fundamental for the full realization of other rights and duties, starting with those which are civil and political.

One of the social rights and duties most under threat today is the right to work. The reason for this is that labor and the rightful recognition of workers’ juridical status are increasingly undervalued, since economic development is thought to depend principally on completely free markets. Labor is thus regarded as a variable dependent on economic and financial mechanisms. In this regard, I would reaffirm that human dignity and economic, social and political factors, demand that we continue “to prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone.”[4] If this ambitious goal is to be realized, one prior condition is a fresh outlook on work, based on ethical principles and spiritual values that reinforce the notion of work as a fundamental good for the individual, for the family and for society. Corresponding to this good are a duty and a right that demand courageous new policies of universal employment.

Building the good of peace through a new model of development and economics

5. In many quarters it is now recognized that a new model of development is needed, as well as a new approach to the economy. Both integral, sustainable development in solidarity and the common good require a correct scale of goods and values which can be structured with God as the ultimate point of reference. It is not enough to have many different means and choices at one’s disposal, however good these may be. Both the wide variety of goods fostering development and the presence of a
wide range of choices must be employed against the horizon of a good life, an upright conduct that acknowledges the primacy of the spiritual and the call to work for the common good. Otherwise they lose their real value, and end up becoming new idols.

In order to emerge from the present financial and economic crisis—which has engendered ever greater inequalities—we need people, groups and institutions which will promote life by fostering human creativity, in order to draw from the crisis itself an opportunity for discernment and for a new economic model. The predominant model of recent decades called for seeking maximum profit and consumption, on the basis of an individualistic and selfish mindset, aimed at considering individuals solely in terms of their ability to meet the demands of competitiveness. Yet, from another standpoint, true and lasting success is attained through the gift of ourselves, our intellectual abilities and our entrepreneurial skills, since a “livable” or truly human economic development requires the principle of gratuitousness as an expression of fraternity and the logic of gift.[5] Concretely, in economic activity, peacemakers are those who establish bonds of fairness and reciprocity with their colleagues, workers, clients and consumers. They engage in economic activity for the sake of the common good and they experience this commitment as something transcending their self-interest, for the benefit of present and future generations. Thus they work not only for themselves, but also to ensure for others a future and a dignified employment.

In the economic sector, states in particular need to articulate policies of industrial and agricultural development concerned with social progress and the growth everywhere of constitutional and democratic states. The creation of ethical structures for currency, financial and commercial markets is also fundamental and indispensable; these must be stabilized and better coordinated and controlled so as not to prove harmful to the very poor. With greater resolve than has hitherto been the case, the concern of peacemakers must also focus upon the food crisis, which is graver than the financial crisis. The issue of food security is once more central to the international political agenda, as a result of interrelated crises, including sudden shifts in the price of basic foodstuffs, irresponsible behavior by some economic actors and insufficient control on the part of governments
and the international community. To face this crisis, peacemakers are called to work together in a spirit of solidarity, from the local to the international level, with the aim of enabling farmers, especially in small rural holdings, to carry out their activity in a dignified and sustainable way from the social, environmental and economic points of view.

*Education for a culture of peace: the role of the family and institutions*

6. I wish to reaffirm forcefully that the various peacemakers are called to cultivate a passion for the common good of the family and for social justice, and a commitment to effective social education.

No one should ignore or underestimate the decisive role of the family, which is the basic cell of society from the demographic, ethical, pedagogical, economic and political standpoints. The family has a natural vocation to promote life: it accompanies individuals as they mature and it encourages mutual growth and enrichment through caring and sharing. The Christian family in particular serves as a seedbed for personal maturation according to the standards of divine love. The family is one of the indispensable social subjects for the achievement of a culture of peace. The rights of parents and their primary role in the education of their children in the area of morality and religion must be safeguarded. It is in the family that peacemakers, tomorrow’s promoters of a culture of life and love, are born and nurtured.[6]

Religious communities are involved in a special way in this immense task of education for peace. The Church believes that she shares in this great responsibility as part of the new evangelization, which is centered on conversion to the truth and love of Christ and, consequently, the spiritual and moral rebirth of individuals and societies. Encountering Jesus Christ shapes peacemakers, committing them to fellowship and to overcoming injustice.

Cultural institutions, schools and universities have a special mission of peace. They are called to make a notable contribution not only to the formation of new generations of leaders, but also to the renewal of public institutions, both national and international. They can also contribute to a scientific reflection which will ground economic and financial activities on a solid anthropological and ethical basis. Today’s world, especially the
world of politics, needs to be sustained by fresh thinking and a new cultural synthesis so as to overcome purely technical approaches and to harmonize the various political currents with a view to the common good. The latter, seen as an ensemble of positive interpersonal and institutional relationships at the service of the integral growth of individuals and groups, is at the basis of all true education for peace.

A pedagogy for peacemakers

7. In the end, we see clearly the need to propose and promote a pedagogy of peace. This calls for a rich interior life, clear and valid moral points of reference, and appropriate attitudes and lifestyles. Acts of peacemaking converge for the achievement of the common good; they create interest in peace and cultivate peace. Thoughts, words and gestures of peace create a mentality and a culture of peace, and a respectful, honest and cordial atmosphere. There is a need, then, to teach people to love one another, to cultivate peace and to live with good will rather than mere tolerance. A fundamental encouragement to this is “to say no to revenge, to recognize injustices, to accept apologies without looking for them, and finally, to forgive,”[^7] in such a way that mistakes and offenses can be acknowledged in truth, so as to move forward together towards reconciliation. This requires the growth of a pedagogy of pardon. Evil is in fact overcome by good, and justice is to be sought in imitating God the Father who loves all his children (cf. Mt 5:21-48). This is a slow process, for it presupposes a spiritual evolution, an education in lofty values, a new vision of human history. There is a need to renounce that false peace promised by the idols of this world along with the dangers which accompany it, that false peace which dulls consciences, which leads to self-absorption, to a withered existence lived in indifference. The pedagogy of peace, on the other hand, implies activity, compassion, solidarity, courage and perseverance.

Jesus embodied all these attitudes in his own life, even to the complete gift of himself, even to “losing his life” (cf. Mt 10:39; Lk 17:33; Jn 12:25). He promises his disciples that sooner or later they will make the extraordinary discovery to which I originally alluded, namely that God is in the world, the God of Jesus, fully on the side of man. Here I would recall the prayer asking God to make us instruments of his peace, to be able to
bring his love wherever there is hatred, his mercy wherever there is hurt, and true faith wherever there is doubt. For our part, let us join Blessed John XXIII in asking God to enlighten all leaders so that, besides caring for the proper material welfare of their peoples, they may secure for them the precious gift of peace, break down the walls which divide them, strengthen the bonds of mutual love, grow in understanding, and pardon those who have done them wrong; in this way, by his power and inspiration all the peoples of the earth will experience fraternity, and the peace for which they long will ever flourish and reign among them."[8]

With this prayer I express my hope that all will be true peacemakers, so that the city of man may grow in fraternal harmony, prosperity and peace.

From the Vatican, December 8, 2012

BENEDICTUS PP XVI


General Audience, St. Peter’s Square, 
Vatican (October 24, 2012)

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Last Wednesday, with the beginning of the Year of Faith, I started a new series of catecheses on faith. And today I would like to reflect with you on a fundamental question: What is faith? Does faith still make sense in a world in which science and technology have unfolded horizons unthinkable until a short time ago? What does believing mean today? In fact, in our time we need a renewed education in the faith that includes, of course, knowledge of its truths and of the history of salvation, but that is born above all from a true encounter with God in Jesus Christ, from loving him, from trusting him, so that the whole of our life becomes involved.

Today, together with so many signs of goodness a certain spiritual desert is also developing around us. At times we get sort of feeling, from certain events we have news of every day, that the world is not moving towards the building of a more brotherly and peaceful community; the very ideas of progress and wellbeing have shadows too. Despite the greatness of scientific discoveries and technological triumphs, human beings today do not seem to have become truly any freer or more human; so many forms of exploitation, manipulation, violence, abuse and injustice endure.... A certain kind of culture, moreover, has taught people to move solely within the horizon of things, of the feasible, to believe only in what they can see and touch with their own hands. Yet the number of those who feel bewildered is also growing, and search to go beyond a merely horizontal view of reality they are prepared to believe in everything and nothing.

In this context certain fundamental questions reemerge that are far weightier than they seem at first sight. What is life’s meaning? Is there a future for humanity, for us and for the generations to come? In which direction should we orient our free decisions for a good and successful outcome in life? What awaits us beyond the threshold of death?

From these irrepressible questions it becomes clear how the world of planning, of precise calculation and of experimentation, in a word the knowledge of science, although important for human life is not enough on
its own. We do not only need bread, we need love, meaning and hope, a sound foundation, a solid terrain that helps us to live with an authentic meaning even in times of crisis, in darkness, in difficulty, and with our daily problems. Faith gives us precisely this: it is a confident entrustment to a “You,” who is God, who gives me a different certitude, but no less solid than that which comes from precise calculation or from science. Faith is not a mere intellectual assent of the human person to specific truths about God; it is an act with which I entrust myself freely to a God who is Father and who loves me; it is adherence to a “You” who gives me hope and trust.

Of course, this adherence to God is not without content; with it we are aware that God has shown himself to us in Christ, he has made us see his face and has made himself really close to each one of us. Indeed, God has revealed that his love for man, for each one of us, is boundless: on the Cross, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God made man, shows us in the clearest possible way how far this love reaches, even to the gift of himself, even to the supreme sacrifice. With the mystery of Christ’s death and Resurrection, God plumbs to the depths of our humanity to bring it back to him, to uplift it to his heights. Faith is believing in this love of God that is never lacking in the face of human wickedness, in the face of evil and death, but is capable of transforming every kind of slavery, giving us the possibility of salvation. Having faith, then, is meeting this “You,” God, who supports me and grants me the promise of an indestructible love that not only aspires to eternity but gives it; it means entrusting myself to God with the attitude of a child, who knows well that all his difficulties, all his problems are understood in the “you” of his mother. And this possibility of salvation through faith is a gift that God offers all men and women. I think we should meditate more often—in our daily life, marked by problems and at times by dramatic situations—on the fact that believing in a Christian manner means my trusting abandonment to the profound meaning that sustains me and the world, that meaning that we are unable to give to each other but can only receive as a gift, and that is the foundation on which we can live without fear. And we must be able to proclaim this liberating and reassuring certainty of faith with words and show it by living our life as Christians.
However, we see around us every day that many remain indifferent or refuse to accept this proclamation. At the end of Mark's Gospel we heard harsh words from the Risen One who says: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (*Mk* 16:16), loses himself. I would like to invite you to reflect on this.

Trust in the action of the Holy Spirit must always impel us to go and preach the Gospel, to the courageous witness of faith; but, in addition to the possibility of making a positive response to the gift of faith, there is also the risk of rejecting the Gospel, of not accepting the vital encounter with Christ. St Augustine was already posing this problem in one of his commentaries on the Parable of the Sower. “We speak,” he said, “we cast the seed, we scatter the seed. There are those who deride us, those who reproach us, those who mock at us. If we fear them we have nothing left to sow and on the day of reaping we will be left without a harvest. Therefore may the seed in the good soil sprout” (*Discourse on Christian Discipline*, 13,14: PL 40, 677-678). Rejection, therefore, cannot discourage us. As Christians we are evidence of this fertile ground. Our faith, even with our limitations, shows that good soil exists, where the seed of the Word of God produces abundant fruits of justice, peace and love, of new humanity, of salvation. And the whole history of the Church, with all the problems, also shows that good soil exists, that the good seed exists and bears fruit.

Yet, let us ask ourselves: where can man find that openness of heart and mind to believe in God who made himself visible in Jesus Christ who died and Rose, to receive God’s salvation so that Christ and his Gospel might be the guide and the light of our existence? The answer: we can believe in God because he comes close to us and touches us, because the Holy Spirit, a gift of the Risen One, enables us to receive the living God. Thus faith is first of all a supernatural gift, a gift of God.

The Second Vatican Council says: “Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior help of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and ‘makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth’” (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, *Dei Verbum*, n. 5).
Our journey starts from Baptism, the sacrament that gives us the Holy Spirit, making us become children of God in Christ, and marks our entry into the community of faith, into the Church: one does not believe by oneself, without the prior intervention of the grace of the Holy Spirit, one does not believe alone, but together with one’s brethren. As from Baptism every believer is called to new life, and to make this confession of faith his or her own, together with the brethren.

Faith is a gift of God, but it is also a profoundly free and human act. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says so clearly: “Believing is possible only by grace and the interior help of the Holy Spirit. But it is no less true that believing is an authentically human act... contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason” (n. 154). Indeed, it involves them and uplifts them in a gamble for life that is like an exodus, that is, a coming out of ourselves, from our own certainties, from our own mental framework, to entrust ourselves to the action of God who points out to us his way to achieve true freedom, our human identity, true joy of the heart, peace with everyone. Believing means entrusting oneself in full freedom and joyfully to God’s providential plan for history, as did the Patriarch Abraham, as did Mary of Nazareth. Faith, then, is an assent with which our mind and our heart say their “yes” to God, confessing that Jesus is Lord. And this “yes” transforms life, unfolds the path toward fullness of meaning, thereby making it new, rich in joy and trustworthy hope.

Dear friends, our time needs Christians who have been grasped by Christ, who grow in faith through their familiarity with Sacred Scripture and the sacraments. People who are, as it were, an open book that tells of the experience of new life in the Spirit, of the presence of that God who supports us on our way and opens us to everlasting life. Many thanks.

Greetings:

I offer a cordial greeting to the Spanish language pilgrims, in particular to the beloved sons and daughters of Panama whom I commend to the loving protection of Our Lady of La Antigua, that they may be valiant missionaries of the Gospel of her Son, by word and by the example of their own lives. I also direct an affectionate greeting to the groups from Spain, Mexico, Argentina and other Latin American countries. I invite all of you
to pray that the Holy Spirit move your hearts and direct them to God, so that together we can joyfully proclaim our faith. Many thanks.

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And now, with great joy I announce that on 24 November I shall hold a Consistory at which I will appoint six new Members of the College of Cardinals.

Cardinals have the task of helping the Successor of Peter in carrying out his Ministry of strengthening his brethren in the faith and of being the principle and foundation of the unity and communion of the Church.

The names of the new Cardinals are:

1. Archbishop James Michael Harvey, Prefect of the Pontifical Household, whom I intend to name Archpriest of the Papal Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls;

2. H.B. Béchara Boutros Raï, OMM, Patriarch of Antioch for Maronites, Lebanon;

3. H.B. Baselios Cleemis Thottunkal, Major Archbishop of Trivandrum for Syro-Malankaras, India;

4. Archbishop John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan, of Abuja, Nigeria;

5. Archbishop Ruben Salazar Gomez, Archbishop of Bogotá, Colombia;

6. Archbishop Luis Antonio G. Tagle of Manila, the Philippines.

The new Cardinals—as you have heard—carry out their ministry at the service of the Holy See or as Fathers and Pastors of the particular Churches in various parts of the world.

I ask everyone to pray for the newly appointed Cardinals, as I invoke the motherly intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that they may always assiduously love Christ and his Church with courage and dedication.
Homily of the Mass at the Opening of the Synod of Bishops and the Proclamation of St. John of Avila and St. Hildegard of Bingen as “Doctors of the Church” (October 7, 2012)

Homily at the Mass for the opening of the Synod of Bishops and Proclamation
of St. John of Avila and St. Hildegard of Bingen as “Doctors of the Church,”
The Vatican
(October 7, 2012)

Dear Brother Bishops,

Dear brothers and sisters:

With this solemn concelebration we open the thirteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith. This theme reflects a programmatic direction for the life of the Church, its members, families, its communities and institutions. And this outline is reinforced by the fact that it coincides with the beginning of the Year of Faith, starting on October 11, on the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. I give a cordial and grateful welcome to you who have come to be part of the Synodal Assembly, in particular to the Secretary-General of the Synod of Bishops, and to his colleagues. I salute the fraternal delegates of the other churches and ecclesial communities as well as all present, inviting them to accompany in daily prayer the deliberations which will take place over the next three weeks.

The readings for this Sunday’s Liturgy of the Word propose to us two principal points of reflection: the first on matrimony, which I will touch shortly; and the second on Jesus Christ, which I will discuss now. We do not have time to comment upon the passage from the Letter to the Hebrews but, at the beginning of this Synodal Assembly, we ought to
welcome the invitation to fix our gaze upon the Lord Jesus, “crowned with glory and honor, because of the suffering of death (2:9). The word of God places us before the glorious One who was crucified, so that our whole lives, and in particular the commitment of this Synodal session, will take place in the sight of him and in the light of his mystery. In every time and place, evangelization always has as its starting and finishing points Jesus Christ, the Son of God (cf. Mk 1:1); and the Crucifix is the supremely distinctive sign of him who announces the Gospel: a sign of love and peace, a call to conversion and reconciliation. My dear Brother Bishops, starting with ourselves, let us fix our gaze upon him and let us be purified by his grace.

I would now like briefly to examine the new evangelization, and its relation to ordinary evangelization and the mission ad gentes. The Church exists to evangelize. Faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ’s command, his disciples went out to the whole world to announce the Good News, spreading Christian communities everywhere. With time, these became well-organized churches with many faithful. At various times in history, divine providence has given birth to a renewed dynamism in the Church’s evangelizing activity. We need only think of the evangelization of the Anglo-Saxon peoples or the Slavs, or the transmission of the faith on the continent of America, or the missionary undertakings among the peoples of Africa, Asia and Oceania. It is against this dynamic background that I like to look at the two radiant figures that I have just proclaimed Doctors of the Church, Saint John of Avila and Saint Hildegard of Bingen. Even in our own times, the Holy Spirit has nurtured in the Church a new effort to announce the Good News, a pastoral and spiritual dynamism which found a more universal expression and its most authoritative impulse in the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. Such renewed evangelical dynamism produces a beneficent influence on the two specific “branches” developed by it, that is, on the one hand the Missio ad Gentes or announcement of the Gospel to those who do not yet know Jesus Christ and his message of salvation, and on the other the New Evangelization, directed principally at those who, though baptized, have drifted away from the Church and live without reference to the Christian life. The Synodal Assembly which opens today is dedicated to this new evangelization, to help these people encounter the Lord, who alone who fills our existence with deep meaning
and peace; and to favor the rediscovery of the faith, that source of grace which brings joy and hope to personal, family and social life. Obviously, such a special focus must not diminish either missionary efforts in the strict sense or the ordinary activity of evangelization in our Christian communities, as these are three aspects of the one reality of evangelization which complement and enrich each other.

The theme of marriage, found in the Gospel and the first reading, deserves special attention. The message of the word of God may be summed up in the expression found in the Book of Genesis and taken up by Jesus himself: “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen 2:24; Mk 10:7-8). What does this word say to us today? It seems to me that it invites us to be more aware of a reality, already well known but not fully appreciated: that matrimony is a Gospel in itself, a Good News for the world of today, especially the dechristianized world. The union of a man and a woman, their becoming “one flesh” in charity, in fruitful and indissoluble love, is a sign that speaks of God with a force and an eloquence which in our days has become greater because unfortunately, for various reasons, marriage, in precisely the oldest regions evangelized, is going through a profound crisis. And it is not by chance. Marriage is linked to faith, but not in a general way. Marriage, as a union of faithful and indissoluble love, is based upon the grace that comes from the triune God, who in Christ loved us with a faithful love, even to the Cross. Today we ought to grasp the full truth of this statement, in contrast to the painful reality of many marriages which, unhappily, end badly. There is a clear link between the crisis in faith and the crisis in marriage. And, as the Church has said and witnessed for a long time now, marriage is called to be not only an object but a subject of the new evangelization. This is already being seen in the many experiences of communities and movements, but its realization is also growing in dioceses and parishes, as shown in the recent World Meeting of Families.

One of the important ideas of the renewed impulse that the Second Vatican Council gave to evangelization is that of the universal call to holiness, which in itself concerns all Christians (cf. Lumen Gentium, 39-42). The saints are the true actors in evangelization in all its expressions. In a special way they are even pioneers and bringers of the new evangelization:
with their intercession and the example of lives attentive to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they show the beauty of the Gospel to those who are indifferent or even hostile, and they invite, as it were tepid believers, to live with the joy of faith, hope and charity, to rediscover the taste for the word of God and for the sacraments, especially for the bread of life, the Eucharist. Holy men and women bloom among the generous missionaries who announce the Good News to non-Christians, in the past in mission countries and now in any place where there are non-Christians. Holiness is not confined by cultural, social, political or religious barriers. Its language, that of love and truth, is understandable to all people of good will and it draws them to Jesus Christ, the inexhaustible source of new life.

At this point, let us pause for a moment to appreciate the two saints who today have been added to the elect number of Doctors of the Church. Saint John of Avila lived in the sixteenth century. A profound expert on the sacred Scriptures, he was gifted with an ardent missionary spirit. He knew how to penetrate in a uniquely profound way the mysteries of the redemption worked by Christ for humanity. A man of God, he united constant prayer to apostolic action. He dedicated himself to preaching and to the more frequent practice of the sacraments, concentrating his commitment on improving the formation of candidates for the priesthood, of religious and of lay people, with a view to a fruitful reform of the Church.

Saint Hildegard of Bingen, an important female figure of the twelfth century, offered her precious contribution to the growth of the Church of her time, employing the gifts received from God and showing herself to be a woman of brilliant intelligence, deep sensitivity and recognized spiritual authority. The Lord granted her a prophetic spirit and fervent capacity to discern the signs of the times. Hildegard nurtured an evident love of creation, and was learned in medicine, poetry and music. Above all, she maintained a great and faithful love for Christ and his Church.

This summary of the ideal in Christian life, expressed in the call to holiness, draws us to look with humility at the fragility, even sin, of many Christians, as individuals and communities, which is a great obstacle to evangelization and to recognizing the force of God that, in faith, meets human weakness. Thus, we cannot speak about the new evangelization
without a sincere desire for conversion. The best path to the new evangelization is to let ourselves be reconciled with God and with each other (cf. 2 Cor 5:20). Solemnly purified, Christians can regain a legitimate pride in their dignity as children of God, created in his image and redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and they can experience his joy in order to share it with everyone, both near and far.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us entrust the work of the Synod meeting to God, sustained by the communion of saints, invoking in particular the intercession of great evangelizers, among whom, with much affection, we ought to number Blessed Pope John Paul II, whose long pontificate was an example of the new evangelization. Let us place ourselves under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of the New Evangelization. With her let us invoke a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that from on high he may illumine the Synodal Assembly and make it fruitful for the Church’s journey today, in our time. Amen.

Torna ai contenuti

The Roman Curia

Decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments approving the Calendar of the Personal Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei (November 10, 2012)

The norms of the Church (see Instruction Calendaria particularia, June 24, 1970) provide that each diocese or equivalent circumscription celebrates liturgically throughout the year the solemnities, feasts, and memorials of the whole Church (General Roman Calendar); and also other special ones: such as that of the principal patron, the anniversary of the dedication of the
Cathedral Church and other patrons and saints related to the diocese (its special calendar).

We publish here the decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments of November 10, 2012, by which it approves the special liturgical calendar of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei.

Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary conceding indulgences on the occasion of the Year of Faith (September 14, 2012)

PENITENCIARIA APOSTOLICA URBIS ET ORBIS DECRETUM

Dono Sacrarum Indulgentiarum ditantur peculiaria spiritalia incepta per Fidei Annum peragenda


Iam Dominico anno 1967, vertente undevicesimo saeculo martyrii apostolorum Petri et Pauli, similem Fidei indixit annum servus Dei Paulus Papa VI, ut in sollemni professione Fidei “signifigaretur quantopere essentialia principia, quae ex saeculis omnium credentium constituunt
patrimonium, confirmatione, intellectione et pervestigatione, ratione usque renovata, indigeant, ad congruam testificationem reddandam in historicis condicionibus, quae aliae sunt ac superiorum temporum” (Benedictus XVI, Litt. apost. *Porta Fidei*, n. 4).

Hac aut nostra aetate profundissimarum mutationum, quibus humanum genus subicitur, Beatissimus Pater Benedictus XVI, per alterum Fidei annum, populum Dei, cuius est universalis Pastor, ita fratres Episcopos totius orbis invitate intendit ut “cum Successore Petri coniungantur, tempore spiritalis gratiae quam nobis tribuit Dominus ad pretiosum Fidei donum memorandum” (ibid., n. 8).

Universis ita christifidelibus “facultas dabitur Fidem profitendi in Dominum surrectum... in Ecclesiis Cathedralibus et in templis totius mundi;... in domibus et apud... familias, ut unusquisque vehementius compellatur ad illam perpetuam Fidem melius cognoscendam et futuris generationibus tradendam. Religiosae communitates sicit illae paroeciales, omniaque ecclesialia instituta, vetera et nova, modum inventer hoc Anno symbolum Credo publice profitendi” (ibid.).


Genetricis omniumque electorum a primo iusto usque ad ultimum merita adminiculum praestare noscuntur” (Clemens VI, Bulla Iubilaei Unigenitus Dei Filius, 27 Ian. 1343).

...apostolica Paenitentiaria, cuius est ea quae ad concessionem et usum Indulgentiarum spectant rite ordinare,fideliumque animos ad earum obtinendarum pium desiderium recte concipiendum et fovendum excitare, Pontificio Consilio de nova Evangelizatione Promovenda enixe rogante, attente perspectis Congregationis pro Doctrina Fidei Adnotationibus de Anno Fidei cum pastoralibus indicationibus, ad Indulgentiarum donum per Fidei annum acquarendum, sequentes statuit dispositiones iuxta ipsius augusti Pontificis mentem editas, quo christifideles impensius ad cognitionem et amorem Doctrinae Ecclesiae Catholicae incitentur et inde uberiores usque spiritales fructus hauriant.

Totum per Fidei annum, a die 11 octobris 2012 usque ad integram diem 24 novembris 2013 indictum, plenariam temporalis poenae, pro peccatis luendae, misericorditer in Domino consequi valebunt Indulgentiam, quam etiam animabus fidelium defunctorum per modum suffragii applicare possunt, omnes et singuli christifideles vere paenitentes, rite confessi, eucharistica Communione refecti et ad mentem Summi Pontificis orantes:

Quo igitur accessus ad sacramentum Paenitentiae et ad divinam veniam per Ecclesiae claves consequam pro pastorali usu evadat, ordinarii locorum rogantur ut canonicis eisque sacerdotibus qui, in Cathedralibus Templis et in Ecclesiis pro anno Fidei designatis, fidelium confessiones audire valebunt, facultates pro foro interno tantum concedant, de quibus pro fidelibus Ecclesiarum orientalium in can. 728, § 2 CCEO, necnon ab iis, quae forte reservata sint vi can. 727 eiusdem Codicis, exclusis, ut patet, casibus consideratis in can. 728, §1; pro fidelibus autem Ecclesiae Latinae, prout habetur in can. 508, § 1 CIC.

Confessarii vero, paenitentibus monitis de gravitate peccatorum, quibus adnexa est reservatio vel censura, proportionatas sacramentales paenitentias determinent, tales nimirum quae ad stabilem morum emendationem maxime conducant, et, pro casuum natura, reparationem scandali et damnorum (si forte secuta sint) imponant.
Apostolica Paenitentiaria Exc.mos Episcopos, quibus spectat triplex munus docendi, regendi et sanctificandi, enixe rogat ut principia et praecepta hic pro eorumdem fidelium sanctificatione indicata, explicare distincte curent, attentis praesertim locorum, culturae et traditionum adiunctis, quibus nimirum fit ut uni eidemque Ecclesiae dispensationi clarius et vividius menti exhibendae, cordique firmius et profundius inserendae, melius inserviat peculiaris adhibita cuique genti catechesis.

Praesenti per annum Fidei tantum valituro. Quibuscumque in contrarium facientibus non obstantibus.

Datum Romae, ex aedibus Paenitentiariae Apostolicae, die 14 mensis Septembris anno Domini 2012, in Exaltatione Sanctae Crucis.

Emmanuel S. R. E. Card. Monteiro de Castro

Paenitentiarius Maior

Christophorus Nykiel

Regens

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

During the Year of Faith special acts of penance will be rewarded with the gift of Sacred Indulgences.

On the day of the 50th anniversary of the solemn opening of the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, to which Blessed John XXIII “entrusted the principal task to guard and present better the precious deposit of Christian doctrine in order to make it more accessible to the Christian faithful and to all people of good will” (John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution Fidei Depositum, October 11, 1992: AAS 86 [1994] 113), the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI established the inauguration of a Year dedicated in particular to the profession of true faith and its correct interpretation, with the reading of, or rather, with devout meditation on the Acts of the Council and on the Articles of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published by Blessed John Paul II, 30 years after the opening of the Council, “in order that all the Christian faithful might better adhere to it, and to promote knowledge and application of it” (ibid. n. 114).

In the year of the Lord 1967, to commemorate the 19th centenary of
the martyrdom of the Apostles Peter and Paul, a similar Year of Faith was proclaimed by the Servant of God Paul VI, “intended to show, by an authentic and sincere profession of the same faith, how much the essential content that for centuries has formed the heritage of all believers needs to be confirmed, understood and explored ever anew, so as to bear consistent witness in historical circumstances very different from those of the past” (Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*, n. 4).

In our time of profound change to which humanity is subjected, the Holy Father Benedict XVI, by proclaiming this second Year of Faith, wishes to invite the People of God, whose universal Pastor he is, as well as his brother Bishops from all over the world “to join the Successor of Peter, during this time of spiritual grace that the Lord offers us, in recalling the precious gift of faith” (ibid., n. 8).

All the faithful will be given “the opportunity to profess our faith in the Risen Lord... in our cathedrals and in the churches of the whole world; in our homes and among our families, so that everyone may feel a strong need to know better and to transmit to future generations the faith of all times. Religious communities as well as parish communities, and all ecclesial bodies old and new, are to find a way, during this Year, to make a public profession of the Credo” (ibid.).

In addition, all the faithful, individually and as a community, will be called to witness to their faith openly before others in the specific circumstances of their daily life: “the social nature of man, however, itself requires that he should give external expression to his internal acts of religion: that he should share with others in matters religious; that he should profess his religion in community” (cf. Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 7 December 1965: AAS 58 [1966], 932).

Since it is primarily a matter of developing a supreme degree of holiness of life—to the extent that it is possible on this earth—and hence of obtaining the highest possible degree of purity of soul, the important gift of Indulgences, which the Church, by virtue of the power conferred upon her by Christ, offers to all who, with the proper disposition, fulfill the special prescriptions for gaining them, will be of great usefulness. “With the Indulgence,” Paul VI taught, “the Church availing herself of her powers
as minister of the Redemption brought about by Christ the Lord, communicates to the faithful participation in this fullness of Christ in the Communion of Saints, providing them with abundant means to achieve salvation” (cf. *Apostolorum Limina*, May 23, 1974: AAS 66 [1974] 289). In this way is revealed the “treasure of the Church,” to which “the merits of the Blessed Mother of God and of all the elect, from the first righteous person to the last, add further” (Clement VI, Bull *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, January 27, 1343).

The Apostolic Penitentiary is charged with everything concerning the granting and use of Indulgences. To encourage the faithful to have a correct conception of Indulgences and to develop a devout desire to obtain them, at the request of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization and with attentive consideration of the Note with Pastoral Recommendations for the Year of Faith, issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for gaining the gift of Indulgences during the Year of Faith, the Apostolic Penitentiary has established the following measures, issued in conformity with the wishes of the august Pontiff, so that the faithful may be further encouraged to know and love the Doctrine of the Catholic Church and obtain from it a greater abundance of spiritual fruit.

Throughout the Year of Faith—established from October 11, 2012 to November 24, 2013—all individual members of the faithful who are truly repentant, have duly received the Sacrament of Penance and Holy Communion and who pray for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff may receive the Plenary Indulgence in remission of the temporal punishment for their sins, imparted through God’s mercy and applicable in suffrage to the souls of the deceased:

a. every time they take part in at least three homilies preached or attend at least three lectures on the Proceedings of the Second Vatican Council and on the Articles of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in any church or suitable place;

b. every time they go as pilgrims to a Papal Basilica, a Christian catacomb, a cathedral church, a sacred place designated by the local Ordinary for the Year of Faith (for example, the Minor Basilicas and
Shrines dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to the Holy Apostles or to the Holy Patrons), and take part there in some sacred function or at least pause in recollection for a suitable length of time with devout meditation, concluding with the recitation of the Our Father, the Profession of Faith in any legitimate form, invocations to the Blessed Virgin Mary or, depending on the case, to the Holy Apostles or Patrons;

c. every time when, on the days determined by the local Ordinary for the Year of Faith (such as, for example, the Solemnities of the Lord and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Feasts of the Holy Apostles and Patrons and of the Chair of St Peter), in any sacred place, they take part in a solemn Eucharistic celebration or in the Liturgy of the Hours, adding the Profession of Faith in any legitimate form;

d. a day freely chosen during the Year of Faith on which to make a devout visit to the baptistery or other place in which they received the sacrament of Baptism, if they renew their baptismal promises in any legitimate form.

Diocesan or Eparchial Bishops and those who are legally equivalent to them, on the most appropriate day in this period, on the occasion of the principal celebration (for example, November 24, 2013, on the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Universal King, with which the Year of Faith will end) will be able to impart the Papal Blessing with the Plenary Indulgence from which all the faithful who receive this Blessing devoutly may benefit.

Faithful who are truly repentant and are unable to take part in the solemn celebrations for serious reasons (such as, for example all the nuns who live in perpetually cloistered monasteries, anchorites and the hermits, prisoners, the elderly, the sick, and likewise those who, in hospital or in other places for treatment serve the sick permanently...), will gain the Plenary Indulgence on the same conditions, if, united in mind and spirit with the faithful present, especially at a moment when the words of the Supreme Pontiff or of the Diocesan Bishops are broadcast via the television or radio, they recite at home, or wherever their impediment obliges them to be (for example, in the monastery chapel, in hospital, in a clinic, in prison...), the Our Father, the Profession of faith in any legitimate form
and other prayers in conformity with the objectives of the Year of Faith, offering up their suffering or the hardship in their lives.

In order that access to the sacrament of Reconciliation and the gaining of divine forgiveness through the power of the Keys may be pastorally facilitated, local Ordinaries are asked to grant faculties, limited to the internal forum, to canons and priests who will hear confession. The hearing of confession of the faithful will take place in cathedrals and churches designated for the Year of Faith, as specified for Eastern Rite faithful in can. 728 § 2 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches and, in the case of a possible reservation, those in can. 727, excluding, as is obvious, the cases considered in can. 728 § 1; for the faithful of the Latin Church, the faculties specified in can. 508 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law.

After warning the faithful of the gravity of sins to which a reservation or censure has been attached, Confessors will determine appropriate sacramental penances that will lead the faithful, as far as possible, to permanent repentance and, according to the nature of the case, will make them make reparation for any possible scandal and damage.

Lastly, the Penitentiary cordially asks Bishops, since they are in possession of the triple munus [office], to teach, to guide and to sanctify, to take pains to explain clearly the principles and measures proposed here for the sanctification of the faithful, taking into account in particular the circumstances of the place, culture and traditions. An appropriate catechesis for the temperament of each people will draw them, in a clearer and more lively way, and more firmly and deeply root in hearts, the desire for this unique gift, obtained by virtue of the Church’s mediation.

This Decree is valid solely for the Year of Faith. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

Given in Rome at the Seat of the Apostolic Penitentiary, September 14, 2012, on the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Manuel Card. Monteiro de Castro

Major Penitentiary

Bishop Krzysztof Nykiel
Regente

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Appointments

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Torna ai contenuti

Decrees

Decree on the granting of indulgences for the Year of Faith

DECRETUM

Quinquagesimo adveniente anniversario ex quo Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II inauguratum est, Beatissimus Pater Benedictus XVI Annum Fidei indixit, qui incipiet die 11 octobris a. 2012, terminabitur vero die 24 novembris a. 2013, in sollemnitate D. N. Iesu Christi universorum Regis.

Sperantes fore ut «Eventus ille opportunus erit ad totam Ecclesiae compagem introducendam in tempus quo peculiariis instruatur meditatio et fides iterum detegatur» (Motu pr. Porta fidei, n. 4), Praelatuae fideles impellere cupimus ad hunc Annum gratiae percurrundum in arta coniunctione cum Romano Pontifice eiusque intentionibus cumque universa sancta Ecclesia.

Hunc vero in finem, prae oculis quidem habitis quae in Decreto Paenitentiariae Apostolicae diei 14 septembris a. 2012 praescribuntur,

DECERNIMUS
1. Servatis condicionibus in Decreto supra citato statutis, hoc Anno Fidei perdurante, donum indulgentiae plenariae lucrari poterunt:


+ XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA
Praelection Operis Dei
Rev.dus D. Dr. Ioseph Antonius Araña
Notarius
Reg. Gen. R. lib. VI pag. 47

TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH
DECREE

For the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of Vatican II, the Holy Father has convoked a Year of Faith that begins on October 11, 2012 and ends on the solemnity of Christ the King, November 24, 2013.

With the hope that this will be “a good opportunity to usher the whole Church into a time of particular reflection and rediscovery of the faith” (Motu proprio "Porta fidei," no. 4), I encourage the faithful of the Prelature to take good advantage of this Year of grace, closely united to the Roman Pontiff and his intentions, and to the Universal Church.

Therefore, taking into account the indications of the Decree of the Sacred Penitentiary dated September 14, 2012

I ESTABLISH:

1. A plenary indulgence can be gained during this Year of Faith, with the conditions set forth in the above-mentioned Decree, by:

   a) All those who make a pilgrimage to the Prelatic church of Our Lady of Peace and take part in a sacred ceremony or at least spend some time in prayer there, ending with an Our Father, the Creed and an invocation to our Lady and to St. Josemaría (cf. Decree of the Penitentiary, September 14, 2012, § b).

   b) The faithful of the Prelature who, besides praying the Profession of Faith, take part in a solemn Eucharistic celebration in any sacred place on the Solemnities of our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on the feasts of the Apostles and Patrons of the Prelature (cf. Codex iuris particularis Operis Dei, no. 5), January 9, February 14, April 20, May 2, June 26, July 16, September 14, October 2, and on the upcoming November 28 (cf. Decree of the Penitentiary, September 14, 2012, § c).

   c) All the faithful who receive devoutly the Papal Blessing with plenary indulgence that I will impart in the solemn celebration of the feast of St. Josemaria on the upcoming June 26 (cf. Decree of the Penitentiary, September 14, 2012).

2. I grant in the internal forum to the priests of the Prelature who hear confessions in the Prelatic church the faculties in c. 508 §1 of the CIC (cf.
Activities of the Prelate

Pastoral Trips

Bishop Echevarría summed up, in his letter to the faithful of Opus Dei dated September 1, the pastoral trips he carried out during the months of July and August: “At the beginning of July, before arriving in Pamplona, I stopped in Barcelona and Gerona. There we had a large get-together and I blessed an image of St. Josemaría in a place where quite a lot of apostolic work with young people is carried out. Afterwards, as I’ve already told you, I went to Portugal to pray before our Lady of Fatima and to meet with a large group of your sisters and brothers. And on the 23rd I was in Lourdes, honoring our Lady.”

On August 16-18, he continued, “I also made a quick trip to the Netherlands. Besides the joy of seeing the people of the Prelature there, I relived part of the ‘prehistory’ of the Work in that country, when I was accompanying our Father and our beloved Don Alvaro. How much they prayed while traveling along its highways and through its cities, thinking of the men and women who would come to Opus Dei, with a hope we now
see made a reality! Let us be sure to live the Communion of Saints each day.”

The letter, dated in Torreciudad, continues: “Tomorrow, on September 2nd, I will ordain to the priesthood three of your Associate brothers, who received the diaconate six months ago. Also for this reason my thoughts have turned to St. Josemaría, who dreamt of this step: the moment when some priests would come from among these sons of his. Pray for them and for the fruit of the many activities now being carried out throughout the world; also for the Regions in the southern hemisphere who, by their ordinary lives, are sustaining all of us.”

On September 4th he returned to Rome, where he remained until the 28th of that month, when he traveled over the weekend to Zürich, Switzerland. He went directly from the airport to visit our Lady at her Shrine of Einsiedeln, where St. Josemaría and the venerable Álvaro del Portillo had prayed many times. In the course of his brief stay, he was able to speak with people from all the Swiss cities where the Prelature is carrying out its apostolic work. He showed special interest in those who were sick and extended to everyone words filled with confidence and optimism.

On Saturday the 29th, referring to the feast of the Holy Archangels, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, he encouraged those present to go to their intercession and to make resolutions to be faithful and apostolic. He also expressed his joy at seeing that the spirit transmitted by St. Josemaría was being lived faithfully everywhere. On various occasions he invited them to pray insistently for Pope Benedict XVI.

From the 16th to the 18th of November he was in Milan, where he met with many faithful of Opus Dei and friends who take part in formative activities offered by the Prelature in that city and nearby. On Saturday the 17th, he had a meeting with priests, and another in the Viscontea Student Residence. Afterwards he visited Cardinal Angelo Scola, the Archbishop of Milan, and made a visit to the Cathedral. There he prayed before the Blessed Sacrament and before an image of our Lady, and then went to the altar where the remains of Blessed Ildefonso Schuster are interred. In the afternoon the largest gathering of the trip took place in the Fieramilanocity
Congress Center with some 4,000 people. Finally, on Sunday, Bishop Echevarría had an opportunity to meet with a large group of university students at the Torrescalla University Residence.

On December 1, Bishop Echevarría traveled to the Principality of Andorra, invited by the Archbishop of Urgell and Co-prince of Andorra, Most Reverend Joan-Enric Vives. The reason for the trip was to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the arrival of St. Josemaría at Sant Julià de Lòria, where he was able to visit the first non-desecrated church he saw during the Spanish Civil War. Below in the corresponding sections we have published the homily and address given by the Prelate during this conference and details of the celebration in which about one thousand people took part.

Finally towards the end of the year, on December 15-16, Bishop Echevarría visited Verona, Italy. In various informal meetings, he encouraged everyone to follow the example and teachings of St. Josemaría in order to seek our Lord in their work and in their life of prayer, and to launch out into a daring apostolate, filled with faith. A little more than fifty years had gone by since Opus Dei began its apostolic activities in Verona in 1961. The first diocesan priest in Italy to ask for admission to the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, Don Ferdinando Rancan, a Veronese, greeted the Prelate as soon as he arrived.

On Saturday he had a gathering with more than six hundred people and answered questions on marriage, maintaining one’s supernatural outlook during the financial crisis, education of one’s children, freedom, friendship, etc. As he had in Milan, on Sunday he met with about a hundred students, this time in the Clivia Residence, where a lively dialogue took place. Afterwards he visited the Cathedral, prayed before the “Madonna del Popolo,” and then had a get together with another group of young people at the Pontenavi Residence.

Torna ai contenuti

Message of solidarity with the earthquake victims in Guatemala
On the morning of November 7, a violent earthquake affected the western part of Guatemala on the border with Mexico. Although thanks be to God the number of dead was fairly small, the material damage was very great, to the detriment of many families—poor people in most cases—who lost their homes or goods.

From the various Centers of Opus Dei in Guatemala and Quetzaltenango, both those of men and women, especially the Centers for young people, various task forces to assist the victims were organized: collection centers, shipments of food, attention to families, etc.

During those difficult moments, Bishop Echevarría wrote a letter on the 8th to the faithful of the Prelature in Guatemala, encouraging them to collaborate generously in the rescue efforts and reminding them that members of the Work all over the world were praying for those who had suffered physical or material harm.

Ordinations

Three teachers, two Spaniards and a Mexican, received priestly ordination on September 2nd at the Shrine of Torreciudad, at the hands of Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei. Numerous faithful, relatives and friends of the new priests filled the church and accompanied them in a day of celebration and prayer.

In his homily, which we include in this issue of Romana, Bishop Echevarría encouraged everyone to live well the Year of Faith convoked by Benedict XVI so that “we might make known to others or remind them of the joyful reality that we are all children of God, and that he calls all of us to share in his friendship.” And he reminded those present of “the immense gift that priests represent, not only for the Church but for all humanity.”

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On November 3, in St. Eugene’s Basilica in Rome, the Prelate of Opus Dei conferred ordination as deacons on 31 faithful of the Prelature from 13 different countries. In his homily, Bishop Echevarría encouraged the deacons, and all the faithful, to ask “the Holy Spirit to increase throughout the world the number of sacred ministers who are well prepared and enthusiastic, in love with our Lord and dedicated entirely to the service of souls. In a word, may he grant us an abundance of holy priests, truly committed to the ministry entrusted to them.”

Participation in the 13th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (October 7 - 28, 2012)

Here is a summary of the address by Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, during the general meeting of the Synod Fathers on October 12, on the topic “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Faith,” which was published in the Bulletin of the Holy See’s Press Office:

“The people of God would like bishops and priests to be teachers of holiness, precisely because they seek it on a daily basis, through the sacramental life and through their own ministry. They must be men who pray with faith, who passionately love the sacrament of the Eucharist and the sacrament of Confession, and who live them with sincere piety, in order to enrich themselves with grace, and therefore to be bearers of the Good News to other priests and to all the faithful. Employing these methods instituted by Christ to identify oneself with him will enable the faithful, in listening to their pastors, to listen to our Lord; and in seeing them pray, they in turn will be moved to prayer. And when they see that they frequently go to Confession, they too will seek sacramental forgiveness.

“It is also useful to reflect on the example of many saints, such as the Curé of Ars, Saint Pius of Pietrelcina, Saint Josemaría Escrivá, and more recently, Blessed John Paul II. As Benedict XVI reminds us, they have left
us a living example of love for the sacrament of Penance, and can strengthen our awareness of the duty to be Good Shepherds, who know how to give their life for their sheep. By also encouraging priests to regularly sit in the confessional, many souls will go to be cleansed of their sins, and from this ministry vocations will arise for the seminary and for the religious life, as well as vocations for good fathers and mothers of families.

“It is also important to put care into homilies from the doctrinal point of view and with the ‘gift of tongues.’ For many faithful, the Sunday Mass, with its homily, is the only opportunity to hear Christ’s message. With a commitment that is renewed each day, preaching will be much more effective, above all if it is also addressed to the soul of the one preaching: if one lives what one says and preaches what one lives.”

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Pastoral Letters

Pastoral letter on the occasion of the Year of Faith (September 29, 2012)

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My dear children: may Jesus watch over you!

1. We all experienced great joy on receiving the Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*, in which the Pope announced the Year of Faith. Benedict XVI has spared no effort in presenting the key contents of the Gospel, in language accessible to the men and women of the twenty-first century. And to further this aim, for the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, he convoked on 11 October 2011, a Year of Faith, which will begin on 11 October 2012 and conclude on the solemnity of Jesus Christ, King of the universe, on 24 November 2013. The date on which this Year begins is also the twentieth anniversary of the Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depósitum*, whereby Blessed John Paul II ordered the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, a text of extraordinary value for personal formation and for the catechesis we have to carry out unceasingly in all environments.

The Year of Faith, then, is a new call to each of the Church’s children to reflect ardently on the faith, to strive to know it better and to put it
faithfully into practice. And it is likewise a call to do all we can to spread it, communicating its content, by the witness of our example and word, to the multitude of people who do not know Christ or fail to draw close to him.

The Holy Father is saddened by the fact that a great number of Christians—including some who consider themselves Catholics—"are more concerned for the social, cultural and political consequences of their commitment, continuing to think of the faith as a self-evident presupposition for life in society. In reality, not only can this presupposition no longer be taken for granted, but it is often openly denied. Whereas in the past it was possible to recognize a unitary cultural matrix, broadly accepted in its appeal to the content of the faith and the values inspired by it, today this no longer seems to be the case in large swathes of society, because of a profound crisis of faith that has affected many people."[1]

2. These considerations are not new. As paradoxical as it might seem, at the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council people already foresaw the danger that, in many sectors of the Church, the enthusiasm stirred up by that Assembly might end up as mere words, without deeply affecting the life of the faithful; or even that, owing to mistaken interpretations and applications of the Council teaching, the genuine Christian spirit could end up being wrongly assimilated to the spirit of the world, instead of elevating the world to the supernatural order.

Those of us who lived through those times recall the sorrow with which Paul VI (once the Council was over) frequently voiced laments about the great crisis of faith, discipline, liturgy, and obedience, that some sectors in the Church were undergoing. St. Josemaría echoed the Holy Father’s concern, and in a letter addressed to his children, written shortly before the end of the Council, he told us: "You know the love with which I have followed the work of the Council during these years, cooperating with my prayer and, on more than one occasion, with my personal work. You also know my desire to be faithful and for you to be faithful to the decisions of the hierarchy of the Church even in the smallest details, acting not as subjects of an authority, but with the piety of children, with the affection that comes from feeling like, and being, members of the Body of Christ."
"Nor have I hidden from you my sorrow at the conduct of those who did not view the Council as a solemn act in the life of the Church and a manifestation of the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit, but rather as an opportunity for self-affirmation, to give free reign to their own opinions or, worse yet, to do damage to the Church. The Council is ending; it has been announced repeatedly that this will be the last session. When the letter I am now writing reaches your hands, the post-Conciliar period will have already begun, and my heart trembles to think that this might be the occasion of new wounds to the body of the Church.

"The years following a Council are always important years, which require docility in applying the decisions adopted, and also firmness in the faith, a supernatural spirit, love for God and for God’s Church, and fidelity to the Roman Pontiff."[2]

When he spoke in this way, there was not the slightest note of pessimism in St. Josemaría. Rather he wanted to make it clear that, then and always, what is needed are women and men of faith.

3. Despite all the efforts of the Magisterium in the last half-century, and the faithful witness of so many people, including some saints, the disorientation has spread throughout the whole world. The Pope writes: "We cannot accept that salt should become tasteless or the light be kept hidden (cf. Mt 5:13-16). The people of today can still experience the need to go to the well, like the Samaritan woman, in order to hear Jesus, who invites us to believe in him and to draw upon the source of living water welling up within him (cf. Jn 4:14). We must rediscover a taste for feeding ourselves on the word of God, faithfully handed down by the Church, and on the bread of life, offered as sustenance for his disciples (cf. Jn 6:51). Indeed, the teaching of Jesus still resounds in our day with the same power: “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life” (Jn 6:27). The question posed by his listeners is the same that we ask today: “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” (Jn 6:28). We know Jesus’ reply: “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent” (Jn 6:29). Belief in Jesus Christ, then, is the way to arrive definitively at salvation."[3]
4. The Year of Faith offers us a marvelous opportunity to delve more deeply into the divine treasure we have received and, with God's grace, to spread this virtue in concentric circles that will reach far and wide. It presents us with an unsurpassable opportunity to give a strong impetus to the new evangelization needed in the world, beginning with our daily effort, shown with deeds, to grow in our friendship with the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. To do so, we can draw strength from the faith of Mary and Joseph, whom St. Josemaría so often contemplated and admired, in order to grow in his identification with Christ and with God's Will. If we want to spur souls on to draw closer to God, we have to speak to them, above all, through the witness of our Christian life.

We know that our Father always looked to the example of the Apostles and the early Christians. In the Twelve and in those first communities of men and women who followed Christ, the security of their faith in Christ and in his teachings shines forth brightly. They learned, and loved, to ponder over every aspect of the Redeemer's passage through this world. It is not an exaggeration to think that they would have vividly retained in their memory the many occasions when Christ forcefully urged the sick, the crippled, and his followers themselves, to come to him with faith, to pray or ask with faith. And they would also have certainly kept deeply engraved on their hearts Christ's fatherly, clear rebuke at their lack of faith, just before entrusting them with the mission of bringing the Good News to the whole world (cf. Mk 16: 14-15).

The first Christians were very aware that they too (as the many testimonies they passed on to us by their conduct so marvelously attest) needed to believe firmly in the grace of Heaven, in order to fulfill the command to spread the Master's teachings.

The Twelve, and those early brothers and sisters of ours, knew that this virtue, so strongly required of them by the Son of God, would open the path to hope that God's redemptive plans would become a reality. At the same time, their love and gratitude to the triune God became stronger and more apostolic every day, capable of bringing people from all environments and professions to the Truth.
5. My daughters and sons, the same is true today, because the means, as St. Josemaría insisted, are the same: the Gospel—lived out in practice!—and the Crucifix.

Let us take every opportunity to tell others that rediscovering the joy and the security of the faith is an obligation for the universal Church, the whole Church; therefore, it is not only a task for the pastors, but one that falls to all the faithful. Certainly, the pastors have to mark out the way, with their example and exhortations, as the Pope says in the motu proprio by which he has convoked this special time in the Church. But he also invites everyone to take on this responsibility of transmitting to others the treasure of Christ’s preaching.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in a note dated 6 January 2012, advised the Bishops to dedicate a pastoral letter to this topic, taking into account the specific circumstances of the portion of faithful entrusted to them.[4] This is the reason for this letter of mine, whose only aim is to encourage each of you, on your own account and also in union with others, to admire anew the beauty of the faith we have received from God, to put it into practice in your daily lives, and to spread it without fear of what others may think.

As that document also states, “the saints and the blessed are the authentic witnesses of the faith.”[5] Therefore, it recommends pastors to strive to make known the lives and teachings of so many saints. So it is only natural that in these pages I will draw frequent inspiration from the written and oral teachings of St. Josemaría, the beloved Founder of Opus Dei, a saint whose apostolic fruit shows us how completely he trusted in God.

**Need for a New Evangelization**

6. Mankind has always hungered, hungers now, and always will, for the word and knowledge of God, although many people are not aware of this deep need of their souls. And we who have received from God the gift of faith, have the duty to be wide awake ourselves and to awaken those submerged in that lethargy of death and ineffectiveness. The Year of Faith, which is being inaugurated within the framework of the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops dedicated to the new evangelization, is yet another spur
for all of us. The moment has come to quicken our pace, as runners do in a race as they come close to the finish line.

I have a vivid memory of how the Venerable Servant of God Alvaro del Portillo encouraged us to participate personally in the task of the new evangelization. At Christmas 1985, he wrote us a pastoral letter with suggestions on how to assist more intensely in the re-Christianization of countries in which a progressive weakening of Christian life was apparent. He alerted us against the “new paganism” stemming from the more economically developed countries, characterized, now too, “by the pursuit of material well-being at all costs, and by an aversion—a horror, indeed—of anything that might cause suffering.”[6]

That immense apostolic task has only been compounded by the additional need to assist the peoples and societies of central and eastern Europe, who were for decades subject to the yoke of Communist materialism, and who sustained the rest of us in freedom through a prolonged and silent martyrdom.

Each day we have to renew our desire to place Christ at the summit and in the heart of human realities. To do so, we need to develop our personal conversation with God and our service to others, contributing with our grain of sand—our total self-giving every day—to the task of building up a world renewed by the grace and salt of the Gospel, which our Lord has entrusted to his disciples. And if ever pessimism tries to gain entrance to our soul, when we don't see the fruits of our efforts right away, we should throw out this lack of hope, since it is not we—so insignificant, so full of defects—who are to take God's plans forward. Various passages from Scripture, in their multiple allusions, confirm for us that "inter médium móntium pertransībunt aquae" (Ps 103/104:10) —the waters shall pass through the mountains. This certainty is opposed to the slightest hint of discouragement, even when the obstacles seem to tower as high as the mountain peaks. And this is the right path to reach Heaven, with the assurance that the divine waters will wash away all our limitations and draw impetus from them to bring us to God.

7. There come to mind some words of St. Josemaría, written shortly before leaving us for Heaven. On seeing the crisis of faith, virtues and
values that had already broken out back then (it was 1973) in many environments, he wrote with supernatural outlook and apostolic zeal: "In moments of great crisis in the Church’s history, those who remained faithful and put up a determined resistance against the forces of evil, and who were sufficiently prepared spiritually and doctrinally, with the required moral and intellectual resources, have never been many in number. But those few filled the Church and the world with light once again."[7] We have to do all we can to help many women and men welcome the gift of grace, and find shelter and strength in this refuge.

The new evangelization is particularly urgent in Europe and in the more developed countries. In his apostolic exhortation Ecclésia in Europá, Blessed John Paul II described the religious situation of society in the “old continent.” Although intended as a summary of the conclusions of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Europe, his words can be applied in great measure to many other places. For after twenty centuries, even in countries with a long Christian tradition, “the number of the unbaptized is growing, both because of the significant presence of immigrants of other religions and because children born into families of Christian tradition have not received Baptism.”[8] The Pope concludes that “Europe is now one of those traditionally Christian places which, in addition to a new evangelization, require in some cases a first evangelization.”[9] First evangelization and new evangelization: two forms of proclaiming the Gospel required of us now by the situation of the Church and the world.

8. In point 848 of The Way St. Josemaría calls on the Christian to be a "missionary—with a mission—and not call yourself a missionary." This reality is grounded in the radical, foundational moment of all Christian mission: as the Father has sent me, even so I send you (Jn 20:21). This first sending out gives shape to the different forms that Christ’s mission will take on in the Church’s life throughout history: from care for Catholics’ life of faith (pastoral work, fraternity), to the proclamation of Christ as Savior to the pagans (first proclamation, evangelization); from fraternal dealings with non-Catholic Christians, encouraging them to seek full communion (ecumenism), to the new proclamation of Christ and his doctrine to the baptized who have abandoned and rejected his teaching (the new
evangelization). The faithful of Opus Dei, with our fully secular lives, are called to take part in these different dimensions of the one “mission” of the Church.

St. Josemaría insisted: "We are missionaries, with a mission, without calling ourselves missionaries. Missionaries, just as much on the paved streets of Rome, New York, Paris, Mexico, Tokyo, Buenos Aires, Lisbon or Madrid, Dublin or Sydney, as in the heart of Africa."[10] The need to pass on the first proclamation of the faith no longer applies only to those countries traditionally known as “mission territories,” but unfortunately affects the whole globe. And we have to dedicate ourselves to this great task.

But this responsibility cannot remain a nice theory. Each of us has to consider: how am I contributing? And even before this, we have to consider how the faith influences our own way of acting, and also whether we thank God every day for this gift and, as a consequence, are striving to pass on this great treasure to others. Let us raise our hearts to our Lord, imploring: "adáuge nobis fidelm", “increase our faith!” (Lk 17:5), so that we may all pray better; adáuge mihi fidelm, “increase my faith!” so that I may sanctify myself in my work and sanctify others, and give a constant Christian meaning to my friendship. Remembering the saying “example is the best preacher,” let’s follow in the footsteps of Christ, who "coepit fácere et docére" (see Acts 1:1), began to do and teach.

Let us be convinced that, in the most varied settings, “a renewed proclamation is needed even for those already baptized. Many (...) today think they know what Christianity is, yet they do not really know it at all. Often they are lacking in knowledge of the most basic elements and notions of the faith.”[11] We have to confront this challenge with our lives and our doctrinal formation. Without pessimism, let us reflect on the fact that the apostolic mission our Lord is urging Christians (those who realize we are God’s children) to undertake, takes on different nuances today, depending on the different environments and places, and on the people with whom we each come into contact. In any case, we have to strive to put people in contact with Christ, helping them to get to know, or to get to know again, the face of our Redeemer, and to follow him, even when they have to go against the current.
9. What a great task we have before us! With humility, with personal eagerness for holiness, we have to reach people, above all, with our example. Let us realize that our effort to live an integral Christian life despite our personal failings forms part of the light our Lord wants to enkindle in the world. And let us not be afraid of clashing with the environment, over points that are incompatible with the Catholic faith, even when this might cause us material or social harm. "Be convinced, and foster this conviction in others, that we Christians have to go against the current. Don't let yourselves be deluded. Think about it carefully: Jesus went against the current, Peter and the first disciples went against the current, and so did all those who throughout the centuries have wanted to be faithful disciples of the Master. Therefore be very clear that it is not the doctrine of Jesus which has to adapt itself to the times, but rather the times which have to open themselves to the light of the Savior."[12]

Therefore, turning our eyes to the Redeemer, and asking him to grant us his peace and the capacity to forgive and love those who promote these misunderstandings, let us pray with determination for those who are determined to handcuff the Church, the hierarchy, and Catholics. Aware of our personal weakness, let us strive untiringly to repay evil with good. And as a consequence of our union with God, let us love those who are trying to persecute religion or confine it to the sacristy, keeping it exclusively in the private sphere.

Moreover, if human respects should never be allowed to restrain our apostolic zeal, still less should we be held back by the reality of our personal weakness or lack of means, for we don’t trust in our own strength, but in the grace of Heaven: "ómnia possum in eo qui me confórtat" —I can do all things in him who strengthens me (Phil 4:13). In this regard the Founder of Opus Dei said: "All of us being united in prayer: this is (...) the source of our joy, our peace, our serenity, and therefore of our supernatural effectiveness."[13] And elsewhere he added: "What other advice do I have for you? Well, simply to do what the Christians who have really tried to follow Christ have always done, and to use the same means employed by the first men who felt prompted to follow Jesus: a close relationship with our Lord in the Eucharist, a childlike recourse to the Blessed Virgin, humility, temperance, mortification of the senses (...) and penance."[14] We
need a solid faith, firmly grounded in our Omnipotent God. It is hard to convey St. Josemaría’s total optimism and firmness; one of the many texts from which he always drew strength was the psalm verse: "in lúmine tuo vidébimus lumen" (Ps 35/36:10), in your light we shall see the light. For with God, all darkness is dissipated.

Returning to the Roots of the Gospel

10. Often, in the past, Europe has had to confront challenging periods of transformation and crisis, but “it has always overcome them, drawing new lifeblood from the inexhaustible reserve of vital energy in the Gospel.”[15] These words of Blessed John Paul II, spoken in 1995, confirm for us the path we have to follow. There is no other way: going to the roots of our faith to imbue ourselves with the life-giving strength we draw from it (this is the reason for the doctrinal formation the Work gives us), and then bringing many other men and women into vital contact with Christ.

St. Josemaría said that "living the faith also means transmitting it to others." To do so, we have to walk alongside them; and on the way we have to listen to the difficulties they raise about the Christian message, and show them that we understand them, so that they feel understood, enlightened, and oriented by our conversation. And thus, walking at their side, we will communicate the Gospel, the living word of God, to them with affection and warmth. That is, we will show them the marvel of the Christian spirit, which harmonizes reason and faith and offers an answer to all their questions and calms the disquiet of the human heart. And thus we will help them to desire the sacraments and to prepare to receive them.

In many cases, divine grace will have to build up the supernatural edifice in souls from the very foundation. Let us take advantage of the eagerness to do good and to act in solidarity with others that we see in the new generations (and not only in them), so that they may discover the Savior. We have to make Christ’s teachings known to them with the gift of tongues, and lay down the foundations—little by little, advancing up a steady slope—until they acquire a firm Christian life.

Example of the first Christians

11. I want to stress to you once again that we should often turn our eyes to the conduct of the Apostles and of our first brothers and sisters in the
faith. They were few in number, they had no human means, and they did not include among their ranks (at least to begin with) any great thinkers or people of high public standing. They carried out their activity in a social environment of indifferentism, of a lack of values, similar in many ways to the one we face today. Nevertheless, they were not intimidated. They carried on a marvelous conversation with everyone they met, or sought out, on their trips and journeys. "There would be no Church, if the Apostles had not carried on that supernatural dialogue with all those souls."[16]

Women and men, their contemporaries, underwent a profound transformation on being touched by divine grace. They did not simply join a new religion that was more perfect than those they already knew, but, through faith, discovered Christ and fell in love with him, the God-Man who had given himself in sacrifice for them and had risen from the dead to open the gates of Heaven to them. This unheard-of fact penetrated into the souls of those early Christians with enormous force, giving them a strength capable of resisting any trial. “No one has believed in Socrates to the point of dying for his teachings,” St. Justin said in the middle of the second century. “But, for Christ, even manual workers and the unlearned have despised not only the opinion of the world, but even the fear of death.”[17]

In a world that ardently longed for salvation, without knowing where to find it, Christian doctrine shone forth like a lighted lamp in the midst of the darkness. Those first Christians, by their behavior, made this saving light shine out for their fellow citizens and became messengers of Christ, doing so simply and naturally, without any outward display, by the consistency between their faith and their deeds. “We don’t say great things, we do them,”[18] one of the first Christians wrote. And they changed the pagan world.

In the apostolic letter that he addressed to the whole Church in preparation for the great jubilee of the year 2000, Blessed John Paul II wrote that “in Christ religion is no longer a ‘blind search for God’ (cf. Acts 17:27) but the response of faith to God who reveals himself. It is a response in which man speaks to God as his Creator and Father, a response made possible by that one Man who is also the consubstantial Word in whom God speaks to each individual person and by whom each person is enabled to respond to God.”[19]
12. I find in these words another consideration that I would like to pass on to you, in light of the need to strive to carry out the task of the new evangelization of society unceasingly. Above all we need a deeply assimilated faith and hope; that is, we need to foster at each moment the deep conviction—stemming from our relationship with the Trinity—that it is possible to change the course of this world of ours, directing all human activities to the glory of God and the conversion of souls. Certainly this will require struggle and suffering. But we will always go forward in laetitia, with joy and trust, because we have God’s promise: "Ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession" (Ps 2:8).

It is moving, I repeat, to contemplate how the Apostles, having no other means than faith in Christ and a sure and joyful hope, journeyed throughout the known world of those times, and spread Christian doctrine everywhere. How much St. Josemaría liked to celebrate their feasts, and those of the holy women who accompanied Jesus on his earthly travels! The figures of the Apostles, Mary Magdalene, Lazarus, and Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, enkindled his heart. From each of them we can learn to believe more firmly in Christ, wholeheartedly, and to love him as intensely as those who knew him did. Like us, they too had their failings and, despite being so few in comparison with the population of the known world, they spread the divine seed with their daily example and their consoling words.

I recall how strongly our Father assured us, when speaking about apostolic efforts in an adverse environment: It’s a question of faith! Yes, it is a question of faith! The faith that, as our Lord says in the Gospel, is able to move mountains (see Mt 17:20) and overcome any obstacle; a faith like the rivers that open up a channel to the sea from the high peaks (see Ps 103/104:10). Therefore I ask you, and I ask myself: how much faith do we show when the right time comes for apostolate, knowing that it is always the right time? Are we truly convinced, as St. John wrote, that "this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith" (1 Jn 5:4)? Do we act accordingly? Do we confront obstacles with an optimistic spirit, with the morale of winners? And therefore, do we underpin every specific apostolic
activity with prayer and sacrifice? Do we give witness to our faith, without letting ourselves be frightened by the obstacles in our surroundings?

Let us tell our Lord more frequently: "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mk 9:24). St. Josemaría was deeply moved by the petition of the father of that sick boy. Let us not rest content with the way we are imploring our Lord for the theological virtues. St. Josemaría, knowing that faith is a supernatural gift that only God can infuse and intensify in the soul, said on one occasion: "every day, not just once but many times, I say this to him (...) I tell him what the Apostles asked of him (...) "adáuge nobis fidem!" (Lk 17:5), increase our faith. And I add: *spem, caritátem*; increase our faith, hope and charity."[20]

*A firm point of support*

13. The Holy Father Benedict XVI, on various occasions, has pointed to the contradictions of the times in which we live. "In vast areas of the world today there is a strange forgetfulness of God. It seems as if everything would be just the same even without him. But at the same time there is a feeling of frustration, a sense of dissatisfaction with everyone and everything. People tend to exclaim: “This cannot be what life is about!” Indeed not. And so, together with forgetfulness of God there is a kind of new explosion of religion. I have no wish to discredit all the manifestations of this phenomenon. There may be sincere joy in the discovery. But to tell the truth, religion often becomes almost a consumer product. People choose what they like, and some are even able to make a profit from it. But religion sought on a “do-it-yourself” basis cannot ultimately help us. It may be comfortable, but at times of crisis we are left to ourselves."[21] And the Pope concludes with the following invitation: Help people to discover the true star which points out the way to us: Jesus Christ!"[22]

Despite the relativism and the permissive atmosphere reigning in broad sectors of society, many people are thirsting for eternity, perhaps because they have tried to quench this thirst without success in perishable goods. What a great truth those well-known words of St. Augustine contain! “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”[23] Only God completely satisfies the yearnings of the human spirit. Therefore, let us be women and men of strong piety, who have
recourse to the various forms of prayer—the true solution to all our troubles—with sincere desires to pray more and better. Let us go to Mass with deep faith, convinced that there the Sacrifice of Calvary becomes sacramentally present, the Sacrifice that brought us salvation and that reinvigorates us for our daily battle for holiness.

14. It was deeply moving to see the faith, piety and recollection with which St. Josemaría entered, body and soul, into the moment of the Eucharistic Consecration. Each day he was overwhelmed, with renewed gratitude and devotion, by the mystery of transubstantiation, by this self-giving of the Son of God to the Father, with the Holy Spirit, for souls. I don’t think I’m exaggerating in saying that it was from knowing himself at those moments to be ipse Christus that he drew all the strength he needed for his wide-ranging and effective apostolic action. The same ardent faith was apparent in him when, before giving Holy Communion, he repeated John the Baptist’s words: Ecce Agnus Dei! He exhorted all Catholics, and he repeated it to his daughters and sons, and to priests, that we need to identify ourselves with Christ, because Christ himself invited us to do so and because thus we will draw souls to the Love of God. Stirring up our faith, as our Father did, precisely at the moment of transubstantiation, is a powerful help to make each day a “Mass.”

The certainty that God wants to count on us can and should be a firm point of support in renewing our apostolic zeal each day. And it should spur us on to serve those around us with hope and supernatural optimism. "We have to be enkindled with the desire and the reality of bringing the light of Christ, the zeal of Christ, the sufferings and salvation of Christ, to many souls: to our colleagues, friends, relatives, acquaintances, and strangers too, no matter what their opinions on earthly matters may be, so that we can give all of them a warm fraternal embrace. Then we will become a burning ruby, and we will no longer be just a poor, wretched piece of coal. We will act as God’s voice, God’s light, the fire of Pentecost!”[24]

Priority Areas,

15. Always and everywhere, the apostolate we do must have a deep intellectual content. We need to “pass on” ideas about the truth in order to
“pass on” the Truth. This is a summary of our whole apostolic task. We should beseech God untiringly, humbly, insistently, and trustingly, to open people’s minds and hearts to his light. Many people today, like the Magi, say: we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him (Mt 2:2). They will say this to us if we who believe in Christ approach everyone with sincere friendship, imbued with charity and understanding, and with human warmth as well, underpinned by a life of piety; and also with gratitude for the good that many people are doing in so many areas.

What amazes us in the Magi, says Benedict XVI, "is that they prostrated themselves before a simple baby in his mother’s arms, not in the setting of a royal palace but, on the contrary, in the poverty of a stable in Bethlehem (cf. Mt 2:11). How was this possible? What convinced the Magi that the Child was “the King of the Jews” and the King of the nations? There is no doubt that they were persuaded by the sign of the star that they had seen “in its rising” and which had come to rest precisely over the place where the Child was found (cf. Mt 2:9).

"But even the star would not have sufficed had the Magi not been people inwardly open to the truth. In comparison with King Herod, beset with his interests of power and riches, the Magi were directed toward the goal of their quest and when they found it, although they were cultured men, they behaved like the shepherds of Bethlehem: they recognized the sign and adored the Child, offering him the precious and symbolic gifts that they had brought with them."[25]

Let us not forget that "our Lord asks all men to come out to meet him, to become saints. He calls not only the Magi, the wise and powerful. Before that he had sent, not a star, but one of his angels to the shepherds in Bethlehem (see Lk 2:9). Rich or poor, wise or less so, all of us have to foster in our hearts a humble disposition that will allow us to listen to the word of God."[26]

16. This task is not reserved to people who work in specially designated fields. The personal apostolate of each Christian is very effective in the ordinary setting in which he or she lives. Therefore, I suggest we devote time to examining our consciences personally on how we are trying to help souls get closer to God: what prayer, what sacrifices, how many hours of
carefully-done work we have offered up; what conversations we have had, face to face or in writing, with our friends, relatives, companions, and acquaintances. Let us pass on this holy concern to those around us, because faith in the effectiveness of Christ’s teachings has to spur us on to serve and love our brothers and sisters better: we can’t be unconcerned about anyone.

The apostolate of the intellect is, as I was saying, everyone’s task. But without losing sight of the many fields in which the new evangelization is urgently needed, special priority should be given today to imbuing certain particular spheres with Christ’s doctrine. We only need think of the work of those in government, of scientists and researchers, of professionals in public opinion, etc., without forgetting that all men and women—we ourselves—experience the need to hear our Lord’s voice and follow it.

“The struggle for the soul of the contemporary world is at its height where the spirit of this world seems strongest,” wrote Blessed John Paul II. He goes on to speak of contemporary platforms for disseminating the truth, “modern Areopagi. Today these Areopagi are the worlds of science, culture, and media; they are the worlds of writers and artists, the worlds where the intellectual elite are formed.”[27]

Research and teaching

17. Although we always have to be open to everyone, helping people who work in intellectual fields to know the Gospel is clearly of great importance. Specifically, those who work in universities need to recall some words of our Lord, addressed to everyone, and see them as especially directed to themselves: "vos estis lux mundi" (Mt 5:14), you need to be the light of the world. Indeed, their professional work places them in the vanguard of the new evangelization. St. Josemaría, who gave such a strong impetus (even before 1928) to the apostolate with intellectuals, said: "the university has, as its highest mission, service to mankind, being a leaven for society."[28]

These words express very well the apostolic direction that those who work in these settings should follow: to be leaven, to give light and warmth—the light and warmth of the Gospel—so that the Good News of Christ may imbue the souls and actions of their friends, colleagues and students, in full fidelity to the Church’s Magisterium. Thus they will
contribute to the evangelization of culture. This point in *The Way* is perennially up-to-date: "You must inspire others with love of God and zeal for souls, so that they in turn will set on fire many more who are on a third plane and each of these latter spread the flame to their professional companions.

"What a lot of spiritual calories you need! And what a tremendous responsibility if you let yourself grow cold! And—I don’t even want to think of it—what a terrible crime if you were to give bad example!"[29]

Let us never lose sight of the important challenge of encouraging many people and institutions throughout the world—impelled by the example of the first Christians—to help bring about a new culture, new laws, new fashions, consistent with the dignity of the human person and our destiny, which is the glory of the children of God in Christ Jesus (see 2 Cor 3:18). While we all need to pray and do everything we can, with full generosity, to accomplish this, university lecturers and researchers have a responsibility to make a real and persevering effort to use every opportunity that their profession affords them. In this context, our faith supports us in advancing towards the truth and at the same time in doing all we can, with the strength that the virtue of faith gives us, to take the truth to all spheres and help the people around us to accept it or grow in it.

18. Research occupies an important place in the work of university teachers and other intellectuals. In that task, a Christian who is resolved to seek and spread the truth, and who is spurred on by a noble zeal to help overcome fragmentation and relativism in building up human knowledge, will discover constant opportunities to carry out a deep doctrinal apostolate. No topic of research, no area in the wide range of teaching, is “neutral” with respect to the faith. All of our activities, even chemistry lectures—to take a graphic example—can assist or fail to assist the spread of Christ’s kingdom. "The objectivity required by science rightly rejects all ideological neutrality, all ambiguity, all conformism, all cowardliness: love for the truth involves the life and entire work of the scientist."[30] If professors and researchers are moved primarily by the desire to give glory to God and serve souls, then the Christian consistency of their example, the availability they show towards students and colleagues, the noble focus they give to their work, their effort to educate their students and pass on their
knowledge, will undoubtedly help those who listen to their words or receive the echo of their work to discover or sense the mark of Christ’s followers.

Moreover, their work will facilitate professional relationships with researchers of high standing in their own country or in others; and it will lead to sincere friendships, which are the natural setting for personal apostolate, and which will enable them to help their colleagues, in their research, at least to respect the fundamental moral principles.

Responsible Catholics involved in these crucial areas for the new evangelization, should ask themselves how they can also reach, to the extent of their possibilities, the media and the forums of public opinion, in order to pass on good, solid doctrine in the area of their own specialty: by writing in the press; taking part in radio and television programs or communicating through the internet; participating in cultural activities and offering an informed scientific opinion on topics that arise in public debate, etc. And, on their part, Catholics who run press or publishing concerns, or who work professionally in these media, should strive to ensure that their pages or cameras present, with depth and rigor, clean and morally correct content.

I would like to emphasize strongly that those who work in these fields need to realize their responsibility to make good use of their talents. And they should never forget that many other people, who do manual work or jobs that might seem of little importance, are striving to turn their work into a petition to God that the men and women who have the most influence on the direction taken by society may fully realize their responsibility, knowing that God will ask them to render an account. And they should be very grateful for those who work, so to speak, in the “shadows.” St. Josemaría’s words are very relevant here: Who is more important, the president of a university, or the lowest person on the maintenance staff? And he answered without hesitating: the one who does his job with greater faith, with a greater zeal for sanctity.

Harmony between faith and reason

19. Those of us who know we are God’s children have to help people realize there is no “competition of any kind between reason and faith: each contains the other, and each has its own scope for action (...). In their
respective worlds, God and the human being are set within a unique relationship. In God there lies the origin of all things, in him is found the fullness of the mystery, and in this his glory consists; to men and women there falls the task of exploring truth with their reason, and in this their nobility consists.”[31]

St. Josemaría’s words are also very timely: "Based firmly on solid scientific knowledge, we have to show people that faith and reason are not in any way opposed;”[32] on the contrary, there should be a complete harmony between them, since both spheres of knowledge stem from God, from the Logos who created the world, and who has taken on human nature.

In his Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte, John Paul II wrote: “For Christian witness to be effective, especially in these delicate and controversial areas, it is important that special efforts be made to explain properly the reasons for the Church’s position, stressing that it is not a case of imposing on non-believers a vision based on faith, but of interpreting and defending the values rooted in the very nature of the human person. In this way charity will necessarily become service to culture, politics, the economy and the family, so that the fundamental principles upon which depend the destiny of human beings and the future of civilization will be everywhere respected.”[33] For this effort, we need the gift of tongues, which we will attain if we invoke the Holy Spirit with faith, and use the human means.

Everyone is aware of the full freedom that, within Catholic doctrine, the Church recognizes for her children in their own professional activity and as citizens among their fellow citizens. Their clear awareness of mankind’s problems, and their supernatural sense in judging and solving these problems in a Christian way, in accordance with a correct and well-formed conscience, have to stimulate each individual’s personal apostolic responsibility, in order to bring a more human, Christian approach to scientific debate. Therefore, people who work in the fields of science and the humanities need to take a serious and well-informed approach to the areas of their work that have a more directly doctrinal or ethical dimension. The moral crisis society is undergoing, and the perennial need to evangelize, make it even more urgent for Christian researchers never to
cease striving steadily and seriously to help resolve the problems of today’s world correctly.

Public morality

20. Another urgent challenge to evangelization is that of public morality. One of the obstacles most virulently opposed to the reign of Christ, in souls and in society, is the wave of sensuality that has invaded customs, laws, fashions, the media, and the arts. Moved by Christian responsibility, and human responsibility as well, to stop this virulent attack, besides praying and inviting others to pray, making reparation and asking others to make reparation, we have to mobilize many people (men and women of good will, whether Catholics or not), helping them to feel the urgency of doing something. Sterile laments are of little use, and even less so is the attitude of indifference, of being satisfied that at least one is not contributing to the evil oneself. On the contrary, every moment is a good time to launch out with greater optimism in a “capillary” apostolate, a radical change, beginning with one’s own life, one’s own home, one’s own professional milieu.

Let us listen to the Apostle to the Gentiles, who exhorts us: We entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, “At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation.” Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation (2 Cor 6:1-2). We Christians have to act with the security of our faith, in order to cleanse everything around us that is not in harmony with God’s law, doing so without human respects, without being afraid for others to realize that we are people who are convinced about our faith. Certain values are non-negotiable, as Benedict XVI has so often stressed: "protection of life in all its stages, from the first moment of conception until natural death; recognition and promotion of the natural structure of the family—as a union between a man and a woman based on marriage—and its defense from attempts to make it juridically equivalent to radically different forms of union which in reality harm it and contribute to its destabilization, obscuring its particular character and its irreplaceable social role; the protection of the right of parents to educate their children."[34]
The Pope explained that "these principles are not truths of faith, even though they receive further light and confirmation from faith; they are inscribed in human nature itself and therefore they are common to all humanity. The Church’s action in promoting them is therefore not confessional in character, but is addressed to all people, prescinding from any religious affiliation they may have. On the contrary, such action is all the more necessary the more these principles are denied or misunderstood, because this constitutes an offense against the truth of the human person, a grave wound inflicted onto justice itself."[35]

21. The same can be said equally about essential points of Christian teaching, which nowadays are being remorselessly assailed by groups of people obstinately determined to eliminate all religious awareness from civil society. Examples are unfortunately all too common: from crude attacks on Jesus Christ, whom they try to make look ridiculous, to slanderous accusations against the Church, her ministers, and her institutions.

To live up fully to our Christian vocation we have to reveal Christ to others, by enunciating Church teaching (firstly by our example, but also by timely interventions), especially in relation to issues that are currently the subject of heated public debate. There springs to mind what Don Alvaro expressed so clearly: “As one has to start by setting one’s own house in order (…), each of us should look and see how concerned we are about this eminently Christian commitment."[36] These words are like an echo of the Apostle’s preaching to the first Christians: "This is the will of God, your sanctification (…) that each one of you know how to keep his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like heathen who do not know God; that no man transgress, and wrong his brother (…) For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness" (1 Thess 4:3-7).

St. Paul’s exhortation is particularly relevant at the present time. It is impossible to combat effectively this wave of slime and filth which is attempting to cover everything, if inside there is some element of complicity (even though it may appear insignificant) with "those foul things that continually seem to boil and rise within you, trying to engulf in their fragrant corruption the high ideals, the sublime determination that Christ himself has set in your heart."[37]
The same note is sounded by St. Gregory Nazianzen, Father and Doctor of the Church, in a passage quoted by Blessed John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation about the mission of Bishops. This is how he puts it: “First be purified and then purify others, first allow yourself to be instructed by wisdom and then instruct others, first become light and then enlighten others, first draw close to God and then guide others to him, first be holy yourself and then make others holy.”[38]

Since we don’t consider ourselves better than others—and we’re quite right—we have to try again and again to ensure our own behavior conforms as closely as possible to Christ’s teaching. We must be convinced that in the first place we have to struggle interiorly, determined to conform our thoughts, aspirations, words, and deeds, even the slightest, to God’s will: "The struggle has a battle-front within our very being, the battle-front of our passions. To be watchful, we have to fight interiorly to turn away decisively from occasions of sin: from whatever undermines our faith, diminishes our hope or weakens our Love.”[39]

22. This provides us with a focal point for our daily examination of conscience for the coming months, and always. How do I struggle for holiness? Do I get down to specifics, following the advice I get in spiritual direction? Do I often appeal to God to give me a sensitive conscience (which has nothing to do with being scrupulous) in order to discover the little cracks in the walls of the soul through which the enemy tries to gain entry, and which diminish the effectiveness of my apostolate? Am I always happy to discover new points of struggle, and do I tackle them resolutely, with a sporting attitude, sustained by God’s grace?

"Non enim vocávit nos Deus in immundítiam sed in sanctificatiónem" (1 Thess 4:7)—God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness. Although some of the media, or misguided ideologies, may try to persuade us otherwise (aided and abetted in the first place by our own disordered tendencies), the battle for clean living is always attractive and always possible. Consequently, at all times it can and must be proposed to every individual, no matter how far removed they may seem to be from the goal. There isn’t a single human being who isn’t looking for a point of reference to cling to, in the sea of waves and tempests that our times are going through, but which is nothing new. As Christians we have the immense
good fortune and ability to pass on this certainty, which many are seeking, perhaps without realizing it. Let us forge ahead, waging the Lord's battles joyfully (cf. 1 Mac 3:2), "in hoc pulcherrimo caritatis bello", in this beautiful battle of charity, whose final outcome is fully assured. It will end in God's victory, for those who remain faithful to his Love.

23. Benedict XVI has recently underlined the importance of frequent reception of the sacrament of Penance. Speaking to an audience of priests and seminarians in the context of the Year of Faith, he said: 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."[40]

The family

24. In the Work we should always act with the optimism and supernatural vision which spring from divine filiation, but we can’t ignore the fact that at this present time one of the areas most under threat from the wave of hedonism is the family. Among the grave consequences of the situation one can immediately identify the increase in matrimonial infidelity and the growing difficulty for young people to be able to hear and follow God’s call, especially in apostolic celibacy. And so "a crusade of
manliness and purity”[41] is especially urgent and necessary nowadays at all levels of society.

This battle for chaste living, like all the other virtues, requires each one of us to practice holy purity, that “joyful affirmation,” most meticulously, in accordance with our state, and also not to neglect the influence we can have on others in our apostolate of friendship and confidence. Moreover, as I said above, it is good to make use of inter-disciplinary studies to help many people and institutions worldwide (following the example of the early Christians) to foster a new culture, a new jurisprudence, and a new approach to fashion.

To achieve such an ambitious target requires us to pray unceasingly and to work indefatigably. But that is how Christians fashion their goals: magnanimous in their scope and in tune with the reality that we are each capable of achieving. We have to be convinced that each one of us can do more, much more than we think, in all sorts of little ways (initiatives, example, holy intransigence) in our own environment. I recall an illustration St. Josemaría used in relation to the ecological problem, and which I copy here because I think it expresses very well what I am trying to say.

"I was saying recently to your older brothers, recalling how we’ve often talked about boats and nets, that nowadays people everywhere talk and write a lot about ecology. Water samples are taken from rivers, lakes, and the sea, and analyzed… Nearly always the result is that things are in a bad way: the fish don’t have a healthy environment to live in.

"When we spoke about boats and nets, you and I, what we had in mind were the nets of Christ, the boat of Peter, and souls. There was a good reason why our Lord said: Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. Well, it could happen that one of those fish, of those men, seeing what’s happening around the world and within the Church of God, seeing that sea covered with filth, those rivers which seem to be full of disgusting scum, where they can’t get any nourishment or oxygen, if these fish were to think (and we’re speaking about fish which do think, because they’ve got souls), the thought could occur to them: I’ve had enough, one leap and I’m
out! It's not worth living like this. I'm off to look for shelter on the bank, I'll take a few gasps and get some air. I've had enough!

"No, my sons, we have to remain in this rotten world, in this sea of dirty water, in these rivers which flow through the great cities and the tiny villages, and whose waters lack the power to nourish men’s bodies, to quench their thirst, because they are poisonous. My sons, the place we have to be is out in the street, in the middle of the world, trying to create around us a pool of clear water, so that other fish may come, and between us all we widen the pool, purify the river, and restore wholesomeness to the waters of the sea."[42]

25. When the Church began the task of changing the environment of the decadent Roman Empire, the social and moral situation was the same as or worse than at present: as Christians, we will always be called upon to make a determined effort to bring Christ’s values to mankind.

Parents have an irreplaceable role to play in this undertaking. The effort to create deeply Christian homes and to provide their children with a genuine Christian upbringing will cause their families to become sources of Christian living, pools of clear water, which will influence many other families too. This in turn will nurture vocations of self-giving to God in the priesthood and in the whole spectrum of Church life, both in the secular sphere and in consecrated life; and give rise to many new "bright and cheerful homes," as St. Josemaría used to say.

Parents have the right, let me repeat, to carry out a wide-ranging personal apostolate in many different ways. And, given the importance of the issue, they will naturally, and freely, form networks with other people experiencing similar problems in order to tackle them together: in areas such as the use of free time, leisure activity and entertainment, travel, setting up establishments where their daughters and sons can mature humanly and spiritually, etc. Parents who have children of school-going age are fully entitled, as part of their responsibility for their education, to the free choice and even the running of schools and youth clubs. It is also obvious how important it is for them to take an active part in the educational establishments where their sons and daughters study, making use of all the resources provided by law to direct them appropriately.
In the last while, after many years of singing the praises of co-
education, people are coming around to the idea that the separate
education of boys and girls at primary and secondary levels is beneficial for
their development. It is important to pay attention to this aspect, and to
promote research and discussion, both legal and educational, and in the
media, to demonstrate the validity and advantages of this method; it
implies great respect for boys and girls, both infants and adolescents, and is
of proven benefit educationally and in personality development.

26. In the same context, it is necessary to have a proper understanding
of freedom, because it is often mistakenly interpreted as the simple ability
to choose what one prefers at each moment, what satisfies one’s fancy or
comfort, without considering its close connection with the truth. Freedom,
which is a great natural good, was weakened by sin, but Christ healed it
through grace and elevated it to the category of the new and genuine
supernatural freedom—the freedom of the children of God (cf. Rom 8:18-
19 and 21). St. Josemaría, precisely because he saw himself as, and felt like,
a son of God the Father (this filiation is at the heart of what it means to be
a man or a woman), managed to achieve a particularly profound
understanding of Christian freedom, and warned us against "the deception
of those who appease themselves with the pathetic cry of “Freedom!
Freedom!” Their cry often masks a tragic enslavement," he pointed out,"because choices that prefer error do not liberate. Christ alone sets us free,
for he alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life." [43] And he added:
"Freedom finds its true meaning when it is put to the service of the truth
which redeems, when it is spent in seeking God’s infinite Love which
liberates us from all forms of slavery."[44]

As responsible citizens, we Christians have to do everything possible to
defend and foster our own freedom and that of others, and at the same
time to help everybody discover that new freedom— "hac libertáte nos
Christus liberávit" (Gal 5:1)—by which Christ has freed us. This is one of
the most urgent tasks of the new evangelization. I have already reminded
you that those who are called to sanctify themselves in the married state
have an irreplaceable role in this undertaking; but I wish to stress that the
obligation to spread good doctrine about marriage and the family is the
responsibility of every single individual.
Knowing and Professing the Faith

27. Every effort to carry out the new evangelization, be it in the intellectual apostolate or in the priority areas I have just pointed to, has to be based on the solid foundation of the faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6), Sacred Scripture tells us.

This theological virtue, the gateway of the Christian life, demands the free assent of the intellect, and leads to complete fidelity to God’s Will, expressed through the truths he has revealed to us, giving us the certainty that they have to be accepted on the authority of the Creator himself, who, as the Book of Genesis explains, wills only good for the whole of creation. And so, when the faith is accepted and professed seriously, it generates an on-going, total confidence in God; and as we practice this free and responsible abandonment, we participate in the divine life which is communicated to us along with these truths as the way to achieve union with God himself.

"The Year of Faith, from this perspective, is a summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Savior of the world. In the mystery of his death and resurrection, God has revealed in its fullness the Love that saves and calls us to conversion of life through the forgiveness of sins. For Saint Paul, this Love ushers us into a new life: “We were buried (...) with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” Through faith, this new life shapes the whole of human existence according to the radical new reality of the resurrection."[45]

Examples of faith

28. The Letter to the Hebrews places before our eyes a series of faithful men and women who, throughout the history of salvation, from Abel the Just onwards, believed in God and followed him with all their strength of mind and will, spending their lives joyfully in his service (cf. Heb 11:4-40). Over them all towers the figure of Abraham, our father in faith.[46] We can also learn a lot from the strength of his hope in God: we all have to grow in the three theological virtues in the coming months, trusting more and more in the means which lead us to Heaven, and asking the Blessed Trinity insistently to increase our faith, our hope and our love.
While Abraham was living in Ur of the Chaldees, he “heard the word of the Lord which took him away from his own land, from his people, from himself in a sense, to make him the instrument of a plan of salvation which embraced the future people of the Covenant and indeed all the peoples of the world.” Immediately, without wavering, the Patriarch set out on his journey.

"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore" (Heb 11:8-12).

The same story of firm faith continues and develops, more deeply and widely, in the New Testament. The Blessed Virgin shows herself to be an unparalleled teacher of faith. "By faith, Mary accepted the Angel's word and believed the message that she was to become the Mother of God in the obedience of her devotion. Visiting Elizabeth, she raised her hymn of praise to the Most High for the marvels he worked in those who trust him. With joy and trepidation she gave birth to her only son, keeping her virginity intact. Trusting in Joseph, her husband, she took Jesus to Egypt to save him from Herod's persecution. With the same faith, she followed the Lord in his preaching and remained with him all the way to Golgotha. By faith, Mary tasted the fruits of Jesus' resurrection, and treasuring every memory in her heart, she passed them on to the Twelve assembled with her in the Upper Room to receive the Holy Spirit."[48]

To meditate on and deepen in Mary’s faith leads us to experience our total dependence on God. It enables us to see how, when we cling firmly to his hand, we can work wonders, and gives an extraordinary perspective to our lives, to the Church, and to the task of co-redemption we have received. This vision also extends to the apparently most insignificant
details of our lives, because with God *póssumus!*—we can do all things; and without him, *nihil*, nothing.

By faith the Apostles left everything to follow the Master. So too did the first disciples, and the martyrs who gave their lives to witness to the Gospel, and countless Christians of all ages, including our own. "By faith, across the centuries, men and women of all ages, whose names are written in the Book of Life, have confessed the beauty of following the Lord Jesus wherever they were called to bear witness to the fact that they were Christian: in the family, in the workplace, in public life, in the exercise of the charisms and ministries to which they were called."[49]

*The example of St. Josemaría*

29. Let us turn our gaze to the history of the Church: there we never fail to find men and women who have been instruments in God’s hands to give new energy and vitality to the Christian faithful in moments of difficulty. There comes to my mind the example of our Founder. St. Josemaría meditated a lot on our predecessors in the faith and how they responded to God. And so, like the patriarch Abraham, our Father abandoned all his own plans and, obedient to God’s voice, became a pilgrim along all the paths of the earth, teaching his brothers and sisters a doctrine "as old as the Gospel, and, like the Gospel, new," [50] namely, that God calls everybody to be saints in their work and in the circumstances of ordinary life, in worldly affairs. He was a man, a priest, of faith and of hope, virtues which, along with charity, God infused into his soul with growing intensity. By fostering this huge faith and this great hope, he managed to carry out the mission he had received, and today the people of all ages, races and backgrounds who are nourished by this spirit and who seek God’s glory are as countless "as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore" (*Gen* 22:17).

St. Josemaría’s life reveals how each day can and ought to be a time of faith, of hope, of love, without yielding to selfishness. We ought to ask ourselves: how do the theological virtues come out in our daily behavior? Do we see the provident hand of our Father God in everything that happens, in both agreeable and adverse events? In other words, are we firmly convinced that "óminia possibília credénti" (*Mk* 9:23), that all things
are possible for him who believes, even though we may be bereft of personal talents and resources? Are we optimistic in the apostolate, with a supernatural optimism based on the conviction that, as the Apostle says, "ómnia possum in eo qui me confórtat" (Phil 4:13), we can do all things in Christ, who is our strength?

Perhaps we have to conclude that as yet we haven't deepened sufficiently in the exercise of these virtues. We can, therefore, apply to ourselves these words of St. Josemaría: "We lack faith. The day we practice this virtue, trusting in God and in his Mother, we will be daring and loyal. God, who is the same God as ever, will work miracles through our hands.

"Grant me, dear Jesus, the faith I truly desire. My Mother, sweet Lady, Mary most holy, make me really believe."[51]

Our Father often beseeched God to increase the theological virtues in himself, in his numerous sons and daughters, and in all the faithful. Every day he used to pray: *ädäuge nobis fídem, spem, carítátem!* Increase our faith, our hope, and our love! He would also make this prayer (silently, in his heart) while he elevated the Host or the Chalice during Mass. His only motive was his desire to be a better servant (and that we too should be better servants) of God and of souls at every moment and on every occasion. I stress that this is what it takes if the Church's path is to be filled with new fruits, now and always. As the Holy Father writes: "We want this Year to arouse in every believer the aspiration to profess the faith in fullness and with renewed conviction, with confidence and hope."[52]

"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. Not without reason, Christians in the early centuries were required to learn the creed from memory. It served them as a daily prayer not to forget the commitment they had undertaken in baptism."[53]

*Asking for faith and growing in it*

30. During the coming months (and indeed always) when we recite the Creed at Mass and on other occasions, let us strive to profess our faith in the Church more consciously, giving greater attention to the words and their meaning. It will help a lot if we frequently study and meditate on its
various articles. Among the suggestions Pope Benedict XVI makes to help us benefit from the occasion, pride of place is given to studying the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* or its *Compendium*. The *Catechism*, a precious legacy of the Second Vatican Council, contains in a complete, organic and systematic way all the truths of the Catholic faith.

"There exists a profound unity between the act by which we believe and the content to which we give our assent."[54] Knowledge of the articles of the faith is essential in order to give them our personal assent, to accept fully, with mind and will, what the Church proposes. This acceptance implies, therefore, that when one believes, one freely embraces the whole mystery of the faith, because God himself guarantees its truth on revealing himself and offering his mystery of love to our reason.

"On the other hand," the Pope continues, "we must not forget that in our cultural context, very many people, while not claiming to have the gift of faith, are nevertheless sincerely searching for the ultimate meaning and definitive truth of their lives and of the world. This search is an authentic “preamble” to the faith, because it guides people onto the path that leads to the mystery of God."[55]

Let us not falter in this marvelous venture to unveil the spiritual aspirations which all souls harbor, in order to offer them the formation they need to satisfy their thirst for Truth. Especially at the present time, it is vital to teach or remind the people we come into contact with for one reason or another that this earthly life is a passing phase of human existence. God has created us for eternal life, he has destined us to participate in his own divine Life, and thereby attain complete and unending happiness. This gift of the Blessed Trinity is only obtained fully after death, but it begins here below. "This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (*Jn* 17:3). "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (*Jn* 6:54).

31. The coming months provide us with a new opportunity to meditate deeply on the mystery of Jesus Christ. Through his words and deeds Jesus has revealed to us the Father and showed us the way that leads to him. He has given us the means to get there—the Church, with her sacraments and
institutions. And moreover, he has sent us the Holy Spirit who, dwelling in our souls through grace, urges us constantly towards the Father's house. All this is a fruit of God's loving-kindness, because in this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins (1 Jn 4:10).

Let us be convinced of the importance of meditating and getting others to meditate on this essential truth: "God loves us! The Almighty, the All-powerful, who made Heaven and earth." Let us be astonished and grateful for this awe-inspiring announcement, which we have to spread everywhere through a universal catechesis. The word “catechesis” in Greek means literally “to make resound in someone’s ears.” For Christians it has been the method of teaching used by the Church from the earliest times, since she first began to transmit to mankind the precious pearl and the treasure of salvation, as the Master himself put it. Thus, by listening, the first disciples of the Lord received the Good News, and they passed it on to others in a way that captured the minds and actions of their hearers and caused them to make it part of their lives.

And that is what we too have to do also now, after twenty centuries of Christianity: make the truth brought by Christ resound in the hearts of the people we meet on our earthly journey, and also, through prayer, those we're not personally in contact with. We have to say to each of them, at the right moment: God has thought about you from all eternity! God loves you! God has prepared a wonderful abode, Heaven, for you, where he will make himself yours and bestow eternal joys on you, filling to overflowing the desires for happiness you carry in your heart!

32. These fundamental truths cannot be taken for granted. Many people know nothing about God or have a mistaken notion of him. Some think of him as a jealous enforcer of the law, always ready to punish, or a God to whom one turns only in time of need; others think of him as shut off in his own happiness, very distant from the sufferings and longings of mankind… We should ask ourselves if our joy and our peace is such that those who see us can “touch” God’s goodness towards his children.

We all have to reinforce constantly "the basic ideas about fundamental issues which you need to be able to illuminate people's minds and to defend
the Church from the attacks she receives at times from all sides: clear ideas about dogmatic and moral truths; about the family, about Christian education; about the right to work, to relaxation, to private property; about the basic rights of association and of expression, etc. In this way you can experience joyfully the truth of those words: "véritas liberabit vos," the truth will make you free; because the truth will give you happiness, peace and effectiveness.\(^{[57]}\)

Let us ask the Holy Spirit insistently to help us offer convincing witness and expound (in accordance with our learning and training) rational arguments that will help people to open their minds to the truth. Let us pray with unwavering confidence. This last is the most important point, and we should remember our Lord’s promise: "I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in Heaven" (Mt 18:19). If we are very united in prayer, closing ranks "like an army in battle array" (Song 6:4), a battle of peace and joy, we will obtain from Heaven what we ask God for.

Commenting on the passage of the Gospel I have just quoted, Pope Benedict XVI points out: "the verb used by the evangelist to say “agree” (...) includes a reference to a “symphony” of hearts. That is what touches God’s heart. Agreement in prayer is important if it is to be accepted by our heavenly Father."\(^{[58]}\) We should be always very much in tune with the Holy Father and his intentions, because that way we will be closer to Christ and, with him, through the Holy Spirit, our prayer will go straight to God the Father.

**Doctrinal Formation**

33. Our Father listed five fundamental aspects of formation: human, religious-doctrinal, spiritual, apostolic and professional. The Year of Faith offers us, in a very clear way, an invitation to reflect upon our doctrinal formation once more. And that is for the simple reason that the aim of all this formation is to help us in various ways to deepen personally in the content of the faith and in its meaning. And so, through means of this renewed *intelléctus fidei*, understanding of the faith, we can announce and proclaim the mystery of the Love of God in Jesus Christ appropriately to our friends and colleagues.
Formation in Church teaching

34. Our Founder summed up the fundamental activity of the Work in a graphic phrase: *to teach doctrine*. Whence derives the constant willing effort to provide the faithful of the Prelature with the nourishment of formation, especially in the field of religious doctrine. I think of how happy our Father must be on seeing from Heaven how these classes take place uninterruptedly, in accordance with the plans and needs of each place. I remind you all of what he used to say insistently, so we wouldn't forget it: "Make every effort to assimilate the doctrine you get and don't let it ever stagnate; feel the need and the welcome duty to pass it on to others, so that it gives rise to good and noble works in their hearts also."[59]

"*Para servir, server*—in order to be useful, serve," St. Josemaría used to say, playing on the two meanings of the word *servir*: being useful to others and having a real ability to tackle different circumstances. In this phrase he summed up the importance of being well instructed, in all fields, out of a desire to contribute effectively to God’s plans and to the Church. "In order to serve others, we ourselves have first of all to be useful; that is, we need formation. If not, we won’t be good instruments, we’ll be useless."[60] Applying this to our apostolic aim, it means that we are useful only insofar as we possess and nurture a living and enlightened faith, because only thus can we serve the apostolate of the Work and the doctrinal formation of others.

Convinced of this perennial need, St. Josemaría laid down the guidelines for the religious-doctrinal formation of the faithful of the Work and gradually developed them. Let us consider, in our conversation with our Lord, what he was always telling us. "Our corporate aims are holiness and apostolate. To attain them we need above all formation. For our holiness, we need doctrine; and for the apostolate, doctrine. And doctrine requires time, in the proper place, and using the proper means. God is not obliged to grant us any extraordinary revelations, nor can we expect him to, when he has already given us the normal human means: work and study. Formation, therefore, requires study."[61]

The Paraclete, dwelling in the soul through grace, together with the Father and the Son, is truly the one (for those who listen to his voice and
are docile to his inspirations) who makes “the teaching of Jesus penetrate the spirit and the heart of man.”[62] Jesus Christ himself called him the *Spirit of truth*, and assured us: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak (...) He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (*Jn* 16:13–14). Blessed John Paul II, in his commentary on this Gospel passage, explained: “If Jesus said of himself: ‘I am the Truth’, it is this truth of Christ which the Holy Spirit makes known and declares (...). The Spirit is Light of the soul: *Lumen córdium*, as we invoke him in the Sequence of Pentecost.”[63]

We Christians are the freest of God’s creatures, as long as we don’t allow ourselves to be dragged down by the fleeting tendencies of the moment. The Church encourages her children to behave as "responsible and conscientious Catholics, so that our minds and hearts are not out of step, going in different directions, but work together harmoniously and steadily. Then at every moment we will see clearly what we have to do and won’t allow ourselves to be dragged along (through weakness of character or cowardice in following our conscience) by the tendencies and fashions of the moment: “so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles.”[64]

*Deepening in the doctrine of the faith*

35. If we desire to know and love God, if we want others to know and love him, it is essential that Catholic teaching enlightens our mind and moves our wills ever more and more. Nowadays, when the dominant culture is so alienated from God, this duty becomes especially crucial.

This explains how important and urgent it is to leave nothing undone in our doctrinal preparation. Don’t ever neglect to study, and in particular to study theology, in accordance with your individual situation, to acquire the *intellectus Fidei* I was speaking about. We ought to experience the vigorous and joyful tug of the *fides quaerens intellectum*,[65] the mind informed by faith, leading us to understand ever more deeply that which we believe. When theology is studied not in a routine or rote-learning fashion, but as part of life, it helps the mind greatly to make the truths of faith its
own and to think in the faith and from the faith. That is the only way to tackle the many complex issues that arise in professional life and in the overall progress of society. Precisely because you are free, my daughters and sons, because each of you decides and acts with full and complete autonomy, make a special effort to form your intellect and conscience well, so you can have at your disposal a wealth of knowledge, not only in the human sciences, but also in theology, to enable you to think, judge and act as Christians.

We have to enrich our minds so that we will have the capacity to deal competently with those aspects of Catholic teaching which are particularly relevant professionally, or currently topical in society. They will vary from place to place, but there are some which at the present time are relevant everywhere, namely, those related to marriage and the family, education, bioethics, etc.

36. In this sense, I have repeatedly reminded you to continue improving the standard of teaching and the specialization of the staff of the Stúdia Generália of the Prelature; to foster high-level lines of research in the universities where Opus Dei provides spiritual orientation; and to create interdisciplinary groups of, for instance, doctors, biologists, lawyers, philosophers, and sociologists to tackle these issues with an apostolic outlook.

Some members of the Prelature can do something similar, along with others, in the public or private academic institutions where they work. And many more, even though they are not professionally engaged in these particular fields, can contribute their own grain of sand, by helping to create a healthy state of public opinion, respectful of the natural law and informed by the Christian message, through the media. You have heard me say that a simple letter or e-mail to a newspaper, explaining some point of Catholic teaching attractively and clearly (with the gift of tongues), can sometimes be more effective than a weighty treatise. When a country’s press and organs of public opinion present a deformed image of the Church, or organize openly sectarian campaigns, Catholics cannot stand idly by: we have to react against these abuses, out of justice towards God and society, to unmask their true nature and demand that the Church be given the
respect she merits, while not trying to excuse the faults of some of her members.

To achieve this, I repeat, we have to recognize how urgent it is for us to improve our theological formation constantly, and (in accordance with our individual needs and circumstances) to deepen our grasp of current issues related to the fundamental truths of revelation. We need to make very good use of the classes and conferences of philosophy, theology and canon law, attending them with interest, punctually, trying to get as much as possible out of them. Moreover, these activities are also an occasion to offer other people the doctrinal and spiritual catechesis they seek.

37. In his catechesis on the Fathers of the Church, Pope Benedict XVI makes a point that is very relevant to the present time. He says that the great error of the ancient pagan religion was to not follow the paths imprinted on men’s hearts by Divine Wisdom. "Therefore, the decline of the pagan religion was inevitable: it was a logical consequence of the detachment of religion—reduced to an artificial collection of ceremonies, conventions and customs—from the truth of being."[66] And he adds that the early Christian Fathers and writers, on the other hand, chose "the truth of being against the myth of custom."[67] He quotes a passage from Tertullian, who wrote: "Dóminus noster Christus veritátem se, non consuetúdinem, cognominávit—Christ has said that he is the truth, not the fashion."[68] And the Holy Father comments: "it should be noted in this regard that the term consuetúdo, used here by Tertullian in reference to the pagan religion, can be translated into modern languages with the expressions: 'cultural fashion,' 'current fads.'[69]

We shouldn’t doubt that, in spite of the apparent victory of relativism in some places, this form of thinking and sowing confusion will end up collapsing like a house of cards, because it is not anchored in the truth of a creative and provident God who guides the paths of history. At the same time, what we see happening around us has to spur us on not to give in, nor to abandon all those disillusioned people for whom life has no meaning.

Union with Christ through Prayer and Sacrifice

38. I know that St. Josemaría often quoted and meditated on the words of St. Ignatius of Antioch on his way to Rome to suffer martyrdom, as he
described himself as “the wheat of God,” to be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts “that I may be found to be the pure bread of Christ.”[70] We Christians realize that we too are “the wheat of God,” because we have the pleasant duty of providing spiritual nourishment to those we come in contact with in one way or another.

We have to be deeply convinced that God wants us to be “Christ’s bread” to satisfy the hunger of souls. To become so, we must let ourselves be ground without resistance, like grains of wheat; we must employ all the means God provides (in depth, not just half-heartedly) to polish us, to smooth away the rough edges of our personality, to eradicate from our interior and exterior dispositions (through love, although it is difficult) that ego which each one of us cherishes to a supreme degree. Our own personal experience teaches us that this work of purification is very necessary if we are to obtain the desired supernatural fruits. The Master explains it to us very graphically: "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn 12:24).

**Union with Christ on the Cross**

39. "Jesus desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4). This holy ambition should influence our behavior: everything we do should be marked by a clearly apostolic character, at all times and in all places. Thus, each member of the Work, even when unable to do apostolate firsthand (because of illness, or changed environment, or inability to speak the language, etc.), will carry out a very fruitful and very direct apostolate. We can all do it, if we do our very best in our relationship with God through the Norms, trying finish our work well, offering it to God every day at Mass. Our Lord expects us to make him the offering of constantly seeking out and using small mortifications and hardships, "like the beating of the heart."[71]

Union with Jesus on the Cross is essential if we are to carry out this apostolic program. It is not possible to follow Christ without self-denial, without cultivating a spirit of mortification, without practicing specific works of penance. The Holy Father points out that "it is the glory of the Crucified One that every Christian is called to understand, live and bear witness to with his life. The Cross—the giving of himself on the part of the
Son of God—is the definitive 'sign' *par excellence* given to us so that we might understand the truth about man and the truth about God: we have all been created and redeemed by a God who sacrificed his only Son out of love. This is why the Crucifixion, as I wrote in the Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, 'is the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love in its most radical form.'[72]

*Entering into Christ's Wounds*

40. We often heard St. Josemaría use the following illustration. He used to say that if we want to walk in the Master's company we have to be "the seed in Christ's wounded hands, and the divine Sower then casts the seed into the furrow. The Sower dips his hand into the big sack and brings it out full of shining golden grains, which he flings far and wide. That is how you and I have got to give ourselves, without looking for any recompense on earth, or inventing imaginary trials. But, as the Gospel states, the grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die, as it seems, in order to bear fruit. Only if we do that will we be good seed for the sowing that our Lord wants to do, to open up divine paths on earth."[73]

In the light of these considerations, let us examine our consciences to see if we are really trying to be devout and penitential, firmly convinced that "action is worth nothing without prayer: prayer grows in value with sacrifice."[74] Let us ask God to grant us daily longings for greater self-giving, efficacious desires to give ourselves willingly for the good of souls. And this is only possible if we try to renew every day at Mass the desire to be a living host in union with Christ.

Nobody can deny the grandeur and the importance of the possibility we are offered, namely, of being a host with Christ. Let us foster this holy desire in our periods of personal conversation with him. Let us beseech Jesus, through his Most Holy Mother, the Teacher of Faith, to grant us the grace to renew our apostolic zeal daily, and let us give effect to those resolutions in specific deeds, and in accordance with the advice we get in spiritual direction.

Then Jesus will indeed take us in his wounded hand and, and having soaked us, as St. Josemaría stressed, with his precious Blood, without
leaving the place where he placed us, he will cast us far and wide: our self-giving will be fruitful in places both near and far; he will make use of our work and our relaxation, our joys and our sorrows, our words and our silences, to scatter his divine seed in myriads of hearts. We will indeed become "bread for the altar and bread for the table: divine and human."[75] And Jesus will perform new, spectacular miracles, as he did formerly in the souls and bodies of those who sought him, when the multitude were all trying to touch him because "power came forth from him and healed them all" (Lk 6:19).

Recourse to the Holy Spirit

41. Just as Jesus Christ preached the Good News impelled by the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 4:14), in the same way we Christians should turn to the Paraclete, filled with confidence, as Blessed Pope John Paul II recommended for the approach of the Jubilee Year 2000. “The primary tasks,” he wrote in an Apostolic Letter, “(...) include a renewed appreciation of the presence and activity of the Spirit, who acts within the Church both in the Sacraments, especially in Confirmation, and in the variety of charisms, roles and ministries which he inspires for the good of the Church.”[76]

Nothing could be more natural, then, in our personal apostolate and any apostolic work, than for us to rely first and foremost on the consoling fact that the Holy Spirit is acting ceaselessly for the sanctification of souls, even though he normally carries out his work in silence. He is “in our own day too (...) the principal agent of the new evangelization (...) the One who builds the Kingdom of God within the course of history and prepares its full manifestation in Jesus Christ, stirring people’s hearts and quickening in our world the seeds of the full salvation which will come at the end of time.”[77] Let’s never doubt it: if we have recourse to the Consoler with faith, he will inspire us with the right words, a timely suggestion, an affectionate and humble way of correcting wrongful behavior, that will help those people change.

Let’s make a serious effort to develop our relationship and conversation with the Holy Spirit, therefore; because, as St. Josemaría also taught, speaking of the way God acts within his faithful children, "God does not
just pass by, he remains in us. We could express this by saying that he is in the center of our souls in grace, giving supernatural meaning to our actions, as long as we don’t oppose him and throw him out by sinning. God is hidden within you and me, in each of us.”[78]

**The weapon of prayer**

42. Let’s re-read some words of Blessed John Paul II on the day of the canonization of the Founder of Opus Dei. “To fulfill such a demanding mission, there must be constant interior growth, nourished by prayer. Saint Josemaría was a master in the exercise of prayer, which he considered an extraordinary ‘weapon’ to redeem the world. He always recommended: ‘In the first place, prayer; then, atonement; in the third place, very much “in the third place,” action’ (The Way, 82). It is not a paradox,” the Pope continued, “but a perennial truth: the fruitfulness of the apostolate lies above all in prayer and in an intense and constant sacramental life. This is, in essence, the secret of the holiness and of the true success of the saints.”[79]

That is the spiritual attitude which this holy priest, our Father, put into practice from the time God first entered his soul, as can be seen clearly in the early years of Opus Dei, when everything was still to be done. In 1930, when Opus Dei was still like a new-born baby, St. Josemaría wrote to Isidoro Zorzano, the only other member of the Work at that point, in words that are permanently applicable: "If we are to be what our Lord and we desire, he wrote, we need to be firmly based, above all, on prayer and expiation (sacrifice). Pray: never, I repeat, omit your meditation when you get up; and every day offer up as expiation all that day’s annoyances and sacrifices."[80]

Let’s follow that line of behavior, which is indispensable for increasing our life of faith and fulfilling the supernatural mission that the Master entrusts to Christians. In the first place, our personal relationship and conversation with Jesus Christ need to grow every day. Both in the middle of the most demanding professional work, and in the silence of an oratory or church, amidst traffic, and also at times of leisure or rest, and, naturally, in family occupations, in sickness and amidst difficulties,—all the time!—we need to be talking to God with our souls, our hearts, our senses
and our lips, making the effort to turn everything we do into a prayer that is pleasing to God, often a wordless one. But, I stress, prayer is the fruit of a life of faith. Great faith is needed to ask our Lord truly, with conviction, as St. Josemaría did: "Jesus, tell me something; tell me something, Jesus!"

Let’s not forget that the person who truly prays makes progress in the virtue of humility; possesses the joy of being a child of God; feels the urgency of daily apostolate; always acts in a friendly, approachable way; knows how to serve; aims to disappear; and is docile in spiritual direction.

*The salt of mortification*

43. As something inseparable from our conversation with God, we need mortification, which rises up to God as "the prayer of the senses." Some people are frightened by the word “expiation,” imagining all kinds of unbearable pain. Nothing could be further from the truth. Normally God asks us for a spirit of penance that is shown in the well-finished-off fulfillment of our duties of state in our individual circumstances; a fulfillment that is persevering, full of joy however difficult it may be, with seamless, heroic faithfulness in little things.

St. Josemaría, who was so generous in the great penances our Lord invited him to offer, because they formed part of his mission as founder, also gave extraordinary importance to acts of expiation that were tiny, but overflowing with love. He explains this in some brief notes made in 1930, about his way of doing the examination of conscience. "Expiation: How have I received today the difficulties that came from God’s hand?; those provided for me by my companions’ characters?; those arising from my own wretchedness? Have I offered to God as expiation the very sorrow that I feel for having offended him so often? Did I offer him the shame of my inner blushes and humiliations, as I consider how little progress I am making along the path of virtues?"[81]

The world today is in special need—and always will be—of souls who love sacrifice and embrace it willingly for love of God. At every moment such sacrifice is also a weapon that can conquer in the fight against hedonism, to which so many people, Christians and non-Christians alike, are falling victim; against the excessive cultivation of the body and the senses. Let’s consider that, in order to trample under foot any disordered
attachment to our own ego, what we need to do is make a total offering, a real holocaust, of our internal and external senses, our faculties, our souls and bodies, in close union with Jesus Christ.

We have to "offer up our lives, our unstinting, uncalculating dedication, as expiation for our sins; for the sins of all men, our brothers; for the sins committed down through the ages, and those that will be committed from now to the end of the world; above all for Catholics, those chosen by God who don't respond properly, who betray the preferential love that God has shown for them." We should add another aspect, one of which our Father was always mindful: that of fighting to win, with hope-filled optimism, in the certainty that God will grant us victory through our faith, our trust in him, and our charity for God and souls.

44. Those words of St. Josemaría help us to face up to our habitual mortifications generously. We all need to purify ourselves unhesitatingly: only like that will we be in a position to heal the atmosphere we live in, with the joy that comes from being God’s children. "Atonement, and, more than atonement, Love. Love as a searing iron, to cauterize our souls’ uncleanness, and as a fire to kindle with divine flames the wretched tinder of our hearts." I also suggest, if ever we feel cowardly, that we contemplate Jesus during the hours of the Passion he suffered for love of us. "After this... can you ever fear penance?"

Using these basic parameters of Christian living, let’s nurture in others a sense of the urgent need for specific, constant apostolic action with young and old, healthy and sick, the people we generally come into contact with through our daily work, friendship, relationship, hobbies, etc., — all the connections that make up the fabric of our presence in our habitual surroundings. Let’s ask our Blessed Lady to give us more apostolic zeal in the coming months so that we can propagate the joy of faith in God, and do so always. Let’s also ask her to send down abundant graces from her Son so that many men and women open their hearts to God’s grace without shutting any part off from him, and make up their minds to journey with Christ along the path to the total happiness that he has prepared for each person from all eternity.

_The Apostolic Task_
45. The “mission,” the apostolic task, that God has entrusted to us, is only possible from within the “life of faith” we have been talking about: it should be a sort of “epiphany” of faith. It is faith—doctrine and life—that gives solidity and effectiveness to Christian life and makes it so attractive, as witnessed by the number of people who don’t have faith but wish—perhaps without doing anything about it—that they could have the happiness and security, the peace of mind, that they see in believers.

We should do our apostolate from within the virtue of faith, as I say. Therefore our daily self-abandonment in our Lord must not weaken. We need to atone a lot for the offences being committed against God and the harm being done to souls. My daughters and sons, we will realize the urgent need for ongoing atonement through the personal apostolate that we do: atonement is like a litmus test that indicates unfailingly the depth of our Christian feelings, the genuineness of our sorrow at the state of society. Let’s offer atonement, in the knowledge that, as our Father said, we ourselves are capable of committing the errors and horrors of the worst of sinners, if we let go of God’s hand. Let’s reject every possibility of remaining inactive. Let’s each personally, all united in our apostolic outlook, pray to our Lord for the people who share the same ideals in one way or another. Let’s set about that sowing of peace fearlessly, using all licit means to bring the pealing of the bells of our *gáudium cum pace*, our joy and peace, to the very furthest corners of the earth.

*Everyone at their post*

46. If we strengthen the basics of our dialogue with the Blessed Trinity with firm, persevering faith, our specific apostolic actions will be effective. Let’s cultivate every opportunity of serving the souls we meet, and be spurred on by the great hope of creating more such opportunities. Let’s try to finish off our work, whatever it is, with total rectitude of intention, keeping watch over ourselves so that no speck of vainglory gets into the work we do. The uprightness of our intentions should never disappear or be lacking from our daily work. Like that, every activity, finished off well and offered up to Heaven, will become identification with Jesus Christ, and will contribute powerfully to the unity of our lives.
At the heart of the new evangelization of society, each person has been assigned to a particular post by Providence. But we cannot remain passive, or be content with just trying to be faithful ourselves; we must go out to meet souls, to serve them, right where they are, in the thousand meeting-points of society—at the university, in schools, in the workplace and leisure activities, in families—to offer them the Christian formation they need. Let’s feel a holy pressure to contribute to the work of the Church in the world, imitating the early Christians. Sometimes the obstacles will appear starkly before our eyes. Then is the time to apply to ourselves some paragraphs of a letter addressed by St. Josemaría to everyone without exception:

"It is natural, my children, sometimes (...) for you to feel your own littleness and think: “All this apostolate, to be done by me? When I’m so pathetic? When I’m so full of faults and failings?”

“At times like that I will tell you to open St. John’s Gospel and meditate slowly on the passage that tells of the healing of the man born blind. See how Jesus makes mud from the dust of the earth and his spittle, and applies it to the eyes of the blind man to give him light (cf. Jn 9:6). Our Lord uses a bit of mud as an eye-salve (...). With the knowledge of our own weakness, our nothingness, but with God’s grace and our good will, we are medicine to give light; we are—while experiencing our human littleness—God’s strength for other people.”[85]

Some of you are in a position to contribute more directly to introducing a new culture, new laws, a new fashion—I have already mentioned them several times—imbued with the Gospel spirit, that need to be promoted unceasingly. But everyone, I insist, has been assigned to a specific post in this "war of love and peace." Every single one of us, whether in the vanguard or the rearguard, is in a position to carry out a very direct apostolate which, in communion with the whole Church, will contribute effectively to achieving those goals.

*Like yeast in the dough*

47. When, at a given moment, you experience more keenly the weight of the adverse environment, in your workplace, among your own relations, in the circle of your friends and acquaintances, think with a deep sense of
responsibility that God is calling Christians to be yeast in the dough. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened" (Mt 13:33). And St. John Chrysostom explains: “Just as the yeast transmits its own virtue into a great mass of dough, so you have to transform the whole world.”[86]

That is how God has acted, and acts, in the history of the world. He has the possibility of making everyone fall at his feet in submission, because no creature can resist his power; but if he did, he would not be respecting the freedom that he himself has granted us. God does not want to conquer by force, but to convince by love, through the free, enthusiastic cooperation of others, who know that the Master is concerned for the crowds, for people, for those who are wandering like sheep without a shepherd. He does not want to impose his Truth like a despot, but nor is he left indifferent at people’s ignorance or moral deviations. And so the good father of the family who invites us to the banquet utters the invitation: "Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled" (Lk 14:23): compélle intráre!

“Although Christ could have drawn people to himself, to come hear his preaching, while remaining in one place, he did not do so; he set us an example, so that we too should travel the roads, seeking those who are lost as the shepherd seeks out the strayed sheep, as the doctor goes to visit the sick person.”[87]

By that method of constant work, countless conversions have been brought about as the Church has forged herself a path through the world. Rarely have they arisen from the action of one exceptional individual, or as the result of a well-thought-out strategy. They have come as the effect of the good example set by men and women, and whole families, who with the help of grace have practiced their faith naturally and have been constantly able to give a reason for the hope that dwells in them (cf. 1 Pet 3:15).

What a great responsibility falls to Christians, to each of us! On our behavior, on our zeal for souls, depend so many great works, highly effective and attractive ones. “If other people lose their savor, you can restore it to them; but if that happens to you, with your failure you will
drag the others down too. Therefore the greater the charge that you have been given, the more fervor and zeal you need to have.”

**Into the deep!**

48. From the beginnings of Opus Dei, the apostolate of the faithful of the Prelature, its Co-operators and friends, has arisen in the heart of the Church as an instrument in God’s hands, to do great service throughout the world, in spite of our personal smallness. *Gratias tibi, Deus!* — Thank you, God!—we should constantly exclaim. And at the same time we have to do more. "Duc in altum!" (*Lk* 5:4): into deep water! Let’s go further without fear or hesitation, always relying firmly on the Master’s command, filled with sure faith in him. What apostolic panoramas the Year of Faith opens to us! It is up to each of us to make the most of them. That work with souls can be carried out in any situation we may find ourselves in, as long as we give primary importance to our prayer of petition to God for specific people and intentions.

Let’s think about the most urgent fields for the new evangelization that I mentioned above; and, with our eyes on the Year of Faith, let’s review the way we ourselves are acting to pass on more of a Christian flavor to our own family, the professional sphere in which we work, the cultural, social or leisure circles to which we belong. Let’s dwell courageously on this examination of conscience, and draw consequences from it for our personal situation, without giving in to vain worrying, but with love-sorrow when necessary. Then we will sometimes have to conclude that we have fallen short; that we could have prayed more intensely, more trustingly and more perseveringly; or that perhaps we have been ungenerous in offering sacrifices, or that we have to be more demanding in our apostolic conversations in the service of others; or that we are neglecting our doctrinal formation. On other occasions we will give thanks because our Lord has chosen to make use of us for his harvest of souls.

To admit all this, far from leading to discouragement, has to spur us on to ask Heaven for a livelier faith and begin again. *Nunc coepi!* St. Josemaría used to say, in words from the Psalm: now I begin; this change is worked by the right hand of the Most High (cf. *Ps* 77:10, *Vulgate*). That is how we should react, when we find that the results do not measure up to our
desires, and even when the reality of our personal littleness, or the apparent ineffectiveness of our efforts, becomes painfully clear. Then, still more urgently, the solution is to begin afresh: "eũtes docéte!" —go out and teach (cf. Mt 28:19), trusting in our Lord’s words, when he sent his disciples out on that first expansion.

49. This was the invitation addressed to Catholics at the end of the year 2000 by Blessed John Paul II. “At the beginning of the new millennium, [as] a new stage of the Church’s journey begins, our hearts ring out with the words of Jesus when one day, after speaking to the crowds from Simon’s boat, he invited the Apostle to ‘put out into the deep’ for a catch: ‘Duc in altum ’ (Lk 5:4). Peter and his first companions trusted Christ’s words, and cast the nets. "When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish" (Lk 5:6).”[89]

This scene, which our Father often considered and preached about throughout his life, is the one we contemplate in the Gospel reading for Mass on the feast of St. Josemaría. I invite you to meditate again, slowly, on each verse, because now too, as in the times of Jesus, the crowds are hungry to hear the word of God.

Our Lord has boarded Peter’s boat so that his word can reach the crowd. Then he asks Simon and the other disciples for their material help: at that point to row out into deep water, and on so many occasions to spread his word more and more widely. This is one way of sharing in the mission to evangelize: providing the Church—as Peter did with his poor boat—with the appropriate material means so that she can work more effectively for the good of souls. But that is not enough. Our Lord is also asking us to do apostolate personally, each according to our own situation, making the most of our possibilities with total generosity. There is an urgent need for women and men who are seriously committed to the absorbing task of bring souls to Christ’s feet, like the first disciples.

The miraculous catch of fish shows the apostolic effectiveness that comes from obeying the Master’s word. After teaching the crowds, Jesus says to Peter and the others, "Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a catch" (Lk 5:4). Simon obeys our Lord’s command, in spite of his
recent experience of failure, and then, because of his docility, the miracle is worked: "they enclosed a great shoal of fish" (Lk 5:6).

"Duc in altum!" These words ring out for us today, and they invite us to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to look forward to the future with confidence: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (Heb 13:8)."

I will also remind you, because of its great current relevance, of what Benedict XVI preached on the day of the solemn inauguration of his pastoral service in the See of Peter:

"Today too the Church and the successors of the Apostles are told to put out into the deep sea of history and to let down the nets, so as to win men and women over to the Gospel—to God, to Christ, to true life. (...) We are living in alienation, in the salt waters of suffering and death; in a sea of darkness without light. The net of the Gospel pulls us out of the waters of death and brings us into the splendor of God's light, into true life. It is really true: as we follow Christ in this mission to be fishers of men, we must bring men and women out of the sea that is salted with so many forms of alienation and onto the land of life, into the light of God. It is really so: the purpose of our lives is to reveal God to men. And only where God is seen does life truly begin. Only when we meet the living God in Christ do we know what life is."[91]

Using all the means

50. The first, indispensable condition for obtaining apostolic fruits is, I stress, cultivating our own life of faith, by having recourse to the supernatural means. If we nurture our friendship with Christ in personal prayer, if we go to the sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist, if we talk to our Lady, the Angels and the saints, our intercessors before God, we will make an effective contribution to that divine fishing in which our Lord Jesus wants to involve us. To do so, following the Master's example, we should love our friends, companions and all souls sincerely, giving expression to the mandátum novum, the new commandment by which, the Savior announced, people would know us for his disciples (cf. Jn 13:34-35).

In addition, our Lord also wants us to place at his service the material means available to us. We can deduce this from the first reading for the
Mass of St. Josemaría. After creating the world with his omnipotence, and with particular love for the first man and the first woman, "the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the East, and there he put the man whom he had formed (...) to till it and keep it" (Gen 2:8-15).

This passage of Sacred Scripture struck deep roots in the mind of the Founder of Opus Dei. From the moment when our Lord made known his Will to him, he understood that these words from the book of Genesis held one of the keys for fulfilling the duty of sanctifying one’s work and sanctifying oneself through work. Jesus’ example is decisive for us: he spent thirty years laboring in the workshop at Nazareth, to show that we also have the duty to use human means to restore the Kingdom of God.

Any apostolate requires us to trust above all in God’s help and, at the same time, to use material means for that purpose. Opus Dei’s projects, for instance, need the prayers and help of many people. And so, with God’s grace and the generous contribution of piety, sacrifice, and alms, made by many people from very different backgrounds, the evangelizing work that is done in the service of the Church throughout the world becomes broader and broader.

St. Josemaría suggested that we should ask ourselves every day: “What have I done today to bring some of the people I know closer to our Lord?” On different occasions we will give effect to that urgent desire by offering guidance in a conversation; by inviting someone to go to the Sacrament of Penance; or by a piece of advice that helps them to understand some aspect of Christian life better. St. Ambrose, referring to the way Zachary, the father of John the Baptist, recovered his speech (cf. Lk 1:64), wrote: “No wonder his tongue was loosened immediately, because faith untied what had been tied up by unbelief.”[92] Faith, if it is alive, unties our tongues to bear witness to Christ in the apostolate of friendship and trust. And the generous offering up of personal prayer and penance, and of well-finished-off work, is always needed; these are the most important instruments we have for achieving our apostolic aims.

Conclusion

51. Before finishing, I will suggest to you three goals for strengthening your life of faith in the coming months: Eucharistic piety, conversation
with the Holy Spirit, and devotion to our Blessed Lady. Each can adapt these to their personal circumstances with the help of spiritual guidance.

_Eucharistic piety_

52. Benedict XVI, in the Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*, expresses his desire for this Year of Faith to arouse in every believer the aspiration to profess the faith in fullness and with renewed conviction, with confidence and hope. And in particular, he suggests: It will also be a good opportunity to intensify the celebration of the faith in the liturgy, especially in the Eucharist, which is “the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed; (...) and also the source from which all its power flows” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10). 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.[93]

2012 has brought or will bring some especially significant anniversaries in the history of Opus Dei. I am thinking of the centenary of St. Josemaría’s First Communion, on 23 April; the twentieth anniversary of his beatification (17 May) and the tenth of his canonization (6 October); the thirtieth anniversary of the pontifical establishment of the Prelature (28 November).... These and other moments from our history, in the context of the preparation and development of the Year of Faith, should be occasions that we make full use of in order to renew our gratitude to and praise of the Blessed Trinity. And how could we do that better than through the Sacrifice of Christ, sacramentally present in the Holy Mass?

Throughout the Year of Faith, then, we should give a new impulse to manifestations of sturdy, firm piety in the Blessed Eucharist, the mystery which links all the mysteries of Christianity.[94] We should try to delve more deeply, with personal awareness, into the gifts that have been given to us with our participation in the one priesthood of Christ. In Baptism we all received the common priesthood of the faithful, and some, being ordained, have received the ministerial priesthood as well. I invite you to bring your priestly soul more fully into action as you hear Mass or celebrate it. Every day, offer on the altar your work, your dreams, your difficulties, your
sorrows and your joys. Jesus Christ will join them to his Sacrifice and will offer it all to the Father, turning the moments and circumstances of our earthly journey into an offering that is pleasing to God, so that it is a true sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving, and atonement for sins. The aspiration that St. Josemaría cherished deep in his heart will become a reality: that our whole life, the twenty-four hours of the day, will become a Mass, closely united to the Sacrifice of the Altar.

53. I invite you to multiply, during these months, your acts of faith in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. How lovingly and how profoundly our Father talked about the Blessed Sacrament! Every time he spoke about this treasure of the Church during his catechetical journeys, he took the opportunity to make a deep act of faith. Our Lord is not only on the altar. When the priest reserves the sacramental species of the Bread in the Tabernacle, Jesus Christ remains there, the Son of Blessed Mary ever Virgin, who was born of her womb; who worked quietly in Nazareth, after being born in Bethlehem; who preached, suffered the Passion and Death on the Cross, who rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven.[95]

At the beginning of 2012 I encouraged you to repeat the profession of faith made by the Apostle Thomas: "Dóminus meus et Deus meus!" My Lord and my God! (Jn 20:28). I also suggest to you that, as you contemplate our Lord hidden in the Blessed Eucharist, you say these or other words, like St. Josemaría: Lord, I believe that it is you, Jesus, the Son of God and of Mary ever-Virgin, who are really present: your Body, your Blood, your Soul and your Divinity. I adore you. I want to be your friend, because it is you who redeemed me. I want to be your love, because you are mine.[96]

My daughters and sons, let’s show that we take after St. Josemaría, who was such a good father, by following carefully the path he traced out for us. Let’s make every effort to be more sensitive every day in our Eucharistic piety. Let’s focus all our attention on him, like real friends, when we greet Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, as we go into or come out of churches or the oratories in our Centers. Wouldn’t it be natural for us to address loving words to him frequently in our hearts? That is what we should do, from wherever we are working, savoring aspirations and spiritual communions.
And let’s make reparation when we see or hear some offense or neglect done to him. Let’s think whether our genuflections are real adoration.

Those are just a few touches—there are many more—of the Eucharistic love that goes with wanting to be Opus Dei and do Opus Dei.

Veni, Sancte Spiritus!

54. Let’s invoke the Paraclete with faith and hope, praying that the miracles of the first Pentecost may be renewed in the Church in our time. I think that we are always astonished at the profound change worked by the Holy Spirit in the twelve Apostles. They threw aside their fears and launched into the street, with confident daring, to talk about Christ to everyone they met. When serious difficulties arose, they took refuge in prayer, relying firmly on our Lord’s promise that the Consoler would be particularly present at such times (cf. Jn 14:15-18; Lk 21:12-15). And so the Acts of the Apostles tells how, when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31).

The Master announced to the Apostles: when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth (Jn 16:13). The Paraclete inspired the Apostles until, at the death of the last one of them, the Revelation brought by Jesus Christ was complete. What is more, Jesus’ words tell us that throughout time the presence of the Spirit of truth has never failed and will never fail the Church, and especially the authentic Magisterium; and the same Consoler leads each of us, if we turn to him, to a progressively deeper knowledge of the mystery of the Savior. A knowledge that is also love, because charity is poured out in our hearts by the same Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5).

55. The Lord also promised that the Spirit would convince the world concerning the sin of not believing in Christ (cf. Jn 16:8-9). We also need that conviction, meaning that we still need to believe more in our Lord, trust him more fully, and place our confidence and our joy in him, not in ourselves, our capacities or our resources.

Let’s ask the Sanctifier to make us understand this need, and avoid falling into the sin of not believing completely in Jesus. Let’s also beg the Paraclete to set us free, with his light and fire, from that limitation, so that
our faith in and love for Christ grow more and more. Perhaps we can meditate on and savor often—I would say daily—the words that our Father composed as a prayer in the 1930s: "Come, O Holy Spirit! Enlighten my understanding to know your commands; strengthen my heart against the snares of the enemy; inflame my will...

"I have heard your voice, and I don’t want to harden myself and resist, saying “Later... tomorrow.” Nunc coepi! Now I begin! In case there is no tomorrow for me.

"O Spirit of truth and wisdom, Spirit of understanding and counsel, Spirit of joy and peace! I want whatever you want, I want it because you want it, I want it however you want it, I want it whenever you want it..."[97]

If we go more deeply into those petitions, we will be more and more enriched with a close friendship with the Paraclete, and, as St. Josemaría wrote, we will feel the need to relate to and converse with each Person of the Blessed Trinity individually.[98]

Let’s also pray to the Sanctifier to infuse our words and actions with his own fire, which is able to change souls. Let’s seriously want him to set us on fire with his flame, to activate the apostolate everywhere. Let’s pray with St. Josemaría’s faith: *ure igne Sancti Spiritus!* Burn us, Lord, with the fire of the Holy Spirit!

*Devotion to Mary*

56. At the summit of all the great figures of Sacred Scripture stands our Blessed Lady. Mary is the perfect example of the fact that, to love God and become one with him, we have to abandon ourselves freely to God’s Will, and believe ever more deeply. The Church sets her before us in a special way in this Year of Faith. “During this Year, it will be helpful to invite the faithful to turn with particular devotion to Mary, model of the Church, who ‘shines forth to the whole community of the elect as the model of virtues’ (*Lumen Gentium* 65). Therefore, every initiative that helps the faithful to recognize the special role of Mary in the mystery of salvation, love her, and follow her as a model of faith and virtue, is to be encouraged. To this end it would be proper to organize pilgrimages, celebrations and gatherings at the major Marian shrines."[99]
In the first place we will make an extra effort during this period to celebrate more and more joyously the memorials of our Lady that come up regularly in the calendar. My request to you is that we may experience them as real family parties, where, as her children, we are overjoyed at our Mother’s anniversaries, and honor her with attentive love and affection.

Let’s make a present to our Lady of our own selves, and other people, in visits to her sanctuaries and shrines, when we go with our relations, friends, fellow-workers or fellow-students. We should go there in close union with the Holy Father and his collaborators, and also with all the other Shepherds of the Church, praying for the fulfillment of the intentions that Pope Benedict had in mind when he convoked the Year of Faith. What better way could there be of presenting these desires to God, than by appealing to the intercession of our Blessed Lady, who was so closely associated with Christ in the Redemption?

Trusting in her powerful mediation, we will petition her to obtain for us from the Blessed Trinity the grace of bringing the world and society back to God. I remind you that, in this regard too, our Father always stressed the need for contrition, convinced that this is the mode of prayer that is best suited to people’s limitations and lacks of generosity—starting with our own. Let’s offer reparation for our personal offenses and omissions, those of the Christian people, and those of all mankind.

57. Commenting on our Lady’s canticle, the Magnificat, Pope Benedict XVI said that Mary wanted God to be great in the world, great in her life and present among us all. She was not afraid that God might be a “rival” in our life, that with his greatness he might encroach on our freedom, our vital space. She knew that if God is great, we too are great. Our life is not oppressed but raised and expanded: it is precisely then that it becomes great in the splendor of God.[100]

When we turn to the unfailing intercession of her who is omnipotent in her petition, let’s beg our Lord perseveringly to give effect to our desires and those of all Catholics for the evangelization of society. That is what this Year should lead us to do, beata María intercedente, through our Lady’s intercession: to stir up the dormant or damaged faith of many people, and to awaken faith in others who do not yet possess it. Let’s use every
opportunity to make Christ and his teachings known, and to spread the spirit of Opus Dei in the service of the Church, through a more determined apostolate of friendship and trust; so that many more men and women, from all backgrounds, may join in the apostolate.

58. Let’s examine our consciences to see how deeply we have each committed ourselves, every day, to making those desires come true. Let’s be sincere with ourselves as we think whether we make the most of the various circumstances in the normal context of our social relations, including at weekends, on holidays, and during necessary times of rest, to reach further, to meet and serve more people—in short, how we fill the streets and other places with apostolic, proselytistic prayer.

Our Blessed Lady is the Teacher of faith. “Just like the Patriarch of the People of God, so too Mary, during the pilgrimage of her filial and maternal fiat, ‘in hope believed against hope.’ Especially during certain stages of this journey the blessing granted to her ‘who believed’ will be revealed with particular vividness.”[101] This stage in the history of the Church that we are living through should be characterized by our Lady’s motherly presence. “Her exceptional pilgrimage of faith represents a constant point of reference for the Church, for individuals and for communities, for peoples and nations and, in a sense, for all humanity.”[102]

59. After Jesus Christ’s Ascension into Heaven, the first disciples awaited the descent of the Holy Spirit gathered around Mary in the Cenacle at Jerusalem. Praying with and through our Lady is the firmest guarantee that our prayer will be heard promptly. So we should have recourse to the Mother of God and our Mother in all our apostolate. We renew this prayer now in St. Josemaría’s words:

"Holy Mary, Queen of Apostles, Queen of all those who desire to make the love of your Son known, you understand our failings so well. Ask Jesus’ forgiveness for our shabby lives—for what could have been fire and has been ashes, for the lights that have gone out, for the salt that has turned insipid. Mother of God, you are omnipotent in your petition. Obtain for us, along with forgiveness, the strength to live truly a life of faith and love, so we can share our faith in Christ with others."[103]

A very affectionate blessing from
your Father
+ Javier

[9] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] St. Augustine, *Confessions*, I, 1, 3 (CCL 27, 1).


[28] St. Josemaría, Address at the act of investiture of honorary doctors by the University of Navarra, 7 October 1967.


[34] Benedict XVI, Speech to a group of parliamentarians of the European Union, 30 March 2006.

[35] Ibid.


[40] Benedict XVI, Address to participants at a course on the internal forum, 9 March 2012.


Roman Missal, Eucharistic Prayer I.

Blessed John Paul II, Letter concerning pilgrimage to the places linked to the history of salvation, 29 June 1999, no. 5.


Ibid.

Ibid., no. 10.

Ibid.

St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 144.


St. Josemaría, Letter, 9 January 1959, no. 34.

St. Josemaría, notes taken at a family gathering, 6 May 1968.

St. Josemaría, notes from a meditation, 21 November 1954.

[65] St. Anselm, Proslogion, introd. (PL 158, 225).
[67] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Romans IV, 1 (Funk I, 216).
[77] Ibid.
[78] St. Josemaría, notes taken at a family gathering, 8 December 1971.
[80] St. Josemaría, letter to Isidoro Zorzano, 23 November 1930.


Ibid.

Benedict XVI, Homily at the beginning of his pontificate, 24 April 2005.


St. Josemaría, notes taken at a family gathering, 11 November 1972.

St. Josemaría, notes taken at a family gathering, 22 November 1972.

St. Josemaría, hand-written prayer, 1934.


Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Pastoral note, 6 January 2012, I, 3.


Ibid., no. 6.

St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 175.
Homilies

On the 75th Anniversary of the journey of St. Josemaría through Sant Julià de Lòria, Principality of Andorra (December 1, 2012)

Most excellent and dear Archbishop, illustrious authorities, master sculptor, my sisters and brothers:

I am moved by the affection you have shown for a saint who I assure you, when he passed through this land, gave thanks and wanted to learn from the people here. For wherever he went, he constantly tried to unite himself to the people there with his prayer, with his mortification, and also with his desire to accompany each person in every moment of their life. Don't think that this is merely imaginary. I had the privilege, a gift from God, of being able to accompany him when he traveled. And I can tell you that he really did fill the highways, the cities, the villages, with prayer and joy, and also with songs, because that was another sign of his supernatural joy.

I am also moved that you have chosen for this ceremony a Gospel scene that St. Josemaría liked so much. Because, if we want, we can draw from every Gospel scene consequences and reasons to rectify and to strive in our daily life—this was St. Josemaría’s message—to sanctifying life’s ordinary circumstances. As he did to Peter and John, Jesus tells us directly: Let me have your boat. This is what St. Josemaría repeated over and over again. God is so merciful and so good, Christ has placed so directly within our reach the holiness of heaven, that he asks each of us to collaborate with the meager material of our poor boat.

It’s no excuse to say: I have nothing, I am worth nothing. Although what we have is apparently nothing, as soon as we let Christ enter the boat
of our soul, it acquires great value, since our Redeemer has come to sanctify our life. Therefore, taking up words of Blessed John Paul II, who admired and loved St. Josemaría so much, I tell you (would that I could say it with the warmth and strength of his voice): “Have no fear, open the doors to Christ!” The doors, that is, of your life, of your soul, of your family. The more we let Jesus become a co-protagonist in our life, letting him guide us, the happier we will be.

And he will say to us those words that so moved St. Josemaría: Duc in altum.[1] You and I can “put out into the deep” in this land of ours, in order to sanctify the places where we find ourselves. And as we can deduce from this scene, our Lord trusted in the rowing of those men. It was they who propelled the boat in which Christ was traveling. You and I too are instruments that God wants to use to bring Christ to everyone. It may be that some people do not understand the message that we’re bringing to them: we must love them just the same, because they still lack the divine savor, the knowledge that Christ is entirely interested in each one of them. Just as he is interested in all humanity, as the Archbishop has expressed so well in reminding us that God wants all souls to be saved.

Let us add our own effort. And if we do so, we will see repeated, as the Founder of Opus Dei so often said, the teachings that can be easily drawn from this Gospel scene. That catch of fish was not for Peter’s benefit alone, or for John’s. So great was the quantity of fish they took in, that the boat was sinking. We have to fulfill our Lord’s will with love, with joy, which should never be lacking in the life of Christians, since we are sons and daughters of God. Those two men, and especially Peter, invited the others with joy to come and help them bring in the load of fish. For as soon as one comes to know Christ, charity and fraternity arise.

I can assure you (and I could dwell here on many anecdotes) that St. Josemaría felt himself to be a brother of all mankind, also of those who secretly or openly said that they didn’t like him. “Well I love you very much,” he would say. Therefore I ask you that, by drawing close to Christ, you will open your soul to a fraternity that will unite you to all mankind. And do you know how we can obtain this charity? By receiving the sacraments, thanking our Lord for the sacraments. Specifically, by not neglecting the marvelous sacrament that St. Josemaría defined as the
sacrament of joy: confession. How marvelous is our God who, as the parable of the prodigal son tells us, does not reject us when we go to him with repentance. He is not like we men, who so often can harbor resentments. He opens up his arms and, as St. Josemaría said (with a somewhat free translation of that scene of the prodigal son), when the father embraced his son, “he ate him up with kisses.”

My brothers and sisters, let us go to the sacraments, which are the font of our true happiness. The font as well, in our families, of peace and harmony, of knowing how to help one another. And I will tell you that it doesn’t matter if you see yourselves, as I see myself, as of little worth, as insignificant. It is beautiful to see how God counts on our insignificance, because he is concerned about each one of us. God loves us with all his infinite strength and wants to pour all of his love into the littleness of the vessel that each one of us is. Peter was astonished at the marvel of seeing how a miracle had been worked: he, who was an expert in fishing, who had spent the whole night fishing and had caught nothing, by obeying God’s command brought in that marvelous multitude of fish. Peter, who realized that it had all been done through the power of God, exclaimed: *depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*

And now I want to tell you one more thing and with this I will end. St. Josemaría used to say: “I understand that Peter would react in this way, but I, precisely because I see myself as of such little worth, tell him with all the strength of my soul: do not depart from me, O Lord.” I ask you my sisters and brothers, even though you find yourself apparently far from Christ, to echo this petition, even though you seem to be saying it only with your lips. Let us all do so, each in the name of the others: Lord don’t depart from us, don’t let us let you leave; may you want to be with us and we to be with you. To attain this, we have a marvelous path, our Mother the Blessed Virgin, who here in this parish you venerate with such great affection. Let us hold tightly to her hand, to her intercession, and let us say to her often: bring us to Jesus and, with Jesus, to the Father and the Holy Spirit.

How many things I would like to say to you! I would like to spend a long time with you, but it’s not possible. I can assure you that I would like to leave my whole life, my soul in this land, which received with such great affection the person who opened the path of holiness to thousands of
people. For thanks be to God, many people all over the world, also in places far from this land of Andorra, follow Christ and want to love him ever more deeply.

Please pray for me. Please pray for your dear Archbishop, for all the authorities. Pray that all of us may be united as one in Christ, who never wants to leave us.

May God bless you.

[1] Lk 5:4

[2] See Lk 5:8

At the priestly ordination of faithful of the Prelature, Shrine of Torreciudad, Spain (September 2, 2012)

My dear brothers and sisters. My dear ordinands:

A few days ago I reread some words of St. Josemaria. He was speaking about the mission of the Work of God in the world and told us: “We are on a divine path, where we have to follow Christ’s footsteps, carrying our own cross, the Holy Cross! And God our Lord expects our generous effort; he wants us to feel very happy to be able to cooperate with our sacrifice to carry out the Work.”[1] These considerations are very appropriate for those who in a few minutes are going to receive the sacrament of the priesthood. And I think the same is true for all Catholics with respect to our common service of the Holy Church. As the Founder of Opus Dei said, the Prelature is a small “portion” of the Church, and if it is not going to serve it—he would add forcefully—let it be destroyed!

On this Sunday, the Lord’s day, knowing that we are each members of Christ’s Mystical Body, let us give thanks to God for the priestly ordination of these three brothers of ours, and at the same time pray fervently to the Blessed Trinity that he awaken in each and every one of us who are present here, in this Shrine of our Lady, a deep and effective realization that we all
possess a priestly soul, infused into each of us by the sacrament of Baptism.

Let us ponder on the reality that we are bearers of Christ; and that this holy responsibility, because God has wanted to count on us, should spur us to draw closer to Jesus, to get to know him more intimately and make him known to others. Nothing is further from the confidence that Heaven has shown us than a passive or disinterested attitude. We must strive each day to allow more space for God in our souls (I would even say that this space should be total), so as to be able to transmit to the world, and more specifically to our relatives, to our colleagues at work, to our friends, the incomparable joy of our condition as children of God. And also so that through him—through Christ—with him and in him (as we pray in the final doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer) we may transform into a divine work our daily tasks and endeavors.

Jesus asked the twelve Apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel. This exhortation is also addressed to us; no one is excluded. It is a mission that we can carry out (it isn’t difficult, but it demands struggle) by acting in a way that is consistent with the grace God is continually pouring into us. Let us be assured that, if we act in this way, if we give witness to our faith, without fearing what others might think, many people will ask us about our reason for doing so or will begin questioning their own way of acting; and we will find so many opportunities to give a reason for our hope, to transmit the treasure of the faith. As you already know, Pope Benedict XVI convoked the Year of Faith, through the Apostolic Letter Porta Fidei, not only for our personal benefit, but so that we might make known to others or remind them of the joyful reality that we are all children of God, and that he calls all of us to share in his friendship. As he said in that document, using words spoken in the inaugural homily for his Pontificate: “The Church as a whole and all her Pastors, like Christ, must set out to lead people out of the desert, towards the place of life, towards friendship with the Son of God, towards the One who gives us life, and life in abundance.”

The text from St. John’s gospel that we have just proclaimed is a very appropriate one for us. Jesus tells us that he is the Good Shepherd and that he has given his life for his sheep. St. Josemaria often commented on these words of our Lord about the Good Shepherd. He directed them to the
faithful of Opus Dei, but without excluding other Catholics, fellow citizens of the members of the Prelature. He pointed out that all of us in the Church are both sheep and shepherd, by which he wanted to stress that, since the baptized are the continuity in time of Christ’s mission, it is up to all of us—in accord with the ministerial priesthood or the common priesthood of the faithful—to serve the others, to give example with our conduct and our doctrinal formation. For if we read the Gospels regularly and with piety, if we make them life of our life, we will be able to generously provide spiritual help, and also the material help at our disposal, to those around us; while also being aware that, through the Communion of Saints, from wherever we are, we can send “arterial blood,” spiritual assistance stemming from Christ’s life-giving Blood, to all humanity.

What I have just said should not be seen as an unrealistic hope—a bright light that shines for a moment and then disappears without leaving a trace. Pope Benedict XVI has repeated tirelessly that God wants to make use of the saints to spread the saving power that Christ, sent by his Father, has brought for the men and women of all times, the Good News that will always be timely and efficacious. Thus if each and every one of us strives to walk loyally with the Master, we will be good shepherds and we will go forth, with a continuous and full availability, in search of souls, convinced of the transcendent importance of our Christian life. For as St. Josemaría never tired of saying, “When it is holiness that is being sown, it is never lost.”[4]

I would like now to address the three of you, my dear sons, chosen by Jesus to continue in time his one Priesthood. You have freely responded to that call and, in order to discover every day the urgency of this commitment, you need to be very humble, asking for this virtue also for all the priests and seminarians in the world. You also need to keep very much in mind that the High Priest, Jesus Christ, came into this world of ours to serve and not to be served. Recall his clear and forthright invitation: learn from me; for I am gentle and humble of heart.[5] I suggest that every day you look frequently and with devotion at the crucifix—the book in which you will find all knowledge, St. Thomas Aquinas said—because we have to travel the same path of total self-emptying that Christ followed. When you are given the host on the paten and the chalice, you will hear the words:
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. Let us not fail to live up to this goal.

Our Holy Father, Benedict XVI, in his letter convoking a Year for Priests, wrote to us: “The priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus”, the saintly Curé of Ars would often say. This touching expression makes us reflect, first of all, with heartfelt gratitude on the immense gift which priests represent, not only for the Church, but also for humanity itself. I think of all those priests who quietly present Christ’s words and actions each day to the faithful and to the whole world, striving to be one with the Lord in their thoughts and their will, and their sentiments.” And further on the Pope said: “We priests should feel that the following words, which he [Saint John Mary Vianney] put on the lips of Christ, are meant for each of us personally: ‘I will charge my ministers to proclaim to sinners that I am ever ready to welcome them, that my mercy is infinite.’”[6] I ask you to meditate on these ideas, and to read that letter again, which will do so much good to your soul and help you to properly exercise your ministry, when serving all who approach your confessional in the sacrament of Penance.

When the imposing of hands takes place to transmit to you the gift of Christ’s priesthood, the choir and people will intone the hymn *Veni Creator*. Go to the Paraclete with deep piety, asking him to engrave on your soul the realization that by this sacrament you are going to be, in a special way, another Christ, and as St. Josemaria added: Christ himself. This affirmation does not imply a rash audacity, because as we read in the Gospels, in a number of places and in different ways, the Master assured us: “he who hears you, hears me,” “do this in memory of me,” “go in my name.” I would like to add that, at Holy Mass, you are going to be Christ himself, and you will be ministers distributing to the people of God the Body and Blood of the Only Begotten Son, in addition to the fact that in the sacrament of Penance our Lord will make use of you, since it is he himself who forgives, to wash souls clean of their sins.

I would also like to ask you to keep very much in mind that “there is no Church without the Eucharist, and there is no Eucharist without the Church.” You, from this day on, will become in a primordial way faithful guardians of this ineffable gift, in which Jesus Christ himself makes
sacramentally present the Sacrifice of the Cross, and remains hidden in the Tabernacles of the world, certainly hoping that all of us will accompany him and especially his priests. Zealously care for the liturgy, without ever getting used to celebrating the actions at the altar, and in a special way Holy Mass. Celebrate it with piety and recollection. It is not a question of putting on a show, but let us not forget that the people see and learn from the worship that we who are God’s ministers offer to our Lord. Ask our Father for this expressly, who right up to the end of his life strove to grow in piety from the beginning of the Holy Sacrifice to the \textit{ite, Missa est}. Ponder often on that cry of a holy bishop, whom our Father echoed in \textit{The Way}: “Treat him well for me!”[7]

Don’t forget, my dear sons, that you are receiving priestly ordination in order to serve the Church, all souls, and more directly the men and women of the Prelature, in which the priests and laity make up an organic unity that can never be broken, because that would be to destroy the path of personal sanctity that God is asking of us, and also the apostolic effectiveness of Opus Dei all around the world, in the service of the Holy Church.

Always be very loyal to the Roman Pontiff, whoever he is; love all the bishops, the successors of the Apostles, and your own Ordinary, the bishop and prelate of Opus Dei. Love the priests of each diocese; and ask our Lord constantly to send many laborers to the Work and to all of his wheatfield ripe for the harvest: many seminarians determined to seek holiness and also many vocations to the consecrated life.

Knowing how St. Josemaría loved—and now from heaven loves—the parents and brothers and sisters of his daughters and sons, I congratulate from the bottom of my heart those who are part of the family of each of our three new priests. Give thanks to the Blessed Trinity, and go to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, our Lady of the Angels, asking that she watch over these sons in their new stage of service to the Church and to souls.

Everything in this house of worship speaks to us of the love of God and of his Mother for each and every one of us: the Tabernacle with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament whom we contemplate in the “\textit{oculus}” of the reredos, the
scenes from the life of our Lord and of Holy Mary, the statue of Our Lady of Torreciudad, the large and majestic sanctuary with the statue of the Founder of Opus Dei adoring our Lord, and even the very walls of brick. Each element is an invitation to us to consider that we are all temples of God and, recalling St. Josemaria's words in _The Way_, just as great edifices—this shrine as well—were built up brick by brick, so too should we realize that each small element of our life can and should be a continuous act of worship of God our Lord.

I cannot conclude without asking that there may rise up each day from our heart a fervent prayer, accompanied by generous sacrifice, for the Pope and his intentions, for the bishops—for my brother bishop of Barbastro—for priests, and for this humanity of which we form part.

Praised be Jesus Christ.


[2] _Mk_ 16:15

[3] _Benedict XVI, Homily at the Mass initiating his pontificate, April 24, 2005._


[7] _The Way, no. 531._

Torna ai contenuti

At the blessing of a statue of St. Josemaría, Girona, Spain (July 1, 2012)

My dear sisters and brothers,

My dear friends, which is the same as sisters and brothers:
I give thanks to God for being here with you. I would like this ceremony of the blessing of the statue of St. Josemaria, a work of the great sculptor Etsuro Sotoo, to become for us a prayer that will be prolonged throughout the coming days, throughout the coming years.

St. Josemaría was a great dreamer, but a dreamer who held tight to reality, precisely so that those everyday activities would produce great apostolic fruit. He dreamed—consider it well—at a time when he was all alone, with no human means, thinking of the expansion of the Work to serve the Church throughout the whole world. Those of us who arrived later have been able to contemplate what the faith of St. Josemaria saw as a vivid reality—a contagious faith, a secure faith, a faith filled with joy, a faith that led him to cultivate contrition, to ask pardon for what he considered were failures to correspond. And thus to identify himself more fully with God, with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

I was told that this sculptor, who has a splendid artistic touch, wanted to place some roses at the feet of St. Josemaría; and he remarked that these roses represented what resulted from the footprints that St. Josemaría left throughout this world of ours, which we also have to traverse holding onto the hand of God, and of our Lady, and with the intercession of St. Josemaría.

I can tell you that indeed he was a great friend of roses, in order to bring them to our Lord in the Tabernacle. I could recount to you many scenes, many moments of the worship that he showed to the Tabernacle and also the devotion of “hyperdulia” that he gave to our Mother Holy Mary, bringing or asking others to bring to our Lord first of all a rose, and bringing them also to our Lady. And certainly he said that we are who we are: poor women, poor men. And therefore, when he was in Mexico, while making a novena praying for the Church, for the Pope, for Opus Dei, for humanity, people there told him that the roses that fell out when the Indian Juan Diego opened his mantel in Tepeyac before Archbishop Zumarraga were large, precious and fragrant. But that in the place where our Lady had appeared to Juan Diego, only small roses grew. St. Josemaria, who was a great observer and who drew both spiritual and human consequences (because one cannot separate the supernatural from the
human in this world of ours) said: “that gives me great joy.” And that is how our life has to be, drawing from our daily activities, from our struggle, the small roses that we give to our Lady so that—as we pray in Opus Dei every day—she will present them to our Lord in our name. And that these roses should be our smile, our well done work, our effort to serve others, and also our effort to love more each day those with whom we live.

Let us learn from those who have preceded us. And I am referring now specifically to St. Josemaría, whom you can be certain has accompanied you, and is accompanying you from heaven while we are here. He follows us with his gaze from heaven; he follows us with his support and is saying to us: don’t give up that daily struggle, because your daily struggle will become the sowing of love and peace that you have to bring to the whole world.

Yes! Let us dream now with St. Josemaría, knowing that each and every one us is an instrument of God, and considering what apostolic efforts—specific ones—we are making each day. We Christians cannot be passive men and women. We have to be active. And just as this beloved sculptor has represented with affection the great tasks that St. Josemaría carried out…. Yes, it’s true! Each and every one of us can and should sow many roses with our actions, with our prayer, with our friendship, with our life in our own family or the place where we find ourselves. People are waiting for us all over the world and are hoping specifically for a witness of faith on the part of all the women and men who know themselves to be children of God, and who have by baptism received the grace to carry Christ in their lives and to bring Christ into the lives of everyone else.

Be women and men who are optimistic. Fill yourselves with the joy that marks those who know and converse with God. And consider carefully: God is trusting in me, he wants to lean on me, he wants to make use of my life for so much fruit that should be produced throughout the whole world. Tell St. Josemaría, that great priest of faith, that self-sacrificing priest, that priest filled with supernatural and human joy, ask him that we too (as he repeated to us so many times) may know how to open up the divine paths of the earth right where we are, because whatever we do has the transcendence of living with God.
I will end by telling you: what better path to reach God and to fulfill God’s will than our Mother in heaven! If it’s possible (I don’t know when or even whether it can be done), I’ve been told that I might visit our Lady of Ransom, where our Father went to entrust to Mary all his worries and concerns. But it was an entrusting filled with peace. To her and in her we place our lives, our hands, so that she will lead us by the path of safety and of faithful correspondence to what God is asking of each and every one of us.

May God bless you!

Articles and Interviews

Interview granted to Desde la Austral, Argentina (Spring – Summer, 2012)

“To read the Council’s documents and put them into practice is to love the Church.” Published in the review “Desde la Austral” of Austral University, Year I, no. 3, Spring-Summer 2012, pp. 22-24.

THE COUNCIL

Now that we have celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, can you comment on the importance it had and continues to have for the Church today?

The Second Vatican Council was the most solemn manifestation of the Church’s Magisterium in the past century, in continuity with all of its previous teaching. The documents that came from it clearly contain great riches and, as John Paul II and Benedict XVI have stressed, we have the challenge of putting them into practice with full fidelity, so that Jesus Christ and his Gospel will reach the hearts and minds of millions of
people. To read the Council’s documents and put them into practice is to love the Church and all mankind.

What was the central message that the Council wanted to give to the men and women of today?

It’s not easy to put in a few words. In any case, we might sum it up by saying that God draws close to us and comes to meet us: he loves us, we are of interest to him and he counts on us; by his grace, we can respond to him and do great good to others. And specifically, the Council has reminded us that holiness—the full response to God’s love—is not a goal for just a privileged few, but is within everyone’s reach, and that we are all called to attain union with God in Christ, through our ordinary life: through our family, work and social relationships. The work of the Council was very intense. More than 2,500 council fathers took part.

How was it possible to reach a true unity and almost unanimity regarding the approved texts, when in the working sessions and discussions on various topics the positions defended were not only quite different but divergent?

The Church is made up of men and women, so it’s not surprising that, at times, people may have a different focus or point of view. Nevertheless it would be a mistake to forget that it is also divine: Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would always accompany and assist the Church. Therefore, as Benedict XVI insists, our readiness to listen is indispensable: it’s not a question of following our own ideas, but of trying to discover God’s will and letting Him be the one to guide us. The documents of Vatican are due to the hard work of many people, but above all we see there the teaching of Jesus Christ and the action of the Holy Spirit.

Why were there conflicting interpretations of some of the Council’s words? Why have John Paul II and Benedict XVI insisted so strongly that its conclusions should be put into practice?

It’s well-known that the Council was badly or partially interpreted in some sectors. The causes were varied and are closely tied to the spread of secularism and hedonistic materialism, which have caused grave harm to souls. I am thinking, for example, of the loss of a Christian sense that has affected many families, of the decline in religious practice, and also of the crisis affecting some members of the clergy and the consecrated life.
Nevertheless, as I’ve already said, the texts of the Council contain great riches; many of its teachings, in part, have already been put into practice in the Church and one can see the fruits: the frequent use of Sacred Scripture, the full responsibility of the laity, as members of the people of God…. But the Council is not an historical event in the past; it is more like an ongoing project that is spreading and being assimilated little by little, with more or less success. We also need to recall that the Church is a pilgrim in this world, and therefore must always go forward with optimistic faith. The new evangelization convoked by Blessed John Paul II and Benedict XVI reminds us of the need to spread one of the key messages of the Council, as I said above: the universal call to holiness, a central message also in the teachings of St. Josemaria.

_The Second Vatican Council saw itself as a noble attempt to foster “dialogue between the Church and the world.” Fifty years later, the Pope once again is insisting on this point. A father or mother of a family, a professional, a student, a teacher…. How can they carry out this dialogue with people who don’t know or have left behind the faith?_

The Church is essentially missionary and Christians are called to always give witness to Jesus Christ. St. Josemaría taught that one cannot separate Christian life from apostolate, just as one cannot separate in Christ his being the God-Man and his mission as Redeemer. I think that the first challenge of all the faithful—whether a mother or father of a family, a son or daughter, a worker, an intellectual, a priest, bishop, religious or lay person—is to acquire a strong formation and go deeply into the reasons for one’s faith. The Holy Father has recommended, in this Year of Faith, that we get to know very well the _Catechism of the Catholic Church_. Thus we will be able to dialogue with others, in order to invite them to share in the treasure we have received, doing so with respect and sincerity. This is the basis of every effort to draw others closer to the faith. And it’s very important that we Catholics put the _mandatum novum_, the new commandment into practice: learning to love everyone, in order to serve and help them, and when necessary, to correct them with charity.

_What importance did the message that St. Josemaria preached since 1928—the universal call to holiness—have on the teaching on the laity accepted by the Council?_
St. Josemaría’s teachings shed light on the importance of the vocation to holiness that all the lay faithful receive at baptism for the service of the Church and the whole world: for the service of families, professional environments, the most needy. This was highlighted by Blessed John Paul II, when he referred to St. Josemaría as “an apostle of the laity for modern times.” And in the official documents of his cause of canonization he was called “a precursor of the Second Vatican Council.” Many Conciliar fathers stated that St. Josemaría had been a precursor of the message of this Church assembly.

Could you explain the role that our first Honorary Rector, the Venerable Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, carried out in the working sessions of the Council?

I would need to go on for a long time to answer this, and I want to stress that more about this topic will become known over time. Many of the protagonists highlighted his contribution: as is well known, he intervened directly, from the ante-preparatory stage right to the end of the Council. I can bear witness to a significant fact: the appreciation for his work on the part of the Roman Curia, including those who didn’t agree with his viewpoint. He was a man of peace, unity and charity. His personal seal was a calm smile of fraternal warmth. Anyone who works on a team knows how important it is to have people who smile and unite. In Don Alvaro’s case, this went hand in hand with his great intelligence and capacity for work.

THE YEAR OF FAITH

Can you give us some advice on how to live and take fruitful advantage within the university community of the recent “Year of Faith” convoked by Pope Benedict XVI?

The Year of Faith is a marvelous opportunity to go more deeply, also personally, into Christ’s message, and to renew ourselves personally so as to communicate that message better. It is an opportunity to value the faith more fully, to try to ensure that our life is that of consistent Christians, and help the men and women of our time to see it as an answer to their deepest questions, so that they feel protected, helped, encouraged. What is fundamental here is study and formation, and also personal friendship that leads to apostolate.
Faith has to be present in university life and scientific research. Benedict XVI insists on the need to “expand reason,” since there is no opposition between science and faith. It would be a mistake—one that restricts and impoverishes reason—to dispense, in practice, in science or in public life, in the economy or in university work, with the transcendent dimension of the human being.

On the other hand, a university community has to be centered on the education and formation of its students and open to the great intellectual challenges, at the same time as it gives priority to helping solve society’s pressing problems: the protection of human life, in all stages of development; fostering the stability of the family, based on marriage between a man and a woman; the struggle against poverty and marginalization; the promotion of a new culture, new legislation, new styles more in accord with the dignity of women and men, as children of God. Where will specific Christian proposals aimed at building a just society based on solidarity come from, if not from those who are inspired by the Gospel and give priority to generous and well-done work? Society needs people who are well prepared from the human, professional, and spiritual point of view. We have a clear path marked out for us during this Year of Faith and afterwards as well.

Benedict XVI convoked a Year of Faith at a time when the weakness of some members of the Church has become obvious to all and the world seems set on a course that falls outside her teachings. Why do you think that, despite everything, this is a moment for faith? Why should one continue believing in the Church?

As I said before, the Church is made up of men and women: we know that sin exists and that God constantly calls us to convert our hearts. As we see the Pope doing, it is important not to ignore the problems, or fail to be concerned about people who have suffered injustices. Nevertheless, it is so evident that the world today has a great need for God and his grace, which reaches us through the sacraments in the Church. Young people seem to discover this easily; it’s striking (for example in the World Youth Days) how they are in tune with the Eucharist, with the Pope and with the Church. The Church is young and we are truly in a time of hope. The Church seeks unity, it promotes peace and solidarity, it makes evangelization its priority, it cares for the poorest and is a beacon of light in
the face of the hatred and violence in so many parts of the world. In this context, we Christians need to reflect the lovable face of Christ. The Church our Mother is holy and always will be, although the behavior of some of her children may not be in accord with that holiness.

*St. Josemaria used to say graphically that he had a faith “so thick you could cut it with a knife.” You lived with this saint: how was this faith shown?*

In his trusting relationship with Jesus, which “saturated” his entire day. In his filial devotion to our Lady. And also in his humility and magnanimity: he considered himself as of little worth, and was very aware that whatever he did would be of value only if God made it prosper; and, at the same time, he encouraged great enterprises to help this world of ours. So many important social, educational and religious initiatives arose under the influence of his words. The Austral University is a specific example of St. Josemaría’s overflowing zeal to serve God and all society. He sought always to rely on God, while personally hiding and disappearing so that only our Lord would shine forth.

*Can you speak a bit about the need that today’s men and women have for strengthening their faith in order to find happiness in this world of ours, which often does not seem to have room for God?*

That true happiness that we all yearn for will only be attained in fullness in eternal life, but it is won and begins here on earth when we live in friendship with God. As St. Augustine said so forcefully: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” I’ll also add that only those who feel a need for salvation can feel a need for Jesus. Is there anyone today who thinks he has no need to cleanse anything in his heart, in his life, in his past, in his present? We Christians should be the understanding face of Christ for others. If our friends, and all mankind, find in us a fraternal face, we can communicate to them the Church’s marvelous message: “Do not be afraid to open your doors to Christ” (John Paul II). “Have the magnanimity to risk your life on Christ” (Benedict XVI). The path of happiness is always a path of generosity. As the Second Vatican Council reminds us, a person “cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 24).
Finally, we would like to ask you something on a more personal note: Is there any possibility that you might visit us during the course of this Year of Faith?

I would be delighted to visit the University and chat with each and every one of you, to share your joys and sorrows, your challenges and plans. I place this desire in God’s hands.

Address at the inauguration of the academic year, Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome (November 5, 2012)

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies and Illustrious Authorities,

Professors and students,

And all who work at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

1. Many of the events that took place during the last Academic Year are related to the year we are about to inaugurate. First of all, I would like to recall that on the past June 28, Pope Benedict XVI, with the publication of the decree on heroic virtues, declared Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, the first Chancellor of this University, as Venerable. This was a great gift for us who lived alongside that most faithful son of St. Josemaría.

In addition, a week ago saw the close of the Synod for the New Evangelization convoked by Benedict XVI, coinciding with the beginning of the Year of Faith, which commemorates the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the 20th anniversary of the publication, in 1992, of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

These events show a common thread linking them as parts of a single picture. When we see an artist painting various figures, one by one, we don't always appreciate the harmony of the whole. But when the work is finished, we see that all the figures contribute to a unified, much larger scene.
The same thing happens in the events that God’s providence oversees in history: *taken together* they offer a vision of amazing beauty, in which each part contributes to the attractiveness of the whole.

2. Something similar also took place regarding the awareness of the universal call to holiness, which the early Christians lived with faith and naturalness, and which later was almost forgotten for many centuries. It was set forth again, finally, with great force by Vatican II, after having been preached with unreserved dedication for many years by St. Josemaría Escrivá, whom John Paul II called the *saint of the ordinary*.

The inspirer of our university was a true precursor of the Second Vatican Council. Since 1928 he reminded many faithful of the vocation of all men and women to holiness and of the need to find God in their daily life.

The Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*, which proclaimed the Year of Faith, underlines the personal responsibility of Christians (which the Synod for the New Evangelization also stressed): “The renewal of the Church is also achieved through the witness offered by the lives of believers: by their very existence in the world, Christians are called to radiate the word of truth that the Lord Jesus has left us.”[1]

Right from the beginning of the expansion of Christianity, first of all the apostles, and later the first intellectuals and Fathers of the Church, presented profound reflections about revelation and exercised a great influence on the daily life of the faithful, giving reasons for their hope (see *1 Pet* 3:14-17), and fostering the spread of the faith.

The universities that have arisen within the Church have also played an essential role in the development of society, through the search for truth in many areas[2]—despite the fact that, not infrequently, some people want to ignore this historical reality.

The moments we are living through, like all the other epochs in history, are very important for the Church. The “dictatorship of relativism,” highlighted by the Pope, has to spur us to live our faith every day with a joyful commitment, both in “building up the university” and in our participation in contemporary debates.
But how can we live the call to holiness in our world today? Allow me to make a suggestion—not only as Grand Chancellor, but also with the affection of a Father—about what, in my opinion, God expects of you, professors, students, and administrative and technical personnel of the University of the Holy Cross.

3. To begin, I would like to address those who carry out tasks not directly linked to teaching. I recall St. Josemaría's words: “Who is more important, the president of a university or the lowest person on the maintenance staff?” And he answered, without hesitating: “the one who fulfills his job with greater faith, with a greater zeal for holiness.”[3]

Many hundreds of students have now passed through these hallways; their hearts have been touched by your joyful availability to serve by example, and they bring it with them to the places where they will help build up the Church, in the furthest corners of the world.

I thank you for your work, which extends from the maintenance of the buildings to the reception of the students in the administrative offices, from the distribution of books in the library to the necessary administrative paperwork: all are services hidden for the most part to the eyes of others.

To fulfill these tasks with perfection requires a true spirit of collaboration; and I would almost say (and without the “almost”) of true fraternity, which rises above possible differences of opinion, and is able to confront problems calmly, seeking positive solutions: unity among you is now very important, and will always be so.

The university is facing important challenges to ensure the necessary personnel and funding. With everyone’s assistance, many initiatives are being undertaken to seek funds and to cut back on expenses.

4. I also want to consider the call to holiness that the students have received. Be aware of the great benefit of being in Rome. Not many of your fellow citizens have had or will have the opportunity to live for several years in the center of Christianity, with the opportunity to go deeply into the faith close to the see of St. Peter and his successors. Many faithful and many institutions have helped you to take advantage of this opportunity, offering financial sacrifices that are at times very great. Your correspondence to their generosity can show itself in the sense of
responsibility with which you care for even the material facilities (residences, classrooms, etc.) that you make use of.

In the not too distant future, people in dioceses all over the world will rely on your doctrinal and intellectual preparation. St. Josemaría reminded us: “Do you realize how much depends on whether you are soundly prepared or not? Many, many souls! And now will you cease to study or work with perfection?”[4]

Guaranteeing a good number of hours devoted to intense study, making an effort to understand the more difficult topics, being actively present in your classes, helping your companions, are positive attitudes that draw us closer to God’s love. St. Josemaría, who well knew the temptation many students face to reduce their efforts, said strongly: “If you know that study is apostolate, but limit yourself to studying just enough to get by, it is clear that your interior life is going badly.”[5]

5. I would like now to direct some final considerations to the professors, since they carry out an important task in the university.

As far as teaching is concerned, each professor should aspire to become a true “master,” who knows how to transmit to the students, with real fervor, the content of his area of study.

To pass on knowledge deeply, and also comprehensively and clearly, demands a prior work of preparation and reflection that should not be neglected.

The secret is in care for little things. Work marked by this characteristic is pleasing to God, also because one teaches by means of the human virtues, which Don Alvaro del Portillo so prized.

Secondly, I think that, often, you will not be able to avoid “administrative” tasks that call for a special spirit of collaboration and availability. These tasks sometimes require a lot of time; but to accept and carry them out is a sign of the generosity that our Lord expects of you and that he will bless abundantly.

As far as the third and final factor is concerned, namely research, professors have to “defend” the excellence and professionalism of their work, something that is by no means easy. The Church has need of our
work, especially in an atmosphere marked by relativism, where the truth is constantly put into question.

St. Josemaría said: “One has to study—to gain the world and conquer it for God. Then we can raise the level of our efforts: we can try to turn the work we do into an encounter with the Lord and the foundation to support those who will follow our way in the future.

“In this way, study will become prayer.”[6]

6. I will end by returning to the original thread of my intervention: the universal call to holiness.

How happy I would be if those who come into contact with us would notice the light of a holiness that communicates warmth by the way of teaching and living the faith on the part of the professors, by the charity and diligence of the students, by the well-done work of the non-teaching personnel!

I pray that St. Josemaría and Venerable Alvaro del Portillo may keep alive in all of us that light and help us to keep always enkindled in our life the fire of God’s love, with all its consequences. I also ardently desire, repeating words of the Holy Father, that “this Year of Faith make our relationship with Christ the Lord increasingly firm, since only in him is there the certitude for looking to the future.”[7]

I ask Mary Most Holy to present to God the fruit of your work and to intercede so that we correspond to the call to holiness. And I declare the academic year 2012-2013 inaugurated.

And pray for me as well. Thank you!


Address at the Congress Center of Andorra la Vella, Principality of Andorra (December 1, 2012)

Your Excellency, Archbishop Joan-Enric Vives y Sicilia, Co-Prince and Bishop of Andorra.

Honorable María Rosa Ferrer Obiols, Chief Consul of Andorra la Vella.

Distinguished Joaquim Manich, President of the Associació d’Amics del Camí de Pallerols de Rialb a Andorra (Association of Friends of the Path of Pallerols from Rialp to Andorra).

Most Excellent Authorities. Ladies and Gentlemen, and also you youngsters.

Before beginning, I would like to say that I am a bit stunned by the affection you have shown me. I have overcome that emotion because I think your affection is directed to St. Josemaría, to whom so much is owed, not only by Opus Dei, as is only logical, but by all mankind, because with his faithful response he has opened up the divine paths of the earth to countless women and men. He has made known to them that, right where they find themselves, they are loved by God and sought by God, who is awaiting our response.

If I were to try to give due witness to the significance of this anniversary, it would take much too long. But I want to tell you that that path towards Andorra in 1937 had great importance not only for the life of


[7] Benedict XVI, Apostolic letter in the form of a “motu proprio” Porta Fidei with which he convoked the Year of Faith (October 11, 2011), no. 15.

Torna ai contenuti
our Father but for the Church, for millions of people all over the world. His passage through this land made it possible for St. Josemaría to carry out the mission that God our Lord entrusted to him on October 2, 1928, a number of years after he began to feel intimations of it in his soul while still a young boy. He responded with great generosity while always feeling that he came up short in the face of God’s love—which is always true, since we can never correspond fully to the hand that our Lord is constantly extending to us, calling us to a great intimacy with him.

I will now go on to read what I have prepared.

Seventy-five years ago, on December 2, 1937, early in the morning, St. Josemaría entered Andorra together with other members of their expedition. They had already crossed the frontier during the night, without knowing the exact moment when they had passed from one country to the other. When the guides told them that they were now inside the territory of this beloved principate, which they were so eager to reach, St. Josemaría, as was his life-long custom, raised his heart to God and—I have not the slightest doubt—prayed for the citizens of this land and for those who would come later throughout the years.

Those first steps on Andorran soil were the first ones he had taken in freedom after a long year and a half undergoing all types of dangers and privations. He had often spent the night walking in the street, on the sidewalk, without documents, with the risk of being arrested and taken directly to jail or to a firing squad. Now in Andorra, after waiting for so long to do so, they rejoiced in being able to do something as simple and necessary as praying or singing out loud.

I had the privilege of accompanying him on many trips. These were never monotonous, although yes they were tiring, because he made long journeys. They were real family trips, for along with the piety that he tried to foster in his own soul and in those who accompanied him, from time to time he would sing. Thus he could say sincerely that he had filled the highways and streets of Europe and the world with prayer and with singing—songs of love for God and for all humanity. Those hours of his
passage through Andorra remained engraved forever in his heart and mind, for they meant the beginning of a new stage in the fulfillment of what God was asking of him: the foundation of Opus Dei and its expansion throughout the world. I often heard him recall those difficult days and that happy ending—without complaining, but rather giving thanks to God, because it is precisely in suffering that love grows, and one’s response to a calling is strengthened.

On the morning of December 2, as they entered Andorra, the first light of day revealed the beauty and grandeur of these valleys. When St. Josemaría spoke about drawing close to the village, as they were praying the Rosary, it was obvious what a deep impression the pealing of the bells of Sant Julià de Lòria for Mass made on him, the first time he had heard this sound since the war began.

I would like to make a brief digression here. I had the opportunity to serve his Mass many times and I can assure you that his Mass was never the same as the previous day. The celebration of the Holy Sacrifice was the culminating moment of his day, and he put all of us into it. He brought to the paten the whole Church, the whole of mankind, so that we would be very close to the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Josemaría recalled that a young fellow from the area guided them to Sant Julià. There in the village they met the priest, who opened the church so they could pray before the Blessed Sacrament. Though brief, that visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in the first tabernacle they encountered was a very intense moment in his heart. The men and women of Opus Dei have learned from our Father that Eucharistic piety, which was one of the foundations, the fundamental one for bringing about the Work as we now see it, and as those who come after us will see it. He always strove to give that time of real encounter with our Lord all the characteristics of a life in love.

They reached Andorra exhausted, after those long nightly hikes, hungry and cold, with the constant threat of danger. How grateful St. Josemaría was for the warm hospitality that Andorra offered them! Finally (and he wasn’t thinking only of the material aspect but also of the affection shown) they could get the good meals and restful nights they so urgently
needed. But Andorra principally offered St. Josemaría the freedom needed to calm a hunger that was no less acute: the freedom to exercise his faith and carry out the supernatural mission that he knew God had called him to.

St. Josemaría was not just fleeing from danger. He had confronted that during the time he had remained in Madrid, and then in Valencia, and later in Barcelona—a danger that was very real. His companions well knew how he had debated with himself during the whole trip as to whether he should continue on or return to Madrid, where so many people needed his pastoral care. The urgency to leave the country was provoked precisely by the impossibility of fully exercising his ministry in the service of souls, by the desire to carry out with freedom the Work that God had entrusted to him. For the Father, Andorra was a brief stretch of road, along which he traveled in freedom and towards freedom, the freedom that we need in order to live with the dignity that corresponds to each human being.

As he so often preached: “It is obvious that, in this field as in all others, you would not be able to carry out this program of sanctifying your everyday life if you did not enjoy all the freedom which proceeds from your dignity as men and women created in the image of God and which the Church freely recognises. Personal freedom is essential to the Christian life. But do not forget, my children that I always speak of a responsible freedom.

“Interpret, then, my words as what they are: a call to exercise your rights every day, and not merely in time of emergency. A call to fulfill honorably your commitments as citizens, in all fields—in politics and in financial affairs, in university life and in your job—accepting with courage all the consequences of your free decisions and the personal independence which corresponds to each one of you. A Christian ‘lay outlook’ of this sort will enable you to flee from all intolerance, from all fanaticism. To put it in a positive way, it will help you to live in peace with all your fellow citizens, and to promote this understanding and harmony in all spheres of social life.”[1]

How greatly St. Josemaría loved freedom! To such an extent that he often said, although he had no particular reason to: “before speaking badly
of anyone I would bite off my tongue and spit it far away.” That is how far his love for freedom went. It is for me a great joy, and very opportune, that this conference has been organized in the context of his journey towards freedom in those exceptional circumstances.

Here in Andorra St. Josemaría was able to experience once again the joy of celebrating Holy Mass with vestments and on an altar. In the nine days of his stay he celebrated the Holy Sacrifice in various churches and chapels of Andorra la Vella and Escaldes, with a piety that always impressed those attending. I like to imagine those Masses during the crossing of the Pyrenees, in the forests of Rialp and in La Ribalera, and how his Masses would have been when he was able to celebrate when they reached Andorra: how intently, with what a strong petition for help, he would have taken in his hands the Host in which Jesus Christ was present, with his Body and Blood, with his Soul and Divinity.

With that longed for freedom finally regained, St. Josemaría also sought out contact with his brothers in the priesthood. Mossén [Father] Lluís Pujol, as we have just heard, who was then the Archpriest of Andorra la Vella, regularly received visits from the Father and the group of his sons accompanying him. In the evenings, they chatted besides the warmth of the fireplace. I can testify that I heard him say many times: “I have to write to my dear brother mossèn Lluís Pujol.” And I am sure that while writing him, he prayed for this land, for all the people here.

God in his providence wanted me to accompany St. Josemaría for many years. I had the privilege and the responsibility of being close every day to the founder’s holy life and the fruit it produced in the Church, which constantly reaches more and more people and places. Clearly a few decisions in one person’s life can have great importance for the whole of society. St. Josemaría always encouraged us to live in such a way that we give to each instant the “vibration of eternity.”[2] In exceptional moments, when they occur, but above all in one’s daily activities. In the episodes of those few days spent crossing the Pyrenees, in his brief stay in Andorra, we can glimpse the virtues that St. Josemaría lived every day, and that led him with naturalness to respond generously in such exceptional circumstances as that of crossing over the mountains that surround this country.
As we have heard, Father Lluis Pujol was deeply impressed by the humble acceptance of suffering and hardship that he discovered in St. Josemaría. He saw the state in which they arrived in Andorra, and he heard him say that they had suffered so much that he had made the resolution of never referring to the sufferings endured during the crossing. Those of us who lived with the Father in later years know that he fulfilled that resolution, since that was always his attitude. On the many occasions that we heard him talk about his memories of those days, we never saw him complain or refer bitterly to those historical circumstances. We always heard him speak of the need for reconciliation, since St. Josemaría was a man who knew how to forgive, because he forgave out of love for God. Therefore he was a great champion, a great preacher of the sacrament of Confession, which he called, with good reason, the sacrament of joy.

The archpriest of Andorra was also surprised by his constant concern for others, which he noticed in many small details during those few evenings spent next to the fire. For all of us who spent time with St. Josemaría, whether years or just a few hours, this is no surprise, since he was a man who knew how to love both in great things and in small ones, which true love always values. That same affection also led him to give thanks with magnanimity. It is a matter of justice to mention today the gratitude St. Josemaría had throughout his whole life for the reception he received in Andorra. And I thank you, knowing that from heaven he is looking at you with joy and praying for you. This gratitude, especially visible in the warm correspondence he maintained for many years with Fr. Lluis Pujol, was directed to all the people of Andorra and their hospitality.

I also frequently recall how St. Josemaría returned to Andorra years later, to attend the installation of the new Bishop of Urgell and Co-Prince of Andorra, his friend Bishop Ramon Iglesias Navarri, as our dear Archbishop has mentioned, in a gesture reflecting the loyalty with which he treated his friends. With heartfelt affection he spoke to us many times of that second trip. He was accompanied by his sister Carmen, a strong woman with a wonderful sense of humor, which was at times a bit dry. He told us that Carmen (whom we familiarly called Aunt Carmen because she was the sister of our Father), when she came, reacted with incredulity to the idea that St. Josemaría had crossed those mountains on foot. She told
him: “You mean you walked over those mountains? Impossible!” But it was possible by God’s grace and the determination of St. Josemaría, who was in good training for long hikes since he often had no money and walked from one end of Madrid to the other to take care of the sick and needy, without taking any public means of transportation because he didn’t have even the few cents needed for it. He also enjoyed the way the new Bishop addressed the Andorrans as “my faithful and vassals.” I’m sure that that Bishop, as have all those coming after him, have found the Andorrans to be faithful and vassals who are loyal, who have helped them, encouraged them, and supported them.

Saints, in their passage on earth, leave a trail. We shouldn’t view the paths they have traveled as an heroic example we could never imitate or a relic to be venerated. God wanted to leave us their lives as examples close to us, people who saw the same scenery and walked on the same land that we see and walk on each day. Considering episodes in their life, as we are doing today, thanks to your affection for St. Josemaría’s passage through Andorra, should serve to help us imitate the saints in points that bring us closer to God and to others. The few days spent in Andorra by St. Josemaría contain many lessons: the teachings of a man of prayer, who took advantage of the freedom to love and pray that Andorra offered him, doing so with great piety; the witness of a man who loved the freedom of all men and women; the example of a saint who knew how to love, to forgive, to give thanks.

I am sure that from heaven he is blessing all the people of this small but hospitable country, which welcomed him so generously, and that he is interceding for its governors and for all its inhabitants, so that God will fill with joy all the homes and each of the men and women of Andorra.

Many thanks.


Interview granted to Avvenire, Italy (October 6, 2012)

Interview Granted to *Avvenire*,
Italy (October 6, 2012)

*By Francesco Ognibene*

The scenes of the half million pilgrims who filled St. Peter’s Square on October 6, ten years ago, are still deeply engraved on our memories. We saw a vast multitude of men and women from all over the world, from many different professions, and social and educational backgrounds. More than ten years have now gone by since Rome woke up to that multitude of ordinary everyday people who had come from all over the world for the canonization of Msgr. Josemaría Escrivá, a Spanish priest who was a pioneer of the sanctity of lay people in the midst of the world, and who founded Opus Dei in 1928. He died in 1975 and was beatified 17 years later.

Bishop Javier Echevarría is the second successor as head of this ecclesial entity, which was erected as a personal prelature by John Paul II in 1982. He recently spoke with Avvenire about the meaning and importance of that day.

**Your Excellency, ten years ago the Church solemnly recognized the holiness of the founder of Opus Dei in the presence of hundreds of thousands of people in Rome. What do you recall about that day and what is its message for us?**

From that day I especially recall the atmosphere of gratitude to God and the festive spirit of so many faithful overflowing with joy. The message of encouragement that the canonization of St. Josemaría gave us was an injection of hope: “to seek personal conversion every day.”

The spirit of St. Josemaría is not just a promise, but a specific and efficacious path for living the Gospel and attaining holiness. His teachings foster a life of virtue, dedication to God and to other men and women. I ask our Lord to engrave that message deeply on our hearts and to help us to put it into practice.
What does St. Josemaría have to say to the Church today?

The fact that his canonization took place at the dawning of a new century is particularly meaningful. If the past century gave witness to the “rediscovery” of the universal call to sanctity, the 21st century should be characterized by the putting of this teaching into effective practice. That is one of the great challenges that the Holy Spirit is indicating to the men and women of our time.

The message of St. Josemaría resounds today with special force: “Holiness is not something for the privileged few,” he insisted. God calls everyone, people of every condition, profession or occupation, right where they are. Normal, everyday life can be a path to holiness, and all the pathways of the earth can be an opportunity for meeting Christ. This is a real and decisive answer to secularization in today’s world.

The canonization of a founder is always a moment of change, marking the “full maturity,” as it were, of the institution they established. In these ten years, what has changed in Opus Dei? How has an institution that is still young in the Church “matured”? And what do you foresee for the future?

The Prelature of Opus Dei is a small part of the Church and is assisting the Church’s universal mission, following the guidelines of its pastors. In the ten years that have gone by since St. Josemaría’s canonization, the faithful of Opus Dei, as well as the many people who take part in its means of formation, continue in their personal commitment to spread the search for holiness in ordinary life.

Specifically, they are working enthusiastically to show that holiness is not an ideal that is purely “spiritualistic,” so to speak, but that it brings with it tangible fruits of justice and peace, as the Holy Father Benedict XVI so often reminds us.

The last ten years have seen the setting up of numerous activities of service to other men and women through the initiative of people of the Work together with their friends, such as the Irtysh Language School in Almaty, Kazakhstan, the Laguna Center for Palliative Care in Madrid, the new center for the Campus Bio-Medico in Rome, the International Harambee Association, which is carrying out educational projects in many
African countries, etc. All of these social initiatives have as their primary purpose to help those who take part in them to come closer to God.

What contribution can lay people who live in the middle of temporal realities—to whom the message of St. Josemaría is principally directed—make to the global crisis? A crisis that is, as the Pope has pointed out on various occasions, above all ethical in nature.

Like all men and women, we Christians know that life can sometimes present critical situations and challenges that are often very difficult to solve. This crisis profoundly affects what mankind most deeply desires: the stability of the family, work, social relationships, financial tranquility.

Those who live as God’s children count on the security of having a good Father in heaven. We need to transmit this hope, which is grounded in faith and in a personal relationship with Jesus. Christians are called upon to discover and re-discover what is essential: that we need to carry on our shoulders others’ hardships, helping them to rebuild families, with a spirit of disinterested work, fostering good social relationships with everyone.

The Church has recently recognized the heroic virtues of your predecessor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo—the first step towards beatification. What does it mean for you to be the successor of two figures of this stature?

This news filled us with joy. As the first successor of St. Josemaría, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo gave us a great example of fidelity and joy. He was above all a faithful man, that is, a man of faith: faith in God, faith in the Church, faith in the supernatural origin of Opus Dei, and therefore faith in the divine character of the enterprise to which he was called by our Lord to help bring it forward, as St. Josemaría did during his whole life. Having two predecessors of that stature spurs me to follow their example and to go constantly to their intercession, knowing my limitations so well.

Fifty years ago the Council took place. What was Msgr. Escrivá’s contribution to the work and results of that Assembly? And what aspects of the Second Vatican Council are most relevant to us today?

Benedict XVI defined the Council as “the great grace the Church received in the 20th century.” St. Josemaría did not participate personally in
the work of the Council, but he followed with great attention that decisive event in the Church's history. In accord with Pope John XXIII's wishes, he was in contact with the Conciliar fathers and *peritos*, to whom, with a spirit of service, he tried to transmit his extensive pastoral experience.

Fifty years have now gone by since the Council proclaimed the universal call to holiness and apostolate, which St. Josemaría (as the decree of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints recalled for his beatification) had contributed to awakening for several decades. Much work still needs to be done for this truth to illumine and guide the ordinary life of all Christians.

**What does Opus Dei offer those who come into contact with its apostolates, and in particular young people?**

To all who draw close to Opus Dei it offers a very clear ideal: that of loving God better, and of reaching full identification with Jesus Christ, responding generously to the Holy Spirit, especially in one's daily life, in family life and at work.

Young people specifically are asked to feel the responsibility of the times in which they live, since they are the future of society. The Holy Father never fails to encourage them as often as possible not to have any fear of dedicating their lives to something great. This past June, in Milan, he assured them that “every age in life is ready to receive Christ.” We can be saints with only a few years of life behind us. Because God calls everyone to holiness, not just a few.

**What will be Opus Dei’s contribution to the Year of Faith?**

All Catholics are called to a deeper and more radical conversion that will help illumine all sectors of society. Our faith can open doors that have been closed and horizons that seemed impossible to attain.

We need to discover around us, in our professional, family and social life, the many people to whom perhaps no one has yet spoken about God and the eternal happiness to which all men and women aspire. Despite our personal weakness, we should awaken others from their lethargy, opening their eyes with the eloquence of our life and the enthusiasm of our words, bringing them closer to Jesus.
Nor can we ever forget that it is we who are called in first place to deepen our spiritual and human formation. This is the challenge of the year which is about to begin and which will give rise to hundreds of activities: courses to rediscover the faith, academic conferences in various universities that receive pastoral assistance from the Prelature, moments of prayer and Eucharistic adoration, etc. And, above all, a deep and broad personal apostolate, person to person.

Torna ai contenuti

Address at the Tenth Anniversary of Harambee, Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome (October 5, 2012)

Dear friends of Harambee-Africa,

The tenth anniversary of your association leads us directly to the ever-present memory of St. Josemaría’s canonization. Permit me, ten years on from that date, to begin with an act of thanksgiving to God for this exemplary shepherd. By his heroic response to the spiritual and human gifts he received from God, he made many things happen. One of them is the way so many thousands of people from all over the world who feel the need to help the men and women in developing countries, are able to do so effectively through your organization.

I also want to thank God personally for the way devotion to St. Josemaría has spread around the world, and for all the help he has given from Heaven over these ten years, ever since the ceremony of his canonization, when our much-loved Pope John Paul II called St. Josemaría “the patron saint of ordinary life.”

St. Josemaría was a big-hearted priest, and that comes through in everything he wrote, in his preaching, and also in the projects for helping the needy that he inspired during his lifetime. His teaching is still an active source of inspiration all over the world today, especially in Africa, which is the focus of attention for this conference.
I think that St. Josemaría’s great capacity to love explains why in so many places in the world, there are churches, chapels, buildings, streets and squares named after him. Congresses and studies have been devoted to his message about seeking God in life’s ordinary occupations, as well as books, films and documentaries. People have come to the Church as a result of getting to know St. Josemaría and his teachings. Every June 26, when the Church celebrates his liturgical memorial, we receive news of thousands of Masses said in every quarter of the globe. At these Masses, women and men of every nationality and every walk of life ask God, through St. Josemaría’s intercession, that “we may, through our daily work, be formed in the likeness of Jesus your Son and serve the work of redemption with burning love.”[1]

The Primacy of love

To get down to the topic for this session, St. Josemaría preached that “A man or a society that does not react to suffering and injustice and makes no effort to alleviate them is still distant from the love of Christ’s heart.”[2]

When I speak of the human heart I am not just talking about feelings, still less about the physical organ. As St. Josemaría often said, “When we speak of a person's heart, we refer not just to his sentiments, but to the whole person in his loving dealings with others. In order to help us understand divine things, Scripture uses the expression “heart” in its full human meaning, as the summary and source, expression and ultimate basis, of one’s thoughts, words and actions. A man is worth what his heart is worth.”[3]

As Pope Benedict reminded us at the beginning of his first Encyclical, “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him’ (1 Jn 4:16). These words from the First Letter of John express with remarkable clarity the heart of the Christian faith: the Christian image of God and the resulting image of mankind and its destiny.”[4]

Charity, true love, is at the centre not just of Christian life but of human life as such. Indeed, “From the fact that God is Love, and that man is made in God’s image, we can understand the profound identity of the human person: our vocation to love. Man is made to love; his life finds its fulfillment only if it is lived in love.”[5] As a result, “Man.... remains a being
that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.”[6] And the other way round: as human beings, the more we grow in love and in the rightly-ordered gift of ourselves, the more we are revealed to ourselves and the more we develop as people. Then we are motivated by the desire to give, freely, instead of being stuck with the craving to get more and more.

As St. Josemaría taught, “Man’s great privilege is to be able to love and to transcend what is fleeting and ephemeral.”[7] So each individual should not limit themselves to doing things. Our actions are fully in accordance with our nature only when the things we do are born of love, show love and are aimed at love.[8] We can go still further, and stress, in the Holy Father’s words, that “It is therefore the vocation to love that makes the human person an authentic image of God: man and woman come to resemble God to the extent that they become loving people.”[9] Charity, service, self-giving to our neighbor—these things are expressions of our basic, innate calling as human beings, who develop by loving and being loved. That, then, is what we must take as our constant, overriding rule of behavior—the practice of all the other virtues must be vivified by charity, which is the bond of perfection. Indeed, St. Josemaría tells us that “By living charity—Love—you live all the human and supernatural virtues demanded of a Christian. These virtues form a unity and cannot be reduced to a mere list. You cannot have charity without justice, solidarity, family and social responsibility, poverty, joy, chastity, friendship...”[10]

Charity, teaches the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, is a “force capable of inspiring new ways of approaching the problems of today’s world, of profoundly renewing structures, social organizations, legal systems from within.”

This truth applies to all mankind, and especially to Jesus’ disciples. Let’s recall that when a doctor of the law asked him which was the first commandment, our Lord did not limit himself to saying that loving God was the greatest and first commandment. He added the need to love our neighbor as a commandment that was included in the first (Matthew 22:35-39). He made it clear that it is not possible to love God without loving our neighbor, since genuine love for God has to include loving what
God loves, i.e. this world and the people in it. Quoting an idea of St. Maximus the Confessor, Benedict XVI teaches that “the love of God is revealed in responsibility for others.”[11] And he shows that “those who draw near to God do not withdraw from men, but rather become truly close to them.”[12]

Equally, it must be stressed that our love for our neighbor is not real love unless we love God. “United to Christ in his consecration to the Father, we are seized by his compassion for the multitudes who cry out for justice and solidarity, and like the Good Samaritan in the parable, [we are] committed to providing concrete and generous responses.”[13] (Benedict XVI, Speech to social pastoral care organizations, Fatima, Portugal, May 13, 2010). Love is demanding and it involves self-giving, which becomes possible thanks to Christ’s full, loving gift of himself to all; and he asks us and encourages us to treat people as he has done (John 13:34; 15:12). “Only if we try to understand the mystery of God’s love—a love which went as far as death—will we be able to give ourselves totally to others and not let ourselves be overcome by difficulties or indifference.”[14] Although in practice genuine, cheerful charity towards our neighbor is more immediate and gives proof of our love for God, we obviously cannot forget that the energy for real service to others comes from supernatural charity. Self-giving and sincere unity with others are possible “as a result of the most intimate union with God, through which the soul is totally pervaded by him — a condition which enables those who have drunk from the fountain of God’s love to become in their turn a fountain from which ‘flow rivers of living water’ (Jn 7:38).”[15]

This interaction between love for God and love for our neighbor, which has been taught and practiced from the beginnings of Christianity, has been underlined in the encyclical Deus Caritas Est. “If I have no contact whatsoever with God in my life, then I cannot see in the other anything more than the other, and I am incapable of seeing in him the image of God. But if in my life I fail completely to heed others, solely out of a desire to be ‘devout’ and to perform my ‘religious duties’, then my relationship with God will also grow arid.”[16]

Putting our hearts into social action
The fact that people’s actions become fully human when they are the result of love is something that “also applies in the social sphere; Christians must be deeply convinced witnesses of this, and they are to show [it] by their lives.”[17] Therefore charity, service, must be present and must imbue all human relations. “It is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones)”, says the Pope.[18] We should be convinced, and should try and convince others, that society is not built primarily on contractual and utilitarian relationships, but on the more deeply human links, starting with love. Accordingly, this principle is the first criterion for the development of society, and should be considered as the soul of the whole social order.[19] Charity, teaches the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, is a “force capable of inspiring new ways of approaching the problems of today’s world, of profoundly renewing structures, social organizations, legal systems from within. In this perspective love takes on the characteristic style of social and political charity: ‘Social charity makes us love the common good,’ it makes us effectively seek the good of all people, considered not only as individuals or private persons but also in the social dimension that unites them.”[20]

From this comes the requirement that affects every aspect of society, and, in the first place, Christians and the whole community of the Church itself. We are to do all we can to love our neighbor with deeds and in truth; not merely our close relations such as our family, but to love with a love that embraces even those furthest from us, in a correctly-ordered way. If we want to bring about a more human society, one that is more worthy of the dignity of the human person, it is necessary to give due importance to social charity, so that it inspires, purifies and raises all human, political and social connections. In short, the first criterion for social progress is the commandment of love. Jesus Christ “revealed to us that ‘God is love’ (1 Jn 4:8) and at the same time taught us that the new command of love was the basic law of human perfection and hence of the world’s transformation. (…) He cautions [us] at the same time that this charity is not something to be reserved for important matters, but must be pursued chiefly in the ordinary circumstances of life.”[21] Charity must imbue all social structures from within. This is why the Holy Father has summed up the whole
function of the social doctrine of the Church as “caritas in veritâ in re sociali: the proclamation of the truth of Christ’s love in society.”[22]

Some consequences

There are all sorts of practical consequences from all of this, both for the whole Church and for each individual believer. Let’s look at a few.

The need to announce that God is love shows that in the social sphere too, the effort to practice charity cannot be seen as something good but secondary. It is a substantial part of the mission of the Church and each Christian. Therefore organized charity on the part of the Church began when the Church herself began, has accompanied her throughout her life, under changing forms, and will continue to do so until the end of time. St. Josemaría said, “It is easy to understand the impatience, anxiety and uneasiness of [faithful Christians who want to] fight the personal and social injustice which the human heart can create. So many centuries of men living side by side and still so much hate, so much destruction, so much fanaticism stored up in eyes that do not want to see and in hearts that do not want to love! The good things of the earth, monopolized by a handful of people; the culture of the world, confined to cliques. And, on the outside, hunger for bread and education. Human lives—holy, because they come from God—treated as mere things, as statistics. I understand and share this impatience. It stirs me to look at Christ, who is continually inviting us to put his new commandment of love into practice.”[23]

Work for everyone

Promoting social charity is work for everyone, as a task that is needed at the individual level, at the level of associations, and at the level of the whole Church. The Second Vatican Council laid clear stress on this: “Let everyone consider it his sacred obligation to esteem and observe social necessities as belonging to the primary duties of modern man.... The Christian who neglects his temporal duties, neglects his duties toward his neighbor and even God, and jeopardizes his eternal salvation.”[24] Accordingly, St. Josemaría taught that “While Christians enjoy the fullest freedom in finding and applying various solutions to these problems, they should be united in having one and the same desire to serve mankind.
Otherwise their Christianity will not be the word and life of Jesus; it will be a fraud, a deception of God and man.”[25]

Charity, which is love, should include the whole person in his or her integrity, body and soul. “Men need earthly bread to sustain them in their lives on earth; they also need bread from heaven to enlighten their minds and inflame their hearts.”[26] Dire poverty demands the urgent gift of material help, but we must never forget spiritual help as well: charity ought in some way to bring God’s love before people’s eyes. This means that Christian charitable work should have a specific characteristic, which cannot be lost or diluted in merely human philanthropy— which is a good thing, but not enough to fulfill the mission Christ has entrusted to us. In addition, we need to underline the fact that the strength of all charitable activity depends on the strength of our faith and our love for God. As Benedict XVI says, “Only on the basis of a daily commitment to accept and to live fully the love of God can one promote the dignity of each and every human being.... Without a transcendent foundation, without a reference to God the Creator, without an appreciation of our eternal destiny, we risk falling prey to harmful ideologies.”[27]

At the same time, so as not to end up with nothing but good intentions, it has to be recognized that social charity has to be organized and institutionalized. “In so many aspects the neighbor to be loved is found ‘in society’.... To love him on the social level means, depending on the situations, to make use of social mediations to improve his life or to remove social factors that cause his indigence. It is undoubtedly an act of love, the work of mercy by which one responds here and now to a real and impelling need of one’s neighbor, but it is an equally indispensable act of love to strive to organize and structure society so that one’s neighbor will not find himself in poverty, above all when this becomes a situation within which an immense number of people and entire populations must struggle.”[28]

It must be stressed that although social structures are necessary, their aim is not to be a substitute for love between people, because human dignity is to be measured only by love, and not by what is just or reasonable. “Be convinced that justice alone is never enough to solve the great problems of mankind. When justice alone is done, don’t be surprised if people are hurt. The dignity of man, who is a son of God, requires much
more. Charity must penetrate and accompany justice because it sweetens and deifies everything: ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:16). Our motive in everything we do should be the Love of God, which makes it easier for us to love our neighbor and which purifies and raises all earthly loves onto a higher level.”[29] What’s more, “the claim that just social structures would make works of charity superfluous masks a materialist conception of man.”[30] Institutions and laws on their own are not enough to build a society that is worthy of humanity; personal charity is also needed as the solid basis for the life of society.

What has been said so far applies to any social situation, but it is particularly important in relation to the poorest sectors of society. Preferential love for the poor has to be activated at the social and global level, by furthering development in ways that overcome religious, racial, ideological and territorial boundaries. St. Josemaría emphasized that “Opus Dei [must be present] wherever there is poverty, unemployment, sadness, and suffering, to teach people about bearing suffering with joy, to end poverty, to end unemployment (because we train people for jobs) and to bring Christ into every person’s life, if they want us to, because we are all for freedom.”[31] And on another occasion he said, “There is only one race, the race of the children of God. There is only one color, the color of the children of God. And there is only one language, the language which speaks to the heart and to the mind, without the noise of words, making us know God and love one another.”[32]

There is even a pragmatic reason for helping others in their development, since any given human group can only achieve its own development by working for the development of others. Blessed John Paul II recalled that “Collaboration in the development of the whole person and of every human being is in fact a duty of all towards all, and must be shared by the four parts of the world.... If, on the contrary, people try to achieve it in only one part, or in only one world, they do so at the expense of the others; and, precisely because the others are ignored, their own development becomes exaggerated and misdirected.”[33] But as well as this pragmatic reason, cooperation in development, especially that of the poorest, is imperative from the ethical and Christian standpoints, and starts by renouncing every kind of selfishness. This union of human and divine is
central to St. Josemaría’s message. He said that the lives of Opus Dei faithful involve “a service whose goals are exclusively supernatural, because Opus Dei is not and never will be — could never be — a worldly instrument. But at the same time, it is a human service, because all that you are doing is trying to achieve Christian perfection in the world, cleanly, with your absolutely free and responsible actions in all fields of civic life. An unselfish service, which does not degrade you but educates you, enlarges your hearts, making them Roman in the best and highest sense of the word, and leads you to seek the honor and good of people in every country, so that day by day there may be fewer poor people, fewer uneducated people, fewer souls without faith, fewer people in despair, fewer wars, less insecurity, more charity and more peace.”

As with every other aspect of Christian life, all that has been said on this subject cannot be reduced to a nice-sounding theory to be preached about. It should be a spur to effective action for the integral development of all without excluding anyone. Such development must be considered as an inescapable duty, one that demands a well-planned, responsible and properly regulated effort that we are all called to carry out, in accordance with our place in the Church and civil society. To achieve our goal perhaps we need to work for changes in the way people live, the structures of power that govern society, the models of production and consumption, and order them according to a correct understanding of the common good of the whole of mankind.

The effort to live like that, aiming to help our fellow-men, is something that none of us should try to avoid. But as well as practicing it ourselves it is equally essential to pass it on to others, i.e. to help them, in St. Josemaría’s words, “not to be selfish and to spend some of their time generously in the service of other less fortunate people, doing jobs suited to their age, in which they can show in a practical way, a human and supernatural concern for their fellow men.”

As Harambee is directed to the world of Africa, I would like to quote some words of Benedict XVI in his Apostolic Exhortation Africæ Munus of November 19 last year: “Human consciences are challenged by the grave injustices existing in our world as a whole and within Africa in particular.... If justice is to prevail in all areas of life, private and public, economic and
social, it needs to be sustained by subsidiarity and solidarity, and still more, to be inspired by charity.”[39]

Harambee came into being in response to St. Josemaría’s canonization. As I wish you a happy anniversary today, I would like to thank you for your work and assure you that I am praying for many more people to join in your shared effort to support people and entities in Africa, who, in their turn, wish to be the builders and agents of their own development. Together with you I thank God for the many educational projects that have already been set up in sub-Saharan Africa in the past decade, and for the many activities you have promoted in the rest of the world. One of your aims is to spread an image of Africa that is very different from the stereotype. In your continent, it is true that there are many injustices that no-one can ignore, but Africa is also a land of spiritual values that are of the greatest importance in our time.

The day after tomorrow, the Thirteenth Assembly of the Synod of Bishops opens, with the theme “The new evangelization for the transmission of the Christian Faith.” I invite you all to pray for this intention. On the tenth anniversary of St. Josemaría’s canonization we can ask him to intercede for the Synod, so that this ecclesial Assembly may remind the world that holiness is not just a goal for the privileged few, but, as the Second Vatican Council confirmed, it is an invitation to everyone, within the reach of every man and woman of good will. Let’s pray that this Synod, and the Year of Faith that is about to begin, may help to enlarge many people’s hearts “in the measure of the Heart of Christ.” May those hearts then stir up other conversions, and be what drives transformations on the social level in accordance with human dignity and our destiny in God’s glory, in Africa and throughout the world.


[3] Christ is Passing By, 164.


[19] See *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 32.


[23] *Christ is Passing By*, 111.


[26] *Christ is Passing By*, 49.

[27] Speech to participants in the General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis, May 27, 2011


[32] *Christ is Passing By*, 106.

[33] *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 32.

[34] Letter dated April 31, 1943, 1.


[38] *Conversations*, 111.


Torna ai contenuti
ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA
Fortieth Anniversary of the stay of St. Josemaría in Enxomil, Portugal

Forty years ago, from October 30 to November 2, 1972, St. Josemaría stayed at La Quinta de Enxomil, in northern Portugal (near Oporto), in the course of an apostolic trip to various cities on the Iberian Peninsula. This was his last trip to Portugal. In Enxomil he received many people and had meetings with a number of groups. In honor of this anniversary a symposium was organized at La Quinta de Enxomil from November 23 to 25, 2012, under the title “Professing the faith with naturalness” (taken from some words of the founder spoken during those days back in 1972), which also drew inspiration from the Year of Faith.

Some of the questions dealt with in the conferences were: “The Faith in St. Josemaría,” “From The Catechism of Trent to the Catechism of the Catholic Church,” “Bright and cheerful homes,” “Doctrinal-religious formation,” “What St. Josemaría said forty years ago in Enxomil,” and “Apostolate with and in the family.” Many of the speakers had met St. Josemaría on that trip, and shared their personal memories of the founder of Opus Dei. In addition three movies were projected: “El Credo,” by Alberto Michelini, about John Paul II; a recording of St. Josemaría in the Viaro School in 1972; and an Argentinean documentary entitled “Building the Family.”

There was also an opportunity to walk around the gardens and visit the shrine of Our Lady Queen of the World, where the Rosary was recited before the statue that was given and blessed by the Venerable Alvaro del Portillo on October 12, 1992, when he passed through Enxomil during the trip that he made to thank our Lady of Fatima for the beatification of the founder of Opus Dei. The approximately forty cooperators of Opus Dei who took part in the gathering left happy and moved.

St. Josemaría in Andorra
On the morning of December 2, 1937, a group of eight exhausted people entered Sant Julià de Lòria, Andorra. They thus ended a harrowing crossing of the Pyrenees fleeing a Spain convulsed by war. The church in Sant Julià was the first church the fugitives had seen in a long time that had not suffered profanation. One of the eight people in the group was St. Josemaria.

For the seventy-fifth anniversary of that event, several commemorative ceremonies were held in Sant Julià and in Andorra la Vella, on Saturday December 1, with about one thousand people in attendance. Invited by the Archbishop of Urgell and co-prince of Andorra, Joan-Enric Vives, the Prelate of Opus Dei also participated in the ceremonies.

In the morning a bronze statue of St. Josemaria in the parish of Sant Julià de Lòria was blessed, the work of the artist Rebeca Muñoz. Situated on the old reredos of the church, the saint is shown in an attitude of adoration, with his eyes fixed on the Blessed Sacrament.

The consul of Sant Julià, Montserrat Gil, welcomed all of those taking part and especially the ecclesiastical authorities. “Seventy-five years later,” she said, “we Lauredianos (as the people of Sant Julià de Lòria are called) have a special affection for St. Josemaría Escrivá and all the fugitives who saved their lives by passing through our land.” The consul expressed her appreciation for the new sculpture, which “will keep his memory alive.” Archbishop Vives, in the name of the diocese of Urgell, had warm words for the parish community of Sant Julià and for all those present: “Welcome, Bishop Echevarría, to what is today your house, your parish, as it was 75 years ago for St. Josemaría,” he said, addressing the Prelate of Opus Dei. Bishop Echevarría in turn had words of gratitude for the Archbishop of Urgell and for the consul of Sant Julià. Saying that he was moved by the affectionate recognition that was being given to the founder of Opus Dei, he spoke about the significance of the anniversary of the passage of a saint through Andorra. His homily can be read in the From the Prelate section in this issue of Romana.

After the blessing of the statue, Archbishop Vives and Bishop Echevarría were received in the Casa de la Vall, seat of the Andorran parliament.
In the evening, in the Congress Center of Andorra la Vella, the Sixth Congress of Paths of Freedom across the Pyrenees was held. This congress is organized annually by the “Association of Friends of the Pallerols Path from Rialp to Andorra.” Its president, Joaquim Munich, welcomed those present to this session, which bore the title: “The passage of St. Josemaría through Andorra in the year 1937.” The meeting included presentations by the Honorable Maria Rosa Ferrer, Consul of Andorra la Vella, by Archbishop Joan-Enric Vives, and by Bishop Javier Echevarría, who gave the address that is also found in this issue of Romana.

The ceremony included the projection of a video with three oral testimonies about the founder of Opus Dei and his passage through the Pyrenees: that of Mossén Lluís Pujol, former rector of Andorra la Vella; Mossén Joan Porta, former rector of Pallerols de Rialb; and Dr. Juan Jiménez Vargas, a member of the group that accompanied St. Josemaría in 1937.

Torna ai contenuti

Tenth Anniversary of the Canonization: devotion throughout the World

The Leon Institute of Culture, in Spain, held a round table on October 24 in honor of the tenth anniversary of the canonization of St. Josemaría. Organized by the Tamaral Youth Association of Leon, the event emphasized the communication skills of the one who, ten years ago, Blessed John Paul II called “the saint of the ordinary.”

The journalist Pablo Rioja was the moderator of the event. The Argentinean producer Juan Martin Ezratty took part by videoconference. Mr. Ezratty has produced several documentaries on the spirit of St. Josemaría, including Inspirados para amar (Inspired to Love), Aprender a querer (Learning to Love), Con el impulso de sus palabras (By the Impetus of his Words), and Amor a la libertad (Love for Freedom). Ezratty, making reference to scenes shown of St. Josemaría in public get-togethers, spoke about his experiences speaking with people who have tried to incarnate in
their lives, with their joys and difficulties, the founder of Opus Dei’s message.

In the second videoconference of the day, the Belgian writer Paule Fostroy spoke about meeting St. Josemaría through reading his biography and some of his writings. Shortly thereafter she produced an illustrated comic book about his life entitled *Through the Mountains*, now available in seven languages. Fostroy said that, by focusing on a specific moment at the beginning of Opus Dei, she was trying to portray his abandonment to God in everything, as well as his devotion to our Lady and his trust in the Communion of Saints.

Matilde Alvarez, who works in public education, spoke about how she met Opus Dei, at first through merely fortuitous factors, and the help that the message of St. Josemaría had been for her family and professional life.

Finally Eugenio Rodríguez, property registrar, looked back at his time as a student at the University of Navarra, where he met the founder of Opus Dei. He related some entertaining anecdotes about the saint’s human qualities (for example, his Aragonese accent), which are sometimes overlooked in the informative material about his life.

Festival of Song at Cerro Alegre, Peru

The San José Educational Center in Cerro Alegre (Cañete, Peru) held its traditional Festival of Song in October. This activity is aimed at providing young people with an opportunity to express and develop their artistic abilities in a Christian framework. For the year 2012, which happened to be the tenth anniversary of the canonization of the founder of Opus Dei, the festival organizers suggested the theme “Gratitude to St. Josemaría Escrivá.” In 1991 they had also chosen a similar theme, when the approaching beatification of Msgr. Escrivá became known. The participants took various aspects of St. Josemaría’s message as the inspiration for their songs.

St. Josemaría in Italian place names
This past summer, in Marina di Ragusa, Sicily, and in Giugliano, Campania, a street and a plaza were named for St. Josemaría respectively. While on November 24, in Viterbo, a plaza was dedicated to St. Josemaría; presiding over the inauguration ceremony was the diocesan bishop, Lino Fumagalli.

In addition, on September 9, a statue of the founder of Opus Dei was blessed and placed in the chapel of the Monaldi Hospital in Naples.

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A theatrical production in Rome

On October 13, in the Oratorio of Gonfalone, situated in the historic center of Rome, a dramatic rhapsody by Mirella Rossi was presented entitled *Per ogni dove in terra è Paradiso* (*In all parts of the earth one finds paradise*). The work was inspired by St. Josemaría’s homily *Passionately Loving the World*.

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In the parish of Albendin, Spain

Since last June 24, the parish of Albendin, a town with 1,500 inhabitants some 60 miles from Cordoba, Spain, now has an alcove with a statue of St. Josemaría.

On the day of the inauguration, the church was filled and the altar was decorated with flowers. The Mass was concelebrated by the pastor, Fr. Francisco Morán, and Fr. Juan Luis Selma, a priest of the Prelature of Opus Dei. In his homily, the latter spoke about having known St. Josemaría personally in Valencia.

At the end of the Mass, the statue was blessed. The pastor suggested to his parishioners that they go to the intercession of St. Josemaría to learn how to sanctify their farm work.

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Jerusalem celebrates the tenth anniversary of the canonization of St. Josemaría
In the co-cathedral of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Fuad Twal, Patriarch of Jerusalem, presided over a Eucharistic concelebration for the tenth anniversary of the canonization of St. Josemaría. It was attended by many people who take part in the means of formation imparted by Opus Dei. The Patriarch spoke about the importance of the laity in the effort to re-Christianize society, and the need to lead an integral Christian life in order to do so, through a unity of life.

A St. Josemaría stand at “Find yourself, you are the Church,” Chile

“Find yourself, you are the Church,” is an initiative organized by the parish of St. John the Apostle, in Vitacura, Chile. With about ten thousand young people attending, it took place on Saturday, September 29, from 11 am until the closing Mass at 8 pm. Explanatory talks were given on various topics related to Catholic faith and morality.

Several young volunteers looked after the stand featuring “the saint of ordinary life,” as Pope John Paul II referred to St. Josemaría Escrivá. Explanatory material was given to those who asked for it with information about the teachings of St. Josemaría and the social initiatives born in Chile under the inspiration of his message. “It was a very enriching experience,” said Tamara Constanzo, a student of education at the University of the Andes.

Sixth St. Josemaría Symposium: ‘Work as Service’

The Sixth International St. Josemaría Symposium, with the motto “Work as Service,” was held in the Jaén Exhibition Center, from November
16 to 17. Over five hundred people attended. The gathering could also be followed directly through the Internet.

In the inaugural ceremony, after a greeting from the mayor of Jaén, Jose Enrique Fernandez de Moya, the economist Antonio Argandoña, a professor at IESE in Barcelona, gave the first address. He reflected on the ethical background of the present economic crisis, showing its relationship to a society that values above all individualism, consumerism and relativism, and that has turned economic and political problems into merely technical questions.

A key concern of the symposium was how to reconcile one’s family and working life. María Calvo, titular professor at the Carlos III University, presented an address on this topic that was followed with great interest.

Round-tables featured people working in various fields, including a television actress, a cleaning woman, a movie producer, a bull fighter, a nurse, an athlete, etc. They described their experiences in trying to make their work a service to others in the light of St. Josemaría’s teachings. The closing presentation was by the theologian Fr. Pedro Rodríguez, a professor at the University of Navarra.

The symposium was organized by the Catalina Mir Foundation.

Torna ai contenuti

Getting to know St. Josemaría in Hong Kong and Macao

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of St. Josemaría’s canonization, presentations were scheduled in various parishes of Hong Kong. The series of presentations began in June 2012 and will continue throughout all of 2013. Each presentation is made up of several panels about the life, writings, message and legacy of St. Josemaría. In addition to his own books (in English and Chinese), other books are also offered: about spirituality, Catholic doctrine, on raising children, etc. A favorable circumstance is the fact that the diocese of Hong Kong celebrated in 2012 a “Year of the
Laity.” In addition, many of the faithful accepted the challenge of the “Year of Faith,” and wanted to deepen their spiritual life by study and reading.

Some faithful of the Prelature also took the initiative of asking the Postal Service to print a special edition of stamps with twelve different images of the founder of Opus Dei, for the tenth anniversary of his canonization. Funds collected through the sale of the stamps will provide financial help to priests and seminarians who want to study at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome.

The movie *There Be Dragons*, with subtitles in Chinese, was projected in Hong Kong on October 26, 27 and 28, and on November 3. It was shown in four different places in the city to enable many people to attend. Some people crossed the frontier from nearby cities of mainline China, such as Shenzhen and Guangzhou. Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, bishop emeritus of Hong Kong, as well as a number of priests and religious, attended one of the projections. In Macao it was seen on November 10 and December 2.

New Publications

**Works of St. Josemaría**

Ediciones Rialp has published a digital version of the works of St. Josemaría in Spanish (*Camino, Surco, Forja, Santo Rosario, Vía Crucis, Amigos de Dios, Es Cristo que pasa, Conversaciones con Mons. Escrivá de Balaguer*). This edition offers the possibility of searching within the books, highlighting passages, adding personal notes, etc. These editions can be accessed through the iTunes bookstore (Apple), and from the Kindle store (Amazon).

The following works of St. Josemaría have also been published:


- *Camino*, MiNos Tercer Milenio, 57th printing, Mexico City, Mexico, 2012.

- *Camino*, MiNos Tercer Milenio, 58th printing, Mexico City, Mexico, 2012.


- *Amigos de Dios*, MiNos Tercer Milenio, 15th ptg, Mexico City, Mexico, 2012.

**Works about St. Josemaría**


The Social Message of St. Josemaria

In October 2002, for the canonization of St. Josemaría, Harambee was born, a foundation for development projects in Africa. Since then, Harambee has contributed to the financing of 46 projects in 17 different countries.

On the tenth anniversary of its birth, Harambee made a balance of its work so far and considered its future direction in a conference held in Rome on October 5 at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. Taking part were the directors of Harambee together with some of those who have benefited from its projects. Speakers included Rosalinda Corbi, international coordinator of Harambee; Marie-Noëlle Muller; from the Harambee Committee of France; Sister Liliana Ugoletti and Giancarlo Urbani from the Canossian Foundation (Sudan); Bishop Rosario Vella of Ambanja, Madagascar; and Theresa Okafor, director of QAARDAN (Quality Assurance and Research Development Agency), a foundation promoting high standards of education in Nigeria. Also participating was the Prelate of Opus Dei; the text of his address is found in this issue of Romana.
Torna ai contenuti
Closing of the diocesan phase of the Cause of Canonization of the married couple, the Servants of God Paquita Domínguez and Tomas Alvira (September 20, 2012)

On September 20, Cardinal Rouco Varela, Archbishop of Madrid, presided over the closing session of the diocesan phase of the process of canonization of the married couple Tomas Alvira (1906-1992) and Paquita Dominguez (1912-1994). During the ceremony the boxes containing the documentary evidence gathered by the diocesan tribunal were sealed; this material will be sent to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, where it will be carefully studied and the writing of the Positio will eventually be initiated. At the ceremony, eight children of the Alvira’s were present along with friends and relatives of the couple and dozens of persons with devotion to these Servants of God. The biographical sketch outlined by the postulator of the cause, Rev. José Carlos Martin de la Hoz, emphasized the persevering effort by Tomas and Paquita—Supernumerary faithful of Opus Dei—to live the Christian virtues to a heroic degree and to sanctify themselves through their professional and family duties.

Torna ai contenuti

New Biography of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo

At the beginning of October, Ediciones Rialp released a new book entitled Álvaro del Portillo: Un hombre fiel. This is a comprehensive biography of the first successor of St. Josemaría at the head of Opus Dei. The author, Fr. Javier Medina Bayo, came to the central offices of Opus Dei, in Rome, in 1970, and as a result was in close contact with Bishop del Portillo for 24 years. Writing the book required an intense work of research, attested to by the numerous citations of letters, official documents, and testimonials throughout the biography.
Vir fidelis multum laudabitur (Prov 28:20). These words from the book of Proverbs are highlighted by the author as the best summary of the life of Venerable Álvaro del Portillo. Already in its second printing, the biography has three sections: “Infancy and Youth (1914-1939),” “Alongside St. Josemaría (1939-1975),” and “Father and Pastor (1975-1994).”

The multiplying effect of women’s education

The Harambee prize for the promotion of the equality of African women was awarded on October 18 to the Nigerian economist Ezinne Ukagwu. Since 2002 she has directed the Iroto Center for Rural Development and has overseen the setting up of the Abidagba medical clinic. The prize was presented by the orchestra director Inma Sharo in a ceremony presided over by Her Royal Highness Doña Teresa de Borbón, Honorary President of Harambee, and by Juan Luis Rodríguez Fraile, President of Harambee España.

During the ceremony, celebrated in the Caixa Forum of Madrid, Ezinne said that Nigerian women “are very courageous and positive, capable of great effort. They play a key role in each family, which urgently requires the co-responsibility of the men, in order to work cooperatively, without antagonisms.”

Inma Shara said: “Harambee’s work with Africans is very effective, because the people themselves are involved in each project and are given the tools to take an active role themselves.” For her part, H.R.H. Doña Teresa de Borbón noted that Ezinne means “good mother” in the local dialect, and that “Ezinne has given honor to her name during her whole life, first with her sisters and brothers, later with her students, and now with the women of Ogun. Together with other Nigerians, she has carried out an immense work in favor of the education of the neediest women of this region in Nigeria.”
Videos on the Faith of Young People

Since October 2012, in connection with the Year of Faith, the web page www.opusdei.org has offered a series of brief videos about faith and young people under the title “What faith means when you’re 20.” These try to show how the faith is lived by young people today with their characteristic qualities: great ideals, enthusiasm, liveliness, desire to change the world, etc. In October a video with brief comments from young people all over the world introduced the series, and in November the video “Wanting to know more” was screened, featuring a young woman from Chicago. In December the featured video was “Faith leads to service,” in which Alberto, an Argentinean student, talks about how his faith helps him to respond to the needs of those around him. Each video can be seen with subtitles in more than ten languages.

Altomonte, a new residence for priests in Rome

In September 2012, Altomonte, a residence for priests who come from all over the world to study in Rome at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, opened its doors. Situated on Via di Torre Rossa, Altomonte offers its residents the possibility of growing in their human, spiritual, pastoral and intellectual preparation. The new residence, with room for 70 students, is divided into two zones, in order to foster a family atmosphere and facilitate personal contact. The director of the new residence is Msgr. Juan Carlos Domínguez who, until a few months ago, was the director of Rome’s Sedes Sapientiae International Seminary.
Pontifical Appointments


On July 13, 2012, Msgr. Jose Tomas Martín de Agar and Fr. Miguel Angel Ortiz were appointed as external judges of the Appeals Court for the Vicariate of Rome.

On September 18, 2012, Bishop Javier Echevarría Rodríguez, Prelate of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, was appointed as one of the Synodal Fathers for the Thirteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (from October 7—28, 2012) on the topic “The new evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith.”

On September 18, 2012, Rev. Antonio Aranda Lomeña, professor of dogmatic theology at the University of Navarra, Spain, and Rev. Giuseppe Tanzella-Nitti, professor of fundamental theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, in Rome, were appointed as auditors (or experts) for above-mentioned assembly of the Synod.

On December 4, 2012, Msgr. Javier Cremades Sanz-Pastor was named Chaplain to His Holiness

Torna ai contenuti

Other new publications


New Centers of the Prelature

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

Bois-Colombes, France; Madrid; Pereira, Colombia; Santa Marta, Colombia; and Valencia, Spain.

Errata: In Issue no. 54, we mistakenly reported the opening of a Center in Almodóvar, Córdoba (Spain).

Some Diocesan Assignments Received by Priests of the Prelature

Rev. José Luis Añón Granizo
Archpriest of Nuestra Señora de los Álamos, Archdiocese of Madrid;

Rev. José Luis Abia Espartero
Member of the priests’ council of the Archdiocese of Valladolid, Spain;

Revs. Carlos Carrasco Guerrero and Benito Somoza Martínez
Chaplains of the Xeral-Cíes Hospital Center, in the Diocese of Tui-Vigo, Spain;

Rev. Javier Cremades Sanz-Pastor
Bishop’s delegate for public ceremonies in the Archdiocese of Madrid;
Rev. Juan Carlos García de Vicente

*Spiritual Advisor for the Spanish Association of Catholic Pharmacists;*

Rev. Osberto González

*Pastor of the Parish of the Holy Family of Nazareth and of St. Josemaría, Archdiocese of Caracas, Venezuela;*

Rev. Luis Rodolfo Ramos Pérez

*Member of the Council of Laity for the Diocese of Aguascalientes, Mexico.*

Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace at the start of the Year of Faith (October 13, 2012)

With the aim of inviting people to pray for the fruitful results of the Year of Faith inaugurated by the Holy Father Benedict XVI on October 11, Bishop Javier Echevarría asked that on October 13 the Blessed Sacrament be exposed in the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace to facilitate the prayer of the faithful. The adoration lasted some six hours and ended with Solemn Benediction, at which the Prelate of Opus Dei was present.
INITIATIVES

• In Brief
Public Opinion Initiatives for the New Evangelization

From November 19 to 25 an international meeting was held at the Castel Romano Conference Center in Castel Gandolfo, Rome, on “Initiatives in Public Opinion for the New Evangelization.” Some sixty people took part from the various countries in which the Opus Dei Prelature carries out apostolic work in a stable way.

In the introductory session, Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, remarked that the Year of Faith and the new evangelization are “a wonderful opportunity for Christians to realize more fully that we need to be leaven in society. While relying on the supernatural means, we need to continue working in this battle of love to give a more Christian and more human soul to the contemporary world, even though our means or talents might seem insufficient.”

The Prelate urged participants to carry out “a mobilization in favor of culture” and encouraged those present to study ways of encouraging young people and adults, students and professionals to become leaders in this effort. “Each of us needs to take to heart that petition of the founder of Opus Dei in The Way: ‘You can’t turn your back on your fellow-men: you have to be anxious to make them happy’ (no. 32).” In this “mobilization,” he added, “we Christian are not moved by the desire for personal success, but by an eagerness to help others to be happy.”

Other sessions stressed the social dimension of the Christian vocation, which brings with it the call to involve oneself, each according to one’s possibilities, in initiatives—personal or collective—to improve society. These efforts should be directed to fostering “a new culture, new legislation, new fashions, in keeping with the dignity of the human person and with our destiny to the glory of children of God in Jesus Christ” (Pastoral Letter of Bishop Javier Echevarría, November 28, 2002). The centrality of charity and the spiritual life was also stressed, as the driving force for all Christian action. In addition aspects of St. Josemaría’s message were highlighted that spur the faithful to feel responsible for society’s improvement: passionately loving the world, fostering one’s own freedom
and that of others, etc. The message of St. Josemaria was also seen as a spur for fostering this broad horizon of evangelization among young people.

Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Vicar General of the Prelature, gave a class on some priority concerns for the new evangelization. He drew on the magisterium of Benedict XVI—who has been striving to put the centrality of God before the eyes of society—and on nos. 15-26 of the Prelate of Opus Dei’s pastoral letter dated September 29, 2012. There the Prelate speaks about the family and marriage, religious freedom, entertainment and art, legislation in matters of education and bioethics, etc. Msgr. Ocáriz stressed the importance of dedicating time and resources to study and research on the great ethical challenges raised by contemporary society.

One of the conferences considered the leadership role that educational institutions inspired by Catholicism can play in the new evangelization. As St. Josemaría insisted, these institutions have the mission to be “beacons of Christian radiation” and of positive social transformation. Specifically, reference was made to the importance of their directors governing with this perspective, both in small daily decisions and in questions of more direct social impact, and of involving all the personnel working there in this mission. In addition, the possibility that every educational center with a Catholic inspiration has of contributing positively to public debate on key ethical questions was stressed.

This international meeting included a seminar organized by the NGO Intermedia Consulting, with specific professional suggestions for those seeking to create a new public culture more in accord with human and Christian dignity.

The Intermedia professionals passed on their experience in increasing the impact on public opinion of non-profit initiatives directed towards the promotion of the common good. They reminded the audience of the importance of gathering useful data and statistical information, and gave some practical example. Various experts spoke about the use of the social network to spread positive values. Now that so many people go to the internet to seek answers to every kind of question, those seeking to have a positive impact on society’s values need to make use of its resources (blogs, networks, etc.) to spread their message.
One of the conclusions of the seminar was that in today’s global and multicultural world—so different from that of the first evangelization—the fostering of a culture that incarnates Christian values, and is thus consistent with the dignity of the human person, calls for innovative approaches. For example, it is indispensable that these initiatives know how to establish an enriching dialogue with civil entities and national and international organisms that are involved with the same questions, gaining in this way a space to offer their own contribution.

During those days the experiences of associations striving to foster the culture of life and strengthen the family were presented (often with the help of non-Catholics and even non-Christians). In addition, various participants presented other experiences in starting initiatives that spread Christian teaching in public opinion and that provide an effective help for the work of evangelization by millions of Catholics throughout the world: websites of a doctrinal and catechetical nature, publications, news agencies, courses of formation for Church communicators, sessions of media training on ethical and religious questions, etc.

Three examples of the latter were Catholic Voices (an association organized by a group of Catholics in the United Kingdom, presented in this meeting by Jack Valero), the website www.arguments.es (with free catechetical resources downloaded by millions of people, as its director, Jesús Juan Pardo explained) and various courses of specialization in religious information organized by the Associazione Iscom of Rome (www.iscom.info) with the collaboration of institutions in Rome, Lisbon, Paris, Santiago de Chile, São Paulo and other places. This last session was offered by those in charge of Iscom, Manuel Sanchez and Bruno Mastroianni.
Bogotá (Colombia) -- Marriage for a new era

During September the Family Institute of La Sabana University organized its Sixth International Conference on the Family, held every two years. This year’s conference had 500 participants, with experts from several different countries. The title this year was “Marriage for a new era.” As a preliminary to the congress, the Second Symposium of Researchers presented the results of their work on questions relating to the family.

Piura, Peru -- On the Bicentennial of Independence from Spain

The University of Piura, from August 1 to 3, organized an International Conference on the Cortes of Cádiz (a Spanish constitutional convention in 1810) and its impact on Latin America under the Viceroy. The Conference included the participation of scholars such as Professors Juan Marchena (University Pablo de Olavide, Seville), Enrique Banús (International University of Catalonia), Mariano Fazio (Pontifical University of the Holy Cross), and Rafael Garcia (University of Navarra). The conference was held in the framework of the Bicentennial Project of 2011-2024 at the University of Piura (commemorating the Wars of Independence fought from 1810-1824). Its aim is to bring greater clarity to the historical import of the independence of the countries of Latin America from Spain.

Pamplona, Spain -- 50 Years for Goimendi Student Residence
The Goimendi Colegio Mayor [Student Residence], connected to the University of Navarra, recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. Some 500 former residents attended the celebration of this university institution founded in 1962. Over the years 2,237 university women from 41 countries have lived there. “The first classes represent the women who opened up the way in attending Spanish universities,” noted Pilar Cárdenas, director of the first women’s university residence in Navarre and the fourth in Spain.

Famous visitors have included Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Queen Fabiola of Belgium, Prince Felipe of Asturias and Miguel Delibes, all of whom have taken part in the colloquia which throughout the years have welcomed 3,600 invitees. Among the 289 Honorary Fellows of the Colegio Mayor are Pope John Paul II, as well as academics from a wide range of disciplines such as Nicolas Grimaldi, professor of metaphysics at the Sorbonne in Paris, Natalia Lopez Moratalla, professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at the University of Navarra, and Jorge Carreras, professor of procedural law. Personalities from the political and cultural milieu, including the composer Cristobal Halffter and the orchestra director Jose Luis Ochoa de Olza, have also received the same recognition.

Women at Goimendi have carried out in recent decades social and solidarity projects in seven countries: Paraguay, Guatemala, Portugal, Croatia, Lithuania, Mexico, and Uganda.

Among the central acts of the celebration was the presentation of the commemorative book “50 years of Colegio Mayor Goimendi,” by the writer and journalist Rosa Maria Echeverría. Attending the ceremony were the mayor of Pamplona, Enrique Maya; the special Councilor for Youth and Sport, Paz Prieto Saenz de Tejada; and the former President of the Autonomous Region of Navarra, Miguel Sanz.

Rome -- The Church Up Close

Some 40 journalists from English speaking countries took part from September 10 to 16 in a seminar entitled “The Church Up Close: Covering
Catholicism in the Age of Benedict XVI.” Organized by the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, the course offered journalists the possibility to enrich the informative coverage they provide about the Church. The seminar was also a good opportunity for cultural interchange and dialogue with those attending. “The stress was on the challenges involved in covering topics about the Church and the viewpoints of journalists who are believers and those who are non-believers,” explained Professor John Wauck, one of the coordinators of the seminar. The program included a series of conferences, personal meetings with veteran “Vaticanists,” and guided tours of the Vatican and some of the major landmarks of Rome.

Bogotá, Colombia -- Conscientious Objection and Freedom

In 2012, Professor Ivan Garzón Vallejo, director of the political science program at the University of Sabana, began an interdisciplinary research project on the juridical, political, philosophical, and medical perspectives of conscientious objection. The research group is made up of four professors of law, one from political science, two from medicine, and another from philosophy. Its first meeting was in July.

In the bi-monthly work sessions the members of the group submit for consideration the research carried out and take up current questions concerning freedom and conscientious objection. The balance of the first semester's work was positive, and two of the projects carried out are ready for publication: the book *Abortion and Conscientious Objection*, by Professor Vincent Prieto, and the research article “Philosophical Arguments, Religious Beliefs, and Public Fairness,” by Professor Garzón Vallejo.

São Paulo -- A new business culture
Forging a new mentality of service to society among business entrepreneurs was the theme of the Third Forum on Social Responsibility organized at the beginning of September 2012 in the Pedreira Center for Professional Educational Assistance. This corporate work of apostolate run by Opus Dei for the professional formation of young people is situated in a poor district on the outskirts of São Paulo.

More than a hundred business people took part in the conference, which began with the presentation by Marcos Fernando de Melo, an engineer and one of the directors of the school. In his talk he highlighted how this training center could be a model of education for the sustainable development of the country. Among the speakers was the filmmaker Mara Mourão, who had just released, via a national network, the movie Quem se importa? (“Who cares?”). Also striking were the testimonies of an alumnus who is now a university professor, and those of several businessmen involved in social projects. Professor and anthropologist Luiz Marins spoke on the relevant role of non-governmental organizations in the development of a new culture.

Esztergom (Hungary) -- Summers of solidarity

A group of 34 boys from various boys clubs—the Amura Club (Madrid), Txindoki (San Sebastian), Alaiz (Pamplona), and the Tiber Club (Rome)—joined forces this past August in a project to help the Gypsy people of Esztergom, a city in northern Hungary on the banks of the Danube. Esztergom is the seat of the Primatial Cathedral of Hungary.

The program arose thanks to the help of Most Rev. János Székely, Auxiliary Bishop of Esztergom-Budapest and director of pastoral work with Gypsies for the Hungarian Bishops’ Conference. Today Gypsies make up 10% of the Hungarian population, and for various cultural, historical and social reasons, they are often discriminated against by the rest of the population.
The work of the young people involved improving the living conditions of the shanties of a Gypsy settlement on the outskirts of the city, and helping put cement floors in some of the houses. They also cleared away debris and garbage from an empty lot nearby and readied it for recreational use.

Nairobi, Kenya -- In Africa, for the promotion of women

On July 28, a group of fifteen Italian university women landed in Nairobi to participate in an international volunteer program in Kenya. The students from the Porta Nevia University Residence of Rome and the Campus Bio-Medico came to Nairobi to assist the Kianda Foundation, an association founded in 1961 to further the cultural, professional, social, and spiritual development of women in Kenya. The women, most of whom are studying the health sciences, worked for two weeks in the Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital, where they had the possibility of visiting the sick and studying clinical cases. Part of the day was dedicated to other services, such as cleaning the public areas and preparing meals in various orphanages. They also gathered information about the nutrition of the local population, aimed at improving eating habits in the area, and helped out in a campaign to eradicate skin parasites. The young women also had the opportunity to attend conferences given by professionals at Moi University and at Strathmore University in Nairobi.

Santana de Parnaíba, Brazil -- “Being a Father” Program

Between August 31 and September 2, a group of fathers from various regions of Brazil gathered in the Sitio das Aroeira Conference Center to
take part in a formative program on fatherhood. The accent was on helping one’s sense of fatherhood to grow by exercising it, just as one can grow in affection, respect and admiration for each daughter and son. The course was directed by Dr. Valdir Reginato, a medical specialist in Family Therapy and author of the book entitled *Aprender a ser pai em 10 lições* [Learn to be a father in 10 lessons], and by Dr. Pedro J. de Rezende, professor at the University of Campinas and a specialist in family orientation.

In addition to the conferences and an interactive movie-forum, practical cases related to raising children were discussed. Positive criteria and experiences were shared in regard to family activities, the use of the social media, and celebrations and trips for the children. The conviction was unanimous that sanctifying family life, and specifically the Christian education of their children, is the primary and principle goal of a Christian father. This is a responsibility that he should confront with generosity and courage, without giving in to the customs and confusions so widespread in today’s society.

Rome -- 20th Summer Conference for Seminarians

The *Iniziative Culturali Sacerdotali* [Priest’s Cultural Initiative] seeks to offer diocesan priests courses of pastoral updating and spirituality, and to foster priestly fraternity. Last August it organized the 20th Summer Conference for Seminarians at a location near Rome. The topic chosen for this year was “The priest, a man of faith: theological and cultural formation in preparation for the priesthood.” The conference included moments for prayer and reflection, and the interchange of ideas on the formation of seminarians. There were also opportunities to share periods of fraternal relaxation and to visit important religious and artistic sites in Rome.

Archbishop Andrea Bruno Mazzolato of Udine spoke about the theological and cultural formation of priests for the new evangelization.
Bishop Gualtiero Sigismondi of Foligno reflected on the importance of uniting the theological formation received in the seminary with spiritual and pastoral formation. On August 22 the participants attended Benedict XVI’s general audience in Castel Gandolfo. Later that same day, Cardinal Julian Herranz shared with them his rich experience in the service of the Church and spoke about his interaction with Blessed John Paul II and St. Josemaría.

Professor John Wauck from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross spoke about the importance of the humanities in priestly formation. In addition, Msgr. Stefano Manetti and Msgr. Nazzareno Marconi, rectors of the seminaries of Florence and Assisi respectively, directed a round table on the theological and cultural formation offered in the present day set up of the seminary. The candidates for the priesthood concluded the conference by participating in the Eucharistic Sacrifice celebrated in the Basilica of St. Peter at the Altar of the Chair by Archbishop Celso Morga, secretary of the Congregation for the Clergy.

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Valencia, Spain -- Projects for the elderly

On November 10, the Valencia Ronda Sur Association, located in the parish of St. Josemaría Escrivá, began its activities. It is inspired by the Alberto Sordi Association in Rome, founded in 2002 to carry out a wish of the Italian actor after whom it is named. The Association is aimed especially at the elderly who are no longer completely self-sufficient, although in possession of their intellectual and emotional faculties. It seeks to help these people to continue developing their natural abilities and discover new fields of knowledge. Among its goals is enabling the elderly to live at home with their families and carry out during the working day (from 10 to 4:30) interesting and useful activities. The focus is on helping seniors enjoy a long life filled with new projects and endeavors.
Lima, Peru -- Reflecting on the documents of Vatican II

For the Year of Faith, the Center for Studies and Communication (CEDESCO) organized an international conference on theology from July 23 to 25.

It brought together more than a hundred priests. Among the lecturers were Bishop José Luis del Palacio of Callao; Rev. Jose Ramon Villar, professor of ecumenical theology and ecclesiology at the University of Navarra; and Rev. Pablo Blanco, founder of the Joseph Ratzinger Study Forum. The speakers offered reflections on the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

Buenos Aires -- In the footsteps of the saints

On October 2, in connection with the Year of Faith, a conference was held at Austral University in Argentina on “the footsteps of the saints.” University president Dr. Marcelo Villar introduced the conference by recalling that St. Josemaría Escrivá had spread the teaching of the universal call to holiness. Two Missionary Sisters of Charity spoke about Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who used to say: “Holiness is not a luxury but an obligation.” They explained that we are all called to let Christ act through us, and gave as an example Mother Teresa’s loving dedication to the poorest of the poor, thus helping people to discover the love that God has for us.

Fernán de Elizalde, vice-postulator of the cause of beatification of the Servant of God Enrique Shaw (1921-1962), showed how a businessman and navy officer could be a saint. He emphasized that, without neglecting his family (Enrique married Cecilia Bunge and had nine children), nor the success of his business, the Servant of God had a deep concern for his workers and led a life centered on Christ.
Finally, Dr. Roberto Dotta spoke about Venerable Álvaro del Portillo, stressing how the life of Don Álvaro (the third of eight children in a deeply Christian family) was changed when he met St. Josemaría. Soon after meeting him he attended a day of recollection preached by the founder of Opus Dei, on July 7, 1935. Afterwards Don Álvaro remarked: “he gave a meditation on love for God and for our Lady, and I was completely overwhelmed.” That same day he decided to join the Work, the beginning of a generous self-giving and faithful commitment that lasted until his death. He also emphasized the optimism of Bishop del Portillo in the face of difficulties, who always saw the fatherly and loving hand of God behind all circumstances.

**Lima, Peru -- “Gifts & Choices”**

During the months of October and November, Los Andes Cultural Center organized a seminar for university students entitled “Gifts & Choices.” The seminar consisted of six discussions with professionals involved in initiatives of service to society. Each session began with a description of how the initiatives arose and how they were put into practice, overcoming the difficulties encountered. The activity was aimed at fostering social responsibility in the young men who frequent the university center.

**Rome -- Ten questions about the Catholic faith**

On October 9, the ICEF family association of Rome inaugurated a cycle of 12 conferences on the Catholic faith. The aim was to open the doors to many people who, on the occasion of the Year of Faith, might want to reconsider their faith and return to practicing it. The sessions were directed by professors at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. Each
session was introduced by a question: Is the faith reasonable? What is the origin of the world? Is it possible to know God through reason? Why do Christians profess faith in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit? What value does Holy Scripture have for Christians? What sense does it make to speak of morality today? What is the Church?, etc. The cycle of conferences will conclude in July 2013.

São Paulo, Brazil -- Human and professional development

At the Sumaré University Center of Studies, a program of human and professional development for high school students was offered throughout 2012. This was the fourth year that the course was held, with monthly conferences with professionals who present the basic choices the students need to make for their future professional careers.

Some of those taking part in this year’s program were: Daniel Neves Faria, founder of the ONG Orpas (Recreational, Professional, Artistic and Social Works), who spoke about study as a means for transforming society; Silvio Medeiros, art director and winner of three prizes in marketing at the Cannes Festival, who stressed the importance of personal effort; Alexandre Gonçalves, a journalist, who spoke on how to develop a well-reasoned argument and give a speech. The classes, enlivened by the real life experience of those giving the presentations, strove to awaken in the students a desire to cultivate the virtues, as indispensable for carrying out well-done work that is ethical and responsible.

In addition to the conferences, each student was offered the possibility of bi-weekly mentoring sessions to draw up personalized plans of study. Each student has access to the advice of professionals who can help in the choice of a career. The program also seeks to foster the students’ human and cultural development, by encouraging friendship among the boys, volunteer work, visits to museums and institutions, along with sports and ecological activities.
Santiago and Concepción (Chile) -- In the Year of Faith

At the University of the Andes, the Year of Faith was inaugurated by the “Faith and Humility” conference, directed by the university chaplain, Fr. Sebastian Urruticoechea. Students have also been encouraged to take part in three competitions: short films, essays, and photographs, all referring to the Year of Faith. Thus began a series of special activities that will take place over twelve months, culminating on November 22, 2013.

Under the title “Believing, living and communicating the faith,” on October 22 a colloquium was held at the Alborada University Residence in Santiago. Bernardino Bravo, winner of the National History Prize, spoke about our place in the world and the need for faith. Fr. José Miguel Ibáñez, who worked with then-cardinal Joseph Ratzinger on the International Theological Commission, spoke about faith as a gift. And Jose Miguel Armendariz, a journalist and philosopher, focused on various ways of communicating the faith. The students asked questions and related their own experiences. After a meditation, and benediction with the Blessed Sacrament, the documentary entitled Benedict XVI: the Adventure of Truth was shown.

In the La Cañada University Residence in Concepción, on November 10 a seminar was offered for students and families. Fr. Jaime Andres Williams’ talk was entitled: “Is there a crisis of faith in the Church?” Then Fr. Pablo Siu, chaplain of the residence, addressed the topic: “Vatican II and its fruits.”
IN PACE
Suffrages for the deceased

In the second half of 2012, 340 faithful of the Prelature and 22 members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross passed away.

Suffrages have been offered for these deceased. As we continue to pray for them, let us thank God for the example they left us through their fidelity in striving to transform their professional work and the ordinary circumstances of their lives into an occasion for loving God and serving the Church and all souls. Their love for God and neighbor constitutes the meaning and value of their lives, whether outstanding in the eyes of others, or whether quite ordinary, as was true in most cases.

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

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A study
“Faith and Life in St. Josemaría Escrivá,” Giulio Maspero

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1. Introduction: Why have a Year of Faith?

At the beginning of Apostolic Letter Porta Fidei we read: “The door of faith (Acts 14:27) is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into his Church.”[1] Faith and life are brought into close proximity at the very beginning of the Holy Father’s document announcing the Year of Faith. The life it speaks of is the life of communion with God. The main concern of the document, like everything Benedict XVI has taught throughout his pontificate, is to ensure that Christianity can never be mistaken for a mere philosophical or moral teaching. Rather it is essentially a living encounter with the Risen Christ, present in his Church and the Lord of history, an encounter “which gives life a new horizon.”[2]

This new horizon of life in communion with God opened up by faith, is the source of the preaching and apostolate of Paul and Barnabas. On returning to Antioch, from where they had first set out on their missionary journey, they gathered the church together and declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 14:27). Therefore it is God himself who opens the door of faith, by acting in the lives of his apostles and saints.

The image of the door or gate is used frequently in the Gospel. The door is often closed, as in the case of the foolish virgins (cf. Mt 25:10), or the neighbor and his children who had already gone to bed (cf. Lk 11:7). In any case, the door is narrow, and the householder may close it (cf. Lk 13:24-25 and Mt 7:13-14). But God opens that door, as is shown by St. Paul’s life and experience. He writes to the Corinthians: a wide door for effective work has opened to me (1 Cor 16:9), and he asks the Colossians to pray that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ (Col 4:3).
St. John’s gospel adds an essential element: the door is opened not only by God but by the Good Shepherd, who is recognized because he comes through the door, and is himself the door (cf. Jn 10:2-10). Therefore Christ is the Door, because he leads us to the fullness of eternal life given by God the Father.

The Scriptural reference to the “door of faith” points, then, to a deeply theological perspective: faith commits and involves a person’s life precisely because it gives life, a life that will never end. Hence “to enter through that door is to set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime.”[3]

The Holy Father wants the Year of Faith to help us recover the strong tie between faith and life. Many people do not live their faith today because they no longer realize that it is essential to life and gives meaning to existence.

This truth—the connection between faith and life—is central to the magisterium of Pope Benedict XVI. “Ever since the start of my ministry as Successor of Peter, I have spoken of the need to rediscover the journey of faith so as to shed ever clearer light on the joy and renewed enthusiasm of the encounter with Christ.”[4]

Today religion, and especially Catholicism, is often looked on by the surrounding culture as an enemy to happiness. It seems to forbid everything we find attractive precisely because it is attractive. Faith is presented as though it were necessarily opposed to human desires and a fulfilled life. The teaching of Nietzsche referenced in the first footnote in Deus Caritas Est says this explicitly.[5]

But why is faith seen today as an enemy of life? Benedict XVI says that the reason is found in not giving enough stress to God’s gift when proclaiming the faith. What needs to be done is to highlight the primary importance of the gift, and show why the essential disposition of Christians is the readiness to be receptive to it. In Porta Fidei the Pope states forcefully: “Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy.”[6]

Even more than the requirement to live in accordance with our beliefs, what makes faith into the natural guide for our lives is an awareness of the beauty of the gift, and joy at our encounter with God: “Faith working
through love (Gal 5:6) becomes a new criterion of understanding and action that changes the whole of man’s life (cf. Rom 12:2; Col 3:9-10; Eph 4:20-29; 2 Cor 5:17).”[7]

The theological virtues, faith, hope and charity, are the Life of God that pours forth, through grace, into our lives when we open ourselves to it. St. Thomas Aquinas says that “faith is a habit of the mind whereby eternal life is begun in us, making the intellect assent to what is non-apparent.”[8]

The movement, then, goes from the Life of God, who gives himself, to the life of man, who becomes opus Dei, a work of God. Benedict XVI expresses this dynamic with great clarity: “The teaching of Jesus still resounds in our day with the same power: Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life (Jn 6:27). The question posed by his listeners is the same that we ask today: What must we do, to be doing the works of God? (Jn 6:28). We know Jesus’ reply: This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent (Jn 6:29). Belief in Jesus Christ, then, is the way to arrive definitively at salvation.”[9] We will now offer some reflections on St. Josemaría Escrivá’s teaching and experience in the light of Porta Fidei.

2. Life of faith in St. Josemaría

Like St. Paul, St. Josemaría too experienced that God had opened the door of faith to him, when he discovered that God wanted the “divine paths of the world” to be opened up,[10] by finding “something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations,”[11] with a “lively awareness of eternity.”[12] That was why he called Madrid his “Damascus,”[13] the place where he received the clear light on his vocation and his mission to found Opus Dei. The holiness to which God was calling him was to be sought in daily life and in loving the world. The work that God was bringing about in him was to be found in ordinary life, which is transformed into a meeting-place with God. Doing God’s work was grounded, in St. Josemaría’s experience, on being God’s work.

God himself is given absolute pride of place, since belief itself, as taught in Jn 6:29, quoted above, is the work of God: the necessary condition for doing God’s work is to enable one’s own life to be more and
more the work of God, through faith. This truly is a gift from God, who gives his life and holiness to every Christian in baptism.

It should not surprise us, then, to see that in St. Josemaría's published writings the word “faith” is closely tied to words connected with life. He asks us to “live by faith” and speaks of the need for a “living faith.” A clear example of this is found at the end of the homily “Passionately Loving the World,” given at the University of Navarra on October 8, 1967. That too was a Year of Faith, convoked by Pope Paul VI, to whom St. Josemaría makes explicit reference:

“Now I ask you with the Psalmist to unite yourselves to my prayer and my praise: Magnificate Dominum mecum, et extollamus nomen eius simul: ‘Praise the Lord with me, let us extol his name together’ (Ps 33:4). In other words, dearly beloved, let us live by faith....

“Faith is a virtue which we Christians need greatly, and in a special way in this ‘Year of Faith’ which our beloved Holy Father, Pope Paul VI has decreed. For without faith, we lack the very foundation for the sanctification of everyday life.

“A living faith in these moments, because we are drawing near to the mysterium fidei (1 Tim 3:9), to the Holy Eucharist; because we are about to participate in our Lord’s Pasch, which sums up and brings about the mercies of God among men....

“Faith, finally, my beloved daughters and sons, to show the world that all this is not just ceremonies and words, but a divine reality, by presenting to mankind the testimony of an ordinary life which is made holy, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and of holy Mary.”

Sanctifying daily life is possible precisely because of faith, and it means living by faith and having a living faith, with explicit reference to St. Paul’s teaching in Gal 3:11—_the just man lives by faith_. All of this effort is based on the theological virtues, as St. Josemaría points to in a striking phrase: “Acts of Faith, Hope and Love are valves which provide an outlet for the fire of souls that live the life of God.”
“Living by Faith” is the title of a homily included in *Friends of God*, about the theological virtue of faith. In it the apparent absence of miracles today, compared with the times of the early Christians, is attributed precisely to the fact that many Christians today fail to live a life of faith.[19] By contrast, faith is living when it “becomes a new criterion of understanding and action that changes the whole of man’s life,” in the words from *Porta Fidei* quoted above. Faith is alive when it has practical effects, when it leads to specific choices, decisions that give direction to Christians’ actual lives.[20] Otherwise, faith is dead, because it remains on a merely sociological plane, like an abstract lesson or a series of moral traditions that have no absolute value in themselves. Joseph Ratzinger explains this very well when he says that the contents of the faith are not like the periodic table of the elements, knowledge of which does not directly affect men’s lives. Faith, by contrast, contains truths that we must necessarily react to. This means that there is no such thing as a true agnostic; agnostics are, in practice, atheists, because to live their lives they have to take specific decisions, which they choose will not be in conformity with the teachings of faith.[21]

In other words, to live we must have some kind of faith, because we inevitably choose to give a meaning to our life. Thus St. Josemaría’s teaching could not be further from Pelagianism and moralism. Christianity cannot be limited to deeds; nor can man achieve salvation by human virtue or his own effort. The act of belief is not limited to the intellect, to the simple acceptance of a number of truths that have little to do with life; on the contrary, the act of belief is shown in the believer’s very life, because faith bestows supernatural life and enables us to think according to “the logic of God,”[22] God’s way of reasoning. We need to ground everything in our life on Christ and establish a personal relationship with him. “You don’t have living faith if you aren’t giving yourself to Jesus here and now.”[23]

This is the radical Christocentrism that enables St. Josemaría to speak so boldly about sanctifying and loving the world.[24] “When faith weakens men tend to imagine that God is far away and hardly cares for his children. They come to regard religion as a kind of appendage, something to have recourse to when there’s no other remedy; they expect, with what
justification one cannot say, spectacular manifestations, unusual happenings. But when faith is really alive in the soul, one discovers instead that to follow Christ one does not have to step aside from the ordinary pattern of everyday life, and also that the great holiness which God expects of us is to be found here and now in the little things of each day.”[25]

The solemn proclamation of the universal call to holiness is seen, then, as a deepening in the faith that is born of our encounter with Christ in everyday life. As Benedict XVI stresses above, it is “a new criterion of understanding and action that changes the whole of man’s life.” The reduction of the faith to a mere sociological tradition, separating it from real life, goes hand in hand with reducing it to the sphere of extraordinary, abnormal things. By contrast, accepting the universal call to holiness means giving new life to our own faith in order to open ourselves up to God who is close at hand:

“We should make no mistake. God is no shadowy or distant being who created us and then abandoned us; nor is He a master who goes away and does not return. Though we do not perceive him with our senses, his existence is far more true than any of the realities which we touch and see. God is here with us, really present, living. He sees and hears us, He guides us, and knows our smallest deeds, our most hidden intentions.

“We believe this—but we live as if God did not exist. For we do not have a thought or a word for him; we do not obey him, nor try to control our passions; we do not show that we love him, and we do not atone.

“Are we going to continue living with a dead faith?”[26]

We need a faith that is alive, since Christ is not a figure from the past, a memory or a tradition. He is alive today and now.[27] And living by faith means being on intimate terms with him, talking to him as a friend, developing a personal relationship with him. This teaching links faith directly to the deepest desires of the human heart. “Our faith does not ignore anything on this earth that is beautiful, noble, and authentically human.”[28] Thus St. Josemaría was once accused of preaching “retreats about life” and not, as was then customary, “retreats about death.”[29]

In the homily “Living by Faith,” the texts from Scripture taken as his starting-point are the miracles where Jesus comes to meet people in their
needs, as in the case of Bartimaeus, the blind man from Jericho, in Mark chapter 10, and the woman with the issue of blood in Matthew chapter 9, and finally the father of the lunatic boy in Mark chapter 9. As Joseph Ratzinger wrote, “the thirst for the infinite belongs quite simply to essential human nature, and is indeed precisely that essential nature,”[30] so that all genuine loves and desires find their meaning only in God’s Love. “Practice your faith cheerfully, keeping very close to Jesus Christ. Really love him—but really, really love him!—and you will take part in a great Adventure of Love, because you will be more in love each day.”[31]

The human heart asks for a real “forever.” Even Nietzsche wrote that “all joy wants eternity.”[32] But this longing is doomed to disillusion unless, in the loves of this earth, in the desires of our heart, we can recognize a path leading, like a river to its source, to God’s Love, to Christ, the Love of loves. “Men lie when they say ‘for ever’ about things on earth. The only true, totally true, ‘for ever’ is that which we say with reference to God. This is how you ought to live your life, with a faith that will help you to taste the honey, the sweetness of heaven whenever you think about eternal life which is indeed ‘for ever.’”[33]

In short, St. Josemaría’s saw faith as force that speaks to life, to people’s loves. In contrast to a faith seen as a mere social occurrence or tradition, St. Josemaría’s preaching addresses people’s hearts, because it is born of faith “lived as an experience of love received.”[34] He presents Jesus to us as one introduces a friend, as the Love of loves, the source and meaning of all loves that are genuine and pure.

The universal call to holiness is based on the conviction of God’s nearness to our own life, to our hopes and desires. By giving priority to the theological virtues, and by a strong Christocentrism, faith is presented in a way that responds to the deepest desires of the human heart.

3. A son’s faith, a father’s faith

St. Josemaría’s teaching on faith has deep theological roots, in first place, because of the light granted to his soul by his foundational charism, and secondly because of the deep understanding of the tradition of the Church with which that light endowed him. In particular, his teachings
contain dogmatic elements that are characteristic of the outlook of the Fathers of the Church, who always tie faith and life closely together.

What stands out above all is his strong conviction of the divine sonship that Christ grants us, and that he sometimes expresses with terms characteristic of the Greek Fathers such as “divinization.”[35] This sonship or “filiation” points to a clear perception of the connection between the divine missions and the intra-Trinitarian processions, as well as the link between the act of creation, and the eternal generation of the Son by the Father. Referring to Galatians 3:26, St. Josemaría said: “All of you are God’s children through faith. What power we have! The power of knowing that we are God’s children.”[36] And he draws out the consequences of that mystery which, in patristic terms, is identified with the distinction without separation, and the union without confusion, of God’s action and his being—the divine economy and the divine immanence. In the words of the great French theologian Jean Daniélou, “From the deepest origins of all things appears this close link of all creation with the Word. It may be said that creation is not without an irradiation of the eternal generation [of the Son by the Father].”[37] Thus St. Josemaría says: “There is no human situation, no matter how trivial and ordinary it may seem, which cannot be a meeting place with Christ and a step forward on our journey toward the kingdom of Heaven.”[38]

Being a contemplative in the middle of the world means recognizing, thanks to the gift of faith and our diligent response, that everything speaks to us of Christ, that it is he who gives meaning to history and the world. Nothing of what is genuinely human can be alien to Christ, so that it is not necessary to abandon ordinary life in order to achieve holiness. In the words of Daniélou again, “To separate oneself from Christ is at the same time to separate oneself from what is real. It does not mean going beyond Christ, but just the reverse: it means closing oneself to life.”[39]

Faith is not simply a collection of teachings to be learnt, but a light that illumines reality, a light that shines out of Christ’s eyes.

St. Josemaría’s union of faith and life, therefore, reflects his Christocentrism and his deep experience of divine filiation, the true center of the entire Christian message and the link between time and eternity.
The Incarnate Word, in his Sacred Heart, unites God and man: God comes in search of us, and we, consciously or unconsciously, seek God, the Love of loves. Therefore St. Josemaría never presents faith only as a body of teachings, but as vitally connected to Christ: “Faith is a supernatural virtue which disposes our intelligence to give assent to the truths of revelation, to say Yes to Christ, who has brought us full knowledge of the Blessed Trinity’s plan for our salvation.”

The mind’s assent is inseparable from that given by the heart in the meeting with Christ, living and resurrected, in the Christian’s “today.” The act of faith is thought and knowledge that are born of the relationship with Jesus Christ in person, of conversation with him and openness to him. Among the Fathers of the Church, St. Augustine explained this reality by distinguishing three aspects of the act of belief: one has to believe that God exists, credere Deum, but one also has to believe in God who reveals himself, credere Deo, which culminates in credere in Deum, i.e. in personal adherence to God, in a faithfulness that leads one to tend continually towards him with one’s whole life.

Thus St. Josemaría’s concept of faith is both profoundly modern and genuinely faithful to Patristic tradition, which he appreciated for its apophatic (negative) theology—the realization that a full knowledge of God as he is in himself is beyond the capacity of our human intellect. We can cite here the beautiful reply he gave to a question raised in a large gathering in Venezuela in 1975:

“And when people tell you they can’t understand the Trinity and Unity [of God], tell them that I don’t understand it either, but I love and venerate it. If I could understand God’s greatness, if God fitted into this poor head of mine, my God would be very small. And yet he does fit—because he wants to—into my heart; he is contained within the immense depth of my soul, which is immortal.”

The intellectual dimension does not exhaust the knowledge of God, who cannot be reduced to a concept or idea. The Christian mystery is fully grasped in a personal knowledge of God who dwells in the soul in grace. Thus we find a close tie between the terms faith and heart in St. Josemaría’s writings: faith entails “seeing the truth and loving it,” loving and
believing. The doctrinal dimension is not sacrificed to an outpouring of sentiment, nor is faith reduced to mere intellectual formulas divorced from life. The phrase he coined to point out the safe path for his spiritual children to follow, “the piety of children and the doctrine of theologians,” shows this same deep harmony that from the time of the early Christians has nourished the Church’s fidelity to Revelation, grounded on the sense of divine filiation.

Belief is first and foremost a gift; it is the indwelling of God, his advent, in the human heart. Thus we begin to see why an essential element in a deepened understanding of faith’s theological dimension is grasping the reality that the Blessed Trinity dwells in the human soul. Each of us is called to be one with Christ, who is our true identity. The only way we can live by faith is by living the life of God’s children, so as to be another Christ. St. Josemaría expresses this in the telling words _alter Christus, ipse Christus_: “Feel, instead, Christ urging you on to become another Christ, _ipse Christus_, Christ himself.”

This, then, is the faith that “becomes a new criterion of understanding and action that changes the whole of man’s life,” a vibrant faith in the Incarnation, in its reality, its cosmic meaning. The meaning of the world is the Incarnate Son of God, and we are called to lead everything back to Christ, who returns all to the Father. This means recognizing the imprint of the Trinity on created being, going from the Incarnate Son who gives the world its meaning, to the Father, source of all creation. As Jean Mouroux wrote, “our faith is Christological, and because it is Christological, it is Trinitarian.”

To be a contemplative in the world, therefore, means looking at the world with Trinitarian eyes—made possible by our personal union with Christ. Thus we find the meaning of creation and history in the freedom of the children of God. “This hymn to freedom is echoed in all the mysteries of our Catholic faith. The Blessed Trinity draws the world and man out of nothing, in a free outpouring of love.”

The Incarnation confirms God’s Love, revealing that the true law governing the world is not blind necessity, nor absolute, disincarnate reason, but the freedom and trust of God the Father, who creates each
being in the Son and for the Son. As St. Josemaría said in an interview in Spain in 1969, “God, on creating us, ran the risk and adventure of our freedom. He wanted the history of the world to be a real history, made of real decisions, and not a fiction or a game. Each man has to experience his own autonomy, with all its concomitant hazards, trial-and-error, and uncertainty.” Hence his “realization that history is undetermined and open to a variety of human options—all of which God respects.”

This deep understanding of faith was given life in St. Josemaría’s response to God, whose son he felt himself to be, to the point of becoming the spiritual father of more children, and forming them in their turn until they too became parents of others. But forming others in freedom and nurturing their growth demand faith in the one Father, who is always at work, giving life, and protecting. A powerful passage written in 1937 (in the coded language that he employed throughout the Spanish Civil War to get past the censors) shows the strength and depth of this living faith:

“I'm not going to tell you anything. It's my custom to keep quiet and almost always just say, ‘Good,’ or ‘Very good.' No one can truthfully say at the end of the day that he did this or that thing by order, or even by an implied order, of the grandfather. When I think I have to say something, I limit myself to setting out clearly the facts of the problem at hand. In no way, even if I very clearly see one, do I or will I give a specific solution to it. I have a different way, a gentler and more effective way, of influencing the wills of my children and grandchildren: I give myself a hard time and pester my old Friend Don Manuel. May I never stray from this path, of always letting my children act with complete freedom... I think you know this about me—despite my human frailty, I could never use anyone’s life, not even a minute of it, for my own comfort or consolation. So much is this true that I will keep my mouth shut (though later I will speak with Don Manuel about it) even when what my children have in mind looks to me like a real disaster.”

St. Josemaría shows here his way of acting and governing with faith, having recourse to God (“Don Manuel,” meaning Emmanuel, God with us) to respect his children’s freedom, since, in order to grow and acquire the capacity to be parents, they need to experience their own limitations and make their own mistakes. For someone who really loves others this process
is painful, as painful as giving birth, but there is no other way of truly engendering another person and making them capable of becoming parents in their turn.

It is also the parents’ responsibility to help their children discover the beauty of world around them. Thus we see reflected in St. Josemaría’s faith “the original optimistic view of creation, that love for the world which is at the heart of the Christian message,”[57] which made him a father in such a marvelous way.

The faith of a son, which is faith in the Son, was manifested in a natural way in the faith of a father that characterized St. Josemaría’s life, totally dedicated as it was to the Work of God. He felt very much a son of God, and also very much a father. His great apostolic fruitfulness can be viewed in this theological perspective of faith, which led him to inspire many people to become saints in the world, and to open up a specific path to holiness.

4. Conclusion: Trinitarian life

The Holy Father Benedict XVI proclaimed a Year of Faith to overcome the current crisis of separating faith and life—for it seems as if Christianity, and the truths professed in the Creed, no longer hold any real value for many people’s lives. In contrast, St. Josemaría’s teachings manifest, even at the level of terminology, a close connection between faith and life, presenting Christian life as a call to live by faith, to ground one’s life on a personal relationship with Christ.

The possibility of “passionately loving the world” and sanctifying all the genuinely human actions and dimensions of life, is based on a deepened understanding of the close connection between faith and life. The unity of life that was a constant theme of St. Josemaría’s preaching is born of a deep, operative faith that opens our human life to God’s Life. “There is only one life, made of flesh and spirit. And it is that life which has to become, in both body and soul, holy and filled with God: we discover the invisible God in the most visible and material things.”[58]

The theological depth of the union of faith and life in St. Josemaría’s outlook is particularly evident in one of his most original teachings: his invitation to learn how to live our faith by contemplating the Holy
Family. He invites us to rise up to the Blessed Trinity in Heaven from the daily life and mutual relations of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, whom he called the “trinity on earth.” This pathway highlights both his Christocentrism and a deepening in the theological dimension of faith:

“I strive to reach the Trinity in Heaven through that other ‘trinity’ on earth: Jesus, Mary and Joseph. They are, as it were, more accessible. Jesus, who is perfectus Deus and perfectus Homo. Mary, who is a woman, the purest of creatures, the greatest: greater than her, only God. And Joseph, who is there right beside Mary: clean, manly, prudent, trustworthy. My God! What models for us! Just to look at them makes me want to die of shame, for, my Lord, I have behaved so badly. I haven’t risen to the occasion, or let myself become divinized. You have given me the means, and you are giving them, and will go on giving them to me. For, to live humanly on this earth, we must strive to live in a divine way.”

Every man and woman is called to live the very life of God, the life of the Blessed Trinity, as did the Holy Family, each of whom lived totally for the others in a communion of perfect love, based on the presence of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, on earth. From the divine “missions,” St. Josemaría rises up to the immanent intra-Trinitarian “processions,” showing how the Christian vocation is not a merely human effort to imitate the inimitable; rather God himself offers ordinary Christians the means to become “divinized” in their daily lives, working alongside and loving the people around them.

From the dogmatic perspective, St. Josemaría’s teaching is deeply rooted in the Fathers of the Church, in the thinking that was born of the lives of the early Christians. And like the Fathers, St. Josemaría stresses the incomprehensibility of the mystery of the Triune God to our limited human intellect:

“It is only right that in the immense marvel of God’s beauty and wisdom, there should be things that we can’t understand here on earth. If we could understand them, God would be a finite being, not infinite—he would fit into our heads, and how poor that god would be! So turn to Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, knowing that Jesus is God, and that God is three
Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and you are adoring the Trinity and the Unity, you are loving the Holy Spirit, when you love Jesus Christ.”[62]

The actual lives of Jesus, Mary and Joseph are the only way for us to reach the Blessed Trinity, because only in the mystery of the divine Humanity of Christ do we have access to the inner life of God. Only in Christ can we share in God’s own life, singling out each of the Divine Persons and talking to them on terms of intimate friendship, as we can to the “earthly trinity.” And to attain this strong faith, we need to go in a special way to our Blessed Lady, Mary, in order to learn to say the “Yes!” that unites faith and life.[63]


[3] Porta Fidei, no. 1


[8] St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, IIa-IIae, Q.4, A.1, Reply

[9] Porta Fidei, no. 3.


[22] Christ is Passing By, no. 172.


[27] See The Way, no. 584; Christ is Passing By, nos. 102ff.

[28] Christ is Passing By, no. 24.


[31] The Forge, no. 448.


[34] Porta Fidei, no. 7.


[38] Christ is Passing By, no. 22.


[40] Friends of God, no. 191.


[42] See St. Augustine, Enarrationes in Psalmos, 130, 1; and Tractatus in Ioannem, 29, 6.

[43] The concept of faith held by St. Josemaría is described by the Venerable Álvaro del Portillo, his first successor, as “living and dynamic.” See del Portillo, in Manuel Belda, Jose Escudero., Jose Luis Illanes, and Paul O’Callaghan, Sanctity in the World....


[47] See *Christ is Passing By*, no. 10.

[48] See *Christ is Passing By*, no. 21.


[52] Friends of God, no. 25.


[55] *Christ is Passing By*, no. 99.


[57] *The Forge*, no. 703.


[59] See *Christ is Passing By*, no. 22.


[61] A more developed study of this topic could be made on the basis of the excellent analysis by Cornelio Fabro, “El temple de un Padre de la Iglesia,” in Cornelio Fabro, Salvatore Garofalo and Maria Adelaide Raschini, *Santos en el mundo: estudios sobre los escritos del beato Josemaría Escrivá*, Madrid: Rialp, 1993, pp. 23-130.

See *Friends of God*, nos. 284-286.