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

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

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

The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness, and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew."[1] Pope Francis begins his Apostolic Exhortation Evangelium Gaudium with these words, recalling the Church’s missionary role in the contemporary world. In encountering, in discovering the Person of Jesus, God made man, we find our salvation, and with it, our joy.

The Roman Pontiff goes right to the heart of the Gospel, where the beauty of God’s salvific love shines forth, shown in Christ death and resurrection.[2] This is the Good News, the announcement the Church wants to bring to every human being. The Pope puts us on guard against certain challenges and temptations we may encounter here, such as worldliness, violence, selfishness, pessimism, etc., and points to ways to overcome them.

Pope Francis stresses the role that each of the baptized is called upon to play in spreading the Gospel message. Christians will proclaim the Gospel joyfully if they themselves, first of all, experience this encounter with Christ, through the sacraments and prayer, which spurs them to transmit their own experience to others: “The primary reason for evangelizing is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to ever greater love of him.”[3] To enkindle the hearts of men and women today (see Lk 24:32), he points to the central role of the preaching of the God’s word, and suggests ways priests can prepare to do so effectively.[4]

We are also invited to rediscover the power of the message of Christian fraternity, which needs to have “a real effect on our lives and in our communities.”[5] In this context he considers the importance of the social inclusion of the poor,[6] and the need to foster peace and dialogue,[7] with an eye to “the future of humanity.”[8] God wants to fill all men and women with joy.

This apostolic exhortation is undoubtedly a call to launch out “into the deep” (see Lk 5:4), striving to imbue all human realities with the Gospel
message, certain that we can count on God’s all-powerful help. “Although we might be personally deficient, the grace of God converts us into useful instruments for aiding others. Regardless of our shortcomings, we are called to share with others the good news that God wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth (1 Tim 2:4). The world and the Church need “Spirit-filled evangelizers,”[10] who will open themselves without fear to the action of the Holy Spirit, who pray and work, knowing that we have Mary as the Mother and Star of the new evangelization.

[3] Ibid., no. 264.
[5] Ibid., no. 179.
[8] Ibid., no. 185.
HOLY SEE

• The Roman Pontiff
• The Roman Curia
Dear Young Friends:

Seeing you all present here today, I think of the story of Saint Francis of Assisi. In front of the crucifix he heard the voice of Jesus saying to him: “Francis, go, rebuild my house.” The young Francis responded readily and generously to the Lord’s call to rebuild his house. But which house? Slowly but surely, Francis came to realize that it was not a question of repairing a stone building, but about doing his part for the life of the Church. It was a matter of being at the service of the Church, loving her and working to make the countenance of Christ shine ever more brightly in her.

Today too, as always, the Lord needs you, young people, for his Church. My friends, the Lord needs you! Today too, he is calling each of you to follow him in his Church and to be missionaries. The Lord is calling you today! Not the masses, but you, and you, and you, each one of you. Listen to what he is saying to you in your heart. I think that we can learn something from what has taken place in these days, of how we had to cancel, due to bad weather, this Vigil in the Campus Fidei, at Guaratiba. Is the Lord not telling us, perhaps, that we ourselves are the true field of faith, the true Campus Fidei, and not some geographical location? Yes, it is true — each one of us, each one of you, me, everyone! To be missionary disciples means to know that we are the Field of Faith of God! Starting with the name of the place where we are, Campus Fidei, the field of faith, I have thought of three images that can help us understand better what it means to be a disciple and a missionary. First, a field is a place for sowing seeds; second, a field is a training ground; and third, a field is a construction site.

1. First: A field is a place for sowing seeds. We all know the parable where Jesus speaks of a sower who went out to sow seeds in the field; some
seed fell on the path, some on rocky ground, some among thorns, and could not grow; other seed fell on good soil and brought forth much fruit (cf. Mt 13:1-9). Jesus himself explains the meaning of the parable: the seed is the word of God sown in our hearts (cf. Mt 13:18-23). Today... every day, but today in a particular way, Jesus is sowing the seed. When we accept the word of God, then we are the Field of Faith! Please, let Christ and his word enter your life; let the seed of the Word of God enter, let it blossom, and let it grow. God will take care of everything, but let him work in you and bring about this growth.

Jesus tells us that the seed which fell on the path or on the rocky ground or among the thorns bore no fruit. I believe that we can ask ourselves honestly: What kind of ground are we? What kind of ground do we want to be? Maybe sometimes we are like the path: we hear the Lord’s word but it changes nothing in our lives because we let ourselves be numbed by all the superficial voices competing for our attention. I ask you, but do not respond immediately; everyone respond in his or her own heart: am I a young person who is numb? Or perhaps we are like the rocky ground: we receive Jesus with enthusiasm, but we falter and, faced with difficulties, we don’t have the courage to swim against the tide. Everyone of us respond in his or her heart: am I courageous or am I a coward? Or maybe we are like the thorny ground: negativity, negative feelings choke the Lord’s word in us (cf. Mt 13:18-22). Do I have the habit of playing both sides in my heart: do I make a good impression for God or for the devil? Do I want to receive the seed from Jesus and at the same time water the thorns and the weeds that grow in my heart? But today I am sure that the seed is able to fall on good soil. We are listening to these witnesses, of how the seed has fallen on good soil. “No, Father, I am not good soil; I am a disaster, and I am full of stones, of thorns, of everything.” Yes, maybe this is so on the surface, but free a little piece, a small piece of good soil, and let the seed fall there and watch how it grows. I know that you want to be good soil, true Christians, authentic Christians, not part-time Christians: “starchy,” aloof and Christian in “apparence only.” I know that you don’t want to be duped by a false freedom, always at the beck and call of momentary fashions and fads. I know that you are aiming high, at long-lasting decisions which are meaningful. Is that true, or am I wrong? Am I right? Good; if it is true, let’s do this: in silence, let us all look into our
hearts and each one of us tell Jesus that we want to receive the seed of his Word. Say to him: Jesus, look upon the stones, the thorns, and the weeds that I have, but look also upon this small piece of ground that I offer to you so that the seed may enter my heart. In silence, let us allow the seed of Jesus to enter our hearts. Remember this moment. Everyone knows the seed that has been received. Allow it to grow, and God will nurture it.

2. The field. Beyond being a place of sowing, the field is a training ground. Jesus asks us to follow him for life, he asks us to be his disciples, to “play on his team.” Most of you love sports! Here in Brazil, as in other countries, football is a national passion. Right? Now, what do players do when they are asked to join a team? They have to train, and to train a lot! The same is true of our lives as the Lord’s disciples. Saint Paul, describing Christians, tells us: “athletes deny themselves all sorts of things; they do this to win a crown of leaves that withers, but we a crown that is imperishable” (1 Cor 9:25). Jesus offers us something bigger than the World Cup! Something bigger than the World Cup! Jesus offers us the possibility of a fruitful life, a life of happiness; he also offers us a future with him, an endless future, in eternal life. That is what Jesus offers us. But he asks us to pay admission, and the cost of admission is that we train ourselves “to get in shape,” so that we can face every situation in life undaunted, bearing witness to our faith, by talking with him in prayer. Father, are you asking us all to pray? I ask you all … but reply in the silence of your heart, not aloud: do I pray? Do I speak with Jesus, or am I frightened of silence? Do I allow the Holy Spirit to speak in my heart? Do I ask Jesus: what do you want me to do, what do you want from my life? This is training. Ask Jesus, speak to Jesus, and if you make a mistake in your life, if you should fall, if you should do something wrong, don’t be afraid. Jesus, look at what I have done, what must I now do? Speak continually with Jesus, in the good times and in the bad, when you do right, and when you do wrong. Do not fear him! This is prayer. And through this, you train yourselves in dialogue with Jesus, in this path of being missionary disciples. By the sacraments, which make his life grow within us and conform us to Christ. By loving one another, learning to listen, to understand, to forgive, to be accepting and to help others, everybody, with no one excluded or ostracized. Dear young people, be true “athletes of Christ”!
3. And third: A field is a construction site. We are seeing this happen before us with our own eyes: young people have engaged and given themselves to the work of building up the Church. When our heart is good soil which receives the word of God, when “we build up a sweat” in trying to live as Christians, we experience something tremendous: we are never alone, we are part of a family of brothers and sisters, all journeying on the same path: we are part of the Church. These young people were not alone, but together they created a path and built up the Church; together they have done what Saint Francis did, built up and repaired the Church. I ask you: do you want to build up the Church? [Yes …] Are you encouraged to do so? [Yes …] And tomorrow, will you have forgotten the “yes” you have spoken today? [No …] That makes me happy! We are part of the Church, indeed, we are building up the Church and we are making history. Young people, please: don’t put yourselves at the tail end of history. Be active members! Go on the offensive! Play down the field, build a better world, a world of brothers and sisters, a world of justice, of love, of peace, of fraternity, of solidarity. Play always on the offensive! Saint Peter tells us that we are living stones, which form a spiritual edifice (cf. 1 Pet 2:5). As we look at this platform, we see that it is in the shape of a church, built up with living stones. In the Church of Jesus, we ourselves are the living stones. Jesus is asking us to build up his Church; each one of us is a living stone, a small part of the edifice; when the rain comes, if this piece is missing, there are leaks and water comes in. Don’t build a little chapel which holds only a small group of persons. Jesus asks us to make his living Church so large that it can hold all of humanity, that it can be a home for everyone! To me, to you, to each of us he says: “Go and make disciples of all nations.” Tonight, let us answer him: Yes, Lord, I too want to be a living stone; together we want to build up the Church of Jesus! I want to go forth and build up the Church of Christ! Are you eager to make this happen again? I want to go out and build up the Church of Christ, let us say this together … [the young people repeat]. You must always remember that you have said this together.

Your young hearts want to build a better world. I have been closely following the news reports of the many young people who throughout the world have taken to the streets in order to express their desire for a more
just and fraternal society. Young people in the streets. It is the young who want to be the protagonists of change. Please, don’t leave it to others to be the protagonists of change. You are the ones who hold the future! You … Through you the future is fulfilled in the world. I ask you also to be protagonists of this transformation. Continue to overcome apathy, offering a Christian response to the social and political anxieties, which are arising in various parts of the world. I ask you to be builders of the world, to work for a better world. Dear young people, please, don’t be observers of life, but get involved. Jesus did not remain an observer, but he immersed himself. Don’t be observers, but immerse yourself in the reality of life, as Jesus did.

But one question remains: Where do we start? Whom do we ask to begin this work? Some people once asked Mother Teresa of Calcutta what needed to change in the Church, and which wall should they start with? They asked her, where is the starting point? And she replied, you and I are the starting point! This woman showed determination! She knew where to start. And today I make her words my own and I say to you: shall we begin? Where? With you and me! Each one of you, once again in silence, ask yourself: if I must begin with myself, where exactly do I start? Each one of you, open his or her heart, so that Jesus may tell you where to start.

Dear friends, never forget that you are the field of faith! You are Christ’s athletes! You are called to build a more beautiful Church and a better world. Let us lift our gaze to Our Lady, Mary helps us to follow Jesus, she gives us the example by her own “yes” to God: “I am the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me as you say” (Lk 1:38). All together, let us join Mary in saying to God: let it be done to me as you say. Amen!

Torna ai contenuti

Homily at the Mass for the 28th World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (July 28, 2013)

Dear brothers and sisters,

Dear young people,
“Go and make disciples of all nations.” With these words, Jesus is speaking to each one of us, saying: “It was wonderful to take part in World Youth Day, to live the faith together with young people from the four corners of the earth, but now you must go, now you must pass on this experience to others.” Jesus is calling you to be a disciple with a mission! Today, in the light of the word of God that we have heard, what is the Lord saying to us? What is the Lord saying to us? Three simple ideas: Go, do not be afraid, and serve.

1. Go. During these days here in Rio, you have been able to enjoy the wonderful experience of meeting Jesus, meeting him together with others, and you have sensed the joy of faith. But the experience of this encounter must not remain locked up in your life or in the small group of your parish, your movement, or your community. That would be like withholding oxygen from a flame that was burning strongly. Faith is a flame that grows stronger the more it is shared and passed on, so that everyone may know, love and confess Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and history (cf. Rom 10:9).

Careful, though! Jesus did not say: “go, if you would like to, if you have the time,” but he said: “Go and make disciples of all nations.” Sharing the experience of faith, bearing witness to the faith, proclaiming the Gospel: this is a command that the Lord entrusts to the whole Church, and that includes you; but it is a command that is born not from a desire for domination, from the desire for power, but from the force of love, from the fact that Jesus first came into our midst and did not give us just a part of himself, but he gave us the whole of himself, he gave his life in order to save us and to show us the love and mercy of God. Jesus does not treat us as slaves, but as people who are free, as friends, as brothers and sisters; and he not only sends us, he accompanies us, he is always beside us in our mission of love.

Where does Jesus send us? There are no borders, no limits: he sends us to everyone. The Gospel is for everyone, not just for some. It is not only for those who seem closer to us, more receptive, more welcoming. It is for everyone. Do not be afraid to go and to bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away, most indifferent. The Lord seeks all, he wants everyone to feel the warmth of his mercy and his love.
In particular, I would like Christ’s command: “Go” to resonate in you young people from the Church in Latin America, engaged in the continental mission promoted by the Bishops. Brazil, Latin America, the whole world needs Christ! Saint Paul says: “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16). This continent has received the proclamation of the Gospel which has marked its history and borne much fruit. Now this proclamation is entrusted also to you, that it may resound with fresh power. The Church needs you, your enthusiasm, your creativity and the joy that is so characteristic of you. A great Apostle of Brazil, Blessed José de Anchieta, set off on the mission when he was only nineteen years old. Do you know what the best tool is for evangelizing the young? Another young person. This is the path for all of you to follow!

2. Do not be afraid. Some people might think: “I have no particular preparation, how can I go and proclaim the Gospel?” My dear friend, your fear is not so very different from that of Jeremiah, as we have just heard in the reading, when he was called by God to be a prophet. “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.” God says the same thing to you as he said to Jeremiah: “Be not afraid... for I am with you to deliver you” (Jer 1:7,8). He is with us!

“Do not be afraid!” When we go to proclaim Christ, it is he himself who goes before us and guides us. When he sent his disciples on mission, he promised: “I am with you always” (Mt 28:20). And this is also true for us! Jesus never leaves anyone alone! He always accompanies us.

And then, Jesus did not say: “One of you go,” but “All of you go”: we are sent together. Dear young friends, be aware of the companionship of the whole Church and also the communion of the saints on this mission. When we face challenges together, then we are strong, we discover resources we did not know we had. Jesus did not call the Apostles to live in isolation, he called them to form a group, a community. I would like to address you, dear priests concelebrating with me at this Eucharist: you have come to accompany your young people, and this is wonderful, to share this experience of faith with them! Certainly he has rejuvenated all of you. The young make everyone feel young. But this experience is only a stage on the journey. Please, continue to accompany them with generosity and joy, help them to become actively engaged in the Church; never let them feel alone!
And here I wish to thank from the heart the youth ministry teams from the movements and new communities that are accompanying the young people in their experience of being Church, in such a creative and bold way. Go forth and don’t be afraid!

3. The final word: serve. The opening words of the psalm that we proclaimed are: “Sing to the Lord a new song” (Psalm 95:1). What is this new song? It does not consist of words, it is not a melody, it is the song of your life, it is allowing our life to be identified with that of Jesus, it is sharing his sentiments, his thoughts, his actions. And the life of Jesus is a life for others. The life of Jesus is a life for others. It is a life of service.

In our Second Reading today, Saint Paul says: “I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more” (1 Cor 9:19). In order to proclaim Jesus, Paul made himself “a slave to all.” Evangelizing means bearing personal witness to the love of God, it is overcoming our selfishness, it is serving by bending down to wash the feet of our brethren, as Jesus did.

Three ideas: Go, do not be afraid, and serve. Go, do not be afraid, and serve. If you follow these three ideas, you will experience that the one who evangelizes is evangelized, the one who transmits the joy of faith receives more joy. Dear young friends, as you return to your homes, do not be afraid to be generous with Christ, to bear witness to his Gospel. In the first Reading, when God sends the prophet Jeremiah, he gives him the power to “pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant” (1:10). It is the same for you. Bringing the Gospel is bringing God’s power to pluck up and break down evil and violence, to destroy and overthrow the barriers of selfishness, intolerance and hatred, so as to build a new world. Dear young friends, Jesus Christ is counting on you! The Church is counting on you! The Pope is counting on you! May Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, always accompany you with her tenderness: “Go and make disciples of all nations.” Amen.

Torna ai contenuti

Homily at the Vigil of the Prayer for Peace, St. Peter’s Square (September 7, 2013)
“And God saw that it was good” (Gen 1:12, 18, 21, 25). The biblical account of the beginning of the history of the world and of humanity speaks to us of a God who looks at creation, in a sense contemplating it, and declares: “It is good.” This, dear brothers and sisters, allows us to enter into God’s heart and, precisely from within him, to receive his message.

We can ask ourselves: what does this message mean? What does it say to me, to you, to all of us?

1. It says to us simply that this, our world, in the heart and mind of God, is the “house of harmony and peace,” and that it is the space in which everyone is able to find their proper place and feel “at home,” because it is “good.” All of creation forms a harmonious and good unity, but above all humanity, made in the image and likeness of God, is one family, in which relationships are marked by a true fraternity not only in words: the other person is a brother or sister to love, and our relationship with God, who is love, fidelity and goodness, mirrors every human relationship and brings harmony to the whole of creation. God’s world is a world where everyone feels responsible for the other, for the good of the other. This evening, in reflection, fasting and prayer, each of us deep down should ask ourselves: Is this really the world that I desire? Is this really the world that we all carry in our hearts? Is the world that we want really a world of harmony and peace, in ourselves, in our relations with others, in families, in cities, in and between nations? And does not true freedom mean choosing ways in this world that lead to the good of all and are guided by love?

2. But then we wonder: Is this the world in which we are living? Creation retains its beauty which fills us with awe and it remains a good work. But there is also “violence, division, disagreement, war.” This occurs when man, the summit of creation, stops contemplating beauty and goodness, and withdraws into his own selfishness.

When man thinks only of himself, of his own interests and places himself in the center, when he permits himself to be captivated by the idols of dominion and power, when he puts himself in God’s place, then all relationships are broken and everything is ruined; then the door opens to violence, indifference, and conflict. This is precisely what the passage in the Book of Genesis seeks to teach us in the story of the Fall: man enters into
conflict with himself, he realizes that he is naked and he hides himself because he is afraid (cf. Gen 3:10), he is afraid of God’s glance; he accuses the woman, she who is flesh of his flesh (cf. v. 12); he breaks harmony with creation, he begins to raise his hand against his brother to kill him. Can we say that from harmony he passes to “disharmony”? No, there is no such thing as “disharmony”; there is either harmony or we fall into chaos, where there is violence, argument, conflict, fear....

It is exactly in this chaos that God asks man’s conscience: “Where is Abel your brother?” and Cain responds: “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen 4:9). We too are asked this question, it would be good for us to ask ourselves as well: Am I really my brother’s keeper? Yes, you are your brother’s keeper! To be human means to care for one another! But when harmony is broken, a metamorphosis occurs: the brother who is to be cared for and loved becomes an adversary to fight, to kill. What violence occurs at that moment, how many conflicts, how many wars have marked our history! We need only look at the suffering of so many brothers and sisters. This is not a question of coincidence, but the truth: we bring about the rebirth of Cain in every act of violence and in every war. All of us! And even today we continue this history of conflict between brothers, even today we raise our hands against our brother. Even today, we let ourselves be guided by idols, by selfishness, by our own interests, and this attitude persists. We have perfected our weapons, our conscience has fallen asleep, and we have sharpened our ideas to justify ourselves. As if it were normal, we continue to sow destruction, pain, death! Violence and war lead only to death, they speak of death! Violence and war are the language of death!

After the chaos of the flood, when it stopped raining, a rainbow appeared and the dove returned with an olive branch. Today, I think also of that olive tree which representatives of various religions planted in the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires in 2000, asking that there be no more chaos, asking that there be no more war, asking for peace.

3. And at this point I ask myself: Is it possible to walk the path of peace? Can we get out of this spiral of sorrow and death? Can we learn once again to walk and live in the ways of peace? Invoking the help of God, under the maternal gaze of the Salus Populi Romani, Queen of Peace, I say: Yes, it is possible for everyone! From every corner of the world tonight, I
would like to hear us cry out: Yes, it is possible for everyone! Or even
better, I would like for each one of us, from the least to the greatest,
including those called to govern nations, to respond: Yes, we want it! My
Christian faith urges me to look to the Cross. How I wish that all men and
women of good will would look to the Cross if only for a moment! There,
we can see God’s reply: violence is not answered with violence, death is not
answered with the language of death. In the silence of the Cross, the
uproar of weapons ceases and the language of reconciliation, forgiveness,
dialogue, and peace is spoken. This evening, I ask the Lord that we
Christians, and our brothers and sisters of other religions, and every man
and woman of good will, cry out forcefully: violence and war are never the
way to peace! Let everyone be moved to look into the depths of his or her
conscience and listen to that word which says: Leave behind the self-
interest that hardens your heart, overcome the indifference that makes your
heart insensitive towards others, conquer your deadly reasoning, and open
yourself to dialogue and reconciliation. Look upon your brother’s sorrow —
I think of the children: look upon these... look at the sorrow of your
brother, stay your hand and do not add to it, rebuild the harmony that has
been shattered; and all this achieved not by conflict but by encounter! May
the noise of weapons cease! War always marks the failure of peace, it is
always a defeat for humanity. Let the words of Pope Paul VI resound
again: “No more one against the other, no more, never!... war never again,
itself only in peace, a peace which is not separate from the demands of
justice but which is fostered by personal sacrifice, clemency, mercy and
love” (World Day of Peace Message, 1975). Brothers and Sisters,
forgiveness, dialogue, reconciliation — these are the words of peace, in
beloved Syria, in the Middle East, in all the world! Let us pray this evening
for reconciliation and peace, let us work for reconciliation and peace, and
let us all become, in every place, men and women of reconciliation and
peace! So may it be.
A News Summary of the Encyclical Lumen Fidei (July 5, 2013)

Published below is a broad summary of Pope Francis' first encyclical, “Lumen Fidei,” published on July 5 and signed on June 29, 2013.

Lumen fidei — The light of faith (Lumen Fidei) is the first Encyclical signed by Pope Francis. Divided into four chapters, plus an introduction and a conclusion, the Pontiff explains that the Letter supplements Benedict XVI’s Encyclicals on charity and hope, and takes up the “fine work” carried out by the Pope Emeritus, who had already “almost completed” the Encyclical on faith. The Holy Father has now added “further contributions” to this existing “first draft.”

The introduction (nos. 1-7) of Lumen Fidei illustrates the motivations at the basis of the document: firstly, it reiterates the characteristics of light typical of faith, able to illuminate all man’s existence, to assist him in distinguishing good from evil, especially in this modern age in which belief is opposed to searching and faith is regarded as an illusion, a leap into the void that impedes man’s freedom. Secondly, Lumen Fidei — precisely in this Year of Faith, 50 years following the Second Vatican Council, a “Council on faith”— seeks to reinvigorate the perception of the breadth of the horizons faith opens so that it might be confessed in unity and integrity. Indeed, faith is not a condition to be taken for granted, but rather a gift from God, to be nurtured and reinforced. “Who believes, sees,” the Pope writes, since the light of faith comes from God and is able to illuminate all aspects of man’s existence: it proceeds from the past, from the memory of Jesus’ life, but also comes from the future as it opens up vast horizons.

Chapter One (nos. 8-22): We have believed in love (1 Jn 4:16). Referring to the biblical figure of Abraham, in this chapter faith is explained as “listening” to the word of God, the “call” to come out from the isolated self in order to open oneself to a new life and the “promise” of the future, which makes possible the continuity of our path through time, linked so closely to hope. Faith also has a connotation of “paternity,” because the God who calls us is not a stranger, but is God the Father, the
wellspring of the goodness that is at the origin of and sustains everything. In the history of Israel, faith is opposed to idolatry, which man is broken down in the multiplicity of his desires and “his life story disintegrates into a myriad of unconnected instants,” denying him the time to await the fulfilment of the promise. On the contrary, faith is trust in God’s merciful love, which always welcomes and forgives, and which straightens “the crooked lines of our history”; it is the willingness to allow oneself to be transformed anew by “God’s free gift, which calls for humility and the courage to trust and to entrust; it enables us to see the luminous path leading to the encounter of God and humanity, the history of salvation” (no. 14). And herein lies the “paradox” of faith: constantly turning to the Lord gives humanity stability, liberating us from idols.

*Lumen Fidei* then turns to the figure of Jesus, the mediator who opens to us to a truth greater than ourselves, the manifestation of God’s love that is the foundation of faith: “in contemplating Jesus’ death … faith grows stronger,” as in this He reveals His unshakeable love for mankind. His resurrection renders Christ a “trustworthy witness,” “deserving of faith,” through Whom God works truly throughout history, determining its final destiny. But there is a “decisive aspect” of faith in Jesus: “participation in His way of seeing.” Faith, indeed, looks not only to Jesus but also from Jesus’ point of view, with His eyes. The Pope uses an analogy to explain that, just as how in our daily lives we place our trust in “others who know better than we do” — the architect, the pharmacist, the lawyer — also for faith we need someone who is reliable and expert “where God is concerned” and Jesus is “the one who makes God known to us.” Therefore, we believe Jesus when we accept his Word, and we believe in Jesus when we welcome Him in our life and entrust ourselves to Him. Indeed, his incarnation ensures that faith does not separate us from reality, but rather helps us to grasp its deepest meaning. Thanks to faith, man saves himself, as he opens himself to a Love that precedes and transforms him from within. And this is the true action of the Holy Spirit: “The Christian can see with the eyes of Jesus and share in His mind, His filial disposition, because he or she shares in his love, which is the Spirit” (no.21). Without the presence of the Spirit it is impossible to confess the Lord. Therefore “the life of the believer becomes an ecclesial existence,” since faith is confessed within the body of the Church, as the “concrete communion of
believers.” Christians are “one” without losing their individuality and in the service of others they come into their own. Thus, “faith is not a private matter, a completely individualistic notion or a personal opinion,” but rather “it comes from hearing, and is meant to find expression in words and to be proclaimed.”

Chapter Two (nos. 23-36): Unless you believe, you will not understand (Is 7:9). The Pope shows the close link between faith and truth, the reliable truth of God, His faithful presence throughout history. “Faith without truth does not save,” writes the Pope; “It remains a beautiful story, the projection of our deep yearning for happiness.” And nowadays, given “the crisis of truth in our age,” it is more necessary than ever before to recall this link, as contemporary culture tends to accept only the truth of technology, what man manages to build and measure through science, truth that “works,” or rather the single truths valid only for the individual and not in the service of the common good. Today we regard with suspicion the “Truth itself, the truth which would comprehensively explain our life as individuals and in society,” as it is erroneously associated with the truths claimed by twentieth-century forms of totalitarianism. However, this leads to a “massive amnesia in our contemporary world” which — to the advantage of relativism and in fear of fanaticism — forgets this question of truth, of the origin of all — the question of God. Lumen Fidei then underlines the link between faith and love, understood not as “an ephemeral emotion,” but as God’s great love which transforms us within and grants us new eyes with which we may see reality. If, therefore, faith is linked to truth and love, then “love and truth are inseparable,” because only true love withstands the test of time and becomes the source of knowledge. And since the knowledge of faith is born of God’s faithful love, “truth and fidelity go together.” The truth that discloses faith is a truth centered on the encounter with Christ incarnate, Who, coming among us, has touched us and granted us His grace, transforming our hearts.

At this point, the Pope begins a broad reflection on the “dialogue between faith and reason,” on the truth in today’s world, in which it is often reduced to a “subjective authenticity,” as common truth inspires fear, and is often identified with the intransigent demands of totalitarianism. Instead, if the truth is that of God’s love, then it is not imposed violently
and does not crush the individual. Therefore, faith is not intransigent, and the believer is not arrogant. On the contrary, faith renders the believer humble and leads to co-existence with and respect for others. From this, it follows that faith lead to dialogue in all fields: in that of science, as it reawakens the critical sense and broadens the horizons of reason, inviting us to behold Creation with wonder; in the interreligious context, in which Christianity offers its own contribution; in dialogue with non-believers who ceaselessly search, who “strive to act as if God existed,” because “God is light and can be find also by those who seek him with a sincere heart.” “Anyone who sets off on the path of doing good to others is already drawing near to God,” the Pope emphasizes. Finally, *Lumen Fidei* speaks about theology and confirms that it is impossible without faith, since God is not a simple “object” but rather the Subject who makes Himself known. Theology is participation in the knowledge that God has of Himself; as a consequence theology must be placed at the service of Christian faith and the ecclesial Magisterium is not a limit to theological freedom, but rather one of its constitutive elements as it ensures contact with its original source, the Word of Christ.

Chapter Three (nos. 37-49): I delivered to you what I also received (*1 Cor* 15:3). This chapter focuses entirely on the importance of evangelization: he who has opened himself to God’s love cannot keep this gift for himself, writes the Pope. The light of Jesus shines on the face of Christians and spreads in this way, is transmitted by contact like a flame that ignites from another, and passes from generation to generation, through the uninterrupted chain of witnesses to the faith. This leads to a link between faith and memory as God’s love keeps all times united, making us Christ’s contemporaries. Furthermore, it is “impossible to believe on our own,” because faith is not “an individual decision,” but rather opens “I” to “we” and always occurs “within the community of the Church.” Therefore, “those who believe are never alone,” as he discovers that the spaces of the self enlarge and generate new relations that enrich life.

There is, however, “a special means” by which faith may be transmitted: the Sacraments, in which an “incarnate memory” is communicated. The Pope first mentions Baptism — both of children and adults, in the form of the catechumenate — which reminds us that faith is
not the work of an isolated individual, an act that may be carried out alone, but instead must be received, in ecclesial communion. “No-one baptizes himself,” explains Lumen Fidei. Furthermore, since the baptized child cannot confess the faith himself but must instead be supported by parents and godparents, the “cooperation between Church and family” is important. Secondly, the Encyclical refers to the Eucharist, “precious nourishment for faith,” an “act of remembrance, a making present of the mystery,” which “leads from the visible world to the invisible,” teaching us to experience the depth of reality. The Pope then considers the confession of the faith, the Creed, in which the believer not only confesses faith but is involved in the truth that he confesses; prayer, Our Father, by which the Christian learns to see through Christ’s eyes; the Decalogue, understood not as “a set of negative commands” but rather as “concrete directions” to enter into dialogue with God, “to be embraced by His mercy,” the “path of gratitude” towards the fullness of communion with God. Finally, the Pope underlines the there is one faith because of the “oneness of the God who is known and confessed,” because it is directed towards the one Lord, who grants us “a common gaze” and “is shared by the whole Church, which is one body and one Spirit.” Therefore, given that there is one faith alone, it follows that is must be confessed in all its purity and integrity: “the unity of faith is the unity of the Church”; to subtract something from faith is to subtract something from the veracity of communion. Furthermore, since the unity of faith is that of a living organism, it is able to assimilate all it encounters, demonstrating itself to be universal, catholic, illuminating and able to lead all the cosmos and all history to its finest expression. This unity is guaranteed by the apostolic succession.

Fourth chapter (nos. 50-60): God prepares a city for them (Heb 11:16)
This chapter explains the link between faith and the common good, which leads to the creation of a place in which men and women may live together with others. Faith, which is born of the love of God, strengthens the bonds of humanity and places itself at the service of justice, rights and peace. This is why it does not distance itself from the world and is not unrelated to the real commitments of contemporary man. On the contrary, without the love of God in which we can place our trust, the bonds between people would be based only on utility, interests and fear. Instead faith grasps the deepest foundation of human relationships, their definitive destiny in God, and
places them at the service of the common good. Faith “is for all, it is a
common good”; its purpose is not merely to build the hereafter but to help
in edifying our societies in order that they may proceed together towards a
future of hope.

The Encyclical then considers those areas illuminated by faith: first and
foremost, the family based on marriage, understood as a stable union
between man and woman. This is born of the recognition and acceptance
of the goodness of sexual differentiation and, based on love in Christ,
promises “a love for ever” and recognises love as the creator that leads to
the begetting of children. Then, youth; here the Pope cites the World
Youth Days, in which young people demonstrate “the joy of faith” and
their commitment to live faith solidly and generously. “Young people want
to live life to the fullest,” writes the Pope. “Encountering Christ … enlarges
the horizons of existence, gives it a firm hope which will not disappoint.
Faith is no refuge for the fainthearted, but something which enhances our
lives.” And again, in all social relations, by making us children of God,
indeed, faith gives new meaning to universal brotherhood, which is not
merely equality, but rather the common experience of God’s paternity, the
comprehension of the unique dignity of each person. A further area is that
of nature: faith helps us to respect it, to “find models of development which
are based not simply on utility and profit, but consider creation as a gift.” It
teaches us to find just forms of government, in which authority comes from
God and which serve the common good; it offers us the possibility of
forgiveness that leads us to overcome all conflict. “When faith is weakened,
the foundations of humanity also risk being weakened,” writes the Pope,
and if we remove faith in God from our cities, we will lose our mutual trust
and be united only by fear. Therefore we must not be ashamed to publicly
confess God, because faith illuminates social life. Another area illuminated
by faith is that of suffering and death: Christians are aware that suffering
cannot be eliminated, but it may be given meaning; it can be entrusted to
the hands of God who never abandons us and therefore become “a moment
of growth in faith.” To he who suffers, God does not give reasons to explain
everything, but rather offers His presence that accompanies us, that opens
up a threshold of light in the shadows. In this sense, faith is linked to hope.
And here the Pope makes an appeal: “Let us refuse to be robbed of hope, or
to allow our hope to be dimmed by facile answers and solutions which block our progress.”

Conclusion (nos. 58-60): Blessed are you who believed (Lk 1:45) At the end of Lumen Fidei, the Pope invites us to look to Mary, “perfect icon” of faith who, as the Mother of Jesus, conceived “faith and joy.” The Pope elevates his prayer to Maria that she might assist man in his faith, to remind us those who believe are never alone and to teach us to see through Jesus’ eyes.

Homily at the Mass Concluding the Year of Faith, St. Peter’s Square (November 24, 2013)

Today’s solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, the crowning of the liturgical year, also marks the conclusion of the Year of Faith opened by Pope Benedict XVI, to whom our thoughts now turn with affection and gratitude for this gift which he has given us. By this providential initiative, he gave us an opportunity to rediscover the beauty of the journey of faith begun on the day of our Baptism, which made us children of God and brothers and sisters in the Church. A journey which has as its ultimate end our full encounter with God, and throughout which the Holy Spirit purifies us, lifts us up and sanctifies us, so that we may enter into the happiness for which our hearts long.

I offer a cordial and fraternal greeting to the Patriarchs and Major Archbishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches present. The exchange of peace which I will share with them is above all a sign of the appreciation of the Bishop of Rome for these communities which have confessed the name of Christ with exemplary faithfulness, often at a high price.

With this gesture, through them, I would like to reach all those Christians living in the Holy Land, in Syria and in the entire East, and obtain for them the gift of peace and concord.
The Scripture readings proclaimed to us have as their common theme the centrality of Christ. Christ is at the center, Christ is the center. Christ is the center of creation, Christ is the center of his people and Christ is the center of history.

1. The apostle Paul, in the second reading, taken from the letter to the Colossians, offers us a profound vision of the centrality of Jesus. He presents Christ to us as the first-born of all creation: in him, through him and for him all things were created. He is the center of all things, he is the beginning: Jesus Christ, the Lord. God has given him the fullness, the totality, so that in him all things might be reconciled (cf. Col 1:12-20). He is the Lord of creation, he is the Lord of reconciliation.

This image enables to see that Jesus is the center of creation; and so the attitude demanded of us as true believers is that of recognizing and accepting in our lives the centrality of Jesus Christ, in our thoughts, in our words and in our works. And so our thoughts will be Christian thoughts, thoughts of Christ. Our works will be Christian works, works of Christ; and our words will be Christian words, words of Christ. But when this center is lost, when it is replaced by something else, only harm can result for everything around us and for ourselves.

2. Besides being the center of creation and the center of reconciliation, Christ is the center of the people of God. Today, he is here in our midst. He is here right now in his word, and he will be here on the altar, alive and present amid us, his people. We see this in the first reading which describes the time when the tribes of Israel came to look for David and anointed him king of Israel before the Lord (cf. 2 Sam 5:1-3). In searching for an ideal king, the people were seeking God himself: a God who would be close to them, who would accompany them on their journey, who would be a brother to them.

Christ, the descendant of King David, is really the “brother” around whom God’s people come together. It is he who cares for his people, for all of us, even at the price of his life. In him we are all one, one people, united with him and sharing a single journey, a single destiny. Only in him, in him as the center, do we receive our identity as a people.
3. Finally, Christ is the center of the history of humanity and also the center of the history of every individual. To him we can bring the joys and the hopes, the sorrows and troubles which are part of our lives. When Jesus is the center, light shines even amid the darkest times of our lives; he gives us hope, as he does to the good thief in today’s Gospel.

Whereas all the others treat Jesus with disdain — “If you are the Christ, the Messiah King, save yourself by coming down from the cross!” — the thief who went astray in his life but now repents, clings to the crucified Jesus and begs him: “Remember me, when you come into your kingdom” (Lk 23:42). Jesus promises him: “Today you will be with me in paradise” (v. 43), in his kingdom. Jesus speaks only a word of forgiveness, not of condemnation; whenever anyone finds the courage to ask for this forgiveness, the Lord does not let such a petition go unheard. Today we can all think of our own history, our own journey. Each of us has his or her own history: we think of our mistakes, our sins, our good times and our bleak times. We would do well, each one of us, on this day, to think about our own personal history, to look at Jesus and to keep telling him, sincerely and quietly: “Remember me, Lord, now that you are in your kingdom! Jesus, remember me, because I want to be good, but I just don’t have the strength: I am a sinner, I am a sinner. But remember me, Jesus! You can remember me because you are at the center, you are truly in your kingdom!” How beautiful this is! Let us all do this today, each one of us in his or her own heart, again and again. “Remember me, Lord, you who are at the center, you who are in your kingdom”.

Jesus’ promise to the good thief gives us great hope: it tells us that God’s grace is always greater than the prayer which sought it. The Lord always grants more, he is so generous, he always gives more than what he has been asked: you ask him to remember you, and he brings you into his kingdom!

Let us ask the Lord to remember us, in the certainty that by his mercy we will be able to share his glory in paradise. Let us go forward together on this road! Amen!

Vatican City, 26 November 2013 (VIS) — This morning in the Holy See Press Office a press conference was held to present Pope Francis’s Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel), written following the Synod of Bishops on “the New Evangelization for the Transmission of Faith,” which took place from 7 to 28 October 2012, and convoked by his predecessor, Benedict XVI. The text was presented by Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, accompanied by Archbishop Lorenzo Baldisseri, secretary general of the Synod of Bishops and Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.

The exhortation, which is 222 pages long, is divided into five chapters and an introduction. The chapters are dedicated to the Church's missionary transformation, the crisis of communal commitment, the proclamation of the Gospel, the social dimension of evangelization, and spirit-filled evangelizers.

We publish below the text presented by Archbishop Fisichella, preserving the numbers referring to the corresponding paragraphs in the exhortation:

“If we were to sum up Pope Francis’s Evangelii Gaudium in a few words, we could say that it is an Apostolic Exhortation written around the theme of Christian joy in order that the Church may rediscover the original source of evangelization in the contemporary world. Pope Francis offers this document to the Church as a map and guide to her pastoral mission in the near future. It is an invitation to recover a prophetic and positive vision of reality without ignoring the current challenges. Pope Francis instills courage and urges us to look ahead despite the present crisis, making the cross and the resurrection of Christ once again our “victory banner” (85).

The several references in Evangelii Gaudium to the Propositions of the October, 2012 Synod on the New Evangelization for the Transmission of
the Christian Faith are a testimony to the extent to which the last Synod has influenced the drafting of this Exhortation. This text, however, goes beyond the experience of the Synod. The Pope commits to paper not only his previous pastoral experience, but above all his call to seize the moment of grace in which the Church is living in order to embrace with faith, conviction and enthusiasm a new phase in the journey of evangelization. Extending the teaching of the Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi of Paul VI (1975), he emphasizes the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ, the first evangelizer, who today calls each and every one of us to participate with him in the work of salvation (12). “The Church’s missionary action is the paradigm for all of her endeavours” (15), affirms the Holy Father, so that it is necessary to seize this favorable moment in order to catch sight of and live out this “new stage” of evangelization (17). This missionary action is articulated in two themes which mark the basic outline of the Exhortation. On the one hand, Pope Francis addresses the particular Churches because, living in the first-person the challenges and opportunities characteristic of their cultural context, they are able to highlight aspects of the new evangelization which are peculiar to their countries. On the other hand, the Pope sets out a common denominator in order that the whole Church, and each individual evangelizer, may discover a common methodology born of the conviction that evangelization is always participatory, shared, and never isolated. The following seven points, gathered together in the five chapters of the Exhortation, constitute the fundamental pillars of Pope Francis’ vision of the new evangelization: the reform of the Church in a missionary key, the temptations of pastoral agents, the Church understood as the totality of the People of God which evangelizes, the homily and its preparation, the social inclusion of the poor, peace, and social dialogue, and the spiritual motivations for the Church’s missionary action. The cement which binds these themes together is concentrated in the merciful love of God which goes forth to meet every person in order to manifest the heart of his revelation: the life of every person acquires meaning in the encounter with Jesus Christ and in the joy of sharing this experience of love with others (8).

The first chapter, therefore, proceeds in the light of the reform of the Church in a missionary key, called as she is to “go out” of herself in order to meet others. It is “the dynamic of exodus and the gift of going out of
oneself, walking and sowing ever anew, always further and beyond” (21), that the Pope explains in these pages. The Church must make “this intimacy of Jesus, which is an itinerant intimacy,” its own intimacy (23). The Pope, as we are already accustomed to, makes use of effective expressions and creates neologisms to grasp the nature of the Church’s evangelizing action. First among these is the concept of “primerear,” namely God preceding us in love and indicating to the Church the path to follow. The Church does not find herself in a dead-end, but is following in the very footsteps of Christ (cfr. 1 Peter 2:21). Thus the Church is certain of the path she must follow. She does not tread this path in fear since she knows that she is called “to go out in search of those who are far from her and arrive at the crossroads in order to invite those who are excluded. She is filled with an unlimited desire to offer mercy.” (24). In order for this to occur, Pope Francis again stresses the need for “pastoral conversion” (25). This involves passing from a bureaucratic, static, and administrative vision of pastoral ministry to a perspective which is not only missionary but is in a permanent state of evangelization (25). In fact, alongside the structures which facilitate and sustain the Church’s missionary activity there are, unfortunately, “ecclesial structures which can jeopardize the dynamism of evangelization” (26). The existence of stagnant and stale pastoral practices obliges us, therefore, to be boldly creative in order to rethink evangelization. In this sense, the Pope affirms that: “an identification of the goals without adequate research on the part of the community as to how to achieve them is doomed to end in mere fantasy” (33).

It is necessary, therefore, “to concentrate on what is essential” (35) and to know that only a systematic approach, i.e. one that is unitary, progressive, and proportional to the faith, can be of true assistance. This implies for the Church the capacity to bring out “the hierarchy of truths” and its proper reference to the heart of the Gospel (37-39), thereby avoiding the danger of presenting the faith only in the light of some moral questions as if these could stand apart from the centrality of love. If we lose sight of this perspective, “the moral edifice of the Church runs the risk of becoming a house of cards, and this is our biggest danger” (39). So there is a strong appeal from the Pope to find a healthy balance between the content of the faith and the language in which it is expressed. It may
happen at times that the rigidity of linguistic precision can be to the
detriment of content, thus compromising the genuine vision of the faith
(41).

One of the central passages in this chapter is certainly paragraph 32 in
which Pope Francis illustrates the urgency of bringing to fruition some of
the perspectives of the Second Vatican Council, in particular the exercise of
the Primacy of the Successor of Peter and of the role of Episcopal
Conferences. John Paul II in Ut unum sint, had already requested
assistance in order to better understand the obligations of the Pope in
ecumenical dialogue. Now, Pope Francis continues in this request and sees
that a more coherent form of assistance could be derived from the further
development of the theoretical foundations of Episcopal Conferences.
Another passage of particular intensity for its pastoral implications are
paragraphs 38-45. The heart of the Gospel “is incarnate within the limits of
human language.” As a consequence, doctrine is inserted into “the cage of
language”—to use Wittgenstein’s expression—which implies the necessity
of a real discernment between the poverty and the limits of language, on
the one hand, and the often yet to be discovered richness of the content of
faith, on the other. The danger that the Church may at times fail to
consider this dynamic is a real one, giving rise to an unjustified fortress
mentality in relation to certain questions which risks rendering the Gospel
message inflexible while at the same time losing sight of the dynamic
proper to its development.

The second chapter is dedicated to recognizing the challenges of the
contemporary world and to overcoming the easy temptations which
undermine the New Evangelization. In the first place, the Pope affirms, we
must recover our identity without those inferiority complexes which lead to
“concealing our identity and convictions... and end up suffocating the joy of
our mission as we become obsessed over becoming like everyone else
possessing the things which they possess” (79). This makes Christians fall
into “a kind of relativism which is more dangerous than the doctrinal one”
(80), because it impinges directly on the lifestyle of believers. So it happens
that many expressions of our pastoral activity suffer from a kind of
weariness which derives from placing the accent on the initiatives
themselves and not on the person. The Pope believes that the temptation
of a “de-personalization of the person” in order to become better organized is both real and common. By the same token, the challenges in evangelization should be accepted more as a chance to grow and not as a reason for falling into depression. There should be no talk, then, of a “sense of defeat” (85). It is essential that we recover interpersonal relationships to which we must accord a priority over the technology which seeks to govern relationships as with a remote control, deciding where, when, and for how long to meet others on the basis of one’s own preferences (88). As well as the more usual and more diffuse challenges, however, we must be alive to those which impinge more directly on our lives: the sense of “daily uncertainty, with evil consequences,” the various forms of “social disparity,” the “fetishism of money and the dictatorship of a faceless economy,” the “exasperation of consumption” and “unbridled consumerism.” In short, we find ourselves in the presence of a “globalization of indifference” and a “sneering contempt” towards ethics, accompanied by a constant attempt to marginalize every critical warning over the supremacy of the market which, with its “trickle down” creates the illusion of helping the poor (cf. 52-64).

If the Church today appears still highly credible in many countries of the world, even where it is a minority, it is because of her works of charity and solidarity (65).

In the evangelization of our time, therefore, and most especially in the face of the challenges of the great “urban cultures” (71), Christians are invited to flee from two phenomena which undermine its very nature and which Pope Francis defines as “worldliness” (93). First, the “charm of Gnosticism” which implies a faith closed in on itself, not least in its own doctrinal certainties, and which erects its own experience as the criterion of truth by which to judge others. Second, a “self-referential and Promethean Neo-Pelagianism” of those who maintain that the grace is only an accessory while progress is obtained only through personal commitment and force. All of this stands in contradiction to evangelization. It creates a type of “narcissistic elitism” which must be avoided (94). Who do we want to be, asks the Pope, “Generals of defeated troops” or “foot soldiers of a platoon which continues to fight”? The risk of a “worldly Church in spiritual or pastoral trappings” (96), is not hidden but real. It is vital, then, not to succumb to these temptations but to offer the testimony of communion (99). This testimony is reinforced by complementarity. Starting from this
consideration, Pope Francis explains the necessity of the promotion of lay people and women, and the need to foster vocations and the priestly life. To look upon the Church in the light of the progress of these last decades demands that we subtract ourselves from a mentality of power and embrace a logic of service for the united construction of the Church (102-108).

Evangelization is the task of the entire People of God, without exception. It is not, nor could it be, reserved or delegated to any particular group. All baptized people are directly involved. Pope Francis explains, in the third chapter of the Exhortation, how evangelization may develop and the various stages which may indicate its progress. First, he is keen to underline the “the primacy of grace” which works tirelessly in the life of every evangelizer (112). Then the Pope develops the theme of the great role played by various cultures in the process of the inculturation of the Gospel, and which prevents a particular culture from falling into a “vainglorious sacralization of itself” (117). He then indicates the fundamental direction of the new evangelization in interpersonal relationships (127-129) and in the testimony of life (121). He insists, furthermore, on rediscovering the value of popular piety as an expression of the genuine faith of many people who thereby give true testimony of their simple encounter with the love of God (122-126). Finally, the Pope invites theologians to study the mediations necessary in order to arrive at an appreciation of the various forms of evangelization (133), reflecting more at length on the homily as a privileged form of evangelization which requires an authentic passion and love for the Word of God and for the people to whom it is entrusted (135-158).

The fourth chapter is given over to a reflection on the social dimension of evangelization. This is a theme which is dear to Pope Francis since, as he states, “If this dimension is not explained in the correct way, we run the risk of disfiguring the authentic and full meaning of the mission of evangelization” (176). This is the great theme of the link between the preaching of the Gospel and the promotion of human life in all of its expressions. This promotion of every human being must be holistic and capable of avoiding the relegation of religion to the private sphere, with no incidence in social and public life. A “faith which is authentic always implies a profound desire to change the world” (183). Two great themes
emerge in this section of the Exhortation: the “social inclusion of the poor” and “peace and social dialogue.” The particular evangelical passion with which the Pope speaks about them is indicative of his conviction that they will decide the future of humanity.

As far as concerns the “social inclusion of the poor,” with the New Evangelization the Church feels it is her mission “to contribute to the resolution of the instrumental causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor,” as well as undertaking “simple and daily gestures of solidarity in the face of the many concrete situations of need” which are constantly before our eyes (188). What emerges from these closely written pages is an invitation to recognize the “salvific force” which the poor possess and which must be brought to the center of the life of the Church with the New Evangelization (198). This implies that first of all, before any concrete experience, there be a rediscovery of the attention due to this theme together with its urgency and the need to promote its awareness. Moreover, the fundamental option for the poor which asks to be put into practice is, in the mind of Pope Francis, primarily a “religious and spiritual attention” which must take priority over all else (200). On these questions Pope Francis speaks with extreme frankness and clarity. The “Shepherd of a Church without borders” (210) cannot allow himself to look away. This is why the Pope demands that we consider the problems of migration, and is equally strong in his denunciation of the new forms of slavery. “Where is the person that you are killing every day in his secret little factory, in networks of prostitution, in children used for professional begging, in those who must work in secret because they are irregular? Let us not pretend. All of us have some share of responsibility in these situations” (211). Also, the Pope is equally forceful in his defense of human life in its beginning and of the dignity of every human person (213). Concerning this latter aspect, the Pope announces four principles which serve as a common denominator for the promotion of peace and its concrete social application. Recalling, perhaps, his studies into Romano Guardini, Pope Francis seems to create a new polar opposition. He reminds us that “time is superior to space,” “unity prevails over conflict,” “reality is more important than ideas,” and that “the whole is greater than its parts”. These principles open up to the dimension of dialogue as the first contribution towards peace, a dimension which is extended in the Exhortation to the areas of science, ecumenism, and non-
Christian religions.

The final chapter seeks to express the “spirit of the New Evangelization” (260). This is developed under the primacy of the action of the Holy Spirit, which always and anew infuses the missionary impulse in the Church beginning with the life of prayer whose center is contemplation (264). In conclusion, the Virgin Mary, “Star of the New Evangelization” is presented as the icon of every authentic preaching and transmission of the Gospel, which the Church is called to undertake in the coming decades with a strong enthusiasm and an unchanging love for the Lord Jesus.

“Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the joy of evangelization” (83). The language of this Apostolic Exhortation is clear, immediate, free from rhetoric and insinuations. Pope Francis goes to the heart of the problems which touch the lives of men and women of today and which demand of the Church more than a simple presence. The Church is asked to actively program a renewed pastoral practice which reflects her engagement in the New Evangelization. The Gospel must reach everyone, without exception. Some, however, are more privileged than others. Pope Francis leaves us in no doubt as to his position: “Not so much friends and rich neighbors, but above all the poor, the sick, those who are often ignored and forgotten … there must be no doubts or explanations which weaken the clarity of this message” (48).

As in other crucial moments of her history, it is with a sense of urgency that the Church prepares to engage in the New Evangelization in a spirit of adoration so as to behold once again, with a “contemplative gaze,” the signs of the presence of God. The signs of the times are not only encouraging, but can serve as a criterion for effective witness (71). Pope Francis reminds us, first of all, of the central mystery of our faith: “Let us not run away from the resurrection of Jesus, let us not surrender, come what may” (3). He shows us a Church which is the companion of those who are our contemporaries in the seeking after God and in the desire to see him.
The Roman Curia

Decree of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints on the extraordinary character of a cure attributed to the Venerable Servant of God Alvaro del Portillo, (July 5, 2013)

CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS
SANCTORUM
ROMANA et PRAELATURAE SANCTAE CRUCIS et OPERIS DEI
BEATIFICATIONIS et CANONIZATIONIS

Ven. Servi Dei
ALVARI DEL PORTILLO Y DIEZ DE SOLLANO
Episcopi Titularis Vitensis
Praelati Praelaturae Personalis Sanctae Crucis
et Operis Dei
(1914-1994)

DECRETUM SUPER MIRACULO

Venerabilis Dei Servus Alvarus del Portillo y Diez de Sollano natus est Matriti a piis honestisque parentibus, tertius ex octo fratribus, die 11 mensis Martii anno 1914. Doctoralem lauream obtinuit in re machinaria civili, in scientiis historicis et in iure canonico. Anno 1935, suae vitae vicesimo primo, Operi Dei adhaesit ac prudenti elapso temporis spatio Sanctus Iosephmaria validissimum suum collaboratorem eum habuit. Die 25 mensis Iunii anno 1944 sacrum presbyteratus ordinem recepit et anno 1946 Romam se contulit ad Conditorem adiuvandum in Operis Dei moderamine et propagatione. In multiplicibus quoque muneribus sibi a Sancta Sede concreditis sese impendit, Consultoris videlicet Dicasteriorum Curiae Romanae atque, in Concilio Vaticano II, Secretarii Commissionis

Has inter probationes notitiae eminent de favoribus cum spiritualibus tum materialibus atque de sanationibus quidem multis eius intercessioni attributis, quorum una peculiariter digna visa est quae attente consideraretur, sanatio scilicet cuiusdam infantis, qui natus est die 10 mensis Iulii anno 2003 affectus deformitate cerebrali congenita in utroque hemisphaerio propter migrationis neuronalis, cardiopatia congenita cyanotica (“tetralogia di Fallot”) et umbilici hernia. Prioribus suae vitae diebus puer passus est iteratas accessiones hypoxico-ischaemicas cerebrales, die vero 2 mensis Augusti affectus est cordis inhibitione propter haemopericardium massivum, quae inhibitio inter dimidiam horam et tres quartas horae partes duravit. Medici quidem pueri redanimationem toto hoc tempore frustra temptaverunt, sed cum tandem hanc therapiam interrupere statuerant, ante totalem eius suspensionem cordis palpitatio sponte restaurata est.
Simul vero parvi infirmi parentes, qui de filii sui statu certiores facterant, instantius pro eius sanatione oraverunt recurrentes ad intercessionem Venerabilis Alvari del Portillo. Iuxta medicorum prognosim, accessio illa ischaemica gravissimum damnum neurologicum secum ferre debuisset, immo et ipsum mortem, sub aspectu autem functionali sanatio fuit completa et duratura.


Facta demum de hisce omnibus Summo Pontifici Francisco per subscriptum Cardinalem Praefectum accurata relatione, Sanctitas Sua, vota Congregationis de Causis Sanctorum excipiens rataque habens, hodierna die declaravit: Constare de miraculo a Deo patrato per intercessionem Venerabilis Servi Dei Alvari del Portillo y Diez de Sollano, Episcopi titularis Vitensis, Praelati Praelatureae personalis Sanctae Crucis et Operis Dei, videlicet de celeri, perfecta ac constanti sanatione cuiusdam pueri a «prolungato arresto cardio-circolatorio, tamponamento cardiaco, determinante insulto ipossico-ischemico in cerebropatia congenita con pregressi danni del circolo cerebrale».

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


ANGELUS Card. AMATO, S.D.B.

Praefectus
English translation of the Decree of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints on the extraordinary character of a cure attributed to the Venerable Servant of God Álvaro del Portillo, (July 5, 2013)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS
ROME
and the PERSONAL PRELATURE of the HOLY CROSS and OPUS DEI
BEATIFICATION and CANONIZATION
of the Venerable Servant of God
ÁLVARO DEL PORTILLO Y DIEZ DE SOLLANO
Titular Bishop of Vita
Prelate of the Personal Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei
(1914–1994)
DECREE ON A MIRACLE

The Venerable Servant of God Álvaro del Portillo y Diez de Sollano was born in Madrid on March 11, 1914 in a Christian home, the third of eight children. He obtained doctorates in Civil Engineering, History and Canon Law. In 1935, at the age of twenty-one, he requested admission to Opus Dei and came to be, after a prudent time, the closest collaborator of
Saint Josemaría. On June 25, 1944 he was ordained a priest and moved to Rome in 1946 to assist Saint Josemaría in the government and expansion of Opus Dei. He generously carried out many tasks for the Holy See: Consultor for several Departments of the Roman Curia, and during the Second Vatican Council, Secretary of the Commission De disciplina clericet populì christiani, as well as Peritus for several Commissions. On September 15, 1975 he was elected the first successor of Saint Josemaría at the head of Opus Dei. On November 28, 1982 Blessed John Paul II erected Opus Dei as a Personal Prelature and named the Venerable Álvaro del Portillo Prelate. On January 6, 1991, Blessed John Paul II ordained him a bishop. His pastoral ministry was particularly marked by faithfulness to the spirit and message proclaimed by the Founder. He was unstinting in his efforts to extend the apostolic work of the Prelature in the service of the Church. During the nineteen years in which he directed the Work, it began stable apostolic work in twenty new countries. During those years he called more than a thousand faithful of the Prelature to the priesthood and fostered many initiatives in the area of social services. In order to realize a long-standing desire of Saint Josemaría, he founded the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, and he encouraged many other activities in the service of souls. He also travelled to all corners of the world and everywhere preached the Gospel with fortitude. Early in the morning of March 23, 1994, just a few hours after returning from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the Lord called him into His presence. Immediately proofs of his fame of holiness sprang up throughout the world.

Among these, reports of spiritual and material favors stand out, along with many cures attributed to his intercession. Especially worthy of consideration is the cure of an infant born on July 10, 2003 with congenital (bilateral) cerebral malformation, cyanotic heart disease (Tetralogy of Fallot) and an omphalocoele. During his first few days of life the infant suffered repeated hypoxic-ischaemic cerebral lesions, and on August 2, he went into cardiac arrest for between thirty to forty-five minutes due to cardiac tamponade as a result of a massive haemorrhagic pericardial effusion. During this time the doctors attempted to resuscitate the infant without success. When they were about to stop all efforts at resuscitation, the infant’s cardiac activity spontaneously resumed.
While this was happening the parents, informed of the situation of their infant, intensified their prayers asking for his cure through the intercession of Venerable Álvaro del Portillo. According to the doctor’s assessment, this ischaemic event ought to have caused grave neurological damage or even the death of the infant. However, from a functional point of view, the recovery was both complete and permanent.

The diocesan investigation of this cure took place in the ecclesiastical Curia of Santiago, Chile, between August 5, 2008 and August 6, 2009. On January 15, 2010 this Congregation decreed the juridical validity of that process. On October 18, 2012 the Department of Medical Advisors of the Congregation issued their assessment that medical science could not explain the cure. The Special Congress of Theological Advisors took place on December 15, 2012, and the Ordinary Session of Cardinals and Bishops on June 4, 2013, presided over by Cardinal Angelo Amato. Both of these bodies, those of the Advisors and of the Cardinals and Bishops, responded unanimously in the affirmative to the question of whether this was a miracle accomplished by God.

After having received from the Cardinal Prefect, whose signature is affixed to this decree below, a detailed report of what has just been stated, the Supreme Pontiff Francis accepted and ratified the votes of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints and declared today, July 5, 2013: The proofs of the miracle performed by God through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God Álvaro del Portillo y Diez de Sollano, Titular Bishop of Vita, Prelate of the Personal Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, are known, namely the rapid, complete and permanent cure of an infant with ‘congenital cerebral malformation and cardiovascular lesions, who suffered a prolonged cardiac arrest secondary to cardiac tamponade which should have caused an anoxic-ischaemic injury to the brain.’

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

Given in Rome on the fifth day of July 2013.

Angelo Card. Amato, S.D.B.

Prefect
L. + S.

+ Marcello Bartolucci

Titular Archbishop of Mevania

Secretary

Torna ai contenuti
PRELATE

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- Activities of the Prelate
- Pastoral Letters
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Activities of the Prelate

Meetings with young people in Rio de Janeiro

The Prelate of Opus Dei arrived in Rio de Janeiro on July 24 for World Youth Day. He stayed at the Botafogo Cultural Center, which ordinarily functions as a university residence, and which on this occasion welcomed about a hundred people from all over the world (from Nigeria, Japan, Canada, Spain, Chile, Mexico, etc.), who had come to Rio to see the Pope. On the following day, the feast of St. James the Apostle, the Prelate celebrated Holy Mass there and urged those present to take advantage of World Youth Day to grow in apostolic zeal and to be very united to the Pope and to the whole Church. He repeated this petition constantly in later gatherings. On the same day, the 25th, he had a get-together with a group of young people in a convention center, with three thousand people attending. Despite the large crowd, his catechesis took place in a family-like and relaxed atmosphere.

In his initial words, the Prelate encouraged those present to realize that they are the hope of the Church and of the Pope: “It is time—today as yesterday, and always—that Catholicism not be confused with mediocrity. Our Lord asks us for perfection: in our work or study, finishing each task
very well, and also in our family life, our friendships, our moments of relaxation. Moreover, God wants us to never compromise with anything that could separate us from him.”

A student of cinematography spoke about his desire to help produce programs and films that present positive role models, and asked how he could struggle to live the virtue of holy purity well. In his reply, the Prelate spoke about prudence and temperance in the use of the internet, among other points.

The second question was from Francisco, from Paraguay, who will soon celebrate his fifteenth birthday. He attends activities in a center of the Work for young people in Asunción. He said that, from about a year ago, he has felt that our Lord is asking him for something more. Although he has been praying to discern God’s will, he wanted to know how to resolve his unrest. Bishop Echevarría encouraged him to try to be close to Jesus in the Eucharist, and added: “Don’t be afraid, since he gave his life for you. And also realize that, if you are generous, if you aren’t afraid to tell our Lord ‘yes,’ by your life you will help many Paraguays to make progress.”

Other topics touched on were the virtue of poverty, the Gospel, prayer, the need for Christian formation in order to lead a life consistent with the faith, etc.

Bishop Echevarría had a similar get-together with girls who frequent apostolic works of Opus Dei in various countries. For them too he had words of optimism for their efforts to Christianize society. He spoke about the Sacrament of Confession, a filial relationship with our Lady, and the help provided by spiritual direction. And he encouraged them to pray for the more than three million people who, according to estimates, were taking part in the ceremonies of World Youth Day— “so that they continue drawing ever closer to our Lord, and do a lot of apostolate, thus seconding the wishes of Pope Francis.”

Torna ai contenuti

Pastoral trips
For World Youth Day 2013, Bishop Javier Echevarría was in Brazil, and also visited other nearby countries. Before undertaking the trip he spent a good part of the month of July in Spain, where, on July 1, at the invitation of Archbishop Manuel Ureña of Saragossa, he had participated in the blessing of two life-size bronze statues, one of Blessed John Paul II and the other of St. Josemaría, in the parish of Santa Engracia in the Aragonese capital.

The Prelate of Opus Dei arrived in Rio de Janeiro on July 24. There he met with faithful of the Prelature and with other young people from various countries who were taking part in the great worldwide reunion with the Pope.

After World Youth Day, on July 29, he went to pray at the Shrine of Aparecida, the patroness of the country, and then spent some days at Sitio da Aroeira, a retreat center near São Paulo, where he met with the regional vicars of Opus Dei from North and South America. A few days later he met with the regional priest secretaries as well. On August 5, he went to São Paulo for a one day visit. There he met with groups of people who take part in the apostolic work of the Prelature. An especially large gathering was held in the evening in a sports pavilion with people of all ages and walks of life.

The next stop on his trip, from August 13 to 16, was Santiago de Chile. There Bishop Echevarría was received by Archbishop Ricardo Ezzati. He also went to pray before the Immaculate Virgin of Cerro San Cristobal and met with faithful of the Prelature, as well as with cooperators and friends who take part in activities of Christian formation organized by Opus Dei.

On Wednesday, August 14, he visited and blessed the installations at the University Hospital of Los Andes, which will soon be inaugurated. Bishop Echevarría, the honorary rector of that university, told those who work in the hospital that the deepest catechesis carried out by Pope John Paul II was that which we saw during his last illness, when he did not hesitate to show the world his physical limitations, because he knew that they were a blessing from God. He encouraged them to make the hospital a fruitful place of salvation, both physical and spiritual, for the patients, for
their families and for the professionals working in the hospital, through a work carried out not only with professional competence but also with unity, affection and understanding. “May you do everything with the greatness of God, who wants to make use of the women and men who work in his projects,” he concluded.

On Thursday, the 15th, he met with more than twelve thousand people in the Movistar Arena. One of the questions asked came from the mother of José Ignacio Ureta Wilson, the boy whose miraculous cure through the intercession of the Venerable Alvaro del Portillo made possible the upcoming beatification of St. Josemaría’s first successor.

On the 16th he went to La Pitana, a neighborhood on the periphery of the city, where he had a gathering with families from the area and blessed the new church of St. Josemaría. He was received by the children from the schools next to the church, Nocedal and Almendral, whose spiritual attention is entrusted to the Prelature of Opus Dei.

From August 16 to 18, the Prelate was in Uruguay. On Saturday, the 17th, in the Palacio Peñarol, he had a get-together with more than three thousand people from different cities of Uruguay. He asked everyone to pray for Pope Francis and spoke to fathers and mothers about, among other topics, the importance of instilling in their children the virtue of temperance. That same day he visited the expansion works at the La Cantera conference and formation center. He also made a short stop at the Los Pinos educational center, a social work benefitting hundreds of boys from the area, where he met with the teachers, students and their families. Then he visited the Center of Support for Integral Development (CADI), a corporate work of apostolate of Opus Dei. CADI is aimed at the human, social and spiritual development of women. Located in an area of great poverty, currently more than 600 families benefit from its work.

On the day of his arrival in Buenos Aires, Sunday the 18th, the Prelate had a get-together on the soccer field at Los Molinos school. Thousands of people were present, not only from Buenos Aires and other cities of Argentina, but also from Bolivia and Paraguay. At various moments during the get-together, Bishop Echevarría asked those present to support the Pope with their prayer and affection.
From August 21 until September 6, the Prelate spent some days in Solingen, Germany. On the 31st he met with faithful of Opus Dei and friends in Cologne’s Gürzenich auditorium.

In December, Bishop Echevarría made a trip to the Holy Land. He left Rome on December 27. In addition to meeting with the people of Opus Dei who live there, and with some families, on Saturday, the 28th, he had a general get-together with a large group of people in Jerusalem, with simultaneous translation into Arabic and Hebrew. On the 29th, the Feast of the Holy Family, he had another get-together in Bethlehem.

On December 30, before returning to Rome, he visited with the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, celebrated Holy Mass in the Grotto of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and went to see the land on which “Saxum” is being built, a retreat center that will also include an information center for pilgrims. There he blessed the first stone. Located at Abu Gosh, the grounds of the Saxum center are seven and a half miles from Jerusalem. Its name comes from the nickname that St. Josemaría sometimes used in addressing Alvaro del Portillo, pointing to his firmness in the faith and in his vocation of service to the Church. “Saxum” is the Latin word for rock.

Torna ai contenuti

Audiences with Pope Francis (October 18, 2013 and December 23, 2013)

On Friday, October 18, at 11:30 am, Pope Francis received in audience the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría. After the audience he said that the Holy Father had expressed his happiness at the apostolic work the Prelature is carrying out, and sent his apostolic blessing to all the faithful, priests and laity, of Opus Dei.
The Holy Father Francis received the Prelate in an audience again on Monday, December 23, the day before Christmas Eve, at 11:30 am. Bishop Echevarría extended Christmas greetings to the Pope. At the end of the audience, he remarked that “when one spends some time with the Pope, one always has the conviction of having been with a good Father.” And he added: “The Holy Father has encouraged us to continue working apostolically in all the countries where faithful of the Prelature are living. Specifically Pope Francis encouraged us to carry out a fruitful apostolate of confession, which is the sacrament of God’s mercy.”

Ordinations

On November 9, a few days before the conclusion of the Year of Faith, 30 faithful of Opus Dei received ordination as deacons from the hands of the Prelate, Bishop Echevarría. The ceremony took place in the Basilica of San Eugenio. The new deacons are from 11 different countries: Spain, Colombia, the Philippines, Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Uganda, the United Kingdom, Brazil, France, and Uruguay.

In his homily the Prelate explained some of the moments of the diaconal ordination ceremony: the imposition of hands and the prayer of consecration, the vesting with garments proper to the deacon (the stole and dalmatica), the giving of the Gospel and the kiss of peace.

“We are taking part,” he said, “in a great manifestation of faith. Each of these men, after having responded freely to God’s call, is about to become Christ’s minister, a servant of all men and women. The choice is a divine one.”

“Jesus takes possession of each one of you, of your whole being, to make you living instruments of his sanctifying action. I understand your joy and emotion on becoming Christ’s minister, since the gift you are going to receive is immense.”

“You will be faithful to him, with God’s help, if you watch over and nourish your spirit of prayer; faithfully fulfilling your duty to recite the
Liturgy of the Hours, and striving to conform your life to Christ’s, whose Body, from this moment on, you can distribute to the faithful in Communion.”

And addressing the faithful who filled the basilica (relatives and friends of the deacons and parishioners), he said: “Let us accompany the new ministers of our Lord with our prayer and mortification. And let us beseech the Holy Spirit to send many priestly vocations to the Church.”

The new deacons will be ordained priests on the upcoming 10th of May, in the same basilica.

A family conference. The Grand Theater of Rome (October 26, 2013)

On Saturday, October 26, three thousand people went to the Grand Theater of Rome, on the northern outskirts of the city, to take part in a gathering of Roman families with the Prelate of Opus Dei.

Bishop Echevarría spoke about Pope Francis in his opening words, and also later, when responding to a question from a university student. “The Pope doesn’t want anything for himself,” he said; “he wants your charity, your help, your affection, which has to be shown in your daily prayer for him.”

Responding to a young student who asked a question about Don Alvaro del Portillo, Bishop Echevarría recalled the generosity and courage of his predecessor at the head of Opus Dei. Specifically he referred to an episode from Don Alvaro’s youth, when he went to a neighborhood on the outskirts of Madrid to help some disadvantaged people there, and was accosted by a group of agitators and struck on the head with a monkey wrench.

At the end of the get-together, many of the families had arranged to have a picnic in a park and then go to the Vatican in order to take part in the meeting of families with the Pope for the Year of Faith.
Pastoral Letters

Pastoral Letter for December 2013

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

The Roman Pontiff has concluded the Year of Faith. During these months, with God’s help, we have tried to grow in this theological virtue, the root of Christian life, asking our Lord insistently, *adauge nobis fidem*,[1] increase our faith—and with it our hope, love and piety. Now, with the impetus we have received during these months of grace, let us strive to continue walking day after day along this path that leads us to heaven. Let us have recourse to our Lady, Teacher of faith and of intimacy with God, so that she make effective our desires to be faithful to her Son and to the Church.

The documents of the Church’s magisterium (and also recently the encyclical *Lumen Fidei*) have emphasized two essential characteristics that lie at the origin of faith, as presented to us in the New Testament. St. Paul stresses that *fides ex auditu,*[2] that faith comes from hearing the Word of God read and welcomed in the Church. While St. John tells us that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, is *the true light which enlightens every man that comes into the world,*[3] granting us the capacity to know the mysteries hidden in God. Light and word, word and light, mark out for us inseparable aspects of the faith we profess. “There is an urgent need, then, to see once again that faith is a light, for once the flame of faith dies out, all other lights begin to dim.”[4] Let us thank God with all our heart, my daughters and sons, for the bright lights that the Holy Spirit, making use of the magisterium of the Church and the life of the saints, constantly enkindles in us. Let us be eager to receive them and to let ourselves be guided by the Paraclete in our daily life.

In the middle of last month, a conference on “St. Josemaría and
Theological Thought” was held in Rome. Those attending analyzed how the preaching and testimony of the saints brings new lights for delving more deeply into the faith and, as a consequence, for deepening the theological exposition of doctrine. This symposium has provided a new opportunity to make more widely known, in the sphere of theology, the special nuances of the message our Father received from God on October 2, 1928, with the mission of transmitting it to Christians, especially those immersed in the family, professional, social, etc. activities of daily life.

During the past months, I have focused on the truths of faith contained in the articles of the Creed. Now I would like to help you, and to help myself, draw out consequences that will imbue our life with this virtue in the coming months; that is to say, to focus on how the faith has to be shown in our daily behavior, so that it will really illuminate our mind, strengthen our will, and enkindle our heart, in order to express the knowledge and love of God in our own conduct and bring it to all souls.

The starting point is a complete trust that in the Church we possess the fullness of the means of sanctification that Jesus left us. These include especially the reception of the sacraments, the fulfillment of the commandments of God and of the Church, and prayer, as the encyclical Lumen Fidei makes clear.

The sacraments are actions of Christ through which his Most Holy Humanity, glorious in Heaven, comes into immediate and direct contact with souls, in order to sanctify them. The Holy Spirit also follows other paths, unknown to us, to draw people to God. But as the Pope says: “Our culture has lost its sense of God’s tangible presence and activity in our world. We think that God is to be found in the beyond, on another level of reality, far removed from our everyday relationships. But if this were the case, if God could not act in the world, his love would not be truly powerful, truly real.”[5]

Let us consider once again St. Josemaría’s teaching, already clearly formulated when quite young: “It’s necessary to be convinced that God is always near us. Too often we live as though he were somewhere far off—where the stars shine. And we forget that he is also continually by our side.
For he is a loving Father. He loves each one of us more than all the mothers in the world can love their children—helping us, inspiring us, blessing... and forgiving... We have to be completely convinced, realizing it to the full, that God, who is close to us and in heaven, is a Father, and very much our Father.”[6]

This is especially so when we receive sacramental absolution and the Eucharist. Moved by this truth of faith, what security we find in our Lord’s forgiveness and closeness, what peace is poured into our soul, and how eager we are to spread this serenity to those around us! Therefore I will never tire of insisting that, each time we have recourse to these sacraments, we should do so with the full certainty that it is the Holy Spirit who draws us, through Christ, to the love of the Father.

Let us apply these considerations to the battles of our own interior struggle. We can be saints, we must be saints, in spite of our defects and our falls, since God is calling us to enter into the intimacy of his divine life as his children in Christ, and he offers us all the remedies needed. With the grace of the sacraments and with prayer, it becomes easier to fulfill the commandments of the divine law and to be faithful to the particular duties of each one’s state in life. “The Decalogue is not a set of negative commands, but concrete directions for emerging from the desert of the selfish and self-enclosed ego in order to enter into dialogue with God, to be embraced by his mercy and then to bring that mercy to others.”[7]

Let us ask our Lord to grant us a strong faith, a faith that will enliven all our actions. Certainly we believe in God’s word, we read and meditate on the Gospel with admiration; but perhaps it does not sink deeply into our souls, to the point of transforming each and every one of our actions. And when difficulties arise, when we feel arid or encounter resistance from our environment, we may become discouraged. Couldn’t it be that our faith, as it were, has fallen asleep? Don’t we have to rely more on the action of the Paraclete, who dwells in our soul through grace? Doesn’t it happen that sometimes we trust too much in our own strength? Let us meditate on the transformation the apostles undergo at Pentecost and try to live in accord with the divine guidelines we find there, which are communicated to us also through the practices of Christian piety that the Church has always recommended: mental prayer, aspirations and vocal prayers (principally the
Rosary), the offering of small mortifications, caring for the examination of conscience, and work well finished in God’s presence.

“The interior life,” our Father taught,” is not about feelings. When we see clearly that it’s worthwhile sacrificing ourselves day in and day out, month after month, year after year, for our whole life, because of the Love that awaits us in heaven: how much light we receive! We have to store up all of this light, my children. We need to make in our souls a reservoir to catch all these graces from God: the clarity, the light, the joy of our dedication. Then when night comes, the darkness and bitter trials, we can draw strength from our reserves, from the clean water of God’s grace. Though in this moment I may be blind, I can see; though I may be dry, I am quenched by the water that flows from the Heart of Christ unto life everlasting. Then, my children, we will persevere in the struggle.”[8]

And then we will be able to help other people so that they too can travel safely along the paths of faith. For “faith does not merely gaze at Jesus, but sees things as Jesus himself sees them, with his own eyes: it is a participation in his way of seeing.”[9] Our Lord’s look falls on each person singly and on the multitude. He came down to this world of ours for each and every one of us, and for each and every one he continues his salvific work. Our mission is to bring into contact with Jesus all the people we encounter on the path of our life, beginning with those closest to us. That is how the first Christians acted, who brought about the conversion of the pagan world.

In an early meditation, St. Josemaría spoke about the example of those first brothers and sisters of ours in the faith: “Unlearned people, knowing they face martyrdom and a violent death. Nevertheless, they accept their role as Christ’s co-workers in the salvation of the world, and they set out to topple paganism and to spread Christ’s lineage throughout the world. Very soon they will be joined by their former persecutor, Saul, who had been ‘kicking against the goad’ (cf. Acts 9:5), and who now accompanies them in their preaching and in their glorious venture whereby they seal the faith they preach with their blood. All of them, by their purity, set out to cleanse the murky and unclean waters of the pagan world. They strive to combat—by the small virtues that they practice, by their modesty and decency—that society’s tendency towards pleasure... They reach the very
heart of the ancient world: Rome. But what could they do there? History gives us the answer: the emperor’s throne is overturned and today, after two thousand years, Peter continues to be the Bishop of Rome.”[10]

Today, too, in the face of the challenges of the new evangelization, we have to keep our hope enkindled. *Non est abbreviata manus Domini*,[11] God’s arm has not been shortened. But men and women of faith are needed to renew the wonders that Scripture recounts. A few days ago, the Pope issued the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, with the conclusions from the Ordinary Assembly of the recent Synod of Bishops, specifically about the new evangelization. I encourage you to get to know that text which offers new lights to give greater impulse to this great endeavor.

I don’t want to overlook the fact that the upcoming December 12th, feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, is another anniversary of the divine locution that St. Josemaría—through words from Scripture—heard in the year 1931. It resounded in the depths of his soul in moments of great obstacles to the development of the Work: *inter medium montium pertransibunt aquae*,[12] the waters of grace will pass through the mountains, overcoming every obstacle, all that is opposed to the kingdom of God in souls and in the life of the Church and humanity. For this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith.[13] Thus we will help make our Father’s aspiration a reality, which was found on his lips and in what he wrote right from the founding of Opus Dei: *regnare Christum volumus!* We want Christ to reign.

Today begins the time of Advent, weeks of preparation for the Birth of our Lord. These days can be a good occasion—marveling once more at the goodness and mercy of our Father God, who sent his Son into the world—to renew our desires to remain open at every moment to the lights and words of God, especially in our reading and meditation on Sacred Scripture.

The gateway to these celebrations is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary: teacher of faith, our hope and marvelous example of how to love God and neighbor for God, with our heart, our mind and our senses fully immersed in him. Let us put great care into preparing for this
solemnity, now so close, going with great filial affection to our Mother in Heaven.

In our prayer let us give ample space to petition for the Church and for the Pope, for his co-workers, for my intentions, for all the spiritual and material needs of the women and men of our time. Let us never be unmoved (thank God, I am sure this doesn’t happen) on seeing the material and spiritual problems—at times real tragedies—that are affecting so many people throughout the whole world.

A number of anniversaries of the Work take place this month; among others, the establishment of the Roman College of Our Lady, in 1953. Let us give thanks to God for all the milestones in the history of the Work.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father,
+ Javier

Rome, December 1, 2013

[1] Lk 17:5.
[5] Ibid., no. 17.
[12] Ps 103(104):10 (Vulg.).
Homilies

At the ordination of deacons, St. Eugene’s Basilica, Rome (November 9, 2013)

Beloved sons about to be ordained deacons,

Beloved brothers and sisters,

1. We are about to end the Year of Faith that Benedict XVI started. Pope Francis will end the year in a solemn Mass on the Feast of Christ the King. This circumstance brings to light a particular aspect of this ordination as deacons of thirty faithful of Opus Dei.

In effect, we are joined together in a wonderful show of faith. Each one of these men, after having freely answered the call of our Lord, is on the verge of becoming a minister of Christ, a servant of all. The vocation is divine, like the calling of Jeremiah, as we heard in the first reading: “Before I formed you in the womb of your mother, I knew you,” the Lord says, “and be- fore you were born, I made you holy, and made you a prophet for all the nations of the earth” (Jer 1:5).

You, my beloved sons, have answered the call personally made to each one of you. Adsum! Here I am! you said. And then, I asked you: “Do you wish to be consecrated in the service of the Church, through the laying on of hands with the gift of the Holy Spirit?” Your voices forcefully echoed in the ears of everybody here: “Volo!” Yes, I do!

As you well know, the imposition of the hands of the Bishop—together with the words of the prayers of consecration—makes up the fundamental sign of the sacrament of Orders in its various de- grees. The imposition of hands, which Christ the Eternal High Priest makes at the same time, has a precise meaning: Jesus takes pos- session of each one of you, of your entire being, to make you into liv- ing instruments of his
sanctifying action. I understand your joy and your emotion at the moment of becoming ministers of Jesus Christ. To be sure, you are about to receive a great gift. Already at Baptism and Confirmation each Christian becomes, by the action of the Holy Spirit, another Christ, an adopted son of our Father God, and—as Saint Josemaría puts it—not only another Christ, but Christ himself, ipse Christus. Today, with the diaconal ordination, and in a little while with the priestly ordination, you will be changed, by the power of the sacrament, into Christ himself. You will share his priesthood in a new way.

Commenting on this ancient gesture of the imposition of hands, Benedict XVI taught that, not only does Christ take possession of his ordained ministers, but he also leads them, one by one, saying to them: “My hands are protecting you. My heart is protecting you. I am holding you in the palm of my hands and it is precisely here that you will experience the intensity of my love. Remain in the palm of my hands and give yourself to me.”[1]

We can see before us a new and solemn commitment of love. You will be faithful, with the help of Our Lord, if you keep and nourish a spirit of prayer, faithfully fulfilling your duty to recite the Liturgy of the Hours, trying to conform your life to the life of Jesus Christ, whose Body, from this point on, you will be able to give to the faithful in Holy Communion. We can understand why Saint Josemaría used to say: Lord, why do you love me so much?

2. Through the imposition of hands and the prayers of the consecration, the liturgical signs show us the duties that you will fulfill. In the first place, you put on the liturgical garments of a deacon: the stole, which is placed on your left shoulder, along with the dalmatic. These are signs that deacons are at the service of all the faithful. It reminds us of what Saint Paul says in the second reading: “For as I was free as to all, I made myself the servant of all, that I might gain more... To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I became all things to all men, that I might save all” (1 Cor 9:19-22).

And so, serve your sisters and brothers and all souls with joy, humility, and charity as you carry out the duties of your ministry: preaching the
Gospel, giving Communion, leading Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament so that the faithful can adore Jesus Christ, and carrying out all the works of charity that might be entrusted to you.

After vesting you, I will give you the book of the Gospel, so that you can preach the Good News to everybody. When the Bishop entrusts you with the Gospel, he says: “Always believe what you preach, teach the faith that you have learned, and live what you teach.” The Liturgy directs these words to the new deacons, but it also directs them personally to every Christian. In short, every faithful should believe in the Word of God, live it with deeds, and teach it to others. And because Christ is the living Word of God, who has become man for our salvation, Saint Josemaría often reminded us: “I really wish we Christians knew how to serve, for only by serving can we know and love Christ and make him known and loved.”[2]

The text of the Gospel that we just heard invites us to serve: the first miraculous catch of fish, that ended with Our Lord sending Peter and the other Apostles—as well as you and me to be fishers of men (Lk 5:10). This phrase calls to mind some words that our Holy Father Francis said in a recent audience: “Christ invites all to ‘go out’ and encounter others, he sends us, he asks us to move in order to spread the joy of the Gospel! Once again let us ask ourselves: are we missionaries by our words, and especially by our Christian life, by our witness? Or are we Christians closed in our hearts and in our churches, sacristy Christians? Are we Christians in name only, who live like pagans? We must ask ourselves these questions, which are not a rebuke. I ask myself as well: what kind of Christian am I, is my witness true?”[3]

3. And finally, the Bishop will give you the embrace of peace. As well as showing that you are admitted into the Order of Deacons, this act says much more: it stands for the love that the whole people of God has for each one of you, and how much she is filled with gratitude for all you do to serve her. And so, let us all pray more for the ministers of the Church. Let us pray in a special way for the Roman Pontiff, who Christians have for ages given the first title of Servos servórum Dei, the Servant of the servants of God.
Beloved sons and daughters, let us aid our newly ordained ministers of the Lord with our prayer and mortification. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to send many priestly vocations to the Church. As Saint Josemaría thought about this need, he asked Our Lord “to make our urge to serve grow, because messis quidem multa, operarii autem pauci (Mt 9:37); because the workers are few, and the harvest is great: our apostolic work is a sea without shores, and there are very few souls in the world who truly wish to serve!”[4]

Let us ask the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Josemaría, and all the Saints to intercede for our brothers here before us. Let us also go to the Holy Souls in Purgatory. The Church dedicates this month to them. “They have such power with God!”[5]

Naturally, I also ask you to pray for the holiness of seminarians and priests in the whole world.

Before ending, I would like to give my very warmest congratulations to the parents, sisters and brothers of the new deacons, as well as to their other relatives and friends. And as we enter the last days of the year of Faith, let us ask God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for a big gift, that each one of us grows in faith, hope, charity, and piety in the way we carry out our Christian duties.

Praised be Jesus Christ!

At the Inauguration of the Academic Year and Blessing of the New Oratory, Campus Bio-Medico University, Rome (November 13, 2013)

My dear sisters and brothers at the Campus Bio-Medico University:

I accepted with great joy the invitation to celebrate Mass for the inauguration of your new academic year. Before continuing, I would like to recall that the foundation of this university and its hospital was already present in the heart of the founder of Opus Dei. From the beginning of his pastoral work, St. Josemaría was in contact both with the intellectual world and the world of the sick. It was from them (asking doctors and patients for prayers) that he obtained the strength needed to do Opus Dei, as God was asking of him.

He was always a sower of charity, of supernatural and human affection, which he drew from his Eucharistic life, from Jesus’ presence in the Blessed Sacrament, who is the Heart of your work here. I ask you to be closely united each day, to live very well a fraternal spirit, a spirit of service. Your work and your unity will be of great benefit for the students and the sick who come here, as well as for their families.

The votive Mass of the Holy Spirit, which presents to us the story of Pentecost, invites us to invoke together, as our Lady and the disciples united in the Cenacle did, the light and strength of the Spirit of God for each of us and for the whole Campus Bio-Medico.

In the first reading, taken from the Acts of the Apostles, we read how “suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting... And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:2-4). His presence gave each of them a strength more than human, the capacity to confront danger, the courage to no longer fear a death like that of the Lord Jesus, which they began to suspect they too would have to suffer. On the contrary, they understood the deep meaning of his death, its divine meaning, as a means for the redemption,
and they went forth to proclaim this to all peoples, who understood them in their own language, because the language of a Christian filled with the Holy Spirit is a universal language.

Let us pause to meditate on the fact that Jesus, even after his resurrection, did not hide his wounds. He did not hide the existence of pain and suffering; he explained to the two disciples from Emmaus that his sufferings were the path we need to take in order to enter into glory (see Lk 24:26). The Gospel helps us to accept this mystery, always present in the life of each of us: the cross of every day that we are called to take upon ourselves in order to follow Christ. I now turn my thoughts to the present moment, which is not an easy one. I look at the crisis that various nations in the world are undergoing, which has also affected Italy, and naturally the Campus Bio-Medico as well. It is a crisis that involves many different sectors: the economy and finances, society, the family, and also education and moral behavior.

We can't give in to resignation and pessimism! The Holy Father recently said: “Every crisis, even the present one, is a passage, the pangs of a birth that involves struggle, hardship and suffering, but which bears within itself the new horizon of life, of a renewal, that carries the power of hope.”[1] In every crisis, including the present one, the seeds of a new beginning are also found.

Let us do everything we can to ensure that this happens as soon as possible. It is Jesus himself who now tells us, as he did back then to his disciples, that we should not be afraid of the world’s opposition. Today the Spirit has just taught us that participation in Christ’s sufferings is a pledge of participation in his glory.

Along with you I look with admiration at how the altarpiece for this chapel has turned out. The scenes from the life of Jesus, who cures and consoles the sick, placed around the crucifix sculpted in stone, are a visible memorial to his ever-present sacrifice. This representation of Christ on the Cross presides over our Eucharist and all the Masses that will be celebrated on this altar, making present, here and now, the sacrifice of the Cross. I was told that when the crucifix had just been installed, when the workers and architects had left the sanctuary free, a woman came up and kiss it with
devotion. For Christ crucified attracts us and attracts all things to himself. Our work, study, difficulties and joys, sufferings, we have to offer everything to Him at Mass, beseeching his grace for the new academic year.

Besides receiving the invitation to unite ourselves to the Cross of Jesus, we can ask ourselves: What does the Spirit want to teach us? What is the path that the Spirit is indicating to each of us to endure hardships patiently and conquer with Christ? Have no doubt: it is the path of charity. Our Lord gave to his followers the new commandment of love, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (Jn 13:34). And he added, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (Jn 14:15). It is as if Jesus were telling us: if you love me, you will love one another as I have loved you.

Love for God and love for neighbor are never separated in the Gospel. All of us have been called to go out of ourselves, to open ourselves to others, to the people around us, in our family, at work, and in any circumstance or place during the day.

The words spoken by the Pope in Cagliari can well be applied to the Campus Bio-Medico, as to any other university: “Isolation, no. Closeness, yes. Culture clash, no; culture of encounter, yes. The university is a privileged place where this culture of dialogue is promoted, taught and lived, this culture which does not indiscriminately level out differences and plurality—this is one of the risks of globalization—nor does it take them to the extreme, causing them to become causes of conflict. Rather, it opens to constructive dialogue. This means understanding and esteeming the other person's gifts; it means not seeing the other with indifference or fear, but as an opportunity for growth.”[2]

We are called to value and foster the noble qualities of the others, of each colleague, of each co-worker, of all those around us each day. As St. Josemaría said: “Charity, which is like a generous overflowing of justice, demands first of all the fulfillment of one’s duty. The way to start is to be just; the next step is to do what is most equitable....”[3] Therefore in order
to live charity, each of us is called, first, to carry out his or her obligations as well as possible.

Nevertheless, to love in a Christian way it is not enough to limit ourselves to doing what is our “duty,” trying, for example, not to treat others badly. “In order to love,” St. Josemaría continues, “great refinement is required, and much thoughtfulness, and respect, and kindliness in rich measure. In other words, it involves following the Apostle’s advice: ‘carry one another’s burdens, and thus you will fulfill the law of Christ’ (Gal 6:2). Then indeed we shall be living charity fully and carrying out the commandment of Jesus.”[4]

Then, if we each carry the burdens of the others, we will lay the groundwork for a new culture. In place of a culture of closed individualism, we will foster a culture of openness and solidarity. A culture of daily cooperation, found in those who know how to listen with interest to a colleague’s viewpoint, who point out in a friendly but clear way the things they don’t understand or disagree with, who loyally correct others instead of giving in to the temptation to criticize them behind their back. It isn’t easy, but that’s why we need to ask for the help of the Holy Spirit, who teaches us to live charity and justice. And never forgetting that charity is a supernatural virtue, which is infused in us by God and which grows above all through the reception of the Sacraments, and in particular through the Sacrament of Penance, which prepares us to receive the immense gift of the Eucharist.

This morning, when traveling along Alvaro del Portillo Street to reach the Campus, I thought of the example of this bishop, our brother and father, who was the one who first envisioned the Campus Bio-Medico project, and who decisively encouraged us to strive for such an ambitious goal. The Church will soon proclaim him blessed, presenting him as a model of the virtues. I like to go to his paternal intercession so that each of us will learn to foster, in his or her own heart and life, a spirit of service, joy and loyalty in work and in human relations. I hope that each of you, following in the footsteps of Don Alvaro, will open up a bright path and become a sower of peace and joy, in every place where life will lead you, but in a special way here in the Campus Bio-Medico.
Let us go to the intercession of Mary Most Holy, who always looks at each of us with motherly love. Let us entrust to her our intentions, our work, and also our worries and sufferings, with the certainty that the Mother of God will speak to her Son about all of this, as she did in Cana of Galilee. And Jesus once again will transform the water of our littleness into the wine of his greatness.

Praised be Jesus Christ!


[2] Ibid.


[4] Ibid.

**Blessing of a Statue of St. Josemaría, Saragossa, Spain (July 1, 2013)**

1. We have just blessed the statues of St. Josemaría and Blessed John Paul II that will be placed in this parish church. The decision of the Archbishop of Saragossa, my dear friend and brother Manuel Ureña, has given me great joy. He was responding to the interest shown by the pastor and a group of parishioners, who wanted to commemorate the occasion on which St. Josemaría celebrated Holy Mass in a side chapel of this church. This happened on June 20, 1946. He was on his way to Barcelona, where he was to embark for Italy to make his first trip to the Eternal City, to continue the canonical path of Opus Dei, following our Lord’s guidance.

On accepting the request of the pastor and parishioners, the Archbishop thought it would be good to also install a statue of Blessed John Paul II, whose rapid canonization we all desire. This would commemorate his stay in Saragossa on two occasions: the first, in November of 1982, to prostrate himself as a devout son of Mary before our Lady of Pilar; the second, a stop on his trip to Santo Domingo and Puerto
Rico, in 1984, for ceremonies in preparation of the five hundredth anniversary of the discovery and evangelization of America.

The ceremony we have celebrated seems to me an act of gratitude and justice, since both St. Josemaría and Blessed John Paul II, each in his own way, showed great affection for this Caesar-Augustan seat and its people.

2. St. Josemaría always had great affection for his Aragonese native land. In Saragossa, he prepared for the priesthood in the San Carlos seminary, where he would spend nights in vigil in one of the choir galleries. It isn’t easy to describe his joy when recalling those times of prayer, alone with God. Years later, in the Holy Chapel of Pilar, he celebrated his first Mass. And in this archdiocese he carried out his first pastoral tasks. How many moments from that time came to his memory from “the Saragossa years,” as he used to say, filled with so many joys and sufferings! They were years of human and supernatural growth, by which our Lord was preparing him to found Opus Dei and to bring forward that work of service to the Church, in the midst of great difficulties. He was always grateful to God for being born in this land of men and women known for their tenacity and perseverance, for their refusal to back down before obstacles. These are human and supernatural virtues that, among so many others, he needed to carry out the mission God had entrusted to him in the bosom of our Mother, the Church.

I had the joy, a true grace from God, of living very close to St. Josemaría for twenty-five years. I frequently heard him refer to those years when our Lord in his soul gave him “inklings” of his call to follow him: first in Logroño, where he lived for some time with his family, and later in this beloved city. Already in Logroño he had begun to sense that God wanted him for something very specific, although without knowing what it was. His response, resting on faith in God and on the protection of our Lady, can be summed up in the persevering prayer that, for more than ten years, he raised to heaven: Domine, ut videam! (Lord, that I may see!) and Domina, ut sit! (Lady, may what God wants come to be!). How often we heard him say that, during the years from 1918 to 1927, his visits to the Basilica of Pilar were a daily reality!
He decided to become a priest in order to be more available for whatever our Lord wanted. This was the core of his self-giving and the root of his apostolic effectiveness throughout the whole world. His ardent desire to fulfill the divine will was fused with a sincere love for the Pope and the Apostles’ successors. It shouldn’t surprise us that Cardinal Soldevila, then Archbishop of Saragossa, on seeing his human and spiritual maturity, conferred on him—while still a seminarian—the position of inspector or superior of the Seminary of San Carlos, in order to help in the formation of his companions; and that the auxiliary Bishop, Miguel de los Santos Díaz Gómara, also showed great trust in him. I am pleased to recall the affection and gratitude that was shown to him by the prelates of this archdiocese who knew him and dealt with him.

3. “I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes” (Lk 10:21). These words of Jesus, which we have just heard in the Gospel, were fulfilled in St. Josemaría and in Blessed John Paul II. Both of their lives had that marvelous conjunction of authentic Christian wisdom with simplicity and humility, as the first reading reminds us. There St. Paul exhorts his readers to guard “the riches of his grace, which has superabounded in us in all wisdom and prudence” (Eph 1:7-8). This is one of the manifestations of true holiness: the capacity to combine the greatest with the smallest, the particular with the universal; and we see this with total clarity in the two great figures we commemorate today.

We all know that Blessed John Paul II had a great affection for his homeland, for the city of his birth, for the parish where he was baptized, for the local Church in which he was incardinated as a priest. This love for particular places, affection for one’s native land, is a characteristic of the Christian life and has nothing to do with nationalism or a narrow outlook. The lengthy pontificate of Juan Paul II was marked by the numerous pastoral trips that he made to every continent, bringing the light of the Gospel to every corner of the earth. From the first day of his supreme ministry, he saw the Church in its universal dimension, open to all men and women and to all cultures.

The same was true of St. Josemaría. He always considered himself a diocesan priest and (while it was possible for him to do so) he dedicated
many hours to ardently serving his brother priests. In the 40s, before his definitive move to Rome, a number of Ordinaries from various places asked him to direct retreats for the priests and seminarians in their dioceses. He assisted several thousand of those brothers of his with the desire to serve them and to learn from each one of them. It is no exaggeration to say that among the glories of the dioceses and archdioceses of Barbastro, Logroño, Saragossa, and Madrid, the presence of St. Josemaría, his deep pastoral action among the clergy and the people, occupies a principal place.

But St. Josemaría is a glory for the universal Church, as was made manifest in the ceremony of his canonization, followed by millions of women and men all over the world, also through the means of communication. The message of the universal call to holiness in ordinary life, which our Lord entrusted to him in 1928, has resounded effectively in persons and countries all over the world. His apostolic zeal led him to write as early as the 1930s: “To be ‘Catholic’ means to love your country and to be second to no one in that love. And at the same time, to hold as your own the noble aspirations of other lands... Catholic: big heart, broad mind.”[1]

Impelled by this divine zeal, the founder of Opus Dei launched out again, in the final years of his life, in an incessant catechesis through Europe and America, seeking only the glory of God, the good of the Church, and the salvation of souls. Thanks be to God we have filmed documentaries that testify to the intensity of St. Josemaría’s preaching, also in those last years of his earthly life.

4. His zeal for souls, his eagerness to make Christ known in all places, is an echo of those words _duc in altum!_—put out into the deep and lower your nets for the catch—that we have listened to in the rite of the blessing of the statues (Lk 5:10). Our Lord addressed these words to Simon Peter, to his companions, and to all who were to walk along the same path throughout history: to all Christians. Both St. Josemaría and Blessed John Paul II frequently meditated on this scene and listened to Jesus’ invitation. At the end of one of those times of contemplation, St. Josemaría helped us to put ourselves into the Gospel, to let Jesus’ invitation take hold in our heart: “Let us accompany our Lord as he goes about his divine task of fishing. We find Jesus by the Lake of Genesareth, with the crowds pressing upon him, eager to hear the word of God. Just as they do today! Can’t you
see? They want to hear God’s message, even though outwardly they may not show it.”[2]

Blessed John Paul II, in connection with the Jubilee of the year 2000, urged the whole Church to feel the timeliness of those words of Christ and the fruitfulness of the docile response of Peter and his companions, who hauled in that abundant catch. “These words ring out for us today, and they invite us to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to look forward to the future with confidence: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.”[3]

Benedict XVI’s fruitful magisterium followed the same path. Also Pope Francis, from the beginning of his pontificate, has been spreading the same apostolic impulse—ever new!—in the Church. In his audiences and homilies he frequently repeats the idea of “getting out” of ourselves, so that each of us may encounter the others and bring them to Christ. In one address, he encouraged everyone to enter into the logic of God, which is the logic of the Cross, because to remain with Christ demands that we get out of our tired and routine way of living the faith. We have to get “out of ourselves,” he concluded, “just as Jesus, just as God came out of himself in Jesus and Jesus came out of himself for all of us.”[4]

5. Love for our Lady also unites those we are venerating today in the statues we have just blessed. I have already mentioned the daily visits of St. Josemaría to our Lady of Pilar, with the filial spirit that led him to seek the protection of our Lady in many shrines throughout the world. Frequently on his lips was the aspiration: “Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam!” That we may all go united, with Peter, to Jesus through Mary.

And turning our eyes to John Paul II, we remember very well the motto that he took for his episcopal coat of arms as a summary of his love for our Lady: Totus tuus. Moved by that same love, he wanted a mosaic of Mary, Mater Ecclesiae, placed at the top of St. Peter’s Square, as a constant invocation to our Lady to always watch over the holy people of God.

It fills me with joy to realize that now, in the presence of the Most Holy Trinity, St. Josemaría and Blessed John Paul II are praying for the universal Church, for this archdiocese, for the pastors who have guided and are guiding it, for the priests, religious and lay faithful who make it up, so
that at every moment they may walk—that we may walk—along the paths
of Christian life, following the luminous star they have left us by their
example and words.

May the Most Holy Virgin, in her advocatio of Pilar, make us strong
in the faith, secure in hope, ardent in charity, enkindled by a zeal for the
salvation of souls that knows no frontiers. Amen.


January 6, 2001, no. 1.

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Pope Francis, Address at a general audience, March 27, 2013.

At the inauguration of the academic year,
Pontifical University of the Holy Cross,
Rome (October 7, 2013)

“Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in
them the fire of your love.” These words that we sang before the reading of
the Gospel are what today, at the opening of this new academic year, we
especially ask of the Third Person of the Most Blessed Trinity: that he fill
us with his gifts and enkindle us with the fire of his love in order to respond
constantly to God’s most lovable will.

Christian life means walking “according to the Spirit,” as St. Paul
reminds us in the passage from his letter to the Galatians that we just
heard. And the Apostle strongly insists that it is not possible to harmonize
“walking according to the Spirit” with “satisfying the desires of the flesh,”
because they “are mutually opposed.” Therefore our commitment, which
we reaffirm at this moment while celebrating Holy Mass, cannot be other
than to let ourselves be “guided by the Spirit” in every circumstance of our
life. This means welcoming his constant motions, both those that he
inspires directly in the interior of our souls, and those that come to us through the normal channels of Christian life, especially in the Eucharist and in Confession, without forgetting that the Paraclete also intervenes in our daily life and in our life at the university, especially in all that refers to the knowledge and transmission of the Word of God in all its aspects.

Only if we let ourselves be guided by the Spirit will it be possible to produce the good fruit that St. Paul lists in that same letter to the Galatians: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law” (Gal 5:22-23). These are signs that our life is developing in accord with the divine will, that we are making constant progress, since we are eliminating selfish tendencies. Therefore they are signs of our identification with Christ, because “those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” in order to live in God.

“Send forth your Spirit, Lord,” we pray with words from the antiphon of the Responsorial Psalm, realizing that without the divine presence that comes to us from on high it is impossible to walk towards God, or to fulfill our mission to “renew the earth,” as the same antiphon says. The world will be renewed by means of our life, through us who are poor men and women, if we welcome the Divine Spirit, because God wants to do great things through our knowledge and piety. This is what Benedict XVI tell us in the Apostolic Letter with which he promulgated the Year of Faith, which is now coming to an end. He states there that “a Christian may never think of belief as a private act. Faith is choosing to stand with the Lord so as to live with him. This ‘standing with him’ points towards an understanding of the reasons for believing. Faith, precisely because it is a free act, also demands social responsibility for what one believes. The Church on the day of Pentecost demonstrates with utter clarity this public dimension of believing and proclaiming one’s faith fearlessly to every person. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit that makes us fit for mission and strengthens our witness, making it frank and courageous” (Porta Fidei, no. 10).

Jesus himself set forth this truth at the Last Supper, as we have heard in the Gospel of the Mass. At that sublime moment he told his disciples: “when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness
to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning” (Jn 15: 26-27). These words were addressed to the apostles first of all, but not only to them: they were also addressed to all his disciples throughout the ages. There come to mind the words of Pope Francis in his general audience on May 15, in relation to the text of St. John that speaks of the “Spirit of truth.” After stressing that Jesus is the Truth who became flesh in the fullness of time (Jn 1:1-14), he added that: “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.”

Before concluding, I would like to recall the prayer to the Holy Spirit composed by St. Josemaría in that now distant April of 1934: “Come, O Holy Spirit! Enlighten my mind to know your commands; strengthen my heart against the snares of the enemy; enkindle my will. I have heard your voice, and I don’t want to harden my heart and resist, saying ‘Later … tomorrow.’ Nunc coepi! I begin right now! Lest there be no tomorrow for me. O Spirit of truth and wisdom, Spirit of understanding and counsel, Spirit of joy and peace! I want whatever you want; I want it because you want; I want it as you want; I want it whenever you want.”

Our Mother Holy Mary is teacher of a complete fidelity to the Holy Spirit, as the Roman Pontiff reminded us when he said: “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” (Audience, May 15, 2013).
Fifty Years After Vatican II: the Contribution of St. Josemaría

In the twentieth century as well, the Holy Spirit inspired one of the great renewals that shine forth like stars in the Church’s two thousand year history—a deep spiritual, intellectual and theological growth. This renewal stemmed from the intertwining of various charisms and currents of thought, and the response by Christians to the pastoral challenges presented by the modern world. It is sufficient to recall figures such as, for example, Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, Blessed Columba Marmion, and Fr. Paul Couturier, or the ecumenical and liturgical movements.

Looking back on these decades we find many saints, both women and men, who by their message and pastoral activity can be seen as gifts from God to shed light on the Church’s path and life. St. Josemaría Escrivá is one of these saints. The light that he received from God in Madrid, on October 2, 1928, was a divine intervention to help build up of the Body of Christ, which St. Paul spoke of in his Letter to the Ephesians (see Eph 4:13 and 15f). The seeds of spiritual and theological renewal that had arisen and taken root in the previous years were the foundation that inspired, under the action of the Holy Spirit, the writing of the magisterial documents at Vatican II and the guidelines given for spreading the faith in today’s world. The Council was, undoubtedly, a great gift from God to his Church at the end of the second millennium.

As we know, from 1928 on St. Josemaría dedicated himself generously to spreading the divine message that the Holy Spirit had entrusted to him, and that influenced the Second Vatican Council. Today, now that fifty years have gone by since the Council, that message continues to offer light to the Church, together with the light of so many other ancient and modern saints, so that the People of God may fully carry out the mission
Christ entrusted to it. This was emphasized by Blessed John Paul II in 1993, a year after the beatification of the founder of Opus Dei. Recalling what the Council had reaffirmed about the service of the Church to the redemption, in all dimensions of human life, he added: “the message of Blessed Josemaría... is one of the most significant charismatic impulses in this direction.”[1]

Twenty years have gone by since John Paul II’s address, and we continue looking at the Council and at St. Josemaría Escrivá as two great gifts from God to the Church. This is true not only for the twentieth century but also for the present moment, since by their mutual relationship and their diversity they contribute every day to making Christ more present in the life of Christians in the world. The diversity is evident. The Council and the documents approved by the Council are a special manifestation of the Church’s magisterium. The teaching of a saint is, in contrast, a personal testimony of faith, hope and charity deeply lived throughout the whole of a life, normally extensive and varied. The Council, like every act of the Magisterium assisted by the Holy Spirit, transcends its time. Nor, in an analogous way, is the influence of the saints exhausted by the events they lived through.

In a special way, the influence of St. Josemaría, as recalled by Bishop del Portillo, my beloved predecessor, is not confined to the years of his life or to his contribution to the development of Vatican II, but it continues to be effective in our own day.[2] I will not endeavor now to try to give an overview of the influence of the spirit of Opus Dei on the life of the Church—let alone try to look into the future. I will simply try to describe, insofar as possible, the contribution of St. Josemaría and of Opus Dei to the Conciliar Assembly and to the immediate reception of the magisterial documents.

First I would like to offer two considerations that can help situate our topic properly in the Church’s history and life.

The first refers to the evaluation of a saint’s contribution to the teaching of an ecumenical council or, more generally, to the development of the magisterium and of Christian thought. There have been no lack of studies, and others will follow in the future, that examine how much a
council owes to a saint, to a theologian, to a pastor, or to a particular school of thought. Pope Paul VI, speaking of Vatican II, presented it as “the hour of Newman.” In the future, the development of theological and historical studies will be able to specify more exactly the extent of the English Cardinal’s influence on that Council, as well as the eventual influence of other saints from the modern or contemporary era.

In our case we need to keep in mind that, when Blessed John XXIII announced the convocation of the Council, the founder of Opus Dei was already a mature person, with many years of experience in directing Opus Dei, which had seen—thanks be to God—a great development in the years following the Second World War. Thus his contribution cannot be reduced to a simple comparison of his writings with the Conciliar texts. Rather we need to consider other sources and other paths. His spirit entered the Council through his conversations with the Conciliar Fathers, which I can personally testify to by my constant presence at his side during those years. And also, or above all, thanks to the lives of so many faithful of Opus Dei, who made present, in the various countries in which they lived and worked, a spirit capable of fostering holiness in the middle of the world, responding to the challenges that Christians encounter on their path.

The second consideration refers to the development of Vatican II and the role the founder of Opus Dei played there. St. Josemaría was not a Council Father. Thus his situation was quite different than, for example, that of Blessed John Paul II, who as auxiliary bishop of Krakow intervened directly in the Council. Nevertheless, St. Josemaria had a deep, although indirect, influence on Vatican II in all its stages: a) in the years previous to the Council, he was a precursor through his preaching and priestly work; b) during the Council he had frequent personal contact in Rome with those who intervened directly in the Council session; c) and after the Council, he welcomed and applied the Conciliar documents in the life of Opus Dei.

These considerations can serve as a framework for this presentation. First, we will look at St. Josemaría Escrivá’s contribution during the preparatory and ante-preparatory phase of Vatican II. I will then consider...
his activity while the sessions were underway, and, finally, examine how he
guided and fostered the reception of the Council’s teachings.

1. Between the announcement and the inauguration of Vatican II

Right from the moment Blessed John XXIII convoked the ecumenical
council, St. Josemaría welcomed it, seeing it as an event destined to
contribute greatly to the good of the Church, under the guidance of the
Holy Spirit. As a person with a deep knowledge of history, he also knew
that while councils bring great benefits to the Church, there is also the
danger that they can lead to one-sided or even mistaken interpretations,
especially given the ideological divisions found in today’s world. Well aware
of the danger of instrumentalizing the Council in the service of one’s own
ideas, he adhered strongly to the light of faith. Without being naive, he had
no fear of the renewal and reforms that would come about over time, in
accord with John XXIII’s desires.

Living very close to St. Josemaría during those years, I saw his great
supernatural hope in God’s action, which through the Council would do
good to the whole Church, giving a renewed impulse to its mission in the
world. Among other benefits, he hoped that the Council would emphasize
the universal call to sanctity and apostolate, the vocation and mission of the
laity, as well as a specific lay spirituality. And he always kept alive his
ardent desire to find a satisfactory solution to the juridical and institutional
situation of Opus Dei in the Church. On this specific topic, an abundant
bibliography is already available.

A few months before the opening of the Council, St. Josemaría wrote
to the people God had entrusted to him:

“In these preliminary phases of the upcoming Second Vatican
Ecumenical Council (for which all of us, in fervent union of intentions
with our Holy Father John XXIII, are beseeching the special help of the
Holy Spirit and offering daily mortifications), particular attention is being
paid to the topic of the laity: to their spirituality and apostolic mission.

“If you could only see how much joy it gives me to know that the
Council is going to concern itself with matters that have filled our life since
1928! I give thanks to God our Lord for the part that the Work has played
(through its life, its spirituality, its apostolates), together with other highly
meritorious associations of the faithful, in helping foster this theological deepening, which undoubtedly will do great good to the Church.”[7]

Some months before the letter we just cited, but after Pope John XXIII’s announcement of the Council, the founder of Opus Dei had written to all the faithful of Opus Dei, present at that time in almost fifty countries, to ask them to offer special prayers and sacrifices for the success of the future Assembly. St. Josemaría knew very well that apostolic initiatives and ecclesial events give lasting fruit when they are carried out in union with the One who is the Giver of grace and of life, and in communion with the Roman Pontiff. After an audience that Pope John XXIII granted him on June 27, 1962, he wrote:

“When the Holy Father announced the Ecumenical Council, I wrote to all of you (my daughters and sons) about the prayer and mortification... that you should offer to our Lord for it. Now, after this audience, my desire is that you redouble these prayers, with more generosity and voluntary penances, and that you offer for this intention many hours of your daily work as well, wherever your work takes place: at the university, in a factory, on a farm, in public service or in studying for your profession, in the domestic administration of our centers, or in the heart of your families: do everything in union with God, for the success of this great initiative that is the Second Vatican Council. I know that this is our Holy Father’s great intention, and I would like that we too do what we can, in our own apparently small environment, to contribute to it through our prayer, penance and sanctified and sanctifying work.”[8]

Besides having recourse to the supernatural means, the founder of Opus Dei strove to contribute to the success of the great Conciliar event through his own encouragement and personal work. As is well known, Pope John XXIII set up in 1959 an ante-preparatory commission presided over by Cardinal Domenico Tardini, Secretary of State, with the task of collecting proposals about the questions the future Council would need to study. I recall that the Cardinal’s letter to all ecclesiastical and academic authorities for help in this effort, moved St. Josemaría to organize in Villa Tevere, the central headquarters of Opus Dei, a working team to prepare, under his direction, topics and suggestions that could then be sent to the various commissions that were being created. He also advised all his
children to make themselves available for whatever might be asked of them and, if possible, to offer ideas and suggestions in the gatherings organized for this purpose in the particular Churches.\[9\]

The Holy See received a large number of responses coming from bishops, universities and other institutes of studies. The following year, the Supreme Pontiff opened the preparatory phase of the Council, with the “Motu Proprio” *Superno Dei nutu* dated June 5, 1960, by which he instituted the various commissions responsible for the preparation of the working plans. At the end of the month, on June 27, St. Josemaría had an interview with Cardinal Tardini; their conversation included, among other topics, preparations for the upcoming Assembly. The Cardinal asked him to send a list of members of the Work who might be able to assist in the work of the preparatory commissions.\[10\]

On the following day Msgr. Escrivá answered him with a letter in which he listed twelve names, the most notable being that of Don Alvaro del Portillo, at that time Secretary General of Opus Dei, and therefore his closest co-worker.\[11\] St. Josemaría offered Don Alvaro’s name despite realizing that this would inevitably mean much more work for himself if his suggestion was accepted. A few days later, on July 4, a letter from the Central Commission, signed by Msgr. Pericle Felici, thanked him for the names.\[12\]

This is how some people from Opus Dei came to take part in the preparatory phase of the Council. Don Alvaro was appointed secretary of the Commission on the Laity and a member of another Conciliar commission. St. Josemaría took care to ensure that Don Alvaro would have adequate assistance from other members of Opus Dei, specialists in theology, canon law and philosophy. As secretary of the *De Laicis* Commission, Don Alvaro helped produce the material to be provided to the Council Fathers, after adding suggestions and ideas from other people. All that he had heard and lived alongside St. Josemaría was the source of inspiration for his work in preparing for the Council.

St. Josemaría was happy to do all he could to assist the Council and would gladly have participated in the Conciliar meetings, despite his heavy commitments in governing Opus Dei. But he realized that his participation
would be viewed as that of someone intervening as the President General of a Secular Institute. This could have been interpreted as a tacit acceptance of the canonical figure of secular institute that he, as many people knew, did not consider adequate for Opus Dei’s real nature. Precisely for this reason, his active participation, as a Council Father or equivalent, could have been used as a fact, or at least a precedent, that would be unfavorable for the future possible revision of Opus Dei’s canonical framework. To avoid placing in danger the full recognition of the foundational charism of Opus Dei, St. Josemaría decided to make known to the Holy See beforehand that he preferred not to take an active part in the sessions. He explained the reasons for his decision, which were readily understood.\[13\]

Given these circumstances, Msgr. Capovilla, interpreting the wishes of John XXIII,\[14\] communicated to him that, if he so desired, he could be present in the hall at least as a Conciliar *peritus* or expert. St. Josemaría reiterated his availability, but explained the reasons that led him to consider it more suitable to also refuse this possibility: On the one hand, he would not have been able to dedicate the time needed for that work. On the other hand, given that some of his sons had already been named as Council Fathers, his role as simply a *peritus* would have seemed quite strange. In addition, if he had accepted the appointment as a *peritus*, some people might have been able to say that his intention was to act “behind the scenes” or with subterfuge. While others, who didn’t know all the facts, might have been led to conclude that the importance of Opus Dei in the life of the Church was very negligible. St. Josemaría’s negative reply was, therefore, a manifestation of great prudence, to avoid having the Holy See put in a bad light. In any case, in his reply St. Josemaría made clear that he would accept the Pope’s decision.

The Pope’s desire, shared by various people in the Roman Curia, that St. Josemaría participate in a direct way in the Council’s work was well known. His contribution was sought not only because of his experience in the apostolate of the laity, in fostering holiness in ordinary work and in deepening the Church’s influence on the modern world, but also in the sphere of ecumenism, since Opus Dei had begun to admit non-Catholics and even non-Christians as Cooperators many years earlier. Thus a clear
dilemma was presented. On one hand, the benefit to be gained from St. Josemaría’s participation in the work of the Council was clear; but on the other hand, there was as yet no adequate canonical definition of Opus Dei that could justify his presence in the Council Hall, without prejudicing the later steps of its canonical path. How could this dilemma be solved? In the end, the Holy Spirit provided a solution that, as we shall see, enabled St. Josemaría’s ideas, suggestions and experience to reach the Council Fathers through his personal meetings with them, even though he was not present in the Council Hall.

2. St. Josemaría’s contribution throughout the Council’s sessions

Pope John XXIII inaugurated the Second Vatican Council on October 11, 1962. He encouraged the Assembly to have a pastoral focus, namely, to pass on the revealed truth as the Church’s Tradition has understood it, but formulated in a way that is more suitable and understandable for people today. This pastoral orientation was shared by St. Josemaría, as I had occasion to hear him say, because it stressed the decisive importance of apostolic action. Nevertheless, St. Josemaría was well aware of the imposing theological, philosophical and ideological problems present in our culture today. Therefore he foresaw that, sooner or later, the inevitable need would arise to make some doctrinal declarations, as in fact was the case in the Conciliar documents, and even more so in the subsequent pontifical magisterium.

After the Council began, with the encouragement of the Vatican II presidency and secretariat, St. Josemaría agreed to meet with the Conciliar Fathers and offer them material to study and work on, within the limits of secrecy of office. His commitment to assist the Conciliar Assembly was shown, in first place, by the help, advice and encouragement he gave to three Conciliar fathers who were members of Opus Dei: Bishop Ignacio de Orbeogoza and Bishop Luis Sanchez-Moreno, both Peruvian bishops, and, Bishop Alberto Cosme do Amaral, who, from the third Council session on, was auxiliary bishop of Porto, in Portugal, and who for the previous several years had been a member of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross.

But his help and advice principally reached the Council through the work of Don Alvaro del Portillo, who in the preparatory phase had been
secretary of the *De Laicos* Commission. In the new plan approved by the Council in the first weeks of October, Don Alvaro was named secretary of the Commission for the Discipline of the Clergy and the Christian People, besides being a consultor for other Conciliar commissions. I can personally testify that Don Alvaro was one of the persons who lived with the greatest fidelity the message that God had entrusted to St. Josemaría in 1928, and who passed it on integrally. Thus through Don Alvaro’s personal dealings with the Council Fathers, St. Josemaría’s contribution to the Council reached far beyond what one can find in the documents alone. As Don Alvaro himself said some years later, when the Conciliar texts were approved it would have been only right to send congratulations to the founder of Opus Dei, since what he had taught and lived since 1928 had now been proclaimed solemnly by the Church’s Magisterium.

In his work for the Council, Don Alvaro relied on the assistance of Julián Herranz, now a cardinal, who was then assistant secretary of the same commission; and also of other specialists in canon law: Jose Luis Gutiérrez, Amadeo de Fuenmayor, Xavier de Ayala, and Prof. Pedro Lombardía, as well as theologians such as Giuseppe Molteni and Pedro Rodríguez. All of these were members of Opus Dei. Finally, among members of Opus Dei working as *periti* was Fr. Salvador Canals.

During those years St. Josemaría had frequent contact with the members of Opus Dei who intervened in the Conciliar Hall, sometimes even daily, especially with those living in Villa Tevere. He dedicated his time generously to listening to their comments and answering their questions. He was also concerned about their rest and saw to it that they could work quietly without distractions or interruptions.

St. Josemaría's contact with people taking part in the Council was not limited to the few Conciliar Fathers who were members of Opus Dei. Don Alvaro, along with others in the Church, wanted to enable many Council Fathers to meet St. Josemaría, so that they could take advantage of his experience in pastoral care of the laity and in fostering holiness in the world. Among the Fathers who frequently visited St. Josemaría, there were naturally several Spanish prelates who had known him for some time, including Bishop José María García Lahiguera, Archbishop Casimiro Morcillo (who was the Vice-President of the Presidential Commission of
the Council), Bishop Juan Hervás, and Cardinal José Maria Bueno Monreal. Other prelates, both from Spain and other countries, had never met him but were very aware of the importance of sounding him out on topics related to the theology of the laity, the evangelization of society, and the relationship of the Church to the modern world. Some of these prelates, finally, got to know him through other Fathers and *periti* and ecclesiastical authorities during the years of the Council.

At Villa Tevere, where St. Josemaría was living, a constant coming and going of prelates from various countries and with quite varied pastoral experiences took place. All of them wanted to get his advice and speak with him: cardinals such as Siri, Lercaro, Döpfner, Marty, König, Antoniutti and Ciriaci; bishops such as Marc-Armand Lallier, George Andrew Beck, Jean-Julien Weber, and Léon-Arthur-Auguste Elchinger; *periti* such as William Onclin and Charles Moeller; theologians such as Carlo Colombo.

Other bishops visiting him included Wheeler, Schmitt, and various bishops from France; also cardinals and bishops such as Dario Miranda, Marella, López Ortiz, Castán, Modrego, Marcelo Gonzalez, Deskur, Polschneider, Suquía, etc.

I can attest to the fact that during those years several hundred prelates, *periti* and observers visited St. Josemaría, drawn not only by his pastoral experience in many of the topics being debated in the Conciliar Hall, but also by his moral authority, thanks to the reputation for holiness that he already enjoyed then. And sometimes he himself went to visit prelates or *periti*, and he also had an opportunity to visit the Conciliar Hall, but not when it was in use by the general congregations.\[17\]

The impression that these prelates received from their interviews, as well as the spiritual joy they carried with them after a visit to St. Josemaría Escrivá, cannot be translated into words, as frequently happens in the life of the spirit. I was a witness to the reactions of those invited and saw the affection and gratitude of many of them after St. Josemaría’s death in the letters of sympathy sent to my predecessor, Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo, and in the “postulatory” letters with which they asked the Holy Father Paul VI that the Cause of beatification and canonization of the founder of Opus Dei be opened when it was deemed suitable.
I would like to cite here, succinctly, four testimonies, to help begin to grasp the impact that he had. The first is that of Bishop Juan Hervás, at that time bishop of Ciudad Real. He states that St. Josemaría’s influence on the Council Fathers who went to visit him was exercised principally thanks to his moral authority which, without imposing anything on anyone, and respecting everyone’s freedom, supported the work of the Council, which often was becoming more and more difficult because of the discussions in the Council Hall and the pressure from the media. Regarding those visits the Prelate recalled, “I always left encouraged to work more and better and to take a more active part in the Conciliar tasks falling to my competence.”

The second testimony is from Most Rev. Paul-Joseph Schmitt, bishop of Metz: “I found in him a person extraordinarily aware of and close to the problems of his contemporaries. None of the great topics that the Council was leading us to consider in depth was unfamiliar to him. He was concerned equally about the future of the world and the future of the Church. He was perfectly aware the gravity of what was involved and showed a deep conviction that we couldn’t limit ourselves to merely a superficial ‘touch up.’ Reforming the structures alone seemed insufficient to him. He thought that only a return to the sources of the faith would allow the Church to fulfill its mission in the world.”

The third testimony comes from Most Rev. Abilio del Campo y de la Barcena, bishop of Calahorra, La Calzada and Logroño. He testifies to his sincere conviction regarding the decisive contribution made by St. Josemaría in clarifying various points on which “the lights that he had received from God and his extraordinary pastoral experience in the world of work were almost indispensable. Many Council Fathers, taking advantage of their friendship with him, were able to avail themselves of his wise counsel.”

The final testimony I will mention is from François Marty, then archbishop of Rheims, who later became Cardinal Archbishop of Paris. He says that “a period of conversation with him felt like a period of prayer. One could see that he lived the spirit of contemplation in the midst of the world that he never ceased to preach from 1928 on, which in no way diminished his good humor and affectionate charity.”
These recollections give us a brief sketch of the human, spiritual, theological and pastoral profile of St. Josemaría and show us that the founder of Opus Dei was following the Council’s activities very closely. They also make clear that many Council Fathers had a clear awareness that in their meetings with him they had received not only words of encouragement and clarifications on certain questions, but also the invitation to draw closer to God and to love his will.

As the work of the Council progressed, the conviction was growing that it was going to require more time than that foreseen at the start. In fact, John XXIII did not live to see the second session of the Council, since in May 1963 he became gravely ill. St. Josemaría followed closely the course of the Pontiff’s sickness through Archbishop Dell’Acqua, then “Sustituto” or “Vice-Secretary” of State for the Vatican, with whom he had a friendly and fraternal relationship. The news of the Pope’s suffering hurt him deeply, as he said later. When he received the news of the death of the Holy Father, St. Josemaría knelt and prayed, deeply moved, for the eternal rest of his soul, and invited us to pray from that very moment for the future Pope. On June 21, 1963, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, one of the first friendly faces St. Josemaría had encountered on his arrival in Rome, in 1946, was elected to the See of Peter. Cardinal Montini took the name of Paul VI and, soon after the election, declared that the Council would continue after the summer.

St. Josemaría lived through the whole Conciliar period with an intertwining of joys and sorrows. One of his first joys was when Pope John XXIII approved the introduction of St Joseph into the Roman Canon of the Mass. It seemed to him a wonderful gesture to emphasize the role of St. Joseph as patron of the universal Church, which would also help show the supernatural value of a normal life of work, in dialogue with God, in the midst of the world. That measure, by the way, was recently reaffirmed by Pope Francis, who included the name of the Holy Patriarch in the other Eucharistic Prayers.

For St. Josemaría it was a motive of special joy that, as the various decrees, declarations and constitutions were approved, he found in them the themes he had been preaching on since 1928. He pointed to two especially important topics that reflected the spirit of Opus Dei: the
universal call to holiness and apostolate, principally present in chapters two and five of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*; and the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world, present in that same Constitution, but also in other documents, such as the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and the Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.[22]

Obviously these documents were the fruit of a great variety of contributions, but I can testify that in St. Josemaría’s meetings with hundreds of Council Fathers, these topics were spoken of extensively, especially the sanctification of work, a decisive factor for authentic Christian presence in the world. Forty years earlier he had already expressed the desire that the vocation of Christians in the middle of the world be given the greatest possible emphasis, in full accord with the ethical demands of an upright conscience and of God’s salvific plan. It was a matter, in other words, of emphasizing the importance of striving for sanctity and seeking to further the sanctification of others.

Since it is impossible here to comment on all the topics dealt with at the Council that were also present in the preaching and in the message of St. Josemaría, I will limit myself to listing them briefly: the Holy Mass, seen as the center and root of our spiritual life and mission; the possibility and the suitability of the cooperation of our non-Catholic and even non-Christian brethren in activities organized by the Catholic faithful; the importance of unity of life, which refuses to admit a separation between prayer and work; the union between baptismal consecration and the mission of the Christian and the priest. I also have to mention here St. Josemaría’s contribution towards the recognition of the pastoral dynamism of the Church’s hierarchical structure, dealt with in the Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, which led, among other things, to the definitive canonical configuration of Opus Dei as a personal prelature. All of the Council’s discussions and votes on these topics moved St. Josemaría to offer a continual act of thanksgiving to God.

So there many joys, but also abundant sorrows. I recall that in the first Conciliar session, or perhaps at the beginning of the second, St. Josemaría mentioned some historians who pointed to the Councils as usually being preceded or followed by eras in which good desires, expressions of the Church’s light and vitality, were also mixed with doubts, mistaken projects.
and pretentious claims. This, he said, is what is also happening now. He was not the only one who thought that way. Moreover, not only historians, but also some great figures in the Church’s life (for example Blessed Cardinal John Henry Newman) had pointed to the spread of intrigues and biased readings in contexts similar to that of Vatican II. But this reality reveals only the human dimension, all too human, present in any reunion and also, unfortunately, in ecumenical councils.

To situate historically the cultural environment found during the time of Vatican II, it would be useful to mention two important factors. First, as we said earlier, a deep ideological and philosophical divide was becoming apparent in society. In addition, although civil authorities in the twentieth century no longer had the same possibility of exerting pressure on Councils as in the past, nevertheless pressure of a different nature, but no less powerful, had now become possible: that exercised by the modern means of communication. The convoking of the Council and its development had awakened in public opinion a great interest in the Church’s life. However this interest, good in itself, was distorted by some of the media, by spreading an interpretation that was completely unsuitable to the Church’s reality, with biased commentaries about the debates and discussions being held by the Council.

St. Josemaría had a great appreciation for the means of communication. As early as the fifties he had encouraged the opening of a school of journalism at the University of Navarra. But he was also very aware of the possibility of employing the media to exert pressure on public opinion, and thereby also on the work of the Council Fathers. The Fathers’ arguments were often presented by the media in a simplistic way, giving a confused interpretation of complex issues and communicating a deformed image of the Council’s work. The inevitable result was the conviction that a fierce struggle was taking place between defenders of the “old” order and the “new,” or that its decisions were the result of strategies and arguments that often were not even Christian.

Right from the Council’s start, a number of people warned of the danger of creating two “councils,” a danger that became ever more apparent as its work progressed. One Council was that being held inside the Vatican Basilica, where differences of opinion were certainly voiced, but always
within a context of communion. While the other “council,” the product of media manipulation, presented the Council’s work as an opportunity to bring about a profound change in the Church, to the point of altering its true essence.

Paul VI was aware of this danger and expressed his concern on a number of occasions. Something similar was true of St. Josemaría’s reaction.[25] He reaffirmed his faith in the assistance provided to the Church by the Holy Spirit, with the conviction that God would intervene (as he frequently said) to ensure that in the texts and final guidelines, despite all the momentary mishaps suffered in the process, the truth of the Gospel would be clarified and the good of the Church fostered.[26] His reaction, therefore, was to pray and offer mortifications, and to ask many other people to do so for the Council’s successful outcome.

As the good shepherd for Opus Dei, he tried to help its members distinguish between being open to the Council’s teachings from being dragged along by the climate of confusion created by the media and by some intellectuals. In the summer of 1964, after the publication of Paul VI’s first encyclical, Ecclesiam Suam, where the Pope pointed to dialogue as a path for furthering the evangelization of the world, he wrote in a tone that combined apostolic zeal with radical fidelity to the faith:

“The dialogue of Christians, and specifically ecumenical dialogue, is a demand that flows from the very nature of the Church, one, holy, and catholic. Dialogue has always existed and will always exist where zeal for souls is found. Therefore I am convinced that the Ecumenical Council being celebrated, for which I have prayed so much and asked others to pray for, will give it new vigor, greater impetus.

“The dynamism of these notes of the true Church, the perennial vitality of its divine life, demands of all Catholics a noble openness to communication with all men and women. The need for dialogue is, then, not simply a demand of a particular time and set of circumstances.”[27]

This pastoral concern had various manifestations. First, he strove to correct false information or ambiguities, such as for example those surrounding the concepts of “openness to the world” and “aggiornamento or bringing up to date.” These concepts were sometimes interpreted as an
invitation to break with Christian tradition, and not as an internal
development that remained faithful to Christ’s word and will.\textsuperscript{[28]} In
addition, he sought to promote knowledge and study of the Conciliar
documents when they were approved and published. He encouraged the
faithful of Opus Dei who worked in the means of communication to
provide truthful information about Vatican II, guided by love for the
Church. He wanted the world of the media, as well as the work of
philosophers and theologians, to be in harmony with the Holy Spirit’s
action assisting the Council.

In a context rich in lights and shadows, St. Josemaría saw the damage
that the fiercely contrasting interpretations could have on the sense of
doctrinal and pastoral unity, essential for the Church’s life. He strove with
all his strength to stress the positive and perennial value of the Church’s
patrimony. And in particular he prayed and had others pray a lot that the
Council would both deepen the doctrine regarding the principal of
collegiality, as well as clearly reaffirm the Pope’s authority.\textsuperscript{[29]}

Moreover, although the Council proceeded rapidly in its work, there
was no lack of difficulties and the debates were at times quite sharp. This
situation, given the way the media presented the Council’s work, caused
confusion among the faithful. Paul VI suffered greatly owing to the
harshness in the climate of work and also because some people were trying
to instrumentalize the Council for ends not in accord with its true purpose.
All of this led the Pope to conclude that it would be good to accelerate its
pace, and seek a rapid conclusion.\textsuperscript{[30]} St. Josemaría was aware of this
situation through Bishop Angelo Dell’Acqua, “Sustituto” of the Secretariat
of State, a good friend of his whom he saw frequently. The Holy Father
knew about and approved of this exchange of information; he saw it as an
informal way to get to know the views of someone he considered very close
to God and rich in pastoral and ecclesial experience.\textsuperscript{[31]}

During this period, in the month of April 1964, the founder of
Opus Dei wrote a filial letter to Paul VI telling him: “All of Opus Dei is
praying a great deal for your august and most beloved person and for your
intentions, so that the present Council may soon come to an end, and for
the huge work that will need to be done in the post-conciliar period. Above
all we are praying that the Roman Pontiff’s authority may never be
conditioned by anything or anyone, and that thus the juridical norms may be safeguarded that regulate, gently and forcefully, the path by which sound doctrine reaches all the faithful.”[32]

Paul VI's desire to bring the Council to an end became a reality on December 8, 1965. In the texts approved there, which are very rich and profound, the Church’s teaching is transmitted in a language drawing deeply on the Scriptures and the liturgy. Among other central points of the Christian message, the Council proclaimed in a solemn way the universal call to holiness and the apostolic mission of the laity, fully entitled members of the Church and called by divine vocation to help perfect God’s creation. In 1969, for the fourth anniversary of the completion of the Council’s work, Paul VI pointed to the importance of these teachings: “the Second Vatican Council... again and again called all the faithful, of whatever condition or place in society, to the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of charity; this exhortation to holiness may be considered the most characteristic element of the Council’s teaching, and its final goal.”[33]

I want to stress once again that these were precisely the issues that St. Josemaría had preached about since 1928, when many still saw the role of the laity as a longa manus of the hierarchy, and the call to holiness as a goal attainable only by those who entered the ministerial priesthood or the religious life. In 1979 Blessed John Paul II stated in a homily that Msgr. Escrivá had been “a precursor of the theology of the laity that later characterized the Church of the Council and the post-Council.”[34] This was not an isolated judgment. Many Conciliar Fathers, as well as other ecclesiastical figures, recognized that St. Josemaría had been a precursor of Vatican II in topics central to the Conciliar magisterium.[35]

I would like to conclude this section with a quotation—a bit long—that sums up St. Josemaría’s feelings during the years of the Council. It is from a letter addressed to the faithful of Opus Dei shortly before the end of the Council:

“My daughters and sons, you know the love with which I have followed the work of the Council during these years, cooperating with my prayer and, on more than one occasion, with my personal work. You also know of my desire to be, and that you be, faithful to the decisions of the Church’s
hierarchy even in the smallest details, acting not only as subjects of an authority but with the piety of children, with the affection of those who see themselves as, and are, members of the Body of Christ.

“Nor have I hidden my sorrow at the conduct of those who have not viewed the Counsel as a solemn act in the life of the Church, and as a manifestation of the supernatural action of the Holy Spirit, but as an opportunity for personal affirmation, to give vent to their own opinions or, even worse, to harm the Church.

“The Council is coming to an end. It has been announced several times that this will be the last session. When the letter I am writing you reaches your hands, the post-conciliar period will have begun. And my heart trembles to think that this could be the occasion for new wounds in the body of the Church.

“The years following a Council are always important years, which demand docility in applying the decisions taken, along with firmness in the faith, supernatural spirit, love for God and his Church, and fidelity to the Roman Pontiff.”[36]

3. The contribution of St. Josemaría to the reception of Vatican II

Blessed John Henry Newman stated that studying the history of the Councils of antiquity had led him to conclude that after each council there had been, with few exceptions, great confusion in the Church’s life. [37] The fulfillment of the founder of Opus Dei’s fear expressed in the letter just cited from October 24, 1965, points to the truth of Newman’s insight.

The period right after the Council’s close was marked by the spread of publications, translations and commentaries on the Conciliar texts, as well as the first documents for applying its conclusions. At first sight its acceptance was very positive. But the horizon was clouded by the appearance of polemical writings and the spread of behavior foreign to the wishes of the Council and the Pope.

Two rigid and opposed postures came to the fore. On the one hand, starting with a mistaken concept of tradition, some people showed a stubborn resistance to the teachings of the Council. On the other, there were those who desired a radical reform of the Church and sought to
pressure the bishops and the Roman Pontiff himself, presenting as proposals aimed at pastoral renovation initiatives that in fact led to subjectivism in the faith. According to the view of an eminent expert in the history of the Councils, Hubert Jedin, “the crisis arose because some people no longer wanted simply to put the Council into practice, but rather to use it as an opening for radical renovations, which in reality left behind the Council’s decrees.”[38] Warnings about the reality of the crisis, and also the pastoral and disciplinary measures adopted by the ecclesiastical authorities, were quite often presented as obstacles to legitimate freedom, or as reactionary postures hostile to progress in the Church.[39]

All of this led to defections from the priesthood and consecrated life, and to confusion among the faithful. The situation became so serious that Paul VI had to intervene several times to explain how Vatican II should be interpreted. In 1966 he said: “the Council is of value insofar as it continues the life of the Church; it does not interrupt it, deform it, or invent it. Rather it confirms that life, develops it, perfects it, and ‘updates’ it.” [40] In a text from the same year he added: “The Council’s teachings do not provide a complete and organic system of Catholic doctrine; this doctrine is much more extensive, as all know, and the Council did not put it up for discussion or modify it substantially... We must not separate the teachings of the Council from the Church’s doctrinal patrimony, but rather see how they fit into it, are consistent with it, and provide it with testimony, growth, explanation, application.”[41] In the following years his interventions became quite frequent and increasingly filled with sorrow, even taking on dramatic tones.

The fact that this sad situation is already quite well known makes it unnecessary to cite other texts from the Roman Pontiff here. However, we would like to mention just one of them, dated June 23, 1972, in which Paul VI emphasizes once again that the confusion and the crisis should be attributed to “a false and arbitrary interpretation of the Council, which seeks to break with the Church’s tradition, including its doctrine, in order to reject the pre-Conciliar Church and arbitrarily devise a ‘new’ Church, radically ‘reinvented,’ as it were, in its structure, dogma, morality and laws.”[42]
During that time St. Josemaría poured himself out in living a full fidelity to Christ and the Church. He separated himself clearly and decisively from those who rejected the Council and who refused to agree to all, or at least some, of its documents. And he denounced energetically the posture of those who denied that the Council had succeeded in completing the necessary reform of the Church, and who let themselves be guided by the so-called “spirit of the Council,” considering themselves authorized to go beyond the Conciliar documents, or even to ask for a new Council.

St. Josemaría accepted with a living faith all of Vatican II’s teachings. He read and meditated on its documents (I am a witness to this), and sought to draw out all the riches contained there. As I mentioned before, I sometimes heard him say that the Conciliar magisterium did not require any change of direction for his message and mission as founder of Opus Dei, but rather was a confirmation of all that he had been preaching for many years. Vatican II had not only opened up the path for an adequate canonical solution for Opus Dei, but had offered a context and terminology for the faith favorable for the life of Christians in the world, in every profession and walk of life. More than a few times St. Josemaría would go with gratitude to the Conciliar texts to explain an idea that he had been expressing for a long time, and joyfully employ the expressions contained there, because they allowed him to explain more effectively what he had received from God in 1928 and lived so faithfully in the following years.\[43\]

As pastor of Opus Dei, St. Josemaría strove to ensure that the Council’s decisions were put into practice, following the Magisterium’s indications, and he read the texts in the light of the Catholic tradition in which the Council itself was inserted.\[44\] He saw the Council’s texts as being directed to all the faithful of Opus Dei, as he made clear in a letter from March 1967. In the same letter he also said that “many present-day mistakes come from viewing the Second Vatican Council as a fresh start in the Church’s history, almost a new kind of Christianity.”\[45\]

Thus he didn’t like the indiscriminate use of the term “post-conciliar,” because it could give the impression of a rupture from the Church’s teachings prior to Vatican II. And he reminded everyone that each Council is in continuity with the previous ones. For it is always the Holy Spirit, he would add, who is guiding the Church. At times I heard him say, in private
and with a touch of irony filled with faith, that in reality the whole history of the Church, starting with the Council of Jerusalem, could be defined as “post-conciliar.”[46] He always strove to foster a full acceptance of the Council in communion with the Church’s tradition and in union with the Roman Pontiff. Therefore I think it is just to say that his attitude coincided with the so-called “hermeneutic of reform in continuity.”[47]

Now I would like to turn to two topics that, among others, were the object of special concern on the part of St. Josemaría: the putting into practice of the liturgical reform and the ambit of Catholic doctrine and morality.

The liturgical books published in applying the Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium presented fewer specific indications than previous ones and allowed for a greater freedom of choice. St. Josemaría, besides indicating the need to faithfully follow the new liturgical norms, placed the accent on the personal piety of both priests and faithful. For example, he put great stress on what was established in the rubrics for the Mass, that is to say, that the priest, after elevating the consecrated host and the chalice, “genuflexus adorat,” genuflects and adores. He recommended that the priest should genuflect slowly, with a true and deep act of adoration. He insisted on the need to celebrate Holy Mass as a sincerely pious priest would do, and advised priests to continue observing (always leaving full freedom in what was a matter of opinion) some details from the previous missal that were conducive to piety, where these was not in conflict with the new liturgical norms.

With regard to the second point, the area of Catholic faith and morality, I would like to stress that St. Josemaría made an effort, from the first moment, to ensure that the faithful of Opus Dei and all of those in contact with its apostolic activities might receive the light that emanated from the Council texts. In the international Centers of Study for the faithful of Opus Dei (the Roman College of the Holy Cross in Rome and the Colegio Mayor Aralar in Pamplona, for the men, and the Roman College of Our Lady, for the women), under his guidance the philosophical and theological courses incorporated right away the Conciliar documents. The same happened in all the centers of formation in the various countries where Opus Dei carried out its apostolate.
In addition, he recommended to his sons and daughters that they spread the teachings of Vatican II, by publishing collections of documents and journals for this purpose. He did all he could, in agreement with the Church’s hierarchy in Spain, to make it possible for the University of Navarra to open up a school of theology in accord with the suggestions of the Declaration *Gravissimum educationis* and the indications of the Decree *Optatam totius*.

All of these initiatives, and many others that could be mentioned here, were inspired by the desire to foster an authentic and deep knowledge of the Council. Thus they were also accompanied by useful orientations for distinguishing between the Council’s true teachings and interpretations that distanced themselves from what it really taught, and therefore from the Church’s tradition. He encouraged people to read and study the writings of the Fathers of the Church and the great doctors, especially St. Thomas Aquinas, as well as the reliable catechisms that existed at that time, such as, for example, that of St. Pius X. Between the years 1966 and 1968 he granted various interviews to the press in which he dealt with topics of interest to public opinion, transmitting with clarity the Church’s teaching. In the decade of the 70s he launched out in a series of catechetical trips, first to Spain and Portugal, and later to various countries in Latin America.

During those years he also wrote various letters to the faithful of Opus Dei to help them to assimilate the teaching of Vatican II and to discern what was of value in the theological literature then being published. Thus, in the Year of Faith proclaimed by Paul VI in 1967, he decided to write a long letter to the faithful of Opus Dei. This was a document of almost two hundred pages commenting on the principal articles of the faith, with abundant citations from Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church. Among these quotes are about 80 texts taken from Vatican II and from interventions by Paul VI during the period of the Council.[48]

Summing up, we can say that his attitude stemmed from two complementary attitudes: from an optimism born of faith, and from a prudence that was the product of a well formed conscience. He realized that prudence was a requirement for every Christian and especially for those “involved in theological research or entrusted with government in the
Church, because now especially immense harm could result from a lack of serenity and consideration in the study of these problems.”[49] To these two characteristics we need to add a third, summed up in a phrase St. Josemaría so often used: the doctrine of theologians and the piety of children.

Every person in the Church needs to acquire a solid knowledge of the faith, but a knowledge that is joined to love, to deepening the awareness of our divine filiation, and therefore to prayer.

These are not theoretical statements, but reflect the life of St. Josemaría. Everything the founder of Opus Dei carried out throughout his life, and in particular during the Council and in the post-conciliar period, was preceded and accompanied by prayer and mortification. During those years he made many penitential pilgrimages to various Marian shrines, including that of Divine Love, Guadalupe, and Fatima. Moreover, on May 30, 1971, he consecrated Opus Dei to the Holy Spirit, expressly beseeching the Divine Paraclete for his sevenfold gifts, so that all the members of the Work and all Catholics would remain firm in the faith and persevere faithfully in the vocation each has received from God.[50]

I am convinced that the pastoral action of St. Josemaría can and should be considered as one of the factors that contributed most effectively to a true and lasting reception of Vatican II. Since he himself lived before, during and after the Council, his life is a clear example of a saint and shepherd who strove to sentire cum Ecclesia before, during and after that event. I think that here we find one of the reasons why both John XXIII and Paul VI wanted to frequently get his viewpoint on what was happening in the Church, through Msgr. Capovilla and Bishop Dell'Acqua. And also why John Paul II showed a special joy when he celebrated his beatification and canonization; and why Benedict XVI also expressed, first as cardinal and later as Roman Pontiff, a great appreciation for him and for his message.

4. Conclusion

I would like to end by citing some words of Cardinal Franz König, written in 1981, some years after St. Josemaría’s death. After referring to his great faith, serenity and supernatural optimism, the Cardinal stated: “the history, still brief, of these years following the conclusion of the
Council’s work, the vicissitudes undergone in applying the Council’s decrees, the experiments attempted, have confirmed Msgr. Escrivá de Balaguer’s clairvoyance. He took Vatican II seriously, distinguishing between what came from the Spirit’s inspiration and what came from merely human attempts to interpret the Council. He thus became the model to follow to bring about the authentic image of the Church described in the Conciliar documents.”[51]

St. Josemaría, who prayed and worked so much for the Second Vatican Council, is now recognized as one of the precursors of a number of its teachings, including the role of the laity, the universal call to holiness, secularity, the Christian value of work and, in general, of the world and all human activities. Nevertheless, I don’t think that this limited perspective exhausts the significance of his message with relation to the Council.

St. Josemaría’s life and teachings will continue to provide light for the present and future renewal of the Church, because they help us to grasp deeply its true nature as the People of God and the Body of Christ, and its mission to give life to the world. They also lead, as a result, to a richer understanding of both the layperson and the priest, and to a not only theoretical but also practical perception of the Christian value of all earthly realities.

It is here that we find, in my opinion, the roots of the theological significance of the founder of Opus Dei, already widely recognized but, as with any figure of great importance, still leaving much to be explored. I truly hope that this congress, dedicated to St. Josemaría’s influence on Christian thought, will be an important step in this direction.


[3] These studies have already been carried out, for example, for the Council of Trent, where the School of Salamanca had a special importance,
and for the first Vatican Council, where the Roman School was very present.


[5] At the beginning of the Council, people of Opus Dei were residing in most of the countries of Western Europe and the Americas and had begun pastoral work in Africa and in Asia.


[7] St. Josemaría, Letter May 25, 1962, no. 92. Opus Dei was at that time “de iure but not de facto” a secular institute, as the founder used to say. Therefore, in his letters from those years when referring to the Work, he preferred to use the term “association” and not “institute.”


[10] The main topic of their conversation was the canonical situation of Opus Dei; the Cardinal informed St. Josemaría that it would not be opportune at that time to present a formal request to change the juridical statutes. For more details see Julian Herranz, *En las afueras de Jericó*, Rialp, Madrid 2007, pp. 33-35.


After the audience on June 27, 1962, Blessed John XXIII asked St. Josemaría to speak frequently with his personal secretary, Msgr. Loris Capovilla, appointed the year before. Besides their meeting in July 1962, a regular correspondence was kept up between the two during the following ten months; see Andrés Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol III., op. cit., pp. 333 and 335.

The data here is not very extensive, for the reasons pointed out. Nevertheless, some is available. For example, in the Conciliar documentation there is preserved an official letter to St. Josemaría, written by Don Alvaro del Portillo in his role as secretary of the Commission for the Discipline of the Clergy and of the Christian People. In that letter the founder of Opus Dei’s extensive pastoral experience is mentioned and he is asked for his suggestions regarding the project of a catechetical directory and the drafting of a handbook for pastors. The letter was dated March 1, 1963. St. Josemaría’s answer was sent on March 5: see General Archives of the Prelature, *Romana et Matriten. Beatificationis et canonizationis Servi Dei Josephmariae Escrivá de Balaguer Sacerdotis, Fundatoris Societatis Sacerdotalis S. Crucis et Operis Dei positio super vida et virtutibus* [from here on cited as *Positio*]. *Biografia Documentata*, pp. 1161-1163, Rome 1988.


For a first evaluation of these encounters, quite sketchy but with the appropriate documentary references, see C. Pioppi, “*Alcuni incontri di San Josemaría Escrivá con personalità ecclesiastiche durante gli anni del Concilio Vaticano II,*” in *Studia et Documenta* 5 (2011) 165-228.


*Positio*, op. cit., p. 1134.

See “Testimony of Bishop Abilio del Campo y de la Barcena,” in *Un santo per amico*, op. cit., p. 48.

See *Positio*, op. cit., p. 1135.


[25] Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo was a witness to how St. Josemaría “was filled with sorrow on seeing that, in examining the various questions, at times the original objectives were abandoned, especially by resorting to manipulation of information. At times news was circulated that was a real and true violation of the reserve with which the work in the Hall was to be carried out, trying to put pressure on the Fathers. He never attributed this deterioration of the discussion to the behavior of the Conciliar Fathers; rather he complained that some groups, often with no role in the Council, took advantage of the legitimate diversity of opinion to sow confusion. They ignored the conviction of most of the Fathers, and pressed for a review of some decisions already taken by the Magisterium and therefore not included in the work program, also because these did not respond to the needs and expectations of the moment. It is well know that unfortunately this posture found a disproportionate resonance in the means of communication. A false picture of the Council’s Sessions was spread among the faithful, to the laity, clerics and religious. It was insinuated that a number of matters were provisional, and the prospect was offered of revising specific dogmatic and disciplinary aspects that were not being discussed. This was a premise that would lead to so many abuses” (Alvaro del Portillo, in *Positio*, op. cit., p. 1141).

[26] He wrote to his sons and daughters: “pray, and also be serene, increasing your trust in God. What has been set forth up until now by the Sacred Magisterium of the Church as a truth of divine faith or of Catholic faith, will remain immovable, since it is absolutely impossible for the Church to retract it” (St. Josemaría, Letter October 2, 1963, no. 18).

[27] St. Josemaría, Letter August 15, 1964, no. 27. In another letter he wrote: “Dialogue, the dialogue to which the world aspires today, is not a human invention.... Nor has it become a desire of the Church by the ‘bright idea’ of some ecclesiastics, seeking to adapt to the times. No: if
there is dialogue, if we can have dialogue, it is because we have the example of Jesus Christ” (St. Josemaría, Letter October 25, 1965, no. 6).

[28] For how he understood “aggiornamento,” see his answer to the editor of the Spanish magazine Palabra, in Conversations with Josemaría Escrivá, no. 1.

[29] As Msgr. Giacomo Barabino testified, “he insisted that it was necessary not to diminish in any way the authority of the Roman Pontiff and that the doctrine of the collegiality of the Bishops had to be properly focused. The media poorly interpreted or frequently altered the meaning of particular interventions and of the Council’s discussion as a whole; the danger was not, therefore, theoretical or remote that an emphasis on collegiality might prove harmful to pontifical authority” (Positio, op. cit., p. 1139).


[31] The founder of Opus Dei’s friendship with Bishop Dell’Acqua had begun earlier, and continued right to his death. The situation of the first years of Paul VI’s pontificate is somewhat similar to that which arose after the audience granted by John XXIII to St. Josemaría on June 27, 1962, in which the Pope encouraged frequent and open dealings between his secretary, Msgr. Loris Capovilla, and the founder of Opus Dei. On the relationship between Bishop Dell’Acqua and St. Josemaría, and Paul VI’s interest here, see Alvaro del Portillo, Immersed in God, op. cit., p. 12.


[35] Cardinal Ugo Poletti recalled, at the opening of the Roman process of the cause of canonization, that “by having proclaimed the universal vocation to holiness since he founded Opus Dei in 1928, Msgr. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer has been unanimously recognized as a precursor of the

His reception of Vatican II can be reconstructed thanks to the interviews granted in the years following the Council, and also by his letters to the faithful, with various dates, but revised in the pre-conciliar and conciliar period; see Jose Luis Illanes, *Obra escrita y predicación de San Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer*, in *Studia et Documenta* 3 (2009) 251 and ff.


In an interview granted in the 80s, the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger offered a similar judgment: “This schematism of a before and after in the history of the Church, wholly unjustified by the documents of Vatican II, which do nothing but reaffirm the continuity of Catholicism, must be decidedly opposed. There is no ‘pre-‘ or ‘post’-conciliar Church: there is but one, unique Church that walks the path towards the Lord, ever deepening and better understanding the treasure of faith that he himself has entrusted to her... In no wise did the Council intend to introduce a temporal dichotomy in the Church” Joseph Ratzinger — Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report*, Ignatius Press 1985, p 35.

See Benedict XVI, Address to the Roman Curia (December 22, 2005).

After having examined this letter and others addressed by St. Josemaría to the faithful of Opus Dei during those years, one of the theological censors for his process of canonization wrote: “The writings of the Servant of God show clearly his deep concern and sorrowful solicitude... The Holy Father Paul VI himself publicly lamented the reality of a “self-destruction” taking place in the Church, so it should be no surprise that in such an eminently priestly spirit as that of the Servant of God, all of this awakened in him a growing sense of suffering, an eagerness to make reparation, the need to encourage his children to live an uncompromising fidelity.” Shortly after these remarks the same censor noted: “But his clear awareness of the difficulties did not produce in him an attitude of sterile lament or pessimism. These ‘Letters,’ which are among the most beautiful writings of the Servant of God and the most revealing of his greatness of soul, are filled with calls to trust, to hope, to serenity: the
Holy Spirit has not abandoned the Church and nostalgia for the past makes no sense. The present circumstances have to be interpreted as a sign of special predilection on God’s part: a time for fidelity, a time for sanctity” (Voti dei Censori, in Positio, op. cit., no. 23.


[50] “We pray,” one of the paragraphs from this consecration reads, “that you always assist your Church, and in particular the Roman Pontiff, so that he may guide us with his word and with his example, and so that he may attain eternal life together with the flock that has been entrusted to him. We pray that, with all of the faithful, we may serve you with holiness of life and integrity of faith and thus reach the glory of heaven.” Consecration of Opus Dei to the Holy Spirit, cited in Andrés Vázquez de Prada, The Founder of Opus Dei, vol. III, p. 428; for other details about this consecration and the situation in the Church see pp. 412—434.


Interview granted to Dong-A, South Korea (December 16, 2013)

By Kap Sik Kim

The film directed by Joffé develops the history of the Spanish Civil War in connection with St. Josemaría’s life. We know that Opus Dei collaborated in the production of the movie. Could you tell us why you decided to collaborate with this project and in what way you helped in the production?

When the producer and director came to Rome to gather information, we provided them with advice so that the movie might faithfully reflect events referring to St. Josemaría’s life. We gave them all the assistance we could, since they were sincerely interested in going to the sources. This is
all the assistance the Prelature provided: facilitating documentation and historical materials.

I know that many Catholics with devotion to St. Josemaría (among them many faithful of Opus Dei) decided to collaborate personally in the spread of this film, precisely because of the positive message that it gives about the power of forgiveness and about the lovable figure of a Catholic priest who loved God and mankind deeply.

I am very grateful to the director Roland Joffé for the great professional skill he showed.

This film speaks about forgiveness, sin, evil, and the path of conversion. Can you tell us your perception of the movie? What was your reaction when viewing the film? Is there any aspect that you feel might have been done better?

It has helped remind me of so many thousands of priests who spend their lives with joy in the service of souls, in the service of society.

It also reminded me of an attitude of St. Josemaría that I had the good fortune of being a direct witness to: his capacity to imitate Christ on the Cross with his arms wide open to everyone. Open to those on the left, on the center, and on the right; to the poor and the rich; to all men and women without exception. He lived in a heroic way during the Spanish Civil War, but he also did so right from his youth, and later during the rest of his life. It is the openness to Christ that Pope Francis speaks about so often, and that provides such a timely message.

Undoubtedly every movie has to limit itself to a few specific events. This one only gives a few hints about St. Josemaría during a particular period of his life. At the same time, I realize that it is not a biographical film. The main character is inserted into a filmed story that has its own proper autonomy.

Some have said that this film is an answer to the Da Vinci Code. What do you think?

Opus Dei as such already responded to this, taking advantage of the immense public interest to carry out a wide ranging catechesis about the figure of Jesus Christ and about the Catholic Church, as well as to inform people about this part of the Church that is the Prelature of Opus Dei. I
give thanks to God for the thousands of people who came closer to the Church thanks to this apparent attack.

On the other hand, I have read that both the director of the film (Roland Joffé), and the producers have said on numerous occasions that their intention was not to respond to anyone. At the same time, I think that, in fact, *There Be Dragons* can serve as a good clarification, since it expresses the truth cinemagraphically on questions related to the message of Christianity and the Church, which were falsified by the movie that you mentioned. I will not hide the fact that I would be pleased if many of the viewers of that movie would see and enjoy *There Be Dragons*, and thus obtain a more complete and true picture of God’s grace, forgiveness and holiness, realities to which every human being aspires.

*The Da Vinci Code* movie and novel have spread a clearly negative picture of Opus Dei. *In what aspects was the reality of Opus Dei twisted in this movie?*

The principal cause of sorrow was that the book gave a very frivolous and superficial picture of the person of Christ. In addition, the caricature of Opus Dei was so grotesque and far from reality that it was almost comical. Seen from this perspective, I can say that perhaps it helped to provide experience on how to make oneself better known, with an enormous audience. In this area too one needs a little patience.

*What type of institution is Opus Dei? What are its goals?*

The specific mission of Opus Dei, within the Catholic Church, is to remind people that all the baptized, men and women, are called to follow and love God, and to love one’s neighbor, specifically through ordinary life. St. Josemaría said that there is something divine hidden in the most ordinary situations, and that it is up to each of us to discover this. No honorable human action can be an obstacle to friendship with God, to an encounter with Christ. The goals of Opus Dei are, therefore, spiritual: to help many men and women to seek, to find, to draw close to, and to love God and their neighbor in and through daily life.

From the juridical point of view, Opus Dei is a personal prelature, one of the forms foreseen by the Catholic Church to organize its pastoral task in the world.
How many faithful and priests are there in Opus Dei?

At the present time there are 90,000 members, 2,000 of whom are priests. Among the lay faithful of Opus Dei one finds women and men of every class and condition, most of them married.

What does Opus Dei do? What kind of spirituality is actually promoted by Opus Dei? Why do some Catholic sectors say that Opus Dei is traditionalist and close to fundamentalism.

St. Josemaría frequently said that Opus Dei is like a great school of catechism. As I mentioned above, this takes place wherever God has sought us out: in the circumstances of ordinary life, in our work, in our family, with our friends, when resting.... It is, one could say, an adventure of love and of joyful fidelity. Opus Dei offers its help to anyone who wants to respond to this divine call. The Prelature offers activities of Christian formation and the possibility of spiritual accompaniment, adapted to each one’s personal life.

The spirit of Opus Dei is based on the Gospel, on trust in God’s loving fatherhood, on faith in the risen Christ, on the action of the Holy Spirit, and on the sacramental life, meant for every soul. Opus Dei fulfills this mission, in the heart of the Church, as a portion of the people of God, in full communion with the Pope and with the bishops of each diocese. It is a form of catechesis, complementary to that which the parish, for example, offers, to help ordinary people find God in their daily life and to share the joy of this encounter with their colleagues, friends and acquaintances.

We know that Opus Dei had a close relationship with Pope John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Perhaps for this reason, in the Western press some have said that Opus Dei is an institution that protects the papacy, or assists the Vatican financially. Perhaps you can tell us something about the relationship that Opus Dei has with the Pope, and with the Vatican.

St. Josemaría always loved and felt himself loved by the Roman Pontiffs that he knew: Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, over a period of 36 years. I often heard him say: “From the Holy See, from the Holy Father, nothing but good can come to us.” For a Catholic, the Pope—whichever he may be—will always be the Vicar of Christ.
Afterward, it is true that there was a trusting and spontaneous relationship between John Paul II and the Venerable Servant of God Alvaro del Portillo, the first successor of St. Josemaria, whose beatification we are awaiting with joy. The Pope saw in Bishop del Portillo a loyal son who spoke the truth clearly and simply. For example, John Paul II once said jokingly that Opus Dei was powerful, to which Don Alvaro replied: “Your Holiness, our only power, our only strength is prayer.” And the Pope, nodding his head, answered: “that’s what I was referring to.”

Of course, John Paul II and Benedict XVI supported Opus Dei, as they did all the Church’s children. Our hope is that it can be said, of these Popes and of those who come afterwards, that they could lean on Opus Dei, which exists for that purpose: to serve the Church. On our part, expanding throughout the world and getting new vocations, if it were not to serve the universal Church and the local Churches better, also here in Korea, would be of no interest to us.

When Pope Francis spoke for the first time from the balcony of blessings, he mentioned all people of good will. The thought struck me that, besides Catholics, the Pope bears on his shoulders the weight, the joys and the sorrows of all humanity. Therefore, along with joy, I felt also the intense desire that all of us pray for the successor of Peter, and a filial eagerness to invite people to love the Roman Pontiff.

How are Opus Dei’s activities financed, and how are its expenditures covered in educational, medical, and apostolic initiatives?

Thanks be to God, many educational and social initiatives have arisen all over the world inspired by St. Josemaría’s message—to seek God through ordinary life. They come about through the personal responsibility and organizing efforts of many different people. For example, in the case of schools, through the parents of the students, who are the ones most interested in their children’s education. Opus Dei does not intervene in this effort; it respects each person’s freedom to strive to better society. The same is true of initiatives in the health field, or in social and cultural endeavors, etc. Those who have helped give rise to each of these also assist in their financing. A healthy principle of autonomy and of respect for each person’s
free effort is fostered. What the Prelature of Opus Dei offers is pastoral care and spiritual formation.

It is important to remember that the goal of Opus Dei, as a part of the Church, is not to organize these types of initiatives, but rather to help make Christ present in the world, to serve souls. This is something that Pope Frances explained very clearly in his recent Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium.

The Cardinal Prefect for the Evangelization of Peoples and of Interreligious Dialogue recently visited Korea. The questions that arise when anyone from the Vatican visits us are: the possibility of naming a Korean Cardinal, the canonization of new Korean martyrs, a visit by the Pope to this country. Do you have any information in this regard?

I am sure that when the Pope does travel to Korea, he will be received with the immense affection that this country is capable of. But as far as appointments go, or decisions about the Pope's trips, I have no information. Personally I would be very happy to see so many Korean martyrs raised to the altars, who have given their lives to announce the reign of Christ's love in that beloved country.

In the movie we mentioned, we see the activity of a priest in a difficult political context and an example of what a priest should be. Presently in Korea we have a democratic system, but some priests have expressed opposition to the results of the recent elections, and have even asked that they be nullified. What is your opinion about political pronouncements by priests?

Priests intervene, in union with the bishop, when fundamental ethical question are involved, directly linked to human dignity. But they should always respect the temporal freedom of the Catholic faithful, since on many questions there may not be a single solution, but several possible legitimate solutions. I am not acquainted with the specific situation of your country, but it is clear that we priests are called to be priests for everyone, not only for those who think as we do, and we should stick closely to the Gospel: living it and preaching it.

Could you give us a brief personal introduction? How did you meet Opus Dei and how did you become a priest?
I did my secondary studies in a high school run by the Marists. And during those years, when I reached the age of 16, God entered into my life, and I began my dedication in Opus Dei. In 1950 I moved to Rome to study canon law in the Angelicum and civil law in the Lateran University, for the licentiate and the doctorate, and I was ordained a priest in 1955. From the time that I arrived in Rome I received the great gift from God of living close to St. Josemaría. It is a gift for which I can never be sufficiently grateful.

Today's society is marked by a religious crisis. Many people have distanced themselves from God, with a selfish and materialistic outlook. Perhaps they have more financial means, but there seem to be ever fewer happy people. How can one attain happiness and interior peace?

The secret to being happy is not in leading a comfortable life. As you well point out, there are people who have substantial material goods but have not attained interior peace. What is very important is dedication to others. Sincerely giving oneself to others is so effective that God rewards it with a humility filled with joy, as St. Josemaría used to say.

Jesus told us: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” If we allow God to enter into our life, our problems won't disappear; but shared with him, we will see them in another light, as an opportunity to serve him and to serve others. If we open our actions, our heart, to God, the people around us will also enter there. Love for Christ, conversation with him in prayer and in the Eucharist, will lead us to willingly serve others, and to be happy with everyone.

What motto or phrase do you like best?

My motto as a bishop is “Deo omnis gloria,” all the glory for God. Everything that happens in our lives—the good and also what does not seem so good—acquires meaning if we take advantage of it to love God more. Living in order to glorify God is the secret to a happy life.

If you had not become a priest and a bishop, what would you have been?

I don't know, I suppose that I would have been the father of a family and a stock broker. The important thing is that God got into my life and led me by unsuspected paths that have filled me with happiness, not
exempt from difficulties, as is only natural for anyone’s path in life. My experience is that trusting in God, living face to face with him, opens up much broader horizons than one could ever imagine.

*Do you have any plan to visit our country?*

I was in Korea in 1987 with Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo, the first successor of St. Josemaría. I have warm memories of that visit and I hope to return, now that some faithful of Opus Dei are living and working there. People in Korea understand very well the spirit that Opus Dei fosters of seeking holiness in ordinary life: in work, in the family, in social relationships, etc.

Speech at the inauguration of the PUHC academic year Rome (October 7, 2013)

Reverend Eminences, Excellencies, Professors, Collaborators, Students, Ladies and Gentlemen:

As we approach the conclusion of the Year of Faith on November 24, we begin the 2013—2014 academic year. As with every new university term, it presents us with projects filled with hope, and also inevitably with possible moments of tiredness.

Before looking towards the future, I would like to recall with gratitude the path we have traveled in the past year, marked by so many important moments, in order to increase everyone’s eagerness—professors, students, and administrative personnel—for the work of the coming months.

In this regard, I would like first to refer to Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Lumen fidei*, not only as an important event from this Year of Faith, but above all because its pages contain valuable guidelines for those, like you, who are involved in the study of theology and the other sacred disciplines, or who work in the school of communication, contributing to a better knowledge of the Church.
Clearly the study of theology cannot be carried out apart from the faith, and faith entails the desire to get to know better the truth that is revealed and believed. The Pope writes: “Theology is more than simply an effort of human reason to analyze and understand, along the lines of the experimental sciences. God cannot be reduced to an object. He is a subject who makes himself known and perceived in an interpersonal relationship. Right faith orients reason to open itself to the light which comes from God, so that reason, guided by love of the truth, can come to a deeper knowledge of God.”[1]

When speaking of God and whatever refers to him, the object of your study is properly speaking a subject, God himself, who wants to be known as a Person and who seeks to establish a dialogue with us, and to involve each of us in that dialogue, in that communion which is his own Life. Theology, and in general the ecclesiastical studies, cannot be separated from the life of prayer, from our personal relationship with God. These studies need to be inserted into our personal life of faith, from which they receive impetus and support.

“The humility to be ‘touched’ by God,” continues the Holy Father, “forms part of theology, admitting its own limitations before the mystery, while striving to investigate, with the discipline proper to reason, the inexhaustible riches of this mystery.”[2] Asking God and his saints for the virtue of humility should always be present both in the work of all Christians and in the activity of every professor, researcher and student of theology. Humility of the intellect has to be for each of us, as St. Josemaría said, “an axiom.”[3] We need humility in order never to forget that we are always facing a God who, although making himself visible in Christ, will always be a great and unfathomable mystery, who asks us to accept the gift of faith with the humility of our reason.

Humility is also needed, as the encyclical insists, in order not to forget that theology “shares in the ecclesial form of faith; its light is the light of the believing subject which is the Church.” Therefore theology should realize that it is at the service of the faith of Christians, and must “work humbly to protect and deepen the faith of everyone, especially ordinary believers.”[4] In addition, the science of theology also requires filial adhesion to the magisterium of the Pope and the bishops in communion
with him, which guarantees contact with the original source of the faith and “the certainty of attaining to the word of Christ in all its integrity.”[5] I will add here a reflection from St. Josemaría in Furrow: “Faith is the humility of the mind which renounces its own judgment and surrenders to the verdict and authority of the Church.”[6]

I would like to insist on another aspect of your work that shows the importance of the virtue of humility. Many of you, new students, have arrived with the experience of working for several years in a variety of professions, or in pastoral responsibilities in priestly ministry in your diocese. The effort required by your new studies—a constant, hidden and silent effort—and the absence of direct contact with a large number of people, will require of you patience and humility. You will often need to remember that, in the not very distant future, all your effort here will be placed at the pastoral service of souls and of the Church; this will require of you a faith capable of transforming your daily study into prayer, into acts of love for God, into love for his Church and souls.

Pope Francis’ words in the last Mass he celebrated in Copacabana, during the recent World Youth Day, come to mind here. You surely remember those three words from his homily that awakened in all of us a deeper apostolic zeal, the desire to commit ourselves more fully to the new evangelization: “What is our Lord saying to us? Three words: go, without fear, to serve.” The words are addressed to each one of us, in the circumstances in which we find ourselves. You, too, from your place of study, the library, the classroom or your office, are invited to launch out without fear, to serve. If you strive to enter into a living and personal dialogue with God, in your study and your work, even when you have to be submerged in your books, you will go everywhere with him, without fear of putting your talent, your time and your life at the service of souls. And thus you will carry out, as St. Josemaría said, a “very direct apostolate.”

I mentioned earlier an event that took place during this Year of Faith: the World Youth Day. This event has been another opportunity to “rediscover the joy of believing and the enthusiasm for communicating the faith.”[7] But I would also like to refer here to other recent events in this Year of Faith, which weren’t planned but which surely have deeply affected us. I am thinking, first of all, of the unexpected and moving announcement
by Benedict XVI renouncing his Pontificate. After a first moment of amazement and—why not?—shock, with the help of faith we understood the great courage and generosity this gesture required. I think I am expressing the desire of all of us if I take advantage of this occasion to once again state our gratitude to the Pope Emeritus for his pontificate and, in a special way, for his rich magisterium. Among his teachings he reminded us that the Church is truly “a living body, enlivened by the Holy Spirit, truly living by God’s power. She is in the world but not of the world: she is of God, of Christ, of the Spirit.”[8]

Another proof of the Church’s supernatural life and nature was the subsequent election of Pope Francis, on March 13. The Church is truly a living body animated by the Holy Spirit; he knows and sees what we men do not see, and suggests at every moment what is most suitable for the Church. Although I have already had the opportunity to express to our Holy Father Francis my personal affection and to assure him of my prayers as well as yours (since I represent in some way the students, professors and employees of this University), I would like to ask you to be even more generous in your prayer and your affection for him. Let us pray that the Holy Father, docile to the motions of the Holy Spirit, may continue guarding and guiding the Church entrusted to him as supreme pastor, with the daring, generosity and strength that, in these first months of his pontificate, have won over the hearts of all the faithful.

Finally, I would like to mention another event that, for me and for this University, holds great significance: the approval on the part of His Holiness Pope Francis of the decrees opening the path for the canonization of John XXIII and John Paul II, and for the beatification of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo.

The birth of this university is closely linked both to John Paul II and to Alvaro del Portillo, my predecessor as Prelate of Opus Dei and as first Chancellor of this University so desired by St. Josemaría. In the documents recounting the history of the University of the Holy Cross, from its birth as the Roman Academic Center to its constitution as a Pontifical University, the signature of His Holiness John Paul II is always present. The Pope not only welcomed the request of Venerable Alvaro del Portillo; he promoted and closely followed the birth of this institution. In God’s Providence, the
Holy Father’s decision to canonize and beatify these two faithful servants of God and the Church, united in life by a deep spiritual affinity, came on the same date. Nor is it by chance that this ceremony is being held in an auditorium dedicated to John Paul II and, for those who didn’t find room here and are following the ceremony by internal television, in the smaller auditorium dedicated to Alvaro del Portillo. Besides our joy on looking forward to attending, with God’s grace, the two ceremonies of canonization and beatification next year, the certainty of having these two sure intercessors in heaven fills us with great peace and serenity.

To their intercession and to the intercession of St. Josemaría Escrivá and our Blessed Mother Mary, I entrust this new academic year, which I now declare opened.

[2] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Surco, n. 259

Torna ai contenuti

Interview granted to Desde la Austral, Argentina (Spring–Summer 2013)

In our interview last year, we asked you to come before the Year of the Faith ended, to confirm us in the faith. You said that you would be “very happy to” but that you left this desire “in God’s hands.” And now we have you with us, for which we give thanks to God for making this mutual desire a reality. What advice do you have for us to take advantage of these last days of grace in the Year
of Faith? And afterwards, how can we transform all the years of our life into years of faith?

I too am very thankful to God for the possibility of being in this dearly beloved country. You can't imagine how much I wanted to come to Argentina to be with you. The authentic Christian life is a life of faith, of believing in God and in his Son Jesus Christ, who gave himself up for us: believing in his love and responding with our own love. Therefore the Year of Faith is an opportunity for us to refocus on how we share our life with Jesus, day by day, in a new and closer way, in all our daily tasks. I can sum it up with words from St. Josemaría: “May you seek Christ, may you find Christ, may you love Christ,” eager to bring to others the experience of meeting him, to create a “culture of encounter,” as the Pope says.

As you can well understand, we Argentineans now have an additional reason to love Pope Francis even more. What can we do, from this “distant corner” of the world, to accompany him in the difficult task that he bears on his shoulders?

As soon as he was elected Pope, Francis became the Pastor of the whole Church. He is now the visible source of unity. Of course, the Pope—as one sees so clearly—has great affection for his country, and I think that he expects a lot from the Argentineans. In order to accompany him in this ministry, three words come to mind: pray, listen, communicate. Praying for him, offering our work, our tiredness, and also our joys. Prayer is always the first work of charity. Then, listening: meditating on what he says, on his encyclical Lumen Fidei, on his homilies, on his speeches and statements. Making his words our own, part of our life. And finally, communicating them: repeating them to others, in a positive and enthusiastic way. It is a great opportunity for Argentina to renew its commitment to all the virtues and fundamental values: faith, hope and charity, and, as a consequence, service, love, solidarity, well finished work, honesty. We can't be, as people say here, chantas, frauds. God expects us to work very well, in the service of society and all mankind.

At World Youth Day held in Rio de Janeiro, Pope Francis told the young people, and by implication all Christians, not to be spectators in life, not to
“remain on the balcony,” but to get involved in people’s lives, just as Jesus did. What can we do to fulfill this request of the Pope.

“Remaining on the balcony” means not making a decision to serve, not giving one’s life to God and others, burying our talents. And Jesus invites all of us, all women and men, to be magnanimous, to dream of great projects of love for God, of service, of fraternity, of education. We can’t be satisfied with a comfortable life, without great ideals. The life of a Christian is a wonderful adventure; that’s the spirit we always see in the Church’s saints, and we are all called to be saints.

We were happy to hear about the upcoming beatification of Don Alvaro, our first Honorary Rector, and we are certain that many of the graces poured out through his intercession will fall upon this University that he inspired. Since you were so close to him, please tell us something about his efforts to begin Austral University.

Don Alvaro encouraged the start of educational and social projects in many countries, in accord with St. Josemaría’s spirit. He followed with great interest these projects promoted by people of the Work, Cooperators and friends, which would be able to do, and are doing, so much good for the places where they are found.

He kept them very present in his prayer, and always encouraged people to “think big,” to dream about these endeavors that, besides providing a solid professional and human formation, would also communicate a Christian spirit of charity and respect, of honesty, friendship, promotion of the family, and pluralism.

I know that, among many other things, Don Alvaro prayed a lot for this University, and that all the good it is doing gave him great joy.

What does our current Honorary Rector expect of us who are now working and studying at the Austral University?

That the educational work and human assistance you provide be based on personal contact with God. That is the best way to ensure that you transmit the friendly, smiling, positive tone of service that characterizes Austral University. I would like to see you closely united, overcoming the natural personal differences that may arises, in order to continue
contributing to Argentina being a country with great horizons, investing in its people, in their education (which includes everyone, from all walks of life), and in their continuous development.

Declaration on Blessed John Paul II and Blessed John XXIII, and the Venerable Alvaro del Portillo (July 5, 2013)

A happy coincidence

A statement of Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, on hearing the news of the approval of miracles attributed to John Paul II and to Alvaro del Portillo, and of the decision by the Holy Father to proceed with the canonization of John XXIII.

The announcement of the forthcoming canonizations of Blessed John Paul II and Blessed John XXIII, and the future beatification of the venerable Alvaro del Portillo is a happy coincidence and a cause of deep joy. We should be profoundly grateful to God for Pope Francis’ decision.

Blessed John Paul II spent himself with untiring generosity in the service of mankind. He brought us closer to God with his rich teaching, through his words and writings, with images and so many gestures charged with meaning. His whole life was based on intimate union with Jesus Christ. You needed only to see him pray to understand the fruitfulness of his ministry.

John Paul II and John XXIII were truly fathers close to all the faithful, to the Church, and particularly, I can say, to this part of the Church which is the Prelature of Opus Dei. I think they helped millions of people to feel that they were the Pope’s “much-loved sons and daughters.”

Bishop Alvaro del Portillo was Saint Josemaría’s best support, and a most faithful collaborator of John Paul II. Many churchmen and lay people from all over the world have told me how much good this faithful priest did to them. And they all agree in this: that it was easy for them to love
him, to trust his advice, because they sensed his sincere and priestly interest for their souls.

Earlier the Church referred to Bishop Alvaro del Portillo as a “profoundly good and amiable man, able to transmit peace and serenity to souls.” At this time of joy, I turn to the intercession of this good and faithful servant, and I ask him to “infect” us with his loyalty to God, the Church, the Pope, Saint Josemaría, and to his friends. I ask him to win for us a share in his social concern, which was shown in the many initiatives around the world for people in need which he encouraged. I ask that he may transmit to us his special love for the family and his passionate love for the priesthood, as well as his tender and simple piety, which had such a Marian flavor.

Address at the dedication of a plaza in honor of St. Josemaría, Ovindoli, Italy (October 1, 2013)

It is a great honor for me to take part in this celebration in honor of St. Josemaría, who so greatly loved this land of Abruzzi and who visited this plaza on November 5, 1949.

St. Josemaría used to say that, for ordinary Christians, daily life is the place where we encounter God. Now, in this plaza in the heart of Ovindoli, we are here to recall that each of us is called to live the Gospel “right in the middle of the world sanctifying our profession or job, our home life and social relations—in fact all of our activities” (Friends of God, no. 54).

These sites were also dear to Blessed John Paul II, who sometimes spent time relaxing and praying among the beautiful mountains of the Abruzzi region, also here in Ovindoli. He himself described St. Josemaría as the “saint of the ordinary,” and pointed to him as an example to remind all the baptized that they are called to holiness in their work and in daily life. All of us have been called to holiness. And holiness means loving God and our neighbor. All work can be turned into prayer, because it can be an
act of love. In fact the majority of the faithful of Opus Dei carry out work or jobs that might be considered of little importance. But this is not so, since what really makes work important is the love with which it is carried out.

The goal of the Prelature of Opus Dei is precisely to spread this message, at the service of and in collaboration with each diocese. Therefore, I ask all of you that you support with your prayer the work that the faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei, priests and laity, are carrying out in Abruzzo, in Italy and throughout the world.

Thousands of people in the past forty years have come to the Casali delle Rocche, to take part in a time of prayer and study, and also quiet hours of relaxation. The property was first given as a gift to Centro ELIS. It was a very simple building, little more than a ruin. But it was turned into the Casale Antico, and later what is now the Conference Center was added on, thanks to the work of renovation and reconstruction carried out over a number of years by the teachers and students from the ELIS Professional School in Rome.

St. Josemaría was very happy to hear that activities were being started in the Casali in Ovindoli at the end of the 60s. As a sign of his love for this region, during those years he also oversaw the birth of the International Center Tor d’Aveia, in San Felice de Ocre, on the other side of the delle Rocche plateau, dedicated above all to gatherings for study, spiritual retreats, and the formation of future priests.

As we have heard, especially after the earthquake in 2009, the faithful of Opus Dei, together with many friends and colleagues, have sought to intensify activities benefiting the people of Abruzzo, to help in the recovery—material as well as spiritual. It is the task of each and all of us to be concerned about the needs of those around us, starting with the poorest and neediest. The call to holiness cannot be reduced to something subjective, individualistic, and private. As Pope Francis never tires of insisting, our Lord is calling us to open ourselves personally to others: “Launch out into the deep,” he said recently, “get out of yourselves; we need to get out of our own small world and open up to God, so that we can also open up more and more to our brothers and sisters. By opening
ourselves to God, we open up to others” (Pope Francis, *Address to the youth of Cagliari*, September 22, 2013).

I am sure that all who pass through this little plaza will be able to count on the special and affectionate intercession of St. Josemaría, to carry out the joyful task of opening ourselves up in the service of our neighbor. Today’s ceremony encourages us, once more, to take seriously the call to holiness, getting out of ourselves to give ourselves to the others. I entrust these intentions to the Most Holy Virgin, the *Madonna*, with the certainty of counting on her motherly protection.

**Torna ai contenuti**

**Message of solidarity with the victims of the typhoon in the Philippines (November 13, 2013)**

The Prelate of Opus Dei has sent a message to the faithful and cooperators of the Work in the Philippines, where typhoon Yolanda caused 10,000 deaths and affected more than ten million people. The Work has been present in this Asian country since 1964.

In his message Bishop Echevarría assured them that he was very close to all the people in the Philippines and was serenely entrusting them “to the protection of the Blessed Virgin, *Regina Asiae*. Be assured,” he continued, “that from Rome and from all over the world, your brothers and sisters are praying especially for the Philippines and, in particular, for the victims and their relatives, and for every one of the inhabitants of the cities affected.”

He also asked the faithful of the Work to do whatever they could “to help the authorities in providing assistance to the victims.”

“We have learned from St. Josemaría to look at the whole world with a universal, catholic heart. Let us accompany those who suffered the consequences of the typhoon and pray that, despite everything, they may remain peaceful.”
“God remains at our side continuously, also in moments of suffering and those that are hardest to understand humanly speaking. The awareness of our divine filiation urges us to face problems with the certainty that he holds us in his fatherly hands. Therefore, fill yourselves with supernatural outlook so that you may also spread it to those around you.”

Interview granted to Corriere della Sera, Italy (December 15, 2013)

What does Opus Dei think of Pope Francis? How has one of the most widespread and influential institutions in the Catholic Church welcomed the election of this Jesuit with his surprising initiatives?

We welcomed him with great joy (the prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría responds smilingly), and in my prayer I asked St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Company of Jesus, and whose apostolic fruits are a treasure for the Church, to intercede for Pope Francis. The founder of Opus Dei had a great appreciation for this saint. In one of his books, The Way, he refers to him six times, even using his nickname Íñigo.

Let’s reverse the question. What does the Pope think of Opus Dei? He has already received you twice in an audience. People say that he has devotion to the founder, St. Josemaria. Is that true?

The Holy Father expressed his joy and gave me his blessing for the apostolic work of the Prelature, which he knows quite well. Among other reasons, because when he was Archbishop of Buenos Aires he was in contact with various faithful of Opus Dei. He also is well acquainted with St. Josemaria. Some years ago, here in Rome he came to visit his sepulcher and stayed there praying for 45 minutes. This is a practical sign of how intense and generous is the prayer of the one who is now the successor of Peter.

From the first moment, Pope Francis has proven to be a “revolutionary” Pontiff, capable of surprising decisions.
And right away people have recognized in Pope Francis an authentic priest, who prays a lot and is attentive to the concerns of the person in front of him. At the same time, he is austere in his personal life. He wants to live deeply that beautiful image of Benedict XVI, who longed for a Church ever more like the home at Nazareth. For this to be a reality, it is not simply a matter of renouncing material goods (some of them are necessary for one’s work and for family and social life). As Pope Francis is teaching us, one needs to truly love the virtue of poverty.

And right from the start, the Pope has spoken of a Church that is “poor among the poor,” that goes out to the peripheries, and he himself has chosen a sober lifestyle. How is all of this seen by Opus Dei which, justly or unjustly, is viewed by many people as an organization that is not directed to the needs of the poor?

In reality, one could say that Opus Dei was born, back in the 30s, precisely in the peripheries, in the poorest districts of Madrid. Since then, many people throughout the whole world continue helping the poor and sick, men and women and children with material needs, in New Delhi and Manila, in Manchester and Kinshasa. Allow me also to clarify that Opus Dei is not only for the rich. Many faithful of the Prelature, in various parts of the world, find it hard to reach the end of the month with enough money to pay all their bills, and have to confront this challenge with heroism and faith, without making a lot of fuss.

With the first year of his pontificate still not over, the Pope has already made important decisions regarding his co-workers, with the clear intention of reforming the Curia, despite meeting some resistance. He is also moving with determination in the matter of financial transparency and the reform of the IOR. How do you view this strategy?

It is not my role to judge what is a priority here, but rather the Holy Father’s. Given my personal experience I can say that there are many people who work with great generosity in the Holy See. But without doubt reform is always needed: no matter how organized they might look, human structures are never at the level needed for the mission of bringing the Gospel to the whole world. Therefore, as the Pope says wisely, it is
important not to confuse the Church with an NGO. The Church should always be grounded on faith in Christ, as his faithful Spouse.

*In line with John Paul II and Benedict XVI, Pope Francis insists on the need for the New Evangelization. How is Opus Dei responding to this call?*

Pope Francis is helping the whole world to give priority to the culture of being, of life, in contrast to the culture of having that sometimes suffocates the more economically developed societies. And he speaks about sanctity in ordinary life: a woman who cares for her children, a man who works to put bread on the table, the sick. The western world needs to rediscover this type of sanctity. It’s not a path for a privileged few: it’s an invitation that our Lord addresses to all men and women. In countries with a Christian tradition, Opus Dei (through its activities for spiritual formation) offers a path for rediscovering the faith in the midst of one’s daily occupations. This is what the New Evangelization means: to re-enkindle in Christians (who sometimes see themselves as such only because of their cultural context) the flame of a living and personal relationship with God.

*Pope Francis has spoken of the Church as a “field hospital” after a battle, which should also be concerned about those who have had an abortion or are divorced. In 2014 a synod on the family is scheduled, and the Pope has sent out a questionnaire in which he asks the bishops their opinion on these topics. What is Opus Dei’s position here?*

Many people today are undergoing great suffering in their working lives and social relationships, and also within the ambit of their own family. As Christians, we are called to respond, to see others with Christ’s eyes, filled with love and mercy. When a Christian helps a friend, it is like Christ looking at a sick person who needs to be cured. The synod on the family will spur us to rediscover the beauty of love and fidelity, of the family environment, which is built up also with words and gestures of service for those who have suffered wounds in this area of their life.

*In an interview published in this newspaper, the president of the Focolare Movement, Maria Voce, has asked that a greater role be given to women in the Church. Do you agree?*

Certainly. For, as the Holy Father has reminded us, the Church is a
woman: one only needs to remember the role of our Lady. The topic of the role of women isn’t new, and in fact women have played an important role in the development of the Church. Moreover, Opus Dei has always viewed women as playing a central role in the life of the Church.

What in your view is the role and responsibility of those in government regarding the crisis that for years now has afflicted the western world, especially in countries such as Italy?

I think it’s important not to place all the blame on those in government. First we need to ask ourselves what each of us personally is doing each day, whatever our role in society may be. We can’t place the responsibility only on others, those whom we elect to govern and whom we can always make demands of. We should first ask ourselves how we live, how we work, how we get along with others, with our own family. To emerge from this crisis, the commitment of each and every one of us is needed, not just those who govern.

Torna ai contenuti
ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA
Devotion throughout the world

*A Statue of St. Josemaría in the Corpus Christi Procession of Elche*

On June 9 the images for the new Corpus Christi Tabernacle were shown for the first time at the Eucharistic procession celebrated for the feast. They are made of silver and are about a foot high. Among other saints, there are four saints from the last two centuries: St. Josemaría Escrivá, St. John Bosco, St. Candida Maria de Jesús, and the Blessed Francisco Palau.

*St. Josemaría Escrivá and Blessed John Paul II in the Basilica of Santa Engracia in Saragossa*

The basilica-parish of Santa Engracia, in Saragossa, Spain, now has two new statues: that of St. Josemaría Escrivá and that of Blessed John Paul II. Molded in bronze, the life-sized statues have been installed in the sanctuary of the Church.

The blessing of the statues took place on July 1. At the request of Archbishop Manuel Ureña of Saragossa, the Prelate of Opus Dei presided over the ceremony. In the Mass which followed, two bishops emeritus, Carmelo Borobia and José Luis Redrado, joined Archbishop Ureña and Bishop Echevarría as concelebrants.

*St. Josemaría and Ovindoli*

Ovindoli, a town in the region of Abruzzo, Italy (the site since the 60s of the Casale delle Rocche conference center directed by faithful of Opus Dei) has dedicated a plaza to St. Josemaría. The inauguration ceremony took place on the afternoon of October 1, with the participation of Bishop Pietro Santoro of Marsi, the Prelate of Opus Dei, and the mayor of Ovindoli.
In his address Mayor Pino Angelosante expressed his gratitude for the work carried out for more than forty years by the Centro Elis Association, on which Casale delle Rocche depends, and particularly for its role after the 2009 earthquake in coordinating various initiatives in assistance of the local population: providing aid to children and elderly who lost their homes; installing a multimedia classroom in the Ovindoli school and a language laboratory in the nearby town of Rocca di Mezzo; repairing the heating system in the parish; obtaining scholarships for young people, etc.

Michele Crudele, director of Rome’s Centro Elis, recalled briefly the history of the Casale Antico (the old villa) the first building of the present complex, which was almost in ruins when it was donated by a benefactor, Alessandro Gerini, and the history of the Casale delle Roche constructed in the 90s. The Casale Antico, after its renovation by volunteers from Centro Elis, began to be used as a center for formative activities in 1967. Some years later, that small building was honored by a brief stay by John Paul II, who lodged there during one of his excursions to Abruzzo.

The Prelate of Opus Dei, in turn, recalled the first time St. Josemaría passed through that small plaza, where the highway that runs through Ovindoli makes an abrupt curve. It was in November 1949, on a trip from L’Aquila on the way back to Rome. As he always used to do, he prayed for all the people living there.

Finally, the Bishop of Marsi, the diocese to which Ovindoli belongs, expressed his appreciation for the formative, social and charitable work that the Centro Elis carries out in the area, and had words of ardent thanks for the founder of Opus Dei.

The addresses were followed by a moment of prayer, and then the unveiling of a bas-relief of St. Josemaría with a commemorative plaque.

The day ended in the auditorium of Casale delle Rocche with the showing of a filmed catechetical get-together with St. Josemaría in Brazil in 1974, and the testimony of Maria Rita Ronchetti, one of those who in 1964 began the SAFI school of hotel management in Rome, also sponsored by the Centro Elis Association.
A Commemorative Stone for the Fortieth Anniversary of St. Josemaría’s Stay in the Colegio El Prado, in Madrid

On October 1 a stone plaque was blessed and inaugurated commemorating the 40th anniversary of the visit of St. Josemaría to the El Prado School. Presiding over the ceremony was Fr. Pedro Alvarez de Toledo, Vicar of the Delegation of Opus Dei in West Madrid.

Attending the ceremony were parents, administrators, professors, employees of the center, and alumni. Some of the parents had been students when St. Josemaría held a get-together in El Prado on October 17, 1972, and now have sons who are studying or have studied there. The parents made a video for the website www.opusdei.es expressing their gratitude for the influence that St. Josemaría’s teachings on the family, marriage and the education of children have had on their lives.

A Reliquary in Carigliano Calabro

On October 13, many inhabitants of the city of Corigliano Calabro welcomed, in the church of Mary Immaculate, a reliquary of St. Josemaría Escrivá. At the Mass celebrated by Fr. Alfonso Guíjarro, a priest of the Opus Dei Prelature, the city’s mayor and the entire city council were present.

On the shores of Lake Garda

On November 16 Delia Castellini, mayor of Toscolano-Maderno sul Garda in northern Italy, and the Vicar General of the diocese of Brescia, Msgr. Gianfranco Mascher, inaugurated a movable pedestrian bridge over the Toscolano River and a new public recreational path a half-mile in length along the shores of Lake Garda, both dedicated to St. Josemaría. Following some words by the mayor and Msgr. Mascher, Roberto Zambiasi, who was born in Toscolano-Maderno and now resides in Milan,
spoke to the residents of his native town about the Founder of Opus Dei, whom he knew personally.

Following the ceremony, a film of a catechetical gathering with St. Josemaría was held in the conference room of the local parish. In honor of Pope Francis, the organizers chose one of the get-togethers in Buenos Aires in 1974.

International Congress on “St. Josemaría and Theological Thought” (November 14-16, 2013)

What do the saints represent for theology? This was the question addressed by the International Congress “St. Josemaría and Theological Thought” that took place at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross from November 14 to 16.

The congress brought together over three days specialists, professors and students interested in “the renewal of theology through the lives of saints,” as Fr. Javier Lopez of the organizing committee explained. And he continued: “We will be looking particularly at the teachings of St. Josemaría, not because he is an isolated case, but because they are especially suited to make clear the value of the saints for theology.”

The origin of this congress goes back to words addressed in 1993 by then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger to the participants in a theological symposium on St. Josemaría held in Rome. The Cardinal stressed that “theology, a science in the fullest sense of the word... is subordinate to the knowledge that God has of himself, and to the knowledge of God that is enjoyed by the saints.”

The future Benedict XVI was referring not only to the knowledge that the saints enjoy in glory, but also to the knowledge they begin to have here on earth, and that they bequeath to us with their writings, their words and their example. The saints enter into the knowledge of God “not only with
their intellect but with their whole heart,” because “the unifying force of love for God leads them not only to let themselves be penetrated by his goodness, but also to enter deeply into his truth.”

The congress began with some words from the Rector of the university, followed by the address by Bishop Javier Echevarría included in this issue of the bulletin. The Prelate reflected on St. Josemaría’s contribution to the preparation, development and reception of the Second Vatican Council, especially in one of its core messages: the universal call to holiness, which for the greater part of the faithful means a call to strive for sanctity in their daily life. Following this presentation, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Vicar General of Opus Dei, spoke about the impetus theology can receive from the teachings of St. Josemaría. His paper is published at the end of this issue of Romana.

Next came five sessions dedicated to the stimulus different areas of theology can receive from St. Josemaría’s teachings. Along with professors from the Holy Cross Pontifical University, presentations were given by specialists and scholars from other university institutions, including Professor Réal Tremblay from the Pontifical Alphonsian Academy, and Professor François-Marie Léthel from the Pontifical Theresian School of Theology.

Particular attention was paid to the sphere of moral theology, with the interventions of professors Réal Tremblay and Angel Rodríguez Luño, the latter from the University of the Holy Cross. “St. Josemaría’s contribution to moral theology,” said Professor Rodríguez Luño, “lay especially in the attractive vision of Christian life that he set forth so forcefully,” and that leads to a positive and realistic moral theology that fosters freedom and pluralism.

Another question addressed was: What is the image of the Church fostered by the preaching and pastoral activity of St. Josemaría? José Ramón Villar, Professor of Ecclesiology at the University of Navarra, said it was a Church where all the faithful have the same dignity in virtue of baptism, since the condition of being “Christian faithful” is common to the laity, religious and consecrated ministers. One finds, therefore, a unity of
vocation and a distinction of functions and charisms within a common mission.

A session dedicated to the inspiration that philosophical reflection can find in the thought of St. Josemaría saw the intervention, among others, of Professor Ana Marta Gonzalez, from the University of Navarra. The relationship between the founder of Opus Dei and canon law was also discussed.

The last day included the participation of Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. He spoke on “The Saints and Theology in the Thought of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI,” who stressed that the saints give witness to the reality that “the truth about God is not a theory but a Person.” Commenting on words of the Pope emeritus, Cardinal Koch said that the saints are the most credible witnesses to the Christian faith, the true reformers of the Church, and the primary interpreters of Holy Scripture.

Pope Francis, in his message to the participants at the congress, expressed his hope that the founder of Opus Dei’s example would be the occasion for a “renewed conviction that believers, by virtue of baptism which incorporates them into Christ, are called to be holy and to help further with their daily work the salvation of all mankind.”

A Biographical and Theological-Spiritual Dictionary of St. Josemaría, Editorial Monte Carmelo

Monte Carmelo publishers has produced the Dictionary of St. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, as part of its collection of large dictionaries. The volume contains 288 sections, of which 158 are of a theological-spiritual character, while 130 are historical-biographical. The first group explores various topics of spiritual life and theological reflection in light of the teachings of St. Josemaria. The historical-biographical sections provide essential information about the persons, places, and most relevant events
connected to the history of the founder of Opus Dei. His written work and preaching are also analyzed, as well as some of the apostolic initiatives that he fostered throughout the world.

This volume of 1358 pages, under the direction of the Historical Institute of St. Josemaría Escrivá, is the work of more than 226 authors from 32 countries, among them theologians, canonists, historians, philosophers and other specialists, under the supervision of an editorial committee led by Msgr. José Luis Illanes, director of the Historical Institute. He says that it will be a “general reference work concerned not only with the life of St. Josemaría, but also with his message and teaching, and with the institution to which he gave life.”

Illanes hopes that the dictionary “will help readers to know better the life and teachings of one of the most important figures of the history of the Church in the twentieth century, a saint of the ordinary (as Blessed John Paul II called him on the day after his canonization), that is to say, a promoter of a path of holiness and apostolate, of a sincere and deep Christian life, in the varied circumstances of ordinary life in the middle of the world.”

Critical-Historical Edition of Christ Is Passing By is published in Spanish

Rialp publishers of Madrid has brought out the Critical-Historical Edition of Christ Is Passing By, a collection of homilies given by the founder of Opus Dei. Professor Antonio Aranda, editor of this work, introduces the book with an explanation of its process of publication in various languages during the author’s life-time. Then he explains the history of the first edition of the original text, accompanied by some critical and historical commentaries.

Christ Is Passing By is a compilation of 18 homilies given by St. Josemaría between 1951 and 1971, on various feasts throughout the liturgical cycle. The connecting thread is divine filiation, the foundation of
the universal call to sanctity; other key topics are the sanctification of ordinary work, contemplation in the middle of the world, and unity of life. Since 1973 more than 500,000 copies have been printed in 14 languages.

The prologue to the work, written by Bishop Javier Echevarría, stresses “the importance that this volume of the Founder of Opus Dei had and has in the spiritual life of countless people,” and he highlights three characteristics already pointed out by Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo in the presentation of the first edition of *Christ Is Passing By*: 1) the theological depth of these meditations, fully linked to the Word of God; 2) the close connection between the teaching of the Gospel and the ordinary life of Christians; 3) the literary style of the author, direct and simple, which helps explains why, after forty years, the book keeps the same freshness and immediacy that it had when it was published.

Antonio Aranda, a professor at the University of Navarra and at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, is the author of numerous publications and a member of various scientific associations.

Torna ai contenuti

Other Publishing News

*Books of St. Josemaría*

*Put*, Split, Verbum, 2013, 7th Croatian printing (3rd in this collection) of *The Way*.

*Camino*, Mexico City, Minos, 2013, 60th Mexican printing.

*Camino*, Madrid, Rialp, 2013, 86th Spanish printing.

In addition, the publisher Le Laurier has published *The Way* in digital format in French (*Chemin*).

*Brazda*, Split, Verbum, 2013, 4th Croatian printing of *Furrow*.

*Surco*, Lima, Infobrax, 2013, 6th Peruvian printing.

*Kovacnica*, Split, 2013, 3rd Croatian printing of *The Forge*.

*Forja*, Mexico City, Verbum, 2013, 16th Mexican printing.
Forja, Madrid, Rialp, 2013, 17th Spanish printing.

Amigos de Dios, Mexico City, Minos, 2013, 15th Mexican printing.

Books about St. Josemaría


Sonhai e ficareis aquém, Pedro Casciaro, São Paulo, Quadrante, 1st Brazilian edition of Dream and Your Dreams Will Fall Short.

San Josemaría Intercessor, Omar Benitez Lozano, Bogotá, Procodes, 1st edition.

Novena del trabajo (Novena for Work), Francisco Faus, Bogotá, 3rd Colombian printing.


Por las sendas de la fe: selección de textos de la predicación [Edited by José Antonio Loarte], St. Josemaría Escrivá, Madrid, Ediciónes Cristiandad, 1st ed.


Un’ educazione cristiana alla professionalità, [Texts selected by Carlo Pioppi], St. Josemaría Escrivá, Brescia, La Scuola, First edition.

Kakbo e Opus Dei? Antonio Mario Chirco and Antonio M. Sicari, Sofia, Bulgaria, Communitas, 1st Bulgarian edition of What is Opus Dei?
Pope Francis Evokes St. Josemaría as a “Precursor of the Second Vatican Council.”

We reproduce here the translation of the message Pope Francis sent to the Chancellor of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Bishop Javier Echevarría:

“On the occasion of the International Symposium on “Saint Josemaría Escrivá and Theological Thought,” organized at the end of the Year of Faith by the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, an academic institution inspired by him, the Supreme Pontiff Pope Francis addresses his affectionate greetings to everyone involved. He does so with the hope that the wonderful example of the priestly life of the holy Founder, a precursor of Vatican II in stressing the universal call to holiness, may inspire in all the faithful of the great family of Opus Dei a renewed conviction that believers, by virtue of baptism which incorporates them into Christ, are called to be holy and to help further with their daily work the salvation of all mankind.

“His Holiness, while recalling the perennial truth preached by Saint Josemaría Escrivá with his words and his life (that the fruitfulness of all apostolate lies in prayer and in an intense and constant sacramental life), asks for prayers for himself and for his ministry. And invoking the light of the Holy Spirit for a fruitful work of reflection, he imparts his Apostolic Blessing to the Rector and the faculty, including all those taking part in the conference and everyone at the Pontifical University.”

Archbishop Pietro Parolin
Secretary of State of His Holiness
Pontifical Appointments

On October 2, 2013, Rev. Rafael Garcia de la Serrana Villalobos was appointed director of the department of technical services for the Vatican City State. He was formerly assistant director of the department.

On December 19, 2013, Msgr. Joaquin Alonso Pacheco was confirmed as a consultor for the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

New Centers of the Prelature

The vicars of the respective circumscriptions have established three Centers of the Prelature in Madrid, Spain.

Saxum, a documentary about Bishop Alvaro del Portillo

A biographical documentary about the first successor to St. Josemaría as head of Opus Dei is now available. Entitled Saxum: Recollections of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, it runs for 30 minutes.

Saxum is the Latin word for “rock,” a word St. Josemaría frequently used to refer to Alvaro del Portillo. It was a way of expressing his reliance on him in carrying out Opus Dei.

Directed by Antonio Tormo and produced by Beta Foundation Films, it shows how Alvaro del Portillo put his virtues and talents at the service of his mission on earth: to seek holiness, first as an engineer, later as a priest, and finally as prelate and bishop.

As a student, Alvaro del Portillo took part in social assistance programs in poor sections of Madrid, and during the years he was at the head of Opus Dei he encouraged the start of many educational and social initiatives.
throughout the world. During the Second Vatican Council, he helped prepare for the Council sessions with his generous work, and was always available to carry out the requests of the successor of Peter. These are some of the reasons why John Paul II, as shown in the documentary, went to pray before the mortal remains of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo just a few hours after his death.

People offering testimony include Cardinal Julian Herranz (who assisted Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo during the Council), Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz (secretary of John Paul II), Bishop Javier Echevarría (current Prelate of Opus Dei and Don Alvaro’s closest co-worker), Isabel Sanchez (Central Secretary of Opus Dei), Teresa del Portillo (sister of Don Alvaro), Joaquin Navarro-Valls (director of the Holy See’s press office from 1984 to 2006), Elizabeth Waldstein (an organist), Colette Kenmogne (a housewife) and other people who had the opportunity to get to know him.
Following the magisterium of Benedict XVI and the Holy Father Francis, and applying their teachings to the circumstances of daily life, Bishop Echevarría provides guidelines for grasping more deeply these basic truths of the Catholic faith.

Other new publications

*Alvaro del Portillo: Un hombre fiel*, by Javier Medina Bayo, Madrid, Rialp, 4th and 5th Spanish printings. The 2nd Mexican printing of this book by the publisher Minos has also appeared.

*Como sal y como luz*, [Edited by José Antonio Loarte], Alvaro del Portillo, Bogotá, Procodes. 1st Colombian edition. The 1st Mexican edition, published by Minos, has also appeared.

*Vivir la Santa Misa*, Javier Echevarría, Mexico City, Minos, 4th Mexican printing.

*Sobre Dios, la Iglesia y el mundo*, Fernando Ocáriz and Rafael Serrano, Madrid, Rialp, 2nd and 3rd Spanish printings. The 1st Mexican edition by Minos and the 1st Brazilian edition by Quadrante of São Paulo have also appeared.


*Echando raíces: José Luis Múzquiz y la expansión del Opus Dei*, John F. Coverdale, Madrid, Rialp, 3rd Spanish printing.

Some Diocesan Assignments Received by Priests of the Prelature

You can read the full text of "Romana" by subscribing to the print edition.
Centennial of the birth of the Servant of God José María Hernández Garnica

November 17 marked the centennial of the birth of the Servant of God José María Hernández Garnica, whose cause for canonization has been begun. He was one of the first priests of Opus Dei and helped spread the message of the sanctification of ordinary life throughout many countries of Europe.

A commemorative ceremony took place on November 18 in the Blanquerna School of Communication at Ramon Llull University, close to the Church of Santa Maria de Montalegre, the organizer of the ceremony, where his mortal remains now rest. The film *Por los Caminos de Europa* (Along the Roads of Europe) was projected, with a biographical sketch of José María Hernández Garnica and testimonies to his reputation for sanctity. Following the film an address entitled “The Value of Fidelity” was given by Rev. José Carlos Martin de la Hoz, postulator of the cause of beatification for the Servant of God, which was followed by a lively discussion.

One of the ideas stressed was that “Where there are saints, more saints arise,” pointing to his relationship with St. Josemaría and also with Alvaro del Portillo, who will soon be beatified, and with whom, together with José Luis Múzquiz, he received priestly ordination in 1944. All three of them were engineers (Alvaro and José Luis were highway engineers, and José Maria, a mining engineer), with doctorates from different universities. Fr. Martin de la Hoz summarized some letters exchanged between the three priests, especially those between Alvaro del Portillo and José Maria.

Also taking part in the ceremony was the rector of the church of Santa Maria de Montalegre, Rev. Francesc Perarnau, who mentioned the large number of faithful who visit the tomb of the Servant of God and who go to his intercession for favors.
Social and educational projects inspired by Msgr. Álvaro del Portillo

The initiatives described in this section are educational, social, and cultural activities brought forward by faithful of the Prelature and cooperators together with many other people, both Catholics and non-Catholics. Those who undertake and direct these activities (taking on full responsibility for them, including their financial aspects) are trying to respond to specific local needs without any discrimination regarding race, religion, or social condition.

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

Social and educational projects inspired by Msgr. Álvaro del Portillo

“All of us, to the extent possible, need to get into contact with people who suffer, with the sick, the poor... the lonely, the abandoned.”

These words written by Msgr. Álvaro del Portillo in 1981 reflect his own personal experience. As a 19-year-old university student, he became involved in the activities of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and helped distribute gifts and food, taught catechism, and provided care for abandoned children in the poorest areas of Madrid. Encouraged by St. Josemaría, he continued providing this assistance with the help of the students at the DYA Academy, where Opus Dei had recently begun its apostolic activities.

During the years Msgr. del Portillo was at the head of the Work (1975—1994), he took advantage of his pastoral visits throughout the world to encourage the start of many social and educational initiatives. His concern for the poor and sick led him “to urge forward and encourage others to take part in projects for the assistance of the needy, seeking to find a professional remedy for these human needs and many more.” When talking to those involved in organizing these activities, Don Álvaro (as many people called him) encouraged them to have broad horizons and gave suggestions on how to make these activities more fruitful. He was always
very happy to receive news about these initiatives and insisted that new projects had to be started, especially in places where peoples’ needs were greater. He had an ardent desire to help people and to bring Christ’s lovable and merciful face to everyone.

With the centenary of Don Álvaro’s birth and his upcoming beatification, these pages offer information about some of the social and educational initiatives that were encouraged by him or begun as a direct result of his intervention. May it be a way of thanking him for the spiritual and material good done to so many souls and also a spur to continue praying for his intercession for the people who benefit from these institutions.

**Junkabal**

Guatemala City, Guatemala

*Junkabal* is a training center for women. It started its activities in 1964 in a small rented house next to a municipal rubbish dump. A program of courses was started, directed to the needs of the impoverished people from the surrounding district. With the construction in 1978 of the second phase, classes in primary and secondary education were begun and also parenting courses. In 1992, with Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo’s encouragement, new buildings were added and training courses were begun to help women set up small businesses in a variety of fields. The progress of these women is followed closely and refresher courses to help them keep up to date are available. Junkabal now incorporates a dental clinic and a program of nutrition classes for mothers and children. During these years more than 100,000 people have passed through Junkabal, many of whom have also taken part in the activities of spiritual formation offered there.

[www.junkabal.edu.gt](http://www.junkabal.edu.gt)

**Valle Grande Institute for Technical Training**

Cañete, Peru

In 1965 Valle Grande Institute started technical training courses for agriculture workers. Beginning in 1992, technical courses in Agrarian Production were offered and the name was changed to the Valle Grande School of Agriculture. This course lasts three years with students
alternating time in class with time spent working on small family farms. Thus the learning process is combined with the world of work and the family. Each year about thirty students graduate who usually quickly find employment. During the 1990’s Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo followed the development of the school very closely and encouraged the directors to develop a wide range of training activities for the local farm people.

www.irvg.org

**Institute of Nursing Studies**

Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

During a visit to Congo in 1989, Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo was struck by the almost complete lack of reliable medical care in the country and suggested setting up a training school for nurses. The *Institut Supérieur en Sciences Infirmières* (ISSI), which began in 1997, has now seen over 450 students graduate. A program leading to a Masters in Midwifery is offered as well, in order to help reduce the high rate of infant and maternal mortality. ISSI also offers training programs for people working in public hygiene throughout the country. Over 2000 people have benefited from these courses.

**Baytree Centre**

London, England

During the 80’s, a group of women from a variety of professional backgrounds started educational activities in Brixton, an area in South London with a high percentage of immigrants. One of their first initiatives was to set up English classes, since the inability to express themselves in English was a frequent cause of isolation and conflict for the local women. Besides encouraging the project from the start, when he came to London in 1987, Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo blessed the premises of Baytree. In 1992 the local government provided financial assistance to expand the buildings. Now, each week more than 500 women from nearly 50 countries attend the classes at Baytree. In addition, through the Homework Club about 900 girls are helped with their school work and overall education. While helping many mothers to gain the qualifications needed to enter the
workforce, the goal is that they themselves will be able to assist their children in their schoolwork.

www.baytreecentre.org

Pedreira Educational and Professional Center
São Paulo, Brazil

Pedreira Educational and Professional Center (CEAP) began in 1985 as a result of an ideal shared by a group of professionals and students who wanted to set up a social project in São Paulo that would contribute to social development in a needy area in the city. They decided to start a school in the Pedreira district (located 30 km from the downtown), which had some of the worst social conditions in the city, with high rates of delinquency, violence and drug use among young people. Currently, CEAP serves 580 students each year. In addition, it offers basic courses in vocational education in electricity and computing for students aged 10 to 14, as well as professional training courses in computer networks, business administration, and telecommunications for students aged between 15 and 17. The Center also offers members of the local community preparatory courses to bring future students up to admission-level requirements for its programs, along with medical care, which benefits approximately 7,000 people per year. Over 6,000 students have graduated from the Center.

www.pedreira.org

Monkole Medical Center
Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

Monkole Medical Centre was set up in Kinshasa following a trip by Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo to Congo in 1989. During his stay, Don Alvaro suggested that it would be a good idea if some members of Opus Dei started working on a medical center in response to a request made by Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo, then President of the Bishops Conference of Congo. Monkole currently offers both medical assistance (in the areas of gynecology and obstetrics, surgery, internal medicine, and pediatrics) and hospitalization services, as well as providing classes in basic hygiene and health, particularly concerning prevention of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, sickle cell anemia, malaria, and tuberculosis. Three medical clinics
connected to the hospital—Eliba, Moluka and Kimbondo—offer medical care in poor neighborhoods. Also affiliated with Monkole are a nursing school (ISSI), which graduates 50 new nurses every year, and a training center for doctors (CEFA). Monkole and its affiliated institutions now have over 50,000 medical consultations each year.

www.monkole.ed

Foundation for Family and Community Assistance

Quito, Ecuador

The Foundation for Family and Community Assistance (AFAC) began in 1991 as a small dispensary in a poor district of Quito. It started in response to a request from Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo to help the sick and the needy. In 1995 the definitive building was inaugurated, with its installations for dentistry, ultrasound, X-ray, and laboratories. A number of specialized courses for women and children at risk are also offered. In 2008 the Center was transformed into a maternity clinic that has helped over 3500 women give birth. About 24,000 patients a year are currently given assistance there. The patients, in most cases young women, are often interested in questions related to living their faith, the upbringing of their children and their responsibilities as mothers.

Banilad Center for Professional Development

Cebu City, Philippines

Banilad Center for Professional Development (BCPD) is a technical school offering two year courses in Catering and Hotel Services. It was born in response to Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo’s petition in a get-together with over a thousand people during his visit to the Philippines in 1987. The then Prelate of Opus Dei asked his audience to set up projects to alleviate poverty and help needy people to have a more dignified and human life. Two years later the construction of Banilad began and was inaugurated in 1991. About 1500 young women have now completed the two year course. Another 2600 have attended short courses on how to set up small businesses.

www.fptihphilippines.com/BANILAD
Kinal Technical Training Center
Guatemala City, Guatemala

Kinal Technical Training Center was founded in 1961, but it was only in 1985, due to the special encouragement of Don Alvaro, that it began construction of its new facilities. Kinal gives economically-disadvantaged youth the opportunity to obtain a high school diploma along with solid technical training, opening up the prospect of a better professional future. It also offers refresher courses and training for adults, mainly in the technical field. 1,200 young people between the ages of 12 and 19 are currently studying in Kinal, plus another 800 adults. Over the past 15 years, the school has on average graduated more than 200 students per year.

www.kinal.org.gt

Montemira School
San Salvador, El Salvador

Montemira School has offered primary education to girls from families of limited means since 1975. As the result of earthquakes in 1986 and again in 2001 the school has twice had to be rebuilt. With the rebuilding in 2001 a high school program was added, which in 2004 was expanded to include a diploma in hotel and catering services. This course, which integrates professional training and general education, was the first program in this specialty approved by the Ministry of Education, and is now a national model for new programs in this area. To date more than 750 girls have passed through the school. With his words of encouragement and the close interest with which he followed the first reconstruction of the school after the 1986 earthquake, Msgr. del Portillo is part of the school’s history.

Seat of Wisdom International Ecclesiastical College Rome, Italy

The Sedes Sapientiae (Seat of Wisdom) International Ecclesiastical College is a seminary erected by the Holy See on January 9, 1991 that welcomes candidates for the priesthood from all across the globe. The project was initiated by Bishop del Portillo in response to a request from Blessed John Paul II. Since its inception, more than 400 of its seminarians have been ordained priests. Students are sent by their bishops from all over the world, and once they have completed their ecclesiastical studies they
return to their dioceses. Currently the College has 90 seminarians from 31 different countries. Don Alvaro encouraged the governing board to foster an environment of trust and freedom, order and fraternity, along with an atmosphere of serious study and strong piety.

www.sedessapientiae.it

Ilomba Rural Center

Bingerville, Abidjan, Ivory Coast

The aim of Ilomba Center is to provide health care for some of the most vulnerable sectors of the population (children, pregnant women, and the elderly) in an area of the Ivory Coast that has little provision for public health. Besides medical care, classes are offered on topics such as nutrition and hygiene. When he visited the country in October 1988, Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo blessed the site on which Ilomba was to be built and expressed his joy at the progress being made. About 12,000 people in the area benefit from the Center’s activities.

Institute for Social Responsibility in Business

Guatemala City, Guatemala

This center seeks to spread the principles of ethics and social responsibility in the business world. It was founded in 1991 in response to the interest shown by Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo to put into practice the teachings of Pope John Paul II in his encyclical Centessimus Annus. In 2005 the Institute became part of the Istmo University. It has its own publications and organizes regular seminars and congresses.

www.ipres.org

Family Cooperation Health Services Foundation

Metro Manila, Philippines

When Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo visited the Philippines in 1987, he encouraged many people to do what they could to help eradicate poverty. One of the results was the creation of the Family Cooperation Health Services Foundation (FAMCOHSEF). Through a network of health professionals in various communities, it offers training in basic family health, essential medical services, nutrition, and first aid. Many people with
limited resources are being helped to avoid illnesses, better their hygiene, and in some cases eliminate malnourishment. The health personnel involved follow a five year part-time course that includes a program for the control of tuberculosis and another on essential nutrition. To date 530 people have taken this course.

**Iroto Rural Development Centre**

Ogun, Nigeria

Iroto Rural Development Centre (IRDC) started as an organization to provide domestic services for a conference center in the state of Ogun. It soon became clear that many women in the area needed supplementary education to help them find employment. In 1985 classes were begun in basic literacy, needlework, and crafts. Soon afterwards courses in hospitality services were started for young girls. Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo’s visit in 1989 gave a big impetus to this educational effort. During his stay at Iroto he expressed his desire for a school that would help many Nigerian women find worthwhile jobs. This intention became a reality in 2005 with the opening of Iroto School of Hotel and Catering.

**Center for Alternative Basic Education**

Lima, Peru

The Center for Alternative Basic Education (CEBA) was started in 1995. It offers educational opportunities to girls and women who have not had the possibility of finishing their schooling. The aim is to give them a good general education that allows them to better their opportunities for employment. The center has laboratories, computer rooms, a library, a cinema for audiovisual projections, and a music room. It also has installations for teaching cooking, pastry work, housekeeping, and home maintenance.

**Monterrey Children’s City**

Guadalupe, Nuevo Leon, Mexico

The Children’s City was founded in 1951 by Father Carlos Alvarez Ortiz, who ran it until 1984. Initially it was an orphanage that gave shelter to 50 children, but in 1986 it became a Family Education Development
Center. In 1987, Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo encouraged a group of faithful of the Prelature to take responsibility for the moral and spiritual formation offered at the institution. Today, the operations of the Children’s City, which has now graduated over 2,600 students, include a boys’ school, a girls’ school, a family education center, a church, and the Centennial Medical Clinic. The school presently caters to a total of 905 families through family education courses and has 1,330 students from kindergarten through grade 12. It provides 22,000 monthly breakfasts, devotes 16,500 hours annually to one-on-one tutoring, conducts 7,000 medical consultations every year in the clinic, and promotes four annual cancer-prevention campaigns. www.ciudadelosninos.edu.mx

Rome Bio-Medical Campus

Rome, Italy

In 1988 Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo invited some doctors and university professors to set up a university policlinic inspired by Christian principles to care for the sick and suffering. He met with this group of promoters several times to encourage them and give them advice. In 1993 the Rome Bio-Medical Campus began with courses of study in nursing, medicine and surgery. A little later the clinic opened in its first building with a hundred beds. Later an engineering faculty was started. In 2008 the current site was finished, with four hundred beds. There is also a research center and another for geriatric medicine. Rome’s civil authorities have dedicated the road leading to the buildings to Bishop del Portillo. The university now offers courses in eight areas for over 1000 students and cares for thousands of patients annually.

www.unicampus.it

Yarani Training School

Abijan, Ivory Coast

In 1989 Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo asked a person from the Ivory Coast about the possibility of setting up a social work to train young women and thus help them to find work. This conversation inspired the setting up of Yarani, which opened its doors in October 1990. Since then over 5,000 people have benefited from its activities. The school offers diplomas in four
areas: starting a basic business; hospitality management; health care; and primary education.

www.yarani.org

Utz Samaj Agricultural School
Tecpán Chimaltenango, Guatemala

A few months after the terrible earthquake that devastated Guatemala in February 1976, the Foundation for Integral Development (FUDI) was set up with the encouragement of Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo to take on the job of rebuilding Sajcavillá, a village inhabited mainly by indigenous people in the district of Sacatepéquez. In the early nineties, FUDI promoted the creation of Utz Samaj, a community development project in Tecpan in the district of Chimaltenango, another predominantly indigenous area in the western highlands of Guatemala. The goal of Utz Samaj is to give farm workers technical, business, and human training. Its Agricultural Training School turns out graduates with an entrepreneurial mindset who have gone on to set up small farms and businesses based on their expertise in agriculture, greenhouse management, and marketing, inspired by a vigorous work ethic. Over 50,000 families in the area now benefit from the training programs offered by Utz Samaj. Their main source of revenue is farm work.

www.serviciosuniversitarios.org

Development Agency for Women Volunteerism
Metro Manila, Philippines

The Development Agency for Women Volunteerism (DAWV) is an educational program begun in 1989 in order to foster a social concern in people with economic means and encourage them to help those in need, not only through material assistance but also through education and guidance. It is based on volunteers (housewives, doctors, business women, social leaders, students) who are given classes on the roots of poverty, the principles of social justice, and the social doctrine of the Church, and then asked to put this knowledge into practice. Through a network of 1500 young volunteers help is now being given to about 50,000 people in various parts of Manila.
Uruguayan Association of Agricultural Family Schools

At the end of the 70's, a group of people working in the agricultural sector saw a need for training programs aimed at helping farm workers and their families. This led in 1970 to the foundation of the Uruguayan Association of Agricultural Family Schools (AUEFA), which opened its first center in the town of Juanico in 1980. In 1987, one of the directors of the AUEFA met with Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo in Rome, who reminded him of the importance for Uruguayan society of the work being done by their association, whose aim is to help farm workers improve their living conditions and those of their family. Currently, the first center to be opened has moved into a permanent facility and in addition to its professional development courses is providing basic education to 70 high school students. In March 1999, a second academic institution was set up, which today is providing training to over 50 young women. In its 32 years of operation, AUEFA has helped 485 farm workers to develop their own professional projects.

Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

Rome, Italy

The Pontifical University of the Holy Cross is a university-level center for ecclesiastical studies serving the whole Church. This project had been desired by the founder of Opus Dei and was launched by Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo. It currently has four schools (Philosophy, Theology, Canon Law, and Institutional Communications) and a Higher Institute of Religious Sciences. Some 6,000 graduates have now benefited from its programs. Academic activities started in 1984 under the title of the Roman Academic Center of the Holy Cross, the forerunner of the present university, which was established as a pontifical institution by John Paul II on January 9, 1990. Many bishops from all over the world send priests and seminarians from their dioceses to receive academic instruction and spiritual formation at this university. Following the express wishes of Bishop del Portillo, the academic activities at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross are open to scholars and students from all fields working on questions concerning scientific, philosophical, economic, and social issues, with a view to encouraging an open dialogue between the faith and the world.
Abidagba Health Centre

Ogun, Nigeria

In 1980 a group of health professionals started providing health services for people in Ogun. They organized sessions in hygiene, child care and the diagnosis of malaria, typhoid, diarrhea, and infectious diseases. Over time it became clear that a medical center was needed which would benefit the whole population. When Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo visited Nigeria in 1989, he spurred forward this initiative and encouraged its becoming a stable center with a Christian focus. With the help of many benefactors, in 1996 the Abidagba Health Centre was inaugurated, staffed by medical and laboratory personnel.

Guaymura University Center

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

In 1979 a group of young people wrote to Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo asking him if the Work could set up a center in Honduras. Two years later, in 1981, Guaymura University Center was begun. It offers Honduran students from all social backgrounds help to develop their spiritual and professional life. Among other things, the Center provides an environment to help students make good use of their time at the university (accommodation, study rooms and other services); academic courses and cultural activities to reinforce what is learned in the university; and opportunities for social service to the disadvantaged that strengthens their own social conscience.

Metro Achievement Center

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Metro Achievement Center opened its doors in 1985. It seeks to motivate and educate young women who want to be better students and to grow in virtue. It offers a summer program and one that is ongoing throughout the school year. Since its start the Center has helped more than 5000 girls. About 500 girls between the ages of 8 and 18 take part in the
program each year. The encouragement of Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo was
decisive in setting up the Center. www.midtown-metro.org/metro

Lamatepec School
San Salvador, El Salvador

Lamatepec opened its doors in 1981. Msgr. del Portillo followed its
launching and the first years of its life very closely because of the civil war
raging in El Salvador at the time. Some words of encouragement from Don
Alvaro during a meeting in Rome with one of the couples sitting on
Lamatepec’s board of directors helped to keep the promoters of this project
going through the tough years when they were trying to get it off the
ground: “If you help look after the children of others, God will look after
your own children.” Lamatepec currently has 700 students. Twenty-four
graduating classes have gone through the school, many of whom now work
in social service projects in San Salvador. In addition, the school also runs
15 social programs for people in need.

www.lamatepec.edu.sv

Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise
San Jose, Cebu, Philippines

When Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo visited the island of Cebu in 1987, he
suggested that an institute to help needy people be set up. On returning to
Rome he asked two specialists from Italian organizations for international
cooperation to study the possibility of setting up a school there. Three years
later, in 1990, the Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise
(CITE) opened its doors. The aim of the institute is to offer technical
training, along with good work attitudes, to young people and their families
from difficult socioeconomic backgrounds, thus helping the whole
community in the Visayas and Mindanao areas. The CITE offers courses
in mechanics, electricity and electronics. More than 3000 pupils have now
gained internationally recognized certificates there, and the Center is
recognized by the Philippine government as one of the best technical
schools in the country.

www.cite.edu.ph
Sirama Center for Professional Training for Women
San Salvador, El Salvador

The Sirama Center for Professional Training for Women began in 1972 in San Salvador. Courses offered include secretarial training, cosmetics, dress-making, local craft-work, baking and cookery. Basic skills needed to organize a mini-business are also taught. In 1986 the original Sirama building was destroyed in an earthquake. Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo encouraged the directive group to start building the new center, which opened two years later. Ten years later, on land belonging to the municipality of Soyapango, another center was started. More than 42,000 women have passed through these two centers.

www.sirama.org

Kimlea Girls Technical Training Centre
Limuru, Kenya

Kimlea, a school providing technical training for rural women, began in a prefabricated classroom in April 1989. That same year Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo visited Kenya and gave some suggestions for the future development of the school. In the following year, thanks to help from the European Union and the Instituto per la Cooperazione Universitara, the building of the definitive site was started. To date about 12,000 people have benefited, most of them young girls working on the tea and coffee plantations. Kimlea offers technical training along with classes in human and spiritual development. The students go through a two year program that gives them access to various professions: catering and hospitality services, dress-making, and agriculture. Courses in basic literacy are also offered for women who have not been able to attend primary school.

www.kimleatechnical.org

HUMTEC School
Comas, Lima, Peru

HUMTEC (Humanities and Technology) School started in 1991 through the initiative of a professor at the University of Piura and a number of local businessmen. Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo closely followed the setting
up of the school and its first stages. For the past twenty years the school has offered academic and technical training to impoverished young people north of Lima, along with education in human and spiritual values. The school receives support from a number of private and international institutions. 400 pupils are currently receiving instruction there.

www.humtec.edu.pe

Aragua Center for Rural Development

Zambrano, Honduras

In 1987, with the encouragement of Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo and the help of national and international bodies, Aragua Center for Rural Development began. Its aim is to further the human and social development of the local agricultural workers and their families. Training courses are offered for women in horticulture, conserving and preserving foods, baking, and embroidery. Classes are also given to help them discover the value of their work and the role it has in the development of the whole community. In addition, in 1988, the Aragua Medical Clinic started, which offers health care, vaccinations, preventative medicine, nutrition checks, and laboratory analysis. Attached to it is a pharmacy that dispenses essential medicines at low cost. About 4000 people are helped by the clinic annually.

Rosedale Center

Bronx, New York, USA

Rosedale Center started in 1978 thanks to the suggestion and close interest of Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo. Since then it has been offering an after-school program for girls living in one of most deprived areas of New York. During the summer holidays, Rosedale runs a program of daytime activities that includes both academics and sports. More than 300 schoolgirls make use of the Center every year. Over the past 25 years all the girls who have passed through Rosedale have finished high school and about 90% have gone on to university.

www.rosedaleweb.wordpress.com

A. C. Educate
Ixtapaluca Valle de Chalco, Mexico state, Mexico

In 1983 in Jaltepec, Mexico, Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo told a group of professionals and businessmen that there was a need for a major social service project in Mexico City. Six people took on responsibility for this project, and in 1991 started a school for boys and another one for girls in one of the poorest areas in the outskirts of Mexico City. The project attempts to address one of the country’s most pressing social needs: high-quality education in low-income areas. Both schools offer programs at the pre-school, elementary, middle, and high-school levels. Technical assistance and training is also provided to a large number of people. The schools currently serve 690 parents and 1600 students with a staff of 75 teachers.

www.educar.org.mx

Kimbondo Technical and Professional School
Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

The history of Kimbondo goes back to the mid eighties and a tiny school that gave professional training to about a dozen young girls coming from rural areas. In 1989 Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo got to know this school, then called Kibali. Besides meeting the pupils, he had a meeting with the people running it and encouraged them to increase and consolidate the project. Two years later the school began to award diplomas in catering and hotel management, and received official recognition in 1994. In 2004 Kibali became Kimbondo Technical and Professional School. Over 350 pupils had now passed through the school. In 2006 it began offering training courses for people working in the hotel industry. To date 410 people have benefited from these courses.

Los Valles Foundation
Cali, Colombia

Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo encouraged a group of professionals to set up a medical and training center in the city of Cali. In 1994 Los Valles Foundation was set up with the aim of improving the quality of life of the mothers of families in the poorest areas of the city through human and spiritual assistance and job training. Courses are offered in manual arts,
cookery, baking, hairdressing, dress-making, doll-making, and woodcraft. Many of the women, encouraged by their own progress, have urged their children to finish school and go on to the university; others have found ways to keep their children out of violent gangs and the drug world. Some of them have even started their own small business, and all can now help contribute to the family income.

Bidasoa International Ecclesiastical College

Pamplona, Spain

Bidasoa International Ecclesiastical College is an international seminary run by the Prelature of Opus Dei. It was erected by the Holy See in 1988 at the request of Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo and is located in Pamplona (Spain). The students who attend this seminary are sent by their bishops to be trained for the priesthood to serve in their respective dioceses. In Bidasoa’s first 23 years of operations, it has seen 512 of its seminarians ordained priests, coming from 160 different dioceses in 29 countries. Currently Bidasoa has 93 seminarians, from 46 different dioceses and 16 countries. Their philosophy and theology courses are given by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Navarra.

Center of Assistance for Integral Development

Montevideo, Uruguay

In 1992, three years after a group of young women started assisting people in a poor area of Montevideo, the Center of Assistance for Integral Development (CADI) was inaugurated. The promoters received a lot of encouragement and guidance from Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. CADI seeks to contribute to the development of families at risk through the education of women, offering them work training, and human and spiritual guidance. In conjunction with the nearby parish, preparation courses are run for Baptism, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation. About 600 families are benefiting from the activities at CADI and altogether more than 7000 people have passed through its classrooms.
Wavecrest College of Catering and Hospitality Management

Lagos, Nigeria

Wavecrest College started in the 80’s with the aim of giving professional training for women working in hospitality services. The promoters were convinced that service-oriented professions have a deep influence on families and society. Wavecrest College is the first institution in Nigeria that offers training in this area and has received state recognition. The organizing entity, Women’s Board Educational Cooperation Society, received detailed advice from Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo.

www.wavecrestcollegeofhospitality.org

Los Pinos School

Quito, Ecuador

Los Pinos School has given rise to two initiatives for people without the resources needed to gain access to a good education. One is a night school in the same building as Los Pinos School in Quito and the second a school in Tumbaco. Both were helped in their beginnings by the advice and guidance of Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo. The evening school started in 1980, and offers courses leading to a diploma in commercial writing, accountancy, or health studies. In 1997 the Tumbaco site started offering a course in management in the service industries. In 2001 new classrooms were opened for 165 students. 162 young women study in the Quito night school, which has 24 teachers. The students also learn practical details about setting up a small business. On finishing evening school some pupils go on to university, others find work in hotels and restaurants, and others decide to set up their own business.

www.colrgionlospinos.k12.ec

Niger Foundation Hospital and Diagnostic Center

Enugu State, Nigeria

In 1989 Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo visited Nigeria. While there he realized that many people did not have access to health care, and he suggested that something be done to meet this need. A year later a hospital was started in Enugu to offer family medical services: the Niger Foundation
Hospital and Diagnostic Center (NFH). Today the hospital has departments in internal medicine, surgery, orthopedics, pediatrics, gynecology, and obstetrics. The hospital also has laboratories for clinical analysis and a radiology section. People without financial resources are especially helped through a program of rural visits that offers vaccinations and tests for various diseases, along with classes in basic health care. Free medical services are offered at its clinic in Aguobo Iwollo. www.nfh.org.ng

Meyalli School
Ixapaluca, Valle de Chalco, Mexico

Meyalli School arose from the concern of some business people who, encouraged by Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo, responded to John Paul II’s challenge during his visit to the Valle de Chalco in 1990: “We cannot live and sleep tranquilly while thousands of our brothers and sister, very close to us, haven’t the minimum needed to live with human dignity.” The group decided to open a school in one of the neediest areas of the Valle de Mexico. Meyalli started in October 1991. It now has 700 girls studying at four levels: kindergarten, primary, secondary, and pre-university. It also has a school for parents and a summer school program. Besides the solid academic training provided, students are also taught good study habits and hygiene, and are offered classes in human and Christian virtues.

www.meyalli.com

Montealto School
Lima, Peru

Montealto was begun in 1993 by a group of families who wanted an educational center for their daughters that would offer them a complete education, including personal and spiritual development. Msgr. del Portillo followed the school in its first steps. When he died the members of the organizing group, knowing his reputation for sanctity, went to his intercession asking that more pupils would be registered. Within a short a good number of new pupils signed up, ensuring the school’s future.
None of the initiatives described here would have been able to get off the ground without the generous assistance of many people from a wide variety of backgrounds, religions, races, and economic situations. Today they rely on the help of foundations, non-governmental agencies, and private organizations. Anyone who wants to know more about any of these initiatives or to offer a donation can visit the web address provided or contact the Opus Dei Information Office in the country concerned.

Torna ai contenuti
IN PACE
Suffrages

In the second half of 2013, 409 faithful of the Prelature and 21 members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross passed away.

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

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

You can read the full text of "Romana" by subscribing to the print edition.
A STUDY
WHAT IMPELUS CAN THEOLOGY RECEIVE FROM THE TEACHINGS OF SAINT JOSEMARÍA?

Fernando Ocáriz

Vice Grand Chancellor of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. Translation of an address given on November 14, 2013, during the conference “Saint Josemaría and Theological Thought” held at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.

1. The saints and the sources of theology

In 1993, in the context of a conference on the teachings of Saint Josemaría, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger said: “The theologian should be a man of scholarship; but he should also, precisely because he is a theologian, be a man of prayer. He must pay attention to the developments in history and scholarship, but, even more than that, he needs to listen to the testimony of those who, having gone the full way on the path of prayer, have, even in this life, attained the highest reaches of divine intimacy; that is, the testimony of those who, in ordinary language, we call saints.”[1]

Contemporary theology acknowledges the capacity of the spiritual life to give inspiration to its work, and consequently the role of the great saints, thus overcoming the rupture in previous centuries between theologians and spiritual authors.[2] Nevertheless, sufficient attention does not seem to have been paid, at least not explicitly, to the writings of the saints, except in questions more directly related to spirituality. In many cases, the testimonies of the saints influence theological work to some degree as regards the approach and verification of conclusions; but they are not seen as authentic sources or “sites” for the theologian’s work. In fact, they are cited scarcely or not at all, perhaps because the saints have not set forth their teachings in a discursive and deductive manner and, in many cases, these touch more directly upon the subjective states of the soul than on the objective topics of dogmatic theology.[3] But in reality, as noted by the International Theological Commission in 2011, “theology is not only a science but also a wisdom... The human person is not satisfied by partial
truths, but seeks to unify different pieces and areas of knowledge into an understanding of the final truth of all things and of human life itself. This search for wisdom, which undoubtedly animates theology itself, gives theology a close relationship to spiritual experience and to the wisdom of the saints.”

We are not referring here, obviously, to the saints who have set forth their teaching in a theologically systematic way, as did Saint Thomas Aquinas, but to those who, by their writings and example, have left us an extensive teaching on the practical manner of responding to God’s call to holiness: above all, those who have been “masters of the spiritual life.”

It is true that “the great spiritual teachers, each with their own nuances, always bring particularly deep insights not so much to theology, in the strict sense, as to the content and meaning of Christian life, on the imitation of and identification with Christ.” These lights, however, can contribute greatly to academic theological reflection. The fact that they are masters of the spiritual life does not exclude their offering clear lights to systematic theology and being sources of inspiration for theological work. As John Paul II stated, Saint Josemaría, “like other great figures in modern Church history, can also be a source of inspiration for theological thought. In fact, theological research, which has an irreplaceable role of mediation in the relationship between faith and culture, progresses and is enriched by drawing on the Gospel, under the impulse of the experience of Christianity’s great witnesses.” There is certainly a theological knowledge attained by a discursive process of reasoning, but there is also another form of knowledge made possible by the “connaturalitÃ©” brought about by the love of God. This second type is found especially in the saints, and theologians need to take it into account.

Many authors have addressed this topic. Some have stressed that the saints are the true theologians (they have known God deeply because they have loved him greatly); others have underlined that the theologian ought to be a person of prayer, someone who truly loves God. As Saint Josemaría wrote, charity “poured out in our soul by God... transforms from within our mind and will.” For charity, which implies an affective communion with God, opens the soul to a deeper knowledge of him: it opens the soul to contemplation, to that *simpex intuitus veritatis ex caritate*
The encyclical *Lumen fidei*, published by Pope Francis, we read: “Faith’s understanding is born when we receive the immense love of God which transforms us inwardly and enables us to see reality with new eyes.” And he adds: “It is a relational way of viewing the world, which then becomes a form of shared knowledge, vision through the eyes of another and a shared vision of all that exists.”

2. The saints; between *auditus fidei* and *intellectus fidei*

In the encyclical *Fides et ratio*, John Paul II wrote that “theology is structured as an understanding of faith in the light of a twofold methodological principle: the *auditus fidei* and the *intellectus fidei*. With the first, theology makes its own the content of Revelation as this has been gradually expounded in Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Church’s living Magisterium. With the second, theology seeks to respond through speculative enquiry to the specific demands of disciplined thought.” *Auditus fidei* and *intellectus fidei* should not be separated, for they are mutually intertwined.

We can pose here this question: for theology, does the teaching of the saints belong to *auditus fidei* or to *intellectus fidei*? First of all, we need to consider that the *intellectus fidei* does not make intelligible an *auditus fidei* that does not already have an intelligible content. *Intellectus fidei* brings the theological process to its goal, giving it unity, but it also places the intellect of the believer in a condition to penetrate more deeply into what God has revealed, the truth of which is already known from listening to the Word received with faith. Therefore, we can begin by saying that the teaching of the saints pertains both to *auditus fidei* and to *intellectus fidei*. But we need to make a subsequent clarification regarding the relationship of this teaching with Sacred Scripture and the Tradition of the Church.

Regarding the saints and the interpretation of Scripture, Benedict XVI said in his apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini*: “The interpretation of Sacred Scripture would remain incomplete were it not to include listening to those who have truly lived the word of God: namely, the saints.” In this light, the teachings of the saints are part of the *intellectus fidei*, to the extent that they are an interpretation of Scripture. The same Pontiff adds: “In
striving to learn from their example, we set out on the sure way towards a living and effective hermeneutic of the word of God”[15].

The saints’ teaching regarding Scriptures is both an interpretation (or understanding) of them, and at the same time a source of interpretation (or understanding). Benedict XVI stressed that “every saint is like a ray of light streaming forth from the word of God,”[16] and then cited the example of a number of saints, among these “Saint Josemaría Escrivá in his preaching of the universal call to holiness.”[17] It is this dual sense—not only as an interpretation but also as a source of interpretation—that Saint Thomas has in mind when he says, following Saint Augustine: “dicta et praecepta sacrae Scripturae ex factis sanctorum interpretari possunt et intelliguntur, cum idem Spiritus Sanctus qui inspiravit prophetis et aliis sacrae Scripturae auctoribus, moverit sanctos ad opus.”[18]

Tradition, inseparable from Scripture and the Church’s Magisterium,[19] is also an irreplaceable source for theology. This Tradition is not passed on by mere repetition, but rather it is a living reality that, as the Second Vatican Council explains, (while transmitting only what has been received) “develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (cf. Lk 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth.”[20] Therefore the Fathers of the Church are not the only witnesses to Tradition, although they do have a special importance because of their antiquity (proximity to the Source), sanctity and depth of teaching.

The entire Church in every age transmits all that she is and all that she believes.[21] Within the Church, the saints are important witnesses to Tradition, as we read in this passage from the Constitution Lumen Gentium: “In the lives of those who, sharing in our humanity, are however more perfectly transformed into the image of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 3:18), God vividly manifests his presence and his face to men. He speaks to us in them, and gives us a sign of his Kingdom, to which we are strongly drawn, having
so great a cloud of witnesses over us (cf. *Heb* 12:1) and such a witness to the truth of the Gospel.”[22]

The saints, with the exception of the Fathers of the Church, were not considered among the *loci theologici* in the famous work by Melchiorre Cano[23] which, for that matter, does not try to be exhaustive (for example, it does mention the liturgy or sacred art as theological “sites”). Nevertheless, from the previous reflections I think we can say that the teaching of the saints (not only their words but also their deeds) are a *locus theologicus*, a “site” from which theologians can draw lights to help them penetrate more deeply into Revelation, and in which the circularity and inseparability between *auditus fidei* and *intellectus fidei* is clearly seen. Moreover, we also need to keep in mind that Vatican II stressed the importance of viewing theology’s purpose in light of its service to man’s salvation, and thus to sanctity.[24] In any case, in viewing the saints as a true “theological site,”[25] “it is important to know not just the *loci* but also their relative weight and the relationship between them.”[26]

How, then, should the teachings of the saints be used in the work of theology? Obviously not in the same way in every case. In general, from the above discussion it should be clear that the deeper understanding of God given to us by the saints cannot be reduced to confirming what has already been achieved by the science of theology, nor to a possible and undisputed point of departure for a specific argument. The saints offer not only conclusions or arguments in the realm of the *intellectus fidei*, but frequently also new insights on aspects of Revelation that for the theologian will form part of the *auditus fidei*.

3. Saint Josemaría and Theology

I think it is opportune to point out here that, while Saint Josemaría possessed an excellent theological formation, this is not the principal reason why he is a source of inspiration for theology. The origin of his possibility to influence theology in a deep and broad way, which I will discuss below, is tied to the supernatural charism of the foundational light regarding Opus Dei that he received on October 2, 1928.[27] But we should also note that his awareness of the ecclesial importance of the charism he had received never led Saint Josemaría to undervalue the specifically
“scientific” dimension of theology. In fact, during his entire life, and thus also in the most intense moments of his mystical experience, he turned to the science of theology as nourishment for his own spiritual life.[28]

Saint Josemaría did not publish any academic treatises or systematic works, with the exception of the theological-juridical study *La Abadesa de Las Huelgas*. As is well known, almost all of his published writings, translated into many languages and with a circulation of more than five million copies, are collections of homilies and other texts of spirituality, aimed in a direct and lively way at helping readers make progress in their Christian life. These writings include collections of points for meditation (*The Way*, *Furrow*, *The Forge*), reflections on the mysteries of the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross, etc. In addition, in his still unpublished writings (which St. Josemaría called *Instructions* and *Letters*), he sets forth in a similarly direct and lively manner and without seeking to be systematic, the precise features of his teaching in the light of the charism received from God, with frequent historical references.

We are not dealing, then, with texts of systematic theology. Nevertheless, when referring to the published homilies (though his words are also relevant for all of Saint Josemaría works), the soon to be blessed Alvaro del Portillo wrote that they are characterized by “their theological depth... Note, for example, how the author comments on the Gospel. He never simply brings it in for show or in a hackneyed way. Each verse has been meditated frequently and yields new aspects... A second characteristic is the immediate connection the homilies establish between the Gospel teaching and the life of the ordinary Christian.”[29]

Saint Josemaría’s inspirational value for theological studies extends to many areas of theology. Cornelio Fabro wrote that Saint Josemaría has “the spirit of a Father of the Church.”[30] His teachings are always centered on Christian life, also when he includes explicit references to its dogmatic foundations, doing so often in a novel way. For example, his quite original and apparently paradoxical way of referring to the *kenosis* of the eternal Word: “God humbles himself to the point of becoming man, and in doing so does not feel degraded for having taken on flesh like ours, with all its limitations and weaknesses, sin alone excepted... He does not lower himself by his self-emptying.”[31] We are offered here, not a paradox, but an insight
to develop theologically: the “self-emptying” of God, who takes on a nature that on its own and without him would be nothing, is combined with the reality that this very humanity of Christ is the peak and perfection of creation; all of creation is ordered towards Christ’s humanity, united without confusion to the divine nature in the unity of his Person, as Saint Paul words to the Colossians make clear (cf. Col 1:16).[32]

Saint Josemaría’s writings contain many profound teachings that can serve as an inspiration for theology. For example, the universal call to holiness and apostolate; the Christian meaning of temporal activities as the material and place for sanctification and apostolate; the laity’s identity and mission within the Church; the centrality of divine filiation in the life of the faithful and their identification with Christ; the Holy Mass as the center and root of Christian life; the sanctification of work and the possibility of contemplation in the midst of professional, family and social activities; the relationship between the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood; unity of life; the original goodness of the world and the understanding of history, after original sin, as the process of redirecting all creation to God; etc.[33] As is well known, with regard to some of these topics—especially the universal call to holiness and the laity’s identity and mission within the Church—many people (among whom we should first mention the soon to be Saint John Paul II) have pointed to the Founder of Opus Dei as a precursor of the Second Vatican Council.[34] The influence of Saint Josemaría in Vatican II has already been amply dealt with in the presentation given by Bishop Javier Echevarría.

4. The Christological roots of the teachings of Saint Josemaría

The above-mentioned aspects are intimately interconnected and each contains new lights to develop. Since it is impossible to deal exhaustively with all of them here, I will try to show how Saint Josemaría’s vision of their common theological root imbues them with unity and thus a particular inspirational force for theology. Lying at the root of all his teachings is a profound contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation. Saint Josemaría’s Christocentrism presents “a deeply coherent vision. From whichever vantage point it is perceived—divine filiation, unity of life, identification with Christ, Jesus’ example for us as true God and true man—the essential content of this spiritual message remains the same: the
life of prayer and the sanctification of work, the universal call to sanctity
and the effort to co-redeem with Christ. But rather than speaking of
different vantage points, it would be better to speak of understanding
Christian life from one vantage point: Christ himself and the mystery of his
Incarnation, seen in parallel lines of inquiry.”[35]

As the Pontifical Decree on the heroic virtues of Saint Josemaría states:
“His vivid perception of the mystery of the Incarnation made him see how
supernatural life penetrates all human realities in the heart of a person
reborn in Christ. These realities thus become the setting for holiness and
the means to that goal”[36]

Above all, Saint Josemaría contemplates Christ as the revelation of
God. We can certainly attain knowledge of God without explicit reference
to Jesus. But it is only in the mystery of Christ that the supreme mystery of
the Trinity is revealed: He who has seen me has seen the Father (Jn 14:9).
Saint Josemaría expresses this core Christian truth in many ways, but I
have always found special light in his words on the human actions of
Christ: “All this human behavior is the behavior of God... Everything
Christ did has a transcendental value. It shows us God’s way of being and
beckons us to believe in the love of God who created us and wants us to
share his intimate life.”[37]

The consideration that Christ’s humanity shows us “God’s way of
being” offers theology a light-filled perspective that needs to be developed
and studied more deeply with the assistance of metaphysics. By recognizing
with Saint Thomas the unity of Christ’s act of being, we contemplate his
human nature as the human way of being of the divine Person, which
renders visible his divine way of being, to which it is united without
confusion.[38] Any deeper understanding, therefore, of the humanity of
Christ—his words, reactions, emotions, actions—speaks to us of how God
is.

The reality that God is Love (1 Jn 4:8) is central to Christian life, and it
is in Christ that God’s love for us becomes fully manifest. To know Christ’s
love in faith is to know God, along with the unity of the divine plan of
creation and redemption—not only the forgiveness of sins but also
participation in the divine intimacy. Saint Josemaría always viewed this
participation in a Christological light. Christ is the Redeemer and the Sanctifier with his Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Moreover, our supernatural elevation makes us children of God in Christ, as theology and also the Magisterium of the Church have been reminding us now for a number of years. Thus, for example, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “We can invoke God as ‘Father’ because he is revealed to us by his Son become man and because his Spirit makes him known to us. The personal relation of the Son to the Father is something that man cannot conceive of nor the angelic powers even dimly see: and yet, the Spirit of the Son grants a participation in that very relation to us who believe that Jesus is the Christ and that we are born of God.”[39]

Saint Josemaría, in continuity with the best theological tradition, and in particular with the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, considers our divine filiation as a participation in the Filiation of Christ: “Through baptismal grace we become children of God. As a result of this free divine decision, the natural dignity of man is elevated in an incomparable way. And although sin destroyed this marvelous reality, the Redemption re-established it in an even more marvelous way, enabling us to share more intimately in the divine filiation of the Word.”[40] The expression “more intimately” shows that Saint Josemaría regards the Incarnation not only as a “means” for granting us adoptive divine filiation (with which one could then dispense, like a bridge once it has been crossed), but also and above all as the very purpose of God’s plan, which is to recapitulate all things in Christ (cf. *Eph* 1:10). Thus when we say that we are “sons in the Son,” we mean to say “in Christ,” united to him through his Humanity.

In the teaching of Saint Josemaría, adoptive divine filiation is a participation in the incarnate and redemptive Filiation, a participation in the Word made flesh, a participation in Christ. This participation entails an identification with him not confined to the moral order (to sharing in Jesus’ feelings, etc.), but rather that belongs more radically to the ontological, metaphysical order. This means not only a likeness with and causal dependance on Christ, but also the very presence in the Christian of Christ, the Word incarnate. Certainly, the presence of our Lord’s humanity in us is not a substantial presence, as in the Eucharist, but it is a truly operative presence of his most holy and glorified Humanity that transcends
space and time. We can be helped to understand this reality more fully by a
deeper understanding of the mystery of grace, through which we come to
share in the fullness of the grace of Christ’s humanity.[41]

Saint Josemaría often spoke of this reality, insisting that each Christian
is by grace, and ought to be ever more so, not only alter Christus but ipse
Christus.[42] The forcefulness he attached to this expression did not have its
origin in theological speculation, but rather in contemplation, above all to
an event, in 1931, when God made him experience his divine filiation in an
extraordinarily forceful way. Years later, Saint Josemaría recalled it thus:
“When God dealt me those blows, back in 1931, I couldn’t understand it.
And then suddenly, in the midst of all that immense bitterness, came these
words: You are my son (Ps 2:7), you are Christ. And all I could say was:
Abba, Pater! Abba, Pater! Abba! Abba! Abba! Abba! And now I see it all with new
light, like a new discovery, as with the passage of the years one sees the
hand of God, of divine Wisdom, of the Almighty. You, Lord, have made
me understand that to have the Cross means finding happiness, joy. And
the reason, I now see more clearly than ever, is this: to have the Cross
means to be identified with Christ, to be Christ, and therefore a son of
God.”[43]

Many lights emerge from this text, not only regarding divine filiation as
identification with Christ, but also regarding the Christological nature of
the meaning of suffering and the relationship between suffering and joy,
etc. Here I would like to reflect briefly on the relationship between the
Christian as ipse Christus and another central aspect of Saint Josemaría’s
teaching: the positive evaluation of the world and the greatness of ordinary
life. “When we strive to be really ipse Christus, Christ himself, then in our
own lives the human side intermingles with the divine. All our efforts, even
the most insignificant, take on an eternal dimension, because they are
united to the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross.”[44] The Incarnation of God in
Christ is not only the efficient cause but also the exemplary cause of
Christian life, where there takes place, in “all our efforts,” the union
without confusion of the divine and human.

Saint Josemaría insists: “Nothing can be foreign to Christ’s care. If we
enter into the theology of it instead of limiting ourselves to functional
categories, we cannot say that there are things—good, noble or
indifferent—which are exclusively worldly. This cannot be after the Word of God has lived among the children of men, felt hunger and thirst, worked with his hands, experienced friendship and obedience and suffering and death... We must love the world and work and all human things. For the world is good. Adam’s sin destroyed the divine balance of creation; but God the Father sent his only Son to re-establish peace, so that we, his children by adoption, might free creation from disorder and reconcile all things to God.”[45]

The concept “worldly” is not univocal. In Saint Josemaría’s mind, “not being exclusively worldly” does not mean “being sacred”, but rather being an occasion and means of an encounter with Christ, because “there is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations,”[46] which fully retain their natural, secular make-up. This “something divine” that Saint Josemaría challenges each person to discover[47] is the presence of God, of Christ, in all created realities, which subsist in him and are ordered to him (cf. Col 1:16-17). It is also the plan of divine Providence which, in each situation, is the expression of God’s love for us.[48]

“Children by adoption,” says Saint Josemaría. That is, having become ipse Christus, and therefore capable of carrying out the works of Christ: to free the world from disorder and to reconcile it with God, through all honest human realities, and especially through sanctified work. In Christ’s life here on earth, also in the years spent in Nazareth, work and prayer were fused in the union of the divine and human in his divine Person. The more each Christian becomes ipse Christus, the more he or she can unite prayer and work in daily life, transforming work into prayer and thereby sanctifying the work itself; and by sanctifying work one becomes more and more deeply ipse Christus. Transforming work and all human realities into prayer is the way we can truly pray always (Lk 18:1; cf. 1 Thess 5:17).

Saint Josemaría explained the sanctification of work in many ways and with many nuances.[49] In the context of the positive evaluation of the world and ordinary life, we can cite these words of his: “The true Christian, who acts according to his faith, always has his sights set on God. His outlook is supernatural. He works in this world of ours, which he loves passionately; he is involved in all its challenges, but all the while his eyes
are fixed on heaven.” Elsewhere he says that being both in heaven and on earth is made possible by being children of God, and therefore being ipse Christus, being both human and divine (“divine,” obviously, by participation): “If we accept the responsibility of being children of God, we will realize that God wants us to be very human. Our heads should indeed be touching heaven, but our feet should be firmly on the ground.”

5. CONCLUSION

The inspirational impetus for theology contained in Saint Josemaría’s teachings varies according to the specific topics dealt with, but it is grounded ultimately in their Christological root. The mystery of Christ is the light that reveals ever anew that God is Love, that filiation is identification with Christ, that earthly realities, including work and all of ordinary life are a place and means of union with God. Furthermore, we can also say that Saint Josemaría, in light of the mystery of the Incarnation, sees the Church as Christ who makes himself present in history with his word and his sacraments—the sacraments being the “footprints” left by our Lord on this earth of ours. And he sees the identity of the priest as that of Jesus Christ.

On these and many other topics, Saint Josemaría’s teachings do not merely contain particular interpretations that fall within the ambit of the intellectus fidei, but also lights that open up new perspectives, and therefore that pertain rather to the auditus fidei, in the mutual interdependence between auditus fidei and intellectus fidei that we mentioned above.

The Christological root that illumines and confers unity on the many topics covered in Saint Josemaría’s teaching gives rise to a spirit of Christian life marked by unity of life, centered on Christ as the path to the Father in the Holy Spirit. And as he always stresses, Mary, the Mother of Christ, is the Mother of all those who, by grace, become ipse Christus.


[7] It has even been said that “all the saints are theologians, and only the saints are theologians” (François-Marie Léthel, *Connaître l’amour du Christ qui surpasse toute connaissance: la théologie des saints*, Éditions du Carmel, Venasque 1980, p. 3).


[9] Cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *In III Sent.*, d. 35, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1 c; *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 180, a. 6 ad 2; *Summa contra gentiles*, IV, c. 22.


[17] Ibid.


[20] Ibid., no. 8.


[33] For a study on these topics carried out principally from the point of view of spiritual theology, see the three volume work of Ernst Burkhart — Javier López, Vida cotidiana y santidad en la enseñanza de san Josemaría, op. cit.


[37] Saint Josemaría Escrivá, Christ is Passing By, no. 109.


[39] Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2780.


[45] Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 112; cf. no. 120.


