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
Omnes cum Petro

Two events left a special mark on the first half of 2013: the announcement of Benedict XVI's resignation from the See of Peter, on February 11, and the election of Pope Francis as the new Roman Pontiff, on March 13. In his final general audience, Benedict XVI said that “the Pope is never alone... The Pope belongs to everyone and so many persons feel very close to him.”[1] This reality has been clearly seen in both events, which have been a spur for the Catholic faithful, and also for many other people of good will, to pray with greater intensity for St. Peter’s successor—the bishop of Rome—and for Christ’s Church. Pope Francis said after his election that during the conclave “from every corner of the earth fervent prayers have been offered up by the Christian people for the new Pope.”[2] God listened to the prayers of his children and has granted the Church another Shepherd. Thus a new link has been added to the long chain connecting us to the Prince of the apostles, to that fisherman from Galilee whom Christ made the visible foundation of his Church.[3]

“Christ. Mary. The Pope. Haven’t we just indicated, in three words, the loves that make up the entire Catholic faith?”[4] This statement, written down by the founder of Opus Dei in 1934, stems from his deep conviction that we need to “love tenderly the Pope, il dolce Cristo in terra as St. Catherine of Siena... liked to repeat,”[5] and that this love is an important part of our relationship with Christ and his Church. He never ceased insisting that we have to love the Pope whomever he may be: omnes cum Petro. That love—truly theological—is based on the certainty that he is, by God’s will, the Vicar of Christ, the “visible source and foundation of the unity both of faith and of communion.”[6] During his years at the head of the Prelature of Opus Dei, the Venerable Álvaro del Portillo—in continuity with and absolute fidelity to St. Josemaría—also insisted on this truth. In 1988, for example, he said that “remaining united to the Pope is the only way to be faithful to our Lord’s words, who assured us: super hanc petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam. It is Christ who builds up the Church—and we with him—through the Holy Spirit, but on the foundation that he himself has placed. The only path for us is to act always cum Petro et sub Petro, in union with the Pope and subject to his authority.”[7]
This conviction of our faith leads the Catholic faithful to express their love for the Roman Pontiff in specific signs of affection. In the first place, by praying each day for him and for his intentions. We have many opportunities for do so: for example, during Holy Mass—the sacrifice most pleasing to God—we pray explicitly for the Holy Father. News we receive about the Church can also be the occasion for being united with Peter. Everyone in the Church can and should help the Roman Pontiff to carry the weight of his ministry. As St. Josemaría said: “You must love, venerate, pray, and mortify yourself for the Pope, and do so with greater affection each day. For he is the foundation stone of the Church and, throughout the centuries, right to the end of time, he carries out among men that task of sanctifying and governing which Jesus entrusted to Peter.”[8]

At the same time, our union with the Pope leads us to welcome his teachings and indications with a generous openness and availability. “Faithfulness to the Pope includes a clear and definite duty: that of knowing his thought, which he tells us in encyclicals or other documents. We have to do our part to help all Catholics pay attention to the teaching of the Holy Father, and bring their everyday behavior into line with it.”[9]

A good son or daughter of the Church wants to be informed about the Pope's teachings. Luckily, present-day means of communication enable us to easily access his words. By knowing them well we will have many opportunities for apostolate, and by echoing the Pope in our own environment (even among those who may be far from the faith) we can help many people to take a greater interest in his teachings. Our Lord will make use of this effort of ours to lead many men and women to rediscover the beauty of the Church.

“In this moment filled with emotion, when the Church’s universality is vividly sensed,” said Bishop Echevarría on the occasion of the election of Pope Francis, “I reaffirm to the new Roman Pontiff complete adhesion to his person and ministry, with the certainty that I am expressing the sentiments of the faithful, both priests and laity, of the Prelature of Opus Dei. We all entrust ourselves to the prayers of His Holiness, in order to contribute effectively, with joyful availability, to the work of evangelization that the Pope referred to in his first greeting to the Church.”[10]
This issue of Romana contains the last words spoken by Benedict XVI as Roman Pontiff and various homilies and audiences of Pope Francis. Also included are words from the Prelate of Opus Dei published in the media regarding the resignation of Benedict XVI and the election of the first Pope from the western hemisphere. There is also, of course, abundant news about St. Josemaria and the Prelature of Opus Dei. The issue ends with a study by Professor Armando Fumagalli on the challenges Christians face in the world of communications.


[3] See the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 936.


[5] St. Josemaría, In Love with the Church, no. 11.


[10] Bishop Javier Echevarría, Words on the occasion of the election of Pope Francis,
HOLY SEE

- The Roman Pontiff
- The Roman Curia
Homily at Holy Mass for the Evangelium Vitae Congress, St. Peter’s Square (June 16, 2013)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This celebration has a very beautiful name: the Gospel of Life. In this Eucharist, in the Year of Faith, let us thank the Lord for the gift of life in all its forms, and at the same time let us proclaim the Gospel of Life.

On the basis of the word of God which we have heard, I would like to offer you three simple points of meditation for our faith: first, the Bible reveals to us the Living God, the God who is life and the source of life; second, Jesus Christ bestows life and the Holy Spirit maintains us in life; and third, following God’s way leads to life, whereas following idols leads to death.

1. The first reading, taken from the Second Book of Samuel, speaks to us of life and death. King David wants to hide the act of adultery which he committed with the wife of Uriah the Hittite, a soldier in his army. To do so, he gives the order that Uriah be placed on the front lines and so be killed in battle. The Bible shows us the human drama in all its reality: good and evil, passion, sin and its consequences. Whenever we want to assert ourselves, when we become wrapped up in our own selfishness and put ourselves in the place of God, we end up spawning death. King David’s adultery is one example of this. Selfishness leads to lies, as we attempt to deceive ourselves and those around us. But God cannot be deceived. We heard how the prophet says to David: “Why have you done evil in the Lord’s sight? (cf. 2 Sam 12:9). The King is forced to face his deeds of death; what he has done is truly a deed of death, not life! He recognizes what he has done and he begs forgiveness: “I have sinned against the Lord!” (v. 13). The God of mercy, who desires life and always forgives us, now forgives David and restores him to life. The prophet tells him: “The Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die.”
What is the image we have of God? Perhaps he appears to us as a severe judge, as someone who curtails our freedom and the way we live our lives. But the Scriptures everywhere tell us that God is the Living One, the one who bestows life and points the way to fullness of life. I think of the beginning of the Book of Genesis: God fashions man out of the dust of the earth; he breathes in his nostrils the breath of life, and man becomes a living being (cf. 2:7). God is the source of life; thanks to his breath, man has life. God’s breath sustains the entire journey of our life on earth. I also think of the calling of Moses, where the Lord says that he is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, the God of the living. When he sends Moses to Pharaoh to set his people free, he reveals his name: “I am who I am,” the God who enters into our history, sets us free from slavery and death, and brings life to his people because he is the Living One. I also think of the gift of the Ten Commandments: a path God points out to us towards a life which is truly free and fulfilling. The commandments are not a litany of prohibitions—you must not do this, you must not do that, you must not do the other; on the contrary, they are a great “Yes!”: a yes to God, to Love, to life. Dear friends, our lives are fulfilled in God alone, because only he is the Living One!

2. Today’s Gospel brings us another step forward. Jesus allows a woman who was a sinner to approach him during a meal in the house of a Pharisee, scandalizing those present. Not only does he let the woman approach but he even forgives her sins, saying: “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little” (Lk 7:47). Jesus is the incarnation of the Living God, the one who brings life amid so many deeds of death, amid sin, selfishness, and self-absorption. Jesus accepts, loves, uplifts, encourages, forgives, restores the ability to walk, gives back life. Throughout the Gospels we see how Jesus by his words and actions brings the transforming life of God. This was the experience of the woman who anointed the feet of the Lord with ointment: she felt understood, loved, and she responded by a gesture of love: she let herself be touched by God’s mercy, she obtained forgiveness and she started a new life. God, the Living One, is merciful. Do you agree? Let’s say it together: God, the Living One, is merciful! All together now: God, the Living One, is merciful. Once again: God, the Living One is merciful!
This was also the experience of the Apostle Paul, as we heard in the second reading: “The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). What is this life? It is God’s own life. And who brings us this life? It is the Holy Spirit, the gift of the risen Christ. The Spirit leads us into the divine life as true children of God, as sons and daughters in the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Are we open to the Holy Spirit? Do we let ourselves be guided by him? Christians are “spiritual.” This does not mean that we are people who live “in the clouds,” far removed from real life, as if it were some kind of mirage. No! The Christian is someone who thinks and acts in everyday life according to God’s will, someone who allows his or her life to be guided and nourished by the Holy Spirit, to be a full life, a life worthy of true sons and daughters. And this entails realism and fruitfulness. Those who let themselves be led by the Holy Spirit are realists, they know how to survey and assess reality. They are also fruitful; their lives bring new life to birth all around them.

3. God is the Living One, the Merciful One; Jesus brings us the life of God; the Holy Spirit gives and keeps us in our new life as true sons and daughters of God. But all too often, as we know from experience, people do not choose life, they do not accept the “Gospel of Life” but let themselves be led by ideologies and ways of thinking that block life, that do not respect life, because they are dictated by selfishness, self-interest, profit, power and pleasure, and not by love, by concern for the good of others. It is the eternal dream of wanting to build the city of man without God, without God’s life and love—a new Tower of Babel. It is the idea that rejecting God, the message of Christ, the Gospel of Life, will somehow lead to freedom, to complete human fulfilment. As a result, the Living God is replaced by fleeting human idols which offer the intoxication of a flash of freedom, but in the end bring new forms of slavery and death. The wisdom of the Psalmist says: “The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Ps 19:8). Let us always remember: the Lord is the Living One, he is merciful. The Lord is the Living One, he is merciful.
Homily at the solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul, St. Peter’s Basilica (June 29, 1913)

Your Eminences, Your Eminence Metropolitan Ioannis,

My Brother Bishops and Priests,

Dear Brothers and Sisters

We are celebrating the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles, principal patrons of the Church of Rome: a celebration made all the more joyful by the presence of bishops from throughout the world. A great wealth, which makes us in some sense relive the event of Pentecost. Today, as then, the faith of the Church speaks in every tongue and desires to unite all peoples in one family.

I offer a heartfelt and grateful greeting to the Delegation of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, led by Metropolitan Ioannis. I thank Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios I for this renewed gesture of fraternity. I greet the distinguished ambassadors and civil authorities. And in a special way I thank the Choir of the Thomaskirche of Leipzig—Bach’s own church—which is contributing to today’s liturgical celebration and represents an additional ecumenical presence.

I would like to offer three thoughts on the Petrine ministry, guided by the word “confirm.” What has the Bishop of Rome been called to confirm?

1. First, to confirm in faith. The Gospel speaks of the confession of Peter: “You are Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16), a confession which does not come from him but from our Father in heaven. Because of this confession, Jesus replies: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church” (v. 18). The role, the ecclesial service of Peter, is founded upon his confession of faith in Jesus, the Son of the living God, made possible by a grace granted from on high. In the second part of today’s Gospel we see the peril of thinking in worldly terms. When Jesus speaks of his death and resurrection, of the path of God which does not correspond to the human path of power, flesh and blood re-emerge in Peter: “He took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him... This must never happen to you” (16:22). Jesus’ response is harsh: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a
hinderance to me” (v. 23). Whenever we let our thoughts, our feelings or the logic of human power prevail, and we do not let ourselves be taught and guided by faith, by God, we become stumbling blocks. Faith in Christ is the light of our life as Christians and as ministers in the Church!

2. To confirm in love. In the second reading we heard the moving words of Saint Paul: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim 4:7). But what is this fight? It is not one of those fights fought with human weapons which sadly continue to cause bloodshed throughout the world; rather, it is the fight of martyrdom. Saint Paul has but one weapon: the message of Christ and the gift of his entire life for Christ and for others. It is precisely this readiness to lay himself open, personally, to be consumed for the sake of the Gospel, to make himself all things to all people, unstintingly, that gives him credibility and builds up the Church. The Bishop of Rome is called himself to live and to confirm his brothers and sisters in this love for Christ and for all others, without distinction, limits or barriers. And not only the Bishop of Rome: each of you, new archbishops and bishops, have the same task: to let yourselves be consumed by the Gospel, to become all things to everyone. It is your task to hold nothing back, to go outside of yourselves in the service of the faithful and holy people of God.

3. To confirm in unity. Here I would like to reflect for a moment on the rite which we have carried out. The pallium is a symbol of communion with the Successor of Peter, “the lasting and visible source and foundation of the unity both of faith and of communion” (Lumen Gentium, 18). And your presence today, dear brothers, is the sign that the Church’s communion does not mean uniformity. The Second Vatican Council, in speaking of the hierarchical structure of the Church, states that the Lord “established the apostles as college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from their number” (ibid.,19). To confirm in unity: the Synod of Bishops, in harmony with the primate. Let us go forward on the path of synodality, and grow in harmony with the service of the primacy. And the Council continues, “this college, in so far as it is composed of many members, is the expression of the variety and universality of the people of God” (ibid., 22). In the Church, variety, which is itself a great treasure, is always grounded in the harmony of unity, like a
great mosaic in which every small piece joins with others as part of God’s one great plan. This should inspire us to work always to overcome every conflict which wounds the body of the Church. United in our differences: there is no other Catholic way to be united. This is the Catholic spirit, the Christian spirit: to be united in our differences. This is the way of Jesus! The pallium, while being a sign of communion with the Bishop of Rome and with the universal church, with the Synod of Bishops, also commits each of you to being a servant of communion.

To confess the Lord by letting oneself be taught by God; to be consumed by love for Christ and his Gospel; to be servants of unity. These, dear brother bishops, are the tasks that the holy apostles Peter and Paul entrust to each of us, so that they can be lived by every Christian. May the holy Mother of God guide us and accompany us always with her intercession. Queen of Apostles, pray for us! Amen.

Homily at the Mass of Solemn Initiation of the Pontificate, St. Peter’s Square (March 19, 2013)

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I thank the Lord that I can celebrate this Holy Mass for the inauguration of my Petrine ministry on the solemnity of Saint Joseph, the spouse of the Virgin Mary and the patron of the universal Church. It is a significant coincidence, and it is also the name-day of my venerable predecessor: we are close to him with our prayers, full of affection and gratitude.

I offer a warm greeting to my brother cardinals and bishops, the priests, deacons, men and women religious, and all the lay faithful. I thank the representatives of the other Churches and ecclesial Communities, as well as the representatives of the Jewish community and the other religious communities, for their presence. My cordial greetings go to the Heads of
State and Government, the members of the official Delegations from many countries throughout the world, and the Diplomatic Corps.

In the Gospel we heard that “Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took Mary as his wife” (Mt 1:24). These words already point to the mission which God entrusts to Joseph: he is to be the custos, the protector. The protector of whom? Of Mary and Jesus; but this protection is then extended to the Church, as Blessed John Paul II pointed out: “Just as Saint Joseph took loving care of Mary and gladly dedicated himself to Jesus Christ’s upbringing, he likewise watches over and protects Christ’s Mystical Body, the Church, of which the Virgin Mary is the exemplar and model” (Redemptoris Custos, 1).

How does Joseph exercise his role as protector? Discreetly, humbly and silently, but with an unfailing presence and utter fidelity, even when he finds it hard to understand. From the time of his betrothal to Mary until the finding of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem, he is there at every moment with loving care. As the spouse of Mary, he is at her side in good times and bad, on the journey to Bethlehem for the census and in the anxious and joyful hours when she gave birth; amid the drama of the flight into Egypt and during the frantic search for their child in the Temple; and later in the day-to-day life of the home of Nazareth, in the workshop where he taught his trade to Jesus.

How does Joseph respond to his calling to be the protector of Mary, Jesus and the Church? By being constantly attentive to God, open to the signs of God’s presence and receptive to God’s plans, and not simply to his own. This is what God asked of David, as we heard in the first reading. God does not want a house built by men, but faithfulness to his word, to his plan. It is God himself who builds the house, but from living stones sealed by his Spirit. Joseph is a “protector” because he is able to hear God’s voice and be guided by his will; and for this reason he is all the more sensitive to the persons entrusted to his safekeeping. He can look at things realistically, he is in touch with his surroundings, he can make truly wise decisions. In him, dear friends, we learn how to respond to God’s call, readily and willingly, but we also see the core of the Christian vocation, which is Christ! Let us protect Christ in our lives, so that we can protect others, so that we can protect creation!
The vocation of being a “protector,” however, is not just something involving us Christians alone; it also has a prior dimension which is simply human, involving everyone. It means protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world, as the Book of Genesis tells us and as Saint Francis of Assisi showed us. It means respecting each of God’s creatures and respecting the environment in which we live. It means protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person, especially children, the elderly, those in need, who are often the last we think about. It means caring for one another in our families: husbands and wives first protect one another, and then, as parents, they care for their children, and children themselves, in time, protect their parents. It means building sincere friendships in which we protect one another in trust, respect, and goodness. In the end, everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it. Be protectors of God’s gifts!

Whenever human beings fail to live up to this responsibility, whenever we fail to care for creation and for our brothers and sisters, the way is opened to destruction and hearts are hardened. Tragically, in every period of history there are “Herods” who plot death, wreak havoc, and mar the countenance of men and women.

Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: let us be “protectors” of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment. Let us not allow omens of destruction and death to accompany the advance of this world! But to be “protectors,” we also have to keep watch over ourselves! Let us not forget that hatred, envy, and pride defile our lives! Being protectors, then, also means keeping watch over our emotions, over our hearts, because they are the seat of good and evil intentions: intentions that build up and tear down! We must not be afraid of goodness or even tenderness!

Here I would add one more thing: caring, protecting, demands goodness, it calls for a certain tenderness. In the Gospels, Saint Joseph appears as a strong and courageous man, a working man, yet in his heart we see great tenderness, which is not the virtue of the weak but rather a sign of strength of spirit and a capacity for concern, for compassion, for genuine
openness to others, for love. We must not be afraid of goodness, of tenderness!

Today, together with the feast of Saint Joseph, we are celebrating the beginning of the ministry of the new Bishop of Rome, the Successor of Peter, which also involves a certain power. Certainly, Jesus Christ conferred power upon Peter, but what sort of power was it? Jesus’ three questions to Peter about love are followed by three commands: feed my lambs, feed my sheep. Let us never forget that authentic power is service, and that the Pope too, when exercising power, must enter ever more fully into that service which has its radiant culmination on the Cross. He must be inspired by the lowly, concrete and faithful service which marked Saint Joseph and, like him, he must open his arms to protect all of God’s people and embrace with tender affection the whole of humanity, especially the poorest, the weakest, the least important, those whom Matthew lists in the final judgment on love: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison (cf. Mt 25:31-46). Only those who serve with love are able to protect!

In the second reading, Saint Paul speaks of Abraham, who, “hoping against hope, believed” (Rom 4:18). Hoping against hope! Today too, amid so much darkness, we need to see the light of hope and to be men and women who bring hope to others. To protect creation, to protect every man and every woman, to look upon them with tenderness and love, is to open up a horizon of hope; it is to let a shaft of light break through the heavy clouds; it is to bring the warmth of hope! For believers, for us Christians, like Abraham, like Saint Joseph, the hope that we bring is set against the horizon of God, which has opened up before us in Christ. It is a hope built on the rock which is God.

To protect Jesus with Mary, to protect the whole of creation, to protect each person, especially the poorest, to protect ourselves: this is a service that the Bishop of Rome is called to carry out, yet one to which all of us are called, so that the star of hope will shine brightly. Let us protect with love all that God has given us!

I implore the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, Saints Peter and Paul, and Saint Francis, that the Holy Spirit may accompany my
ministry, and I ask all of you to pray for me! Amen.

Words of Greeting to the Cardinals Present in Rome, the Vatican (February 28, 2013)

Venerable and Dear Brothers,

I welcome you with great joy and I offer each one of you my most cordial greeting. I thank Cardinal Angelo Sodano who, as always, interpreted the sentiments of the entire College: Cor ad cor loquitur [heart speaks to heart] I warmly thank you, Your Eminence. And I would like to say — taking up your reference to the disciples of Emmaus — that for me too it has been a joy to walk with you in these years, in the light of the presence of the Risen Lord.

As I said yesterday to the thousands of faithful who filled St Peter's Square, your closeness and your advice have been of great help to me in my ministry. In these eight years we have lived with faith very beautiful moments of radiant light on the Church's journey, as well as moments when several clouds gathered in the sky. We sought to serve Christ and his Church with profound and total love, which is the heart and soul of our ministry. We gave hope, the hope that comes to us from Christ, which alone can give light to us on our journey. Together we may thank the Lord who has enabled us to grow in communion and, together, pray him to help us to grow even more in this profound unity, so that the College of Cardinals may be like an orchestra where differences — an expression of the universal Church — contribute to a superior and harmonious concord.

I would like to leave you a simple thought, which is deep in my heart: a thought about the Church, about her mystery, that constitutes for us all — we can say — the reason and passion for life.

I will allow a sentence of Romano Guardini to help me. It was written in the very same year that the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council
approved the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, in his last book, which included a personal dedication to me — which makes the words of this book particularly dear to me. Guardini says the Church “is not an institution conceived and built in theory... but a living reality.... She lives through the course of time, in becoming, like every living being, in undergoing change.... And yet in her nature she remains ever the same and her heart is Christ.”

It seems to me that this was our experience yesterday in the Square: seeing that the Church is a living body, enlivened by the Holy Spirit and which is really brought to life by God’s power. She is in the world but not of the world: she is of God, of Christ, of the Spirit. We saw this yesterday. That is why Guardini’s other famous saying is both true and eloquent: “The Church is reawakened in souls.” The Church is alive, she grows and is reawakened in souls who — like the Virgin Mary — welcome the Word of God and conceive it through the action of the Holy Spirit; they offer to God their own flesh. It is precisely in their poverty and humility that they become capable of begetting Christ in the world today. Through the Church, the Mystery of the Incarnation lives on for ever. Christ continues to walk through the epochs and in all places.

Let us stay united, dear Brothers, in this Mystery: in prayer, especially in the daily Eucharist, and in this way we shall serve the Church and the whole of humanity. This is our joy that no one can take from us.

Before I say goodbye to each one of you personally, I would like to tell you that I shall continue to be close to you with my prayers, especially in these coming days, that you may be completely docile to the action of the Holy Spirit in the election of the new pope. May the Lord show you the one whom he wants. And among you, in the College of Cardinals, there is also the future pope to whom today I promise my unconditional reverence and obedience. For this reason, with affection and gratitude, I cordially impart to you the Apostolic Blessing.

Torna ai contenuti
Urbi et Orbi Message for Easter, the Vatican (March 31, 2013)

Dear brothers and sisters in Rome and throughout the world, Happy Easter! Happy Easter!

What a joy it is for me to announce this message: Christ is risen! I would like it to go out to every house and every family, especially where the suffering is greatest, in hospitals, in prisons …

Most of all, I would like it to enter every heart, for it is there that God wants to sow this Good News: Jesus is risen, there is hope for you, you are no longer in the power of sin, of evil! Love has triumphed, mercy has been victorious! The mercy of God always triumphs!

We too, like the women who were Jesus’ disciples, who went to the tomb and found it empty, may wonder what this event means (cf. Lk 24:4). What does it mean that Jesus is risen? It means that the love of God is stronger than evil and death itself; it means that the love of God can transform our lives and let those desert places in our hearts bloom. The love of God can do this!

This same love for which the Son of God became man and followed the way of humility and self-giving to the very end, down to hell—to the abyss of separation from God—this same merciful love has flooded with light the dead body of Jesus, has transfigured it, has made it pass into eternal life. Jesus did not return to his former life, to earthly life, but entered into the glorious life of God and he entered there with our humanity, opening us to a future of hope.

This is what Easter is: it is the exodus, the passage of human beings from slavery to sin and evil to the freedom of love and goodness. Because God is life, life alone, and we are his glory: the living man (cf. Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses, 4,20,5-7).

Dear brothers and sisters, Christ died and rose once for all, and for everyone, but the power of the Resurrection, this passover from slavery to evil to the freedom of goodness, must be accomplished in every age, in our concrete existence, in our everyday lives. How many deserts, even today, do
human beings need to cross! Above all, the desert within, when we have no
love for God or neighbor, when we fail to realize that we are guardians of
all that the Creator has given us and continues to give us. God’s mercy can
make even the driest land become a garden, can restore life to dry bones (cf.
Ezek 37:1-14).

So this is the invitation which I address to everyone: Let us accept the
grace of Christ’s Resurrection! Let us be renewed by God’s mercy, let us be
loved by Jesus, let us enable the power of his love to transform our lives too;
and let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can
water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish.

And so we ask the risen Jesus, who turns death into life, to change
hatred into love, vengeance into forgiveness, war into peace. Yes, Christ is
our peace, and through him we implore peace for all the world.

Peace for the Middle East, and particularly between Israelis and
Palestinians, who struggle to find the road of agreement, that they may
willingly and courageously resume negotiations to end a conflict that has
lasted all too long. Peace in Iraq, that every act of violence may end, and
above all for dear Syria, for its people torn by conflict and for the many
refugees who await help and comfort. How much blood has been shed!
And how much suffering must there still be before a political solution to
the crisis will be found?

Peace for Africa, still the scene of violent conflicts. In Mali, may unity
and stability be restored; in Nigeria, where attacks sadly continue, gravely
threatening the lives of many innocent people, and where great numbers of
persons, including children, are held hostage by terrorist groups. Peace in
the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and in the Central African
Republic, where many have been forced to leave their homes and continue
to live in fear.

Peace in Asia, above all on the Korean peninsula: may disagreements
be overcome and a renewed spirit of reconciliation grow.

Peace in the whole world, still divided by greed looking for easy gain,
wounded by the selfishness which threatens human life and the family,
selfishness that continues in human trafficking, the most extensive form of
slavery in this twenty-first century; human trafficking is the most extensive
form of slavery in this twenty-first century! Peace to the whole world, torn apart by violence linked to drug trafficking and by the iniquitous exploitation of natural resources! Peace to this our Earth! Made the risen Jesus bring comfort to the victims of natural disasters and make us responsible guardians of creation.

Dear brothers and sisters, to all of you who are listening to me, from Rome and from all over of the world, I address the invitation of the Psalm: “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; for his steadfast love endures for ever. Let Israel say: ‘His steadfast love endures for ever’” (Ps 117:1-2).

Homily at Taking Possession of the Cathedral of the Bishop of Rome, the Basilica of St. John Lateran (April 7, 2013)

It is with joy that I am celebrating the Eucharist for the first time in this Lateran Basilica, the Cathedral of the Bishop of Rome. I greet all of you with great affection: my very dear Cardinal Vicar, the auxiliary bishops, the diocesan presbyterate, the deacons, the men and women religious, and all the lay faithful. I also greet the Mayor, his wife and all the authorities present. Together let us walk in the light of the risen Lord.

1. Today we are celebrating the Second Sunday of Easter, also known as “Divine Mercy Sunday.” What a beautiful truth of faith this is for our lives: the mercy of God! God’s love for us is so great, so deep; it is an unfailing love, one which always takes us by the hand and supports us, lifts us up and leads us on.

2. In today’s Gospel, the Apostle Thomas personally experiences this mercy of God, which has a concrete face, the face of Jesus, the risen Jesus. Thomas does not believe it when the other Apostles tell him: “We have seen the Lord.” It isn’t enough for him that Jesus had foretold it, promised it: “On the third day I will rise.” He wants to see, he wants to put his hand in the place of the nails and in Jesus’ side. And how does Jesus react? With patience: Jesus does not abandon Thomas in his stubborn unbelief; he gives
him a week’s time, he does not close the door, he waits. And Thomas acknowledges his own poverty, his little faith. “My Lord and my God!”: with this simple yet faith-filled invocation, he responds to Jesus’ patience. He lets himself be enveloped by divine mercy; he sees it before his eyes, in the wounds of Christ’s hands and feet and in his open side, and he discovers trust: he is a new man, no longer an unbeliever, but a believer.

Let us also remember Peter: three times he denied Jesus, precisely when he should have been closest to him; and when he hits bottom he meets the gaze of Jesus who patiently, wordlessly, says to him: “Peter, don’t be afraid of your weakness, trust in me.” Peter understands, he feels the loving gaze of Jesus, and he weeps. How beautiful is this gaze of Jesus—how much tenderness is there! Brothers and sisters, let us never lose trust in the patience and mercy of God!

Let us think too of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus: their sad faces, their barren journey, their despair. But Jesus does not abandon them: he walks beside them, and not only that! Patiently he explains the Scriptures which spoke of him, and he stays to share a meal with them. This is God’s way of doing things: he is not impatient like us, who often want everything all at once, even in our dealings with other people. God is patient with us because he loves us, and those who love are able to understand, to hope, to inspire confidence; they do not give up, they do not burn bridges, they are able to forgive. Let us remember this in our lives as Christians: God always waits for us, even when we have left him behind! He is never far from us, and if we return to him, he is ready to embrace us.

I am always struck when I reread the parable of the merciful Father; it impresses me because it always gives me great hope. Think of that younger son who was in the Father’s house, who was loved; and yet he wants his part of the inheritance; he goes off, spends everything, hits rock bottom, where he could not be more distant from the Father, yet when he is at his lowest, he misses the warmth of the Father’s house and he goes back. And the Father? Had he forgotten the son? No, never. He is there, he sees the son from afar, he was waiting for him every hour of every day, the son was always in his father’s heart, even though he had left him, even though he had squandered his whole inheritance, his freedom. The Father, with patience, love, hope and mercy, had never for a second stopped thinking
about him, and as soon as he sees him still far off, he runs out to meet him and embraces him with tenderness, the tenderness of God, without a word of reproach: he has returned! And that is the joy of the Father. In that embrace for his son is all this joy: he has returned! God is always waiting for us, he never grows tired. Jesus shows us this merciful patience of God so that we can regain confidence, hope—always! A great German theologian, Romano Guardini, said that God responds to our weakness by his patience, and this is the reason for our confidence, our hope (cf. Glaubenserkenntnis, Würzburg, 1949, p. 28). It is like a dialogue between our weakness and the patience of God, it is a dialogue that, if we do it, will grant us hope.

3. I would like to emphasize one other thing: God’s patience has to call forth in us the courage to return to him, however many mistakes and sins there may be in our life. Jesus tells Thomas to put his hand in the wounds of his hands and his feet, and in his side. We too can enter into the wounds of Jesus, we can actually touch him. This happens every time that we receive the sacraments with faith. Saint Bernard, in a fine homily, says: “Through the wounds of Jesus I can suck honey from the rock and oil from the flinty rock (cf. Deut 32:13), I can taste and see the goodness of the Lord” (On the Song of Songs, 61:4). It is there, in the wounds of Jesus, that we are truly secure; there we encounter the boundless love of his heart. Thomas understood this. Saint Bernard goes on to ask: But what can I count on? My own merits? No, “My merit is God’s mercy. I am by no means lacking merits as long as he is rich in mercy. If the mercies of the Lord are manifold, I too will abound in merits” (ibid., 5). This is important: the courage to trust in Jesus’ mercy, to trust in his patience, to seek refuge always in the wounds of his love. Saint Bernard even states: “So what if my conscience gnaws at me for my many sins? ‘Where sin has abounded, there grace has abounded all the more’ (Rom 5:20)” (ibid.). Maybe someone among us here is thinking: my sin is so great, I am as far from God as the younger son in the parable, my unbelief is like that of Thomas; I don't have the courage to go back, to believe that God can welcome me and that he is waiting for me, of all people. But God is indeed waiting for you; he asks of you only the courage to go to him. How many times in my pastoral ministry have I heard it said: “Father, I have many sins”; and I have always pleaded: “Don't be afraid, go to him, he is waiting for you, he will take care of everything.” We hear many offers from the
world around us; but let us take up God’s offer instead: his is a caress of love. For God, we are not numbers, we are important, indeed we are the most important thing to him; even if we are sinners, we are what is closest to his heart.

Adam, after his sin, experiences shame, he feels naked, he senses the weight of what he has done; and yet God does not abandon him: if that moment of sin marks the beginning of his exile from God, there is already a promise of return, a possibility of return. God immediately asks: “Adam, where are you?” He seeks him out. Jesus took on our nakedness, he took upon himself the shame of Adam, the nakedness of his sin, in order to wash away our sin: by his wounds we have been healed. Remember what Saint Paul says: “What shall I boast of, if not my weakness, my poverty?” Precisely in feeling my sinfulness, in looking at my sins, I can see and encounter God’s mercy, his love, and go to him to receive forgiveness.

In my own life, I have so often seen God’s merciful countenance, his patience; I have also seen so many people find the courage to enter the wounds of Jesus by saying to him: Lord, I am here, accept my poverty, hide my sin in your wounds, wash it away with your blood. And I have always seen that God did just this—he accepted them, consoled them, cleansed them, loved them.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us be enveloped by the mercy of God; let us trust in his patience, which always gives us more time. Let us find the courage to return to his house, to dwell in his loving wounds, allowing ourselves be loved by him and to encounter his mercy in the sacraments. We will feel his wonderful tenderness, we will feel his embrace, and we too will become more capable of mercy, patience, forgiveness and love.

Torna ai contenuti

General Audience in St. Peter’s Square
(May 15, 2013)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today I would like to reflect on the Holy Spirit’s action in guiding the
Church and each one of us to the Truth. Jesus himself told his disciples: the Holy Spirit “will guide you into all the truth” (Jn 16:13), since he himself is “the Spirit of Truth” (cf. Jn 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).

We are living in an age in which people are rather sceptical of truth. Benedict xvi has frequently spoken of relativism, that is, of the tendency to consider nothing definitive and to think that truth comes from consensus or from something we like. The question arises: does “the” truth really exist? What is “the” truth? Can we know it? Can we find it? Here springs to my mind the question of Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator, when Jesus reveals to him the deep meaning of his mission: “What is truth?” (Jn 18:37, 38). Pilate cannot understand that “the” Truth is standing in front of him, he cannot see in Jesus the face of the truth that is the face of God. And yet Jesus is exactly this: the Truth that, in the fullness of time, “became flesh” (cf. Jn 1:1, 14), and came to dwell among us so that we might know it. The truth is not grasped as a thing, the truth is encountered. It is not a possession, it is an encounter with a Person.

But who can enable us to recognize that Jesus is “the” Word of truth, the Only-Begotten Son of God the Father? St Paul teaches that “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3). It is the Holy Spirit himself, the gift of the Risen Christ, who makes us recognize the Truth. Jesus describes him as the “Paraclete,” namely, “the one who comes to our aid,” who is beside us to sustain us on this journey of knowledge; and, at the Last Supper, Jesus assures the disciples that the Holy Spirit will teach them all things and remind them of all he has said to them (cf. Jn 14:26).

So how does the Holy Spirit act in our life and in the life of the Church in order to guide us to the truth? First of all he recalls and impresses in the heart of believers the words Jesus spoke and, through these very words, the law of God — as the Prophets of the Old Testament had foretold — is engraved in our heart and becomes within us a criterion for evaluation in decisions and for guidance in our daily actions; it becomes a principle to live by. Ezekiel’s great prophesy is brought about: “You shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you.... And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be
careful to observe my ordinances” (36:25-27). Indeed, it is in our inmost depths that our actions come into being: it is the heart itself that must be converted to God, and the Holy Spirit transforms it when we open ourselves to him.

Then, as Jesus promised, the Holy Spirit guides us “into all the truth” (Jn 16:13); not only does he guide us to the encounter with Jesus, the fullness of the Truth, but he also guides us “into” the Truth, that is, he makes us enter into an ever deeper communion with Jesus, giving us knowledge of all the things of God. And we cannot achieve this by our own efforts. Unless God enlightens us from within, our Christian existence will be superficial. The Church’s Tradition asserts that the Spirit of truth acts in our heart, inspiring that “sense of the faith” (sensus fidei) through which, as the Second Vatican Council states, the People of God, under the guidance of the Magisterium, adheres unfailingly to the faith transmitted, penetrates it more deeply with right judgement, and applies it more fully in life (cf. Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, no. 12). Let us try asking ourselves: am I open to the action of the Holy Spirit? Do I pray to him to give me illumination, to make me more sensitive to God’s things?

This is a prayer we must pray every day: “Holy Spirit, make my heart open to the word of God, make my heart open to goodness, make my heart open to the beauty of God every day.” I would like to ask everyone a question: how many of you pray every day to the Holy Spirit? There will not be many, but we must fulfill Jesus’ wish and pray every day to the Holy Spirit that he open our heart to Jesus.

Let us think of Mary who “kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” (Lk 2:19, 51). Acceptance of the words and truth of faith so that they may become life is brought about and increases under the action of the Holy Spirit. In this regard we must learn from Mary, we must relive her “yes,” her unreserved readiness to receive the Son of God in her life, which was transformed from that moment. Through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son take up their abode with us: we live in God and of God. Yet is our life truly inspired by God? How many things do I put before God?

Dear brothers and sisters, we need to let ourselves be bathed in the light of the Holy Spirit so that he may lead us into the Truth of God, who
is the one Lord of our life. In this Year of Faith let us ask ourselves whether we really have taken some steps to know Christ and the truth of faith better by reading and meditating on Sacred Scripture, by studying the Catechism and by receiving the sacraments regularly. However, let us ask ourselves at the same time what steps we are taking to ensure that faith governs the whole of our existence. We are not Christian “part-time,” only at certain moments, in certain circumstances, in certain decisions; no one can be Christian in this way, we are Christian all the time! Totally! May Christ’s truth, which the Holy Spirit teaches us and gives to us, always and totally affect our daily life. Let us call on him more often so that he may guide us on the path of disciples of Christ. Let us call on him every day. I am making this suggestion to you: let us invoke the Holy Spirit every day, in this way the Holy Spirit will bring us close to Jesus Christ.

Homily at the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, Plaza of St. John Lateran (May 30, 2013)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the Gospel we have listened to, Jesus says something that I always find striking: “you give them something to eat” (Lk 9:13). Starting with this sentence I am letting myself be guided by three words; following [sequel], communion, sharing.

1. First of all: who are those who must be given something to eat? We find the answer at the beginning of the Gospel passage: it is the crowd, the multitude. Jesus is in the midst of the people, he welcomes them, he speaks to them, he heals them, he shows them God’s mercy; it is from among them that he chooses the Twelve Apostles to be with him and, like him, to immerse themselves in the practical situations of the world. Furthermore the people follow him and listen to him, because Jesus is speaking and behaving in a new way, with the authority of someone who is authentic and consistent, someone who speaks and acts with truth, someone who gives
the hope that comes from God, someone who is a revelation of the Face of a God who is love. And the people joyfully bless God.

This evening we are the crowd of the Gospel, we too seek to follow Jesus in order to listen to him, to enter into communion with him in the Eucharist, to accompany him, and in order that he accompany us. Let us ask ourselves: how do I follow Jesus? Jesus speaks in silence in the Mystery of the Eucharist. He reminds us every time that following him means going out of ourselves and not making our life a possession of our own, but rather a gift to him and to others.

2. Let us take another step. What does Jesus’ request to the disciples—that they themselves give food to the multitude—come from? It comes from two things: first of all from the crowd, who in following Jesus find themselves in the open air, far from any inhabited areas, while evening is falling; and then from the concern of the disciples who ask Jesus to send the crowd away so that they can go to the neighboring villages to find provisions and somewhere to stay (cf. Lk 9:12).

Faced with the needs of the crowd the disciples’ solution was this: let each one think of himself — send the crowd away! How often do we Christians have this temptation! We do not take upon ourselves the needs of others, but dismiss them with a pious: “God help you,” or with a not so pious “good luck,” and if I never see you again…. But Jesus’ solution goes in another direction, a direction that astonishes the disciples: “You give them something to eat.” Yet how could we be the ones to give a multitude something to eat? “We have no more than five loaves and two fish — unless we are to go and buy food for all these people” (Lk 9:13). However Jesus does not despair. He asks the disciples to have the people sit down in groups of 50 people. He looks up to heaven, recites the blessing, breaks the bread and fish into pieces and gives them to the disciples to distribute (cf. Lk 9:16). It is a moment of deep communion: the crowd is satisfied by the word of the Lord and is now nourished by his bread of life. And they were all satisfied, the Evangelist notes (cf. Lk 9:17).

This evening we too are gathered round the table of the Lord, the table of the Eucharistic sacrifice, in which he once again gives us his Body and makes present the one sacrifice of the Cross. It is in listening to his word,
in nourishing ourselves with his Body and his Blood that he moves us on from being a multitude to being a community, from anonymity to communion. The Eucharist is the sacrament of communion that brings us out of individualism so that we may follow him together, living out our faith in him. Therefore we should all ask ourselves before the Lord: how do I live the Eucharist? Do I live it anonymously or as a moment of true communion with the Lord, and also with all the brothers and sisters who share this same banquet? What are our Eucharistic celebrations like?

3. A final element: where does the multiplication of the loaves come from? The answer lies in Jesus’ request to the disciples: “You give them…,” “to give,” to share. What do the disciples share? The little they have: five loaves and two fish. However it is those very loaves and fish in the Lord's hands that feed the entire crowd. And it is the disciples themselves, bewildered as they face the insufficiency of their means, the poverty of what they are able to make available, who get the people to sit down and who—trusting in Jesus’ words—distribute the loaves and fish that satisfy the crowd. And this tells us that in the Church, but also in society, a key word of which we must not be frightened is “solidarity,” that is, the ability to make what we have, our humble capacities, available to God, for only in sharing, in giving, will our life be fruitful. Solidarity is a word seen badly by the spirit of the world!

This evening, once again, the Lord distributes for us the bread that is his Body, he makes himself a gift; and we too experience “God’s solidarity” with man, a solidarity that is never depleted, a solidarity that never ceases to amaze us: God makes himself close to us, in the sacrifice of the Cross he humbles himself, entering the darkness of death to give us his life which overcomes evil, selfishness and death. Jesus, this evening too, gives himself to us in the Eucharist, shares in our journey, indeed he makes himself food, the true food that sustains our life also in moments when the road becomes hard-going and obstacles slow our steps. And in the Eucharist the Lord makes us walk on his road, that of service, of sharing, of giving; and if it is shared, that little we have, that little we are, becomes riches, for the power of God — which is the power of love — comes down into our poverty to transform it.
So let us ask ourselves this evening, in adoring Christ who is really present in the Eucharist: do I let myself be transformed by him? Do I let the Lord who gives himself to me, guide me to going out ever more from my little enclosure, in order to give, to share, to love him and others?

Brothers and sisters, following, communion, sharing. Let us pray that participation in the Eucharist may always be an incentive: to follow the Lord every day, to be instruments of communion and to share what we are with him and with our neighbor. Our life will then be truly fruitful. Amen.

Greetings

I am pleased to greet the many English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today's Audience, including those from England, Scotland, Sweden, Australia, India, Vietnam, Canada and the United States. As the Church prepares to celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, I pray that his gifts of wisdom, joy and peace will accompany you and your families along the path of authentic Christian discipleship. God bless you all!

General Audience, St. Peter's Square
(March 27, 2013)

Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning!

I am glad to welcome you to my first General Audience. With deep gratitude and reverence I take up the "witness" from the hands of Benedict XVI, my beloved Predecessor. After Easter we shall resume the Catechesis for the Year of Faith. Today I would like to reflect a little on Holy Week. We began this Week with Palm Sunday — the heart of the whole Liturgical Year — in which we accompany Jesus in his Passion, death and Resurrection.

But what does living Holy Week mean to us? What does following Jesus on his journey to Calvary on his way to the Cross and the Resurrection mean? In his earthly mission Jesus walked the roads of the
Holy Land; he called 12 simple people to stay with him, to share his journey and to continue his mission. He chose them from among the people full of faith in God’s promises. He spoke to all without distinction: the great and the lowly, the rich young man and the poor widow, the powerful and the weak; he brought God’s mercy and forgiveness; he healed, he comforted, he understood; he gave hope; he brought to all the presence of God who cares for every man and every woman, just as a good father and a good mother care for each one of their children.

God does not wait for us to go to him but it is he who moves towards us, without calculation, without quantification. That is what God is like. He always takes the first step, he comes towards us.

Jesus lived the daily reality of the most ordinary people: he was moved as he faced the crowd that seemed like a flock without a shepherd; he wept before the sorrow that Martha and Mary felt at the death of their brother, Lazarus; he called a publican to be his disciple; he also suffered betrayal by a friend. In him God has given us the certitude that he is with us, he is among us. “Foxes,” he, Jesus, said, “have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head” (Mt 8:20). Jesus has no house, because his house is the people, it is we who are his dwelling place, his mission is to open God’s doors to all, to be the presence of God’s love.

In Holy Week we live the crowning moment of this journey, of this plan of love that runs through the entire history of the relations between God and humanity. Jesus enters Jerusalem to take his last step with which he sums up the whole of his existence. He gives himself without reserve, he keeps nothing for himself, not even life. At the Last Supper, with his friends, he breaks the bread and passes the cup round “for us.” The Son of God offers himself to us, he puts his Body and his Blood into our hands, so as to be with us always, to dwell among us. And in the Garden of Olives, and likewise in the trial before Pilate, he puts up no resistance, he gives himself; he is the suffering Servant, foretold by Isaiah, who empties himself, even unto death (cf. Is 53:12).

Jesus does not experience this love that leads to his sacrifice passively or as a fatal destiny. He does not of course conceal his deep human distress as
he faces a violent death, but with absolute trust commends himself to the Father. Jesus gave himself up to death voluntarily in order to reciprocate the love of God the Father, in perfect union with his will, to demonstrate his love for us. On the Cross Jesus “loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). Each one of us can say: “he loved me and gave himself for me.” Each one can say this “for me.”

What is the meaning of all this for us? It means that this is my, your and our road too. Living Holy Week, following Jesus not only with the emotion of the heart; living Holy Week, following Jesus means learning to come out of ourselves — as I said last Sunday — in order to go to meet others, to go towards the outskirts of existence, to be the first to take a step towards our brothers and our sisters, especially those who are the most distant, those who are forgotten, those who are most in need of understanding, comfort and help. There is such a great need to bring the living presence of Jesus, merciful and full of love!

Living Holy Week means entering ever more deeply into the logic of God, into the logic of the Cross, which is not primarily that of suffering and death, but rather that of love and of the gift of self which brings life. It means entering into the logic of the Gospel. Following and accompanying Christ, staying with him, demands “coming out of ourselves,” requires us to be outgoing; to come out of ourselves, out of a dreary way of living faith that has become a habit, out of the temptation to withdraw into our own plans which end by shutting out God's creative action.

God came out of himself to come among us, he pitched his tent among us to bring to us his mercy that saves and gives hope. Nor must we be satisfied with staying in the pen of the 99 sheep if we want to follow him and to remain with him; we too must “go out” with him to seek the lost sheep, the one that has strayed the furthest. Be sure to remember: coming out of ourselves, just as Jesus, just as God came out of himself in Jesus and Jesus came out of himself for all of us.

Someone might say to me: “but Father, I don't have time,” “I have so many things to do,” “it’s difficult,” “what can I do with my feebleness and my sins, with so many things?” We are often satisfied with a few prayers, with a distracted and sporadic participation in Sunday Mass, with a few
charitable acts; but we do not have the courage “to come out” to bring Christ to others. We are a bit like St Peter. As soon as Jesus speaks of his Passion, death and Resurrection, of the gift of himself, of love for all, the Apostle takes him aside and reproaches him. What Jesus says upsets his plans, seems unacceptable, threatens the security he had built for himself, his idea of the Messiah. And Jesus looks at his disciples and addresses to Peter what may possibly be the harshest words in the Gospels: “Get behind me Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men” (Mk 8:33). God always thinks with mercy: do not forget this. God always thinks mercifully. He is the merciful Father! God thinks like the father waiting for the son and goes to meet him, he spots him coming when he is still far off....

What does this mean? That he went every day to see if his son was coming home: this is our merciful Father. It indicates that he was waiting for him with longing on the terrace of his house. God thinks like the Samaritan who did not pass by the unfortunate man, pitying him or looking at him from the other side of the road, but helped him without asking for anything in return; without asking whether he was a Jew, a pagan or a Samaritan, whether he was rich or poor: he asked for nothing. He went to help him: God is like this. God thinks like the shepherd who lays down his life in order to defend and save his sheep.

Holy Week is a time of grace which the Lord gives us to open the doors of our heart, of our life, of our parishes — what a pity so many parishes are closed! — of the movements, of the associations; and “to come out” in order to meet others, to make ourselves close, to bring them the light and joy of our faith. To come out always! And to do so with God’s love and tenderness, with respect and with patience, knowing that God takes our hands, our feet, our heart, and guides them and makes all our actions fruitful.

I hope that we all will live these days well, following the Lord courageously, carrying within us a ray of his love for all those we meet.
Homily at the Chrism Mass, St. Peter’s Basilica (March 28, 2013)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, This morning I have the joy of celebrating my first Chrism Mass as the Bishop of Rome. I greet all of you with affection, especially you, dear priests, who, like myself, today recall the day of your ordination.

The readings and the Psalm of our Mass speak of God’s “anointed ones”: the suffering Servant of Isaiah, King David and Jesus our Lord. All three have this in common: the anointing that they receive is meant in turn to anoint God’s faithful people, whose servants they are; they are anointed for the poor, for prisoners, for the oppressed… A fine image of this “being for” others can be found in the Psalm 133: “It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down upon the collar of his robe” (v. 2). The image of spreading oil, flowing down from the beard of Aaron upon the collar of his sacred robe, is an image of the priestly anointing which, through Christ, the Anointed One, reaches the ends of the earth, represented by the robe.

The sacred robes of the High Priest are rich in symbolism. One such symbol is that the names of the children of Israel were engraved on the onyx stones mounted on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, the ancestor of our present-day chasuble: six on the stone of the right shoulder-piece and six on that of the left (cf. Ex 28:6-14). The names of the twelve tribes of Israel were also engraved on the breastplate (cf. Ex 28:21). This means that the priest celebrates by carrying on his shoulders the people entrusted to his care and bearing their names written in his heart. When we put on our simple chasuble, it might well make us feel, upon our shoulders and in our hearts, the burdens and the faces of our faithful people, our saints and martyrs who are numerous in these times.

From the beauty of all these liturgical things, which is not so much about trappings and fine fabrics than about the glory of our God resplendent in his people, alive and strengthened, we turn now to a consideration of activity, action. The precious oil which anoints the head of Aaron does more than simply lend fragrance to his person; it overflows
down to “the edges.” The Lord will say this clearly: his anointing is meant for the poor, prisoners and the sick, for those who are sorrowing and alone. My dear brothers, the ointment is not intended just to make us fragrant, much less to be kept in a jar, for then it would become rancid … and the heart bitter.

A good priest can be recognized by the way his people are anointed: this is a clear proof. When our people are anointed with the oil of gladness, it is obvious: for example, when they leave Mass looking as if they have heard good news. Our people like to hear the Gospel preached with “unction,” they like it when the Gospel we preach touches their daily lives, when it runs down like the oil of Aaron to the edges of reality, when it brings light to moments of extreme darkness, to the “outskirts” where people of faith are most exposed to the onslaught of those who want to tear down their faith. People thank us because they feel that we have prayed over the realities of their everyday lives, their troubles, their joys, their burdens and their hopes. And when they feel that the fragrance of the Anointed One, of Christ, has come to them through us, they feel encouraged to entrust to us everything they want to bring before the Lord: “Pray for me, Father, because I have this problem,” “Bless me Father,” “Pray for me” — these words are the sign that the anointing has flowed down to the edges of the robe, for it has turned into a prayer of supplication, the supplication of the People of God. When we have this relationship with God and with his people, and grace passes through us, then we are priests, mediators between God and men. What I want to emphasize is that we need constantly to stir up God’s grace and perceive in every request, even those requests that are inconvenient and at times purely material or downright banal—but only apparently so—the desire of our people to be anointed with fragrant oil, since they know that we have it. To perceive and to sense, even as the Lord sensed the hope-filled anguish of the woman suffering from hemorrhages when she touched the hem of his garment. At that moment, Jesus, surrounded by people on every side, embodies all the beauty of Aaron vested in priestly raiment, with the oil running down upon his robes. It is a hidden beauty, one which shines forth only for those faith-filled eyes of the woman troubled with an issue of blood. But not even the disciples—future priests—see or understand: on the “existential outskirts,” they see only what is on the surface: the crowd
pressing in on Jesus from all sides (cf. Lk 8:42). The Lord, on the other hand, feels the power of the divine anointing which runs down to the edge of his cloak.

We need to “go out,” then, in order to experience our own anointing, its power and its redemptive efficacy: to the “outskirts” where there is suffering, bloodshed, blindness that longs for sight, and prisoners in thrall to many evil masters. It is not in soul-searching or constant introspection that we encounter the Lord: self-help courses can be useful in life, but to live our priestly life going from one course to another, from one method to another, leads us to become pelagians and to minimize the power of grace, which comes alive and flourishes to the extent that we, in faith, go out and give ourselves and the Gospel to others, giving what little ointment we have to those who have nothing, nothing at all.

The priest who seldom goes out of himself, who anoints little—I won’t say “not at all” because, thank God, the people take the oil from us anyway—misses out on the best of our people, on what can stir the depths of his priestly heart. Those who do not go out of themselves, instead of being mediators, gradually become intermediaries, managers. We know the difference: the intermediary, the manager, “has already received his reward,” and since he doesn’t put his own skin and his own heart on the line, he never hears a warm, heartfelt word of thanks. This is precisely the reason for the dissatisfaction of some, who end up sad—sad priests—in some sense becoming collectors of antiques or novelties, instead of being shepherds living with “the odor of the sheep.” This I ask you: be shepherds, with the “odor of the sheep,” make it real, as shepherds among your flock, fishers of men. True enough, the so-called crisis of priestly identity threatens us all and adds to the broader cultural crisis; but if we can resist its onslaught, we will be able to put out in the name of the Lord and cast our nets. It is not a bad thing that reality itself forces us to “put out into the deep,” where what we are by grace is clearly seen as pure grace, out into the deep of the contemporary world, where the only thing that counts is “unction”—not function—and the nets which overflow with fish are those cast solely in the name of the One in whom we have put our trust: Jesus.

Dear lay faithful, be close to your priests with affection and with your prayers, that they may always be shepherds according to God’s heart.
Dear priests, may God the Father renew in us the Spirit of holiness with whom we have been anointed. May he renew his Spirit in our hearts, that this anointing may spread to everyone, even to those “outskirts” where our faithful people most look for it and most appreciate it. May our people sense that we are the Lord’s disciples; may they feel that their names are written upon our priestly vestments and that we seek no other identity; and may they receive through our words and deeds the oil of gladness which Jesus, the Anointed One, came to bring us. Amen.

Homily on Palm Sunday – 28th World Youth Day, St. Peter’s Square (March 24, 2013)

1. Jesus enters Jerusalem. The crowd of disciples accompanies him in festive mood, their garments are stretched out before him, there is talk of the miracles he has accomplished, and loud praises are heard: “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” (Lk 19:38).

Crowds, celebrating, praise, blessing, peace: joy fills the air. Jesus has awakened great hopes, especially in the hearts of the simple, the humble, the poor, the forgotten, those who do not matter in the eyes of the world. He understands human sufferings, he has shown the face of God’s mercy, and he has bent down to heal body and soul.

This is Jesus. This is his heart which looks to all of us, to our sicknesses, to our sins. The love of Jesus is great. And thus he enters Jerusalem, with this love, and looks at us. It is a beautiful scene, full of light—the light of the love of Jesus, the love of his heart—of joy, of celebration.

At the beginning of Mass, we too repeated it. We waved our palms, our olive branches. We too welcomed Jesus; we too expressed our joy at accompanying him, at knowing him to be close, present in us and among us as a friend, a brother, and also as a King: that is, a shining beacon for our lives. Jesus is God, but he lowered himself to walk with us. He is our
friend, our brother. He illumines our path here. And in this way we have welcomed him today. And here the first word that I wish to say to you: joy! Do not be men and women of sadness: a Christian can never be sad! Never give way to discouragement! Ours is not a joy born of having many possessions, but from having encountered a Person: Jesus, in our midst; it is born from knowing that with him we are never alone, even at difficult moments, even when our life’s journey comes up against problems and obstacles that seem insurmountable, and there are so many of them! And in this moment the enemy, the devil, comes, often disguised as an angel, and slyly speaks his word to us. Do not listen to him! Let us follow Jesus! We accompany, we follow Jesus, but above all we know that he accompanies us and carries us on his shoulders. This is our joy, this is the hope that we must bring to this world. Please do not let yourselves be robbed of hope! Do not let hope be stolen! The hope that Jesus gives us.

2. The second word. Why does Jesus enter Jerusalem? Or better: how does Jesus enter Jerusalem? The crowds acclaim him as King. And he does not deny it, he does not tell them to be silent (cf. Lk 19:39-40). But what kind of a King is Jesus? Let us take a look at him: he is riding on a donkey, he is not accompanied by a court, he is not surrounded by an army as a symbol of power. He is received by humble people, simple folk who have the sense to see something more in Jesus; they have that sense of the faith which says: here is the Saviour. Jesus does not enter the Holy City to receive the honors reserved to earthly kings, to the powerful, to rulers; he enters to be scourged, insulted and abused, as Isaiah foretold in the First Reading (cf. Is 50:6). He enters to receive a crown of thorns, a staff, a purple robe: his kingship becomes an object of derision. He enters to climb Calvary, carrying his burden of wood. And this brings us to the second word: Cross. Jesus enters Jerusalem in order to die on the Cross. And it is precisely here that his kingship shines forth in godly fashion: his royal throne is the wood of the Cross! It reminds me of what Benedict XVI said to the Cardinals: you are princes, but of a king crucified. That is the throne of Jesus. Jesus takes it upon himself… Why the Cross? Because Jesus takes upon himself the evil, the filth, the sin of the world, including the sin of all of us, and he cleanses it, he cleanses it with his blood, with the mercy and the love of God. Let us look around: how many wounds are inflicted upon humanity by evil! Wars, violence, economic conflicts that hit the weakest,
greed for money that you can’t take with you and have to leave. When we were small, our grandmother used to say: a shroud has no pocket. Love of power, corruption, divisions, crimes against human life and against creation! And—as each one of us knows and is aware—our personal sins: our failures in love and respect towards God, towards our neighbor and towards the whole of creation. Jesus on the Cross feels the whole weight of the evil, and with the force of God’s love he conquers it, he defeats it with his resurrection. This is the good that Jesus does for us on the throne of the Cross. Christ’s Cross embraced with love never leads to sadness, but to joy, to the joy of having been saved and of doing a little of what he did on the day of his death.

3. Today in this Square, there are many young people: for twenty-eight years Palm Sunday has been World Youth Day! This is our third word: youth! Dear young people, I saw you in the procession as you were coming in; I think of you celebrating around Jesus, waving your olive branches. I think of you crying out his name and expressing your joy at being with him! You have an important part in the celebration of faith! You bring us the joy of faith and you tell us that we must live the faith with a young heart, always: a young heart, even at the age of seventy or eighty. Dear young people! With Christ, the heart never grows old! Yet all of us, all of you know very well that the King whom we follow and who accompanies us is very special: he is a King who loves even to the Cross and who teaches us to serve and to love. And you are not ashamed of his Cross! On the contrary, you embrace it, because you have understood that it is in giving ourselves, in emerging from ourselves that we have true joy and that, with his love, God conquered evil. You carry the pilgrim Cross through all the Continents, along the highways of the world! You carry it in response to Jesus’ call: “Go, make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19), which is the theme of World Youth Day this year. You carry it so as to tell everyone that on the Cross Jesus knocked down the wall of enmity that divides people and nations, and he brought reconciliation and peace. Dear friends, I too am setting out on a journey with you, starting today, in the footsteps of Blessed John Paul II and Benedict XVI. We are already close to the next stage of this great pilgrimage of the Cross. I look forward joyfully to next July in Rio de Janeiro! I will see you in that great city in
Brazil! Prepare well—prepare spiritually above all—in your communities, so that our gathering in Rio may be a sign of faith for the whole world. Young people must say to the world: to follow Christ is good; to go with Christ is good; the message of Christ is good; emerging from ourselves, to the ends of the earth and of existence, to take Jesus there, is good! Three points, then: joy, the Cross, young people.

Let us ask the intercession of the Virgin Mary. She teaches us the joy of meeting Christ, the love with which we must look to the foot of the Cross, the enthusiasm of the young heart with which we must follow him during this Holy Week and throughout our lives. May it be so.

Homily at Holy Mass with the Cardinals, Sistine Chapel (March 14, 2013)

In these three readings, I see a common element: that of movement. In the first reading, it is the movement of a journey; in the second reading, the movement of building the Church; in the third, in the Gospel, the movement involved in professing the faith. Journeying, building, professing.

Journeying. “O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord” (Is 2:5). This is the first thing that God said to Abraham: Walk in my presence and live blamelessly. Journeying: our life is a journey, and when we stop moving, things go wrong. Always journeying, in the presence of the Lord, in the light of the Lord, seeking to live with the blamelessness that God asked of Abraham in his promise.

Building. Building the Church. We speak of stones: stones are solid; but living stones, stones anointed by the Holy Spirit. Building the Church, the Bride of Christ, on the cornerstone that is the Lord himself. This is another kind of movement in our lives: building.

Thirdly, professing. We can walk as much as we want, we can build many things, but if we do not profess Jesus Christ, things go wrong. We may become a charitable ngo, but not the Church, the Bride of the Lord.
When we are not walking, we stop moving. When we are not building on the stones, what happens? The same thing that happens to children on the beach when they build sand castles: everything is swept away, there is no solidity. When we do not profess Jesus Christ, the saying of Léon Bloy comes to mind: “Anyone who does not pray to the Lord prays to the devil.” When we do not profess Jesus Christ, we profess the worldliness of the devil, a demonic worldliness.

Journeying, building, professing. But things are not so straightforward, because in journeying, building, professing, there can sometimes be jolts, movements that are not properly part of the journey: movements that pull us back.

This Gospel continues with a situation of a particular kind. The same Peter who professed Jesus Christ, now says to him: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. I will follow you, but let us not speak of the Cross. That has nothing to do with it. I will follow you on other terms, but without the Cross. When we journey without the Cross, when we build without the Cross, when we profess Christ without the Cross, we are not disciples of the Lord, we are worldly: we may be bishops, priests, cardinals, popes, but not disciples of the Lord.

My wish is that all of us, after these days of grace, will have the courage, yes, the courage, to walk in the presence of the Lord, with the Lord’s Cross; to build the Church on the Lord’s blood which was poured out on the Cross; and to profess the one glory: Christ crucified. And in this way, the Church will go forward.

My prayer for all of us is that the Holy Spirit, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Mother, will grant us this grace: to walk, to build, to profess Jesus Christ crucified. Amen.

Declaration of Renunciation of the Petrine Ministry, the Vatican (February 11, 2013)

The Roman Pontiff Benedict XVI
DECLARATIO

Dear Brothers,

I have convoked you to this Consistory, not only for the three canonizations, but also to communicate to you a decision of great importance for the life of the Church. After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry. I am well aware that this ministry, due to its essential spiritual nature, must be carried out not only with words and deeds, but no less with prayer and suffering. However, in today’s world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the barque of Saint Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months, has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me. For this reason, and well aware of the seriousness of this act, with full freedom I declare that I renounce the ministry of Bishop of Rome, Successor of Saint Peter, entrusted to me by the Cardinals on 19 April 2005, in such a way, that as from 28 February 2013, at 20:00 hours, the See of Rome, the See of Saint Peter, will be vacant and a Conclave to elect the new Supreme Pontiff will have to be convoked by those whose competence it is.

Dear Brothers, I thank you most sincerely for all the love and work with which you have supported me in my ministry and I ask pardon for all my defects. And now, let us entrust the Holy Church to the care of Our Supreme Pastor, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and implore his holy Mother Mary, so that she may assist the Cardinal Fathers with her maternal solicitude, in electing a new Supreme Pontiff. With regard to myself, I wish to also devotedly serve the Holy Church of God in the future through a life dedicated to prayer.

From the Vatican, February 10, 2013

BENEDICTUS PP XVI
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Presbyterate,

Distinguished Authorities, Dear Brothers and Sisters:

When on April 19 nearly eight years ago I accepted the Petrine ministry, I had the firm certainty that has always accompanied me: this certainty of the life of the Church which comes from the word of God. At that moment, as I have often said, the words which echoed in my heart were: Lord, why are you asking this of me, and what is it that you are asking of me? It is a heavy burden which you are laying on my shoulders, but if you ask it of me, at your word I will cast the net, sure that you will lead me even with all my weaknesses. And eight years later I can say that the Lord has truly led me, he has been close to me, I have been able to perceive his presence daily. It has been a portion of the Church’s journey which has had its moments of joy and light, but also moments which were not easy; I have felt like Saint Peter with the Apostles in the boat on the Sea of Galilee: the Lord has given us so many days of sun and of light winds, days when the catch was abundant; there were also moments when the waters were rough and the winds against us, as throughout the Church’s history, and the Lord seemed to be sleeping. But I have always known that the Lord is in that boat, and I have always known that the barque of the Church is not mine but his. Nor does the Lord let it sink; it is he who guides it, surely also through those whom he has chosen, because he so wished. This has been, and is, a certainty which nothing can shake. For this reason my heart today overflows with gratitude to God, for he has never let his Church, or me personally, lack his consolation, his light, his love.

We are in the Year of Faith which I desired precisely to reaffirm our faith in God in a context which seems to push him more and more into the background. I should like to invite all of us to renew our firm confidence in the Lord, to entrust ourselves like children in God’s arms, certain that those arms always hold us, enabling us to press forward each day, even when the going is rough. I want everyone to feel loved by that God who
gave his Son for us and who has shown us his infinite love. I want everyone
to feel the joy of being a Christian. In one beautiful morning prayer, it says:
“I adore you, my God, and I love you with all my heart. I thank you for
having created me and made me a Christian....” Yes, we are happy for the
gift of faith; it is our most precious possession, which no one can take from
us! Let us thank the Lord for this daily, in prayer and by a consistent
Christian life. God loves us, but he also expects us to love him!

But it is not only God whom I want to thank at this moment. The
Pope is not alone in guiding the barque of Peter, even if it is his first
responsibility. I have never felt alone in bearing the joy and the burden of
the Petrine ministry; the Lord has set beside me so many people who, with
generosity and love for God and the Church, have helped me and been
close to me. Above all you, dear brother Cardinals: your wisdom, your
counsel and your friendship have been invaluable to me; my co-workers,
beginning with my Secretary of State who has faithfully accompanied me
in these years; the Secretariat of State and the whole Roman Curia, as well
as all those who in various sectors offer their service to the Holy See: many,
many unseen faces which remain in the background, but precisely through
their silent, daily dedication in a spirit of faith and humility they have been
a sure and trustworthy support to me. I also think in a special way of the
Church of Rome, my Diocese! I cannot forget my Brothers in the
Episcopate and in the Presbyterate, the consecrated persons and the entire
People of God: in my pastoral visits, meetings, audiences and journeys I
have always felt great kindness and deep affection; yet I too have felt
affection for each and all without distinction, with that pastoral charity
which is the heart of every Pastor, and especially of the Bishop of Rome,
the Successor of the Apostle Peter. Every day I have borne each of you in
prayer, with the heart of a father.

I would like my greeting and my thanksgiving to extend to everyone:
the heart of the Pope reaches out to the whole world. And I wish to express
my gratitude to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See which
represents the great family of the nations. Here I think too of all those who
work for good communications and I thank them for their important
service.
At this point, I would also like to thank most heartily all those people throughout the world who in these recent weeks have sent me moving expressions of concern, friendship and prayer. Yes, the Pope is never alone; now I once again experience this so overwhelmingly that my heart is touched. The Pope belongs to everyone and so many persons feel very close to him. It is true that I receive letters from world leaders — from heads of state, from religious leaders, from representatives of the world of culture, and so on. But I also receive many many letters from ordinary people who write to me simply and from the heart, and who show me their affection, an affection born of our being together with Christ Jesus, in the Church. These people do not write to me in the way one writes, for example, to a prince or some important person whom they do not know. They write to me as brothers and sisters, as sons and daughters, with a sense of a very affectionate family bond. Here one can sense palpably what the Church is — not an organization, an association for religious or humanitarian ends, but a living body, a communion of brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ, which makes us all one. To experience the Church in this way and to be able as it were to put one’s finger on the strength of her truth and her love, is a cause for joy at a time when so many people are speaking of her decline. But we see how the Church is alive today!

In these last months I have felt my energies declining, and I have asked God insistently in prayer to grant me his light and to help me make the right decision, not for my own good, but for the good of the Church. I have taken this step with full awareness of its gravity and even its novelty, but with profound interior serenity. Loving the Church means also having the courage to make difficult, painful decisions, always looking to the good of the Church and not of oneself.

Here, allow me to go back once again to April 19, 2005. The real gravity of the decision was also due to the fact that from that moment on I was engaged always and forever by the Lord. Always—anyone who accepts the Petrine ministry no longer has any privacy. He belongs always and completely to everyone, to the whole Church. In a manner of speaking, the private dimension of his life is completely eliminated. I was able to experience, and I experience it even now, that one receives one’s life precisely when one gives it away. Earlier I said that many people who love
the Lord also love the Successor of Saint Peter and feel great affection for
him; that the Pope truly has brothers and sisters, sons and daughters,
throughout the world, and that he feels secure in the embrace of your
communion; because he no longer belongs to himself, he belongs to all and
all belong to him.

The “always” is also a “forever” — there can no longer be a return to
the private sphere. My decision to resign the active exercise of the ministry
does not revoke this. I do not return to private life, to a life of travel,
meetings, receptions, conferences, and so on. I am not abandoning the
cross, but remaining in a new way at the side of the crucified Lord. I no
longer bear the power of office for the governance of the Church, but in
the service of prayer I remain, so to speak, in the enclosure of Saint Peter.
Saint Benedict, whose name I bear as Pope, will be a great example for me
in this. He showed us the way for a life which, whether active or passive, is
completely given over to the work of God.

I also thank each and every one of you for the respect and
understanding with which you have accepted this important decision. I will
continue to accompany the Church’s journey with prayer and reflection,
with that devotion to the Lord and his Bride which I have hitherto sought
to practise daily and which I would like to practise always. I ask you to
remember me in prayer before God, and above all to pray for the Cardinals,
who are called to so weighty a task, and for the new Successor of the
Apostle Peter: may the Lord accompany him with the light and strength of
his Spirit.

Let us call upon the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother
of God and Mother of the Church, that she may accompany each of us and
the whole ecclesial community; to her let us commend ourselves with deep
confidence.

Dear friends! God guides his Church, he sustains it always, especially at
times of difficulty. Let us never lose this vision of faith, which is the one
ture way of looking at the journey of the Church and of the world. In our
hearts, in the heart of each of you, may there always abide the joyful
certainty that the Lord is at our side: he does not abandon us, he remains
close to us and he surrounds us with his love. Thank you!
First Greeting and Apostolic Blessing Urbi et Orbi, St. Peter’s Square (March 13, 2013)

The Roman Pontiff Francis

Brothers and sisters, good evening!

You know that it was the duty of the Conclave to give Rome a Bishop. It seems that my brother Cardinals have gone to the ends of the earth to get one... but here we are... I thank you for your welcome. The diocesan community of Rome now has its Bishop. Thank you! And first of all, I would like to offer a prayer for our Bishop Emeritus, Benedict XVI. Let us pray together for him, that the Lord may bless him and that Our Lady may keep him.

[Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...]

And now, we take up this journey: Bishop and People. This journey of the Church of Rome which presides in charity over all the Churches. A journey of fraternity, of love, of trust among us. Let us always pray for one another. Let us pray for the whole world, that there may be a great spirit of fraternity. It is my hope for you that this journey of the Church, which we start today, and in which my Cardinal Vicar, here present, will assist me, will be fruitful for the evangelization of this most beautiful city.

And now I would like to give the blessing, but first—first I ask a favor of you: before the Bishop blesses his people, I ask you to pray to the Lord that he will bless me: the prayer of the people asking the blessing for their Bishop. Let us make, in silence, this prayer: your prayer over me.

***

Now I will give the Blessing to you and to the whole world, to all men and women of good will.

[Blessing]

Brothers and sisters, I leave you now. Thank you for your welcome. Pray for me and until we meet again. We will see each other soon.
Tomorrow I wish to go and pray to Our Lady, that she may watch over all of Rome. Good night and sleep well!

The Roman Curia

Decree approving the proper of the Mass in Latin and the Liturgy of the Hours of the days assigned in the proper Calendar of the Personal Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei (February 28, 2013)

After approving the Calendar of the Prelature, which was published in the previous issue of Romana, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments approved the Latin texts of the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours for those feasts, by means of the following decree:

CONGREGATIO DE CULTU DIVINO
ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM
Prot. N. 190/13/L
SANCTAE CRUCIS ET OPERIS DEI
Instante Excellentissimo ac Reverendissimo Domino Xaverio ECHEVARRIA, Episcopo titulari Cilibiensi ac Praelato Sanctae Crucis et Operis Dei, litteris die 17 mense Februarii anno 2013 datis, vigore facultatum huic Congregationi a Summo Pomifice BENEDICTO XVI tributarum,
Proprium Missarum et Liturgiae Horarum eiusdem Pralaturae lingua
Decree adding a memorial of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to Eucharistic Prayers II, III, and IV of the third typical edition of the Roman Missal (May 1, 2013)

Decree by which the name of St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is added to Eucharistic Prayers II, III, and IV of the Roman Missal (May 1, 2013)

CONGREGATIO DE CULTU DIVINO
ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM
DECRETUM
ut nomen Sancti Ioseph Beatae Mariae Virginis Sponsi
Precibus eucharisticis II, III et IV, quae in editione typica tertia Missalis Romani sunt, posthac adiciatur, post nomen Beatae Virginis Mariae additis verbis

Paternas vices erga Iesum exercens, in oeconomia salutis super Familiam Domini constitutus munus gratiae Sanctus Ioseph Nazarenus luculenter adimplevit et, humanae salutis mysteriorum primordiis summopere adhaerens, benignae humilitatis est exemplar, quam christiana fides sublimes ad fines provebit, et documentum communium humanarum simpliciumque virtutum, quae necesse sunt, ut homines boni sint verique Christi sectatores. Per eas vir Iustus ille, amantissimam gerens Dei Genetricis curam laeantique studio Iesu Christi sese institutioni devovens, pretiosissimorum Dei Patris thesaurorum custos factus est et tamquam mystici illius corporis, quae est Ecclesia, subsidium assiduo populi Dei cultu per saecula prosecutus est.

In Catholica Ecclesia christifideles iugem erga Sanctum Ioseph praebere consuerunt devotionem ac sollemnioribus ritibus assiduoque cultu castissimi Deiparae Sponsi memoriam adhuc upote caelestis universae Ecclesiae Patroni adeo percoluerunt, ut iam Beatus Ioannes Pp. XXIII tempore Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani Secundi nomen eius vetustissimo Canoni Romano addi decerneret. Quae honestissima placita pluribus ex locis perscripta Summus Pontifex Benedictus XVI persolvenda suscipit atque benigne approbavit ac Summus Pontifex Franciscus nuperrime confirmavit, prae oculis habentes plenam illam communionem Sanctorum, qui iam nobiscum viatores in mundo ad Christum nos adducunt eique coniungunt.

in Prece eucharistica IV: «cum beata Virgine, Dei Genetrice, Maria, cum beato Ioseph, eius Sponso, cum Apostolis».

Circa textus lingua latina exaratos, adhibeantur hae formulae, quae nunc typicae declarant. De translationibus in linguas populares occidentales maioris diffusionis ipsa Congregatio mox providebit; illae vero in aliis linguis apparandae ad normam iuris a Conferentia Episcoporum conficientur, Apostolicae Sedi per hoc Dicasterium recognoscendae.

Contrariis quibuslibet minime obstantibus.

Ex aedibus Congregationis de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum, die 1 mensis Maii anno 2013, sancti Ioseph opificis.

Antonio, Card. Cañizares Llovera

Prefectus

✠ Arturo Roche

Archiepiscopus a Secretiis

Wording of the addition of the commemoration of St. Joseph to the Eucharistic Prayers II, III, and IV.

Formulae quae ad nomen Sancti Joseph spectant in Preces eucharisticas II, III et IV Missalis Romani inserendae, linguis anglica, hispanica, italica, lusitana, gallica, germanica et polonica exaratae

Probatum

Ex aedibus Congregationis de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum, die 1 mensis Maii 2013.

✠ Arturus Roche

Archiepiscopus a Secretis

Angliae

In Eucharistic Prayer II: “that with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with blessed Joseph, her Spouse, with the blessed Apostles...”;
In Eucharistic Prayer III: “with the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with blessed Joseph, her Spouse, with your blessed Apostles and glorious Martyrs...”;

In Eucharistic Prayer IV: “with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with blessed Joseph, her Spouse, and with your Apostles....”

Letter of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments Ratifying the Concession to Celebrate a Votive Mass in Honor of St. Severinus in Centers of the Opus Dei Prelature (March 25, 2013)

Letter of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments

ratifying the concession to celebrate a votive Mass in honor of St. Severinus in

the Centers of the Prelature of Opus Dei (March 25, 2013)

CONGREGATIO DE CULTU DIVINO
ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM
Prot. N. 190/13/L
Città del Vaticano, 25 marzo 2013
Eccellenza,

Siamo a rispondere con piacere alla sua lettera del 17 febbraio 2013 con la quale si chiedeva di poter celebrare, nei Centri della Prelatura della Santa Croce e Opus Dei, la Messa in onore di San Severino martire, le cui reliquie riposano in una delle cappelle della curia della Prelatura.
Dopo aver studiato la documentazione storica allegata e ciò che riguarda le precedenti concessioni di culto a san Severino martire, in virtù delle competenze di questa Congregazione per il Culto Divino e la Disciplina dei Sacramenti

concediamo la celebrazione della Messa votiva in onore del martire San Severino in tutti i Centri della Prelatura il 8 novembre o nel giorno più vicino non impedito, secondo le norme liturgiche.

Il formulario per la celebrazione deve essere uno di quelli del Comune martyrum, Pro uno martyre.

L’occasione ci é gradita per porgerLe, Eccellenza, cordiali saluti ed augurarLe una Santa Pasqua 2013.

Antonio Card. Cañizares Llovera
Prefetto

+Arthur Roche
Arcivescovo Segretario

Torna ai contenuti
PRELATE

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

Decree of Appointment of the Vicar of the Quasi-Region of Poland:

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

Præsentibus his litteris te, Rev.dum D.num D.rem Stephanum Moszoro Dabrowski, nominamus atque constituimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Quasi-Regione Poloniae, cum omnibus et singulis iuribus et obligationibus huic officio adnexit.

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

Datum Romæ, ex Ædibus Curiæ Prælatitiae, die 15 mense aprili anno 2013.

+ XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA
Prælatus Operis Dei
Activities of the Prelate

Pastoral Trips

February 15-17 in Lithuania

On the third weekend in February, Bishop Echevarría traveled to Lithuania, where Opus Dei has carried on stable apostolic work since 1994. Besides meeting several times with faithful of the Prelature along with their friends and families, the Prelate of Opus Dei also greeted the Cardinal Archbishop of Vilnius, His Eminence Audrys Juozas Backis. He also took advantage of his visit to pray at the Shrine of Ausros Varrtai (Our Lady, Gate of Dawn). As Benedict XVI had announced his resignation from the Petrine ministry only a few days earlier, Bishop Echevarría invited his hearers repeatedly to pray for the Holy Father and also for the new Pope. Other recurrent themes of his conversations in Lithuania were: bringing Christ’s light to the university environment, praying for one’s study or work colleagues, and speaking to them about God without fear.

April 11-14 in Lebanon

From April 11 to 14, Bishop Echevarría made a pastoral visit to Lebanon, which enabled him to give encouragement to the apostolic activities that the faithful of the Prelature carry out in that country with the help of many other people. The Prelate visited the centers of formation organized by faithful of Opus Dei in Lebanon, including the Al Tilal Institute of Management and Services where work of human and social development is carried out for women who live in the Lebanese mountains.
In the general get-together with more than 350 people, Bishop Echevarría invited those present to be people who pray, who talk with God, and diligently seek holiness. Thus they will be of great help to the Pope, the bishops, the priests, and everyone around them. He also stressed that their daily life lived with generosity and a big heart would contribute to solving the problems that exist in Lebanon and in the world.

The Prelate of Opus Dei visited Maronite Bishop Boulos Matar of Beirut and the Apostolic Nuncio in Lebanon, Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia. He also visited the Carmelite Convent of Unity in Harissa and the Shrine of our Lady of Lebanon, also in Harissa, where he prayed particularly for peace in that region and in the whole world. During these four days, the Patriarch of the Maronites, His Beatitude Cardinal Bechara Boutros Raï, O.M.M., was not in Lebanon.

May 24–28 in South Africa

On Friday May 24, Bishop Echevarría arrived in South Africa, to spend a few days with faithful of Opus Dei there and those who take part in the means of Christian formation offered by the Prelature. He had an opportunity to speak to many people during a gathering in the Sandton Convention Center in Johannesburg. He also spent time with various families during his visit to the Mater Dolorosa parish, which is entrusted to priests of Opus Dei. On Sunday the 26th, Bishop Echevarría traveled to Pretoria. There he visited the centers of the Prelature and, in one of them, consecrated the altar in the oratory. He also spoke with groups of university students and with families. In these gatherings he spoke about the Blessed Trinity (the solemnity of this feast was celebrated on May 26th this year), devotion to our Lady, caring for one’s family, concern for others, confession, the apostolate, and other aspects of Christian life.

Bishop Echevarría was grateful for his meetings with the Archbishop of Johannesburg, Most Rev. Buti Joseph Tihagale, O.M.I., and the Archbishop of Pretoria, Most Rev. William M. Slattery, O.F.M. He also had an opportunity to speak with the Apostolic Nuncio in South Africa, Archbishop Mario Roberto Cassari. Before returning to Rome, the Prelate had a get-together with priests from various dioceses of South Africa.
Ordinations (May 4, 2013)

On May 4, 2013, in the Roman Basilica of St. Eugene, Bishop Echevarría conferred priestly ordination on 31 faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei. These new priests will serve the Church through their ministry, after having exercised various professional activities for several or many years. In his homily, the Prelate addressed the families of the new priests and their friends who had come to the ceremony: “I especially congratulate their families. By your prayer, good example and in various ways you have contributed to their priestly vocation. I always say this, but in a special way on these occasions: every Christian has the duty to pray every day so that our Lord may grant many seminarians throughout the world. Let us take it as a joyful duty.”

The new priests come from five continents: Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America. 

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

Audience with the Holy Father Francis (June 10, 2013)

On Monday June 10, His Holiness Pope Francis received the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, in a private audience. Among other things, the second successor to St. Josemaría took advantage of this filial meeting to thank the Pope for his generous service as Supreme Pastor of the Church and to assure him of the prayers for the Pope and his intentions on the part of the faithful of the Prelature and all those who take part in the means of formation offered by Opus Dei.
Pastoral Letters

Letter of April 2013

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

The moments of great importance in the Church’s life that we have been witnesses to are still very recent: the election of a new Roman Pontiff. As always happens when such events take place, we have experienced the action of the Paraclete and seen the truth of Benedict XVI’s words at the beginning of his Petrine ministry: “the Church is alive—this is the wonderful experience of these days... And the Church is young. She holds within herself the future of the world and therefore shows each of us the way towards the future. The Church is alive and we are seeing it: we are experiencing the joy that the Risen Lord promised his followers.”[1]

United to the whole Church, all of us in the Work have welcomed with great joy the election of Pope Francis, who has brought with him a bracing gust of spirituality, an eagerness to improve. The feast of St. Joseph, the day on which the new Roman Pontiff solemnly inaugurated his ministry as supreme Pastor of the universal Church, has brought home to us with special force the truth that our Lord, his Blessed Mother and the Holy Patriarch are watching over the Church at every moment—that the Spouse of Christ never finds herself alone amid the ups and downs in the course of her existence.

“How does Joseph respond to his calling to be the protector of Mary, Jesus and the Church?” asked Pope Francis. “By being constantly attentive to God, open to the signs of God’s presence and receptive to God’s plans, and not simply to his own. This is what God asked of David... God does not want a house built by men, but faithfulness to his word, to his plan. It is God himself who builds the house, but from living stones sealed by his Spirit. Joseph is a ‘protector’ because he is able to hear God’s voice and be guided by his will; and for this reason he is all the more sensitive to the persons entrusted to his safekeeping. He can look at things realistically, he is in touch with his surroundings, he can make truly wise decisions.”[2] As I told you before the election, and later reiterated to you (following our
Father's example in everything), we already love the new Pope with immense supernatural and human affection, while also striving—by abundant prayer and mortification—to support the first steps of his ministry, which are always important.

Yesterday Easter time began. The alleluia filled with a jubilation that rises from earth to heaven in all corners of the world, gives voice to the unbreakable faith of the Church in its Lord. Through his ignominious death on the Cross, Jesus received from God the Father, through the Holy Spirit, a new life—a glorified life in his Most Holy Humanity—as we profess each Sunday in one of the articles of the Creed. The same Jesus, *perfectus homo*, perfect man, who suffered death under Pontius Pilate and was buried, the same who on the third day... rose again in fulfillment of the scriptures,[3] never to die again and as a pledge of our future resurrection and our hope of eternal life. Let us say then with the Church: It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, at all times to acclaim you, O Lord, but in this time above all to laud you yet more gloriously, when Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. For he is the true Lamb who has taken away the sins of the world; by dying he has destroyed our death, and by rising, restored our life.[4]

Let us try to go more deeply, with the Paraclete’s help, into this great mystery of faith, upon which rests—as a building on its foundation—the whole Christian life. “The mystery of Christ’s resurrection,” the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, “is a real event, with manifestations that were historically verified, as the New Testament bears witness.”[5]

St. Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth. I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.[6]

The totally exceptional character of Christ’s resurrection is shown in the fact that his Most Holy Humanity, united once again in soul and body by the power of the Holy Spirit, is completely transfigured in the glory of God the Father. It is an historical fact testified to by fully credible witnesses; but at the same time and above all, it is a fundamental point of
Christian faith. Our Lord, “in his risen body... passes from the state of death to another life beyond time and space. At Jesus’ resurrection his body is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: he shares the divine life in his glorious state, so that St. Paul can say that Christ is ‘the man of heaven’ (cf. 1 Cor 15:35-50)”[7]

Let us meditate on St. Josemaría’s words in one of his homilies: “Christ is alive. Jesus is the Emmanuel: God with us. His resurrection shows us that God does not abandon his own....

“Christ is alive in his Church. I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you (Jn 16:7). That was what God planned: Jesus, dying on the cross, gave us the Spirit of truth and life. Christ stays in his Church, its sacraments, its liturgy, its preaching—in all that it does.

“In a special way Christ stays with us in the daily offering of the holy Eucharist. That is why the Mass is the center and source of Christian life. In each and every Mass the complete Christ, head and body, is present. Per Ipsum et cum Ipso et in Ipso. For Christ is the Way; he is the Mediator; in him we find everything. Outside of him our life is empty. In Jesus Christ, and taught by him, we dare to say: Our Father. We dare to call the Lord of heaven and earth our Father.

“The presence of the living Christ in the host is the guarantee, the source and the culmination of his presence in the world.”[8]

The risen Jesus is also the Lord of the world, the Lord of history: nothing happens unless he wants or permits it in view of God’s saving plans. St. John presents him to us in all his glory in the Apocalypse: "In the midst of the lamp stands [I saw] one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast; his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters; in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.”[9]

Our Lord’s sovereignty over the world and all of history requires that
we his disciples strive with all our strength to build up his kingdom on earth. This effort demands not only loving God with our whole heart and soul, but also loving each of our fellow men with an affective and effective charity, in deed and in truth, especially those who are most in need. Therefore it is easy to understand, writes St. Josemaría, “the impatience, anxiety, and unease of people whose naturally Christian soul (cf. Tertullian, Apology, 17), stimulates them 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!”

As you know, this is one of the concerns that the new Pope has shown from the first moments of his pontificate. Prompted by the example and teachings of our Father, let us continue making an effort to bring the charity of Christ, spiritual and material concern for others, to the environment in which each of us works; doing so personally, but also seeking and urging the assistance of others who have a concern for the needy. Let us never forget that Opus Dei was born and found strength, by God’s will, among the poor and sick of the most neglected neighborhoods of Madrid, and that our Founder dedicated himself to them with generosity and heroism, with a great expenditure of time, in the first years of the Work. In 1941 he wrote: “I don’t need to remind you, because you are living it, that Opus Dei was born among the poor of Madrid, in the hospitals and the most wretched districts: and we continue attending to the poor, to children, and to the sick. This is a tradition that will never be interrupted in the Work.”

A few years later, St. Josemaría amplified this teaching with other very clear words which, despite the time that has gone by, are still very timely. “In these times of confusion,” he wrote, “it is hard to know what is right, or center, or left in political and social matters. But if by left one understands attaining well-being for the poor, so that all can share the right to live with a minimum of comfort, to work, to be well cared for if sick, to have sufficient rest and relaxation, to have children and to educate them, to be taken care of when old, then I am more on the left than anyone. Naturally, within the social doctrine of the Church, and without compromises with
Marxism or atheistic materialism; nor with anti-Christian class struggle, because in these things we cannot compromise.”[13]

It especially saddened our Founder to see that a lack of love and charity towards the indigent was found also at times among Christians. “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.

“All the circumstances in which life places us bring a divine message, asking us to respond with love and service to others.”[14]

My daughters and sons, let us meditate on these words and make them resound in the ears of many people, so that the new commandment of charity may shine forth in the life of all men and women and be, as Jesus wanted, the distinctive sign of all his disciples.[15] I would like us to take to heart the words of the Gospel, after the resurrection of Jesus: gavisi sunt discipuli viso Domino,[16] the disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord. Let us also recall that the Master is always following us closely, and we have to discover him, to see him, in the extraordinary and ordinary circumstances of daily life, convinced of what St. Josemaría said: either we find him there or we will never find him. Therefore, with Christ’s triumph, with the certainty that he is counting on us, have we given a new impetus to our gaudium cum pace, to our joy filled with peace? Does it have supernatural and human content?

Throughout this month, together with the Church’s joy for Easter and for having once again a successor of Peter on earth, in our case there are new reasons for joy: especially the anniversaries of St. Josemaría’s First Communion and Confirmation on the 23rd. What a good opportunity to ask God through his intercession, in the upcoming weeks, to grant the Holy Spirit’s abundant light and strength, for Pope Francis, for the Holy Church, for all humanity! I won’t hide from you that I enjoy going over the history of Opus Dei, the “history of God’s mercies,” and I ask the Blessed Trinity that the same be true of each and every one of you: we don’t live on
memories, but on the joy of seeing God’s hand in the steps of the Work, in the life of St. Josemaría.

Your Father,

+ Javier

Rome, April 1, 2013


[6] *1 Cor* 15:3-5.


[16] *Jn* 20:20
At the Priestly Ordination of 31 Deacons of the Prelature, St. Eugene’s Basilica, Rome (May 4, 2013)

Dearest sons about to be ordained. Dear brothers and sisters.

1. Over the past weeks we have been witnesses and protagonists of a great event in the life of the Church: the beginning of a new pontificate. We are witnesses because we have contemplated once again the sovereign action of the Holy Spirit who exceeds human expectations. And we are protagonists because, as living members of the Church, we have prayed a great deal and we continue to pray so that these circumstances might stimulate all Catholics to strive ever more for their personal sanctification and apostolate.

The Easter season makes the risen Christ present, the conqueror of sin and of all evil. Our Lord desires each of us to make him present in the situations in which we find ourselves: in our families, and in our social and professional activities. God’s calling — St Josemaría teaches — gives us a mission: it invites us to share in the unique task of the Church, to bear witness to Christ before our fellow men and so draw all things toward God.[1]

I invite you, therefore, to ask yourself whether the joy and the good desires which we experienced upon the election of the Roman Pontiff, and also during this time of Easter, have forged in us concrete decisions of personal improvement, of zeal for the salvation of souls. We cannot be satisfied with good feelings; rather we should make a real effort — with God’s help — to convert them into concrete realities.

2. Today we are attending a priestly ordination, a great gift of God to his Church. This event can and should mean, for all of us, a push to exercise our priestly soul in the service of others. The first reading speaks of the example of Paul and Barnabas, men who have dedicated their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 15:26). Indeed, they valiantly defended the essential characteristics of the Christian faith, confronting
those who wanted to distort it. We too must commit ourselves seriously to the defence and the spread of our faith. Now that we find ourselves in the second half of the Year of Faith, we can examine whether we have insistently asked the Lord for an increase in this virtue, along with hope and charity, aware that it is a gift of God which we cannot attain by our own efforts alone. The privileged place to abundantly receive these virtues is the sacraments, by means of which Jesus sends us the Holy Spirit on behalf of the Father. Specifically, let us prepare ourselves better to receive the sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist, as they are the principle fountains of grace.

The second reading has presented us with the new Jerusalem, the holy city coming down out of heaven from God, gleaming with the splendour of God (Rev 21:10-11). It is a call to intensely desire the definitive homeland, where the Lord has gone to prepare a place for us (cf. Jn 14:2-3). The solemnity of the Ascension — which we will celebrate next week — is an invitation to not forget that our definitive home is Heaven: a truth which, at the same time, gives meaning to our existence on earth. In fact — St Josemaría writes — our calling discloses to us the meaning of our existence. It means being convinced, through faith, of the reason for our life on earth. Our life, the present, past and future, acquires a new dimension, a depth we did not perceive before. All happenings and events now fall within their true perspective: we understand where God is leading us, and we feel ourselves borne along by this task entrusted to us.\[2\]

3. I now address the new priests. Consider, my sons, the words of the gospel of St John to which we have listened. In the intimacy of the last supper, after instituting the Eucharist and the priesthood, Jesus said: Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him (Jn 14:23). Within a few moments, the Holy Spirit will descend upon you in a new way. You will receive his anointing which will make of you living instruments of God’s grace by the power to consecrate in persona Christi the Body and Blood of Our Lord, by the power to pardon sins and by the duty to preach the Word of God with his authority. This grandeur is compatible with our littleness for the Lord entrusts these gifts to us so that we might guide souls to eternal life. Let us ask with St Josemaría, on behalf of all priests, for the
grace to perform holy things in a holy way, to reflect in every aspect of our lives the wonders of the greatness of God.\[3]\] A good way to attain this end is to love the Sacred Host more and more each day. May we think more frequently of that point from The Way: "Treat him well for me, treat him well!" Words, mingled with tears, of a certain venerable bishop to the priests he had just ordained. Would that I had the power, Lord, and the authority to repeat that same cry in the ears and in the hearts of many, many Christians!\[4]\]

Let us call to mind some other words of the founder of the Work. On the occasion of a priestly ordination of some faithful of Opus Dei, he wrote: They are being ordained to serve. They are not being ordained to give orders or to attract attention, but rather to give themselves to the service of all souls in a divine and continuous silence.\[5]\] My sons: you ought to get out of yourselves in order to think only of the souls which will be entrusted to your pastoral care. “The priest who seldom goes out of himself, — Pope Francis recently said — instead of being a mediator, gradually becomes an intermediary, a manager.”\[6]\] This should not occur. The priest is mediator between God and men in Jesus Christ (cf. Heb 5:1-3) so that divine grace may vivify everything.

Before finishing, I invite you to pray very much for the Holy Father, especially in these first months of his ministry as supreme Pastor; pray also for those who collaborate with him in governing the Church, for the bishops and priests of the entire world and for priestly vocations. And, logically, for these new priests of the Prelature. I especially congratulate their families. By your prayer, good example and in various ways you have contributed to their priestly vocation. I always say this, but in a special way on these occasions: every Christian has the duty to pray every day so that our Lord may grant many seminarians throughout the world. Let us take it as a joyful duty.

May the Blessed Virgin, Mother of all and especially of priests, bless and protect us always.

May Jesus Christ be praised!

\[1\] St. Josemaría, Christ is Passing By, n. 45.

\[2\] Ibid.
Dear brothers and sisters.

Dear confirmation recipients:

I was very happy to accept your pastor’s invitation to celebrate Holy Mass on the eve of the Solemnity of Pentecost, and now my joy is even greater because I am going to confer Confirmation on some of you. Thus you will become mature Christians, regardless of the age recorded on your birth certificates, because the Holy Spirit will come to dwell within you in a new way.

But who is the Holy Spirit? What is his role in the lives of Christians? These are not idle questions, since for many of those who have been baptized the answer is still almost unknown. Listen to the advice of St. Josemaria, that holy priest who loved you very much, even if he did not know you personally: “Get to know the Holy Spirit, the Great Unknown, the One Who has to sanctify you.”[1]

We have listened to St. Luke’s words in the Acts of the Apostles. The coming of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete sent by Jesus on behalf of God the Father, was made manifest with great signs: a roaring and impetuous wind that made the house where they were gathered shake, tongues of flame that came to rest on the heads of our Lady, the apostles, and the other disciples gathered there in prayer.
The noise was heard everywhere, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem ran filled with curiosity to see what had happened. They were astonished when they saw Peter, John, Andrew and all the others completely transformed. Not only because each heard them speaking in his own language, but also because the fear they had shown up till then was now gone.

After Jesus’ death, the apostles had deserted the Master. All except John, the youngest of them, sustained by our Lady, who is a constant example of faithfulness and love; and also the holy women, who truly loved our Lord. Later, the disciples, when they had seen the risen Christ and spoken with him before his ascension to heaven, recovered their strength a little, but not completely. They continued to be fearful and stayed behind locked doors for fear of the Jews.

The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost radically changed this situation. No longer filled with fear, they became courageous, overcoming any fear of what others might think. They spoke openly to the crowd about Jesus and his resurrection from the dead, making clear to everyone that he was the Messiah Israel had awaited for so many centuries.

This transformation affected not only their conduct, but also their very way of speaking. Before, they had been people with little education; but from the moment they received the Holy Spirit, they began to speak of the great truths of Sacred Scripture in a way everyone could comprehend, and of the message Jesus had entrusted to them. And everyone understood what they were saying: Parthians, Greeks, Elamites, Arabs, Romans…. People of all languages were amazed at their words. Many converted, received baptism and became part of the Church. All of us, in order to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying, need to take care of our human, doctrinal, spiritual, and apostolic formation.

My dear brothers and sisters: the same power of God that was manifested on the day of Pentecost continues to be present today and will be present until the end of the world. The action of the Paraclete “is not a remembrance from the past, from some golden age of the Church which has since been buried in history. Despite the weaknesses and the sins of every one of us, it is the reality of today’s Church and of the Church of all time.”[2]
The Church has suffered trials of every sort: persecutions to the point of martyrdom, calumnies, privations and misunderstandings of all kinds. Nevertheless, with the help of the Holy Spirit, nothing nor anyone has been or will be able to divert it from the fulfillment of its purpose: the glorification of God and the salvation of souls, carried out with a joy the world cannot give.

Within a short time, some of you will receive the Chrism, that is, the Sacrament of Confirmation. It has received this name because it will strengthen your faith and reinforce in you the grace you received in Baptism, in order to be the Church and to do Church. From today on you will have the mission—which implies a beautiful responsibility—to make Christ present without fear or vacillation, in the midst of your families, among your school or work companions, among your friends, knowing also how to go against the current, if necessary, in ways of dressing, in conversations, in entertainment, and so on. How are you going to do this? First of all, by your good example, by your truly Christian behavior in each setting; and also by your words, speaking to people about Jesus and about the joy of being Christians, about the happiness we experience when we are close to him through the grace that we receive in Confession and in Communion: don’t neglect these means which are necessary for all of us.

A few days ago, Pope Francis addressed a confirmation group with these words: “Let us trust in God’s work! With him we can do great things; he will give us the joy of being his disciples, his witnesses.”[3] Let us correspond generously at every moment to the vocation we have received from God, trying to discover his presence and action in our ordinary life. “It is worthwhile putting our lives on the line,” wrote St. Josemaría, “giving ourselves completely, so as to answer to the love and the confidence that God has placed in us. It is worthwhile, above all, to decide to take our Christian faith seriously.”[4]

Before concluding I would like to make a suggestion to all of you. The solemnity of Pentecost, the very fact of being present at the Confirmation of these children, relatives and friends of yours, is a pressing invitation to live your Christian vocation fully. This involves, in first place, a call to become holy as our heavenly Father is holy. Speak with our Lord every day, speak with him about your daily life; you will be happier and more serene!
Our Lady prayed with the disciples and taught them to pray while awaiting Pentecost. Today we can ask Mary to teach us to pray in the same way, to follow Jesus closely. Let us listen to the voice of the Holy Father. “Commit yourselves to great ideals, to the most important things. We Christians were not chosen by the Lord for little things; push onwards toward the highest principles. Stake your lives on noble ideals, my dear young people!”[5] Thus we will become courageous people, capable of truly aspiring to sanctity in our daily life, as the first disciples did. Let us too strive, as they did, to lead many more people to a closer friendship with Jesus.

Praised be Jesus Christ!


At the Mass in Coena Domini on Holy Thursday, Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, Rome (March 28, 2013)

1. Cari fratelli, cari figli miei!

La Solennità odierna non è la ripetizione di una celebrazione che si ripresenta ciclicamente ogni anno. È la manifestazione dell’Onnipotenza dell’Amore di Dio per l’Umanità di tutti i tempi, per ciascuno di noi, per te e per me!

L’Amore di Dio per le creature si fa presente ogni giorno nella Santa Messa, ed è talmente profondo da raggiungere tutti gli uomini, purché non rifiutiamo l’amicizia che ci offre Lui.
Grazie, Signore, di aver voluto istituire l’Eucaristia, che non è un simbolo, ma la realtà della tua Presenza tra noi; la certezza di un amore, il Tuo, che non ci abbandona mai. Noi vogliamo corrispondere — io voglio corrispondere, perché Amor con amor si paga! — alla tua costante disponibilità ad amarcì, a stare con noi ed in mezzo a noi. Con l’Eucaristia ci hai dimostrato, una volta per tutte, che le tue “delizie sono tra i figli dell’uomo” (cfr Prv 8, 31), cioè con ognuno di noi.

Ti supplichiamo sinceramente di non permettere che ci separiamo da Te, che non ci abituiamo ad avere nella nostra vita questo tuo Amore infinito, che ci sostiene sia per farci imparare ad amare di più, sia perché preferiamo sempre la tua amicizia — anche a costo di lotta e di sacrificio — a qualsiasi altro legame di questo mondo. Aiutami a sentire la necessità di fare apostolato, ogni giorno, con gli amici, con i miei colleghi.

2. Ne nous réfugions pas dans notre petitesse au lieu de grandir en vie eucharistique. Tournons notre regard vers la dernière Cène que nous commémorons maintenant. Le Maître, qui est tout-Amour, a invité les Douze, des hommes fragiles comme nous. Au Cénacle, le Christ s’ouvre complètement à eux, il manifeste les sentiments qu’il nourrit dans son cœur.

Il leur demande aussi de porter ses enseignements jusqu’au bout du monde, et il les enjoint de rendre présent le Sacrifice qu’il accomplira bientôt au Calvaire. La célébration sacramentelle est unie à ce Sacrifice, alors que Jésus institue le Sacrement de l’Eucharistie et celui du Sacerdoce.

Méditons ceci: aujourd’hui nous sommes l’Église du vingt et unième siècle. À chacun d’entre nous il revient de continuer dans le temps le Trésor que les Douze ont reçu. Si nous voulons y arriver,

Nous devons être, comme l’écrivit saint Josémaría, «essentiellement eucharistiques»: c’est de là que viendra toute l’efficacité de notre vie et de notre apostolat. Pour cela, nous devons beaucoup parler à nos amis et à nos parents du grand sacrement du pardon: la Confession! Faisons-le sans respect humain: Les âmes ont besoin de nous.

3. Being Eucharistic souls involves - in order to understand it ever more deeply — fostering the spirit of service, which is what the Teacher does up to the very last moment of His life.
Although Peter may have lacked the humility to let himself be served, his reaction is, from a human point of view, very understandable: "You are going to wash my feet?" It may happen that the Lord asks us for something that overwhelms us, something that makes us see our littleness; or perhaps something that does not fit our plans, even our plans for an effective apostolate. That is the moment to say with sincerity, in our intimate conversation with Jesus Christ: "Whatever you want, Lord, I want too."

That's what Saint Josemaría did when the Lord revealed to him what seemed to be an impossibility: doing Opus Dei. Then, even though he felt he was inadequate for such a task, he took refuge in the Eucharist, as he had been doing for years. And now we see the efficacy of a whole-hearted love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and an unlimited docility to the Lord's calls. According to what Pope Francis said, we must never lose our hope. We can find refuge in our Lord and help the others to do so.

4. En aquellos momentos solemnes del Jueves Santo, María, la Madre de Dios y Madre nuestra, no se encontraba ajena a cuanto su Hijo hacía. Es fácil imaginar su dolor ante el anuncio de la Pasión y Muerte del Redentor; y su gozo —mayor que el de la humanidad entera de todos los tiempos— por la promesa de que Jesucristo no nos iba a dejar huérfanos, y nos acompañaría hasta el final de los tiempos.

Hoy deseo además recordaros que es el aniversario de la ordenación sacerdotal de san Josemaría. Solía vivirlo muy unido a la Santísima Virgen, renovando el propósito de aprovechar, cada jornada, la Vida que Jesucristo nos da: “que sea siempre la Santa Misa el centro y la raíz de nuestra existencia”. El Señor le pidió una prueba el último año: se estaba preparando con mucho agradecimiento para sus Bodas de oro sacerdotales, y quería decir la Santa Misa, cuando llegase esa fecha, con mucha piedad. Al comenzar la Cuaresma, vio truncado sus planes porque ese día, Viernes Santo, se conmemoraba la muerte de Cristo, sin la Misa. Al principio le costó y le costó mucho. Luego aceptó con alegría, el enorme sacrificio de no poder celebrar la Misa, y con más intensidad transformó la jornada en una continua unión al Sacrificio del altar.

Recuerdo ahora otro detalle que le removió extraordinariamente años antes. Pudo ver una estampa en la que se representaba a la Virgen adorando
la Sagrada Hostia: y comprendió otra manera de hacernos entender que el Amor del Cielo quiere unirse al amor que le demos los hombres, y nos lo dice a través de ese adorar total, perfecto, de la Virgen Santa ante la Eucaristía.

Dirijámonos a Santa María, para que Ella nos haga comprender cada día con hondura que ubi caritas et amor ibi Deus est! Así sea.

On the Feast of St. Josemaría, St. Eugene’s Basilica, Rome (June 26, 2013)

Homily given by the Prelate of Opus Dei for the feast-day of St Josemaría Escriva, 2013

Mons. Javier Echevarría

Dear brothers and sisters,

1. This year we are celebrating the liturgical memorial of St. Josemaría in the middle of the Year of Faith. Several months of it have already gone by, but there are still a few months left before it ends. So today I think it is timely for us to reflect together on the way we are living through this grace-filled period. Let’s turn our eyes to St. Josemaria; we can have recourse to his intercession, as we consider some aspects of the faith that he received from God and practised heroically.

I’d like to dwell on certain features of the virtue of faith that he had. For a long time before founding Opus Dei, when he was still a boy, St. Josemaría intuited that God wanted something of him, but he didn’t know what. So as to be available to God’s Will he set aside his perfectly legitimate personal plans and decided to become a priest. For the next ten or eleven years of study and trusting spiritual preparation, he prayed hard, condensing his personal prayer into the words of the blind man in the Gospel: Domine, ut videam! Lord, that I may see! And he added an appeal to our Lady: Domina, ut sit! Lady, may it come to be, may your Son’s will
be fulfilled in me! In that way, through his intense life of faith, hope and love, he was ready to receive God’s plan for the Work on October 2, 1928.

Almost at the end of his life on earth, in a family gathering with many people, he said that his life had somehow followed what happened to Abraham, our father in faith, who in *spe contra spem credidit* (*Rom* 4:18), believed in God against all hope. He went on, Because about forty-seven years ago there was a priest — whom I know slightly, he’s a sinner like me — who had no resources, had nothing; all he had was twenty-six years of age, the grace of God and good humour. Here he paused, and then said, Humanly speaking, that’s no great treasure, is it? But in God’s eyes... And now, here you are; and there are brothers and sisters of yours all round the world: of every colour, every race, every language.[1]

2. I think that this life of faith ties in very well with the Gospel of today’s Mass, where we contemplated St Peter’s reply of faith. Those fishermen had exhausted themselves in vain all night, working hard and catching nothing. And Jesus, after speaking to the crowd, said to Peter, Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a catch. A moment of uncertainty, and then the Apostle replied,... At your word, I will let down the nets. And the miracle happened: They enclosed such a great shoal of fish that the nets were near breaking (*Lk* 5:4-6). It was a miracle that God worked with the humble, faith-filled cooperation of Peter and his companions.

We shouldn’t forget this fact: in our lives too, in our work too, God is ready to bring about great things. However, he is waiting for our faith: for us to really believe in him, the Son of God who became man to save us. On another occasion the twelve Apostles asked our Lord how to work the miracles he worked. And Jesus’ reply was: This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent (*Jn* 6:29).

God is the same as always, wrote St. Josemaría in *The Way*. It is men of faith that are needed: and then, there will be a renewal of the wonders we read of in the Gospel.

“*Ecce non est abbreviata manus Domini!*” — God’s arm, his power, has not grown weaker![2]

Today, like yesterday, our Lord is ready to do great things. He only
needs our cooperation, our efforts towards a conversion that will spread to all the people around us. “The Year of Faith, from this perspective,” explained Benedict XVI in the letter convoking it, “is a summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Saviour of the world”[3]

3. Believing theoretically is not enough. Undoubtedly we have to accept the teachings of the Church faithfully; but it is also necessary for our faith to find expression in the whole of our lives, to be shown in all of life’s circumstances, both the ones that seem important and the little occupations that make up the fabric of our daily living. “Only through believing, then, does faith grow and become stronger; there is no other possibility for possessing certitude with regard to one’s life apart from self-abandonment, in a continuous crescendo, into the hands of a love that seems to grow constantly because it has its origin in God”[4]

In total loyalty to this law of supernatural life, St. Josemaría made a determined effort to grow in faith day after day. Relying on this virtue that was infused in his soul by God, and cooperating with his personal response, this holy priest was able to overcome all the difficulties that arose in fulfilling God’s will.

For example, in 1934, a few years after the founding of Opus Dei, he wrote, I am aware of the obstacles you will encounter. Some of them may seem insurmountable..., but *inter medium montium pertransibunt aquae*, the supernatural spirit of the Work and the impetus of your zeal will pass through mountains, and you will overcome those obstacles (Instruction, 1 April 1934, no. 7). And with the same conviction, he said again in 1974: This world of ours will be saved (...) not by those who try to dope the life of the spirit and reduce everything to questions of economics or material wellbeing, but by those who have faith in God and in man’s eternal destiny, and receive Christ’s truth as a light that guides their actions and behavior.[6]

St. Josemaría aimed to preach that faith, in other words to teach it and spread it throughout the world. And today, thank God, there are millions of people of all ages, backgrounds and walks of life, who, following in the footsteps of that teaching, are doing their best to find God in all the
circumstances of their daily lives. Men and women alike are following Christ closely, just as Peter, John, Andrew and the other Apostles did after the miraculous catch of fish. With what force those stupendous words must have rung out in their souls: “Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men.” And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him (Lk 5:10-11).

4. We too, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, are able to follow Jesus as the first Twelve did, each in the place where God’s call finds us: it isn’t difficult! And there, where our Lord has found us or asks us to be, we can make Jesus known to, and loved by, many other people. In Pope Francis’ words, we can ask ourselves: “Are we capable of bringing the word of God into the environment in which we live? Do we know how to speak of Christ, of what he represents for us, in our families, among the people who form part of our daily lives? Faith is born from listening, and is strengthened by proclamation….

“But this also applies to everyone,” the Holy Father continues: “we all have to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel. We should all ask ourselves: How do I bear witness to Christ through my faith? Do I have the courage of Peter and the other Apostles, to think, to choose and to live as a Christian, obedient to God? To be sure, the testimony of faith comes in very many forms, just as in a great fresco, there is a variety of colours and shades; yet they are all important, even those which do not stand out. In God’s great plan, every detail is important, even yours, even my humble little witness, even the hidden witness of those who live their faith with simplicity in everyday family relationships, work relationships, friendships.”[7]

To finish with, we can listen to some words by St. Josemaría. Our faith is not in any way a burden or a limitation. What a poor idea of Christianity one would have if one thought that way! When we decide for God we lose nothing, and we gain everything…. We have drawn the winning card, the first prize. If anything prevents us from seeing this clearly, let us look inside our own soul. We may find that our faith is weak, that we have little personal contact with God, that our life of prayer is impoverished.[8]
Let us ask God our Lord, through his Mother, who is our Mother too, to increase his love in us, to grant us a taste of the sweetness of his presence. Only when we love do we attain the fullest freedom: the freedom of not wanting ever to abandon, for all eternity, the object of our love. And, through St. Josemaría’s intercession, let’s beg God that in the remaining months of the Year of Faith, and afterwards throughout our lives, our faith may become stronger, firmer and more ardent, in the life of the Sacraments, with frequent reception of Confession and Holy Communion. Amen.


[4] Ibid., no. 7.


[9] Ibid.

At Sunday Mass in the Parish of St. Josemaría, Rome (March 17, 2013)

My dear sisters and brothers:

Today we begin the fifth week of Lent, so it’s only natural that we want to reflect on how we are preparing for Holy Week, and on how we are
responding to the love of Christ, who redeemed us, who opened to us the path of salvation, that is to say, the path of holiness.

St. Augustine, who was a sinner like us, but who, after his conversion, came to live as a saint, a great servant of the Church and of souls, wrote: “If God didn’t love sinners he wouldn’t have come down from heaven to earth.”[1] We need to meditate on the infinite mercy of our Lord, who loved, and loves, us to the point of giving his life for us, for you, for me. How great is our Lord’s love! With human logic, we can understand that someone might give their life for their father, for a child, for a brother or sister, for a friend; but to give one’s life, not just for a stranger, but for someone who is behaving as an enemy, doesn’t fit into our mental categories. Jesus, in contrast, did so, and he renews this great generosity of his whenever we go to the sacrament of Penance to seek forgiveness for our faults, for our sins, no matter how great they might be.

My brothers and sisters, let us be filled with joy at this God of ours who never wants to abandon us! But we have to keep up a close dialogue with him, each day, dedicating a few minutes expressly to him and trying to keep up this conversation throughout the whole day, as St. Josemaría, a great lover of God, taught. Let us resolve, then, to pray more, to seek an intimate friendship with God, because he is a true friend who never betrays us, who follows us closely, who listens to us, who wants us to learn to do likewise with our relatives, friends, and colleagues. I ask you: do you try each day to serve, to help those at your side? Do you pray as well for all humanity? Do you and I realize that we need the charity, the friendship of others, and that others also need our affection, our prayer?

It is fashionable nowadays to speak about solidarity, but that is still very little: we need to “fill” the world with charity, with Christ’s love. St. Josemaría often insisted that we cannot serve someone just once, carrying out a good action that is extraordinary, and think that we have done enough. He taught us that we need to persevere in love for God and in love for others. And we can do so throughout the course of every day. If we read our Lord’s teachings in the Gospel attentively, we can discover his marvelous perseverance in doing good. He listens closely to our requests; at times it seems that he doesn’t answer right away, because he wants us to
insist in our prayer with faith. But he cured the blind, the crippled, the sick. Always with a total availability.

What is our prayer like during this Year of Faith? Are we asking God to protect the Church, Pope Francis, the bishops, the priests, families, your family?

It is very important that we love one another, but we also need to pray for one another.

Let us turn once more to the example of St. Josemaria: From time to time he confided to us: “How long I waited for you! How much I prayed for you!” He did this especially in the Holy Mass. Therefore I suggest that you take part in the Mass not only on Sunday. If you can, come more frequently, to become a woman or a man of the Eucharist who then will be able to dedicate yourself with joy and determination to others.

The scene from today's Gospel, like all the others there, is very beautiful and can help us not to take refuge in excuses, saying: “I am a poor person without good qualities or virtues; I let myself be dragged along by my small or great miseries.”

As we have just heard, some Pharisees brought before Jesus a sinful woman, caught in the act of adultery (see Jn 8:1-11). They don't want this woman to repent and begin living an orderly life, and they try to involve Jesus in their attitude of condemnation. Those accusers don't realize that they are in the presence of the Son of Man, the beloved Son of his Father God, although they had seen Jesus' constant concern to help those in need.

The Master first led the woman's accusers to examine their own conscience, so that the would seek God's forgiveness, and then learn to help those in error.

Let us reject a critical attitude toward others. We have to help them to correct their behavior, telling them where they need to do so and extending a helping hand to them.

Jesus did not let himself be led by curiosity or by the scandalous news that today draws the attention of so many people. He remained calm, showing respect for the sinful woman, for all sinners, and made clear that evil is evil, that sin is sin, because the right understanding shown others
does not consist in leaving sin alone, but in correcting the person with charity and helping the one who is in error. That is Jesus’ attitude, who did not condemn, but gave light to consciences: “Go and sin no more.”

Brothers and sisters, let us always draw close to Jesus, also when we have sinned, and he will come to help us. But we have to repent for our falls in confession.

Before ending, I invite you to pray for Pope Francis. He needs our help; he needs us to behave as good children; he needs us to commit ourselves to carry out a constant effort to “build up the Church.”

Let us go to Jesus, through our Lady, so that he protect the Pope, those who assist him, all humanity, and this entire parish community, to which I feel very closely united. By your conduct, help the pastor and the other priests and all the faithful. I pray for you every day.

Praised be Jesus Christ!


At the Mass for the Anniversary of the Death of Venerable Álvaro del Portillo, St. Eugene’s Basilica, Rome (March 23, 2013)

My dear brothers and sisters:

We have come here, filled with gratitude to our Lord, to raise our prayer to heaven, uniting ourselves to the incessant praise that my beloved predecessor, the Venerable Alvaro del Portillo, is addressing to the Most Blessed Trinity. In doing so, we also recall the many times that he celebrated various liturgical functions in this basilica.

There come to mind many recollections of the morning of this very day, nineteen years ago, and of various events during the following hours. I cannot fail to recall here at least two of them, especially the simplicity, the peace of Don Alvaro when the doctor told us, in his presence: “he is going
to heaven”; and with the same simplicity he entrusted his soul to God. Hours later, in the midst of the sorrow of losing such a good father, we received the consolation of John Paul II’s visit, who came to pray before the body of my predecessor with his habitual recollection, and to say farewell to him. When I expressed my thanks for his visit he repeated twice: “Era una cosa dovuta,” he had to do it.

We are now on the threshold of Holy Week and we want to prepare ourselves to live the Easter Triduum very well. I’ve used the word “live” here, following the advice of St. Josemaria, who frequently said that, since we are children of God, we cannot be content with commemorating those mysterious moments as if they belonged to a time long past. They are always timely and, precisely for this reason, men and women of all eras can receive the salvation that Christ won for us on the Cross.

It is always a good moment to turn our eyes to the Crucifix, both in the happy events of ordinary life, and when difficulties arise. But during these days our soul should feel a greater need not to leave Jesus alone, since we can live in peace only thanks to his holocaust on the holy wood of the Cross, on which, in words of St. Josemaria, “he offered to the Father the very last drop of his blood, the last gasp of his breathing.”

Let us make an effort to repeat often those words formulated by Christian piety: adoramus te Christe et benedicimus tibi, quia per Crucem tuam redemisti mundum. And let us not forget that on the Cross, raised up by our sins, Christ was and is awaiting us.

The Entrance Antiphon for the Mass we are celebrating invites us to invoke God. I recall how the founder of Opus Dei put great stress on the words of the prophet, clama ne cesses, cry out without ceasing (Is 58:1), keeping up a dialogue with our Lord who at every moment holds out his hand to us if we have recourse to him.

In this Year of Faith, let us be filled with hope, repeating this aspiration: adauge nobis fidem, spem, caritatem, increase our faith, hope, and charity. The words of the first reading, taken from the prophet Ezekiel, also bolster our hope:

“Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all
sides, and bring them to their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms” (*Ezek 37:21-22*).

Almighty God himself, *Deus ad salvandum* (*Ps 68[67]:20*), comes to meet us so that we will recognize him, so that we will converse with him in the midst of all the circumstances of ordinary life. Let us be filled with supernatural and human joy because God is seeking us; he is waiting for us and never tires of listening to us.

We are the People of God, women and men who have to manifest, with their own conduct, the need to address the Trinity untiringly, without getting used to it. We are the People of God and we have to invite others—first of all our relatives, friends, colleagues, and all those we encounter each day—to realize that they are called to share in the immense good fortune of being God’s friends. We can remind them of Pope Francis’ encouraging words, who insists that God never tires of forgiving us, of loving us, of coming to meet us. We are the ones who, at times, fail to take advantage of the refuge that our Lord is offering us.

We are reminded of this also by the words of the responsorial psalm: *Dominus custodiet sicut pastor gregem suum*, the Lord will watch over us as the shepherd does his flock (*Jer 31:10*). It is very important that each and every one of us truly desires to be a friend of God, because on your behavior, on mine, as St. Josemaria wrote, depend many great things for the Church, for all humanity.[1]

Naturally, our thoughts turn to the Roman Pontiff, Shepherd of the universal Church, while we invoke *toto corde* God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, asking that they assist the Successor of Peter in his work of service to the flock of Christ. We promise him all of our veneration and filial obedience, and we will pray without ceasing that his petrine ministry may produce abundant fruit, as we did so intently on the very day of his election as well as in the first weeks of his Pontificate. The great expectation throughout the world before the Conclave and the interest shown everywhere in his first words as Supreme Pastor can be seen
as yet another “motive for credibility” in the Church, ever young and ever beautiful.

The Gospel scene we have just contemplated (see Jn 11:45-56), like all the others found there, is quite striking. Christus vincit, Christus regnat. The Master did not lack calumniators who declared themselves his enemies, although he answered them with love, in spite of the sufferings they wanted to inflict on him. This is an invitation for us, also when unfortunately we have not behaved as faithful children, to return to the One who is the source of love and forgiveness and carry out an apostolate of the sacraments, living them first of all ourselves. Let us frequently think of the fact that we can become the hand of Jesus that cures, that opens the eyes of the blind, that helps others to walk in Christ’s footsteps.

I don’t think I am exaggerating in the least if I say that the Venerable Alvaro del Portillo made this aspiration a reality in his own life: to serve God totally in order to truly serve souls. He never hesitated to ask our Lady’s help to let himself be guided by her to Jesus. He used to repeat—and would that we might do the same!—Gentle mother, do not turn away, / do not take your gaze from me; / come with me everywhere / and never leave me alone. / Since you protect me so much, / as a true Mother, / let me be blessed by the Father, / the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Praised be Jesus Christ.

Avec l’élection du Pape François nous avons pu voir une fois de plus que la lumière de l’Église arrive au monde entier. Elle se diffuse partout car son être et sa mission sont de refléter la lumière du Christ, comme la lune brille dans la nuit parce qu’elle reflète la lumière du soleil. Si parfois elle semble s’obscurcir ou briller moins, c’est à cause de nos fautes et de nos péchés. Laissons la grâce de Dieu agir en nous et nous guider.

Nous autres chrétiens nous devons être lux mundi (Mt 5, 14), lumière du monde. «Mais comment cela peut-il arriver?» se demandait Benoît XVI l’année dernière, pendant la Veillée pascale. Il répondait par ces mots: «Par le sacrement du Baptême et la profession de foi, le Seigneur a construit un pont vers nous, par lequel le nouveau jour vient à nous. Dans le Baptême, le Seigneur dit à celui qui le reçoit: Fiat lux!, que la lumière soit. Le nouveau jour, le jour de la vie indestructible vient aussi à nous. Le Christ te prend par la main. Désormais tu seras soutenu par lui et tu entreras ainsi dans la lumière, dans la vraie vie». (Homélie dans la Veillée pascale, 7-IV-2012)

Je t’invite à penser que le Seigneur veut se servir de toi, afin que sa Lumière parvienne autour de toi et au monde entier.

2. Let us meditate on what Saint Josemaría wrote: "We are children of God, bearers of the only flame that can light up the paths of the earth for souls, of the only brightness that can never be darkened, dimmed or overshadowed." (Forge 1) That is how it is - how it must be. “The Lord uses us as torches, to make that light shine out. Much depends on us; if we respond many people will remain in darkness no longer, but will walk instead along paths that lead to eternal life." (Ibid.)

Doesn’t this divine task fill us with joy? The Lord wants us to help our Christian brothers and sisters to escape from their lethargy, so that they too may make this light of God, the true light that comes into the world and illumines all mankind (cf Jn 1, 9), spread throughout the whole world and shine for those who do not yet know it.

A few days ago, Pope Francis recalled that, as is written in the Apocalypse, the Lord is knocking at the door of our soul and hoping that we will open it for Him. But the Holy Father also noted that Jesus not only wants to enter into us, but also wants us to let Him go out. He wants us to
accompany Him in His never-ending search for souls in all the crossroads of the world.

What concrete resolutions have you made during these days in Rome, so close to the successor of Saint Peter, that you can put into practice now, without waiting until you return? Resolutions of a greater personal dedication to what God asks of you, with renewed apostolic zeal, determined to get out of ourselves and to go meet those who are waiting for us, as Christians, to share with them the light and the life of Christ.

Ask the Lord to make your daily conduct a reflection of the Love that He grants to all of us: thank God for this responsibility that He has entrusted to you.

3. *Ubi est, mors, victoria tua* (*1 Cor* 15, 55); ¿dónde está, oh muerte, tu victoria? Cristo ha vencido al pecado, al demonio, a la muerte, y a nosotros nos hace partícipes de su victoria. Es preciso echar fuera los respetos humanos. Como los Apóstoles, como las santas mujeres, hemos de salir a todas las encrucijadas de nuestra vida ordinaria, llevando el gran anuncio de la Resurrección del Señor. El Papa Francisco nos ha pedido a todos, pero especialmente a los jóvenes, que no nos dejemos robar la esperanza, que no perdamos la alegría, que tengamos el *coraggio*, el coraje de hacer presente a Jesús en todas la periferias de la existencia, con especial insistencia sobre todo allí donde no se le conoce o se le ignora voluntariamente.

San Josemaría nos instaba a dar siempre y en todas partes razón de nuestra esperanza (*1 Pe* 3, 15), como exhorta san Pedro, cuidando nuestro trato personal con Dios, bien seguros de que Él sigue abriendo el camino de la Iglesia en la historia y cuenta con nosotros como instrumentos fieles. No nos puede extrañar que esas sendas presenten obstáculos, a veces más difíciles; precisamente entonces hemos de sentir la alegría de la victoria, porque vivimos en Cristo y de Cristo, y con Él somos capaces de superar todas las dificultades.

¡Qué seguridad nos infunde la generosidad del Señor! Correspondamos a su amor con amor, a su entrega con nuestra entrega. Si imitamos a Jesús, nuestro Dios y nuestro Amor, en Él, con Él y por Él se seguirán cumpliendo las palabras de un escritor cristiano de los primeros siglos: *somos de ayer y lo llenamos todo* (Tertuliano). Ten el convencimiento de que tu vida
influye en todos los lugares, porque las palabras de la Escritura: *Deus noster, Deus ad salvandum* —Dios viene a salvarnos—, puedes y debes comunicarlas a los demás.

4. Siamo pieni di gratitudine vedendo che Gesù si serve di una donna, Maria di Mágdala, che inizialmente aveva vissuto una vita disordinata, per farla diventare, dopo la sua totale conversione, la prima persona che ha proclamato a tutti il suo trionfo. *Apostola degli Apostoli* la chiamano alcuni Padri della Chiesa, perché il Signore le affidò la missione di portare agli Apostoli il primo annuncio della resurrezione.

La contrizione porta all’amore. E l’amore spinge alla contrizione, che è un dolore d’amore. È molto eloquente il fatto che Gesù ci metta davanti la figura di questa donna, per dimostrarci che non possiamo restare paralizzati quando tocchiamo con mano la nostra debolezza. Il Dio vittorioso, che potrebbe realizzare tutto senza bisogno delle creature, desidera servirsi di chi ha raggiunto l’amore, andando al di là della propria debolezza. Perciò ci ha lasciato il sacramento della Confessione, in cui elargisce abbondantemente la sua misericordia, perdonando le nostre colpe e ci colma della sua fortezza e della vera gioia. Parla di questo sacramento a quelli che conosci: te ne saranno tanto grati!

La Santissima Vergine Maria, Madre di Dio e Madre nostra, ci aiuta a raggiungere questa felicità, ad accrescerla ed a recuperarla se qualche volta avessimo la disgrazia di perderla, perché — come ha scritto san Josemaría — Lei ci porta sempre da suo Figlio: “a Gesù si va e si ritorna «sempre» per Maria” (*Cammino*, 495). La Madonna ha accolto nel suo seno il Figlio di Dio,

nell’incarnazione, perché sin da prima era già tutta sua: *piena di grazia* (*Lc* 1, 28), come fu salutata dall’arcangelo san Gabriele. Maria ci insegna ad appartenere a Dio con le parole che pronunciò a Cana di Galilea: “*fate quello che Lui vi dirà*” (*Gv* 2, 5). Evidentemente anche la Maddalena, ascoltando la risposta della Madonna, aveva imparato ad amare il Signore così, con opere.

Sia lodato Gesù Cristo!

Torna ai contenuti
“I Will not Leave You Orphans,” ABC, Spain (March 1, 2013)

“I will not leave you orphans” (Jn 14:18), Christ told his Apostles. He promised to send them the Holy Spirit, who would make them more fully children of God the Father. “I will not leave you orphans”—these words come to my mind at the end of this pontificate. Benedict XVI is not leaving us orphaned, because his magisterium, his teachings, still live; because he is with us in his prayer and fatherly love; because his likeness to the Good Shepherd becomes stronger every day; and, finally, because the Holy Spirit will continue to guide his Church through a new Pope.

Benedict XVI, in the rich body of his teachings, shows a quite extraordinary capacity to present profound truths in simple words. He took up the idea of the apparent “eclipse of God” to invite us to rediscover the meaning of God the Creator and Redeemer, who is always at work in our world.

He reminded us forcefully of the fact that love is the essence of God and, therefore, the reason for man’s existence and journey—a journey which, in this Year of Faith, finds a sure reference-point in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and its Compendium, fruits of the Second Vatican Council in which Cardinal Ratzinger also played his part. The Catechism of the Catholic Church invites us to contemplate and experience the Church as the Communion of Saints, where none of the baptized feels unwanted and where we learn to practice charity in truth.

In the homily he gave for the inauguration of his pontificate, Benedict XVI invited us to travel towards close personal friendship with the Son of God, because everything else depends on that. God speaks to us and answers our questions; he never stops attending to us. I remember how, for the canonization of St. Josemaría, the then Cardinal Ratzinger unpacked the meaning of the term “Opus Dei”, the Work of God: the deep meaning of these words is that we let God act, because living as Christians mainly means wanting Christ’s grace and charity to work in our own lives.
This also points to the depth of his reflections on the spirit of the liturgy, which express the close connection between the Word and the Bread of the Eucharist, thus adding the essential dimension of adoration that lifts the whole question onto a higher plane and resolves so many arguments. Our sharing in the Eucharist is primarily interior, because in the liturgy God takes the initiative, not we; what we experience at Mass is “performative,” ever new, because there Christ transforms us.

The Pope has taken his decision freely, after pondering it in prayer, for the good of the Church.

At the end of an exhausting day’s work, one of Pope John Paul II’s close collaborators once asked him not to do too much. His reply was, “After one Pope, comes another.” That is why, now too, we are serene and full of hope, in the hands of Our Lady, Mother of God and our Mother. The See of Peter will always be the source and foundation of the Church’s unity, and a firm reference-point for the world. The Pope has taken his decision freely, after pondering it in prayer, for the good of the Church, and so we received the sad news with filial respect and love. Benedict XVI assures us that he will continue to help us with his prayer, a prayer on which all the sons and daughters of the Church can rely with full trust, as we have done during the years of his pontificate.

I thank God for the various occasions when Benedict XVI received me as Prelate of Opus Dei. I am moved now as I remember his simplicity and availability, his warm welcome, his capacity for listening, and his keen interest in news of the Prelature’s apostolic expansion. I experienced his attentiveness—that of a true university professor—when one spoke to him about intellectual-type projects, but equally, about works of service to the terminally sick, or people in other kinds of difficulties.

As can be seen in his filmed audiences, the Pope did not hesitate to take one of your hands between his own in a fatherly clasp when you were speaking to him, transmitting encouragement, love and support, attentively and patiently. He really was a father, who rejoiced intensely at the evangelization being done by Christians all over the world.

Some other words of Christ come spontaneously to my mind: “Now you are sad,” says Jesus as he comforts those whom he is about to leave,
but, he prophesies, “your hearts will rejoice, and no-one will take your joy from you” (Jn 16:22). Following the invitation issued by Benedict XVI in his February 17 Angelus address, we are already praying for the next Pope. Do we feel like orphans? No! The Holy Spirit is acting in his Church right now. Another Peter will come, shouldering his nets, a new Bishop of Rome and a new Father for the family of God’s children. And to Pope Benedict XVI, who is about to pass on the helm of the boat of St. Peter to his successor, we say from the bottom of our hearts: “Thank you, Holy Father! Forgive us for the times we have ignored your calls as Good Shepherd! We beg you not to stop helping the whole People of God with the fruitfulness of your thought and prayers!”

“With Christian Consistency,” Mundo Cristiano, Spain (May 2013)

I am grateful for the invitation to present a few reflections as Mundo Cristiano celebrates its fiftieth anniversary. At a time when many publications appear only to quickly disappear, a publication that lasts for a half century gives a respectable vintage to a magazine.

From the beginning of Opus Dei, St. Josemaría Escrivá made clear that his children could work in any honest task, through which they were to seek sanctity and carry out apostolate. And he used to give some specific examples: the world of industry and craftsmanship, manual work, teaching at its various levels, fashion, work in the home, research, finance, etc. Included here, he would also often cite publishing and the press, with their strong evangelizing repercussions. St. Josemaría had been a teacher in the first school of journalism begun in Spain after the civil war; and years later, in 1958, he encouraged the beginning of the Institute of Journalism, which later became the School of Communications at the University of Navarra. It was the first time in Spain that those studies were made possible in a university setting. He also encouraged similar projects in other cities on different continents.
All the faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei try to carry out their respective professional tasks with Christian consistency (“unity of life,” our founder called it), and with an apostolic aim: whether a teacher, nurse, taxi driver, or street vendor. And also those who work in journalism, no matter how far their specialty—sports, fashions, politics or daily news—may seem from theological concerns.

There comes to mind what St. Josemaría once told a journalist who asked him about university journalism: “Journalism is a great thing, and so is university journalism. You can contribute a good deal to promote among your fellow students love for noble ideals, and a desire to overcome personal egoisms. You can foster an awareness of social problems, you can encourage fraternity” (Conversations, no. 86). In this context, I also recall how happy he was to see, fifty years ago, the first issues of Mundo Cristiano. Its first director, Fr. Jesús Urteaga, is surely also happy to see, from Heaven, the current progress of the magazine.

In the past, publications with religious content would usually offer various articles of a spiritual nature: the life of a saint; a section of letters or consultations, answered by a learned priest; an edifying story for children and formative pastimes. Times have changed, and it is more than likely that a publication with a profile like this would now find it difficult to attract many readers. In a magazine “for the family,” readers now expect to see articles about automobiles, computers, cooking, sports, fashion, television…. And these expectations need to be met. But this in no way conflicts with the need to always maintain Christian consistency and offer content that will inspire people to get to know their faith better and grasp its meaning more fully. This includes information about the Holy Father and matters of interest for the life of the Church: from the Second Vatican Council, when Mundo Cristiano was born, to the present Year of Faith.

I am confident that the magazine, within the natural evolution every living reality undergoes, has tried to do so during these past fifty years.
“Bringing Christ’s Fire and Joy to Every Heart,” Avvenire, Italy (May 18, 2013)

This year the solemnity of Pentecost is celebrated in the month of May, which is also the month of our Lady. Mary teaches us to welcome the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. As Pope Francis reminded us in his last general audience, we need to look at Mary and "relive her 'yes,' her complete availability to receive the Son of God in her life, who from that moment transformed it."

Recently, we have had so many reasons to praise God for the action of the Holy Spirit: the election of Pope Francis has produced in many people the desire to draw near once again to the faith and to the sacrament of Penance. The power of the Holy Spirit is urging Christians to undertake a true “transformation” in order to spread the Gospel throughout the whole world.

Now as well—and this will always be true—the Church moves forward under the impulse of the Spirit. All the ecclesiastical organizations, both those that are diverse manifestations of the Church’s hierarchical structure (for example, the dioceses and apostolic vicariates, the ordinariates, the territorial and personal prelatures) as well as others that arise in the context of its members’ right to form associations (for example, the movements or communities) are inspired by the same Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

A specific sign of this action of the Paraclete is the meeting of ecclesial movements and lay associations that is being held on Saturday and Sunday in Rome. This encounter is the culmination of a pilgrimage organized on the occasion of the Year of Faith convoked by the beloved Benedict XVI, who taught us to strive to lovingly understand the mystery of Christian life. This encounter will be a sign of the Church’s vitality. Moved by the Holy Spirit, the Church constantly gives birth to new forms and languages in order to reach all men and women, to bring Christ’s fire and joy to every heart.

The Prelature of Opus Dei, by its nature, will not take part as such in this pilgrimage of movements. But thanks to the ecclesial communion, we
will all be present with our prayer and affection. The Prelature’s faithful, along with so many other Catholics, will live Pentecost closely united to Pope Francis and the representatives of these groups. Moreover, many will also join with relatives and friends in the celebrations taking place in St. Peter’s square.

My ardent wish is that the hope St. Josemaría, founder of Opus Dei, expresses in these words may reach the hearts of many people: “I want all of us within the Holy Church to feel that we are members of the same body, as the Apostle asks of us. I want us to be vividly and profoundly aware, without any lack of interest, of the joys, the troubles, the progress of our Mother... I want us to live as one, each of us identified with the cares of the others, and all identified with Christ” (The Forge, no. 630). This is what Pope Francis is calling us to strive for, with his smile, with his heart as a shepherd concerned for all men and women.

Pentecost speaks to us of many languages, expansion, getting out of ourselves. But it also urges us to seek a true unity of hearts, expressed in deeds, among all the sons and daughters of the Church. A unity that is a sign of hope.

+ Javier Echevarría
Prelate of Opus Dei

Interview Granted to La Razon, Spain (March 24, 2013)

How did you receive the news that we had a new Pope? What sensations went through your heart at that moment?

Great joy. As Catholics, we need to have a common father on earth, the vicar of Christ in the universal Church. When we saw the white smoke I knelt down and prayed for him, without yet even knowing who he was. I renewed my inner desire to be a good son to the Roman Pontiff.
When the newly-elected Pope Francis spoke from the Balcony of Blessings, he mentioned all people of good will. And I thought about how, as well as Catholics, the Pope carries the burden of the joys and sorrows of all mankind. So as well as joy I also felt an intense desire for all of us to pray for the successor of St Peter, and I experienced a filial ambition to invite people to love the Roman Pontiff.

Of the things he has been saying during these first days of his pontificate, what do you recall? What struck you, what attracted your attention?

“Christ is the centre”, he told the journalists in the audience of 16 March. It reminded me of what St Josemaria often used to say: “It is Christ we have to talk about, not ourselves.” That points us straight to what is essential. Pope Francis also talked to us about the action of the Holy Spirit. The recent conclave, and the whole history of the Church, need to be read from that viewpoint, from the viewpoint of faith.

This is the first Latin-American Pope in history. From your experience as prelate of Opus Dei, what do the Christians of Latin America contribute to Europe?

What you find in Latin America is the attitude that charity is shown by warmth and affection. That human warmth often helps to prevent prejudice against other people, to avoid the sort of intellectual complexes that harm interpersonal relationships, and helps to form real human contact instead. One manifestation of that capacity to love can be seen in the popular piety that is still so alive in many Latin American countries, with a devotion to the Mother of God that is both tender and strong, and that has at its heart a very enriching attitude for all mankind. All of this is a great gift for the Church.

Little by little we are learning details about the Holy Father: he travels by bus, lives in a small Buenos Aires flat… Do you think that these small daily details will help change the minds of those who have a stereotyped idea of priests, Cardinals, the Church in general?

That austerity has been a feature of all the recent popes, with different external manifestations, and also a great majority of priests, who have only just enough to live on, and many of them not even that. As you say, people have stereotyped ideas. I’ll tell you about a Cardinal who came to the
Pontifical University of the Holy Cross one time; between one event and another, at 5 o'clock there was a coffee break. He had something then, and said, “You know, this evening I won't have any dinner, I don't have anyone to help me prepare a meal.” Not all of them live in exactly the same way, but there are plenty of examples like that.

The absence of material possessions, as St Bernard says, is not a virtue in itself, but the virtue consists of loving poverty, which is also seen in those acts of self-denial. That disposition is still more creatively fruitful when a person is able to go without superfluous possessions and is detached from the things they have. Truly, as St Josemaria said, poverty brings man a treasure on earth, and in that respect he held up as an example those parents of large families who, in their loving efforts to support their families, joyfully renounce so many things for themselves. We see, therefore, that poverty is a virtue to be loved — as Jesus taught us — and it is included in charity. At the same time, we should do everything possible to relieve the suffering caused by personal and social injustices, and I find it very natural that we should sometimes be overcome with impatience on seeing so much injustice, which we want to remedy.

The reform of the Curia, the new evangelization… There are many matters that have been discussed by the Cardinals in their “general congregations” meetings. Of all the affairs that have been tabled, which one do you consider the most urgent for the Church?

The Curia, for human and supernatural reasons, is adapted by each Pope and the needs of the Church, according to the times. But it isn’t my job to set priorities: that is in the hands of the Holy Father, whose only desire is to serve everyone. While we speak of a reform that may be necessary, we know that many people work in Rome self-sacrificingly, with a great spirit of service, sometimes far from their homeland and family, and for low rates of pay.

Obviously, I wasn’t in the general congregations, where the Cardinals have their discussions together, but there is no doubt that the new evangelization is still a priority for the Church. I think that this Pope’s simple, direct style is a great help here.
In the statement you made a few days ago you underlined Pope Francis’ call to evangelize. How does the Holy Father’s invitation match with the specific charisma of Opus Dei? What are the challenges involved?

Cardinal Bergoglio’s motto has been “miserando et eligendo.” It comes from the Venerable Bede, from a passage we read every year in the Liturgy of the Hours. It is a commentary on the calling of St Matthew. Jesus had pity, had mercy, and at the same time called his disciples to follow him. A vocation brings a proof of love: it is born from God’s merciful Heart. St Bede comments that Jesus saw “more with the inner eyes of his heart than with his bodily eyes.”

St Josemaria, with the message he received from God, came to remind people that we are all called to holiness, and he used to pray: “May I see with your eyes, O Christ, my beloved Jesus.” I think that the urgency to evangelize, which is ever-present in the Church, is an invitation to look at people, at everyone, with the eyes of an apostle, with mercy and affection, with a desire to help them receive the great gift of knowing Christ and his love.

"As St Josemaria said during his catechesis in Buenos Aires, “When you work and help your friend, your colleague, your neighbour, in such a way that they don’t even realize it, you are healing them."

The spirit of Opus Dei impels the faithful of the Prelature, both priests and lay-people, to realize that in ordinary life, in the world of work, in the family, in social relations, we have to discover that other people need us, not because we are any better than them, but because we are all brothers and sisters. As St Josemaria said — during his catechesis in Buenos Aires, actually — “When you work and help your friend, your colleague, your neighbour, in such a way that they don’t even realize it, you are healing them; you are Christ who heals, you are Christ who unhesitatingly shares the lives of those who have fallen sick, as can happen to any of us at any time.”

All of that also means carrying and loving the cross, which Pope Francis also spoke about in his first homily. And, as Cardinal Bergoglio said in his homily in the Chrism Mass last year, we need to have “patience
with people” when we teach and explain and listen, and always pray to the Holy Spirit for grace.

**How much will it help Pope Francis to know that Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI is close at hand?**

I think that the Pope will feel, above all, the spiritual strength and companionship of his predecessor. And he’ll often find support in the rich, ever-relevant teachings of Benedict XVI. The love that all of us in the Church feel for him grows still greater, because we know he is praying for us in his Mass and his prayer, and supporting our unconditional union with Pope Francis. In that regard, I think it is important to respect Benedict XVI’s wish to disappear from the eyes of the world, so that it is completely clear that there is only one Pope, so as not to confuse people who may have less Christian formation or little theology. The Roman Pontiff is now Pope Francis, to whom the previous Pontiff has promised joyful and total veneration and obedience.

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**Interview Granted to El Mercurio, Chile**

*(April 7, 2013)*

**1. What does the election of a Latin-American Pope mean for the Church?**

In Latin-America there is an especially refined popular piety, and love for the Blessed Virgin Mary particularly stands out. One sees a living Church, close to the people, to its intimate problems, which now has given us a Pope to continue the new evangelization. This surely means a relaunching of the faith throughout the world, and especially in the Americas. All of this is a gift for the Church. Every pontiff has his own personality. Pope Francis brings us the pastoral imprint of a person close to those on the “periphery” of society and to the heart of the Spouse of Christ.

It is also clear that a Pope who comes from the continent of South America can bring to the whole Church a stronger sense of fraternity and of detachment from material goods. He will help the whole world to grasp
better the importance of a “culture of being” rather than “of having,” which at times is suffocating the more economically developed societies.

2. Opus Dei always stresses that it wants to “serve the Church as it wishes to be served.” What does that mean in practice, with respect to availability to carry out what the Pope is asking or might ask?

That is an expression used by St. Josemaria, when referring to the aim of Opus Dei. This affirmation is framed within the mission entrusted by the Church to this Prelature: to help remind all men and women that we are called to holiness in ordinary life, especially through professional work. Sometimes specific needs arise. For example, Pope John Paul II asked that some people of Opus Dei begin its apostolic activity in Kazakhstan, and we did so. Those who went there began by looking for professional work, as do other citizens. On other occasions, the Roman Curia may ask for the assistance of a priest; and when I see that the Pope supports that petition, I agree right away to it. The same happens in many dioceses. On another level, when faithful of Opus Dei—with the help of many others—begin a social work, for example, they do so in function of the local needs and with the blessing of the local bishop. Thus an institute for technical training was begun on the outskirts of Nairobi, another in Lebanon, a hospital for the care of the terminally ill in Madrid, a social work in New York in the Bronx, etc.

3. Do you plan to go and see the Pope? Is this a question of protocol, or do you have to wait to be invited?

Besides the regular visits that are incumbent on every bishop, to inform on the state of his dioceses (in my case, the development of the Prelature of Opus Dei), I would like to see the Pope, when the moment comes, to express my full adhesion to him and to his ministry, something that I have already made known to him in writing. I think that for now the Holy Father has to confront the many urgent tasks that the beginning of a pontificate brings with it.

4. What is the commitment of the members of Opus Dei with regard to the Holy Father?

The same as that of all other Catholics; to be good and loyal children, who support the Magisterium of our common father Pope Francis, and
accompany him with our persevering prayer and human affection.

As you know, Opus Dei has a minority of diocesan priests, but the great majority of the faithful of the Prelature are men and women who spend a good part of each day in a factory, in a hospital, in a school, in a business, or in ordinary family life. Therefore, I have suggested to the members of the Work that they generously offer daily prayers for Pope Francis and unite themselves to his intentions at Mass, and also through their hours of work and their apostolate as ordinary Christians in the middle of the world; and through the sacrifices that are demanded today to support a family. I am completely convinced that many are also offering up for the Pope their illnesses, their financial and professional difficulties, their concern for a needy relative or friend, and also their joys.

In a brief prayer that the faithful of Opus Dei recite daily, taken from the liturgical tradition of the Church, there is a supplication for the Holy Father asking that God may conserve him for many years and make him happy here on earth. We try to pray these words with the conviction that prayer—including this brief daily petition—is very fruitful.

5. **What was the relationship of the faithful of Opus Dei in Argentina with the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Cardinal Bergoglio? Have people there told you any anecdotes about the present Pope?**

In my visits to Argentina, I saw in the faithful of Opus Dei a great affection and respect for Cardinal Bergoglio; it was a relationship of cordiality, of simplicity, of friendship, of concern to help bring forward the desires of that beloved archdiocese. The Cardinal often celebrated Mass on June 26th, the feast of St. Josemaría, in the Cathedral. I knew that the faithful of the Work had a close relationship with the then Cardinal, who responded with paternal warmth. For example, he went to a center of the Work to visit a sick priest, and he accompanied another priest at the wake of his mother. These details say a lot about how attentive he is to people, the affection he has for each one. He was well acquainted with a school started by people of Opus Dei in Barracas, one of the poorest districts in Buenos Aires, and he visited this school more than once.

6. **What was your reaction as Prelate of Opus Dei on learning that the new Pontiff belonged to the Society of Jesus?**
I entrusted the Holy Father to St. Ignatius of Loyola, whose spiritual heritage has brought so much fruit to the Church. I am convinced that St. Ignatius will intercede for the present Pope. And I thought of the joy that his election must bring to the Society of Jesus.

I also recalled the devotion that St. Josemaría had to St. Ignatius, whom he cites numerous times in *The Way*, and to whom he refers familiarly as Iñigo or Ignacio. He considered him an eminent example of holiness, of the unconditional self-giving that he too proposed—along other paths—to those who drew close to his apostolate. And he celebrated Holy Mass in the room of the saint from Loyola.

To present the Church as made up of divided groups would go against communion, and show an outlook lacking in faith. We are all in the barque of Peter to serve, in a unity of hearts and wills, each according to their mission and charism.

7. Pope Francis has written a great deal about the importance of work for the dignity of the human person. One immediately recalls here the theology of work developed by St. Josemaría. Do you think the new Pope knows the writings of the founder of Opus Dei?

I don't have any information about his knowledge of St. Josemaria's writings, but I do know that the Pope has recourse to St. Josemaria's intercession. Some years ago he came to the Prelatic church of Our Lady of Peace, and remained for about 45 minutes praying before his tomb.

In any case, I am happy to see their agreement in the evaluation of human work as a path of sanctity and of social justice. Recently, recalling his youth, Cardinal Bergoglio said that working in a laboratory had been one of the most important experiences in his life. “In the laboratory I learned that every human task has possibilities both for good and for bad,” he explained. And it’s true that, in our daily occupations, we can cultivate the best of ourselves or become egotists. Work is the arena for growing in virtues, or (in words of St. Josemaria) the hinge of our sanctification. The present Roman Pontiff said in 2007: work “guarantees human dignity and freedom, and therefore is the key to every social question.” I am sure that the Holy Father will teach us by his example to transform our
work—whether intellectual, manual, or domestic—into service, doing it for God and for our fellow men and women.

Words on the Occasion of the Election of Pope Francis (March 13, 2013)

This is a moment of great joy for Catholics all over the world. Pope Francis is the 265th successor of Peter. From the moment the white smoke was first seen we have welcomed him with great thanks. And now, following the example of Benedict XVI, we express to him our unconditional reverence and obedience. And also our affection and prayer, continuing the prayers that we shared with the Pope during his first appearance on the balcony of the Hall of Blessings in Saint Peter’s Basilica.

In this moment filled with emotion, when the Church’s universality is vividly sensed, I reaffirm to the new Roman Pontiff complete adhesion to his person and ministry, with the certainty that I am expressing the sentiments of the faithful, both priests and laity, of the Prelature of Opus Dei. We all entrust ourselves to the prayers of His Holiness, in order to contribute effectively, with joyful availability, to the work of evangelization that the Pope has mentioned in his first greeting to the Church.

During these weeks of serene waiting, much has been said about the burden that weighs on the shoulders of the Holy Father. But let us not forget that the Pope relies on God’s help, on the assistance of the Holy Spirit and the affection and prayers of all Catholics, and of millions of other men and women of good will.

As Saint Josemaría Escrivá always advised, I ask our Lord today very especially that all of us Catholics may share “one will, one heart, one spirit, so that omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam—so that we may all go to Jesus, closely united to the Pope, through Mary” (The Forge, 647).

+ Javier Echevarría
Close to Pope Francis, with Our Prayer and Affection, Article in Palabra, (April 2013)

We have welcomed with great joy the election of Pope Francis as Peter’s successor in the See of Rome and as Supreme Pontiff of the universal Church. The festive pealing of the bells, sent ringing throughout the whole world, brought us the news we had been praying for so intently: *habemus Papam!* And once more we experienced the the Paraclete’s action who, above all the vicissitudes of the world and of history, guides and governs the Mystical Body of Christ.

From the first moment, the Holy Father has asked for our prayers to help him carry the burden that our Lord has placed on his shoulders. In this moment filled with great emotion and significance, when once again we have seen that the Church is alive, and is capable of transmitting that life to all men and women, we renew our desires to accompany Pope Francis on his path of service to the Church and the world.

Evangelization, the new evangelization, the growth of Christian life. These are the key words with which, from the first moment, the Roman Pontiff has made known to us his priorities upon beginning his pontificate. Pope Francis comes from Latin America, where faith in Christ took root more than five hundred years ago. It is a church rich in religious traditions that nourish the faith of the People of God. A church close to people who, in the midst of the spiritual and material needs and difficulties of both the poor and the rich, the educated and the unlettered, the sick and the healthy, has remained faithful to Christ for centuries, under the protection of Mary’s mantle and closely united to its pastors. A church that, despite all the worldly attractions of materialism, has returned again and again to the sources of a true spirituality: the sacraments; devotion to our Lord, especially to his passion; a filial trust in our Lady; recourse to the intercession of the saints.
Pope Francis will transmit all of this spiritual richness to the Church on the other continents; above all to the places in Europe, North America and Oceania, where the symptoms of a certain disenchantment and spiritual erosion are more openly seen. It will mean, at the same time, a new impulse to the evangelization of the peoples of Asia, Africa, and of Latin America itself, so hungry for God.

The Roman Pontiff wants to steer us towards what is essential. “Christ is the center,” he said in his audience on March 26. And in his homily at the Mass for Palm Sunday, he assured us that “Christ’s Cross embraced with love never leads to sadness, but to joy, to the joy of having been saved and of doing a little of what he did on the day of his death.”

This brings us to the very core of Christian life. Pope Francis insists that God’s mercy is infinite, that he never tires of forgiving us. As St. Josemaría Escrivá often reminded us, “our God is a God who forgives,” a Father to whom we need to have frequent recourse in the sacrament of confession.

To carry on his task, the Pope is relying on the prayer of each one of us, and above all on the intercession of our Lady and St. Joseph. It was quite significant that his first departure from the Vatican, on the morning following his election, was to the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, to place his pontificate at the feet of our Mother, the refuge and salvation of the Roman people and of the entire Church.

During the weeks that have gone by since then, there has been much discussion of the burden that has fallen on the shoulders of the Roman Pontiff, to whom is especially entrusted the unity of faith and communion in the Church. To be able to carry that weight joyfully, the Pope seeks above all the help of God, the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the closeness of our Lady, the intercession of the saints. But he also asks for (and I don’t mind repeating this once more) the affection and prayers of all Catholics and of many other people of good will. Let’s not leave him alone! May he be able to count on our daily prayer, backed up by sacrifice and the offering of work that is well finished. In a special way let us unite ourselves to him at Holy Mass, the best moment, the most sublime one each day, to beseech God our Lord, with words of St. Josemaría: “omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per
Mariam! — that we may all go to Jesus, closely united to the Pope, through Mary” (*The Forge*, no. 647).

+ Javier Echevarría

Prelate of Opus Dei

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Words on the Occasion of Benedict XVI’s Resignation (February 11, 2013)

The Church feels today a special need to thank Benedict XVI for his rich and fruitful magisterium, and also for his humble and generous example of service to the Church and the world.

In this singular moment in the Church’s history, the faithful of the Prelature—priests and laity—are praying for Benedict XVI and all his intentions. And united to the Pope and the entire Church, we are asking the Holy Spirit to pour out his grace in abundance on the people of God and its pastors.

In union with Benedict XVI we are invoking the Paraclete’s help for the future Roman Pontiff.

+ Bishop Javier Echevarría

Prelate of Opus Dei
ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA
Conversations from the Viewpoint of Journalism

On January 29 a presentation of the historical-critical edition of Conversations with Msgr. Escrivá was held. Conversations, first published in 1968, contains a homily and seven interviews granted by the founder of Opus Dei to Le Figaro, The New York Times, Time magazine, L’Osservatore della Domenica, and three Spanish magazines (Telva, Gaceta Universitaria and Palabra). Some 350,000 copies of the book have now been published in a dozen languages. In the summer of 2012, the historical-critical edition was published by Rialp.

The presentation at the University of Navarra’s Madrid campus was attended by over 30 well-known journalists. With the help of previously filmed testimonials, a virtual round table was held on the future of communications, and on the message of St. Josemaría. The ceremony was organized by the School of Communications at the University of Navarra, in conjunction with the Information Office of Opus Dei and Rialp publishers.

Fr. José Luis Illanes, in charge of the book’s publication, briefly sketched the origin of the project. He said that it “forms part of the edition of the complete works of St. Josemaría Escrivá, and seeks to provide a cultural and ecclesiological framework for a deeper grasp of the content of the interviews.”

The journalist Pilar Urbano was the director of the presentation, and introduced those taking part. These were, in alphabetical order: José Apezarena, Javier Bardaji, Thomas Burns Marañón, Pilar Cambra, Manuel Campo Vidal, Juan Pablo Colmenarejo, Jorge del Corral, Gonzalo del Prado, Gustavo Entrala, Iñaki Gabilondo, Andres Garrigó, Ana Gil, Elsa Gonzalez, Noelia Gorbea, Mónica Herrero, Luis Infante, José María Irujo, Juan Kindelán, Fernando Lázaro, Miguel Ángel Liso, Esteban López Escobar, Joaquín Luna, Jesús Martínez de Rioja, Mercedes Montero, Martín Mucha, Joaquín Navarro Valls, Covadonga O’Shea, Ramón Pérez Maura, Ramón Pi, Pedro J. Ramírez, Helena Resano, Carmen Rigalt,
Arturo San Agustín, Alfonso Sánchez-Tabernero, Manuel Ventero, Germán Yanke and Juan Yeregui.

The contributions of all of them are available on the Internet, at the blog conversacionescon.es.

Young People in Dialogue with St. Josemaría

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Prado, Gustavo Entrala, Iñaki Gabilondo, Andres Garrigó, Ana Gil, Elsa Gonzalez, Noelia Gorbea, Mónica Herrero, Luis Infante, José María Irujo, Juan Kindelán, Fernando Lázaro, Miguel Ángel Liso, Esteban López Escobar, Joaquín Luna, Jesús Martínez de Rioja, Mercedes Montero, Martín Mucha, Joaquín Navarro Valls, Covadonga O'Shea, Ramón Pérez Maura, Ramón Pi, Pedro J. Ramírez, Helena Resano, Carmen Rigalt, Arturo San Agustín, Alfonso Sánchez-Tabernero, Manuel Ventero, Germán Yanke and Juan Yeregui.

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Studia et Documenta no. 7

The seventh volume of Studia et Documenta, the annual review from the St. Josemaría Escrivá Historical Institute, offers new material on the history of Opus Dei.

One of the articles is dedicated to a trip that Cardinal Roncalli, now Blessed John XXIII, made to Spain in 1954. He stayed in two university student residences, corporate apostolic undertakings of Opus Dei, in Santiago de Compostela and Saragossa. Using first hand sources, Alfredo Mendiz describes the positive impression that Cardinal Roncalli received from that experience, and he concludes with a brief section on the later relationship between Pope John XXIII and Josemaría Escrivá.

The opening articles focus on the priestly ministry of the founder of Opus Dei in the 30's and 40's. The first article, by Gloria Toranzo, sheds light on the beginnings of Opus Dei among women. Joaquin Herrera Dávila is the author of the second article, which provides details of St. Josemaría's first trip to Andalusia, in April 1938. Constantino Anchel's article looks at the 116 preaching activities St. Josemaría carried out between the years 1938 and 1946, and the impression these made on those attending.
Other topics in this volume are the childhood of the saint, when he studied in the school of the Piarists in Barbastro (1908-1915); the three trips Opus Dei’s founder made to Austria, between 1949 and 1955; the beginning of the Roman College of Holy Mary in 1953; and the work of social integration carried out in the Zunil School in Guatemala thanks to the message of St. Josemaría.

The section dedicated to unpublished documents includes two articles. The first, edited by José Luis Gonzalez-Gullón, offers notes taken in the year 1934 by Ricardo Fernandez Vallespin, director of the DYA Academy, the first center of Opus Dei. These notes reflect the calm environment of work and friendship found there, in a Spain that was then in deep political and social turmoil, and the abundant pastoral activity of Josemaría Escrivá. The second article, by Francisca Colomer, focuses on a report about Opus Dei by the Archbishop of Valencia, sent to the nuncio in Spain in 1941.

The news section includes details on the sixteen processes of canonization of faithful of Opus Dei presently underway. Finally, the bibliographic section has reviews of twenty-two publications, selected from the most recent books related to St. Josemaría and Opus Dei, and a new section of the systematic bibliography the review has been publishing since its first issue.

The new issue is also marked by a change of editors. José Luis Illanes, who has been director of Studia et Documenta up till now, has passed the baton to Carlos Pioppi, who has been working at his side as assistant director from the journal’s beginnings. Prof. Pioppi teaches History of the Church at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome.

Torna ai contenuti

Devotion Throughout the World

Australia

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of Opus Dei’s apostolic work in Australia, a conference was held on May 11
in Sydney. The topic was: “Fifty years living the message of St. Josemaría Escrivá.” Among other speakers, Cardinal George Pell expressed his conviction that the documents of the Second Vatican Council, especially those dealing with the laity, were influenced by the spirit of Opus Dei. “St. Josemaría saw this message, by divine inspiration, several decades before the Council, and was considered by many to be a precursor of these teachings at the Council.” He added that the teachings of St. Josemaría were helping many faithful today “to discover the redemptive force of the faith and its capacity—to transform the world.”

Also speaking was Mrs. Suzanne Twyford, one of the first organizers of the Pared Foundation, which has given rise to various schools in Sydney, among them Tangara School for Girls. During the congress a new video was shown in which various faithful of the Prelature explain how their family, social and work life have been enriched by the message of St. Josemaría, imbuing their lives with a stronger faith. Among them were a chef, a teacher, a doctor, a lawyer and his wife, a marketing manager, and others from different cultures, including China, Lebanon, and Uruguay.

Spain

On June 26, 2012, at the end of the Mass of St. Josemaría in the parish of Canals in Valencia, the pastor told the director of the Escora Youth Club of his intention to place a painting of St. Josemaría in a side chapel presided over by a statue of St. Joseph and which also has a painting of Our Lady of the Abandoned. He said that thanks to Escora, which recently celebrated its golden anniversary, many parishioners at Canals were living the spirituality of the saint and had devotion to him. He thought that a good day to bless the painting would be the following October 6, the tenth anniversary of his canonization. The painter chosen for the work was José Manuel Pozo Serrano. For various reasons the painting could not be finished until November, and so the pastor decided that the ceremony of blessing and installation would take place at the main Mass on the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

In a different part of Spain, the parish council at Santiago el Real in Logroño made known in the parish bulletin dated November 18, 2012, that one of the side altars in the church would be dedicated to St.
Josemaría. The chapel installed there will have, as a reredos, a painting of the saint by the artist Sister Isabel Guerra.

**Honduras**

When the study entitled “St. Josemaría, Teacher of Forgiveness” appeared in issues 52 and 53 of *Romana*, a group of young professionals in Honduras decided to spread the founder of Opus Dei’s teachings on this topic. After several months of preparation, they invited the author of the article, Jaime Cardenas, to visit the cities of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula in Honduras during the first week of December 2012, on the occasion of the launching in the country of the *Novena to St. Josemaría for the Family* by Francisco Faus. Jaime Cardenas was interviewed on a television program and in the daily paper *El Heraldo*. In speaking of the teachings of the founder of Opus Dei on forgiveness and love for others, Cardenas emphasized the importance of valuing each person as a child of God. Each human being is “the bearer of a core of dignity that not even sin can erase.” In answer to the question “How can we learn to forgive?” the speaker stressed the importance of the theological virtue of charity as the source of forgiveness: “What we really have to learn is how to have affection, how to love: first God and, in him, to learn to love our neighbor, even if someone offends us. If you don’t love, you can’t forgive.”

He also gave an address in Tegucigalpa to more than 600 people, and in San Pedro Sula to an audience of more than 500. The framework of the conference, the launching of the Novena to St. Josemaría for the Family, allowed Cardenas to emphasize the role of the family as the place where one learns to forgive and to grasp the intricacies of human relationships, since it is where we learn to be grateful, to be humble and understanding towards others.

**Italy**

On May 8, a bronze bell was installed in the chapel at the University of Parma. It was blessed by Bishop Enrico Solmi, accompanied by the chaplain of the university, Father Umberto Cocconi. The bell, which is dedicated to our Lady, has relief sculptures of the Miraculous Medal and of three saints: St. Peter Damien, St. Thomas the Apostle, and St. Josemaría.
It weighs a hundred pounds, has a circumference of 21.3 inches and sounds the note “re.”

In addition, during the month of April, a painting of the founder of Opus Dei was installed in a chapel of the Church of Our Lady of the Angels in Naples. A scenic overlook on the island of Ischia and a plaza in Alcamo, a Sicilian community, were also dedicated to him.

România

On June 26, a statue of St. Josemaría was blessed in the parish of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus in Bucharest. Archbishop Ioan Robu formally blessed the statue, sculpted in stone by Etsuro Sotoo, a Japanese artist who is working on the Basilica of the Holy Family in Barcelona. At St. Theresa’s, Holy Mass has been celebrated on the feast of St. Josemaría for the past several years. The statue was presented by a parishioner who wanted to thank God for the help he had received through the founder of Opus Dei. It has been placed in the nearby parish garden, close to the school.

Other New publications

Books of St. Josemaría

• Put, Sofia, Bulgaria, Communitas Foundation, 2013, Fourth Bulgarian printing of The Way.

• Cesta, Prague, Paulinky, 2013, Fourth Czech printing of The Way.

• Camino, México D.F., MiNos Tercer Milenio, 2013, 59th Mexican printing.

• Bruzda, Poznán, Święty Wojciech, 2013, Eighth Polish printing of Furrow.

• Santo Rosario, Santiago de Compostela, Follas Novas, 2013, First printing in Galician.
• *Sviatata Broenitsa*, Sofia, Bulgaria, Communitas Foundation, 2013, First Bulgarian edition of *Holy Rosary*.

• *Christus komt langs*, Amsterdam-Utrecht, De Boog, 2013, Second Dutch printing of *Christ Is Passing By*.


Books about St. Josemaría


Theological Keys to the Teaching of the Founder of Opus Dei

The third volume of *Vida cotidiana y santidad en la enseñanzas de san Josemaría* has now been published by Rialp. The three volume work of spiritual theology, with over 1,800 pages, is the first in-depth study of the founder of Opus Dei’s teachings.

The authors, Ernst Burkhart and Javier Lopez Diaz, theology professors in Rome, have had access to all the writings of the founder, both the published ones and many still unpublished. Their study provides an overview of the possibility of holiness and apostolate and of transforming the world little known until now.
The two earlier volumes were published in 2010 and 2011. The first volume focuses on the vocation and mission of the laity, and on seeking the glory of God, the Kingdom of Christ, and the building up of the Church by personal sanctification and apostolate.

The topics of the second volume are no less central: divine filiation, the freedom of the children of God, and the theological and human virtues of the children of God. The Christian is seen as “another Christ,” or even more forcefully, using an expression of St. Josemaría, as “Christ himself,” because each Christian has to be able to say with St. Paul: “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

The third and final volume, now published, covers the sanctification of professional work and family and social life; the struggle for holiness; and finally, the means of sanctification and apostolate. It concludes with an epilogue on “unity of life,” a typical expression of St. Josemaría, in which the authors see a summing up of his teaching. As the founder of Opus Dei said: “Heaven and earth seem to merge on the horizon. But where they really meet is in your hearts, when you sanctify your everyday lives” (Homily of October 8, 1967, in Conversations, 116).

Eucharistic Celebrations on the Feast of St. Josemaría

On the liturgical commemoration of St. Josemaría, June 26, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, celebrated Mass in the Basilica of St. Eugene in Rome. As in other years, we are publishing in this issue the homily he gave at this Eucharistic celebration. Many other Masses were celebrated for this feast in cities around the world. In Paris, for example, there was one on June 20 in the cathedral of Notre Dame, celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop Eric of Moulins-Beaufort who explained in his homily that the mystery of Notre Dame is still alive, and it attracts multitudes because it is a building moved by faith, a faith that continues to shine forth today. In the Year of Faith he encouraged the faithful to mature in this
virtue, to obtain from God a faith like that of St. Josemaría. At the end of the ceremony, the faithful who filled the cathedral, were able to venerate the Holy Crown of Thorns, a relic of the passion of our Lord preserved there.
News
St. Severinus, Martyr

We offer here a summary written by Msgr. Juan Miguel Ferrer about the history of devotion to the martyr St. Severinus, whose relics (donated in 1957 by Cardinal Mimmi, Archbishop of Naples) repose in an oratory dedicated to St. Joseph in the Prelatic Curia of Opus Dei in Rome.

The Holy Martyr Severinus is mentioned in the Roman Martyrology of 1930, with his feast on November 8. He is described as a Roman soldier martyred under Diocletian, whose relics were conserved in the Roman catacombs, and who seems to be associated with the four Roman martyrs of the Via Labicana. Devotion to these four martyrs was over time lost, mixed, since the 6th and 7th centuries, with the memory of the holy martyrs of Pannonia (the famous “Crowned Four” of the Monte Celio basilica, close to the Via Labicana). The Pannonia martyrs’ remains were brought to Rome amid the barbarian invasions and veneration for them was widespread in Rome from the end of the 5th and throughout the 6th century. The assimilation of the distinct cults of veneration would explains the name Severinus: it would be the equivalent of Severianus, the name attributed to one of the martyrs of Pannonia (taken in turn, since the 7th century, from one of the members of the other group of “four martyrs,” in this case that of Albano).

The attempt to unravel this confusion in the Martyrology among the “Crowned Four” of Pannonia (who later were found to be five), and the four Roman martyrs of the Via Labicana, and the four martyrs of Albano has given rise to many historical studies and hagiographies since the beginning of the 20th century. Thus it has been possible to reconstruct, with sufficient certainty, the names of the martyrs of Pannonia (those who are today listed in the Martyrology with a feast on November 8) and the martyrs of Albano (whose memorial is celebrated on another day). And it has been confirmed that the record of the four Roman martyrs of the Via Labicana has been lost, which has led to their being removed from the latest edition of the Roman Martyrology. As is known, the successive Roman Martyrologies of the 20th century have undergone changes in order to gradually incorporate the results of historical studies.
It is likely that the martyr St. Severinus whose remains were presented by Gregory XVI to the church of Naples, and which Cardinal Marcello Mimmi gave to Opus Dei in 1957, is one of the holy Roman martyrs of the Via Labicana, whose memorial for centuries was celebrated together with that of the martyrs of Pannonia, on November 8, and whose names are unknown.

In that case, the source for a soldier martyr during the persecution of Diocletian linked to St. Severinus, as well as the date of November 8 as his dies natalis, would need to be situated within the ancient veneration of the four martyrs of the Via Labicana. The name Severinus would come from his association with the Roman veneration for the “Crowned Four,” one of whom, as indicated above, was venerated with the name of Severianus. Over time, however, his cult was all but forgotten in the basilica of Monte Celio dedicated to these martyrs, and in fact was almost non-existent in the 19th century, when Pope Gregory XVI granted the “relics of St. Severinus” to Naples.

If the relics of St. Severinus do come from Monte Celio, determining whether they correspond to one of the “Crowned Four” or to one of the martyrs of the Via Labicana is almost impossible now. However everything seems to indicate that when Gregory XVI handed them over (the veneration of the martyrs of the Via Labicana having long been forgotten), Severinus was the name attributed to one of the martyrs of Pannonia and not to the Roman martyr.

If it is shown that the relics do not in fact come from Monte Celio, but that Gregory XVI took them directly from the catacombs, we would need to conclude that the identification of that “Severinus” with the feast of November 8th is purely accidental, and that therefore it is impossible to attribute either a name or a history to him.

From the 17th to the end of 19th century, remains were frequently taken from the catacombs (all of them being considered martyrs) and arbitrarily given a name. The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, in insisting on recording November 8th as the day for celebrating St. Severinus, has sought to support his connection with the very ancient tradition of the four martyrs of the Via Labicana,
celebrated for centuries on that date. We can only hope that the preceding considerations encourage some historian or liturgist to carry out a deeper and more thorough investigation on this topic and try to clarify it.

New Centers of the Prelature

The Vicars of the respective circumscriptions have established a new center in Lima, Peru, and two in Sydney, Australia.

Other Publications of Interest


Book of Texts of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo: To Pray: as Salt and as Light
In May 2013, the publisher Planeta made available the book *Orar: Como sal y como luz* (To Pray: As Salt and as Light), a selection of spiritual texts from Bishop Álvaro del Portillo on various aspects of Christian life. During the 19 years that he spent as head of Opus Dei, Bishop del Portillo gave many homilies and addresses, wrote 176 pastoral letters and had hundreds of conversations on topics of the spiritual life in gatherings with thousands of people all over the world. However, until now his writings of a spiritual nature, unlike his theological-canonical studies on the role of the laity and on the ministry of priests in the Church, have not been an object of wide diffusion. This edition was issued after the official recognition of his heroic virtues by the Holy See. The texts presented in this new book have been selected by Fr. José Antonio Loarte. *Como sal y como luz* helps the reader to pray led by the hand of the Venerable Álvaro del Portillo and transmits the teaching of sanctification in professional work and in daily life that Don Álvaro learned from the lips of the Founder of Opus Dei.

Some Diocesan Assignments Received by Priests of the Prelature

*With the permission of the Ordinary of the Prelature, the following appointments have been made by the authorities of the respective local dioceses:*

Rev. Amin Abboud  
*Member of the Committee of Consultors of St. John’s College, University of Sydney, Australia.*

Rev. Michael Barrett  
*Theological consultor of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, California*

Rev. Anthony Bernal  
*Pastor of St. Mary Star of the Sea parish, Archdiocese of Melbourne, Australia*

Rev. John Flader
UNIV 2013, First Audience with Pope Francis

During Holy Week, university students from all over the world met in Rome to take part in the 2013 UNIV Forum, which is now in its 46th year. This yearly international gathering began under the encouragement of St. Josemaría, who wanted to infuse in young people a great love for the Church and the Pope.

On Wednesday March 27, the 3,000 participants went to St. Peter’s Square to accompany Pope Francis in the first general audience of his pontificate. After speaking about the meaning of Holy Week, the Roman Pontiff addressed some special words to the young people of UNIV: “I greet the university students who are taking part in the international congress organized by the Prelature of Opus Dei. Dear friends, you have come to Rome during Holy Week to strengthen your faith and find spiritual enrichment. I thank you for your prayers and affection. Through
your presence in the university environment, each of you can carry out what Saint Josemaría Escrivá hoped for: ‘It is in the midst of the most material things of the earth that we must sanctify ourselves, serving God and all mankind.’

In the name of all the participants, the president of UNIV 2013 presented the Pope with a DVD entitled: “What faith means when you’re 20. Young people in dialogue with St. Josemaría.”

**Book: Interview with Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz. Sobre Dios, la Iglesia y el mundo (On God, the Church and the World)**

In this interview with Rafael Serrano, editor of the Aceprensa news agency, Msgr. Ocáriz, vicar general of the Prelature of Opus Dei and consultor to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, reflects on important topics of theology, the life of the Church, Opus Dei, and contemporary society and thought. The book confronts complex questions such as the interpretation of the Second Vatican Council, the possibility of new personal prelatures, the mystery of each person’s vocation, and the harmony between faith and reason as the path for overcoming the “dictatorship of relativism.” At the same time, personal anecdotes relating to St. Josemaría, Benedict XVI and Pope Francis enliven the text.

**Pontifical Appointments**

On January 26, 2013, Rev. Rafael Garcia de la Serrana Villalobos was appointed assistant director of the Technical Services Department of the “Governatorato” of Vatican City.
The Archbishop of Pamplona opens the Cause of Canonization of Laura Busca Otaegui

On June 14, in the sacristy of the Cathedral of Pamplona, Archbishop Francisco Perez Gonzalez opened the Cause of canonization of the servant of God Laura Busca Otaegui (1913 — 2000), pharmacist, researcher, and mother of seven children. Her husband, Eduardo Ortiz de Landázuri, is also in the process of canonization. Both were supernumeraries of Opus Dei and strove for holiness, in accord with the teachings of St. Josemaría, in the ordinary activities of each day. Besides the Archbishop of Pamplona, also taking part in the ceremony were Msgr. Ramon Herrando, Vicar of Opus Dei in Spain, and Rev. Constantino Anchel, the postulator of the Cause. Among other aspects, emphasis was put on the magnanimity and understanding shown by the servant of God and her dedication to her husband, her children, and to many other people. Also stressed was that everything in Laura's life was an expression of love for God and others, and sprang from a strong and deep piety.
INITIATIVES

• In Brief
Baytree Centre: an Oasis in the Middle of Brixton, London

Located in Brixton, in the London Borough of Lambeth, Baytree Centre lies at the heart of an area of great ethnic diversity, of a vibrant community that reflects the richness of many cultures.

The borough attracts a high percentage of immigrants and refugees from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, but it is one of the most disadvantaged areas of Britain. According to official government statistics, Lambeth’s population has one of the highest indexes of social needs in the country. It is ranked as the seventh most deprived area in England and the twelfth in the United Kingdom.

Baytree Centre is aimed at helping women discover the value of their family life, and to combine it, when necessary, with professional work outside of the home.

The origins of the work carried out in Baytree are to be sought precisely in the area’s deprivation. “Back in 1985,” says Marie-Claire Irwin, one of the first volunteers, and now Baytree’s Training Coordinator, “we started to develop here some of the activities promoted by the Dawliffe Hall Educational Foundation (DHEF), an educational charity. The need to care for the girls and women in Brixton was apparent. Before we knew it, the activities had begun to grow. We carried out a survey in the area to identify the most pressing needs.

“The results showed that women in the area wanted the knowledge and skills that would allow them to find good jobs: computing, English, nutrition, physical training, child care and child hygiene. So we started looking for premises where we could start running such courses.”

A building was found in 1987: a derelict warehouse. By 1995 it had been transformed into a training center complete with classrooms, computer bays, spacious rooms for meetings, and offices, a small cafeteria, etc. “We started activities when we could still use only one room, and at the same time we were trying to find the money to complete the rest of the building. For years we worked in the midst of the construction workers!” says Marie-Claire.
Thanks to private sector and local government funding, as well as European funds, the Center is now able to provide not just professional training courses for the girls, but also programs of family development directed towards the mothers and their daughters, during childhood and adolescence. It also provides a day care center, with many volunteers who want to help out. Besides the work training courses, there is a whole environment geared towards total personal development, including the spiritual dimension, which contributes to a solution to the poverty and other social problems of the area.

“Brixton has a multi-racial community, with a large refugee population, and high unemployment and crime rates,” Marie-Claire explains. “There is poverty, but the worst poverty of all in this area is social. Many of the women are very isolated: I have met some who have lived here for twenty years and still do not speak English. My reaction to these situations, and my effective and constant desire of working to improve them, is born of my frequent reflection on the teachings of Saint Josemaría. In Christ is Passing By, for example, he writes: “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.” He was concerned about both the great crises that affect all mankind as well as the problems and worries of those at his side. Therefore he said forcefully that we couldn’t be happy with giving a few coins and old clothing; we have to give our heart and our life.”

It is this firmly Christian conviction of the people who work in Baytree that leads them to appreciate the value of each person, over and above any racial or social difference.

“This is why the Center users are not exclusively Catholics or Christians. We are open to everyone: we are here to help any woman who needs us. We are here because we want to help society at large, and contribute specifically to the development of this local community. Baytree was born to fill a gap in this area, so that women may discover the value of their family lives and learn to combine them, when necessary, with a job
outside the home. What we are trying to do is to strengthen the family by helping the women, in order to rebuild the social make up of the area.”

In Brief

Chaclacayo, Lima, (Peru) -- Business, the Person, and Social Responsibility

From February 24 to March 3 a program on a new way of doing business was offered by the Sama Cultural Center. The course seeks to foster a more human way of doing business, based on respect for the human person and the social responsibility of the entrepreneur. The program, which follows the case study method, was developed by professors of the School of Management at the University of Piura. Besides the academic content, it also offered the opportunity to meet students from different parts the country. 23 university students from Chiclayo, Trujillo, Cuzco, Arequipa and Lima took part.

Sololá, (Guatemala) -- An Award for ‘Ixoqi’

The Foundation for Integral Development received the “Best Solidarity Initiative” award from the Mapfre Foundation for its “Ixoqi” project, which promotes the craft work of numerous Maya-Cakchiqueles women from Chimaltenango and Sololá. The programs teach the women weaving and embroidery, traditional handicrafts, and how to improve the quality of their designs. The beneficiaries also have the possibility of learning how to make home preserves and bakery and confectionery products. The
commercialization of these products permits the women to raise the income level in their homes.

Kevelaer, (Germany) -- Interreligious Symposium “Mary, Mother of Jesus”

Kevelaer is the second most popular pilgrimage site in Germany. There Father Germán Rovira, of Opus Dei, established the IMAK (Internationaler Mariologischer Arbeitskreis Kevelaer). Twenty-six years ago an international Marian congress was organized that culminated in the visit of Blessed John Paul II to Kevelaer. On that occasion Blessed Teresa of Calcutta was also present.

From its creation, IMAK has organized an annual conference on a topic related to our Lady. This year’s was held from April 28 to May 1, under the title “Mary, Mother of Jesus.” In conjunction with the director of pilgrimages at Kevelaer, Father Rolf Lohmann, a canon of Munster Cathedral, it was decided to open the symposium this time to non-Catholics who know and venerate the Virgin Mary. The leit motiv was interreligious dialogue, with contributions from Christian participants and also from a Muslim theologian. The atmosphere was one of mutual respect and friendship, despite differing viewpoints. The peaceful simplicity of the pilgrimage site certainly contributed to this atmosphere. The image of our Lady venerated there is a simple black and white drawing, a copy of our Lady Consolatrix Afflictorum (Comforter of the Afflicted) in Luxembourg.

Speakers included the old rector of the basilica, Father Richard Schulte Staade; Pastor Konrad Schrieder, prefect of an ecclesial community, the “High Church of Germany”; Archpriest Alexeis Ribakovs, from the Russian Orthodox Church; Professor Dina El Omari, from the School of Islamic Theology at the University of Münster; and a priest from the Armenian Church, Pastor Hratsch. The Catholic priests Germán Rovira and Peter von Steinitz preached meditations in the Chapel of the Candles on “Mary, bridge between the Churches of the East and West” and “Mary,
companion of the Redeemer.” The conference ended on May 1 with a solemn Mass in the basilica, celebrated by the auxiliary bishop of Münster, Bishop Stefan Zekorn, and Bishop Pius Mlungisi Dlungwana of Mariannhill, South Africa.

Valencia, (Spain) -- Professional formation in Xabec

This past March 25, the Xabec Center for Professional Formation signed an agreement with the German Chamber of Commerce in Koblenz, by which German companies will offer work positions to graduates of the Spanish technical school. Besides the director of Xabec and the director of the Koblenz Chamber of Commerce, the signing ceremony was attended by the education Counselor of the regional government, the president of the Council of Chambers of Commerce of Valencia, and the general director of Voossloh (a major German train and railroad infrastructure company). For the 2013 school year it is expected that more than 50 companies will receive some 100 students during their period of training.

Montevideo, (Uruguay) -- The Year of Faith at the University of Montevideo

Between April and October in 2013, the University of Montevideo plans to second the Year of Faith through an academic program that includes conferences and round tables with national and foreign specialists. These activities, in accord with the invitation of the Church and the university’s mission, are meant to make clear that no conflict exists between the faith and true science, because both, although along distinct paths, strive to attain the truth. The conferences and round tables count on the participation of national and foreign invitees. All are open to the public, regardless of creed.
Sydney, (Australia) -- Fathers and Daughters

A number of fathers at Tangara School for Girls and Montgrove College—two schools entrusted to the pastoral care of the Opus Dei Prelature—organized this past school year seminars and working sessions on the central role fathers play in their daughters’ lives. Some 250 people took part. Topics covered included the essential role of fathers in preparing their daughters for adolescence and adult life, the unbreakable bond between father and daughter, and the importance of faith in family life. The seminars and working sessions were duplicated later in other cities such as Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Hobart.

Euskirchen–Kreuzweingarten, (Germany) -- Excellence in the Home

On April 13 the fourth Excellence in the home seminar was held in the Haus Hardtberg Conference Center in Euskirchen-Kreuzweingarten, under the title “Creating a home.” Almost a hundred specialists and people interested in domestic sciences attended: professionals, teachers in schools of professional formation, and young married couples.

The Peruvian philosopher Maria Pia Chirinos, Vice-rector of the University of Piura, was the principal speaker. In her address she used the example of the return home of Ulysses in *The Odyssey*. Through Homer’s classic work, the anthropological value of the home and its influence on human development was highlighted. Chirinos emphasized an aspect of the human person that at times is forgotten: our weakness and need to be taken care of. She pointed out how recent studies show that families in which members are concerned about spending time together have a much lower
danger of failure in school or of alcoholism. A home in which each member feels him or herself recognized and loved, confers on the human being the strength needed to confront life’s challenges.

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**Lugano, (Switzerland) -- The Year of Faith and the Second Vatican Council**

During the first half of the Year of Faith, the Alzavolla Cultural Center in Lugano organized a cycle of conferences entitled “Reactivate the Faith: Rediscovering Vatican II.” The goal was to examine the importance of the Second Vatican Council in the history of the Church and to get to know its texts better. The first sessions dealt with the context that led Blessed John XXIII to convocate the Council. Then certain key texts were studied in depth, including the constitutions *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Dei Verbum*, and *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

The cycle was inaugurated by the Bishop of Lugano, Pier Giacomo Grampa. Among the speakers were various specialists and professors from the University of Lugano. The initiative received broad coverage in the local newspapers, as well as on the diocesan website. Eighty people from various Swiss cantons were enrolled in the course.

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**Cheshire, (England) -- Faith, Catechesis and Schools**

From March 11 to 13, Thornycroft Hall held a symposium for priests under the title “The Year of Faith, Catechesis and Schools.” Cardinal Robert Sarah, who was in Rome for the Conclave that elected Pope Francis, sent the presentation he had prepared, which was read in his absence. Other speakers were Canon Anthony McBride (episcopal vicar for formation in the diocese of Salford), who addressed the role of Catholic
secondary schools in today’s society, and Professor Caroline Farey (Maryvale Institute, Birmingham), who reflected on the priority of providing catechesis for adults. The economist Edward Hadas spoke about ethical aspects of the current financial crisis, while the priest and moralist David Potter addressed burning issues in the field of bioethics. Finally, Father Andrew Pinsent (director of research at the “Ian Ramsey Centre for Religion and Science” in Oxford), spoke on the relationship between philosophy, faith and science.

Montevideo, ( Uruguay) -- Academic Reflections on Life

On Tuesday May 7, before an audience of several hundred people in Montevideo’s Radisson Hotel, Dr. Tabaré Vazquez presented the book Veto al aborto, produced by the School of Law at the University of Montevideo. As President of Uruguay, five years earlier, Tabaré Vazquez had vetoed a law seeking to liberalize abortion. On this occasion he remarked that “beyond its striking title, this book is an academic work, the fruit of extensive studies, profound reflections, and a good dose of common sense.” The volume contains 15 articles that develop, from various perspectives, the arguments that the then President expressed in his message of November 14, 2008 to the General Assembly of the legislative branch.

London, ( England) -- Cultural Horizons

Between October 2012 and March 2013, the Thomas More Institute in collaboration with the international university residence Netherhall House, organized three series of seminars on Saturday mornings. The goal was to encourage students to think in an interdisciplinary way and broaden their cultural horizons beyond the sphere of their particular specialization.
The three series were entitled: “Philosophy of Science” (directed by Professor Christopher Martin); “The Philosophy Underlying Science” (presented by Dr. Peter Adams); and “Aesthetics in Today’s World,” with various speakers, moderated by Dr. Piers Tattersall.

Valencia, (Spain) -- Collecting Food for the Needy

During March and April, a group of residents from the Albalat Student Residence collected 500 liters of milk and 200 boxes of biscuits to help the parish school of Santiago Apostol. As a result of the economic crisis and delays in financial assistance, many schools are unable to cover their minimum expenses and have been forced to cut back on their services. This is the situation that the Santiago Apostol parish school found itself in, given its high percentage of immigrant pupils from needy families. Thanks to this help, the Santiago Apostol school was able to continue offering its children breakfast, which for some of the pupils is their first nourishing food of the day.

Rome, (Italy) -- A Study Conference in Honor of Robert Spaemann

On January 10, the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross was the scene of a study conference in honor of the German philosopher Robert Spaemann. The motive was the publication in Italian of his work *Natural Ends: the History and Rediscovery of Teleological Thought*, recently issued by Ares publishers. After the greeting by the Rector, Msgr. Luis Romera, the speakers were Cardinal Camillo Ruini, Professor Sergio Belardinelli from the University of Bologna and Professor Leonardo Allodi, translator and coordinator of the Italian version of the book.
Ettal, (Germany) -- Priests’ Fasching Conference

Each year, during the “Fasching,” (Mardi Gras) holidays, a gathering for priests is held in Ettal, a small village in the Bavarian Alps, half way between Munich and Innsbruck. This year it took place from the tenth to the twelfth of February. Priests came from various parts of Bavaria as well as from Austria. As in past years, the priests made new friends, shared experiences, prayed together and deepened their formation. Information on various initiatives of evangelization throughout the world helped to spur the apostolic zeal of those attending. This year the main focus of the presentations was the social communications media, a topic that affects their pastoral work in many ways.

São Paulo, (Brazil) -- A Course on the History of Philosophy

At the beginning of this year, a number of graduate students began a course on the history of philosophy at the Sumaré University Center, with professors from various schools offering to take part. The common desire was to acquire a solid culture, open to the truth.

The course ran for three semesters. In the first module, the students took classes on philosophical thought in antiquity. Starting with the question “what is philosophy?” other questions posed by the pre-Socratic philosophers were discussed, right up to the summit of ancient philosophy in the works of Plato and Aristotle. The second module dealt with patristic and medieval philosophy, especially the impact of Christian revelation on philosophy and the relationship between faith and reason. In the final stage, modern and contemporary philosophers were studied.
Interest in the course grew over the year. One of the means used to spread interest in it was the Internet, with a website that included videos of the classes and the program of the meetings, with auxiliary texts.

Milan, (Italy) -- The Future Is Built Today

This past January 18, the inauguration of the academic year in the Torrescalla University Residence was marked by a round table entitled “In search of development: prerequisites for growth in Italy.” The principal speakers were Andrea Sironi, president of the Bocconi University of Milan, and Ferruccio de Bortoli, publisher of the newspaper Corriere della Sera. Both pointed to the importance of encouraging an “ethic of work,” such as that which this university center is trying to spread.

Lima, (Perú) -- Recalling the Venerable Álvaro del Portillo

For the anniversary of the death of the Venerable Álvaro del Portillo, Masses were said in many cities of Peru, as was done in many other countries. In Lima, the celebration took place on Thursday March 21 in the Church of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, presided over by Cardinal Juan Luis Cipriani Thorne, Archbishop of Lima. Five hundred people took part. During his homily Cardinal Cipriani stressed Bishop de Portillo’s fidelity to his priestly vocation in service of the Church. Other bishops celebrating Masses included: Archbishop José Antonio Eguren of Piura, in the Church of Maria Auxiliadora; Bishop Ricardo García, Bishop-Prelate of Yauyos, in the Cathedral of St. Vincent of Cañete; Bishop Jesús Moliné of Chiclayo, in the chapel of the Santa Maria Reina School in Chiclayo; and Archbishop Juan Antonio Ugarte of Cuzco, in the Church of the Triumph.
Guatemala City, (Guatemala) -- Junkabal at 50

“Junkabal,” which in the Maya-Cakchiquel language means “warmth of a home,” was born in 1963. It sought to offer professional training to women in Guatemala City who worked as sellers in the Central Market or who collected discarded items. The six foundresses—Olga de Mirón, Frances de Fischer, María Martha de Maegli, Márgara de Fischer, Conchita de Lara and Martha Novella—refurbished a small house in the city and began giving courses in cooking, flower care and arrangement, piñata-making, and needlework. Since then, 50,000 Guatemalan women and their families have benefited from the programs at Junkabal, and have been incorporated into the country’s labor market or begun small businesses.

A milestone in the history of Junkabal was the construction in 1971 of the buildings that replaced the original small house, on land donated by a businessman, Samuel Camhi. The programs of professional training are now held there, and a school offers education from the pre-primary level to a high school degree. Scholarships and subsidies are available for the needier students.

In 1983, a program to help women from the poorest neighborhoods was begun. They are taught how to use recycled material to make women’s pocketbooks and costume jewelry, which they can sell to improve their family’s finances.

San José, (Costa Rica) -- Digital Identity Forum

During Holy Week in 2013, the Miravalles University Center organized a forum on human identity in the digital world. Twenty
university students from Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Panama took part. The Panamerican Giancarlos Candanedo, who works in the communications field, reflected on the positive effects attained by some social networks, giving as an example @Pontifex on Twitter. The Venezuelan columnist Hermann Petzold said that there will always be critics of the social networks, but that “not everything found there is frivolous and one can develop relationships with valuable people.” He pointed to one of the risks social networks bring with them, namely creating virtual profiles with false attributes. The solution, said Petzold, lies in reestablishing consistency between the virtual and the physical worlds: “falsehood and truth are the same offline as online.” During the various sessions, essential characteristics of all efforts to communicate effectively were emphasized that also apply to the digital world: veracity, opportuneness, credibility, consistency, and respect.

Torna ai contenuti

Cañete, (Peru) A Degree in Family and Marriage

The Familias del Sur association (Families of the South), promoted by couples from Cañete and nearby towns, has organized a Degree in Marriage and the Family, in collaboration with the University of La Sabana in Colombia. The program had as its goal to train future teachers for the course. It ran for seven sessions, from November 2012 to May 2013, and covered various questions related to the family and the management of some typical situations that arise at home. Twenty-seven couples took part in the course.

Torna ai contenuti

Cañete, (Peru) -- 50 Years of Condoray

This past May 24, in a solemn ceremony, the Municipality of Cañete honored the Condoray Institute with its Civic Medal, in recognition of the
work carried out over fifty years in assisting local development. This includes the starting of more than 4,000 micro-businesses by women, the training of 10,000 young women for technical careers, etc.

“Education has been the key to attaining true promotion for women in this region,” said Milagros Panta, Executive Director of the Condoray Center for the Professional Formation of Women situated in the Valley of Cañete. “We try to foster an integral development that includes all human dimensions, including the spiritual. We seek not only the material progress of women and their families, but also an integral human formation.” Drawing inspiration from the spirit of St. Josemaria, this center has developed various programs to help women live in accord with their dignity and find suitable work. Presently Condoray offers technical courses with official validation in Hotel Services and Secretarial and Accounting skills. These courses provide employment opportunities for many girls from low income backgrounds. The school also carries out other programs in 17 rural communities: work training; personal and family development; community development, including improving housing, nutritional health, and hygiene. The Center for Business Formation, another of the programs, provides training for creating a small business, which permits the women to increase their family income.

Antigua, (Guatemala) -- To Eradicate Hunger.

Guatemala is the Latin American country with the highest rate of chronic infant malnutrition, with 48% of the children affected. Faced with this stark reality, the government has invited all social sectors to unite in a pact aimed at “Zero Hunger.”

The Las Gravileas training center for women, near the city of Antigua, has for several years been assisting women in situations of extreme poverty from “the dry corridor” and the Eastern plateau, regions where the poorest Guatemalan communities are found.
In the context of the “Zero Hunger” pact, this year the two-and-a-half-day courses have been multiplied. There women learn a productive skill, are helped to draw up a business plan, and are given a “kit” that enables them to begin earning money right away. A tutor from the school accompanies the women during the training process and visits their community to help overcome the difficulties that often arise at first. Since the women tend to spend the greater part of their income in feeding and raising their families, this type of program has a direct impact on the battle to eliminate hunger.

Naples, (Italy) -- Inauguration of the School Year in Monterone

This past January 26 a ceremony was held at the Monterone university residence in Naples to inaugurate the new school year. The speakers were Luigi Nicolais, president of the Nacional Research Council, Senator Raffaele Calabrò, president of the promotional board of the residence, and Alberto Faccini, director of Monterone. The National Research Council president emphasized that “young people represent the future of research and of the country, because of their capacity to provide new ideas and new projects. Investing in education and in research,” he said, “is the way to invest in our future.”

Sydney, (Australia) -- Home Traditions

In July 2012, Kenvale College began “Home Traditions,” a one-year diploma in home-management skills. One of the students, Ginny Gonzaga, explained that “the strength of a society depends on the solidity of its families, built up in the home environment. When the home and family lose their priority, the repercussions are evident: broken marriages, juvenile delinquency, addictions, mental health problems, etc.” For
Gonzaga, the tasks within the home “make an essential contribution to society, since a well-run home fosters the well-being, security and dignity of the person.” The course guides participants through the various domestic tasks—budgeting and finance, time management, care for beauty and traditions, food preparation, etc. This is complemented by classes in anthropology that help to show the deep human meaning of this profession.

Guayaquil, (Ecuador) -- Social Work in the Delta School

Six girls from the Delta School carried out a project to improve the infrastructure of a small school in “Palo de Iguana,” one of the poorest neighborhoods in Guayaquil. It arose from a school program called “Creativity, Action, Service.” After considering various places, this one was chosen because of the obvious poverty of the pupils, who lacked basic services of hygiene and drinkable water, etc. Both the school and the homes around it are built of cane with a dirt floor. The work consisted in cleaning and painting the classrooms and constructing bathrooms. It also involved constructing a cistern and elevated tank and pump.

To obtain the materials, the girls from the Delta School undertook various activities that generated donations from individuals and businesses. A group of mothers helped with the transportation of the students and materials. To inaugurate the improvements at the small school, the local mayor made an appearance. The next step will be the construction of a recreation and sports area.

Diriamba, (Nicaragua) -- Vega Baja Social Center
Since 2010, the Vega Baja Social Center has been providing assistance in the town of Diriamba in western Nicaragua. This initiative organized by women of Opus Dei offers programs of human and professional formation to needy girls and women from the surrounding rural area and neighboring towns and villages. The objective is to offer the students the necessary skills to improve their quality of life and that of their families, through their insertion in the working world and through the practice of human and Christian virtues in their homes.

Some 200 women are trained each year in cooking, needle work, management of micro-businesses, crafts, bee-keeping, use of computers and English. Rosibel Alemán, 67 years-old, a student of the micro-business course, says: “I thought that at my age I couldn’t study, but thanks to these courses I realized that I can and I discovered that I had abilities I never imagined.” Eleana Ramos, a twelve-year-old who participates in the school supplementation program, says: “I love to come to the center, although I have to walk several kilometers from my house. I’m learning new things and feel urged to be better, and I make new friends.” “For me,” says Yelsika Bonilla, an 18 year-old student in the cooking program, “this was my great opportunity, because here they’re teaching me a profession and, above all, to value myself as a person and to develop myself.”

Kyoto, (Japan) -- Ikumen-kai: Workshop for Young Fathers

Since May 2012, Yoshida Student Center has organized the Kioto Ikumen-kai, a monthly workshop for young fathers on how to raise children. Ikumen is a word recently incorporated into the Japanese dictionary, used for young fathers who play a more active role in their children’s education, in contrast to what was customary in the past when this was seen as mainly the task of mothers. The meetings are coordinated by the writer and teacher Toshimi Nakai, author of numerous books and articles on education, and Dr. Shoji Tateishi, a physician and director of a
pediatric clinic. Those taking part come from Kyoto and other nearby cities.

In each session Dr. Tateishi talks about a practical topic, for example, television viewing, relationships between the spouses, or forming a child’s affectivity. This is followed by an interchange of experiences among the participants. Frequent reference is made to St. Josemaría’s teachings on the family: parents as protagonists in the education of their children, finding the right balance between freedom and responsibility, etc. “More and more fathers in Japan are realizing that dedicating time and energy to their children’s education is the best way to sustain their family, and also to grow in their own formation,” says Professor Nakai. Owing to the novelty of this initiative, the Kyoto Ikumen-kai has been the topic of articles in several of the city’s newspapers.

**Nairobi, (Kenya) -- An Online Course in Catholic Doctrine**

To help families live the Year of Faith in accord with the recommendations of the Motu Propio *Porta Fidei*, Kianda School—a primary and secondary school in Nairobi attended by 800 girls—designed a course of Catholic doctrine on the Internet. It offered a study guide on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for all the families of students at the school who desired it. (As is the case with Kenya’s overall population, the students at this school belong to a great variety of religions). The course suggested readings, review questions and recommended links. Each week, the families enrolled received a class through the Internet that they studied on their own. Once a month they gathered at the school to review the content and clarify questions. On matriculating, each participant received a copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 
Sorocaba, (Brazil) -- “Empresárias do Lar”

In Sorocaba, a city in the interior of the state of São Paulo, a project entitled Empresárias do Lar (Entrepreneurs of the Home) has been underway, run by two women of the Prelature and two cooperators. This is a course for girls who are preparing for marriage, with the aim of helping them to form a home that is humanly pleasant and attractive. The program seeks to foster virtues such as patience, good humor, diligence, punctuality, courtesy, detachment, etc., all viewed in a Christian perspective, in order to form a home that is marked by peace and joy. Practical classes are also offered on a number of topics, such as nutrition, meal menus, cleanliness and decoration in the home, financial budgeting, etc.

Participants discover the value of their own femininity, with its whole range of values: refinement, dedication to family members, balanced sensitivity, concern for interior and exterior beauty, harmony between husband and wife, mutual help and respect.

The feedback from the first sessions was very positive. The course was filmed by a local television channel and retransmitted for a full week with a large audience, leading many people to become interested in future courses.
IN PACE
Suffrages for the Deceased

In the first half of 2013, 404 faithful of the Prelature and 19 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
“The Responsibility of Christians in the Communications Media: Some Thoughts Based on St. Josemaría Escrivá’s Teachings,” Armando Fumagalli

“Technologies of the word” and the Good News

The history of communication technology goes back much further than we might at first think. Although not usually viewed in this light, even writing itself arose primarily as a means of communication, and is already, broadly speaking, a “technology.”

To speak of writing as the first “technology of communication” can, I think, help us evaluate calmly present-day media, including the most powerful and widespread ones such as film, radio, television, or the Internet. Communication technology has been of great importance for centuries now: for example, the cultural revolution brought about by printing, with its movable type and the possibility for the mass diffusion of books and newspapers.

For us Christians, for whom the communication of the “Good News” is a fundamental commitment, understanding how and by whom the “news” is spread today is a crucial task. It is not by chance that in an encyclical dedicated to the permanent missionary mandate of the Church, Pope John Paul II wrote: “The first Areopagus of the modern age is the world of communications, which is unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as a ‘global village.’ The media of social communication have become so important that for many they are the principal informative and formative instrument of orientation and inspiration for individual, family, and social behavior.”[1]

These two aspects of communication (formative and informative) are an ever-present theme in the teaching of St. Josemaría Escrivá. On the one hand, he stresses the responsibility Christians have to lead a life fully consistent with their Baptism, without dividing it into separate compartments. In addition, he reminds us of our apostolic commitment, the need to give witness and to “catechize” with all the means at our
disposal: “it is our duty to give doctrine always, everywhere, and with all the means.”[2]

St. Josemaría set forth with great clarity the path for committed Christians in the world of the means of communication (a mission which, as we will see, is to a certain extent everyone’s task). He did so not only with his specific teachings related to what he called “the apostolate of public opinion,” but especially with his teaching on the Christian vocation, on the call to sanctity addressed to everyone, and on the importance of doing apostolate in all circumstances and with all available means. Very relevant here is his teaching on the awareness of divine filiation that should saturate the life of every Christian. The reality of being children of God in Christ, of being heirs of the Kingdom and sharers in Christ’s reign over creation, should lead Christians to reject any inferiority complex, to feel at home in every human environment, including those that seem to present the most problems or that (for various reasons, often due to historical circumstances) seem the most distanced from Christ.

In this essay, I will not try to comment in detail on St. Josemaría’s texts dealing with the “apostolate of public opinion” (a topic that would demand a substantially broader essay).[3] Rather I will attempt to put in context reflections about the influence of the mass media (especially television and cinema) in contemporary society, by viewing them in light of some constant themes in the preaching of the founder of Opus Dei on the responsibility Christians have to confront problems that arise in this area. Obviously, we will not try to explain St. Josemaría’s teachings on this topic exhaustively, nor is ours the only way of interpreting them. Additional important context is provided by texts from the Magisterium on the use of the means of communication.[4]

Evolving technologies

We can begin by recalling that books, as well as ancient Roman manuscripts, are already in some sense a “technology of the word.” The changes that the introduction of writing led to in the way people communicate are very relevant and were the object of interesting studies on the part of twentieth century authors, including, for example, the Jesuit Walter J. Ong.[5] Centuries of a “civilization of the book” have familiarized
us with this technology; everyone today accepts that books are written to spread a message, along with other forms of writing. It has never occurred to anyone to reproach St. Paul for having written letters, as though the Apostle had wanted to downplay personal relationships. (However Jesus, it is good to recall, did not write anything.)

Books—starting with Sacred Scripture itself—have been very important for evangelization throughout the Church’s history. The writings of St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, St. Alphonse Ligouri, St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, etc., have been of immense benefit for the effective spread of the faith.

With regard to the more recent media (radio, television, the movies, Internet) perhaps it will require a century or two to incorporate them in a “natural” way into the life of Christians. It is possible that we are still in the first epoch, full of perplexity—an epoch in which some people believe too much in the power of the media while others overly distrust it. The result is often a pendulum-like movement between fear of these new means of communication and an over-idolization of them. Personally, my impression is that we are still in the first phase of a difficult process of assimilation, of “coming to grips with” and “taking the measure of” the new media.

Some sectors of the Protestant world (especially in America) make regular and effective use of television (at least if one considers the human results). While in the Catholic world, after the initial example of Fulton J. Sheen (whose weekly radio and television programs had an audience of over 30 million people and continued for more than a decade[6]), a greater reluctance has been shown (possibly in part because the world of the so-called televangelists has not been immune from financial and other scandals). Nevertheless, interesting “grass-root” initiatives begun by Catholics have arisen, such as Radio Maria, with very high numbers of listeners. In Italy, Radio Maria averages over a million and a half listeners a day (data from Audiradio), and is therefore rated among the most popular Italian radio stations. And of course in the United States, Mother Angelica’s EWTN network continues to reach a large worldwide audience.

The mere “physical” presence of a person on the television screen often can have a very powerful effect. The relationship between John Paul II and
television has only begun to be studied, but it is indisputable that in 1978 his powerful physical appearance, and his strong and well modulated voice, played an important role in transmitting, from the moment of his election, the message of a Church that was young and vibrant, with a message worth listening to. The very style of John Paul II and his way of conducting himself made him a Pope who was very easy to present on television. Among the thousands of examples one could cite here, we can recall how pictures of the Pope spread around the whole world when, for the first time, he went down to the Basilica of St. Peter on Holy Friday to hear confessions. The impact these images had on world public opinion were probably—at least in the short run—much stronger than many speeches or documents of his.

Before turning to some specific reflections about the world of film and television, we can conclude these opening remarks with some sobering words by St. Josemaría, who said very clearly (and personally, I fully share this view) that the modern means of communication are (at times without any explicit intent) “educators.” “They are educators, and carry out the role—often in a hidden and impersonal way—of teachers. Entrusted to them, almost unconditionally, are the intellects, and even the consciences of millions of people.”

**Literature, film, television, and personal fulfillment**

At times the danger may exist today that Catholics could consider movies and television series as a “foreign” territory, where it is very difficult to introduce not only the Christian message but even a lifestyle consistent with the Christian vision of the human person.

Not only in public opinion but also among those working in the field (especially among Europeans, though considerably less so among Americans who know the market better), many people think that successful narrative products (literature, film, television series) need to go against Christian morality. Unfortunately many specialists in the media often let themselves be led by ideas not based on empirical evidence—much more so than one might imagine. We know that this animosity towards a Christian vision of the human person could never be a requirement for success, since the requirements of God, that is, the moral law, could never be irrational or...
contrary to the human person’s deepest aspirations. And it is confirmed by abundant empirical data, starting with the imperishable timeliness (proven by sales) of authors such as Shakespeare, Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky, and also by the fact that the movies with the greatest success throughout the world today almost always offer content that is consistent with a Christian anthropology.[10]

The reason for this is not hard to find. Any effective story, far from being an arbitrary creation of the imagination, is always, essentially, a response to a great moral question. The best schools of screenwriters are united in affirming that the most effective scripts present a main character who, after confronting a series of ever more challenging problems, is called to make a decision that determines in a definitive way who he or she is or, better, who he or she decides to be and, as a result, to forge one’s own personal destiny.[11] In the great classics of film such as the movies directed by Frank Capra, the hero almost always has to confront ever more challenging situations in the effort to be true to one’s moral principles; and after resisting almost to the limit of one’s strength, salvation comes at the last moment as a reward (frequently unexpected) for being faithful to the moral good. In the Italian movie *Life is Beautiful* (awarded three Oscars and the top box office hit in Italy), the hero defends the innocence of his son to the point of joyfully sacrificing his own life, with the hope that his son can save himself, as later happens. Or to take another example from a film that has enjoyed widespread and permanent success, in *Finding Nemo* Marlin searches for his lost son Nemo, but he has to learn above all to control his own anxiety as a father while little Nemo has to learn to control his impatience. It is not by chance that at the end of the movie, in the culminating moment, the two protagonists are saved together, when they put their trust in each other and rebuild a harmonious relationship.

All of this can be summed up by saying that every good story is an answer to the question, always in some sense radical, of the human person’s happiness and final end. In other words, a good story is also the presentation of a moral principal; it is a moral reflection carried out not in an abstract way, but through a concrete case.

It is also true that rhetorical skill combined with a confused value system can enable an effective author to captivate his or her public and
impose an erroneous anthropological vision. This is not only possible but in fact happens with a certain frequency, above all when a strong appeal is made to the emotions.

Nevertheless, here too we are convinced that the principle expressed in Aristotle’s Rhetoric is still valid: given equal conditions, in itself the truth is always more convincing than error. The reason why relatively few “true” movies enjoy great success lies almost always in the poor artistic quality of the story with a “true” anthropological message, and not in the refusal of people to accept the truth.

These are considerations that are present (without entering into specific technical questions) in the Letter of St. Josemaría that we cited above. The situation does not seem to have changed much since 1946: “the reason for the success and almost complete dominance of the instruments of communication run by anti-Catholics lies not only in the fact that these people arrived first: it is also that ordinarily they are better, from the professional point of view... It is true that one can attract the public’s attention with objects that a morally upright person, a responsible Christian, cannot use. From that point of view we need to admit that the corruptors have an easier task. But it is no less certain that if many Catholics worked in this field, with a knowledge appropriate to its specific demands, they would find a way to attract people through noble means. What one cannot do, with any hope for success, is to take up this work without having first studied and carefully experienced the psychology of each audience; without having a real dominion of the techniques of each means of communication; without having learned how to express oneself effectively—the gift of tongues!—in the language suited to news reporting, to novels, to images, to film scenes, to theatrical action.”[12]

It is interesting to note that frequently the few “good” movies produced, if they are well made, enjoy great success. Some recent examples of film that offer a more or less positive message include the last dozen films of Pixar (from Toy Story on), The Lord of the Rings films and the Harry Potter series. In addition, many financially “smaller” movies that are rich in moral and even directly spiritual values have enjoyed, either locally or worldwide, great success. These films have often won important prizes, and offer high quality content.[13]
Producing movies that are morally sound and financially successful is thus not a contradiction in terms. But it requires considerable effort. Some of the examples cited in the footnotes required ten years of hard work and revision before being brought to the screen. The problem is when people think success is easy and quick to attain, which makes them prey to pessimism when their first attempt fails.

The key professional skill required to be successful in this field is the ability to tell good stories well, which in the audiovisual world brings into play a varied and complex set of professional aptitudes. Moreover, my years working as a consultant for audiovisual productions has convinced me that the principal skill, the absolutely decisive one, is the ability to write good screenplays and evaluate the scripts written by others.

The big problem, therefore, is not that the public wants to see immoral stories. The real problem is that the creators of movie and fiction are rarely people with a Christian outlook. Both recent studies by some Americans, as well as my own experience in Italy and my knowledge of the situation in neighboring countries, make clear that in fact (but not by right!) the film and television environment is dominated by an ideology that is often closed to any transcendent reality, and in certain important anthropological questions far from a Christian view of the human person.

In the end, the reason these negative views hold sway in the audiovisual media is usually because the producers want to make more money. But often, as we have seen, the few “good” movies produced are those that attain the greatest popular success.

It is the so-called “media elite” who impose these ideas on the movie and television industry at the present moment. This group includes surprisingly few people who believe in God, or who find themselves in a stable marriage with children. Rather it includes a great number of people with an unstable family and emotional life, who dedicate themselves soul and body to their work, living a bohemian lifestyle. It is a lifestyle that is prey—not always, but quite frequently—to the dangers of the corruption brought about by an abundance of money, and to the restless tension of an unstable success attained today but possibly gone tomorrow.
Often those working in these fields are not driven by the desire to earn more money, but rather by their own ideological and artistic convictions and by the eagerness to receive recognition on the part of their colleagues: for a cinematographer, a director or an actor, an Oscar is valued much more highly than success at the box office.[17]

Of course there are also deeply religious people working in the world of movies and television, but today in fact they number very few. Nevertheless, a very interesting recent book gathers testimony from Hollywood cinematographers and producers (many of them responsible for well-known movies or television series) who share the desire of living integrally their Christian faith (whether Catholic or Protestant). None of them sees any incompatibility between their personal beliefs and the public’s expectations, as if making “good” movies was equivalent to being condemned to failure.[18] The challenge they see rather is the effort needed to avoid superficiality and to tackle tough questions, and above all (in a hypercompetitive milieu that makes an idol of success) to find a way to live their personal lives with equilibrium and avoid being dragged along by the pressures of their professional environment and the anxiousness to attain great results.

**The drama of life and “virtue ethics”**

Let us return to the connection between the construction of effective stories and moral reflection. As we said above, a well-told story ordinarily involves the question of what the “right” or “good” life is for a particular person in a specific situation—almost always one of struggle with the need to confront a dilemma that is often intellectually challenging.

To speak of a “good life” means, in the end, to speak of morality. Many recent documents of the Magisterium provide useful guidelines here, drawing especially on the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Fathers of the Church. These include John Paul II’s encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (1993), as well as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992) and its *Compendium* (2005). The same is true of many contemporary philosophical works on morality that set forth the foundations for a “virtue ethics.”[19]

Moreover, many of these solid works on moral philosophy have stressed the importance of narratives in the moral formation of the person
and a reconsideration of the fact that a certain unity exists (not an identity, but a close relationship) between philosophy and literature, morality and the narrative form.[20]

In this context, the teaching of St. Josemaría offers a very interesting vision. Without entering into the philosophical foundations of moral theology, he always insisted that the good life is our response to God’s calls to us during our lifetime. For St. Josemaría happiness (that is, a life that is good, the full realization of the human person) was impossible outside of union with God and the loving response to his requests. In his preaching he always stressed the close tie between faithfulness to God and happiness, between a morally good life and the fulfillment of the deepest yearnings of the human heart. Among the many published and unpublished texts that could be cited here, we can highlight two successive points in The Forge:

“I am every day more convinced that happiness in Heaven is for those who know how to be happy on earth.”[21]

“With crystal clarity I see the formula, the secret of happiness, both earthly and eternal. It is not just a matter of accepting the Will of God but of embracing it, of identifying oneself with it—in a word, of loving the Divine Will with a positive act of our own will.

“This, I repeat, is the infallible secret of joy and peace.”[22]

The same stress is found in the teaching of Pope John Paul II on the foundations of the moral life. In an important homily given in the year 2000 on Mount Sinai, he said: “The Ten Commandments are not an arbitrary imposition of a tyrannical Lord. They were written in stone; but before that, they were written on the human heart as the universal moral law, valid in every time and place. Today as always, the Ten Words of the Law provide the only true basis for the lives of individuals, societies and nations. Today as always, they are the only future of the human family. They save man from the destructive force of egoism, hatred and falsehood. They point out all the false gods that draw him into slavery: the love of self to the exclusion of God, the greed for power and pleasure that overturns the order of justice and degrades our human dignity and that of our neighbor... To keep the Commandments is be faithful to God, but it is also to be faithful to ourselves, to our true nature and our deepest
aspirations.”[23] Many authors[24] have pointed to the importance of Karol Wojtyla’s theatrical experience in his youth, not only because of what it taught him about physical presence on the stage and how to dialogue with large crowds, but because it helped him understand the “drama of life” and the importance of human subjectivity and personal freedom when deciding how to incorporate into one’s life the objective moral law based on the universal demands of human nature.

In St. Josemaría, expressed in different language and based on an extensive pastoral and personal experience, we find a similar high regard for human subjectivity and freedom (in an epoch when Catholic pedagogy overvalued external obedience and a concern for results). For example, in a homily published in Christ Is Passing By, he says: “Christ’s work, which his Father entrusted to him, is being carried out. His power runs right through history, bringing true life with it... God wants us to cooperate with him in this task which he is carrying out in the world. He takes a risk with our freedom [italics in the Spanish]... God respects and bows down to our freedom, our imperfection and wretchedness.”[25]

And in another homily, in Friends of God, he writes: “How great a truth is this, which opens the way to freedom and gives it meaning throughout our lives... It is the knowledge that we have come from the hands of God, that the Blessed Trinity looks upon us with predilection, that we are children of so wonderful a Father. I ask my Lord to help us decide to take this truth to heart, to dwell upon it day by day; only then will we be acting as free men. Do not forget: anyone who does not realize that he is a child of God is unaware of the deepest truth about himself. When he acts, he lacks the dominion and self mastery we find in those who love our Lord above all else.”[26]

And in the same homily we read: “Where does our freedom come from? It comes from Christ our Lord. This is the freedom with which he has ransomed us (see Gal 4:31)... We Christians do not have to ask anyone to tell us the true meaning of this gift, because the only freedom that can save man is Christian freedom. I like to speak of the adventure of freedom, because that is how your lives and mine unfold. I insist that it is freely, as children and not as slaves, that we follow the path which our Lord has
marked out for each one of us. We relish our freedom of action as a gift from God."[27]

As a consequence, a “dramatist” (novelist, screenwriter, director) who is a believer can confront any question and problem in life with confidence, going right to the heart of the matter. And the more one succeeds in presenting a “true” picture of the human situation, the more in harmony with the faith will be the answers presented.

Thus the sense of divine filiation preached by St. Josemaría as a central element of Christian spirituality helps to rid us of any feeling of inferiority in the face of the topics that hold sway in today’s culture and the attempt to answer the radical questions of human existence outside of our relationship with God. It is impossible to give a true answer to the question about the meaning of our life (which, in the end, is the goal of literature as well as drama, film and television), without taking into account our relationship with God and his salvific plans for mankind.

Let us look at another passage from the letter we have already cited several times, which seems to us very eloquent: “Don't be alarmed, then, by the situation today, or think that it has no solution. Don't let yourselves be frightened by the fury of the waves stirred up on the sea of this world. Don't seek to flee, because the world is ours: it is God’s handiwork and he has given it to us as an inheritance.... We, who are children of God, brethren of Jesus Christ, share in his inheritance, which is the whole world: si autem filii, et heredes: heredes quidem Dei, coheredes autem Christi . (Rom 8:17); if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ... Our Lord wants to be placed once more at the summit of all human activities. Particularly from us, he expects our service, our help to bring about an even greater harvest of Redemption, which is the only true freedom for mankind. We are working with this hope and this responsibility.”[28]

Hence if movies and television series today are, as it were, an “avant-garde laboratory” for moral and existential reflection[29] (which personally I am convinced is the case), it is even more important now to have Christians in these professional fields. In an attempt to draw a large audience, films often deal with the most controversial topics (at the risk of oversimplifying
the situation, we could say that a burning issue in the nineties was the recognition of homosexuality, while in the past decade it has been euthanasia). This effort to “break new ground” is seen as guaranteeing interest on the part of the public and offers the sense of “novelty” and “daring”[30] that is an important element in attracting viewers.

Therefore the presence of Christians today in the field of screenwriting is of great urgency. For it means being present in the “laboratory” where moral views are being forged that are lived out by a large part of society, especially in the more developed countries where the consumption of these media is so high that it is hard not to see it as a contagious illness that is spreading rapidly.

A personal relationship

Although at first sight seeming to militate against personal relationships, it is not true that the mass media are entirely impersonal. The modern means of communication not only make it possible to reach a large multitude of people in a very short time. In addition, when the viewer or reader is presented with a well-constructed narrative, it is a very effective way to reach the depths of that person’s heart, and thus deeply influence decisions about one’s goals in life.

The fear that the world of movies and television will become a substitute for personal relationships is easy to understand; although in our opinion this fear can be somewhat excessive. Certainly the intemperate and disordered use of these media presents a very real danger for the passive spectator. But reading a good book or watching a good movie can also give rise to emotions that open the doors of our heart. When I am immersed in reading an exciting story, I have the impression that the author of the novel is speaking directly to me. While a movie that draws me into its action so deeply makes me a friend and brother of the main character, creating a strong bond of empathy with the protagonist, whom I come to consider as a real person who can guide me in my own choices in life.[31]

In other words, these media are “mass” regarding the number of people involved, but they are strongly personal in their effect, and generate a very real intimacy.[32]

And this intimacy is engendered by a successful novel with hundreds of
This paradoxical “mass intimacy” is today much easier to perceive thanks to the possibility of readers/spectators commenting on websites and the social net (another way of publicizing a work). Today the authors of successful narrative works receive such an avalanche of commentary and feedback that they could be overwhelmed; but it is, in any case, an empirical confirmation of how these works reach the hearts of a great number of people.\[33\]

This capacity to reach a massive number of people but also to touch the heart of each reader or viewer is perhaps the most delicate aspect of modern communication media. But the union of these two realities makes it even more urgent for us Christians to be present there.

**A great opportunity**

In this context, St. Josemaría’s insistence that lay people become aware of their responsibility to be present at the crossroads of human relationships is especially relevant here. It is difficult to think of places in our day and age with a greater need for those who take their faith seriously. And he highlighted the great detriment to the Church that ensues from the absence of well-formed Christians in these immense worldwide “market places” of film and television.

St. Josemaría also stressed that the “apostolate of public opinion” is everyone’s task and not an isolated “preserve” for highly specialized people. Nevertheless, as we see in a passage from his 1946 Letter cited above, this broadening of Christians’ sense of responsibility in this area in no way eliminates the need for a specific and demanding preparation by those who want to work professionally in these media and influence them positively. It would be foolish to think that good will or good intentions would be sufficient here.\[34\]

Each of us, he insisted, should ask ourselves what we can do to help make Christ present also in this area. This effort may include writing letters to praise or protest about the content (always doing so with a constructive spirit) in a newspaper article, movie or television program; or possibly
organizing viewer or listener associations to exert more influence on the orientation of the media. It will also require being a responsible consumer of these media (thus also exerting an influence by contributing to their success or lack thereof). Some people may be in a position to invest in advertising, and thus select media that show a greater respect for the dignity of the human person. Parents can teach their children to be judicious in their use of the media and how to choose good quality programs; and they can set up film and reading forums for discussing worthwhile novels or movies and television programs, etc.

For St. Josemaría, lay people’s responsibility in this area stemmed from having received Baptism, and was simply a matter of living the social and cultural dimensions of the faith we have received. And we need to do so with a just pluralism (also in tastes and styles that are the result of legitimate preferences), but always with the personal consistency of being Christians “one hundred percent.”

It’s not a utopia

Recently, in the main lecture hall of the Lateran University, a very interesting address was given by Ettore Bernabei, who for fourteen years (from 1961 to 1974) was director general of the Italian public television network RAI. Since 1992, he has been the promotor and president of a television production company that has produced programs with Christian values, which have enjoyed great success in Italy and frequently worldwide.\[35\] He was able to speak with the authority of one who has spent forty years on the frontlines of the demanding and competitive world of television communications: “In my experience in the media I have found that when one tries to inspire programs that further the common good, the public always responds positively.”\[36\]

Many others have had similar experiences in their work in the field of communications.\[37\] Here I want to limit myself to some brief final considerations based on the experience of Ettore Bernabei, with whom the writer of this study has since 1999 worked closely on a number of projects. In the effort to produce high quality programs, the technical resources (into which many people mistakenly invest too much of their energy, diverting it from the narrative, philosophical, and theological aspects involved) are
always a secondary element, which needs to be put at the service of the construction of the story, that is, the content one wants to transmit. Thus the personal has priority over the technical. Lux Vide productions has always placed its emphasis—including investment and use of financial resources—on the phase that in the movie industry is called “development,” that is, the patient, deep and demanding work of screenwriting required to perfect the script for the intended project, sacrificing some of the budget available for staging and production. This strategy, not followed by many producers today, is in the opinion of this writer absolutely the best procedure, and has shown itself to be effective both in the quality of the products as well as in success with viewers.[38]

Certainly the task here is not easy, and the path that has to be followed is a long and arduous one. But in this new century and millennium, there is a renewed awareness on the part of Christians of their responsibility to be present in these media. We are referring both to initiatives fostered by the bishops (for example, the Catholic television station TV2000 in Italy or the renewed efforts of Catholic newspapers such as Avvenire), and also and above all to the personal initiatives on the part of Catholic lay men and women.

This writer’s ten years of experience in this field amply testifies to the fact that truly, as St. Josemaria liked to say, “the divine paths of the earth have been opened up,” also in the media and the world of communication.


[3] Here one could mention, for example, the importance of repeating the same ideas with patience and constancy, changing the presentation and way of saying things, presenting ideas in an attractive way, but without fear of returning again and again to certain key concepts; as well as the different forms that “giving doctrine” can require in diverse contexts and media, etc.

other more specific documents from the same Pontifical Council on various aspects of communications (Pornography and Violence; Ethics of Advertising; Ethics in the Internet, etc.); the messages of Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI for the World Conference on Social Communication; Blessed John Paul II, Apostolic letter *The rapid development* (January 24, 2005). In no. 37 of the encyclical *Redemptoris mission*, (December 7, 1990), John Paul II gives some very important guidelines for our efforts here: “To some degree perhaps, this Areopagus has been neglected. Generally, preference has been given to other means of preaching the Gospel and of Christian education, while the mass media are left to the initiative of individuals or small groups and enter into pastoral planning only in a secondary way. Involvement in the mass media, however, is not meant merely to strengthen the preaching of the Gospel. There is a deeper reality involved here: since the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church’s authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the ‘new culture’ created by modern communications.”


[6] Fulton J. Sheen, who was also for several years Bishop of Rochester, N.Y., and long-time head of the American Society for the Propagation of the Faith, died in 1979. His process of beatification is now underway.


[10] At the present moment (August 2011), the top ten movies in terms of world-wide box office success have been (without taking into account
inflation, and therefore giving contemporary films an advantage): Avatar, Titanic, The Lord of the Rings 3, Pirates of the Caribbean 2, Toy Story 3, the last Harry Potter, another Pirates of the Caribbean, Alice in Wonderland, Transformers 3, and Batman: the Dark Knight. In this ranking, the only surprising inclusion is the pantheistic vision of Avatar, which is a very special case, also in regard to the reasons for its success. The Lord of the Rings is a basically faithful adaptation of a novel with a deeply Christian vision of life; and films such as Toy Story 3 contain human themes in deep harmony with a Christian vision of man. If we look at the top 100 box office successes of all time (data from the website www.imdb.com), the only films that openly conflict with a Christian vision are The Da Vinci Code (in 38th place), and another movie based on a book by the same author, Angels and Demons, which is currently number 91 and which presents less serious moral problems. Among these top 100 films, none of them, in my opinion, presents grave problems from the point of view of sexual or excessively violent content.


[13] Considering only recent movies made in European countries, we could cite here, from Germany, Das Leben der Anderen (The Lives of Others), which cost four million euros and earned 77 million; from France, Des homes et des dieux (Of Gods and Men), which cost 4 million Euros and earned 27 million in that country alone; from Italy Benvenuti al Sud (Welcome to the South) (30 million euros earned in Italy, for a cost of approximately 4 million); and from England, The King’s Speech, which cost 15 million euros and earned approximately 400 million, and won several Oscars, including best picture and best cinematography.

An important exception is the production company Pixar, where almost all the writers and directors are married and have children. The movies produced there, especially *The Incredibles* and *Up*, and to a slightly lesser extent in *Toy Story*, *Finding Nemo* and all their other movies, reflect a much more positive vision of family relationships than that found in most movies produced by Hollywood or by the bohemian élites of the European film world.


See here also Michael Medved, *Hollywood vs. America*, cit. Medved knows the Hollywood environment very well after working for many years as a movie critic.


[22] Ibid., no. 1006.


[27] Ibid., no. 35.


[29] This reality varies of course depending on the country; my considerations are centered above all on Europe, North America and—to a lesser extent—on Latin America. TV movies, miniseries, and—especially in the North American market—long television series often present very sophisticated narrative reflections on life (for example, the series *Lost* or, in a very different way, a show like *The Simpson’s*).

[30] Bobette Buster, a well-known Hollywood consultant and adjunct professor of screenwriting at the University of Southern California, often stresses in her classes how movies with great impact need to confront “daring” topics and issues. She is referring here not to the trite tendency to present a shocking or non-conventional plot (a shortcut frequently used by second-rate writers, and that usually is not very effective in drawing interest), but rather to the daring needed to tackle moral and spiritual topics. Examples that could be cited here are two of the films mentioned above: *The Lives of Others*, on resisting oppression by a Communist regime, and *Life is Beautiful*, which deals with defending the innocence of a young boy in extreme circumstances.


A film director mentioned recently in a public interview how he had been surprised by an e-mail from a viewer. This woman said that, after seeing one of his movies that weekend (in which someone chooses to have an abortion, but another person says clearly that “one cannot dispose of children”), she had canceled her appointment to have an abortion. A former student of mine has written a very successful novel (with 400,000 copies sold in Italy in two years and translations in more than fifteen languages) that confronts deep existential questions about life with great wisdom. He has been receiving an immense number of e-mail messages, and commentaries on blogs and Facebook, that testify to how his short novel has changed the life of one person after another, and has deeply touched the hearts of thousands of people: from a thirty five year old woman who said that she had changed her mind and decided to have children, to people who write that “it has changed my way of seeing the world.” Reading the commentaries on this novella on the social network sites (Facebook, author’s blog, etc.) has been extraordinarily instructive for me.

Barbara Nicolosi, a teacher and screen writer who works in Hollywood, has often stressed this point in recent years. See, for example, her essay in the volume *Behind the Screen*, cited above, and—among her more recent writings—the interview granted to *Aletheia Writing Magazine*, Summer 2011, pp. 18ff. (also available at http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/Storytelling-a-Dying-Art-Nick-Muzekari-08-05-2011).
This production company, which enjoys quite a large budget, specializes in television series that frequently deal with historical and religious themes, and that explicitly aim at offering entertainment in accord with Christian values. Many of its programs have had record audiences in Italy, and have been broadcast widely in other countries. Some of these programs have been nominated for and also received the Emmy prize, which is considered the “Oscar” of television throughout the world.

Ettore Bernabei, *Lectio magistralis*, Pontifical University of the Lateran, Rome, May 16, 2011, partially reproduced in *L’Osservatore Romano*, 16-17 May 2011, p. 4, under the title “La televisione può salvarci dalla Torre di Babele.” Some important reflections on his work can also be found in Ettore Bernabei (with Gabriele La Porta), *Tv qualità. Terra promessa*, Eri, Roma 2003.

For example, the efforts of Act One (www.actoneprogram.com) in Los Angeles, or in the Protestant world, the production house Walden Media. I would also include here my own experience in setting up in 2000, with the help of professional colleagues at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan, what is now the Master’s Program in Fiction and Cinema.

In contrast, a frequent temptation when planning and producing a movie or a television program, and for educational centers such as universities, is to view the essential thing as being at the forefront in technology, to have the newest instruments and control devices, etc. In our opinion, the key goal for a university is to form professionals with a broad and deep culture (and with a solid grounding in the faith). And in the field of producing programs, to enable people to conceptually develop projects in the required depth (and therefore also to give them the time and financial resources required to work as well as possible). Today writers often launch out to produce a script before studying and developing their projects carefully. And thus unfortunately it is very easy to waste a great deal of money in movies and television.