Romana
Bulletin of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei

Rome, January-June 2015
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English language edition
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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 Family and Human Ecology

The faithful and cooperators of the Prelature of Opus Dei are taking part this year in a Marian Year for the Family. As Bishop Javier Echevarría reminded us on the feast of the Holy Family, “we need to pray each day for all the world’s families, asking that every country may fully accept in its laws the natural law that comes from God.” The Marian Year is a good occasion “to place in our Lady’s hands all the needs of the Church and mankind, and to faithfully second the intentions of the Pope,” the Prelate added.

The Christian family has an irreplaceable mission. Children raised in its warmth “will become true Christians, men and women of integrity, capable of facing all life’s situations with an open spirit, of serving their fellow men and helping to solve the problems of mankind, of carrying the testimony of Christ to the society of which they will be a part” (St. Josemaría, Christ Is Passing By, no. 28).

In this regard, Pope Francis, in his encyclical Laudato Si’, points to some of the many services that the family provides for the care of our “common home” within an “integral ecology,” beginning with the spread “of a culture of life in the face of a culture of death.” It is in homes where “we first learn how to show love and respect for life; we are taught the proper use of things, order and cleanliness, respect for the local ecosystem and care for all creatures.”

The home is also, the Pope reminds us, the place where “we receive an integral education, which enables us to grow harmoniously in personal maturity.” The many attacks the institution of the family is undergoing contrast with the culture of encounter that it fosters in society: “we learn to ask without demanding, to say ‘thank you’ as an expression of genuine gratitude for what we have been given, to control our aggressiveness and greed, and to ask forgiveness when we have caused harm.” These gestures of sincere courtesy help “to create a culture of shared life and respect for our surroundings” (Laudato Si’, no. 213).

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	Francis, Bishop of Rome, Servant of the Servants of God, to all those who read this letter, grace, mercy, and peace.

1. Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy. These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him. The Father, “rich in mercy” ( Eph 2:4), after having revealed his name to Moses as “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” ( Ex 34:6), has never ceased to show, in various ways throughout history, his divine nature. In the “fullness of time” ( Gal 4:4), when everything had been arranged according to his plan of salvation, he sent his only Son into the world, born of the Virgin Mary, to reveal his love for us in a definitive way. Whoever sees Jesus sees the Father (cf. Jn 14:9). Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God.

2. We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.

3. At times we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father’s action in our lives. For this reason I have proclaimed an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy as a special time for the Church, a time when the witness of believers might grow stronger and more effective.
The Holy Year will open on December 8, 2015, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. This liturgical feast day recalls God’s action from the very beginning of the history of mankind. After the sin of Adam and Eve, God did not wish to leave humanity alone in the throes of evil. And so he turned his gaze to Mary, holy and immaculate in love (cf. Eph 1:4), choosing her to be the Mother of man’s Redeemer. When faced with the gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy. Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive. I will have the joy of opening the Holy Door on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. On that day, the Holy Door will become a Door of Mercy through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope.

On the following Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent, the Holy Door of the Cathedral of Rome—that is, the Basilica of Saint John Lateran—will be opened. In the following weeks, the Holy Doors of the other Papal Basilicas will be opened. On the same Sunday, I will announce that in every local church, at the cathedral—the mother church of the faithful in any particular area—or, alternatively, at the co-cathedral or another church of special significance, a Door of Mercy will be opened for the duration of the Holy Year. At the discretion of the local ordinary, a similar door may be opened at any shrine frequented by large groups of pilgrims, since visits to these holy sites are so often grace-filled moments, as people discover a path to conversion. Every Particular Church, therefore, will be directly involved in living out this Holy Year as an extraordinary moment of grace and spiritual renewal. Thus the Jubilee will be celebrated both in Rome and in the Particular Churches as a visible sign of the Church’s universal communion.

4. I have chosen the date of 8 December because of its rich meaning in the recent history of the Church. In fact, I will open the Holy Door on the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. The Church feels a great need to keep this event alive. With the Council, the Church entered a new phase of her history. The Council Fathers strongly perceived, as a true breath of the Holy Spirit, a need to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way. The walls, which for too long had made the Church a kind of fortress, were
torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way. It was a new phase of the same evangelization that had existed from the beginning. It was a fresh undertaking for all Christians to bear witness to their faith with greater enthusiasm and conviction. The Church sensed a responsibility to be a living sign of the Father’s love in the world.

We recall the poignant words of Saint John XXIII when, opening the Council, he indicated the path to follow: “Now the Bride of Christ wishes to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up arms of severity... The Catholic Church, as she holds high the torch of Catholic truth at this Ecumenical Council, wants to show herself a loving mother to all; patient, kind, moved by compassion and goodness toward her separated children.”[2] Blessed Paul VI spoke in a similar vein at the closing of the Council: “We prefer to point out how charity has been the principal religious feature of this Council... the old story of the Good Samaritan has been the model of the spirituality of the Council... a wave of affection and admiration flowed from the Council over the modern world of humanity. Errors were condemned, indeed, because charity demanded this no less than did truth, but for individuals themselves there was only admonition, respect, and love. Instead of depressing diagnoses, encouraging remedies instead of direful predictions, messages of trust issued from the Council to the present-day world. The modern world’s values were not only respected but honored, its efforts approved, its aspirations purified and blessed... Another point we must stress is this: all this rich teaching is channeled in one direction, the service of mankind, of every condition, in every weakness and need.”[3]

With these sentiments of gratitude for everything the Church has received, and with a sense of responsibility for the task that lies ahead, we shall cross the threshold of the Holy Door fully confident that the strength of the Risen Lord, who constantly supports us on our pilgrim way, will sustain us. May the Holy Spirit, who guides the steps of believers in cooperating with the work of salvation wrought by Christ, lead the way and support the People of God so that they may contemplate the face of mercy.[4]

5. The Jubilee year will close with the liturgical Solemnity of Christ the King on 20 November 2016. On that day, as we seal the Holy Door,
we shall be filled, above all, with a sense of gratitude and thanksgiving to the Most Holy Trinity for having granted us an extraordinary time of grace. We will entrust the life of the Church, all humanity, and the entire cosmos to the Lordship of Christ, asking him to pour out his mercy upon us like the morning dew, so that everyone may work together to build a brighter future. How much I desire that the year to come will be steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God! May the balm of mercy reach everyone, both believers and those far away, as a sign that the Kingdom of God is already present in our midst!

6. “It is proper to God to exercise mercy, and he manifests his omnipotence particularly in this way.”[5] Saint Thomas Aquinas’ words show that God’s mercy, rather than a sign of weakness, is the mark of his omnipotence. For this reason the liturgy, in one of its most ancient collects, has us pray: “O God, who reveal your power above all in your mercy and forgiveness …”[6] Throughout the history of humanity, God will always be the One who is present, close, provident, holy, and merciful.

“Patient and merciful.” These words often go together in the Old Testament to describe God’s nature. His being merciful is concretely demonstrated in his many actions throughout the history of salvation where his goodness prevails over punishment and destruction. In a special way the Psalms bring to the fore the grandeur of his merciful action: “He forgives all your iniquity, he heals all your diseases, he redeems your life from the pit, he crowns you with steadfast love and mercy” (Ps 103:3-4). Another psalm, in an even more explicit way, attests to the concrete signs of his mercy: “He executes justice for the oppressed; he gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the sojourners, he upholds the widow and the fatherless; but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin” (Ps 146:7-9). Here are some other expressions of the Psalmist: “He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds… The Lord lifts up the downtrodden, he casts the wicked to the ground” (Ps 147:3, 6). In short, the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as of that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child. It
is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is a “visceral” love. It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy.

7. “For his mercy endures forever.” This is the refrain that repeats after each verse in Psalm 136 as it narrates the history of God’s revelation. By virtue of mercy, all the events of the Old Testament are replete with profound salvific import. Mercy renders God’s history with Israel a history of salvation. To repeat continually “for his mercy endures forever,” as the psalm does, seems to break through the dimensions of space and time, inserting everything into the eternal mystery of love. It is as if to say that not only in history, but for all eternity man will always be under the merciful gaze of the Father. It is no accident that the people of Israel wanted to include this psalm—the “Great Hallel,” as it is called—in its most important liturgical feast days.

Before his Passion, Jesus prayed with this psalm of mercy. Matthew attests to this in his Gospel when he says that, “when they had sung a hymn” (26:30), Jesus and his disciples went out to the Mount of Olives. While he was instituting the Eucharist as an everlasting memorial of himself and his paschal sacrifice, he symbolically placed this supreme act of revelation in the light of his mercy. Within the very same context of mercy, Jesus entered upon his passion and death, conscious of the great mystery of love that he would consummate on the Cross. Knowing that Jesus himself prayed this psalm makes it even more important for us as Christians, challenging us to take up the refrain in our daily lives by praying these words of praise: “for his mercy endures forever.”

8. With our eyes fixed on Jesus and his merciful gaze, we experience the love of the Most Holy Trinity. The mission Jesus received from the Father was that of revealing the mystery of divine love in its fullness. “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8,16), John affirms for the first and only time in all of Holy Scripture. This love has now been made visible and tangible in Jesus’ entire life. His person is nothing but love, a love given gratuitously. The relationships he forms with the people who approach him manifest something entirely unique and unrepeatable. The signs he works, especially in favor of sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering,
are all meant to teach mercy. Everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion.

Jesus, seeing the crowds of people who followed him, realized that they were tired and exhausted, lost and without a guide, and he felt deep compassion for them (cf. Mt 9:36). On the basis of this compassionate love he healed the sick who were presented to him (cf. Mt 14:14), and with just a few loaves of bread and fish he satisfied the enormous crowd (cf. Mt 15:37). What moved Jesus in all of these situations was nothing other than mercy, with which he read the hearts of those he encountered and responded to their deepest need. When he came upon the widow of Nain taking her son out for burial, he felt great compassion for the immense suffering of this grieving mother, and he gave back her son by raising him from the dead (cf. Lk 7:15). After freeing the demoniac in the country of the Gerasenes, Jesus entrusted him with this mission: “Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you” (Mk 5:19). The calling of Matthew is also presented within the context of mercy. Passing by the tax collector’s booth, Jesus looked intently at Matthew. It was a look full of mercy that forgave the sins of that man, a sinner and a tax collector, whom Jesus chose—against the hesitation of the disciples—to become one of the Twelve. Saint Bede the Venerable, commenting on this Gospel passage, wrote that Jesus looked upon Matthew with merciful love and chose him: *miserando atque eligendo.*[7] This expression impressed me so much that I chose it for my episcopal motto.

9. In the parables devoted to mercy, Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy. We know these parables well, three in particular: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the father with two sons (cf. Lk 15:1-32). In these parables, God is always presented as full of joy, especially when he pardons. In them we find the core of the Gospel and of our faith, because mercy is presented as a force that overcomes everything, filling the heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon.

From another parable, we cull an important teaching for our Christian lives. In reply to Peter’s question about how many times it is necessary to
forgive, Jesus says: “I do not say seven times, but seventy times seven times” (Mt 18:22). He then goes on to tell the parable of the “ruthless servant,” who, called by his master to return a huge amount, begs him on his knees for mercy. His master cancels his debt. But he then meets a fellow servant who owes him a few cents and who in turn begs on his knees for mercy, but the first servant refuses his request and throws him into jail. When the master hears of the matter, he becomes infuriated and, summoning the first servant back to him, says, “Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?” (Mt 18:33). Jesus concludes, “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart” (Mt 18:35).

This parable contains a profound teaching for all of us. Jesus affirms that mercy is not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are. In short, we are called to show mercy because mercy has first been shown to us. Pardoning offences becomes the clearest expression of merciful love, and for us Christians it is an imperative from which we cannot excuse ourselves. At times how hard it seems to forgive! And yet pardon is the instrument placed into our fragile hands to attain serenity of heart. To let go of anger, wrath, violence, and revenge are necessary conditions to living joyfully. Let us therefore heed the Apostle’s exhortation: “Do not let the sun go down on your anger” (Eph 4:26). Above all, let us listen to the words of Jesus who made mercy an ideal of life and a criterion for the credibility of our faith: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt 5:7): the beatitude to which we should particularly aspire in this Holy Year.

As we can see in Sacred Scripture, mercy is a key word that indicates God’s action towards us. He does not limit himself merely to affirming his love, but makes it visible and tangible. Love, after all, can never be just an abstraction. By its very nature, it indicates something concrete: intentions, attitudes, and behaviors that are shown in daily living. The mercy of God is his loving concern for each one of us. He feels responsible; that is, he desires our wellbeing and he wants to see us happy, full of joy, and peaceful. This is the path, which the merciful love of Christians must also travel. As the Father loves, so do his children. Just as he is merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other.
10. Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church’s very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love. The Church “has an endless desire to show mercy.”[8] Perhaps we have long since forgotten how to show and live the way of mercy. The temptation, on the one hand, to focus exclusively on justice made us forget that this is only the first, albeit necessary and indispensable step. But the Church needs to go beyond and strive for a higher and more important goal. On the other hand, sad to say, we must admit that the practice of mercy is waning in the wider culture. In some cases the word seems to have dropped out of use. However, without a witness to mercy, life becomes fruitless and sterile, as if sequestered in a barren desert. The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more. It is time to return to the basics and to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters. Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope.

11. Let us not forget the great teaching offered by Saint John Paul II in his second Encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*, which at the time came unexpectedly, its theme catching many by surprise. There are two passages in particular to which I would like to draw attention. First, Saint John Paul II highlighted the fact that we had forgotten the theme of mercy in today’s cultural milieu: “The present-day mentality, more perhaps than that of people in the past, seems opposed to a God of mercy, and in fact tends to exclude from life and to remove from the human heart the very idea of mercy. The word and the concept of ‘mercy’ seem to cause uneasiness in man, who, thanks to the enormous development of science and technology, never before known in history, has become the master of the earth and has subdued and dominated it (cf. *Gen* 1:28). This dominion over the earth, sometimes understood in a one-sided and superficial way, seems to have no room for mercy… And this is why, in the situation of the Church and the world today, many individuals and groups guided by a lively sense of faith are turning, I would say almost spontaneously, to the mercy of God.”[9]
Furthermore, Saint John Paul II pushed for a more urgent proclamation and witness to mercy in the contemporary world: “It is dictated by love for man, for all that is human and which, according to the intuitions of many of our contemporaries, is threatened by an immense danger. The mystery of Christ... obliges me to proclaim mercy as God’s merciful love, revealed in that same mystery of Christ. It likewise obliges me to have recourse to that mercy and to beg for it at this difficult, critical phase of the history of the Church and of the world.”[10] This teaching is more pertinent than ever and deserves to be taken up once again in this Holy Year. Let us listen to his words once more: “The Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy—the most stupendous attribute of the Creator and of the Redeemer—and when she brings people close to the sources of the Savior’s mercy, of which she is the trustee and dispenser.”[11]

12. The Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person. The Spouse of Christ must pattern her behavior after the Son of God who went out to everyone without exception. In the present day, as the Church is charged with the task of the new evangelization, the theme of mercy needs to be proposed again and again with new enthusiasm and renewed pastoral action. It is absolutely essential for the Church and for the credibility of her message that she herself live and testify to mercy. Her language and her gestures must transmit mercy, so as to touch the hearts of all people and inspire them once more to find the road that leads to the Father.

The Church’s first truth is the love of Christ. The Church makes herself a servant of this love and mediates it to all people: a love that forgives and expresses itself in the gift of oneself. Consequently, wherever the Church is present, the mercy of the Father must be evident. In our parishes, communities, associations and movements, in a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy.

13. We want to live this Jubilee Year in light of the Lord’s words: Merciful like the Father. The Evangelist reminds us of the teaching of Jesus who says, “Be merciful just as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36). It is a program of life as demanding as it is rich with joy and peace. Jesus’s
command is directed to anyone willing to listen to his voice (cf. \textit{Lk} 6:27). In order to be capable of mercy, therefore, we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God. This means rediscovering the value of silence in order to meditate on the Word that comes to us. In this way, it will be possible to contemplate God’s mercy and adopt it as our lifestyle.

14. The practice of pilgrimage has a special place in the Holy Year, because it represents the journey each of us makes in this life. Life itself is a pilgrimage, and the human being is a \textit{viator}, a pilgrim travelling along the road, making his way to the desired destination. Similarly, to reach the Holy Door in Rome or in any other place in the world, everyone, each according to his or her ability, will have to make a pilgrimage. This will be a sign that mercy is also a goal to reach and requires dedication and sacrifice. May pilgrimage be an impetus to conversion: by crossing the threshold of the Holy Door, we will find the strength to embrace God’s mercy and dedicate ourselves to being merciful with others as the Father has been with us.

The Lord Jesus shows us the steps of the pilgrimage to attain our goal: “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back” (\textit{Lk} 6:37-38). The Lord asks us above all not to judge and not to condemn. If anyone wishes to avoid God’s judgment, he should not make himself the judge of his brother or sister. Human beings, whenever they judge, look no farther than the surface, whereas the Father looks into the very depths of the soul. How much harm words do when they are motivated by feelings of jealousy and envy! To speak ill of others puts them in a bad light, undermines their reputation and leaves them prey to the whims of gossip. To refrain from judgment and condemnation means, in a positive sense, to know how to accept the good in every person and to spare him any suffering that might be caused by our partial judgment, our presumption to know everything about him. But this is still not sufficient to express mercy. Jesus asks us also to forgive and to give. To be instruments of mercy because it was we who first received mercy from God. To be
generous with others, knowing that God showers his goodness upon us with immense generosity.

Merciful like the Father, therefore, is the “motto” of this Holy Year. In mercy, we find proof of how God loves us. He gives his entire self, always, freely, asking nothing in return. He comes to our aid whenever we call upon him. What a beautiful thing that the Church begins her daily prayer with the words, “O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me” (Ps 70:2)! The assistance we ask for is already the first step of God’s mercy toward us. He comes to assist us in our weakness. And his help consists in helping us accept his presence and closeness to us. Day after day, touched by his compassion, we also can become compassionate towards others.

15. In this Holy Year, we look forward to the experience of opening our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society: fringes which modern society itself creates. How many uncertain and painful situations there are in the world today! How many are the wounds borne by the flesh of those who have no voice because their cry is muffled and drowned out by the indifference of the rich! During this Jubilee, the Church will be called even more to heal these wounds, to assuage them with the oil of consolation, to bind them with mercy and cure them with solidarity and vigilant care. Let us not fall into humiliating indifference or a monotonous routine that prevents us from discovering what is new! Let us ward off destructive cynicism! Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, and our fraternity! May their cry become our own, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism!

It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. It will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty. And let us enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God’s mercy. Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as
his disciples. Let us rediscover these corporal works of mercy: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. And let us not forget the spiritual works of mercy: to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead.

We cannot escape the Lord’s words to us, and they will serve as the criteria upon which we will be judged: whether we have fed the hungry and given drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger and clothed the naked, or spent time with the sick and those in prison (cf. Mt 25:31-45). Moreover, we will be asked if we have helped others to escape the doubt that causes them to fall into despair and which is often a source of loneliness; if we have helped to overcome the ignorance in which millions of people live, especially children deprived of the necessary means to free them from the bonds of poverty; if we have been close to the lonely and afflicted; if we have forgiven those who have offended us and have rejected all forms of anger and hate that lead to violence; if we have had the kind of patience God shows, who is so patient with us; and if we have commended our brothers and sisters to the Lord in prayer. In each of these “little ones,” Christ himself is present. His flesh becomes visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the malnourished, and the exiled… to be acknowledged, touched, and cared for by us. Let us not forget the words of Saint John of the Cross: “as we prepare to leave this life, we will be judged on the basis of love.”[12]

16. In the Gospel of Luke, we find another important element that will help us live the Jubilee with faith. Luke writes that Jesus, on the Sabbath, went back to Nazareth and, as was his custom, entered the synagogue. They called upon him to read the Scripture and to comment on it. The passage was from the Book of Isaiah where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to those in captivity; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Is 61:1-2). A “year of the Lord’s favor” or “mercy”: this is what the Lord proclaimed and this is what we wish to live now. This Holy Year will bring to the fore the richness of Jesus’
mission echoed in the words of the prophet: to bring a word and gesture of consolation to the poor, to proclaim liberty to those bound by new forms of slavery in modern society, to restore sight to those who can see no more because they are caught up in themselves, to restore dignity to all those from whom it has been robbed. The preaching of Jesus is made visible once more in the response of faith, which Christians are called to offer by their witness. May the words of the Apostle accompany us: he who does acts of mercy, let him do them with cheerfulness (cf. Rom 12:8).

17. The season of Lent during this Jubilee Year should also be lived more intensely as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God’s mercy. How many pages of Sacred Scripture are appropriate for meditation during the weeks of Lent to help us rediscover the merciful face of the Father! We can repeat the words of the prophet Micah and make them our own: You, O Lord, are a God who takes away iniquity and pardons sin, who does not hold your anger forever, but are pleased to show mercy. You, Lord, will return to us and have pity on your people. You will trample down our sins and toss them into the depths of the sea (cf. 7:18-19).

The pages of the prophet Isaiah can also be meditated upon concretely during this season of prayer, fasting, and works of charity: “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, here I am. If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. And the Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your desire with good things, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters fail not” (58:6-11).

The initiative of “24 Hours for the Lord,” to be celebrated on the Friday and Saturday preceding the Fourth Week of Lent, should be
implemented in every diocese. So many people, including young people, are returning to the Sacrament of Reconciliation; through this experience they are rediscovering a path back to the Lord, living a moment of intense prayer and finding meaning in their lives. Let us place the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the center once more in such a way that it will enable people to touch the grandeur of God’s mercy with their own hands. For every penitent, it will be a source of true interior peace.

I will never tire of insisting that confessors be authentic signs of the Father’s mercy. We do not become good confessors automatically. We become good confessors when, above all, we allow ourselves to be penitents in search of his mercy. Let us never forget that to be confessors means to participate in the very mission of Jesus to be a concrete sign of the constancy of divine love that pardons and saves. We priests have received the gift of the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins, and we are responsible for this. None of us wields power over this Sacrament; rather, we are faithful servants of God’s mercy through it. Every confessor must accept the faithful as the father in the parable of the prodigal son: a father who runs out to meet his son despite the fact that he has squandered away his inheritance. Confessors are called to embrace the repentant son who comes back home and to express the joy of having him back again. Let us never tire of also going out to the other son who stands outside, incapable of rejoicing, in order to explain to him that his judgment is severe and unjust and meaningless in light of the father’s boundless mercy. May confessors not ask useless questions, but like the father in the parable, interrupt the speech prepared ahead of time by the prodigal son, so that confessors will learn to accept the plea for help and mercy pouring from the heart of every penitent. In short, confessors are called to be a sign of the primacy of mercy always, everywhere, and in every situation, no matter what.

18. During Lent of this Holy Year, I intend to send out Missionaries of Mercy. They will be a sign of the Church’s maternal solicitude for the People of God, enabling them to enter the profound richness of this mystery so fundamental to the faith. There will be priests to whom I will grant the authority to pardon even those sins reserved to the Holy See, so that the breadth of their mandate as confessors will be even clearer. They
will be, above all, living signs of the Father’s readiness to welcome those in
search of his pardon. They will be missionaries of mercy because they will
be facilitators of a truly human encounter, a source of liberation, rich with
responsibility for overcoming obstacles and taking up the new life of
Baptism again. They will be led in their mission by the words of the
Apostle: “For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have
mercy upon all” (Rom 11:32). Everyone, in fact, without exception, is called
to embrace the call to mercy. May these Missionaries live this call with the
assurance that they can fix their eyes on Jesus, “the merciful and faithful
high priest in the service of God” (Heb 2:17).

I ask my brother Bishops to invite and welcome these Missionaries so
that they can be, above all, persuasive preachers of mercy. May individual
dioceses organize “missions to the people” in such a way that these
Missionaries may be heralds of joy and forgiveness. Bishops are asked to
celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with their people so that the
time of grace made possible by the Jubilee year makes it possible for many
of God’s sons and daughters to take up once again the journey to the
Father’s house. May pastors, especially during the liturgical season of Lent,
be diligent in calling back the faithful “to the throne of grace, that we may
receive mercy and find grace” (Heb 4:16).

19. May the message of mercy reach everyone, and may no one be
indifferent to the call to experience mercy. I direct this invitation to
conversion even more fervently to those whose behavior distances them
from the grace of God. I particularly have in mind men and women
belonging to criminal organizations of any kind. For their own good, I beg
them to change their lives. I ask them this in the name of the Son of God
who, though rejecting sin, never rejected the sinner. Do not fall into the
terrible trap of thinking that life depends on money and that, in
comparison with money, anything else is devoid of value or dignity. This is
nothing but an illusion! We cannot take money with us into the life
beyond. Money does not bring us happiness. Violence inflicted for the sake
of amassing riches soaked in blood makes one neither powerful nor
immortal. Everyone, sooner or later, will be subject to God’s judgment,
from which no one can escape.
The same invitation is extended to those who either perpetrate or participate in corruption. This festering wound is a grave sin that cries out to heaven for vengeance, because it threatens the very foundations of personal and social life. Corruption prevents us from looking to the future with hope, because its tyrannical greed shatters the plans of the weak and tramples upon the poorest of the poor. It is an evil that embeds itself into the actions of everyday life and spreads, causing great public scandal. Corruption is a sinful hardening of the heart that replaces God with the illusion that money is a form of power. It is a work of darkness, fed by suspicion and intrigue. *Corruptio optimi pessima,* saint Gregory the Great said with good reason, affirming that no one can think himself immune from this temptation. If we want to drive it out from personal and social life, we need prudence, vigilance, loyalty, transparency, together with the courage to denounce any wrongdoing. If it is not combated openly, sooner or later everyone will become an accomplice to it, and it will end up destroying our very existence.

This is the opportune moment to change our lives! This is the time to allow our hearts to be touched! When faced with evil deeds, even in the face of serious crimes, it is the time to listen to the cry of innocent people who are deprived of their property, their dignity, their feelings, and even their very lives. To stick to the way of evil will only leave one deluded and sad. True life is something entirely different. God never tires of reaching out to us. He is always ready to listen, as I am too, along with my brother bishops and priests. All one needs to do is to accept the invitation to conversion and submit oneself to justice during this special time of mercy offered by the Church.

20. It would not be out of place at this point to recall the relationship between justice and mercy. These are not two contradictory realities, but two dimensions of a single reality that unfolds progressively until it culminates in the fullness of love. Justice is a fundamental concept for civil society, which is meant to be governed by the rule of law. Justice is also understood as that which is rightly due to each individual. In the Bible, there are many references to divine justice and to God as “judge.” In these passages, justice is understood as the full observance of the Law and the behavior of every good Israelite in conformity with God’s commandments.
Such a vision, however, has not infrequently led to legalism by distorting the original meaning of justice and obscuring its profound value. To overcome this legalistic perspective, we need to recall that in Sacred Scripture, justice is conceived essentially as the faithful abandonment of oneself to God’s will.

For his part, Jesus speaks several times of the importance of faith over and above the observance of the law. It is in this sense that we must understand his words when, reclining at table with Matthew and other tax collectors and sinners, he says to the Pharisees raising objections to him, “Go and learn the meaning of ‘I desire mercy not sacrifice’. I have come not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mt 9:13). Faced with a vision of justice as the mere observance of the law that judges people simply by dividing them into two groups—the just and sinners—Jesus is bent on revealing the great gift of mercy that searches out sinners and offers them pardon and salvation. One can see why, on the basis of such a liberating vision of mercy as a source of new life, Jesus was rejected by the Pharisees and the other teachers of the law. In an attempt to remain faithful to the law, they merely placed burdens on the shoulders of others and undermined the Father’s mercy. The appeal to a faithful observance of the law must not prevent attention from being given to matters that touch upon the dignity of the person.

The appeal Jesus makes to the text from the book of the prophet Hosea—“I desire love and not sacrifice” (6:6)—is important in this regard. Jesus affirms that, from that time onward, the rule of life for his disciples must place mercy at the center, as Jesus himself demonstrated by sharing meals with sinners. Mercy, once again, is revealed as a fundamental aspect of Jesus’ mission. This is truly challenging to his hearers, who would draw the line at a formal respect for the law. Jesus, on the other hand, goes beyond the law; the company he keeps with those the law considers sinners makes us realize the depth of his mercy.

The Apostle Paul makes a similar journey. Prior to meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus, he dedicated his life to pursuing the justice of the law with zeal (cf. Phil 3:6). His conversion to Christ led him to turn that vision upside down, to the point that he would write to the Galatians: “We have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and
not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified” (2:16).

Paul’s understanding of justice changes radically. He now places faith first, not justice. Salvation comes not through the observance of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, who in his death and resurrection brings salvation together with a mercy that justifies. God’s justice now becomes the liberating force for those oppressed by slavery to sin and its consequences. God’s justice is his mercy (cf. Ps 51:11-16).

21. Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God’s way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert, and believe. The experience of the prophet Hosea can help us see the way in which mercy surpasses justice. The era in which the prophet lived was one of the most dramatic in the history of the Jewish people. The kingdom was tottering on the edge of destruction; the people had not remained faithful to the covenant; they had wandered from God and lost the faith of their forefathers. According to human logic, it seems reasonable for God to think of rejecting an unfaithful people; they had not observed their pact with God and therefore deserved just punishment: in other words, exile. The prophet’s words attest to this: “They shall not return to the land of Egypt, and Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me” (Hos 11:5). And yet, after this invocation of justice, the prophet radically changes his speech and reveals the true face of God: “How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel! How can I make you like Admah! How can I treat you like Zeboiim! My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger, I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come to destroy” (11:8-9). Saint Augustine, almost as if he were commenting on these words of the prophet, says: “It is easier for God to hold back anger than mercy.”[13] And so it is. God’s anger lasts but a moment, his mercy forever.

If God limited himself to justice alone, he would cease to be God, and would instead be like human beings who ask merely that the law be respected. But mere justice is not enough. Experience shows that an appeal to justice alone will result in its destruction. This is why God goes beyond
justice with his mercy and forgiveness. Yet this does not mean that justice should be devalued or rendered superfluous. On the contrary: anyone who makes a mistake must pay the price. However, this is just the beginning of conversion, not its end, because one begins to feel the tenderness and mercy of God. God does not deny justice. He rather envelops it and surpasses it with an even greater event in which we experience love as the foundation of true justice. We must pay close attention to what Saint Paul says if we want to avoid making the same mistake for which he reproaches the Jews of his time: “For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified” (Rom 10:3-4). God’s justice is his mercy given to everyone as a grace that flows from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus the Cross of Christ is God’s judgment on all of us and on the whole world, because through it he offers us the certitude of love and new life.

22. A Jubilee also entails the granting of indulgences. This practice will acquire an even more important meaning in the Holy Year of Mercy. God’s forgiveness knows no bounds. In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God makes even more evident his love and its power to destroy all human sin. Reconciliation with God is made possible through the paschal mystery and the mediation of the Church. Thus God is always ready to forgive, and he never tires of forgiving in ways that are continually new and surprising. Nevertheless, all of us know well the experience of sin. We know that we are called to perfection (cf. Mt 5:48), yet we feel the heavy burden of sin. Though we feel the transforming power of grace, we also feel the effects of sin typical of our fallen state. Despite being forgiven, the conflicting consequences of our sins remain. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, God forgives our sins, which he truly blots out; and yet sin leaves a negative effect on the way we think and act. But the mercy of God is stronger even than this. It becomes indulgence on the part of the Father who, through the Bride of Christ, his Church, reaches the pardoned sinner and frees him from every residue left by the consequences of sin, enabling him to act with charity, to grow in love rather than to fall back into sin.

The Church lives within the communion of the saints. In the Eucharist, this communion, which is a gift from God, becomes a spiritual
union binding us to the saints and blessed ones whose number is beyond counting (cf. Rev 7:4). Their holiness comes to the aid of our weakness in a way that enables the Church, with her maternal prayers and her way of life, to fortify the weakness of some with the strength of others. Hence, to live the indulgence of the Holy Year means to approach the Father’s mercy with the certainty that his forgiveness extends to the entire life of the believer. To gain an indulgence is to experience the holiness of the Church, who bestows upon all the fruits of Christ’s redemption, so that God’s love and forgiveness may extend everywhere. Let us live this Jubilee intensely, begging the Father to forgive our sins and to bathe us in his merciful “indulgence.”

23. There is an aspect of mercy that goes beyond the confines of the Church. It relates us to Judaism and Islam, both of which consider mercy to be one of God’s most important attributes. Israel was the first to receive this revelation which continues in history as the source of an inexhaustible richness meant to be shared with all mankind. As we have seen, the pages of the Old Testament are steeped in mercy, because they narrate the works that the Lord performed in favor of his people at the most trying moments of their history. Among the privileged names that Islam attributes to the Creator are “Merciful and Kind.” This invocation is often on the lips of faithful Muslims who feel themselves accompanied and sustained by mercy in their daily weakness. They too believe that no one can place a limit on divine mercy because its doors are always open.

I trust that this Jubilee year celebrating the mercy of God will foster an encounter with these religions and with other noble religious traditions; may it open us to even more fervent dialogue so that we might know and understand one another better; may it eliminate every form of closed-mindedness and disrespect, and drive out every form of violence and discrimination.

24. My thoughts now turn to the Mother of Mercy. May the sweetness of her countenance watch over us in this Holy Year, so that all of us may rediscover the joy of God’s tenderness. No one has penetrated the profound mystery of the incarnation like Mary. Her entire life was patterned after the presence of mercy made flesh. The Mother of the
Crucified and Risen One has entered the sanctuary of divine mercy because she participated intimately in the mystery of His love.

Chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God, Mary, from the outset, was prepared by the love of God to be the Ark of the Covenant between God and man. She treasured divine mercy in her heart in perfect harmony with her Son Jesus. Her hymn of praise, sung at the threshold of the home of Elizabeth, was dedicated to the mercy of God which extends from “generation to generation” (Lk 1:50). We too were included in those prophetic words of the Virgin Mary. This will be a source of comfort and strength to us as we cross the threshold of the Holy Year to experience the fruits of divine mercy.

At the foot of the Cross, Mary, together with John, the disciple of love, witnessed the words of forgiveness spoken by Jesus. This supreme expression of mercy towards those who crucified him show us the point to which the mercy of God can reach. Mary attests that the mercy of the Son of God knows no bounds and extends to everyone, without exception. Let us address her in the words of the Salve Regina, a prayer ever ancient and ever new, so that she may never tire of turning her merciful eyes upon us, and make us worthy to contemplate the face of mercy, her Son Jesus.

Our prayer also extends to the saints and blessed ones who made divine mercy their mission in life. I think especially of the great apostle of mercy, Saint Faustina Kowalska. May she, who was called to enter the depths of divine mercy, intercede for us and obtain for us the grace of living and walking always according to the mercy of God and with an unwavering trust in his love.

25. I present, therefore, this Extraordinary Jubilee Year dedicated to living out in our daily lives the mercy which the Father constantly extends to all of us. In this Jubilee Year, let us allow God to surprise us. He never tires of casting open the doors of his heart and of repeating that he loves us and wants to share his love with us. The Church feels the urgent need to proclaim God’s mercy. Her life is authentic and credible only when she becomes a convincing herald of mercy. She knows that her primary task, especially at a moment full of great hopes and signs of contradiction, is to introduce everyone to the great mystery of God’s mercy by contemplating
the face of Christ. The Church is called above all to be a credible witness to mercy, professing it and living it as the core of the revelation of Jesus Christ. From the heart of the Trinity, from the depths of the mystery of God, the great river of mercy wells up and overflows unceasingly. It is a spring that will never run dry, no matter how many people draw from it. Every time someone is in need, he or she can approach it, because the mercy of God never ends. The profundity of the mystery surrounding it is as inexhaustible as the richness which springs up from it.

In this Jubilee Year, may the Church echo the word of God that resounds strong and clear as a message and a sign of pardon, strength, aid, and love. May she never tire of extending mercy, and be ever patient in offering compassion and comfort. May the Church become the voice of every man and woman, and repeat confidently without end: “Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old” (Ps 25:6).

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter’s, on April 11, the Vigil of the Second Sunday of Easter, or the Sunday of Divine Mercy, in the year of our Lord 2015, the third of my Pontificate.

FRANCISCUS

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[6] Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time. This Collect already appears in the eighth century among the euchological texts of the Gelasian
Sacramentary (1198).


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Laudato Si,’ The Encyclical of Pope Francis on ‘The Care of Our Common Home’ (May 24, 2015)

On June 18 of this year Laudato Si’ was published, the second encyclical of Pope Francis. Centered on care of Creation, it was signed in Rome on May 24, 2015, the solemnity of Pentecost.

The text that we present here, prepared by the Press Office of the Holy See, offers an overview of the 191 pages of the document and its key points, along with a summary of each of its six chapters, and a few special paragraphs. The numbers within parentheses refer to the original numeration of the sections of the encyclical.

An Overview

“What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (160). This question is at the heart of Laudato Si’ (May You be praised), the anticipated Encyclical on the care of the common home by Pope Francis. “This question does not have to do
with the environment alone and in isolation; the issue can not be approached piecemeal." This leads us to ask ourselves about the meaning of existence and its values at the basis of social life: “What is the purpose of our life in this world? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us?” “Unless we struggle with these deeper issues,” says the Pope—I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results” (160).

The Encyclical takes its name from the invocation of St. Francis, “Praise be to you, my Lord,” in his Canticle of the Creatures. It reminds us that the earth, our common home “is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us” (1). We have forgotten that “we ourselves are dust of the earth; our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters” (2).

Now, this earth, mistreated and abused, is lamenting, and its groans join those of all the forsaken of the world. Pope Francis invites us to listen to them, urging each and every one—individuals, families, local communities, nations and the international community—to an “ecological conversion,” according to the expression of St. John Paul II. We are invited to “change direction” by taking on the beauty and responsibility of the task of “caring for our common home.” At the same time, Pope Francis recognizes that “there is a growing sensitivity to the environment and the need to protect nature, along with a growing concern, both genuine and distressing, for what is happening to our planet” (19). A ray of hope flows through the entire Encyclical, which gives a clear message of hope. “Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home” (13) “Men and women are still capable of intervening positively” (58). “All is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start” (205).

Pope Francis certainly addresses the Catholic faithful, quoting St. John Paul II: “Christians in their turn ‘realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith’” (64) Pope Francis proposes specially “to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home” (3). The dialogue runs
throughout the text and in chapter 5 it becomes the instrument for addressing and solving problems. From the beginning, Pope Francis recalls that “other Churches and Christian communities—and other religions as well—have also expressed deep concern and offered valuable reflections” on the theme of ecology. Indeed, such contributions expressly come in, starting with that of “the beloved Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew” (7), extensively cited in numbers 8-9. On several occasions, then, the Pope thanks the protagonists of this effort—individuals as well as associations and institutions. He acknowledges that “the reflections of numerous scientists, philosophers, theologians and civic groups, all... have enriched the Church’s thinking on these questions” (7). He invites everyone to recognize “the rich contribution which the religions can make towards an integral ecology and the full development of humanity” (62).

The itinerary of the Encyclical is mapped out in no. 15 and divided into six chapters. It starts by presenting the current situation based on the best scientific findings available today, next, there is a review of the Bible and Judeo-Christian tradition. The root of the problems in technocracy and in an excessive self-centeredness of the human being are analyzed. The Encyclical proposes an “integral ecology, which clearly respects its human and social dimensions” (137), inextricably linked to the environmental question. In this perspective, Pope Francis proposes to initiate an honest dialogue at every level of social, economic and political life, that builds transparent decision-making processes, and recalls that no project can be effective if it is not animated by a formed and responsible conscience. Ideas are put forth to aid growth in this direction at the educational, spiritual, ecclesial, political and theological levels. The text ends with two prayers; one offered for sharing with everyone who believes in “God who is the all-powerful Creator” (246), and the other to those who profess faith in Jesus Christ, punctuated by the refrain “Praise be to you!” which opens and closes the Encyclical.

Several main themes run through the text that are addressed from a variety of different perspectives, traversing and unifying the text: the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything in the world is connected, the critique of new paradigms and forms of power derived from technology, the call to seek
other ways of understanding the economy and progress, the value proper to each creature, the human meaning of ecology, the need for forthright and honest debate, the serious responsibility of international and local policies, the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle.

Chapter 1—What is Happening to our Common Home

The chapter presents the most recent scientific findings on the environment as a way to listen to the cry of creation, “to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it” (19). It thus deals with “several aspects of the present ecological crisis” (15).

Pollution and climate change: “Climate change is a global problem with serious implications, environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods; it represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day” (25). If “the climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all” (23), the greatest impact of this change falls on the poorest, but “many of those who possess more resources and economic or political power seem mostly to be concerned with masking the problems or concealing their symp- toms” (26). “Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded” (25).

The issue of water: the Pope clearly states that “access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights.” To deprive the poor of access to water means to deny “the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity” (30).

Loss of biodiversity: “Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever” (33). They are not just any exploitable “resource,” but have a value in and of themselves. In this perspective “we must be grateful for the praiseworthy efforts being made by scientists and engineers dedicated to finding solutions to man-made problems,” but when human intervention is at the service of finance and
consumerism, “it is actually making our earth less rich and beautiful, ever more limited and gray” (34).

Decline in the quality of human life and the breakdown of society: in the framework of an ethics of international relationships, the Encyclical indicates how a “true ecological debt” (51) exists in the world, with the North in debt to the South. In the face of climate change, there are “differentiated responsibilities,” (52) and those of the developed countries are greater.

Aware of the deep differences over these issues, Pope Francis shows himself to be deeply affected by the “weak responses” in the face of the drama of many peoples and populations. Even though there is no lack of positive examples (58), there is “a complacency and a cheerful recklessness” (59). An adequate culture is lacking as well as a willingness to change life style, production and consumption (59), while there are efforts being made “to establish a legal framework which can set clear boundaries and ensure the protection of ecosystems” (53).

Chapter two—The Gospel of Creation

To face the problems illustrated in the previous chapter, Pope Francis selects Biblical accounts, offering a comprehensive view that comes from the Judeo-Christian tradition. With this he articulates the “tremendous responsibility” (90) of humankind for creation, the intimate connection among all creatures and the fact that “the natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone” (95).

In the Bible, “the God who liberates and saves is the same God who created the universe, and these two divine ways of acting are intimately and inseparably connected” (73). The story of creation is central for reflecting on the relationship between human beings and other creatures and how sin breaks the equilibrium of all creation in its entirety: “These accounts suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself. According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin” (66).

For this, even if “we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted
the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures” (67). Human beings have the responsibility to “till and keep’ the garden of the world (see Gen 2:15)” (67), knowing that “the ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward, with us and through us, towards a common point of arrival, which is God” (83).

That the human being is not the master of the universe “does not mean to put all living beings on the same level and to deprive human beings of their unique worth and the tremendous responsibility it entails. Nor does it imply a divinization of the earth which would prevent us from working on it and protecting it in its fragility” (90). In this perspective, every act of cruelty towards any creature is “contrary to human dignity” (92). However, “a sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings” (91).

What is needed is the awareness of a universal communion: “called into being by the one Father. All of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect” (89).

The chapter concludes with the heart of Christian revelation: “The earthly Jesus” with “his tangible and loving relationship with the world” is “risen and glorious, and is present throughout creation by his universal Lordship” (100).

Chapter three—The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis

This chapter gives an analysis of the current situation, “so as to consider not only its symptoms but also its deepest causes” (15), in a dialogue with philosophy and the human sciences.

Reflections on technology are an initial focus of the chapter: the great contribution to the improvement of living conditions is acknowledged with gratitude. However it gives “those with the knowledge, and especially the economic resources to use them, an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world” (104). It is precisely the mentality of technocratic domination that leads to the destruction of nature and the
exploitation of people and the most vulnerable populations. “The technocratic paradigm also tends to dominate economics and political life,” (109), keeping us from recognizing that “by itself the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion” (109).

“Modernity has been marked by an excessive anthropocentrism”(116): human beings no longer recognize their right place with respect to the world and take on a self-centered position, focused exclusively on themselves and on their own power. This results in a “use and throw away” logic that justifies every type of waste, environmental or human, that treats both the other and nature as simple objects and leads to a myriad of forms of domination. It is this mentality that leads to exploiting children, abandoning the elderly, forcing others into slavery and over evaluating the capacity of the market to regulate itself, practicing human trafficking, selling pelts of animals in danger of extinction and of “blood diamonds.” It is the same mentality as many mafias, of those involved in trafficking organs and drug trafficking and of throwing away unborn babies because they do not correspond to what the parents want (123).

In this light, the encyclical addresses two crucial problems of today’s world. Above all work: “any approach to an integral ecology, which by definition does not exclude human beings, needs to take account of the value of labor” (124), because “to stop investing in people, in order to gain greater short-term financial gain, is bad business for society” (128).

The second problem regards the limitations of scientific progress, with clear reference to GMOs. This is a “complex environmental issue” (135). Even though “in some regions their use has brought about economic growth which has helped to resolve problems, there remain a number of significant difficulties which should not be underestimated,” (134), starting from the “productive land being concentrated in the hands of a few owners” (134). Pope Francis thinks particularly of small producers and rural workers, of biodiversity, and the network of ecosystems. Therefore “a broad, responsible scientific and social debate needs to take place, one capable of considering all the available information and of calling things by their name” starting from “lines of independent, interdisciplinary research” (135).
Chapter four — Integral Ecology

The heart of what the Encyclical proposes is integral ecology as a new paradigm of justice; an ecology “which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings” (15). In fact, “nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live” (139). This is true as we are involved in various fields: in economy and politics, in different cultures particularly in those most threatened, and even in every moment of our daily lives.

The integral perspective also brings the ecology of institutions into play: “if everything is related, then the health of a society’s institutions affects the environment and the quality of human life. ‘Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment’” (142).

With many concrete examples, Pope Francis confirms his thinking that “the analysis of environmental problems cannot be separated from the analysis of human, family, work related and urban contexts, and of how individuals relate to themselves” (141). “We are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis which is both social and environmental” (139).

“Human ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good” (156), but is to be understood in a concrete way. In today’s context, in which, “injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable” (158), committing oneself to the common good means to make choices in solidarity based on “a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters” (158). This is also the best way to leave a sustainable world for future generations, not just by proclaiming, but by committing to care for the poor of today, as already emphasized by Benedict XVI: “In addition to a fairer sense of inter-generational solidarity there is also an urgent moral need for a renewed sense of intra-generational solidarity” (162).

Integral ecology also involves everyday life. The encyclical gives specific attention to the urban environment. The human being has a great capacity for adaptation and “an admirable creativity and generosity is shown by persons and groups who respond to environmental limitations by alleviating the adverse effects of their surroundings and learning to live
productively amid disorder and uncertainty” (148). Nevertheless, authentic development presupposes an integral improvement in the quality of human life: public space, housing, transport, etc. (150-154).

Also “the acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation” (155).

Chapter five — Lines of Approach and Action

This chapter addresses the question of what we can and must do. Analyses are not enough: we need proposals “for dialogue and action which would involve each of us individually no less than international policy” (15). They will “help us to escape the spiral of self-destruction which currently engulfs us.” (163). For Pope Francis it is imperative that the developing real approaches is not done in an ideological, superficial or reductionist way. For this, dialogue is essential, a term present in the title of every section of this chapter. “There are certain environmental issues where it is not easy to achieve a broad consensus. [...] the Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics. But I want to encourage an honest and open debate, so that particular interests or ideologies will not prejudice the common good” (188).

On this basis, Pope Francis is not afraid to judge international dynamics severely: “Recent World Summits on the environment have failed to live up to expectations because, due to lack of political will, they were unable to reach truly meaningful and effective global agreements on the environment” (166). And he asks “What would induce anyone, at this stage, to hold on to power only to be remembered for their inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so?” (166). Instead, what is needed, as the Popes have repeated several times, starting with Pacem in Terris, are forms and instruments for global governance(175): “an agreement on systems of governance for the whole range of the so-called ‘global commons,’ (174), seeing that “environmental protection cannot be assured solely on the basis of financial calculations of costs and benefits. The environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately
safeguarded or promoted by market forces” (190, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*).

In this fifth chapter, Pope Francis insists on development of honest and transparent decision-making processes, in order to “discern” which policies and business initiatives can bring about “genuine integral development.” (185). In particular, a proper environmental impact study of new “business ventures and projects demands transparent political processes involving a free exchange of views. On the other hand, the forms of corruption which conceal the actual environmental impact of a given project in exchange for favors usually produce specious agreements which fail to inform adequately and do not allow for full debate.” (182).

The most significant appeal is addressed to those who hold political office, so that they avoid “a mentality of “efficiency” and “immediacy” (181) that is so prevalent today: “but if they are courageous, they will attest to their God-given dignity and leave behind a testimony of selfless responsibility” (181).

*Chapter six — Ecological Education and Spirituality*

The final chapter invites everyone to the heart of ecological conversion. The roots of the cultural crisis are deep, and it is not easy to reshape habits and behavior. Education and training are the key challenges: “change is impossible without motivation and a process of education” (15). All educational sectors are involved, primarily “at school, in families, in the media, in catechesis and elsewhere” (213).

The starting point is “to aim for a new lifestyle,” (203-208), which also opens the possibility of “bringing healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power.” (206). This is what happens when consumer choices are able to “change the way businesses operate, forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production” (206). The importance of environmental education cannot be underestimated. It is able to affect actions and daily habits, the reduction of water consumption, the sorting of waste and even “turning off unnecessary lights”(211): “An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness” (230). Everything will be easier starting with a contemplative
outlook that comes from faith: “as believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us with all beings. By developing our individual, God-given capacities, an ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm.” (220).

As proposed in *Evangelii Gaudium*: “sobriety, when lived freely and consciously, is liberating,”(223), just as “happiness means knowing how to limit some needs which only diminish us, and being open to the many different possibilities which life can offer” (223), In this way “we must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it.” (229).

The saints accompany us on this journey. St. Francis, cited several times, is “the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically” (10). He is the model of “the inseparable bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace” (10). The Encyclical also mentions St. Benedict, St. Thérèse of Lisieux and Blessed Charles de Foucauld.

After *dato Si’è* regular practice of an examination of conscience, the means that the Church has always recommended to orient one’s life in light of the relationship with the Lord, should include a new dimension, considering not only how one has lived communion with God, with others and with oneself, but also with all creatures and with nature.

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The Roman Curia
Decree of Approval of the Translations into Hebrew and Arabic of the Mass of St. Josemaría, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments

CONGREGATIO DE CULTU DIVINO ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM

Prot. N. 28/15

SANCTAE CRUCIS ET OPERIS DEI

Instante Excellentissimo ac Reverendissimo Domino Xaviero Echevarría Rodríguez, Episcopo titulare Cilibiensi ac Praelato Sanctae Crucis et Operis Dei, litteris die 31 mensis decembris 2014 datis, vigore facultatum huic Congregatione a Summo Pontifice FRANCISCO tributarum, textum arabicum et hebraicum Missae in honorem sancti Iosephmariae Escrivá de Balanguer, presbyteri, prout in adiecto exstat exemplari, perlibenter confirmamus.

In textu imprimendo mentio fiat de confirmation ab Apostolica Sede concessa.

Eiusdem insuper textus impressi duo exemplaria ad hanc Congregationem transmittantur.

Contrariis quibuslibet minime obstantibus.

Ex aedibus Congregationis de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum, die 16 mensis maii 2015.

Robert. Card. Sarah
Praefectus
+ Arturus Roche
Archiepiscopus a Secretis

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PRELATE

- New Circumscriptions
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On January 15, 2015, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, established the quasi-region of El Salvador, previously a delegation belonging to the region of Northern Central America, by means of the following decree:

Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRIA

Dei et Apostolicæ Sedis gratia

Prælatus

DE C R E T U M

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

Quo aptius provideatur curæ laboris apostolici Prælaturæ, de Consilii Generalis atque Assessoratus Centralis consensu, detracta parte territorii Salvatoriae quæ ad interim ad Regionem Americæ Centralis Septentrionalis pertinebat, decreto hoc nostro:

Statuimus ut praedicta haec Regio territória complectatur Guatimalæ et Honduræ.

Pariterque,

Novam erigimus Prælaturæ circumscriptionem, nempe Quasi-Regionem Salvatoriae a Nobis dependentem, eiusdem Nationis territórium comprehendet et in civitate Sancti Salvatoris sedem habeat.

Datum Romæ, ex Ædibus Curiæ Prælatitiae, die 15 mense ianuario anno 2015.

+ XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA

Prælatus Operis Dei

Rev.dus D. Dr. Ioseph Antonius Araña

Curiæ Prælatitiæ Notarius

Reg. Gen. R. lib. VI pag. 57
On June 2, 2015, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, established the quasi-region of Uruguay, by means of the following decree:

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

D E C R E T U M

Cum Delegatio Uruguaiae, a Prælato dependens, eum progressionis gradum attigerit, qui requiritur ut in Quasi-Regionem erigatur.

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

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

Datum Romæ, ex Ædibus Curiæ Praelatitiae, die 2 mense iunii, anno 2015.

+ XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA
Prælatus Operis Dei
Rev.mus D. Dr. Ernestus Burkhart
Curiæ Prælatitiae Cancellarius
Reg. Gen. R. lib. VI p. 59

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Activities of the Prelate

Pastoral Trips

Portugal, March 20-22, 2015

The Prelate of Opus Dei’s pastoral trip to Portugal, from the 20th to the 22nd of March, began with a moment of prayer in the Capelinha of the apparitions at the Shrine of Fatima.

On Saturday the 21st, Bishop Echevarría had a meeting with over a thousand people—faithful and friends of Opus Dei—at the Planalto School. The Prelate encouraged those present to live the liturgical period of Lent with “a constant concern to make the others happy,’ seeking a conversion of heart “in family life, in life together, in the environments of daily professional work.” Those attending asked Bishop Echevarría about unity in families, the vocation of children, the difficulties and demands of courtship, and the compatibility of a life of intense prayer with a day of very demanding work.

During his stay in Portugal, the Prelate visited several people who were gravely ill. He also met with young people who take part in the apostolates of the Prelature and with married couples who are helping bring forward various schools whose spiritual care is entrusted to the Work.

On March 7, Bishop Echevarría conferred ordination as deacons on three associate faithful of the Prelature: Sidnei Fresneda Herrera, from Brazil, and Juan José Muñoz García and Rubén Mestre Andrés from Spain. The ceremony took place in the parish of St. Josemaría, in Rome’s Ardentine district.

“By your diaconal ordination, you become co-workers of the bishop and priests in the liturgical service. Not only because you can administer Holy Communion to your brothers and sisters, but because it is your responsibility to put special care and affection into everything referring to divine worship. Yes, Jesus Christ awaits you! Treat him with great refinement,” the Prelate reminded the ordinands.

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Ordination of Priests (St. Eugene's Basilica, Rome, May 9, 2015)

On May 9, Bishop Echevarría conferred priestly ordination on 32 faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei. The ceremony took place in St. Eugene’s Basilica in Rome.

During his homily—printed in full in this issue—the Prelate addressed the new priests with words of Pope Francis, encouraging them to be joyful, since “priestly joy is a priceless treasure, not only for the priest himself, but for the entire faithful people of God.”

“The vocation to the priesthood is a free call that God addresses to some men for the service of the Church, without taking into account preceding merits or other considerations,” Bishop Echevarría said. “Let us give thanks to God for his goodness and pray for them and for all the priests in the world. I also suggest that you pray for all the families in the world, since it is in the heart of Christian homes that God usually
cultivates, as in a nursery, the various forms of the vocation to holiness,”
the Prelate added.

The new priests come from fourteen countries.

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

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Almudi Theology Dialogues (April 17, 2015), Valencia, Spain

On Friday April 17, at the invitation of Archbishop Antonio Cardinal Cañizares of Valencia, the Prelate of Opus Dei gave the inaugural address for the annual “Almudi Theology Dialogues.”

Organized by the St. Vincent Ferrer School of Theology in Valencia and the Almudi Priest’s Library, the topic this year was “Vatican II and the priesthood: fifty years of Presbyterorum Ordinis. In memory of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo.”

Bishop Echevarría’s address was entitled “Blessed Alvaro del Portillo’s role in drafting the decree Presbyterorum Ordinis at the Second Vatican Council” (included in full in the following pages).

The address, followed by a question period, took place in the Alfonso the Magnanimous Hall of the La Beneficencia Cultural Center. A large number of priests from the Archdiocese of Valencia and the dioceses of Segorbe-Castellon, Orihuela-Alicante, and Cartagena took part. Cardinal Cañizares presided over the meeting.

At 7 pm that evening, in the cathedral of Valencia, Bishop Echevarría concelebrated Holy Mass with the Cardinal Archbishop and other church leaders. The Prelate also went to pray before Our Lady of the Forsaken, in the chapel that has an image of St. Josemaría praying before the patroness of the city.

Over the course of the weekend, before returning to Rome on the 19th, Bishop Echevarría held various meetings with faithful of the Prelature and
Pastoral Letters

Pastoral letter of January 1, 2015

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

We are in Christmas time and, as our Father said, “our thoughts turn to the different events and circumstances surrounding the birth of the Son of God. As we contemplate the stable in Bethlehem or the home of the holy family in Nazareth, Mary, Joseph and the child Jesus occupy a special place in our hearts. What does the simple, admirable life of the Holy Family tell us? What can we learn from it?”[1]

These words help to situate us in the atmosphere suited to such a holy time. We stop to contemplate the birth of our Lord again and again, without becoming tired. We would like to go ever more deeply into this marvelous mystery, but we always fall short. God’s love for mankind, for each and every one of us, is truly beyond our grasp. Therefore, our attitude is one of constant gratitude to God. He has lowered himself to the level of our poor humanity, to free us from our miseries and raise us to the condition of children of God. On Christmas Eve, we read in the Collect for the Mass: “Come quickly, we pray, Lord Jesus, and do not delay, that those who trust in your compassion may find solace and relief in your coming.”[2] And we are not surprised to sense he is answering each of us, as Ananias told Paul: “Quid moraris?”[3] What are you waiting for? Let us ask our Lady and St. Joseph that we may always feel the urgent need to be with Christ, to seek him.

Today, on the 1st of January, we are celebrating the solemnity of the Mother of God, whom our Lord gave us as our Mother. Mary is the path
chosen by God the Father so that his only-begotten Son might become man, through the working of the Holy Spirit. We direct our gratitude also to Mary. We give her thanks because by her response at the Annunciation, and by her strong and silent presence at the foot of the Cross, she has opened for us the path of divine filiation. With words of St. Josemaria we tell her: “Mother, Oh Mother! With that word of yours—fiat, ‘be it done’—you have made us brothers of God and heirs to his glory. —Blessed are you!”[4]

I have convoked a Marian year in Opus Dei, to pray with the whole Church for the upcoming Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which will consider the vocation and mission of the family in the Church and the world. We are asking God fervently, through our Lady’s intercession, that the irreplaceable value of this fundamental cell of society be rediscovered everywhere. If Christian homes recognize and accept God’s plan for them, the evils afflicting peoples and nations will be able to be remedied.

St. John Paul II, in the first weeks of his pontificate, received a group of married couples taking part in courses of family development. And he told them: “The future of the Church and humanity is born and grows in the family.”[5] Later he repeated the same idea, in one way or another, on countless occasions during his long and fruitful pontificate. In the apostolic exhortation Familiaris Consortio, fruit of the Synod of Bishops held in 1980, he wrote: “The family finds in the plan of God the Creator and Redeemer not only its identity, what it is, but also its mission, what it can and should do. The role that God calls the family to perform in history derives from what the family is; its role represents the dynamic and existential development of what it is.”[6] And he ended with an urgent call that continues to resonate today with even greater force, “Family, become what you are!”[7]

It is always a good moment to raise up this petition to Heaven, and with greater reason during the feasts of Christmas time, which shed bright light on the divine plan for the human race. The angels announced to the shepherds “a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”[8] The whole human race is seen as destined to receive this good news. St. Luke
recounts briefly: “They went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger.”[9] In the beginning God created man and woman with equal dignity, establishing the first human family, and he gave them the mandate to have dominion over the material universe and to populate the earth.[10] From here stems the root of the family institution. But the event at Bethlehem goes much further: God himself, in his infinite condescension, has become incarnate within the heart of a family, thus showing his will for the ordered development of humanity. The family at Bethlehem is seen as a model for all the homes on earth.

In the first of his series of catechetical addresses on this topic, Pope Francis said that “the Incarnation of the Son of God opens a new beginning in the universal history of man and woman. And this new beginning takes place within a family at Nazareth. Jesus was born in a family. He could have come spectacularly, or as a warrior, an emperor… No, no: he came as a son of a family, in a family. This is important: to contemplate in the Crib this very beautiful scene.[11]

“As we read in Holy Scripture, the birth of Jesus means the beginning of the fullness of time (cf. Gal 4:4). It was the moment God chose to show the extent of his love for men, by giving us his own Son. And God’s will is fulfilled in the simplest, most ordinary of circumstances: a woman who gives birth, a family, a home. The power of God and his splendor come to us through a human reality to which they are joined. Since that moment Christians have known that, with God’s grace, they can and should sanctify everything that is good in their human lives. There is no human situation, no matter how trivial and ordinary it may seem, which cannot be a meeting place with Christ and a step forward on our journey toward the kingdom of heaven.”[12]

The conjugal union was established by God right from the moment of the creation of man and woman, but unfortunately it is now neglected in so many places. The family is so mistreated! An attempt is made to present as normal situations that are a very grave attack on God’s creative and saving plan. In many places and environments (not only among individuals, but even the public authorities, through laws and government decisions), the family institution is weakened and people try to change it into something very different. They fail to realize—the devil is very skilled at blinding
intellects—that by emptying the concept of the family, they cause immense damage to civil society.

This past Sunday we celebrated the feast of the Holy Family. On that day, as we do every year, we renewed the consecration of our parents, sisters and brothers, to the Holy Family of Nazareth, as our Founder established for that feast day. And we invited our relatives and friends, and all those who take part in the Prelature’s apostolic work, to unite themselves with us in that act. As always, we have prayed for all the Christian homes in the world, asking that they may be and live in accord with the divine model shown to us in Bethlehem and in Nazareth.

During this Marian year we are praying especially for this intention. Perhaps we can make use of an aspiration that will help us to keep it present. Our Father frequently prayed: “Jesus, Mary and Joseph, may I always be with the Three.” We will ask insistently that all the families on earth may always be well protected by the Holy Family of Nazareth.

And as we raise up this prayer to Heaven, we will also include those who govern and those who direct international institutions, on whom falls the responsibility of caring for the integrity of this fundamental cell of society. Let us ask God that the unity and indissolubility of marriage and its openness to life may be reaffirmed, along with the right of parents to educate their children in accord with their beliefs. Let us ask that civil laws, instead of placing obstacles to the harmonious development of the family, may rather facilitate the fulfillment of the aims God established in creating it.

A determined effort is needed in the new evangelization of society, beginning with every home. “As Mary and Joseph did, every Christian family can first of all receive Jesus, listen to him, talk with him, guard and protect him, grow with him, and thus improve the world.”[13] Families need to foster in their own home the virtues the liturgy reminds us of in one of the readings for the feast of the Holy Family. “Put on, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven
you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts.”[14]

These recommendations are for all the family’s members: parents, children, brothers and sisters and other relatives. And although the term “family” is most specifically used to designate the environment where a person is born and grows, we also know that the Church is God’s family on earth; and that the living portion of the Church that is Opus Dei is also a family. St. Josemaría stressed that an immense variety of people, with their own ways of being and very personal characteristics, could belong to the Work in one way or another. “I am not saying it just for the sake of saying it,” he once remarked, “when I tell you that the Work is a divine and human family; and as happens in natural families abundantly blessed by God with many children, some are tall and others short, some have dark hair and others blond... In addition, we have at our side those relatives of ours whom we love so much, the Cooperators... and then so many friends and colleagues who in one way or another share in our family.”[15]

We have to do all we can to make life pleasant for those we live with, or who are close to us for one reason or another. “Let us make room in our heart and in our day for the Lord. As Mary and Joseph also did, and it was not easy. How many difficulties they had to overcome! They were not an artificial family, an unreal family. The family of Nazareth urges us to rediscover the vocation and mission of the family, of every family.”[16]

Let us beseech our Lord, through the intercession of our Lady and St. Joseph, that in the Centers of the Work, in the homes of the other faithful and the Cooperators of the Prelature, of our friends and relatives, and in all Christian homes, the example of the Holy Family may be reflected. Contemplating Jesus, Mary and Joseph has to impel us to be truly concerned about the others, as they were. Each day we have to pray about and strive to meet their spiritual and material needs, their need for rest, for order and material care of the house, which has to be a mirror of the home at Nazareth. Let us never consider these duties as a burden, but rather as wonderful opportunities to serve.

Within the intimacy of the family at Nazareth, Jesus was the witness to so many small points of refinement, so many manifestations of affection.
When he began his public life, he was known by his family of origin: “Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary?”[17] Would that, on observing our behavior as faithful followers of Christ, people could say: it is clear this person is imitating Jesus’ example, because of the care shown for the atmosphere in his or her home, because they bring it everywhere they go, because they try to help others share in this joy and peace.

The 9th is the anniversary of the birth of St. Josemaría. In Barbastro and Logroño, our Founder learned so many small points of refinement that strengthen family unity, and that he later passed on to us. Our gratitude also extends to his parents for having been docile instruments of God in the human and supernatural formation of St. Josemaría.

Let us unite ourselves to the intentions of the Pope, praying also for the religious and consecrated souls, in this year the Church has dedicated to them. And let us go with great trust to our Lady in this prayer.

With other words of our Founder, let us ask that families may always preserve the spirit of the early times of Christianity: “small Christian communities which were centers for the spreading of the Gospel and its message. Families no different from other families of those times, but living with a new spirit, which spread to all those who were in contact with them. This is what the first Christians were, and this is what we have to be: sowers of peace and joy, the peace and joy that Jesus has brought to us.”[18]

A few days ago, I passed through Pamplona and visited people there who are sick. I also had a get-together in the university gymnasium with some two thousand five hundred people. I recalled how St. Josemaría would look at our Lord, filled with gratitude. And the thought came to me that, wherever we are, we find ourselves “in our own home,” closely united in order to serve God and all souls.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father

+ Javier

Rome, January 1, 2015


[7] Ibid.


[16] Pope Francis, Address at a general audience, December 17, 2014


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**Homilies**
Cari fratelli e cari figli,

1. La Messa in coena Domini ci ricorda in un modo del tutto speciale l'istituzione dell'Eucarestia: il sacramento della presenza reale di Gesù Cristo —con il suo corpo, sangue, anima e divinità— sotto le apparenze del pane e del vino. Se ogni giorno nella Santa Messa si rende presente il sacrificio del Calvario, oggi, per così dire, quella presenza acquista una tonalità più forte, perché ci dimostra che Gesù ha voluto restare con noi. Nel Canone Romano (e analogamente nelle altre preghiere eucaristiche), prima di pronunciare le parole della consacrazione, il sacerdote afferma espressamente che proprio oggi, la vigilia della sua passione, Egli prese il pane nelle sue mani sante e venerabili, e allo stesso modo questo glorioso calice, trasformando con le sue parole il pane e il vino nel suo santo corpo e nel suo sangue preziosissimo.[1]

Gesù volle istituire questo sacramento prima della sua passione e morte; e ogni uomo e ogni donna, fino alla fine dei tempi, potrà mettersi immediatamente a contatto con il sacrificio della Croce. Questo sacrificio “è talmente decisivo per la salvezza del genere umano —scrisse san Giovanni Paolo II— che Gesù Cristo l'ha compiuto ed è tornato al Padre soltanto dopo averci lasciato il mezzo per parteciparvi come se vi fossimo stati presenti. Ogni fedele può così prendervi parte e attingerne i frutti inesauribilmente.”[2]

Sono giorni di ringraziamento a Dio che in tanti modi ci ha dimostrato il suo amore, ed anche di concreti propositi di miglioramento personale. Ci possiamo chiedere come trattiamo Gesù quando assistiamo alla Messa, quando lo riceviamo nella Comunione e nelle visite al Santissimo Sacramento; se ci sforziamo di farlo ogni giorno con delicatezza maggiore; se sentiamo la responsabilità che i nostri amici o colleghi arrivino a conoscere Cristo per la nostra devozione eucaristica. Perché, come insegnava san Josemaría, «amor con amor si paga». Il Signore, non ce lo
dimentichiamo, ci ha amato sino alla fine (cfr. Gv 13, 1): fino a dare la sua vita per ciascuno di noi.

(English)

2. Saint Josemaría, in 1969 during Holy Week, said: “There are three things that we need to be especially thankful for: the institution of this sacrament, its perpetuation through the words of consecration that are recited by the priest, and its administration.”[3]

Let us also give thanks for the institution of the priesthood: “do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19), said our Lord to the Apostles at the Last Supper. Today, so as to emphasize that mandate in a special way, the Church asks God the Father to accept the offering that we present to Him, “as we observe the day on which our Lord Jesus Christ handed on the mysteries of his Body and Blood for his disciples to celebrate.”[4]

It was just a few days ago that we celebrated the ninetieth anniversary of our Father’s priestly ordination. Consider all the graces we have obtained from his priesthood, for the Church and for the whole world! If you are here today, participating in the Holy Mass near to the sacred mortal remains of Saint Josemaría, it is also because the founder of Opus Dei, faithful to the grace of his divine vocation, corresponded with total generosity to what our Lord wanted.

We turn to Saint Josemaría to thank him for his fidelity. And we ask him to intercede before God so that all of us, now and always, respond to our divine vocation of being Christians, with the loyalty and love with which he responded to our Lord's calling, without making excuses for ourselves.

(Spanish)

3. La Última Cena presenta un tercer aspecto, que no cabe olvidar: el servicio a los demás. “Os he dado ejemplo” (Jn 13:15), puntualizó el Señor después de lavar los pies a sus discípulos. Y, más adelante insistió en su enseñanza de servicio a los demás, encareciéndoles la importancia de vivir el mandatum novum, el mandamiento nuevo de la caridad: “Este es mi mandamiento: que os améis los unos a los otros como Yo os he amado” (Jn 15, 12).
A san Josemaría, desde muy joven, le enamoró esta recomendación y dispuso que en los centros del Opus Dei se pusiera una cartela con estas palabras del Señor. ¿Cómo llevar a la práctica este mandamiento nuevo? Hay modos muy diversos, pero de gran importancia es esforzarse para que las personas que tratamos, vivan habitualmente en la amistad de Cristo, frecuentando el sacramento de la Penitencia y recibiendo la Eucaristía. En esto consiste el apostolado cristiano, que todos hemos de realizar siguiendo la invitación del Maestro: “Id al mundo entero y predicad el Evangelio a toda criatura” (Mc 16, 15). San Josemaría hablaba del “apostolado de amistad y confidencia,” que consiste en saber iniciar —después de pedírselo al Señor— una conversación oportuna, de tú a tú, capaz de abrir a vuestros amigos inesperados horizontes sobrenaturales.

Esto mismo pide el Papa Francisco, cuando insiste en que todos los bautizados somos responsables de la nueva evangelización. “Ser discípulo es tener la disposición permanente de llevar a otros el amor de Jesús.... Es un diálogo personal, donde la otra persona se expresa y comparte sus alegrías, sus esperanzas, las inquietudes por sus seres queridos y tantas cosas que llenan el corazón. Sólo después de esta conversación es posible presentarle la Palabra... siempre recordando el anuncio fundamental: el amor personal de Dios que se hizo hombre, se entregó por nosotros y está vivo ofreciendo su salvación y su amistad.”

Roguemos a la Virgen, mujer eucarística y primera evangelizadora, la gracia de terminar estos días en Roma con un propósito firme: conducir una existencia cristiana más llena de amor a Dios, más comprometida en el servicio a los demás, tratando de que nuestros amigos, parientes y conocidos, se acerquen más a su Hijo Jesús, como ella lo hizo con su correspondencia generosa y alegre a los requerimientos de la gracia. Así sea.

Queridas hermanas y queridas hijas:

1. Al comenzar esta solemne vigilia hemos visto cómo, desde el cirio pascual, la luz se ha propagado hasta iluminar completamente la iglesia donde nos encontramos. Es una imagen muy sugestiva de lo que sucedió hace dos mil años, en una noche como ésta. Con la resurrección de Cristo —“la luz verdadera que ilumina a todo hombre que viene a este mundo” (Jn 1, 9)— se ha ido difundiendo la gracia salvadora que nos alcanzó en la Cruz. Por eso cantamos hoy con alegría el triple aleluya; y agradecemos la resurrección de Cristo, esperanza segura de la nuestra.

Alguien podría objetar, echando una mirada al mundo, que en muchos lugares —en no pocas almas— la luz de Cristo no se ha encendido aún, o parece estar mortecina. Y, a pesar de eso, la fe nos asegura que el Señor no ha fracasado. “Cristo vive. Jesús es el Enmanuel: Dios con nosotros. Su resurrección nos revela que Dios no abandona a los suyos.”[1]

Pero quiere contar con nosotros —con cada una y cada uno de los cristianos— para hacer llegar a todos los rincones los frutos de la redención. Y nos ha mostrado abundantes prendas de esa victoria: los sacramentos, entre los que ocupa un lugar preeminente la Sagrada Eucaristía: Cristo realmente presente con su cuerpo, sangre, alma y divinidad, para todos nosotros; el sacramento de la Penitencia, para que esa misma luz de Cristo borre nuestras ofensas y hagamos apostolado de este don, que san Josemaría calificaba como sacramento de la alegría. Además, en el alma, habita por la gracia el Espíritu Santo prometido, que nos inspira y nos guía por las sendas de la santidad. Y, finalmente, tenemos a la Madre de Dios como Madre nuestra, pues Jesucristo nos la entregó cuando moría en la Cruz.
Disponemos, pues, de todos los medios para que la luz de la Pascua se irradié por la tierra entera; y depende de nuestra respuesta personal, pues Dios ya lo ha cumplido sobreabundantemente y nos ha pedido que continuemos esta tarea en el tiempo que pasemos aquí abajo. ¿Cómo no recordar las palabras que dijo por medio del profeta? «¿Puede acaso la mujer olvidarse del fruto de su vientre, no compadecerse del hijo de sus entrañas? Pues aunque ella se olvidare, Yo no me olvidaré de ti» (Is 29-14-15).

2. We Christians today, just as those throughout history, have the wonderful responsibility of illuminating the whole world with the light of Christ. In the Gospel, He himself tells us: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house” (Mt 5:14-15).

We will fulfill our Lord’s mandate with our lives, with our good example, with our words, speaking of this God of ours in season and iout of season (2 Tim 4:2), as Saint Paul says. And, at all times, with our prayer and our union with Jesus on the Cross, seeking to place him at the summit of our study, of our work, of our daily interactions with the others.

I have the vivid memory of an image I saw a few years ago in Germany. I was told that, in a village that was nearly destroyed during the Second World War, they found amidst the ruins of the local church a statue of the crucified Christ, but without the arms. People wondered whether it would be worthwhile restoring it (it was a very old and valuable image) or whether it would be better to replace it with another one. In the end, the parish priest decided to leave it as it was and to add an inscription that says now you are my arms. I ask each of you, and I ask myself: do we know how to apply these words to ourselves? Are we truly eager to be the arms and hands of Christ, so as to draw many souls to him?

(French)

3. Nous sommes encore les bras et les mains du Christ lorsque nous diffusons la pratique de la confession sacramentelle, en premier lieu en nous confessant nous-mêmes. Dans le sacrement de la miséricorde divine, Dieu nous pardonne tous nos péchés, autant de fois qu'il le faut, si nous sommes
repentis et si nous avons le désir de ne plus l'offenser.

Avec quelle joie Dieu reçoit ses filles et ses filles dans ce sacrement! Comme il aime pardonner! Il était si pressé de communiquer à l’Église le pouvoir de remettre les péchés que, le jour même de sa résurrection, lors de la première apparition aux Apôtres, il leur conféra ce pouvoir, afin qu’ils le transmettent aux évêques et aux prêtres jusqu’à la fin des siècles. En soufflant sur eux, nous raconte saint Jean, il leur dit: «Recevez l’Esprit Saint. À qui vous remettrez ses péchés, ils seront remis» (Jn 20, 23).

Le Pape François vient de rappeler cet enseignement de l’Église: “La Confession est le sacrement de la tendresse de Dieu, sa manière de nous accueillir” (1er avril 2015). Et saint Jean Paul II assurait que, dans l’Opus Dei, il y a le charisme de la confession: une grâce particulière de Dieu pour conduire beaucoup d’âmes à ce tribunal de miséricorde. Je vous invite le faire chaque fois qu’une occasion se présente.

(Italian)

4. Nella prima apparizione agli Apostoli, Gesù risorto, prima di dare loro il potere di perdonare i peccati, donò la pace e «mostrò loro le mani e il fianco» (Gv 20, 20). In quel gesto scopriamo una prova ulteriore del suo ardente amore per noi, la conferma che possiamo sempre ricorrere a lui con fiducia. Consideriamo che anche in Cielo la Santissima Umanità del Signore conserva quelle piaghe causate dai nostri peccati. Con queste “credenziali,” come ripeteva san Josemaría, Egli ci ricorda —affinché lo capiamo bene— che sta sempre intercedendo per noi presso Dio Padre, e che ci concede il suo perdono se ricorriamo a lui nel sacramento della Penitenza.

San Josemaría coltivò sin da giovane una grandissima devozione per le piaghe del Signore. Ci diceva che nella vita si possono presentare dei momenti in cui sembra che le cattive passioni si ribellino; ci invitava allora a “metterci in ciascuna delle sue santissime ferite: per purificarci, per godere del suo sangue redentore, per fortificarci.”[2]

È il consiglio che anch’io vi do adesso. Innamoratevi della Santissima Umanità del Signore, non fuggite dalla Croce, con cui lui vuole benedirci:
egli ci dà la forza per portarla con gioia. E la nostra vita si colmerà di efficacia soprannaturale, con un’allegria contagiosa.


At the Priestly Ordination of Deacons of the Prelature, St. Eugene's Basilica, Rome (May 9, 2015)

My dear new priests;

Dear brothers and sisters:

1. In the collect prayer, we have asked God for the grace to live “with heartfelt devotion these days of joy, which we keep in honor of the risen Lord.”[1] The priestly ordination of these deacons gives special emphasis to the Easter joy that fills the Church. I am sure that this joy—as Pope Francis said some time ago—“has penetrated deep within our hearts; it has shaped them and strengthened them sacramentally.”[2] This reality can be said of every Christian, since we have all been anointed in Baptism and in Confirmation by the Holy Spirit, who has configured us to Christ and made us sharers in his unique priesthood. Today, in a different way, these brothers of ours will receive a new anointing by the Paraclete that will configure them to Christ the Head of the Church and bestow on them the power to carry out the priestly ministry, in the name and with the authority of Christ himself.

For you, my sons, it is a day of special joy. And with you, the Church also rejoices. “Priestly joy is a priceless treasure, not only for the priest himself but for the entire faithful people of God.”[3]
2. The vocation to the priesthood is a free call that God addresses to some men for the service of the Church, without taking into account preceding merits or other considerations. This is God’s way of acting, as we see in the first reading of the Mass. Confronting the narrow hearts of some people who opposed the baptism of the first Gentiles, St. Peter insisted: “God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him.”[4]

Another proof of how great God’s love is—and we can never grasp it in all its infinity—is seeing that the new priests come from four continents and fifteen different countries. Let us give thanks to God for his goodness and pray for them and for all the priests in the world. I also suggest that you pray for all the families in the world, since it is in the heart of Christian homes that God usually cultivates, as in a nursery, the various forms of the vocation to holiness.

The priesthood, I was saying, is a free call, but it has an irreplaceable importance in the Church. St. Josemaría wrote that “many great things depend on the priest: we have God, we bring God, we give God.... Consider the divinization of even our body: the tongue that brings God to others, the hands that touch him, the power of working miracles, in administering grace. All the riches of this world are worth nothing in comparison with what God has entrusted to the priest.”[5]

3. And you, my dear ordinands, consider that from now on you will be ministers and dispensers of God’s mysteries. You will explain the Word of God to all men and women; you will dispense grace in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist and in Penance; you will guide the Christian people to the pastures of eternal life, also with your prayer and good example; and you will help souls to come to know ever more fully the marvels of Christian life.

In a recent ordination of priests, Pope Francis said: “Remembering that you have been chosen from among men and constituted on their behalf to attend to the things of God, exercise the priestly ministry of Christ with joy and genuine love, with the sole intention of pleasing God and not yourselves.”[6]
Therefore, as our founder said, “a priest should be exclusively a man of God. He should reject any desire to shine in areas where other Christians do not need him. A priest is not a psychologist or a sociologist or an anthropologist. He is another Christ, Christ himself, who has to look after the souls of his brothers and sisters.”[7]

As far as the forgiveness of sins in Penance is concerned, try to always impart absolution; and if someone is not well disposed, help them with patience, with charity, with a spirit of sacrifice. Our Lord had mercy on sinners and called them to conversion. And St. Josemaría, who tried to act with a heart at the measure of Jesus’ merciful heart, did not hesitate to write: “In attending to souls in the holy sacrament of Penance, remember that passage from the Gospel, when our Lord replies to the question about how many times we should forgive: "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven" (Mt 18:22). Always: we need to always forgive, also in the sacrament of Penance.”[8] And referring to when he began his priestly work, he added: “I had no objection to forgiving the same person, multiple times on the same day, many faults in the same area, because ‘non est opus valentibus medicus, sed male habentibus’ (Mt 9:12); it is not those who are healthy, but the sick, who need the doctor. And at the same time, you have to do what is necessary to ensure that souls do not abuse divine grace.”[9]

The Eucharist! Words fall short in trying to adequately express the marvel of the Eucharistic sacrament. Strive each day to celebrate the Holy Mass as well as possible. In the Sacrifice of the Altar we all—priests and laity—find the grace we need for our personal sanctification and for the sanctification of the faithful. And—I tell you with St. Josemaría—don’t be in a hurry!

I congratulate once again your parents, your relatives and friends, all whose who are taking part in this ceremony and those who were not able to be present here. I ask all of you to pray for the new priests; they really count on your prayers to be worthy ministers of the One who has loved them with predilection and called them his friends.[10]

Also remember me in your prayers. And let us raise up our petitions each day for the Pope, for bishops, for priests, for all mankind.
Let us entrust these intentions to the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, in the month of May that we have begun, dedicated especially to our Lady.

Praised be Jesus Christ.

[1] Sixth Sunday of Easter, collect prayer.


[3] Ibid.


[9] Ibid.


At the Liturgical Solemnity of St. Josemaría St. Eugene's Basilica, Rome, (June 26, 2015)

My dear brothers and sisters:

1. In the second reading, St. Paul reminds us that "all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God... and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17-17).

   Every day, but today with greater intensity, I go to St. Josemaría asking him to obtain for us an ever greater love for our Lord, for the Church, for all humanity, through the intercession of our Lady.
The Church is the family of God on earth, born from the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. The Father of this great family is our Father God, "from whom all paternity in heaven and on earth takes its name" (Eph 3:15). Jesus, the only-begotten Son, through his incarnation, is our elder Brother, whom we should come to resemble more each day. The Holy Spirit is the Love of the Father and the Son, who has been poured into our hearts. And so that nothing might be missing in this family of the Church, we have been given Mary Most Holy as our Mother. Isn’t all this more than enough reason to give thanks to God with renewed strength?

Let us also give thanks to St. Josemaría, on this day of his liturgical feast, for having passed on to us, through his life and words, a treasure of teachings based solidly on the consideration of our divine filiation, an essential, irreplaceable, foundation for Christian life.

2. In accord with Pope Francis’ intentions, let us take advantage of these months of preparation for the Synod of Bishops on the family next October to pray more intensely for this meeting. To give greater strength to our petitions, I want to let you know that in Opus Dei we are celebrating a Marian year. Through our Lady’s intercession, we are asking the Most Holy Trinity that the Synod’s effort will strengthen people’s understanding of the nature and aims of the family, an absolutely essential institution for the good of the Church and society.

I would like to consider today some aspects of St. Josemaría’s teachings on this topic. We know how ardent his concern was for the good of families. He always looked “upon Christian homes with hope and affection, upon all the families which are the fruit of the Sacrament of Matrimony. They are a shining witness of the great divine mystery of Christ’s loving union with his Church which St. Paul calls sacramentum magnum, a great sacrament (Eph 5:32). We must strive so that these cells of Christianity may be born and may develop with a desire for holiness, conscious of the fact that the Sacrament of Initiation—Baptism—confers on all Christians a divine mission that each must fulfill in his or her own walk of life.”[1]

3. We are very aware (it’s not a new reality) of the attacks that the institution of the family is now undergoing. Many people insist on
rejecting the divine plan for the marital union, based on creation and confirmed in our redemption. As St. Josemaría pointed out, the underlying reason for this opposition often seems to be a form of “demographic neo colonialism.” Pope Francis has also recently denounced these efforts: “Let us be on guard against new... forms of ideological colonization which are out to destroy the family. They are not born... of prayers, of closeness to God or the mission which God gave us; they come from without, and for that reason I am saying that they are forms of colonization. Let’s not lose the freedom of the mission which God has given us, the mission of the family.”

The present situation should challenge us—always with hope and supernatural optimism—to recover and make known the true meaning of the family, in particular of the Christian family, called, as St. John Paul II said, “to take part actively and responsibly in the mission of the Church in a way that is original and specific, by placing itself, in what it is and what it does as an ‘intimate community of life and love,’ at the service of the Church and of society.”

Benedict XVI encouraged Christian families to find in the Eucharist a source of strength and inspiration. “The love between man and woman, openness to life, and the raising of children are privileged spheres in which the Eucharist can reveal its power to transform life and give it its full meaning.”

4. I would like to recall here some other words of St. Josemaría that can serve as a stimulus for all of us. He wrote: “Let’s be frank—the normal thing is for the family to be united. There may be friction and differences, but that’s quite normal. In a certain sense it even adds flavor to our daily life. These problems are insignificant, time always takes care of them. What remains firm is love, a true and sincere love which comes from being generous and which brings with it a concern for one another.”

The kingdom of God is seemingly weak in appearance, like a mustard seed. Certainly it requires our collaboration, with the awareness that it is God’s initiative and gift. As Pope Francis reminded us a few weeks ago: “Our weak effort, seemingly small before the complexity of the problems of the world, when integrated with God’s effort, fears no difficulty. The
victory of the Lord is certain: his love will make every seed of goodness present on the ground sprout and grow. This opens us up to trust and hope, despite the tragedies, the injustices, the sufferings that we encounter.\footnote{Pope Francis, Angelus address, June 14 2014.} Therefore I invite you to pray every day for the Holy Father, for bishops and priests.

I especially advise the married couples here present, the engaged couples who will marry soon, and all of you, to have a great faith in the action of the Holy Spirit for the good of all families. Teaching people the importance of Confession and the Eucharist is an excellent support for families. These sacraments are an unmatchable treasure for living charity with everyone, and therefore for unity in families.

Let us go to our Lady, who always intercedes for her children. We can make the same request that she made to her divine Son at the marriage feast in Cana: "They have no wine" (\textit{Jn} 2:3). Mother of ours, obtain for us from Jesus the “good wine” of God’s grace for all families, so that God may be loved and obeyed, in daily life, by fulfilling his saving plan, for the good of all mankind. So be it.

Praised be Jesus Christ!

\footnote{St. Josemaría, \textit{Conversations with Josemaría Escrivá}, no. 91.}
\footnote{Ibid., no. 94.}
\footnote{Pope Francis, Encounter with families in the Philippines, January 16, 2015.}
\footnote{St. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhort. \textit{Familiaris Consortium}, November 22, 1981, no. 50.}
\footnote{Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhort. \textit{Sacramentum Caritatis}, February 22, 2007, no. 79.}
\footnote{St. Josemaría, \textit{Conversations with Josemaría Escrivá}, no. 101.}
\footnote{St. Josemaría, \textit{Conversations with Josemaría Escrivá}, no. 101.}

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At the Solemn Mass for the Liturgical Memorial of Blessed Álvaro del Portillo, St. Eugene's Basilica, Rome (May 12, 2015)

My dear brothers and sisters

1. We are celebrating for the first time the liturgical memorial of Blessed Álvaro del Portillo. The Mass begins with these words: “This is the good and faithful servant whom the Lord has placed in charge of his household.”[1] We are filled with joy on seeing how God transforms us, weak creatures, into his beloved sons, making us sharers in his divine life. We recall this truth in today’s celebration, and also when the Church declares the holiness of one of her children. The Fathers of the Church said that the sanctification of souls is the greatest marvel worked by the Holy Spirit, after the miracle of the Eucharistic conversion carried out each day on our altars.

Some years ago, the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger commented on the words of the blind man from Jericho—"Lord, that I may see!"—that St. Josemaría frequently meditated upon. “Only when one learns to see God,” said the future Benedict XVI, “does one see well. And one begins to see God when one sees the will of God and wants what he wants. A longing to see the will of God and to put his own will into that of God was and remained the real driving force of Escrivá’s life.”[2] This was also the path followed by Blessed Álvaro. Let us give thanks to God for filling him with “a spirit of truth and love.”[3]

2. Don Álvaro attained heavenly beatitude because from his youth, and especially after he met St. Josemaría, he took seriously the call to holiness addressed by God to all men and women. His was an “unquestioned fidelity to God, carrying out his will promptly and generously; fidelity to the Church and the Pope; fidelity to his priesthood; and fidelity to his vocation as a Christian in every moment and circumstance of his life.”[4]

The readings of the Mass speak to us of the Good Shepherd. In the book of the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord promised that he himself would be the shepherd of his sheep: "As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will
rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness."[5] This is how Blessed Alvaro acted, as an exemplary shepherd in the Church. I am a witness to his ardent love for all souls; not only those entrusted to him as prelate of Opus Dei, but all mankind, without exception. He made his own the words of St. Paul in the second reading: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake."[6]

In his letter for the beatification of Don Alvaro, Pope Francis wrote: “Especially outstanding was his love for the Church, the Spouse of Christ, whom he served with a heart devoid of worldly self-interest, far from discord, welcoming towards everyone and always seeking in others what was positive, what united, what was constructive. He never spoke a word of complaint or criticism, even at especially difficult times, but instead, as he had learned from St. Josemaría, he always responded with prayer, forgiveness, understanding and sincere charity.”[7]

3. Today’s Gospel presents us with the figure of the Good Shepherd who "gives his life for his sheep," the only one who can say: "I know my sheep and mine know me."[8] Jesus wished to choose some men who, in the Church, would represent him and take his place. Among these Blessed Álvaro, first as a most faithful son of St. Josemaría and later as his successor in Opus Dei, guided for almost twenty years the faithful of the Prelature—laity and priests—along the paths opened up by the founder. He reminded us of so many things; among others, to live fully united to God's will, as he had learned from St. Josemaría. That was the source of his constant serenity, which he spread to those around him. I like to remember Don Álvaro’s face, which infused peace, joy, friendship, readiness to serve. Many people felt spurred, after meeting him, to reflect deeply on how Christ must have looked at people, attracting the multitudes to himself.

I can also assure you that, in the face of setbacks, at times serious ones, he was for us and for everyone a strong and sympathizing support. “Why do the saints seem filled with peace, even in the midst of pain, disgrace, poverty, and persecutions?”, he asked himself in one of his pastoral letters. “The answer is very clear,” he continued. “Because they strove to identify themselves with the will of their Father in Heaven, imitating Christ; because when facing both what is agreeable and what is disagreeable, what requires little effort and what perhaps demands great sacrifice, they decide
to put themselves in God’s presence and declare firmly: ‘Is that what you want, Lord?... Then it’s what I want also!’ ( The Way, 762). That is the root of effectiveness and the source of joy!”[9]

With the passage of the years, it seems to me that it is easy to discover in these words a “self-portrait” of Don Álvaro. He had contemplated this reality very closely in the life of St. Josemaría, and his fidelity was such that, without even noticing it, he showed us the identity proper to a man of God, but also very human.

Let us make the resolution now, following Blessed Álvaro’s example, to “humbly dedicate ourselves to the Church’s saving mission,”[10] as we asked at the beginning of this Mass, bringing many people to the sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist. Let us entrust our petitions to our Lady in this month dedicated to her, and pray with the Pope and for the Pope.

Praised be Jesus Christ.

[1] Entrance antiphon, (Ps 34[33]:2)


1. The texts of the Mass are very eloquent and moving, speaking to us of divine mercy. In the collect prayer we asked God: “Look graciously on this confession of our lowliness, that we, who are bowed down by our conscience, may always be lifted up mercy.”

This is a recurrent theme during this liturgical period. The Church invites us to follow Christ on his last trip to Jerusalem, to carry out the sacrifice of our salvation: that of all humanity and of each one of us. Therefore it is important that we renew every day our desire for conversion, which needs to be shown in insistent prayer, in assiduous mortification, in the practice of works of charity. Thus we will respond, to the extent of our strength, but with generosity, to divine mercy.

The greatest manifestation of God’s mercy is the incarnation of Jesus Christ and his death on the Cross for our salvation. “God so loved the world,” St. John tells us, “that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.” And St. Paul, in the second reading, says: “we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

Divine mercy fills the whole earth. Not only did God send his Son to save us through his sacrifice on Calvary and glorious resurrection, but he has wanted this grace to be always present, until the end of time. Therefore he has left us his Word in the Gospel and entrusted to the Church his sacraments, which we should receive frequently. It is only natural, then, that at every moment—but especially when we celebrate the Eucharist—we renew our gratitude and resolve to make better use of these sources of grace. Jesus was sent by the Father to converse with us, to speak with men and women, and he has great interest in our personal life.

2. Among the seven sacraments, Orders holds a unique position. Thanks to the sacred ministers, the Church is able to fulfill its mission fully. Today we thank God for the ordination as deacons of these brothers
of ours. From this moment on, they will be sharers in Christ’s salvific mission in teaching the faith, in liturgical service, and in the service of charity. I would like to refer briefly to these offices.

In the first place, my dear future deacons, you will have to teach people the path of salvation marked out by the commandments of God’s law. The Lord’s ten words on Mount Sinai are addressed to all men and women, with no exception. They were inscribed by God himself in human nature right from the creation of our first parents. Nevertheless, so that they not be forgotten, God also wanted them to be recorded in Holy Scripture. But we have to give witness to them with our daily conduct, so that people see Jesus when they look at us.

Let us not forget that the commandments are not a law imposed from without, foreign to our deepest impulses and desires; on the contrary, they fully accord with our human nature. God has created us for love, so that we might attain eternal happiness, and this is our path: there is no other. We can always count on God’s help. As St. Augustine stated: “God does not command impossible things; but, in commanding, he admonishes us both to do what you can, and to seek his grace to do what you cannot do.”

Our Lord’s yoke is not heavy when it is accepted with love. As we exclaimed in the responsorial Psalm: “The Law of the Lord is perfect; refreshing the soul... The precepts of the Lord are right, refreshing the heart. The command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eye.”

3. I would like to add some words about the other offices that await you. By your diaconal ordination, you become co-workers of the bishop and priests in the liturgical service. Not only because you can administer Holy Communion to your brothers and sisters, but because it is your responsibility to put special care and affection into everything referring to divine worship. Yes, Jesus Christ awaits you! Treat him with great refinement.

Finally, in what refers to the service of charity, in close union with your bishop, remember that by serving Christ in your fellow men with humility and patience, you should guide your brothers and sisters “to that King for whom to serve is to reign.” If you have to stand out in anything, may it be in your spirit of service. St. Josemaría taught us that “we have to make
ourselves a carpet so that others may tread softly.”[7] This is not just a nice phrase. He went on to insist that it has to be a reality in the life of every Christian. He also taught us that “charity does not consist so much in ‘giving’ as in ‘understanding’.”[8] Let us strive to do so each day.

I congratulate the relatives and friends of the new deacons. I ask you to keep praying for them and for all sacred ministers, from the Pope down to the last deacon recently ordained. Also pray for me so that each day I may be the good and faithful servant that our Lord wants. And let us also beseech our Lord to raise up many vocations to the priesthood.

To conclude, let us entrust our petitions to our Lady, in this Marian year that we are observing in Opus Dei. We place under Mary’s protection especially all families, fundamental building blocks of society, and in a special way Christian families, who are called to be true domestic churches.

Praised be Jesus Christ!

In considering the origin and content of the decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, on the ministry and life of priests, it will be helpful to first briefly mention the various changes its drafting process underwent, both during the preparatory phase of the Council and during the Council itself. We will also need to take into account the history of the various De Ecclesia schemas (which eventually became the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*), since the questions about the priesthood dealt with there had direct repercussions on the preparation of the decree on priests.

I. *A brief historical introduction*

As is well-known, in order to determine the topics the Council would address, the opinion of all the world’s bishops was asked for, as well as that of the Roman Curia and the ecclesiastical universities. The proposals, which were very numerous, were distributed among ten commissions and three secretariats; a large number of schemas for possible documents were prepared, to be studied and worked on in the Conciliar assembly.

But as you also know, this abundant preliminary material was almost totally discarded by the Council fathers. There were many reasons for doing so, although they came down in the end to basically two:

a) These schemas dealt with many quite diverse questions that often lacked any connecting thread.

b) Their formulation was based, in general, on a theology that had been forged down through the centuries and that was seen as sufficiently solid, without attempting any major deepening in this teaching. As far as the priesthood was concerned, the common opinion was that priests possessed the fullness of the priesthood, since their principal responsibility was to consecrate the Body and Blood of Christ in celebrating Mass; all the other priestly functions were subordinated to this potestas or “power.”
Therefore the teaching was quite widespread that the episcopate did not constitute the highest grade of the Sacrament of Holy Orders; it was understood as an added power—one of jurisdiction—to the power priests already possessed, for organizing and governing the Church.

But right away the objection was raised that this vision of the hierarchy suffered from a clear defect: the failure to sufficiently consider the Church as *communio*, an insight a number of theologians had been developing in the first half of the twentieth century.

Charles Moeller offered a perceptive remark in this regard when, in a book with commentaries by various authors on the constitution *Lumen Gentium*, published in 1965, he began his article with these words: “If anyone, in January 1959, had said that a few years later [in 1964] a dogmatic constitution on the Church would be promulgated, he would have been viewed as a naïve dreamer.”[1]

The Conciliar sessions began on October 11, 1962. As the work progressed, the need to deepen the ecclesiological roots of many of the topics being discussed became more evident. As far as the priesthood was concerned, in October 1963, in the second Conciliar session, a good number of the fathers expressed their dissatisfaction. As one of them pointed out, the paragraph the schema *De Ecclesia* dedicated to the ministerial priesthood was very brief (scarcely a half page in length), as opposed to the nine pages dedicated to the episcopate, and was quite sketchy in content. The fear was expressed that priests would find this treatment disappointing, since they might think that the Council was not giving sufficient attention to the great service to the Church that their mission entailed.

To remedy this without modifying the schema on the Church, the possibility was suggested of preparing a message from the Conciliar fathers to priests. A proposal was presented for the consideration of the assembly, but so many alterations were suggested that the second session of the Council ended without the message being completed, and therefore it was never sent.

At the same time, some interventions by the Council fathers had pointed, though indirectly, to the need to go more deeply into the
ecclesiology of communion. Here was found the foundation for the revision and new formulation of the part of the schema De Ecclesia that dealt specifically with priests. These new ideas helped make it clear that there was no need to send a message specifically to priests, and that what was required was to confront in depth this topic of vital importance for the Church.

As mentioned above, the Conciliar fathers agreed that a comprehensive vision of the Church had for the most part been lacking in their reflections. In this regard, in the proposal for the dogmatic constitution on the Church studied during the second Conciliar session (1963), chapter I, on the mystery of the Church, was followed by chapter II, on the hierarchy. Only in chapter III was the vision of the Church as the people of God and, in particular, the importance and role of the laity set forth. The observations and proposals for improvements suggested by the Fathers led to the clarifying decision that chapter II should be dedicated to the people of God (to which those who form part of the hierarchy belong equally with the lay faithful), after setting forth the mystery of the Church as a whole, since being a member of the people of God (Christifidelis) is common to all the baptized, whether laity or ordained ministers. And only afterwards would it discuss the hierarchical constitution of the Church (chapter III) and the laity (chapter IV).

II. Writing the decree on priests

The drafting of the decree that would eventually be promulgated under the title *Presbyterorum Ordinis* was entrusted to the Conciliar Commission for the Discipline of the Clergy and the Christian People.

In the title of that commission the clergy and the Christian people were improperly distinguished from each other—reflecting a situation that, as we have seen, was little by little being overcome. With regard to the Christian people, in the preparatory stage various schemas were drawn up on the care of souls, catechesis, and the associations of the faithful. Regarding the discipline of the clergy, eight schemas were drafted in that preparatory phase; some dealt with overly specific questions, such as the union and division of parishes, the clerical way of dressing and tonsure, and the ordination of those who had been ministers in a non-Catholic
Christian religion. All discussed practical aspects of the ministry and life of priests, but without delving deeply into a true theology of the priesthood.

After the first session of the Council had already begun, Don Álvaro del Portillo, on November 8, 1962, was named secretary of this commission. Its president was Cardinal Ciriaci who, owing to some health problems, usually entrusted to Don Álvaro the task of directing and coordinating the work of the members and experts who made up that body. Naturally, Don Álvaro kept the president closely informed regarding the progress of their work. His efforts in confronting this task is yet another reason for being grateful for the untiring dedication of the one who is now Blessed Álvaro, His zeal in the service of the Church and his great love for the priesthood produced, as a very important fruit of the Council, the promulgation of the decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*.[3] More than a few fathers and theologians considered it of singular importance for its doctrinal and pastoral richness. Therefore, in describing the content of the decree, I will also make use of some paragraphs taken from Álvaro del Portillo’s own writings about the priesthood.

Without digressing too far, it seems of particular importance to me that in the course of Don Álvaro’s cause of canonization, many witnesses testified to his ability to create around him an effective climate of trust and teamwork. Even before taking part in the Council, he was well known in Spain and Italy for his human warmth, his priestly simplicity, and his deep theological and canonical knowledge—qualities that he strove to improve each day for the greater service of the Church, the prelature of Opus Dei, and all souls. He was esteemed by the Roman Pontiffs that he met personally. He came to know Pius XII when still a young civil engineer, and both John XXIII and Paul VI showed him great affection. After the Council, he was close to St. John Paul II, whom he dealt with as a trusting son during the years of his pastoral service to the Church as Prelate of Opus Dei.

This respect and admiration was shared by many people in the Roman Curia, including cardinals and bishops others who worked there. His effective assistance was greatly appreciated by various congregations and Pontifical councils over the years. He had an admirable capacity to establish friendship with a great variety of people, whom he tried to serve
wherever he could. Many expressed their joy at learning of his election as head of Opus Dei, after the death of St. Josemaría. And knowing Don Álvaro, they were not surprised when in the crucial moment of the death of the founder of an institution of the Church, in Opus Dei no “earthquake” took place; not only because of the unity of its faithful, but also because of the internal and external prestige the first successor of St. Josemaría enjoyed.

Although Don Álvaro maintained a refined reserve about his work in the Council, I gratefully preserve many recollections of my life close to such a good servant of the Church during those years, and I was a witness to his self-sacrificing dedication in the tasks entrusted to him. He frequently worked late into the night, while never allowing these efforts to lessen his dedication to his responsibilities in Opus Dei, in assisting the founder as secretary general.

I was usually present at the mid-day meal conversations with many of the Conciliar fathers and experts, who were invited by St. Josemaría Escrivá through Blessed Álvaro. And I frequently had an opportunity to be present—intervening as little as possible—at conversations between St. Josemaría with Blessed Álvaro about topics related to the priesthood, although they never spoke about the tasks he was carrying out in the Council. Those dialogues undoubtedly helped Don Álvaro when he had to suggest solutions to the questions that arose in the Conciliar hall or in the various commissions, in order to later present them for detailed study by the Conciliar commission of which he was secretary.

The venerable Cardinal Augustin Mayer, who worked in the Conciliar commission in charge of preparing the decree on priestly formation, often expressed his gratitude to Msgr. Del Portillo, who had enriched the study and conclusions of the document prepared by that commission.

Returning now to the topic that directly concerns us, during the Council’s first session (October — December 1962) the Commission for the Discipline of the Clergy and the Christian People awaited specific indications from the Secretariat presided over by Archbishop Pericle Felici, on how they should study the various pertinent questions. When that session ended, it became clear that the Council’s work was not progressing
as quickly as hoped for. Therefore in January 1963, the Coordinating Commission drastically reduced the number of proposals that had to be examined in the general assembly. And it entrusted to the Commission for the Discipline of the Clergy and the Christian People the task of drafting—based on three schemas drawn up in the preparatory stage—a proposal for a decree on the clergy, divided into three chapters: I. Sanctity of the clergy; II. Pastoral knowledge and training of the clergy; III. Administration of ecclesiastical goods. Also included, as an appendix, was a brief exhortation on the distribution of the clergy throughout the world.

As one can see, this proposal included pastoral and practical topics that it was considered opportune to deal with in a single document. And as far as the theology of the priesthood was concerned, it was understood that, if some additions needed to be suggested (something that wasn’t considered necessary at that time), the proper place to do so would be in the De Ecclesia schema then in preparation. The Commission for the Discipline of the Clergy and the Christian People produced the schema De clericis, which was then handed over to the Council fathers for their observations and suggested changes, to be sent in writing.

The Council, as I already mentioned, was moving ahead slowly. Therefore when the second session ended, the Coordinating Commission decided on a new reduction in the documents that had to be studied in the assembly. And it indicated that the De clericis schema should be drastically reduced to its essential points and summarized in some brief propositions.

The schema with these propositions was entitled De sacerdotibus (no longer De clericis), which when reworked would become De vita et ministerio sacerdotali. As in the previous year, to compensate for the brevity of this text devoted to priests, the Commission for the Discipline of the Clergy asked the Coordinating Commission to authorize a new proposal for a message to be sent to all the priests in the world from the Council fathers.

Those propositions were discussed for the first time in the Council Hall on October 13-15, 1964. The voting on the text showed that the fathers wanted a much broader and more organic document on the priesthood. As Cardinal Julian Herranz remarked, then an assistant to the
Secretary of the Conciliar Commission, the rejection of such a short proposal was a matter of great joy to Don Álvaro and also to the members of the commission, who had accepted very much against their will the directive to reduce the schema to a few almost telegraphic propositions. They greatly desired to be able to offer priests a text they could welcome with satisfaction, given their indispensable role in the Church.\(^5\) And thus the proposal of sending a message to priests was abandoned for the second time.

The Commission on the discipline of the clergy and the Christian people worked intensely to develop the theology of the priesthood sketched out in no. 28 of *Lumen Gentium*, on priests and their mission in the Church. This provided the framework for the pastoral, disciplinary and ascetical reflections that logically ensued. A month later, on November 20, 1964, eve of the promulgation of the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* and near the end of the third Conciliar session, the printed proposal for the decree *De ministerio et vita presbyterorum* was handed to the Council fathers.

Don Álvaro’s work as secretary of the commission was arduous, bringing its efforts to a successful conclusion in a very brief period of time. This work also included many hours of studying proposals and holding personal and joint conversations with the sixty people from seventeen countries—including cardinals, bishops, theologians and canonists—who made up the commission. One of the commission members who said he was especially pleased was Bishop Marty, then Archbishop of Reims and later Cardinal Archbishop of Paris. Equally so were the experts who collaborated most directly, among whom I am pleased to recall Msgr. Onclin (Dean of the School of Canon Law at the Louvain) and Father Lecuyer, of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit.\(^6\)

This new proposal for the decree was discussed during the fourth and final session of the Council, on October 14—16 and 25—26 in 1965. It was approved almost unanimously as the guideline for the work of redrafting that the commission carried out in less than 20 days. The new text was voted on in the Council hall on November 12—13, 1965, obtaining an ample approval of each of its chapters and articles. Nevertheless, proposals for amendments were also made and, taking these
into account, the text was revised and printed again. During that time period, those taking part in the work praised the secretary’s capacity for synthesis and his theological and canonical depth, finding the most appropriate ways to make the suggested changes. Finally, the decree was submitted for a vote on December 2, 1965, being approved by a margin of 2,243 placet with only 11 non placet.

This document, the decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, on the ministry and life of the priest, was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965, eve of the solemn closing of the Council. A few days later, Cardinal Pietro Ciriaci wrote a letter to Don Álvaro from which I take a few paragraphs:

“With the definitive approval on this past December 7, the great work of our commission has been happily concluded, thanks be to God. The decree, not the least important of the Conciliar decrees and constitutions, has been brought to be successful end.”

And after recalling with joy “the almost unanimous vote,” the president of the commission responsible for its drafting added:

“I know very well how great a role you have had in all this, with your wise and tenacious work, and friendly demeanor. While always respecting other people’s freedom of opinion, you have ensured fidelity to the great guiding principles of priestly spirituality. When I inform the Holy Father, I will not fail to point out all of this. Meanwhile, I want you to receive, with warm applause, my most sincere thanks.”[7]

III. Coordinates of the decree

This decree has as its foundation no. 28 of the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*, which presupposes the common priesthood of all the faithful (chapter II of that constitution) and the doctrine on the ministerial priesthood, found in the numbers that deal with the bishops (chapter III). Within this chapter, no. 28 of *Lumen Gentium* begins by putting the priesthood of ordained priests in relationship with Christ’s consecration and mission, as well as with the ecclesiastical hierarchy as a whole. It continues with a description of the bonds that unite the priest with his bishop, with his brothers in the priesthood, with the other faithful and with all men and women, called to belong to the people of God.
The close tie between consecration and mission, within the framework of ecclesial communion, provides the coordinates for the Council’s teaching on the priesthood. What is new here is not the attempt to reform the earlier teaching, but rather to place it, as Blessed Álvaro wrote, within its natural Christological and ecclesiological framework. That is, within the framework of “the mission of the Church received from Christ,” [which] “is one, and is entrusted to all the members of the people of God who, by the sacraments of initiation, are made sharers in the priesthood of Christ [the common priesthood]... A single mission, of universal scope, and, to carry it out, a single priesthood, in which all the members of the people of God share, although in different ways.”[8]

Within that unity, the Sacrament of Holy Orders “is fundamentally and above all a configuration, a sacramental and mysterious transformation of the person of the man-priest into the person of Christ himself, the only mediator.”[9] The priest is thereby sealed with an indelible character and made a perpetual minister for the preaching of the Gospel, for pastorally directing the faithful and for celebrating divine worship, functions that converge and attain their culmination in the celebration of the Eucharist. And as we read in Presbyterorum Ordinis, no. 14, with an expression that Blessed Álvaro had heard so many times from St. Josemaría, the Eucharist is the centrum ac radix, the center and root of the life of every priest and of the whole Church. As Presbyterorum Ordinis (no. 5) says: “The other sacraments, as well as every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate, are tied together with the Eucharist and are directed towards it... In this light, the Eucharist is seen as the source and the apex of the whole work of preaching the Gospel.”

In regard to the previously mentioned duality of the priest’s consecration and mission, we find among the Council fathers two tendencies that accentuate either the consecration or the mission. Don Álvaro del Portillo described the situation thus: “Throughout the Conciliar debates about the decree on priests, two positions arose that, considered separately, could appear opposed and even contradictory to one another. Stress was laid, on the one hand, on the aspect of evangelization in the announcement of the message of Christ to mankind; on the other hand, the accent was placed on worship and adoration of God as the goal to
which everything should converge in the ministry and life of priests. An effort to attain a synthesis, a conciliation, became necessary, and the commission put all its efforts into harmonizing these two viewpoints, which were not opposed nor, therefore, mutually exclusive.\[10\]

As the members of the commission remarked, Don Álvaro’s untiringly efforts to combine and harmonize these viewpoints were decisive for reaching the desired conclusion. “These two diverse doctrinal positions on the priesthood,” Msgr. Del Portillo says in his book on the priesthood, “attain their full significance when integrated within a total synthesis, which allows one to see how these two aspects are absolutely inseparable facets that complement and mutually highlight each other. The ministry in favor of mankind can only be understood as a service rendered to God (see Rom 1:9); and, in turn, the glory of God demands that the priest be eager to unite to his own praise that of all mankind... We see here, therefore, a dynamic perspective of the priestly ministry that, in proclaiming the Gospel, engenders faith in those who do not yet believe (see Rom 12:1), so that, by belonging to the people of God, they may unite their sacrifice to that of Christ, forming a single body with him.”\[11\]

We find confirmation of these words in no. 2 of *Presbyterorum Ordinis*: “Through the ministry of the priests, the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is made perfect in union with the sacrifice of Christ. He is the only mediator who in the name of the whole Church is offered sacramentally in the Eucharist and in an unbloody manner until the Lord himself comes. The ministry of priests is directed to this goal and is perfected in it.”

The Holy Father Francis insists without ceasing on a Church that doesn’t remain closed in on itself, but that goes out to all men and women, always in close union with Jesus Christ. We can cite here some recent words of his to the clergy in Naples:

“I would like to conclude with three things. First: adoration. ‘Do you pray?’ — ‘I pray, yes.’ I ask, I thank, I praise the Lord. But, do you adore the Lord? We have lost the meaning of the adoration of God: we must bring back the adoration of God. Second: you cannot love Jesus without loving his Bride. Love for the Church. We have met many priests who loved the Church and we saw that they loved her. Third, and this is
important: apostolic zeal, that is, being a missionary. Love for the Church leads one to make her known, to go beyond oneself in order to go out and preach the Revelation of Jesus, but it also impels one to go beyond oneself to approach that other transcendence, namely adoration. In the context of being a missionary I think that the Church has to journey a little more, convert more, for the Church is not an NGO, but is the Bride of Christ who has the greatest treasure: Jesus. Her mission, her raison d’être is precisely this: to evangelize, in other words, to bring Jesus. Adoration, love for the Church and being a missionary. These are the three things that came to mind spontaneously.”[12]

IV. Structure and content of Presbyterorum Ordinis

The introduction makes clear the need to continue developing the doctrine on the priesthood, already found in the constitution on the sacred liturgy and in the dogmatic constitution Lumen Gentium. The decree continues with three chapters: 1) the priesthood in the mission of the Church; 2) the ministry of priests; 3) the life of priests.

The second chapter, the most extensive one (nos. 4-11), sets out the priestly functions: preaching the Word of God; being ministers of the sacraments, above all of the Holy Eucharist; and instructing the People of God in the faith, seen here as a synonym for the pastoral care of the faithful. It then considers, within the framework of the priestly ministry, the relationship of priests with their bishops, with their brothers in the priesthood, and with the lay faithful.

The language is mostly theological in the first part of this section and, without losing this characteristic, in the second part there begin to appear some pastoral, ascetical, and disciplinary consequences. Later on these would be put into practice and receive juridical formulation through successive post-conciliar Pontifical documents, and eventually in the 1983 Code of Canon Law, and the Code of the Canons of the Oriental Churches in 1990.

Among these ascetical and pastoral con-sequences, we can underline here the make-up of the presbyteral council (no. 7), as well as the related reflections in no. 8; the sacramental bond of fraternity found among all priests, especially among those who form a single diocesan presbyterate,
united among themselves by special bonds of apostolic charity, ministry, and fraternity. No one can live in isolation; we all need the friendly support of brothers with whom we meet frequently and who look upon us with affection, notice what we need, contribute to our smile, and help us in our daily life. The text continues with reflections on the relationship between young and not so young priests, and also expresses great esteem for associations that foster the holiness of the clergy in the exercise of their ministry. The number that we are commenting on closes by recalling the special solicitude that priests should show in serving brothers of theirs who are going through moments of special difficulty.

The relationship of priests with the laity (no. 9) is explained in terms of service, and also of respect for the role that corresponds to them in the Church and in civil society. I dare to say that the priest has to learn each day to love souls, one by one, without excluding anyone. Both in personal dealings with each individual and in the pastoral care of families—the great challenge of our day—and of the Christian community as a whole, the priest has to continually strive to make himself all things to all men, as St. Paul exhorts (see 1 Cor 9:22). Thus he will help foster in everyone the “joy of the Gospel” Pope Francis speaks of—a joy that “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.”[13] Then there will grow in the people of God, both priests and laity, an eagerness to go forth to seek many other souls, so that they may come to share in the supernatural and human joy that doesn’t fit in any heart, no matter how big it is, and that always strives to overflow and spread without limits.

With a concern for the good of the whole Church, no. 10 offers some practical suggestions: reforming the process of incardination by adapting it to specific needs, and facilitating special pastoral tasks that redound to the benefit of the particular churches in which they are carried out, through personal dioceses or prelatures that can be inserted harmoniously in the hierarchical organization of the Church, as is set forth in Communionis Notio.[14]

Chapter II ends with no. 11 of the decree, which deals with vocations to the priesthood. This has to be a constant concern on the part of the
whole Church and in a special way of bishops and priests. As the archives of Blessed Álvaro del Portillo make clear, this section of the decree caused a conflict of jurisdiction that lasted from November 1964 to May 1965. And since the members of the commission had already returned to their respective cities and countries, Don Álvaro had to try to resolve this problem almost on his own.

The conflict arose because the commission preparing the decree on priestly formation had dedicated nos. 2 and 3 of the decree Optatam Totius to the fostering of vocations. Members of this commission went to Don Álvaro and asked him to remove this section from Presbyterorum Ordinis. Blessed Álvaro didn’t see how he could agree, since it would be inconceivable to have a text about priests without referring to their solicitude for vocations, a concern that had to be a constant yearning in every priest. Both the Secretariat of the Council and the Coordinating Commission intervened in this controversy. Finally the decision was made to submit the question to the opinion of the Conciliar fathers, when they gathered again for the fourth and final session of the Council. This was done, and the vote resulted in the decision that although the topic was already well covered in the decree Optatam Totius, it could not be left untreated in the decree on priests, since its omission would be an inexplicable gap.

I will now turn very briefly to chapter III of the decree, on the life of priests (nos. 12-21). Stress is laid on the need for priests to strive seriously for sanctity, as all the faithful are called to do. I think the nucleus of this chapter is found in no. 14, where unity of life and pastoral charity are described.

Pastoral charity impels the priest to seek holiness in the exercise of his ministry. The Conciliar text overcame a vision according to which acts of worship and personal practices of piety were seen as sources for gathering spiritual energy, which later would be poured out—almost we could say, gradually drained—in the activities proper to the priestly ministry. Two parallel lines were thus set up: that of personal sanctification and that of priestly work. The decree united these two lines, making clear that the participation of the priest in the mediation of Christ—acting in persona Christi capitis, in communion with the bishops and with the whole
Church—is directed inseparably to both God and men. These two aims are harmoniously fused in a priest’s unity of life and mutually demand one another. So much so that the one cannot subsist without the other; all of a priest’s actions contribute both to his personal sanctification as well as to the good of souls.

The decree ends with an exhortation to trust in God, who never abandons his Church. The conclusion (no. 22) is an impassioned song to hope, taken from the letter to the Ephesians: “Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus” (Eph 3:20—21).

I end by invoking the protection of the Mare de Deu dels Desamparats. May our Lady of the Forsaken lead us by the hand on our journey in life, so that we begin each day with a renewed eagerness to pour out our heart to God in prayer and to give ourselves to souls. I take advantage of this talk to ask everyone to pray for the Pope and those who assist him in governing the Church, for all bishops and priests, for priestly and religious vocations, and for the holiness of all the Christian people.

Valencia, April 17, 2015

+ Javier Echevarría
Prelate of Opus Dei


[2] In the Conciliar phase, the content of those proposals was partially used in other documents, or remained archived for their study in the future revision of the Code of Canon Law.


Letter of Cardinal Pietro Ciriaci, president of the Conciliar Commission on the discipline of the clergy and the Christian people, to Don Álvaro del Portillo; December 14, 1965: AGP, APD D-17105 (original in Italian).

Álvaro del Portillo, Escritos sobre el sacerdocio (On the Priesthood), sixth ed., Madrid 1990, pp. 39-40. Lumen Gentium no. 10 teaches that the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood differ not in degree but essentially (as was already explained in Pius XII’s encyclical Mediator Dei, November 20, 1947, nos. 22 ff.); but the added clarification is made that both priesthoods mutually require each other.

Ibid., p. 82.

Ibid., 42.


Pope Francisco, Words to the Clergy in the Cathedral of Naples, March 21, 2015.


Dearest Silvano: May Jesus watch over my daughters and sons of Kenya!

Minutes before the Good Friday ceremonies, I feel the need to write to you so as to be closer to each one of you. The news of the senselessness of yesterday’s attack has naturally gone round the world, and from the first moment, I have united myself to your sorrow in the face of such meaningless violence, and I unite myself with all my heart to your suffrages for the victims and to the sorrow of their families.

It is necessary that you live the reality of this Communion of Saints which leads us to always act like a pine cone, united and very secure because you have the support of the prayer and the mortification of the Father and of the entire Work, and also of many souls. I count — now in a special way — on you, on your piety, on the offering of the restlessness and discomforts, on your serenity because you are in the hands of God, who takes a lot of care of his Kenyan children, and although the Cross may weigh, Our Lord permits it for the good of those who love him and of humanity.

As the period of Easter begins, in the vigil tomorrow, pray with a lot of faith to the Holy Spirit for those who have committed such an atrocity, so that they may repent and rectify.

I beg you to sustain my intentions and not to relax in the apostolate, convinced that the Blessed Trinity will draw abundant fruit from this situation.

I finish repeating what I told you at the beginning: you count on the prayer of the whole Work, and of many good people, who help us effectively with their prayers. Try to transmit Christian meaning and peace around you: foster among people that they may know how to forgive and to pray for those who commit such atrocities.

I love and I bless you with immense affection,
The new encyclical of the Holy Father Francis is closely tied to the opening pages of Sacred Scripture: God created the human being as man and woman and placed them in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it (Gen 2:15). And he brought all the animals to the man to see how he would name them (cf. Gen 2:19). This was an act of love on God’s part, an expression of his confidence in each human being, to whom he entrusted the task of developing the potentialities that he himself had placed in creatures.

Each of us is a guardian and caretaker of creation. As the Pope reminds us, God placed man and woman in the garden not only to preserve it, but also to make it fruitful by tilling it, by their work. “Developing the created world in a prudent way,” Francis says, “is the best way of caring for it, as this means that we ourselves become the instrument used by God to bring out the potential which he himself inscribed in things” (Laudato Si’, 124).

When men and women strive to welcome the Creator’s plan, any noble human work can become an instrument for the progress of the world and the strengthening of human dignity.

The key is found in working as well as possible, with the desire to serve others, out of love for God and neighbor. Certainly there are other reasons
why we work: to support ourselves and our family, to generously assist those in need, to attain human fulfillment.... But the Pope’s words remind us that the goal is even higher: to collaborate in a certain sense with God in the redemption of mankind.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the death of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, that holy priest and founder of Opus Dei who proclaimed to the entire world the Gospel value of work done out of love. I am a witness to how Saint Josemaría strove to live what he preached about work in his own life, right to the end of his earthly journey.

“Mankind’s great privilege is to be able to love and to transcend what is fleeting and ephemeral,” he wrote in a book called Christ is Passing By. That is why work “should not be limited to material production. Work is born of love; it is a manifestation of love and is directed towards love. We see the hand of God, not only in the wonders of nature, but also in our experience of work and effort. Work thus becomes prayer and thanksgiving, because we know we are placed on earth by God, that we are loved by him and made heirs to his promises.”

Work, depending on its aim, can either destroy or strengthen human dignity, care for or disfigure nature, provide or omit the service we owe to our neighbor.

The importance of work for a humanly dignified life is deeply sensed by a person who is unemployed and experiences the anguish of not having an income. Therefore those who are out of work should hold a central place in the prayer and concern of every Christian. As the Pope said, helping the poor or the unemployed by giving money “must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs.” The broader objective “should always be to allow them a dignified life through work” (Laudato Si’, 128). The encyclical also reminds us that “to stop investing in people, in order to gain greater short-term financial gain, is bad business for society” (Ibid.).

Benedict XVI defined the Christian as “a heart that sees.” In work, economic effectiveness will certainly be one factor, but never the only one. Christians put their heart into their work because of Christ’s example, and they strive to turn their work into service to others and praise for the
Creator. Only work that is seen as service to our fellow men and women, and that is done out of love for God, can open up horizons for the terrestrial and eternal happiness of the people of our day and age.

Interview Granted to Paraula (April 26, 2015)

Eduardo Martínez

Bishop Javier, Opus Dei is celebrating a Marian year for the family. On convoking it, you asked the members of the Work to pray to our Lady for families, thus uniting themselves to the intentions of Pope Francis. What is the present situation of the family, what are its principal challenges? And in relation to the Pope, what do you hope for from the upcoming Synod on the Family?

The celebration of this Marian year seemed to me to be a way of seconding the Pope, who is insistently asking all Christians for prayers for the fruit of the Synod on the Family.

It is a cause of joy to see that many families feel loved by God and are a reflection of Trinitarian love. Through the efforts of fathers and mothers, often heroic, they become “bright and cheerful homes,” as Saint Josemaría used to say. They pour out their affection on the society around them. But there are also many other families that are going through grave difficulties, or in which coldness and selfishness hold sway. Uniting myself to the Pope’s intentions, I would like to see the Synod become an acknowledgement and expression of gratitude for the first, and a strong point of support for a positive transformation of the second group of families. I would also like it to be an opportunity for families to realize that they are the Church and that the entire Church accompanies them in their daily efforts.

If in this year of grace, between the two Synods, we can manage with God’s help to focus people’s attention on the families in greatest need and reduce, although only by a small proportion, the number of families with
serious difficulties, we will have achieved something very important for the Church, for society as a whole and for the good of many people. Therefore I advise families to read the Pope’s encouraging catechesis on fathers and mothers, on grandparents and relatives, on brothers and sisters and children.

How would you evaluate the results of the Marian year for the family up to now?

Drawing up a balance sheet in spiritual matters is always difficult. But our Lady will certainly present to our Lord the continuous and incalculable prayer, the generous and abundant offering of suffering on the part of so many sick people, so many hardships and shortages offered up by people all over the world for the same intention, the thousands and thousands of visits to Marian shrines…., and also so many hours of catechesis and reflection on the family, from every aspect: anthropological, philosophical, theological, pastoral.

I ask the faithful and Cooperators of Opus Dei to draw up their own personal balance sheet: to examine how their deeper grasp of the Gospel reality of the family is leading them to love marital fidelity and to be generous; and also to assist so many married couples who are undergoing special difficulties, often heightened (we should never forget it) by the global financial crisis.

Your address in Valencia for the “Almudi Theological Dialogues” centered on the figure of your predecessor at the head of Opus Dei, Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, in his role as secretary for the Council’s Commission on the Clergy. What memories do you hold of him, what stands out in his way of being?

Two words with Don Alvaro were enough for one to be filled with peace. He was a man, a priest, a bishop of great humanity, with a smile and goodness that, from the first moment, broke down barriers. It was impossible not to feel loved, respected, understood. I think his natural way of being had a certain predisposition for this special empathy, but above all it was clear that his welcoming attitude reflected the style of the Gospel, which he had learned from Jesus through the example of Saint Josemaría.

Many of the Council Fathers who got to know him or interacted with him during the sessions of Vatican II have given testimony to Blessed
Alvaro’s way of being and acting.

You also worked closely with the founder of Opus Dei. What can you tell us about him? What is his strongest message for our times?

The Holy See’s decree on his heroic virtues described him as “a traveling contemplative,” a man, a priest who invited everyone to seek God in our daily journey, in the ordinary circumstances of our daily life, which should not be an obstacle but an opportunity to find God, who loves each one of us with an infinite Love.

One thing was obvious to me: he himself lived the advice he gave others. I was a witness, for many years, of his personal struggle to draw ever closer to God, as a person in love who wants to respond with his whole heart to the one he loves: doing so each day, in important tasks and in those that did not seem so important, in what was difficult and in what was easy, serving others with a contagious joy.

He often said, in many different ways: “Holiness means seeking God’s presence, continuous contact with him, through prayer and work, based on a persevering dialogue with him.” His message was not primarily an invitation to action, to get things done, but to love.

The “Almudi Theological Dialogues” center this year on the Second Vatican Council and the priesthood, for the 50th anniversary of the decree “Presbyterorum Ordinis.” How do you view the current state of the priesthood, especially in Europe, where problems such as the decline in the number of priestly vocations are evident. How can we re-energize the calling to the priesthood?

Certainly problems exist, but I think the Council documents and the magisterium of the Popes and of many bishops are helping the new generations to take up the calling to be a priest with an eagerness for holiness and for service, although we would all like to see greater fruit. Thanks be to God and to people of good will, quite a few countries are seeing an increase in the number of priests and seminarians.

Saint Josemaría used to ask: “Do we want to be more?” And right away he responded: “Then let us be better!” If we bishops and priests strive more zealously for sanctity; if Catholics pray more for us and for vocations; if we have the nobility and courage to challenge many souls with following
Christ; if families, schools and those engaged in pastoral work with young people carry out a deep work of Christian formation... then despite all the problems, despite the reigning atmosphere of relativism and hedonism, the materialism that is afflicting the world, the Lord of the harvest will not fail to send workers for his fields. He himself has promised it, as long as we ask him sincerely and with our deeds.

Right here in Valencia, there have been so many and such abundant ordinations of priests, some of whom have also gone to serve in other dioceses. This too is a sign of hope for our times.

As far as the laity are concerned, in light of the universal call to holiness proclaimed in the Gospel and spread so widely by St. Josemaría, should we try to take a more active role in the life of the Church, as the Council also indicated? And in which aspects?

As you know, the last Council, and the Roman Pontiffs as well, both the previous ones and Pope Francis, have strongly insisted on the apostolic mission of the lay faithful, who are called to make a very important contribution to the new evangelization.

Naturally for some this will mean collaborating in church institutions, but the specific task of the laity is found where their aspirations are, in their daily work and with those they love, as St. Josemaría explained. That is the place for their daily encounter with God. Their proper mission, the Council reminded us, is to infuse a Christian spirit into temporal realities. The primary responsibility of the lay faithful, therefore, perhaps more so than priests and religious, is to foster the development of a culture, of legislation, etc., consistent with the dignity of the human person.

Certainly, within this great panorama of enlivening temporal realities with a Christian spirit, we also find the challenge to confront poverty and injustice in the world. Without detracting from the great effort that so many priests and religious are making in this area, it is also a demand incumbent on lay men and women, spurred by their concern for human dignity and acting with the professional spirit that is proper to them.

This past half year has seen the important step in Opus Dei of naming an auxiliary vicar to help you in governing the Work. Four months after that decision, what is your assessment of how this is going?
The role of an auxiliary vicar was already foreseen by St. Josemaría, and this past December, after asking God for light, it seemed to me that the moment had come to put it into operation. As far as “how this is going,” I give thanks to God for being able to rely on the help that is now provided by having an auxiliary vicar. The Work is carrying out stable activity in 69 countries and continues to expand, and although I am feeling well for my age, the auxiliary vicar means a new impulse to follow closely all of this apostolic work.

But I am very much in need of prayers, as are all of us who have this kind of pastoral responsibility. I ask your readers to accompany with their filial prayer my brother and friend, their cardinal archbishop, and to also pray for me.

Statement on the Beatification of Archbishop Óscar Romero

On February 3, the Holy Father Francis authorized the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to promulgate a decree of martyrdom for the Servant of God Oscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdamez. Archbishop Romero (El Salvador: 1917-1980) was assassinated out of hatred for the faith on March 24, 1980, while celebrating Holy Mass.

On learning of the news, Bishop Javier Echevarría said: “The martyrs present a challenge to all men and women, both believers and non-believers, but they are a shining light especially for those who have placed their hope in God. I am sure that Archbishop Oscar Romero is going to be a deeply beloved saint.”

“I met Archbishop Romero in Rome,” the Prelate of Opus Dei said, “during one of his visits to Saint Josemaría, in 1974. He was a pious person, detached from his own interests and dedicated to his people. His struggle for sanctity was palpable. Archbishop Romero was one of the first bishops who, following the death of Saint Josemaría in 1975, wrote to Blessed Paul VI asking that his cause of canonization be opened. I am certain that now,
from Heaven, he continues interceding with his good friend Saint Josemaría for this portion of the people of God.”

Saint Josemaría and Archbishop Romero had known one another since 1955. The Archbishop of San Salvador had great esteem for the spirit of Opus Dei and had frequent contact with the apostolic work of the faithful of the Prelature in El Salvador. In 1974 he came to Rome and had several conversations with Saint Josemaría. As Fr. Antonio Rodríguez Pedrazuela recounts in his book *A Sea Without Shores*, the founder of Opus Dei was concerned that the Archbishop have the opportunity to rest during his stay in Rome, because he realized the tense situation he faced back in El Salvador.

The affection was mutual, and when the founder of Opus Dei died, Archbishop Romero, in his postulatory letter for Saint Josemaría’s cause of canonization, expressed his gratitude “for having received from him encouragement and strength to be faithful to the unchangeable doctrine of Christ and to serve the Holy Roman Church with apostolic zeal.”

In the same letter he wrote: “Msgr. Escrivá’s life was marked by a continuous dialogue with God and a deep humility. One could see that he was a man of God and that he dealt with people with great refinement, affection and good humor.” A letter addressed to Blessed Alvaro del Portillo a few months after the founder’s death shows that his affection and esteem for Saint Josemaría had only grown stronger.

He also had a deep friendship with Archbishop Fernando Sáenz, who was Vicar of Opus Dei in El Salvador, and later his successor as archbishop of San Salvador. The day he was assassinated, March 24, 1980, Archbishop Romero spent the morning with Fernando Sáenz at a get-together for priests organized by priests of Opus Dei. Afterwards Fernando Saénz accompanied the Archbishop to the church where he was to celebrate Mass. In an article written some years later about Blessed Oscar Romero’s final day on earth, Archbishop Sáenz recalls: “They killed him during the offering of the bread and wine. It was, as it were, a marvelous external sign of his having offered his life for his people, for the poor, for justice, for peace.”
About Saint Josemaría
The Books of St. Josemaría in Electronic Format

Ediciones Rialp has published *San Josemaría: sus libros*, an eBook with all the published writings of the founder of Opus Dei: *Camino, Surco, Forja, Es Cristo que pasa, Amigos de Dios, Santo Rosario, Via Crucis*, and *Conversaciones con Monseñor Escrivá de Balaguer* in Spanish. The edition includes a general index of topics and a search index for quotes from the Old and New Testaments in each of his works.

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Blessed Óscar Romero and St. Josemaría

We reproduce here an interview with Msgr. Joaquín Alonso published on May 23 regarding the beatification of Archbishop Oscar Romero. Msgr. Alonso was a witness to the meeting that Blessed Romero had with St. Josemaría in 1974. The interview with Rodrigo Ayude was published in La Prensa Gráfica of El Salvador on May 23, 2015, under the title “Archbishop Romero was a man of God.”

Msgr. Joaquín Alonso (Seville, 1929) lived alongside Saint Josemaría in Rome and has worked closely with the Prelate of Opus Dei for many years. A consultor theologian for the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, in this interview he speaks of Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was beatified on May 23rd in San Salvador.

*Msgr. Alonso, how did you come to know the future Blessed Oscar Romero?*

I met him in Rome, in 1974. On October 30 of that year he came to Rome (it wasn’t his first trip here). Saint Josemaría had agreed to meet with him on November 8, and he asked me to do all I could to assist him. He had just been named bishop of Santiago de María, in El Salvador, a few days before undertaking the trip.
Bishop Romero remarked to me that his trip to the Eternal City was providential, since it was an opportunity to leave behind his habitual environment and get a broader perspective, as he put it, on the small corner of the world that was his responsibility back home. He felt keenly the weight of his responsibility for his new episcopal see, and he needed someone who could listen to his concerns and give him encouragement.

*Do you have any specific memories of those days?*

For me this visit was an opportunity to speak with Bishop Romero at length and get to know him quite well. Our conversations were fraternal and very priestly. Among other things, Bishop Oscar Romero told me that, since the early 60s, he had been receiving spiritual direction from a priest of Opus Dei, Fr. Juan Aznar, who died in March 2004.

Later I came to know more details about his relationship with Fr. Juan Aznar. For example, he told him in a letter written in 1970: “You are the only person who truly understands my soul.” And in 1973, when sending Christmas greetings, he remarked: “I never forget your wise counsels.” Blessed Oscar Romero was a priest filled with gratitude, and I was moved to learn that he had died precisely when celebrating the Eucharist, the highest act of thanksgiving.

*How did the meeting between Bishop Romero and Saint Josemaría go?*

Saint Josemaría received him on the 8th of November. Their conversation lasted almost an hour and, when it ended, Bishop Romero told me that he had been deeply moved. He said that he had felt strengthened in his faith by Saint Josemaría's words and that the founder of Opus Dei had embraced him, making him feel loved and accompanied. Bishop Romero called Saint Josemaría a “man of God” and took advantage of their meeting to invite him to come to Central America, which in fact became a reality in 1975.

Bishop Romero also had the opportunity on that trip to greet Blessed Paul VI, and he was happy to receive some words of encouragement from him. Afterwards he told me that this trip reminded him of his first years as a priest and seemed to him a gift from God.

*Did his contact with you continue in later years?*
I remember that on June 26, 1978, the third anniversary of Saint Josemaría’s transit to heaven, he came to celebrate Holy Mass in the crypt of Our Lady of Peace, where the founder’s mortal remains were then residing. I attended his Mass, along with Msgr. Francisco Vives. He gave a short homily filled with affection and gratitude to Saint Josemaría, and said that, right from the first moment of meeting him, he felt treated as a brother. And he also wrote these words in a letter.

As I said, this took place in 1978, a year after he had been named Archbishop of San Salvador. At that time, as he himself made known publicly, another priest of Opus Dei, Msgr. Fernando Sáenz, was giving him spiritual guidance.

**How did you react to news of his death?**

The tragic news was a great shock to me, while it also led me to want to accompany him with my prayer and have recourse to his intercession to ask for the Church in Latin America. I also gave thanks to God for the opportunity to get to know personally this man of God.

The Way of the Cross in Vietnamese

In March, the Vietnamese translation of *The Way of the Cross* was published in Vietnamese under the title *Duòng Thánh Giá*. This is the third book of St. Josemaría translated into this language, after *The Way* (*Con Đường*) and *Holy Rosary* (*Tràng Hạt Mận Côi*).

To date, *The Way of the Cross* has been translated into 30 languages with over half a million copies printed.

Devotion Throughout the World

*A statue in Caceres*
On Saturday, February 14, in the Risen Christ Pastoral Center in Caceres, Spain, the blessing of a statue of St. Josemaría took place. Bishop Francisco Cerro Chaves of Coria-Caceres blessed the sculpture in a ceremony that brought together many families and that was followed by Holy Mass. The cedar wood statue was the work of the Sevillian sculptor Antonio Dubé.

*Two streets named for him*

*Cabezo de Torres, Murcia, Spain*

On March 28, the day marking the 90th anniversary of St. Josemaría’s priestly ordination, the municipal council of the Murcian community of Cabezo de Torres inaugurated a street dedicated to the founder of Opus Dei. By this gesture, the council wanted to thank St. Josemaría for “his apostolic efforts in the land of Murcia, and for fostering the Christian faith in all sectors of society,” Juan José Muñoz, the town’s mayor, said.

*Vibo Valentia, Calabria, Italy*

The city of Vibo Valentia has, since March 7, a street dedicated to St. Josemaría. The mayor, Giovanni Russo, presided over the inauguration ceremony. He was accompanied by the diocesan Archbishop Luigi Renzo and the director of the Alcantara University Residence in Catania, Aldo Capucci. Among those present were Most Rev. Vincenzo Rimedio, bishop emeritus of Lamezia Terme, and delegates from the civil and military authorities, as well as priests from the diocesan clergy and numerous citizens of Calabria.

*A stained glass window in Sydney*

In the Church of Our Lady of the Angels in Rouse Hill, a suburb of Sydney, Australia, a stained glass window was installed with St. Josemaría pictured against a background of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and a group of workers engaged in various intellectual and manual professions. The newly built church was recently consecrated.

*A chapel in Quinahue*
On June 27, a new chapel dedicated to St. Josemaría was consecrated in Quinahue, Chile. It was constructed over the ruins of an old shrine, destroyed by the earthquake in Chile in 2010. The cure of a young man from the town, attributed to St. Josemaría, encouraged the neighborhood to work for five years on the reconstruction of the church and to name the Spanish priest as its patron. Bishop Alejandro Goic consecrated the new chapel and placed a relic of St. Josemaría in the base of the altar. During the ceremony he asked the community to especially pray to their new patron for the sanctity of bishops, priests and religious.

A new church in Burgos

On Friday, June 26th, the Archbishop of Burgos consecrated the new church for the parish of St. Josemaría Escrivá, upon the completion of the first phase of its construction. Archbishop Gil Hellin concelebrated with several priests from the diocese. He recalled that St. Josemaría often told lay people that the street was also their church: “We have to find God in daily life, in our home, in the office, on the playing fields, in the classroom, etc.”

Other Publishing News

Books of St. Josemaría

Camino, San Jose, Promesa, 2015, Fifth Costa Rican printing.
Camino, Mexico City, Minos, 2015, 64th Mexican printing.
Vaga, Riga, Kala Raksti, 2015, Third Latvian printing of Furrow.
Via Crucis, Caracas, Vértice, Third Venezuelan printing.

Books About St. Josemaría

Eucharistic Celebrations on the Feast of St. Josemaría

On June 26th, the liturgical memorials of St. Josemaría, many Masses were celebrated throughout the world. Notably, for the first time the Mass of St. Josemaría was celebrated in Greece, in Saint Paul's Church in Athens. Rev. Alberto Paima concelebrated with other priests who traveled there for the occasion. Families attended from various parts of Greece, including the Peloponnesus and Thessalonica. The memorial of St. Josemaría was also celebrated for the first time in Lusaka, Zambia, with the apostolic nuncio, Archbishop Julio Murat, concelebrating on June 30. Around the 26th of June many bishops throughout the world celebrated the Mass of St. Josemaría in the cathedrals of their respective dioceses.

Cardinal O'Malley of Boston: the theology of work

“St. Josemaría gives us a theology of work that comes from his insights into the scriptures and the inspiration of grace. He saw that the world is good. The world is God's creation, and the fruit of his love, as the Holy Father in his latest encyclical underscores,” Cardinal Sean Patrick O'Malley said in his homily at the Mass held in the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Boston, on June 20.

The Maronite Archbishop of Beirut: working for peace

In Beirut, Lebanon, Maronite Archbishop Boulos Youssef Matar thanked Opus Dei for the work of evangelization carried out in the country in close union with the local ecclesiastical hierarchy, and prayed to St.
Josemaría for peace throughout the Middle East. Some 300 people took part in the Holy Mass held on June 26, including many families.

Archbishop Vian of Guatemala City: holiness in marriage

In Guatemala City, the metropolitan Archbishop, Oscar Julio Vian, emphasized the teachings of St. Josemaría on seeking sanctity in marriage and family life. He asked those attending to pray for the Synod on the Family, convoked by Pope Francis for October 2015.

Kenya: the role of the laity in evangelization

The bishop of Malindi, Kenya, Most Rev. Emmanuel Barbara, encouraged the faithful to carry out a wide-reaching apostolate, and to counteract certain social initiatives opposed to the family that sometimes reach Africa from more developed countries. In another part of the country, the ordinary of Nakuru, Kenya, Bishop Maurice Muhatia, stressed in his homily how the Church, through the laity, should reach people and places that are far from God.

#JuneforFamilies on the Social Web

The feast of St. Josemaría this year marked the fortieth anniversary of his going to Heaven. It also fell within the Marian Year of prayer for the family that the faithful and cooperators of the Prelature are living. For this occasion, the Opus Dei website—www.opusdei.org—offered thirty counsels of St. Josemaría regarding courtship, engagement, married love, family life, and the raising of children. Under the hashtag #JuneforFamilies, each day from June 1 to 30 some advice of St. Josemaría about the family was placed on the website. This initiative also made it easy to be united to Pope Francis’ request that we pray for all the families in the world and for the upcoming synod on the family.
News
First Celebration of the Memorial of Blessed Álvaro

On May 12, the liturgical feast of Blessed Álvaro del Portillo, who was beatified on September 27, 2014 in Madrid, was celebrated for the first time in many Masses all over the world. In Madrid, the birthplace of Blessed Álvaro, Archbishop Carlos Osoro celebrated the Holy Eucharist in the Cathedral of Santa María la Real de la Almudena. In his homily the Archbishop of Madrid said: “We are brought here today by a man of God, by the memory of a saint who showed by his life the reality that we sing in the Psalm: ‘The Lord is my Shepherd, there is nothing I shall want.’... This is the first time his feast day is being celebrated after his beatification, and I give thanks to God because this is the first time I have had the opportunity to celebrate the first feast day of a new Blessed.... I entrust to him the mission God has given me here in this Church of Madrid. I am sure that Blessed Álvaro, who loved Madrid and was from Madrid, will intercede for us.”

In the United Kingdom, Cardinal Vincent Nichols and Archbishop Arthur Roche, secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, concelebrated the Mass in Westminster Cathedral. Archbishop Roche presented Blessed Álvaro as an example of one who sought holiness in a discrete and humble manner in daily life, and encouraged those present to follow his example, applying it, for the majority of them, to their relationship with their spouses and families. He pointed to the “simplicity of family life” as “the chosen place where people learn to fall in love with Christ day by day.... The one thing I have readily noticed in the members of Opus Dei, and I say this as an outsider, is the natural way in which you relate everything to God and his providence, not least in difficult and trying times,” the Archbishop said.

Cardinal Nichols, the Archbishop of Westminster, addressed some brief and heartfelt words to those present, thanking the faithful of the Prelature for their service to the Church, not only in his diocese but throughout the whole country.
In Uruguay, the Bishop of Minas, Most Rev. Jaime Fuentes, encouraged those attending the Mass in Montevideo to ask Blessed Álvaro for “the Synod of Bishops and for families.” He reminded them that Álvaro del Portillo “put at the service of the Church his great intelligence, his charity and his spirit of sacrifice.” He advised those present to try to be for their friends a “preventive medicine,” anticipating “matrimonial crises, staying close to people, reaching out to them,” like the “the pastor of a very small flock.”

UNIV 2015: Friendship and Citizenship

Some 2,500 students from every corner of the world spent Holy Week and Easter in Rome attending “UNIV Forum 2015 — Friendship: Model of a New Citizenship.” On Wednesday, April 1, the university students took part in the general audience with Pope Francis. The Holy Father greeted the students and encouraged them, with words of St. Josemaría, “to grow in friendship with our Lord, because ‘You need a heart which is in love, not an easy life, to achieve happiness’ (Furrow, no. 795).” At the end of the audience, the Forum gave the Pope a painting of the Holy Family’s flight into Egypt, as a sign of unity with the Christians who are suffering persecution in various parts of the world. During the days of the gathering funds were collected for persecuted Christians in the Middle East, intended for the refugees in Lebanon.

The president of UNIV 2015, the Chilean student Florence Cordero, stressed that the 48th edition of the Forum asked participants to “reflect on friendship as the key to building a new society, at a time when superficiality makes us settle for weak bonds and relationships that undermine the quality of true companionship.”

The Forum organized many cultural events—conferences, colloquia, study groups, and round tables—especially in the area of the humanities and the arts. The Italian writer Alessandro D’Avenia, professors David O’Connor and Craig Iffland, and Kenyan Professor Elizabeth Gachenga were among the speakers at the conferences.
The UNIV Forum began 48 years ago, in 1968, under the encouragement of St. Josemaría Escrivá. The meeting is an opportunity to get to know the city of Rome by following in the footsteps of the Church’s history from the earliest centuries. The Prelature of Opus Dei organizes activities of Christian formation that accompany the cultural activities for this international event.

A Documentary Video: Take a Chance on Happiness

This new documentary presents various married couples from England, Scotland, and Ireland, who speak about their daily challenges in their family life. Topics covered include married love, dealing with their children, instilling piety, and the way they confront these in light of the teachings of St. Josemaría. It alternates testimony from the spouses and brief video clips of St. Josemaría giving advice on marriage and parenthood, taken from films of his catechetical trips during the 1970’s. The 25 minute video was directed by Juan Martín Ezratty and produced by Digito Identidad. It can be downloaded at www.opusdei.org.

Some Diocesan Assignments Received by Priests of the Prelature

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

Other Publications of Interest
Pontifical Appointments

On January 24, 2015, the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, appointed Fr. Félix María Arocena Solano as professor of Liturgy and Sacramental Theology in the School of Theology at the University of Navarra.

On March 14, 2015, Msgr. Lluís Clavell, rector emeritus of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross and ordinary member of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, was appointed consultor for the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops.

New Centers of the Prelature

The vicars of the respective circumscriptions have erected seven new centers of the Prelature: two in Lima, Peru; one in Mombasa, Kenya; one in Entebbe, Uganda; one in Brisbane, Australia; one in Cerdanyola del Vallés, Spain; and one in Barcelona, Spain.
Twenty-Five Years of Incontro Romano

On March 31, the international forum *Incontro Romano* celebrated its 25th anniversary with a conference entitled “The Power of Service: Empathy and Teamwork.” The event was attended by over 300 young women from 50 different countries, interested in promoting a culture of service through domestic work and other professions centered on caring for people.

The keynote address was given by Reyes Rite, president of the International Institute for Resilience and Emotional Development (IRYDE) and specialist in manager development.

*Incontro Romano* began in 1990, under the encouragement of Blessed Álvaro del Portillo. The forum seeks to highlight the dignity of the service professions and their close tie to social progress, along with the special contribution of women in this area.

Conference on The 'Anthropological Question' and the Evangelization of the Family, Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome

On March 12-13, the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome organized the interdisciplinary conference “Marriage and the Family: the ‘Anthropological Question’ and the Evangelization of the Family.” Sponsored by the School of Canon Law, the initiative was aimed at reflecting on the nature of marriage and the family in the period between the two synods.

The conference welcomed the interventions of Cardinal Carlo Caffarra, Archbishop of Bologna; Professor Pedro Juan Viladrich, from the
University of Navarra; and Msgr. Paolo Bianchi, Judicial Vicar of the Regional Tribunal of Lombardy. In addition, papers were presented by a number of professors from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross and other university institutions.

The event also included the participation of people with extensive experience in this area, including Claudio and Laura Gentili, from the Betania Center in Rome; Patrizio and Daniela Romano, in charge of the FarFamiglia project; and the lawyer Bruno Roma. Thanks to their experience, practical guidelines were suggested for preparing people for marriage and accompanying couples in difficult situations.

An Electronic Book: Catechesis on the Family (vol. I)

The Opus Dei website (www.opusdei.org) has published an electronic book with the catechesis of Pope Francis dedicated to the family in his Wednesday audiences held from December 10, 2014, to March 25, 2015, as preparation for the upcoming ordinary synod of bishops. The eBook can be downloaded in PDF and ePUB format.

Volume 9 of Studia et Documenta

The Istituto Storico San Josemaría Escrivá has published the ninth volume of the Studia et Documenta journal. The new issue opens with a section on Blessed Álvaro del Portillo on the occasion of his recent beatification and the centennial of his birth.

The first article, by Rev. Federico Requena, provides information about the theology professors who instructed Blessed Álvaro del Portillo. His service to the Church in the Second Vatican Council is the topic of the second article, written by Manuel Valdés. Valdés examines the work of
Blessed Alvaro as Secretary of the Conciliar Commission De Disciplina Cleri et Populi Christiani, as well as his contributions to the final version of the decree Presbyterorum Ordinis.

The next two articles look at Blessed Álvaro del Portillo’s time at the head of Opus Dei. The first, by Rev. Carlo Pioppi, studies the expansion of Opus Dei between 1978 and 1993 throughout a number of countries in Latin America (Bolivia, Honduras, Trinidad and Tobago, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua) and in Europe (Sweden, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland). The second article, by Professor Maria Eugenia Ossandón, provides details about Blessed Álvaro’s filial friendship with St. John Paul II.

Following this section on Blessed Álvaro, issue number 9 includes three articles centered on St. Josemaría: one on his secular law studies at the University of Saragossa, another on his preaching of retreats to diocesan priests between the years 1938 and 1942, and a third about the three circular letters that he sent from Burgos to all the members of Opus Dei in 1938-39.

This volume also dedicates its attention to the beginnings of Opus Dei in Nagasaki, continuing an article that was published on this topic in the first volume of Studia et Documenta in 2007.

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Presentation of Saxum in Rome

On June 22, the cultural association ICEF organized in Rome a presentation of the Saxum project, a center of orientation and information for visitors and tour guides in the Holy Land that is being constructed a few miles from Jerusalem. Among those present were Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei; Daniele Mancini, Ambassador of Italy to the Holy See; Sergio Utili, president of ICEF; Dino Collevati, representative of the Saxum Project in Italy; and Massimo Maria Caneva, president of AESI, the European Association of International Studies.
Bishop Echevarría said that Saxum is a “dream of St. Josemaría and of Blessed Álvaro.” And he asked for prayers so that there “the faith of the pilgrims will be strengthened to the point that on their return to their places of origin they might be apostolic men and women, capable of telling others that Jesus will never abandon us.” He also expressed gratitude for the generosity of all those working on the project and those who are helping out financially.

In his intervention, Italy’s ambassador to the Holy See, Daniele Mancini, stressed that the new center will have optimal conditions for reflection, prayer, and rest.

Closure of the Diocesan Process of the Servant of God Laurita Busca Otaegui

On Monday, June 22, the diocesan phase of the cause of canonization of the Servant of God Laura Busca Otaegui was formally closed. She was the wife of Eduardo Ortiz de Landázuri, who has also been declared a Servant of God and whose process of canonization was closed in the archdiocese of Pamplona on May 28, 2002. Both were faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei.

The ceremony, presided over by Archbishop Francisco Pérez González, took place in the sacristy of the Cathedral of Pamplona in northern Spain. It brought together a large group of family members and friends, along with many married couples who wanted to thank Eduardo and Laura for their example of love, fidelity, self-giving and joy in married life.

During the closing ceremony Archbishop Pérez González said that “the day after the canonization of St. Josemaría, St. John Paul II referred to him as the saint of the ordinary. Today we pause to remember a faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei who followed the path opened by the founder, seeking holiness in the ordinary daily activities of a Christian mother and spouse.”

The boxes containing the documentary materials and personal
testimonies assembled by the tribunal since September 2012 were sealed and will be sent on to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints for further study. From this moment on, the two Causes of Canonization are united in the private devotion of the Christian faithful as the Cause of Canonization of the Ortiz de Landázuri-Busca married couple.

Laura Busca was born on November 3, 1913 in Zumárraga, Guipuzcoa. She carried out her studies in Zumárraga, Vergara, and Valladolid. She received her licentiate in pharmacy in the Central University of Madrid in 1935. Her doctoral thesis on typhus was researched at the King’s Hospital, where she met Eduardo. After the traumatic years of the Spanish civil war, they were married on June 17, 1941, and eventually had seven children. Laura, who dedicated herself full time to her family, asked for admission to Opus Dei as a Supernumerary in 1953.

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INITIATIVES

• In Brief
Laguna Hospice Care Center: Treating Patients, Caring for People (Madrid)

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.

Laguna Hospice Care Center:
Treating Patients, Caring for People

The Laguna Hospice Care Center is a social initiative that began in 2002, for the centennial of the birth of St. Josemaría Escrivá. Located in Madrid, it provides care for people suffering from advanced sicknesses, old age and dementia, regardless of their financial or social situation. Laguna seeks to put into practice the teachings and example of St. Josemaría, who used to say: “For the sick we won’t spare any effort. If someone needs a piece of heaven, we will go there to rob it, certain that this will please our Father God.”

Laguna is now the largest hospital specializing in palliative care in Spain, and the second largest in Europe, in terms of the number of beds. It provides care for more than 500 people each year. The hospital center accompanies patients and their families during the whole process of their sickness, and offers both the appropriate medical care and the social and spiritual assistance required.

Its activity includes palliative care, neurology, geriatrics, and physiotherapy—both in the patient’s home, and in the hospital and residence. Laguna also carries out ongoing research in this area of health
care. It helps train caretakers for elderly people in their homes, and organizes dedicated volunteers who provide irreplaceable help by staying in close contact with the patients.

The hospital is under the auspices of the non-profit foundation Vianorte-Laguna, which supports this project with the financial contributions of many individuals and both public and private institutions.

Laguna aims to foster a culture of care and respect for each person in all of his or her human dignity. The elderly and the sick are cared for and loved right to the final moment of their lives. By providing information about its activities and making people sensitive to the needs of the elderly, it seeks to create in society as a whole a culture of solidarity.

In Brief

Montevideo, Uruguay -- Presentation of a Biography of the Pope

On May 5, British journalist Austen Ivereigh presented a biography of Pope Francis at the University of Montevideo. He took advantage of his visit to also give classes on strategic communication and rhetoric at the university’s School of Journalism.

Ivereigh is the co-founder and coordinator of Catholic Voices, which tries to explain the concerns of the Catholic Church to the communications media. He is a frequent contributor to America, The Guardian, and Our Sunday Visitor, and makes regular appearances on CNN and BBC television.
Piura, Peru - The Humanity of the Family

The Institute of Family Sciences at the University of Piura organized a round table discussion on “The Humanity of the Family,” for school administrators, teachers and parents in Piura. The activity took place over six days in the months of May and June, with conferences on the meaning of human sexuality, conjugal love, marriage, and the family.

Naples, Italy -- Homeless Project

University students from the Accademia Monterone in Naples have embarked on two volunteer projects in the city. The first of these, called the “Homeless Project,” involves young men who each week provide assistance to several charitable centers.

The second project, entitled “Health Volunteers,” involves a network of free health care for people living in poverty. A team of young doctors offers its service to indigent persons who cannot afford diagnostic procedures or visits to specialists.

Guatemala City, Guatemala -- Seminar of the New Evangelization

For the past ten years the Lendel University Residence in Guatemala City has organized a seminar on the new evangelization entitled “Transforming the Culture.” “Family Know What You Are” was the theme of the session held on May 16-17. One hundred twenty women gathered to dialogue and reflect on various aspects of the family, with the aim of specifying lines of action in society. The topic was chosen because of the Marian Year for the family that is being held in the prelature of Opus Dei and in the context of the upcoming Ordinary Synod of Bishops.
Campus Müngersdorf, Germany -- Fashion and Identity

On March 10, Campus Müngersdorf held a conference on “fashion and identity,” under the direction of professor Giovanna Finger.” In her address she stressed the possibility of fashion in the postmodern world to help shape contemporary culture.

The Eifel, Germany -- A Priestly Way of Life

From March 2 to 5, Haus Hardtberg Conference Center in the Eifel region of Germany held a workshop for priests to share experiences on their priestly life.

The thirty participants focused—in the light of the Church’s Magisterium and the teachings of Pope Francis—on the mission of the pastor, the new evangelization and certain timely aspects of marriage and the family. Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus Klaus Dick of Cologne was one of those taking part in the workshop.

Jerusalem, Israel -- On the Road to Emmaus

On March 5, the Polis Institute, in collaboration with Saxum Foundation, organized a trip along the road to Emmaus for Israeli tour guides. Taking part were a dozen experts from such cities as Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Eilat. The trip involved walking along the part of the road where the disciples from Emmaus are believed to have walked,
specifically the section between Abu Ghosh and Emmaus Nicopolis, about a ten mile walk through the hills of Judea, following the path of an old Roman road.

Sydney, Australia -- Reflections on the Family

“Love is our Mission: the Family is Alive” was the theme chosen by Creston College for its annual Easter Seminar, in light of Pope Francis’ catechesis on the family and the upcoming Ordinary Synod of Bishops.

The various addresses highlighted the family as the basic cell of society, where personal identity and Christian commitment take root in each of its members. Among the topics considered were human relationships and the practical consequences of true love in marriage.

The closing conference, entitled “A Home for the Wounded Heart: Pastoral Challenges in the Church,” made clear the need for understanding people and staying close to those with “wounded hearts” to help them return to union with the Church. One of the workshops explored the encyclical Humanae Vitae and helped participants analyze the repercussions of the contraceptive mentality of the last sixty years.

Madrid, Spain -- A Global Conversation About Journalism

On February 12, about six hundred people took part in the third session of Conversations with…, a conference for journalists organized by the School of Communications at the University of Navarra. Held in the auditorium of the Rafael del Pino Foundation in Spain’s capital, it gave the journalists an opportunity to reflect on their mission in society. Among those taking part was the former Executive Editor of The New York Times,
Jill Abramson.

The dean of the University of Navarra’s School of Communications, Monica Herrero, told those present that “St. Josemaría, the founder of our university and the one who gave impetus to the Institute of Journalism at the University of Navarra, which at the time was the only university department of journalism in Spain, had a deep awareness of the importance of both freedom and a solid formation for journalists at a university level.”

Pamplona, Spain -- Museum of the University of Navarra

On January 22, the King of Spain Philip VI and his wife Letizia Ortiz inaugurated the Museum of the University of Navarra in Pamplona. The new building, designed by the architect Rafael Moneo, includes among its collection works by Tapies, Rothko, Picasso, Oteiza, Kandinsky, and Palazuelo.

More than 1,500 people took part in the opening ceremony, including important figures from the artistic and cultural world. The rector of the university, Alfonso Sánchez-Taberno, said that the museum hopes to become the hub of cultural life on the campus and a gateway of communication with the whole world.

The three story museum contains more than 110,000 square feet of floor space. Besides the paintings and sculptures, it also houses the photographic collection of the University of Navarra, made up of 14,000 photographs and 100,000 negatives from the nineteenth century up to the contemporary era, including the artistic legacy of the well-known photographer José Ortiz-Echagüe.

Bogotá, Colombia -- Religious Freedom
On June 25, the School of Philosophy, Human Sciences and Institutional Communication at the University of the Sabana organized a study day on the persecution the Church is undergoing in various parts of the globe. It was directed by Javier Menéndez Ros, president of the Church Suffering Foundation. The most recent study carried out by this entity found that religious freedom is being seriously harmed in 82 of the 196 countries studied.

**Nairobi, Kenya -- Eastlands College of Technology**

The Strathmore Educational Trust has inaugurated the new seat of Eastlands College of Technology, a center for professional formation for 800 students, located in a heavily populated suburb of Nairobi. The director of the sponsoring foundation, Andrés Olea, explained that “this new seat, after twelve years spent in provisional quarters, has been made possible thanks to help from local people and from those in countries such as Spain and Belgium.”

Half of the forty million people in Kenya are younger than 25, and the rate of unemployment among young people is almost 80%. Eastlands College of Technology is seeking to tackle this social problem by providing training to young men so that they can have access to jobs requiring technical skills, while also giving the young people the knowledge needed to start their own micro-enterprises.

**Rome, Italy -- Alleviating the Harshness of Winter**

In the month of January, forty boys from the Tiber Club headed into the streets of the Eternal City to distribute coffee, chocolate and croissants
to homeless people. Between six and eight thousand people sleep on the streets of Rome each night. The students listened to moving and often painful stories, which gave them an opportunity to speak about God and the faith, and to offer everyone a bit of company.

**Torun, Poland -- The Joy of Service**

On May 16, in the John Paul II Center for Dialogue in Torun, a conference entitled “The Joy of Service,” was held on the figure of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo. It was organized by the School of Theology at the Nicolas Copernicus University in Torun. Among the speakers were Pawel Skibinski, professor of history of the twentieth Century at the University of Warsaw, and a biographer of Blessed Alvaro; Ignacio Soler, a priest of Opus Dei who is a member of the Centro Józefológico de Kalisz; Rev. Jacek Polowianiuk, a canon lawyer and assistant professor in the School of Administration and Social Sciences at the Polytechnical University of Warsaw; and Rev. Jan Uchwat, spiritual director of the diocesan seminary of Gdansk and professor of Moral Theology and Bioethics.

**Warsaw, Poland -- On the Synod**

From May 7 to 10, at the Dworek Conference Center near Warsaw, a course for young mothers was held on topics that will be discussed in the upcoming Synod of Bishops in October 2015. Topics covered included how to help marriages in crisis, keys for passing on the faith effectively in the family, helping the divorced and civilly remarried to keep in contact with the Church, the bad consequences of gender ideology, the moral implications of contraceptive and abortive drugs, etc.

Reference was made throughout to documents of the Magisterium of the Church related to these questions and statements by Pope Francis. The audience took an active role in the panels and the presentation of topics.
Positive experiences on various aspects of family life were shared and a list of conclusions was drawn up.

Paris, France -- Donations for Saxum

In France, various gatherings were organized to explain the Saxum project and to help raise funds for it.

The first of these was a piano recital held in Lyon, with over 200 people attending. After the presentation of the Saxum project, the pianist Anne Bertin-Hugault interpreted pieces by Liszt.

A second concert, this time consisting of vocal music, took place in the Garnelles Cultural Center in Paris. Franz Schubert’s “Winter Trip” (Winterreise) was the featured piece of music. In line with Saxum’s aim to foster interreligious dialogue, the concert held in a center of Opus Dei included people from other religions. The person singing and his son who played the piano were Jewish, and the presenter was a Muslim. The latter explained each of the 21 sections of the work before its presentation. At the end of the recital an appetizer was offered, prepared in accord with the dietary prescriptions of each religion.

Montevideo, Uruguay -- Social Inclusion and New Technologies

The University of Montevideo has decided to assist the Ibirapitá project, which seeks to bring adults into the digital age through the distribution of electronic tablets. During 2015 over 30,000 retirees will receive electronic devices and a short course in how to use them.

The university’s president, Juan Manuel Gutiérrez, said that “our plan is to work in a public home for the aged, which will mean not only a
support for the elderly, but also an ongoing learning process and enrichment for our students, and for the professors who are taking part.”

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Enxomil, Portugal -- Pastoral Conference for Priests

On February 9, a conference for priests on pastoral topics was held at the Enxomil Conference Center in Arcozelo, near Oporto. This year was the 17th in the series of gatherings. The theme was “The Family: Joys and Difficulties of Walking Together.” About a hundred priests from various dioceses of Portugal took part. The conference was presided over by Cardinal Manuel Clemente, the Latin Patriarch of Lisbon, and by Msgr. Jos Rafael Espirito Santo, the regional vicar of Opus Dei.

Cardinal Clemente’s address centered on key topics related to the two synods on the family. Professor Diogo Gonçalves from the University of Lisbon presented some ideas and practical experiences regarding the strengthening of family values.

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IN PACE
Suffrages for the Deceased

In the first half of 2015, 410 faithful of the Prelature passed away and, besides the priests incardinated in it, 21 members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross.

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—their pastoral ministry in the case of the priests—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
Citizens Both on Earth and in Heaven? Reflections on Laudatio Si’ and the Message of Saint Josemaría Escrivá

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The social encyclical Laudato si’ [LS] considers many questions linked to the relationship of the human person with the surrounding environment.[1] Pope Francis, by emphasizing that “everything is interconnected,” opens up broad horizons,[2] urging us to “take up the commitment to creation set before us by the Gospel of Jesus” (LS 246). As St. Josemaría Escrivá insisted, the good news of the Gospel is meant to vivify every human situation. “The task that awaits us is immense. It is a sea without shores.”[3]

Laudato si’ can be read in the same light as we view the early paintings of Brueghel, with their large cast of characters. But now it is no longer only villages and the countryside that we see. Our gaze is directed to the city and its busy streets—to a really existing humanity, both happy and unhappy, and often in rebellion against God’s creation; a humanity that is sometimes poor and joyful at the same time. And as in the Flemish painter’s works, it is the person, each unique one, created in God’s image, whose face comes ever clearer into focus.

Pope Francis points to the ethical and spiritual causes underlying the deterioration of the environment, and stresses the need to “care for our common home.”[4] St. John Paul II also uses this expression in his
encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, warning that today “the State is no longer the ‘common home’ where all can live together on the basis of principles of fundamental equality.”[5] If here the expression “common home” makes us think of peace and equality in society, now Pope Francis invites us to broaden our view to embrace the whole world in the light of ecology (a word coined at the end of the nineteenth century from the Greek word “οικος,” home).

*Laudato si’* takes up again favorite topics of Pope Francis that have also been considered by various bishops’ conferences.[6] Many of these topics were also central to his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. In reflecting there on the world economic situation undermined by the current moral and anthropological crisis, the Bishop of Rome stressed the social dimension of the faith. He urged a greater awareness of the reality of poverty and the flagrant inequalities found in today’s world. He asked that the markets raise their sights to pressing social questions, and denounced corruption and destructive competition. He challenged the financial sector to put itself at the service of the economy and the common good, and deplored usury and the idolatry of money.[7]

In a recent article, Giuseppe Tanzella-Nitti has pointed to a broadening of the concept of “quality of life” in this encyclical, which gives a central role to the “principle of solidarity” in attaining the common good (see LS 156-158), of which the climate forms a part,[8] closely tied to agriculture.[9] The encyclical points to the danger of a technical expertise that can lead to domination over nature (see LS 108), and calls for a unity in all human knowing,[10] restoring the role of the light of faith (see LS 62-64) and placing truth and wisdom as the goal of scientific progress (see LS 105, 117).[11]

Moreover, technology itself can result in “the imposition of a dominant lifestyle” (LS 145) without just regulation (see LS 173). As a result, the world needs to be reoriented (see LS Ch. 3). As Antonio Porras points out, Pope Francis is inviting us to take up a new “lifestyle” (LS 16)[12] in conformity with an “integral ecology” (LS 10).[13] *Laudato si’* laments the degradation of the quality of life in cities (see LS 149-154) and rural areas (see LS 45, 134, 151-152, 154, 180), the result, for example, of poor waste management (see LS 173).
As a social encyclical, *Laudato si’* is a rich document calling for a reform of society through specific solutions that still have to be identified and implemented. It is also a magisterial document on the theology of creation. The encyclical develops themes and perspectives that the founder of Opus Dei did not have an opportunity to deal with in depth. But it also includes other topics, such as the importance of work and our mission to perfect the created world, that are very much present in the teachings of Josemaría Escrivá. The message of the saints can be very fruitful for theological thought, as shown by the breath of mysticism and the example of St. Francis of Assisi and other saints in *Laudato si’*.14

In reading the encyclical, I find many important affinities with St. Josemaría, although at times employing different terminology than his. To cite just a few examples: the importance of the dogma of creation, both for the moral and spiritual life; the value of the created world; an awareness of how close God is to us at every moment; respect and care for material realities, including very small ones. My purpose here is not to treat each of these topics in depth, but rather to try to delve more deeply into the perspectives presented by *Laudato si’* and the theological intuitions of St. Josemaría. To do so, I will focus on three key ideas in constant interaction: the call to care for creation, present in the Gospel and setting conditions on science; the meaning of work and responsible citizenship; and finally, the relational identity of the human person.

1. Love and Care for Creation

“The world came about as the result of a decision” (LS 77). “The creating word expresses a free choice” (LS 77), and “we are called to respect creation and its inherent laws” (LS 69; see LS 140, 221). Every creature has an intrinsic value (see LS 69). “The biblical texts are to be read in their context, with an appropriate hermeneutic, recognizing that they tell us to ‘till and keep’ the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15). ‘Tilling’ refers to cultivating, plowing or working, while ‘keeping’ means caring for, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature” (LS 67).

Man and nature care for one another mutually. Therefore man, who “is in himself a gift of God,”“should respect the natural and moral structure of
what has been given.”[15] Bossuet comments on Gen 2:15 as follows: “In the
garden of paradise, God gave two orders to man: to ‘cultivate it,’ and ‘to
care for it,’ that is to say, to preserve its beauty, which also applies to
culture... God thereby taught man to care for himself and, at the same time,
to preserve his place in paradise.”[16]

We find in the encyclical a joyful declaration of love for creation, for
nature, along with a “dramatic” (LS 246) denunciation of the selfishness
that permits flagrant situations of human misery—together with a call to
ture poverty. Laudato si’ is centered on the degradation of the environment
owing to human intervention, a problem that is seen as urgent. And it
reminds us that we are called to perfect creation: “God took the man and
put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (Gen 2:15). As the
Catechism comments, “God thus enables men to be intelligent and free
causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for
their own good and that of their neighbors.”[17]

It is worthwhile citing here the relevant paragraph from Laudato si’ in
full: “Yet God, who wishes to work with us and who counts on our
cooperation, can also bring good out of the evil we have done. ‘The Holy
Spirit can be said to possess an infinite creativity, proper to the divine
mind, which knows how to loosen the knots of human affairs, including
the most complex and inscrutable.’[18] Creating a world in need of
development, God in some way sought to limit himself in such a way that
many of the things we think of as evils, dangers or sources of suffering, are
in reality part of the pains of childbirth which he uses to draw us into the
act of cooperation with the Creator. God is intimately present to each
being, without impinging on the autonomy of his creature, and this gives
rise to the rightful autonomy of earthly affairs. His divine presence, which
ensures the subsistence and growth of each being, ‘continues the work of
creation”[19] (LS 80).

Protecting God’s creation

Pope Francis reminds us that, when considering specific technical
solutions to the “great deterioration of our common home” (LS 61), a
legitimate “diversity of opinions” exists (LS 60-61). The Pope insists that
“on many specific questions the Church does not have any reason to
propose a definitive word” (LS 61). But the Bishop of Rome warns against facile doubt here: “we are tempted to think that what is happening is not entirely clear” (LS 59). Therefore *Laudato si’* invites us to “an honest and open debate” (LS 188).

God comes first, the Pope reminds us. “Our human ability to transform reality must proceed in line with God’s original gift of all that is” (LS 5). Pope Francis laments that the relationship of man with nature has been reduced to a form of disrespectful domination (see LS 106). Technology has emancipated itself from nature in a way that ends up conditioning everything, so that the objects it produces “are not neutral” (LS 107). The economy itself is suffering from an overriding concern for the maximization of profit in detriment to the good of the person (see LS 109, 128, 187) and of the environment (see LS 190, 195). He asks Christians for an “ecological conversion,” since we are called to protect God’s creation. Moreover, “the human environment and the natural environment are being degraded together” (LS 48).

Created things have an intrinsic value, and need to be protected against human exploitation. “It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential ‘resources’ to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves” (LS 33). The encyclical cites many specific examples: “In tropical and subtropical seas, we find coral reefs comparable to the great forests on dry land, for they shelter approximately a million species, including fish, crabs, mollusks, sponges and algae. Many of the world’s coral reefs are already barren or in a state of constant decline” (LS 41; see LS 23). The deterioration of the ecosystem needed for the cultivation of mangroves is another example mentioned (LS 39).

These problems stem from human disorder and ignorance. “God created the world, writing into it an order and a dynamism that human beings have no right to ignore” (LS 221). “The Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures” (LS 68). Creation contains a message: “nature is filled with words of love” (LS 225). Pope Francis points to a concern for the welfare of birds in the Old Testament (see *Deut* 22: 4, 6), and to Jesus’ words about God’s providential care for sparrows (see *Lk* 12:6; *Mt* 10:29): “How then can we possibly mistreat them or cause them harm?” (LS 221, see LS 68).
A sparrow is very small, but God cares for it. The love we should have for creation is also shown in care for little things, a frequent theme in St. Josemaría’s preaching: “You will usually find few opportunities for dazzling deeds, one reason being that they seldom occur. On the other hand, you will not lack opportunities, in the small and ordinary things around you, of showing your love for Christ. As St. Jerome writes, ‘Even in small things, the same (greatness of) spirit is revealed. We admire the Creator, not only as the framer of heaven and earth, of sun and ocean, of elephants, camels, horses, oxen, leopards, bears and lions, but also as the maker of tiny creatures, ants, gnats, flies, worms and the like, things whose shapes we know better than their names: and in all of them (big or small) we reverence the same skill. So too, the person who is dedicated to Christ is equally earnest in small things as in great.”[23]

Pascal said: “do the little things as if they were great things, because of Christ’s majesty, who has done them in us, and who lives our life; and the great things as if they were small, because of his omnipotence.”[24] For the Word of God, in becoming man, has made himself small.

Our model here is Christ, perfect God and perfect Man: “By the revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, [Christ] fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear.”[25] It is up to us to incarnate Christ’s message in the epoch in which we live, a concern very much present in the preaching of St. Josemaría. “I see all the circumstances of life—those of every individual person’s existence as well as, in some way, those of the great cross roads of history—as so many calls that God makes to men, to bring them face to face with truth, and as occasions that are offered to us Christians, so that we may announce, with our deeds and with our words strengthened by grace, the Spirit to whom we belong. Every generation of Christians needs to redeem, to sanctify its own time. In order to do this, it must understand and share the desires of other men—one’s equals—in order to make known to them, with a gift of tongues, how they are to correspond to the action of the Holy Spirit, to that permanent outflow of rich treasures that comes from our Lord’s heart We Christians are called upon to announce, in our own time, to this world to which we belong and in which we live, the message—old and at the same time new—of the Gospel.”[26]
When he speaks about the environment and social exclusion, the Pope is confronting real problems that, though often ignored, are everyone’s concern.[27] St. Josemaría emphasized that the revelation of God’s goodness takes place in a world called to be saved: “You could make a good motto for Christian life out of these words of St. Paul: ‘All things are yours, and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s’ (1 Cor 3:22-23), and so carry out the plans of that God whose will it is to save the world.”[28] He invited us to “passionately love the world,”[29] the title of a well-known homily of his. “The world is good,” said St. Josemaría, “for the works of God are always perfect.” And he added that “it is we men who make the world bad, through our sins.”[30]

Santiago Sanz rightly speaks about a “creational optimism”[31] in St. Josemaría. The founder of Opus Dei’s teaching about Christian love for the world and the call to sanctify it—respecting its intrinsic laws and leading it to its full potential—offer us a rich storehouse of reflections on care for our environment, especially when seen in light of Laudato si’s ardent call for social justice.

Selfishness and poverty

Pope Francis strongly proclaims the dignity of the poor (see LS 158), based on respect for all human life: “Instead of resolving the problems of the poor and thinking of how the world can be different, some can only propose a reduction in the birth rate” (LS 50). Treating the human person as an object, overlooking the intrinsic value of each human being in God’s eyes, is the logical outcome of relativism. “The culture of relativism is the same disorder which drives one person to take advantage of another, to treat others as mere objects” (LS 123).[32]

In Laudato si’ we breathe a Christian spirit that rebels against the coexistence of great poverty with an entrenched personal and collective selfishness which, if not its cause, is at least its corollary (see LS 105, 149, 204, 230). Pope Francis calls for a true revolution: “to accept decreased growth” (LS 193), “redefining our notion of progress” (LS 194), recovering the meaning of sacrifice and goodness in order to learn how to live together (see LS 199), educating people in “ecological citizenship” (LS 211). The
challenge of this cultural and social revolution is addressed to businesses, schools, and centers of higher education, to every citizen and country. 

*Laudato si'* does not hesitate to denounce “corruption” (LS 54, 142, 172). With globalization, the pace of social change has undergone an astonishing acceleration. Pope Francis calls this a “rapidification” of life today (LS 18), closely tied to the danger of becoming superficial: the danger of not asking ourselves about “the purposes and the meaning of everything” (LS 113) owing to the “fast pace induced by contemporary technological advances” (LS 133). *Laudato si* coincides here with some of Toni Judt’s observations on the dangers of rapid progress and innovation: the fear of the uncontrollable rapidity of change, the fear of losing one’s job and being harmed by an increasingly less equitable distribution of resources.

*Laudato si* shows, in short, a certain impatience with the state of today’s world. The situations of poverty and inequality in the world also led St. Josemaría to become indignant: “It is easy to understand the impatience, anxiety and uneasiness of people whose naturally Christian soul stimulates them to fight the personal and social injustice which the human heart can create. So many centuries of men living side by side and still so much hate, so much destruction, so much fanaticism stored up in eyes that do not want to see and in hearts that do not want to love!

“The good things of the earth, monopolized by a handful of people; the culture of the world, confined to cliques. And, on the outside, hunger for bread and education. Human lives—holy, because they come from God—treated as mere things, as statistics. I understand and share this impatience. It stirs me to look at Christ, who is continually inviting us to put his new commandment of love into practice.”

*Impatience, anxiety and uneasiness*…. It is easy to understand why the recent encyclical often becomes a cry of suffering (see Jas 5:4), taking on a prophetic tone that is also song of love. *Laudato si* denounces the injustices found in present-day social structures. Social relations have become deformed because the consumer has become the sole criteria, and we are witnessing the emergence of new forms of poverty (see LS 158). Pope Francis reclaims here the role of the State (see LS 197). Since human
beings are not merely consumers (see LS 226), they should be, above all, good administrators.

**Being good administrators and avoiding waste**

What attitude should we adopt towards the goods of this world, our common home? Clearly the first step is to refuse to reduce man to a mere consumer, which goes hand in hand with waste (see LS 109). The Successor of Peter offers a number of specific suggestions in this regard: not wasting water (see LS 185) or paper (see LS 22, 211), and economizing on energy (see LS 211), to cite just a few. “A minority believes that it has the right to consume in a way which can never be universalized” (LS 50).

The founder of Opus Dei also offers many examples based on his own ardent spiritual life and his vivid experience of war and scarcity. As St. Bernard said, the virtue of poverty does not consist merely in being poor but in loving poverty. St. Josemaría described the virtue of poverty in these terms: “Not to have anything as one’s own; not to have anything superfluous; not to complain when the necessary is lacking; when one can choose, to chose the poorest and least attractive; not to mistreat the objects that we use; to make good use of time.”[38]

He also used to say: “It is not enough to want to be poor. We have to learn to be poor.”[39] The material goods we may possess oblige us to try to remedy the needs of our neighbor. “True poverty does not consist in not having things, but in being detached: in voluntarily renouncing one’s control over things.”[40] To avoid wasting paper Josemaría Escrivá, “when taking notes or making rough drafts, always used the back sides of used sheets of paper. He liked to joke that he would ‘write on the edges if that were possible.’”[41] As far as electricity was concerned, he was very observant of any possible waste: “Look, they turned on the lights up there in order to open the shutters on the windows, and since the whole room was flooded with natural light they forgot to turn them off... Please go up and ask them politely to turn off the lights, since they are wasting electricity.”[42] He invited people to pay attention to small things, doing so out of charity: the act of economizing on resources and avoiding waste is a way of feeling united to those who are suffering need. In this regard, I
recall the decision by students in a residence in Nairobi to economize on the use of hot water out of solidarity with the poor.

According to Blessed Álvaro del Portillo, the founder of Opus Dei, encouraged people “to be detached from material things—we are only administrators (see LS 116)—and to act with common sense, without wasting or squandering goods, administering as well as possible whatever we have to manage.” More than a matter of money, it is a question of a spiritual attitude. This is how Pope Francisco perceives it, while also emphasizing the gravity of overlooking the lack of social justice. We can thus understand why the Pope mentions prayer before and after meals as an anti-consumerist effort (see LS 227), and why the culinary art can be related to ecology (see LS 133-134).

2. Work and Responsible Citizenship

Caring for creation, a responsibility that comes with being a good citizen, is exercised especially in one’s work. St. Paul was proud of being a Roman citizen, as he firmly declared before the centurion (see Acts 22:25-28). He invited the Philippians to be “citizens worthy of the Gospel of Christ” (see Phil 1:27). The Greek word used here, “politeuesthe,” “to be citizens,” often does not appear in translations of the Bible, even though it is the literal meaning of the word in that verse. Laudato si’ frequently stresses the need for responsible citizenship and emphasizes the importance of work, a reality closely linked to the Eucharist, which is also central to the encyclical.

Free and responsible citizens

Pope Francis invites citizens to become aware of their responsibilities (see LS 118) and to exercise them. He uses the expression “ecological citizenship” (LS 211), and links it to the exercise of personal virtues: “Only by cultivating sound virtues will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment” (LS 211). Moreover, “unless citizens control political power—national, regional and municipal—it will not be possible to control damage to the environment” (LS 179). Thus being a citizen implies not only belonging to a community but also sharing in political power in some way.

In St. Josemaría, the concept of citizenship appears in the framework of
a Christian vision of life. He dedicates a chapter in *Furrow* to the topic of “citizenship” (numbers 290-322), since for him every Christian who lives “in the midst of the world” is “another citizen” (no. 321).

The focus of St. Josemaría here is love for the world in God: “we love the world passionately because God has taught us to” (no. 290). “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (*Jn* 3:16). Every Catholic should be characterized by “a careful awareness of trends in science and contemporary thought; and a positive and open attitude towards the current changes in society and in ways of living” (no. 428). All human values need to be integrated “in the hope of Christ”: friendship, the arts, science, philosophy, theology, sport, nature, culture, souls” (no. 293). All these realities need to be brought to God (see no. 295), renouncing the “pleasant but insubstantial enchantment of the world” (no. 294).

Josemaría Escrivá invites us to “the proper fulfillment of our duties as citizens,” but also asks to “demand our rights and place them at the service of the Church and society” (no. 300). This entails paying our taxes, being concerned for the common good, taking part in political and social life, etc. All of this can be summed up in putting into practice the Church’s social teachings.^[46]

As in *Laudato si’,* the focus here is clearly on God, on “eternal happiness” (no. 305), on the joy and the daring of “the children of God” (no. 306). A Christian’s responsible citizenship includes realities such as:

— the fundamental freedom of a child of God: “How sad it is to have the mentality of a Roman Emperor, and not to understand the freedom other citizens enjoy in the things God has left to the free choice of men” (no. 313). St. Josemaría holds up a true “doctrine of civic freedom,”^[47] which includes the personal responsibility of fulfilling one’s duties as citizens in political, economic, university, and professional life;^[48]

— respect for the “rights of other peoples” (no. 316), because “if patriotism becomes nationalism, which leads to looking at other people, at other countries, with indifference, with scorn, without Christian charity and justice, then it is a sin” (315).

St. Josemaría did not try to offer a specific program of social action for
Opus Dei, since that is not part of the mission of this prelature, which is open to all social programs admissible for Christians, and which encourages them to freely take on their civic responsibilities. He strove to spread the evangelical call to holiness and apostolate in professional work and daily life, in the fulfillment of one's civic duties, with respect for the created world.

All this demands personal formation. Pope Francis especially deplores “the fragmentation of knowledge” (LS 110). St. Josemaría saw the great need for unity among all the fields of human knowing, which should be the special concern of the university. And he had an ardent hope that a catechism of the Church’s social doctrine might soon see the light of day. Cardinal Van Thuan recalled that “Josemaría Escrivá wanted the catechism of Christian doctrine to include the social and political duties of Christians in civil society, and thus foster in Catholics a unity of life from childhood: a good Christian should also be a good citizen.” He wanted Catholics to make a positive contribution to society. He recommended that each Catholic join forces with other people and institutions, whether Christian or not, to tackle the problems of society (see LS 219), fulfilling one’s duties out of love.

Besides carrying out our daily work and duties with love, which is the first step in diminishing poverty in the world, we have to do what we can to eradicate it directly. We can mention here the forty social initiatives urged forward by St. Josemaría's successor, Blessed Álvaro del Portillo, to help underprivileged people all over the world: hospitals in Africa, programs for the social advancement of women in Latin America, schools for professional training in the Philippines, food banks in Europe, centers for the social integration of immigrants in the United States, etc.

The awareness of the need to be a responsible citizen has to be strengthened by an integral education that fosters wisdom, not at all an easy challenge (see LS 209). A great help to responding effectively to these challenges is found in the teachings of Vatican II. Although it took place many decades ago now, we are still in need of “a patient assimilation of the Second Vatican Council’s teaching, striving to implement them ever more effectively.” This is especially important in all that refers to “the harmony and collaboration between faith and reason.” to be citizens on
earth with our eyes set on heaven.

The Council emphasized that “what specifically characterizes the laity is their secular nature.” Ángel Rodríguez Luño has pointed to the “positive theological dimension” of secularity in St. Josemaría Escrivá. Rising above a merely sociological viewpoint, he places his focus on the Incarnation and the Paschal mystery: “What illuminates our conscience is faith in Christ, who has died and risen and is present in every moment of life. Faith moves us to play our full part in the changing situations and in the problems of human history. In this history, which began with the creation of the world and will reach its fulfillment at the end of time, the Christian is no expatriate. He is a citizen of the city of men, and his soul longs for God. While still on earth he has glimpses of God’s love and comes to recognize it as the goal to which all men on earth are called.”

For “here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come” (Heb 13:14). This future city already exists as an eschatological reality. The Paschal mystery has brought us the first fruits of glory in the praise of God and communion with our brothers and sisters in charity. All of this is made present in Christian worship, to which work is closely tied. Joseph Ratzinger wrote that “there is a reality that immediately stands out when one considers the life of Msgr. Escrivá or comes into contact with his writings: a very vivid sense of Christ’s presence.” This close presence of Christ is central to his teachings on human work, as is also true in Pope Francis: “Jesus worked with his hands, in daily contact with the matter created by God, to which he gave form by his craftsmanship” (LS 98).

Work, personal development, sanctification

Work plays an important role in Pope Francis’ recent encyclical (see LS 98, 124-129). The Holy Father stresses the need for work if people are to lead a dignified human life (LS 127-129). He reminds us of the value given to work by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical Laborem Exercens (see LS 124). He cites the beautiful Benedictine saying “ora et labora” (LS 126) and evokes the message of Charles de Foucauld (LS 125). The encyclical stresses the “rich personal growth” (LS 127) that should take place in work, which dignifies the human person (see LS 128). “Underlying every form of work is a concept of the relationship” (LS 125) with others.
It is well known that the sanctification of work is an essential feature of the spirit of Opus Dei, together with the reality of our divine filiation as the ground of all Christian life, and the centrality of the Eucharist, the mystery which in some way crowns the encyclical (see LS 236-237). Josemaría Escrivá also stressed the great importance of friendship and service to those around us: “the spirit of service, the desire to contribute to the well being of other people” implies a certain professional competence: “It’s not enough to want to do good; we must know how to do it. And, if our desire is real, it will show itself in the effort we make to use the right methods, finishing things well, achieving human perfection.”

Escrivá liked the formula: “para servir, servir” (to be useful, serve). The theologian Antonio Aranda comments that “servir” can have two meanings: to do one’s work well, that is, to be a good professional, but also to work with a spirit of service, thinking of others. The same idea appears in the homily that Pope Francis gave in Havana: “Whoever does not live to serve, does not understand how to live [in Spanish: no sirve para vivir].” Therefore “to love means to renew our dedication every day, with loving deeds of service,” with a self surrender that “is a consequence of freedom.” As Jesus himself said: “The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28).

Seeing our work as an opportunity to serve those around us means, Escrivá said, giving “priority to spirit over organization,” which entails the exercise of the human virtues: courage, serenity, patience, magnanimity, concentration, diligence, truthfulness and justice, temperance and prudence; and also of the supernatural virtues, especially the theological ones, doing everything with joy. The value of a job is closely tied to the love we put into it. Each should see him or herself as child of God in every job, “capable of being raised to the supernatural plane, that is, inserted into the constant flow of Love which defines the life of a child of God.” Here we see Pope Francis’ constant stress on the need to “give glory to God” (LS 127), and to share God’s “fatherly tenderness” (LS 73, see 77, 96) with those around us.

Laudato si’ thus leads us right to St. Josemaría’s teachings on sanctifying daily life, grounded in Genesis and Christ’s life in Nazareth (see Mk 6:3; see LS 98). With regard to the expression “Ora et labora,” St. Josemaría fully
agreed with Blessed Alvaro del Portillo’s remark: “We must not forget the
great good that the Benedictines have done for the Church and for civil
society by their diligent work, preserving the cultural treasures during the
dark era of the Middle Ages, teaching a great part of Europe how to raise
crops, etc.”[75]

Charles de Foucauld, in his approach to work, focuses on Christ’s
hidden life at Nazareth. For the fiery convert the key element is Jesus’ self-
lowering or kenosis: “In love, adoration, immolation, supplication, manual
labor, poverty, humiliation, recollection, silence, we imitate as faithfully as
possible the hidden life of Jesus of Nazareth.”[76] In St. Josemaría teachings
on work “the tonality is different,”[77] as Laurent Touze points out, despite
the fact that humility is always the foundation of everything.

St. Josemaría insists: “Sanctity, for the vast majority of men, implies
sanctifying their work, sanctifying themselves in it, and sanctifying others
through it. Thus they can encounter God in the course of their daily
lives.”[78] For Escrivá this means transforming work into prayer: work
becomes true contemplation.[79] Worshipping God, in Hebrew, means at
the same time adoration and service (“avodat Elohim”). We could even
speak analogically of a “liturgy” of work.[80]

Besides being an important means of sanctification, work for Escrivá
needs to be carried out with a professional outlook. Here we see the
importance of apprenticeship, preparation, continual formation, being up to
date, striving for the professional competence that enables us to offer a
better service. Our work should be marked by the “effort to build up the
By doing our work as well as possible and respecting professional ethics,
the human being exercises the human virtues, animated by charity: one
becomes a better person, grows in love for God and neighbor, and attains
sanctity.

Moreover, by working in this way, we perfect the world with our work.
We read in Genesis: “God rested from all his work which he had done in
creation.”[82] Literally this verse reads: “God rested from the work that El
Elohim had created to do.” “To do” here can be understood as referring to
human beings, since Elohim [God] is the subject of “create.” In other
words, the continuity of the creative action is also found in the fact that God creates so that others may do or work. Man is associated with the work of creation and participates in the divine power.[83] Love for creation becomes an act of co-creation.[84]

José Luis Illanes unfolds the richness of work in the teaching of the Founder of Opus Dei.[85] The sanctification of work goes far beyond a struggle against laziness and the need to support oneself (see Mt 10:10), since it is an express command of God and the hinge for one’s holiness and apostolate. We each are asked to develop our talents (see Mt 25:26), to yield fruit (see Mk 11:13), so as not to be the withered fig tree. Work done as perfectly as possible, but without a sterile perfectionism, is raised to the supernatural order and becomes an instrument of sanctification.

This spirit of work is contagious. St. Josemaría even said that “our constant daily work is so connatural for us that even our hobby is work: by one form of working, we rest from another.”[86] Thus someone who is unemployed needs to work hard in seeking a job. On the day following the publication of Laudato si’, the Prelate of Opus Dei said: “The importance of work for a humanly dignified life is deeply sensed by a person who is unemployed and experiences the anguish of not having an income. Therefore those who are out of work should hold a central place in the prayer and concern of every Christian. As the Pope said, helping the poor or the unemployed by giving money ‘must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs.’ The broader objective ‘should always be to allow them a dignified life through work’ (Laudato si’, 128). The encyclical also reminds us that ‘to stop investing in people, in order to gain greater short-term financial gain, is bad business for society’ (Ibid.).”[87]

The first challenge for a person who is unemployed might be to regain confidence in himself and his relationship with others, especially if work defines his identity to a large extent. The search for work is also closely tied to the need to preserve relationships with others. A person who is unemployed may need to accept work he is able to do, even if it doesn't completely satisfy his legitimate expectations. Thus he will regain the relationships that “humanize” his life, a life in which he can now once again give and receive.
Work that is truly sanctified should lead to “the humanization of the world,” helping to overcome what *Laudato si’* calls “persistent situations of dehumanizing misery.” I think of that seller of oranges in La Paz, Bolivia, who replied to a customer asking to buy all of his remaining oranges: “only a dozen; what would I do for the rest of the day?” His response echoes some verses of the Greek poet Hesiod: “Work is no disgrace, but idleness truly is shameful.”

**Eucharistic praise and recapitulation**

Work reinforces each person’s dignity and leads to human and spiritual growth, and finds its fullest meaning in God. “The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things. Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator” (LS 83).

This transformation of the world is possible through union with Christ in the Eucharist, since in each Eucharistic celebration “Jesus attracts all things to himself.” This is a central theme in St. Josemaría’s preaching and also in *Laudato si’* (see 233-237). In a homily during the celebration of a Mass on a university campus, St. Josemaría said:

“We can, therefore, rightfully speak of a ‘Christian materialism,’ which is boldly opposed to that materialism which is blind to the spirit. What are the Sacraments, which early Christians described as the footprints of the Incarnate Word, if not the clearest manifestation of this way that God has chosen in order to sanctify us and to lead us to heaven? Don’t you see that each Sacrament is the Love of God, with all its creative and redemptive power, giving itself to us by way of material means? What is this Eucharist which we are about to celebrate, if not the adorable Body and Blood of our Redeemer, which is offered to us through the lowly matter of this world (wine and bread), through the ‘elements of nature, cultivated by man,’ as the recent Ecumenical Council has reminded us.”

Pope Francis invites us to respect creation, including the vegetable and animal worlds (see LS 124, 130). St. Josemaría did the same, making
reference to the Eucharist. In the mystery of the altar, the wheat and grapes symbolize nature, the material world. Having become bread and wine through human work, we offer our work, culture, the arts, sciences, history, interpersonal relationships, in order to transform everything into Christ, the Son of God and our Lady, in praise of God, in the joy of the Holy Spirit: “When I celebrate Mass with just one person to serve it, the people are present also. I feel that there, with me, are all Catholics, all believers, and also all those who do not believe. All God’s creatures are there—the earth and the sea and the sky, and the animals and plants—the whole of creation giving glory to the Lord.”[94]

We can therefore speak of a “liturgy of creation.”[95] It is, as it were, an “anticipation of the universal transformation of this world at the end of time.”[96] This liturgical action, which raises earth to Heaven and which has a cosmic dimension, points to the recapitulation of all things in Christ (see LS 100). In words of St. Thomas Aquinas, at the end of time “every material creature will receive a certain newness of glory.”[97]

What can we say in this regard? This question, apparently so far removed from the concerns of modern man, takes on new force during a personal conversion, a natural catastrophe or the death of a beloved person. Death, which so often is hidden in our postmodern societies, is a reality that is certain and unavoidable. Fernando Ocáriz tells us that, according to Aquinas, for the blessed there is no rupture or lack of proportion between the immediate and loving contemplation of the Trinity that the soul will have, and the vision of the material world to the person’s glorified eyes: “The plenitude of historical Revelation and the plenitude of cosmic Revelation not only coincide in Christ the Revealer, but they also coincide in their eschatological consummation, to the extent possible for the glorified material world, in the highest revealed reality: the Divine Trinity.”[98]

After celebrating the Eucharist, the founder of Opus Dei loved to pray a hymn taken from the Book of Daniel (chapter 3) that is joined to the Psalm Laudate (Ps 150): the Trium Puerorum or Benedicite, whose use goes back to at least the third century. This hymn invites all creation to bless the Lord. Our gaze is turned towards the sun, the moon, the stars; it embraces the immense expanse of the oceans; it rises to the snow-covered peaks and
contemplates the variety of atmospheric conditions, cold and heat, light and darkness; it pauses on the mineral and vegetable world, then summons up the animal species, to finally culminate with man, the image of God. Merely by their existence, all creatures bless God and give him glory (see LS 69), despite the fact that, setting aside the angels, only the human being can direct himself to God in a voluntary and free act.

As the Constitution Gaudium et Spes teaches, “Though made of body and soul, man is one. Through his bodily composition he gathers to himself the elements of the material world; thus they reach their crown through him, and through him raise their voice in free praise of the Creator.”

Pope Francis invites us to join in this praise, an echo of St. Francis Assisi’s Canticle of the Creatures. This song praises the Creator in his creatures, in a way analogous to our praise of the saints in the liturgy, given that in them we exalt God who, in crowning their merits, crowns his own gifts. Certainly not everything is God: the world and its transformation are not God. But our faith teaches that “each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God’s infinite wisdom and goodness.”

Moved by a deep awareness of his divine filiation, the author of The Way was not yet thirty years old when he wrote in his Apuntes íntimos [Intimate notes] these burning words “[Child,] get used to lifting your heart to God, in acts of thanksgiving, many times a day. Because he gives you this and that. Because you have been despised. Because you haven’t what you need or because you have. Because he made his Mother so beautiful, his Mother who is also your Mother. —Because he created the sun and the moon and this animal and that plant. —Because he made that man eloquent and you he left tongue-tied... Thank him for everything, because everything is good.”

This is an act of thanksgiving that, far from being passive, spurs us to act, as Pope Francis also invites us to do throughout his encyclical (see, for example, LS 13, 19, 189, 217). Christian charity involves much more than just material assistance: “If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing” (1 Cor 13:3). Pope Francis has frequently stressed that the Church is not a humanitarian organization,
since it is a sign and sacrament of intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, as Vatican II teaches. The Church was born of God’s love and returns us to him, giving us what we cannot give ourselves, including the sacraments that unite us. Thus it turns out that the human person and relationships are at the heart of *Laudato si’*.

3. *Person and Relationship*

What are the features that characterize our society today? There is no unanimity on this point. I will limit myself to a certain universal recognition of the dignity of the human person and his or her subjective value; the decisive importance of the new technologies, which are changing the world of communication; the closer relationships between the different religions, but also at times their collisions; the loss of the meaning of life, against the backdrop of relativism and nihilism.\[103\] We could also mention here the manipulation of scientific research to achieve a proud dominion over good and evil (see *Gen* 2:9, 17; 3:22), the failure to view human life as a good (something almost spontaneous in the past), individualism (see LS 162, 208), the ideology of gender and the Cyborg mirage\[104\] that is trying to create an artificial man. To complete the list, I will add that after the achievements of modernity and its “myths”—“individualism, unlimited progress, competition, consumerism, unregulated market” (LS 210)—along with its crises (see LS 119), we have entered a postmodern era in which the “lack of identity is a source of anxiety” (LS 203). Man has become acutely aware of his vulnerability and even fragility.\[105\] Affectivity, often exaggerated, becomes an essential part of postmodern man, who often suffers heartbreak and, in turn, has difficulty in “knowing how to love.”\[106\]

A particularly important passage in the recent encyclical stresses the “qualitative newness” of the human person, whose being cannot be explained by a hypothetical evolutionary process in which God does not intervene: “Human beings, even if we postulate a process of evolution, also possess a uniqueness that cannot be fully explained by the evolution of other open systems. Each of us has his or her own personal identity and is capable of entering into dialogue with others and with God himself. Our capacity to reason, to develop arguments, to be inventive, to interpret reality and to create art, along with other not yet discovered capacities, are signs of a uniqueness which transcends the spheres of physics and biology.
The sheer novelty involved in the emergence of a personal being within a material universe presupposes a direct action of God and a particular call to life and to relationship on the part of a ‘Thou’ who addresses himself to another ‘thou.’ The biblical accounts of creation invite us to see each human being as a subject who can never be reduced to the status of an object” (LS 81).

**Man, a relational being**

This is the context in which the “human ecology” Pope Francis speaks of can be rightly understood (LS 5, 148, 152, 155, 156). His observations in this regard develop ideas already present in Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI.[107] As Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo points out, in *Laudato si’* Pope Francis stresses that “when all is said and done, nature, the earth, is our common home and therefore it is related in a fundamental way with man.”[108] *Laudato si’* gives great importance to the concept of relationship: “underlying every form of work is a concept of the relationship which we can and must have with what is other than ourselves” (LS 125).

The concept of relationship is also very present in the message of St. Josemaría. François-Xavier Guerra has written about “the terms that Escrivá employs to express the bonds between persons and their articulation with the collectivity... The terms most frequently employed are ‘relation,’ ‘relationship,’ ‘life of relationship.’ These are found with some frequency in the books following *The Way,* and refer to various types of relationships, from the most elevated and intimate to the most ordinary. The ‘relationships with God’ or with ‘the three Divine Persons’ occupy the first place in this scale, in a lexicon of usage that makes reference to ‘conversation,’ ‘intimacy,’ ‘friendship’ (an eminently interpersonal relationship, in a sense that it is also very present in all that refers to the ‘relationship between spouses’). We also find, branching out in concentric circles, other relationships: ties of kinship, friendship, work, neighborhood, cultural or political affinity, belonging to various associations... The kind of community that emerges here is, in fact, a ‘civil society’ and not an organic whole; an interweaving of relationships that, although it includes permanent cores of relationship—the family, friendship—is essentially mobile, fluid, voluntary. It is these relationships that Christians are called to sanctify, to Christianize, to humanize; in a natural way, far from any
kind of organizational volunteerism, as though every human relationship were destined to resemble the highest interpersonal relationships.\textsuperscript{[109]}

Guerra has rightly stressed that Escrivá suggests “a quiet transformation of the relational fabric that is modern society, rejecting any clericalism that might limit the freedom of Catholics’ temporal action.”\textsuperscript{[110]}

\textit{Creatures of flesh and blood: land, exile and identity}

More than having a body, we are at the same time both body and soul. Respect for human nature (see LS 155) and the meaning of the incarnation (see LS 99) are very present in the thought of Pope Francis. “The acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home” (LS 155). This acceptance entails three key manifestations.

—The first is the recognition of an obvious fact, our sexual condition. “Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology. Also, valuing one’s own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if I am going to be able to recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different” (LS 155). The Pope thus strongly rejects the gender theories prevalent today, a veritable ideology, since they are detached from reality and aim to transform the structures of society, doing violence to personal freedom and trampling on the truth (see \textit{Gen} 1:27; \textit{Jn} 8:32): “We can joyfully accept the specific gifts of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator, and find mutual enrichment. An attitude that would seek to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it, is not a healthy one”\textsuperscript{[111]} (LS 155).

—Another consequence of our bodily condition is the irreplaceable need to meet people face to face. Certainly one can dialogue by Internet, chat rooms and video-conferences between people separated by thousands of miles. But in the end nothing can take the place of a direct personal encounter. “Real relationships with others, with all the challenges they entail, now tend to be replaced by a type of internet communication” (LS 47). The Pope detects in this a number of drawbacks: choosing or eliminating relationships “at whim,” which can give rise to artificial emotions; along with the danger of being shielded “from direct contact
with the pain, the fears, and the joys of others and the complexity of their personal experiences” (LS 47). This concern is also present in the Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium: “Many try to escape from others and take refuge in the comfort of their privacy or in a small circle of close friends, renouncing the realism of the social aspect of the Gospel. For just as some people want a purely spiritual Christ, without flesh and without the cross, they also want their interpersonal relationships provided by sophisticated equipment, by screens and systems which can be turned on and off on command. Meanwhile, the Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction.”[112]

Here we are called to confront the real world, with an invitation to true charity. We can’t be content to meet others in the “mirror” of the Internet, adapting a metaphor used by St. James (see Jas 1:22-24). As Aristotle suggested, many apparent friends are not such in reality, because “it is not possible to be a real friend of a great number of people.”[113]

Certainly the Internet offers wonderful opportunities for evangelization.[114] Pope Benedict XVI pointed out: “The digital environment is not a parallel or purely virtual world, but is part of the daily experience of many people, especially the young. Social networks are the result of human interaction, but for their part they also reshape the dynamics of communication which builds relationships.”[115]

The great danger is abusing the social networks. In reality, Pope Francis is inviting us to not fall into materialism. Today we find ourselves in a paradox: the race to become rich—which the Bishop of Rome denounces—along with an excessive care for the body (which becomes a mask) or contempt for it (impurity, abortion: see LS 1120). Man thinks that he has a body, when in reality he is body and soul. In the house of Simon the Pharisee, Christ’s deserved to be perfumed by that woman; her gesture had a natural meaning that Christ appreciated (see Lk 7: 36-50). However, the significance of human gestures can also be altered, as with Judas’ kiss, which provoked our Lord’s reproach (see Lk 22:48).[116] Judas, who had protested when Mary of Bethany poured out the perfume, claiming that its price could have been better employed in helping the
poor, also provoked our Lord to prophesy: “The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me” (Jn 12:8).

—Finally, our material condition leads us necessarily to put down roots in a specific place and epoch. The incarnation of the Word is linked to the Judea of Herod. This is a theme that the Pope we have gone to find “almost at the end of the world” has spoken about from time to time: that of memory, and specifically that of places. Judt has remarked that we seem to have less and less in common with the rapidly changing worlds of our contemporaries, and even less with those of the past.[118]

Our relationship with the environment in which we live profoundly affects us (see LS 147). We need to feel ourselves “at home” (LS 151). “The life of the spirit is not disassociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities” (LS 216). Returning to certain places connected with our childhood reinforces our identity (see LS 84). They are linked to a history and a culture (see LS 143). Our origins are rooted in the land of our ancestors (see LS 146). We are invited to better grasp the theme of exile as a return to the land, so present in universal literature, especially in the Bible. We could mention here Psalm 137, whose song evokes both the memory of the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile, a recurrent theme in various cultures.[119] Exile and dispersion are linked to sin.[120] The drama of exile is at the center of our history and our identity, from the nostalgia for the lost paradise to the longing for Heaven, which is life in God; universal literature echoes all of this drama.[121] Family names are often place names. Moreover, a name, nomen, is also noumen, memory; and—more than an omen (prediction)—the name may be chosen as an inspiration (see LS 10), a program or expression of a vocation that, in some cases, will contribute to the renown of a person.

The Christians who memorialized Christ from the time when they dispersed because of the persecutions (see Acts 11:26), considered themselves as exiles here below, as we sing in the Salve Regina: post hoc exilium, “after this exile.” Hospitality is the response to the sorrow of exile (see LS 71). The Old Testament already invited its readers to love the stranger as oneself (see Lev 19:33-34). “Great motivations... make it possible for us to live in harmony, to make sacrifices, and to treat others well” (LS 200). Christ was linked with his village, Nazareth (see Mt 21:11;
Jn 1:45-46). The great illegal immigrant is God made man in Christ Jesus. Fleeing to Egypt, clandestine, and after being rejected by his own, we see him also return to Galilee after his resurrection (see Mt 28:11). Some people worship him, others doubt. Nothing prevents us from thinking that Jesus returned to the places of his infancy, his work, his first preaching, the sites also of so many failures, with the emotion and recollections of that perfect Man who is, essentially and eternally, the Son engendered by the Father.

The theme of exile can also be associated with the return home, which sometimes can lead to great suffering, when it is no longer what the soldier dreamed about after a long absence. This is a topic Paul Claudel gave penetrating expression to, and that has also been represented artistically, for example, in movies. However, in Claudel’s work the return home can be cruel, even sadder than the farewell. “The traveler returns home as a guest; he is a stranger to everyone, and everything is strange to him... The separation becomes complete, and his exile continues.”

Claudel himself said of Rimbaud: “What you sought so far beyond the sea and the cities, your mother and your sister knew without having left Charleville.” For the worst exile is the exile from oneself. There is a “relationship of each person with himself” (LS 141; see LS 10). As Cardinal Carlo Caffarra says in his commentary on the parable of the prodigal son, “man is exiled from the deepest core of his personality.” He needs to return to the memory of an original and foundational relationship, the memory of the Father’s house (see Lk 15:11-32), understood as Source. For the great and definitive return brings us to the house of the Father in the company of our fellow men.

*Universal fraternity, mercy and the call to holiness*

God’s universal fatherhood is the basis of the “universal fraternity” (LS 228) that embraces the family—where life is accepted (see LS 213)—and the local community, along with one’s native land and the entire world (see LS 142, 157). The family is a social good. In the family, Cardinal André Vingt-Trois reminds us, there exists a social bond because “the children are loved for themselves,” just as they are, as an echo of God’s love. Thomas Aquinas spoke about paternal love and parents who see
in their children a part of themselves: *ut aliquid sui existentes.*[129] Here God’s fatherhood is not only seen; it shines forth and communicates itself.[130] The gratuity of fraternal love, Pope Francis insists, shows us that “it is possible to love our enemies” (LS 228). Love for one’s enemies is the jewel of the Gospel message. We are taught to differentiate between an offense and its author. And we unite ourselves to Christ’s prayer of intercession on the Cross: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (*Lk* 23:34). Love for one’s enemies is proof of growth in filial intimacy with the Father: “But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven” (*Mt* 5:44-45; see *Mt* 6:12). Our Lord invites us to this love, this understanding for our enemies, through St. John, who is always speaking about fraternal love. St. Augustine, in his commentary on St. John’s epistle, sees in his enemy a brother called to the same holiness as he: “If in loving your enemy you wish him to be your brother, in loving him, you love your brother. For you do not love what he is, but what you wish him to be.”[131]

By loving our enemies we also further our own good, as Antoine de Saint-Exupéry shows provocatively.[132] Pope Francis cites St. Thomas in viewing nature as a work of divine art: “The Spirit of God has filled the universe with possibilities and therefore, from the very heart of things, something new can always emerge: ‘Nature is nothing other than a certain kind of art, namely God’s art, impressed upon things, whereby those things are moved to a determinate end. It is as if a shipbuilder were able to give timbers the wherewithal to move themselves to take the form of a ship’” (LS 80).[133] For Saint-Exupéry the sea, which is seen as a symbol of menace and enmity, also contributes to giving form to the ship.[134] St. Josemaría prayed each day this verse of Psalm 27:3: “Though a host encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.” And he wrote: “Never feel yourselves to be anyone’s enemy,”[135] “I haven’t needed to learn how to forgive, because God has taught me how to love.”[136]

As the Catechism teaches, “Sin is before all else an offense against God, a rupture of communion with him.”[137] Obviously Pope Francis is not falling into moral casuistry or inventing new “sins” by speaking about “sins against creation” (LS 8, 66, 218). We can sin when we cause a grave and unjust evil to our neighbor. Following Benedict XVI, Francis recalls
that every creature is a word of God and proclaims his glory (see LS 233). And he challenges government workers, entrepreneurs, and citizens, to confront their own responsibility here, which requires adequate training (see LS 105). The Pope stigmatizes consumerism (see LS 34, 50, 203, 210, 219), whether related to ecology or not, because it harms in the long run the common good (see LS 184), and creates a certain addiction (see LS 204).

In the creation accounts, man and woman are complementary beings (see Gen 2:18-23), called to be God’s image and likeness, to be fertile and to rule the earth (see Gen 1:26-29). With original sin, however, the human person’s relationship with himself and with God was damaged, along with our relationship with our neighbor (represented here by the child, fruit of fertility) and with the earth. Pope Francis offers a definition of sin in the framework of man’s vocation as a relational being: “The creation accounts... suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor, and with the earth. Pope Francis offers a definition of sin in the framework of man’s vocation as a relational being: “The creation accounts... suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor, and with the earth. According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin” (LS 66).

Christ came to mend what had been broken. And thus, for example, Francis of Assisi was able to live “in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature, and with himself” (LS 10).

With his encyclical Rerum Novarum, Leo XIII began the development of the Church’s social doctrine within the Pontifical magisterium, which forms part of the message of the Christian faith and contains a moral teaching: it guides human behavior and reaches to the “moral core of problems.” Similarly Laudato si’ could mark the beginning of an organic set of teachings on the theology of creation. Undoubtedly, its repercussions go beyond the present problems about caring for the environment. Rerum Novarum (1891) was followed by the doctrinal developments in Pius XI’s Quadragesimo Anno, Paul VI’s Octogesima Adveniens, and other texts, including Centesimus Annus by John Paul II and Caritas in Veritate by Benedict XVI. These new magisterial texts on creation, were they to appear
one day, could be applied to new situations, and provide an ever more consistent view of the Gospel of Creation. For example, they might go more deeply into this passage from Laudato si’: “Developing the created world in a prudent way is the best way of caring for it, as this means that we ourselves become the instrument used by God to bring out the potential which he himself inscribed in things” (LS 124).

The teaching of the saints contributes to this progress. They have seen the world as the inheritance of God’s children, who take possession of it when, with the power of the cross—the seal of the Holy Spirit (see Eph 1:12-14)—they sanctify temporal activities, helping to purify all created realities of sin, so that they reflect the glory of the Creator (see Rom 8:16-18, 29; Gal 4:4-7).

Starting from created realities, Francis writes, we can rise up towards a loving divine mercy (see LS 77). There is a direct relationship between the Year of Mercy and Laudato si’, which reminds us of “what the great biblical narratives say about the relationship of human beings with the world” (LS 65). As John Paul II commented on Genesis: “This dominion over the earth, perhaps understood in a one-sided and superficial way, seems to have no room for that mercy,” revealed to us in Christ.

Shown in an eminent way in Christ, God’s mercy is communicated intimately in his passion, death, resurrection and ascension, and in the sending of the Holy Spirit—mysteries closely tied to his work in Nazareth and to his public life. It is not a matter of a mere empathy with others’ misery. It is a mercy that entails an interior transformation through suffering (see Heb 2:10; 4:15). We see this clearly in our Lady: “Just as her pierced heart mourned the death of Jesus, so now she grieves for the sufferings of the crucified poor and for the creatures of this world laid waste by human power” (LS 241).

This divine mercy, so central to the preaching of Pope Francis, is also demanding. It is not just a matter of forgiving. “Sin no more” (Jn 5:14), Christ tells the paralytic at Bethsaida after curing him. “Go, and do not sin again” (Jn 8:11) he tells the sinful woman. Even God’s anger is compatible with his mercy, says Jean Danielou. Mercy requires that we recognize the sin, without presumption (see Sir 5:5-6), even though, in the Bible, the
root “jdh” appears both in the confession of sin (see for example, Dan 9:4 and Mk 1:5), as well as in the praise of divine power, which is salvific and merciful (see, for example, Psalm 18[17]:50 and Mt 11:25).[145]

“In the Bible the God who liberates and saves is the same God who created the universe, and these two divine ways of acting are intimately and inseparably connected” (LS 73). This focus is the *leitmotiv* of the theology of Jean Danielou.[146] In the unity of the divine plan, there are essential categories that manifest God’s way of acting: *bara*, the initiative is always divine; *emet*, the truth characterizes the promise because *hesed*, God, who is merciful, establishes an irrevocable covenant (*bérith*), because his justice, *tsédeq*, is seen in the fulfillment of his promise that is the realization of the divine plan of salvation.[147] In *Laudato si’* all divine history is implicitly present, from creation to the *eschaton* (the last days), as the *magnalia Dei* (*Sir* 18:4). The time of mercy is also the time of convocation, of calling (see Rom 1:17; 1 Cor 1:2), the time of *kerygma*, of evangelization, of holiness.[148] In the teaching of Josemaría, the invitation to live ordinary life in a holy way is “the most moving manifestation of the *magnalia Dei*, of those prodigious mercies which God has always worked, and does not cease to work, in order to save the world.”[149]

In the Jubilee Year 2015-2016, it is encouraging to hear that the loving paternity of God is not a “bland” paternity, but rather the “climate” in which the effort of each Christian “to behave as a child of the Father” is situated.[150] With the Love that is the fire of the Holy Spirit, the Father “loves his children so much that he sends the Word, the Second Person of the most Blessed Trinity, so that by taking on the nature of man he may die to redeem us.”[151] He “leads us gently to himself, through the action of the Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts,”[152] inviting us to follow Christ, to imitate him, in a word, to identify ourselves with him: “letting his life show forth in ours to such an extent that each Christian is not simply alter Christus: another Christ, but ipse Christus: Christ himself!”[153] This divinization requires a constant and heroic response to allow God to act,[154] a self-conquest.

Josemaría Escrivá trusted in our capacity to rise ever higher, with God’s grace: “Let’s listen to our Lord: ‘He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in very little is dishonest also in
much’ (Lk 16:10). It is as if he were saying to us: ‘Fight continuously in the apparently unimportant things which are to my mind important; fulfill your duty punctually; smile at whoever needs cheering up, even though there is sorrow in your soul; devote the necessary time to prayer, without haggling; go to the help of anyone who looks for you; practice justice and go beyond it with the grace of charity.’

“These and many others are the inspirations we feel inside us every day, little silent reminders encouraging us to outdo ourselves in the supernatural sport of overcoming our self. May the light of God show us the way to understand his directions. May he help us to fight and be with us in victory. May he not leave us when we fall but always help us to get up and return to the struggle.”[155]

Therefore, mercy is a call to conversion. The “awareness that God is our Father brings joy to our conversion: it tells us that we are returning to our Father’s house.”[156] This joy is the result of the action, both sweet and burning, of the Holy Spirit within us. Divine mercy is in no sense a blessing of mediocrity, but rather an invitation to draw fruit from the talents we have received. St. Josemaría often preached about God’s mercy.[157] He also had a personal devotion to God’s merciful love, a devotion spread by a French Visitation Sister.[158] Love brings with it self-giving, self-sacrifice. “With our Lord the only measure is to love without measure,”[159] because “the truth of a Christian’s life is this: self giving and love... Love for God, that is, and, for God’s sake, love for one’s neighbor.”[160]

The corporal works of mercy are quite demanding: visiting the sick, giving to the poor, burying the dead; and freeing prisoners—an arduous task also shown in making headway against the “new forms of slavery in modern society,”[161] such as alcohol and drugs. And among the spiritual works of mercy, counsel and correction may be difficult to accept, and it is not always easy to receive a teaching (see Prov 15:32).

The encyclical Laudato si’ directs our gaze towards our common home, teaching us to contemplate those who inhabit it, and to ask ourselves about our interpersonal relationships. This path invites us once more to raise our eyes to heaven. We understand the moral value of respect for creation when
we realize that this world is called to be a figure of what, one day, will be the new heavens and the new earth (see 2 Pet 3:13). “The whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now” (Rom 8:22; see LS 80): a clear call to a “social ecology” and to an “interior ecology.” It is not surprisingly, therefore, that Laudato si’ is both down-to-earth and spiritual at the same time: the “ecological culture” should be “a style of life and a spirituality” (LS 111). At the same time, “a spirituality which forgets God as all-powerful and Creator is not acceptable” (LS 75). Pope Francis saw himself forced to “say, with regret, that the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care.”

Laudato si’ is an insistent call to an examination of conscience: firm in our radical condition as daughters and sons of God, we encounter, in the beauty of divine creation, a common space for dialogue and work, where “we come together to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us” (LS 244). It is in this world’s history, and with the collaboration of our freedom, that the unity between creation and the Redemption is being carried out. It is a dynamic process, a result of what Josemaría Escrivá called “unity of life.

“In this life, the contemplation of supernatural reality, the action of grace in our souls, our love for our neighbor as a result of our love for God—all these are already a foretaste of heaven, a beginning that is destined to grow from day to day. We Christians cannot resign ourselves to leading a double life: our life must be a strong and simple unity into which all our actions converge. Christ awaits us. We are ‘citizens of heaven,’ (Phil 3:20), and at the same time fully fledged citizens of this earth, in the midst of difficulties, injustices and lack of understanding, but also in the midst of the joy and serenity that comes from knowing that we are children of God.”

This is how Christians are called to care for creation, which is progressing toward its plenitude. And as Pope Francis said at his inauguration for his ministry in the chair of Peter: “The vocation of being a ‘protector,’ however, is not just something involving us Christians alone; it also has a prior dimension which is simply human, involving everyone. It means protecting all creation... Let us be ‘protectors’ of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the
environment. Let us not allow omens of destruction and death to accompany the advance of this world. To protect creation, to protect every man and every woman, to look upon them with tenderness and love, is to open up a horizon of hope; it is to let a shaft of light break through the heavy clouds; it is to bring the warmth of hope.”

In the city of man, where the soul experiences so strongly the desire for God, “love always proves more powerful” (LS 149), and awakens hope (see Rom 5:5). “All it takes is one good person to restore hope!” (LS 71).


[2] See Pope Francis, Encyclical Laudato si’, May 24, 2015, nos. 117, 120, 125, 137-140 (“ecosystems”), 142, and 220. See Víctor Manuel Fernández, “Dentro la Laudato si. Nemmeno un passerotto è dimenticato da Dio,” L’Osservatore Romano, June 26, 2015, 5 (orig. in La Nación and Agencia Informativa Católica Argentina, June 20, 2015): “Underlying all the reflections we find some firm philosophical convictions. For example, the certainty that ‘everything is interconnected’ and that therefore no phenomenon can be understood in an isolated way.”


[6] Laudato si’ includes 20 citations from these conferences.


See LS 23, 25, 34, 51, 131, 164, 180. On this topic, see Ambiente, alimentazione e agricoltura: le opportunità dell’EXPO e la lettera enciclica di Papa Francesco, a seminar held on September 17, 2015, organized by the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross for the UCID (Unione Cristiana Imprenditori Dirigenti), with the presentation of Il cibo per tutti — Agricoltura, nuovo modello di sviluppo e valori sociali della Chiesa, LEV, 2015.

Including philosophy and social ethics: see LS 110-111, 136; this is eminently the role of the university.


Laudato si’ 115, which cites St. John Paul II’s Encyclical Centesimus Annus, May 1, 1991, 38.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 307.


See also LS 188: “The Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics.”


St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Conversations*, 70.


St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Conversations*, 70.

See Mariano Fazio, “Da Benedetto a Francesco,” in Studi Cattolici (May 2015) 651, p. 335, where Fazio points to this line of continuity between Benedict XVI and of Pope Francis.

As an example of university teaching and research linked to the social doctrine of the Church, we could mention the efforts of IESE (Barcelona, University of Navarra) regarding business ethics, management of human resources, social responsibility of businesses, the economy of health, development of emerging nations, business and the family, promotion of women and leadership, technology, the person and education, the public sector and social justice, and ecology. See Martin Schlag—Domèneç Melé, Humanism in Economics and Business. Perspectives of the Catholic Social Tradition, Springer, 2015; the authors develop the metaphysical and ethical foundation for a social ethics.


See Tertullian, Apologeticus, 17 (PL 1,375).

St. Josemaría Escrivá, Christ Is Passing By, no. 111.


St. Josemaría Escrivá, AGP, Biblioteca, P10, 50.

St. Josemaría Escrivá, The Way: Critical-Historical Edition (ed. by Pedro Rodríguez), Instituto Historico san Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, Rialp, Madrid 2004, 632, which adds: “Thus there are poor who are really rich. And the reverse.” See St. Leo the Great, Homily on the Beatitudes, PL
54, 462: “Many rich people have this spirit, because they put their abundance at the service not of their prestige, but of works of charity. For them the greatest gain is in what they employ to alleviate the misery and the suffering of their neighbor.”

[41] Blessed Álvaro del Portillo, in Immersed in God, p. 155.


[45] See “politeuomai” in Horst Balz - Gerhard Schneider, col. 1043-1044. Paul takes up again here a concept current in the Christian community of Philipp; therefore, it does not signify simply “to be” or “to conduct oneself.” See La Bible. Traduction officielle liturgique published by the Catholic bishops of the French-speaking countries, Mame, Paris 2013, 1954, note e. See also, Sagrada Biblia, School of Theology of the University of Navarra vol. 5, Pamplona 2004, note on Phil 1:27-30, p. 1162.

[46] See, for example, Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes, ch. III-IV; Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 1915, 2238—2240, 2255, 2273.

[47] St. Josemaría Escrivá, Conversations, 118.

[48] See ibid.


[50] See ibid., 76: “College years are a period of preparation for finding solutions to these problems. Everyone should be welcome in the university. It should be a place of study and friendship, a place where people who hold different opinions which, in each period, are expressions of the legitimate pluralism which exists in society, may live together in peace.” In a time of heightened specialization, the unifying role of the university is even more important (people say that a “specialist” is someone who knows everything about a very tiny area: everything about practically nothing). On faith and
philosophy, see St. John Paul II Encyclical *Fides et ratio*, September 14, 1998, 73 (on “circularity” between philosophy and theology). On interdisciplinary exchange, especially between philosophy and science, see Lluis Clavell,


[51] François-Xavier Nguyên Van Thuân, Communication (January 11, 2002), in *La grandeza de la vida ordinaria*, vol. I, *Vocazione e missione del cristiano in mezzo al mondo*, Edizioni Università della Santa Croce, 2002, 174; the Cardinal was at that time President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. See St. Josemaría Escrivá, Letter January 9, 1932, 45: “I will tell you, in regard to this, what my great desire is: I would like to see, in the catechism of Christian doctrine for children, clear teaching regarding what these firm points are, on which one cannot give in, when taking part in public life; and that it also make clear the duty of acting, of not abstaining, of making a personal effort to serve the common good with loyalty and personal freedom. This is a great desire of mine, because I see that thus Catholics would learn these truths from childhood and would know how to practice them later when they become adults,” in Ángel Rodríguez-Luño, *Moral Cristiana*, in *Diccionario de San Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer*, Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2014, 850-851. That desire has been fulfilled thanks to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, various national and diocesan catechisms and, more recently, thanks to Martin Schlag (ed.), *Economia e società: Le sfide della responsabilità cristiana. Domande e risposte sul Compendio della Dottrina Sociale della Chiesa*, EDUSC, Roma 2015; in English, updated with the contribution of *Laudato si’: On Earth as it is in Heaven: A Summary of Catholic Social Teaching*, Midwest Theological Forum, Downers Grove (IL) 2015.


“Christ: Constructing the New City of Love”). Among many others, I cite here a wonderful example: in the 1970's in Québec, Doctor André Allaire (1934-2007) created a committee to clean the water of the Saint-François river, on the banks of which he lived, with the involvement of four industrial sectors; he was a pioneer of ecology: see Journal L’Express (Drummondville), October 31, 2007 and Romana 45, (July-December 2007) p. 328.


[55] LLUÍS CLAVELL,


[56] Ibid.


[63] Ibid., 50. The desire to work as well as possible seems to be engraved on the human heart. In Mandarin, “work” is written with a capital “i,” with two large horizontal strokes at each extreme of the vertical line; this expresses the reality that work unites or joins together two or more pieces, with rules or measurements. The Chinese character refers to the concept of fine and precise work, carrying something out perfectly. I owe these insights to Professors Cristoforo Josemaría and Maria Tou.

[64] Ibid.


St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Friends of God*, 31


See St. Josemaría, when speaking to the people in care of maintenance at the University of Navarra: “Your work, in the sight of God, is just as important as that of the researchers and professors” (cited by Blessed Álvaro del Portillo in St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Instruction*, May 1935/September 14, 1950, note 238); and referring to the same tasks he said: “I don’t know which of these jobs is more important: but certainly, the one that is done with more love for God” (notes taken during a family gathering, July 27, 1974, in AGP, Biblioteca, P05, vol. 2, 395).


Laurent Touze, “La contemplation de la vie ordinaire. À propos de Josémaría Escrivá,” in Esprit et Vie 112 (2002), pp. 9-14. This article traces in broad strokes the lines of convergence and the differences between Charles de Foucauld and Josemaría Escrivá.


St. Josemaría Escrivá, The Forge, 703.


See St. Josemaría Escrivá, Homily “Working for God,” in Friends of God, 57—60. See St. John Paul II Address at the centennial of the birth of Josemaría Escrivá (January 12 2002), in La grandeur de la vie ordinaire, vol. I, Vocazione e missione del cristiano in mezzo al mondo, Edizioni Università delle Santa Croce, 2002, 26: “In sanctifying their own work and respecting the objective moral laws, the lay faithful contribute effectively to building a society more worthy of man and to liberating creation which groans and travails in pain while awaiting the revelation of the children of God (see Rom 8:19-22). Thus they help to mold the face of a humanity attentive to the demands of the person and the common good.” Edith Stein says that man’s vocation entails “working for the development of creation, as and how God has given it over to the free initiative of the human being;” “Die Frau. Ihre Aufgabe nach Natur und Gnade,” in E.S. Werke, XVIII: Obras completas, IV Escritos antropológicos y pedagógicos (Magisterio de vida cristiana, 1926–1933), Ed. Monte Carmelo—El Carmen de Espiritualidad, Burgos 2003, 285.
Amaury Derville directed my attention to this point and its basis in the rabbinical exegesis ("laasot": man associated with creation). Bernardo Estrada confirmed for me that in this case it was not a matter of the rhetorical figure of zeugma which could unite two subjects of the same verb.

See José Luis Illanes, “Trabajo, santificación, del,” in Diccionario de San Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2014, 1202-1210.


Women have an important role to play in this “humanization,” Edith Stein said, stressing the “blessing” women bring to social life: see “Die Frau: Ihre Aufgabe nach Natur und Gnade,” in E. S. Werke, XVIII.


Hesiod, Work and days, in Roberto Heredia Correa, Germán Viveros, José Tapia Zúñiga, Antología de textos clásicos grecolatinos, UNAM, Mexico City. 1994, 48. In fact, according to Alain Fouchard, it would be an error to interpret these verses as a reaction against a Greek aristocratic ideology that condemned work in the 8th Century B.C. But these words reflect very well the lack of prestige with which work was viewed by the French nobility during the 18th century. Could it be that Hesiod considered work as the best vehicle for liberation and that, therefore, he is expressing here a protest against poverty? However the problem here is that “the term ‘work’ does not have an equivalent in Greek,” as Fouchard emphasizes in Aristocratie et démocratie: idéologies et sociétés en Grèce ancienne, Institut des Sciences et Techniques de l'Antiquité, CNRS, Annales Littéraires de l’Université de Franche-Comté, Les Belles Lettres, 122-123. Autores disputant, see Malick Ndoye, Groupes sociaux et idéologie du travail dans les mondes homérique et hésiodique, 109. The Greek word “oneidos,”
translated here as “disgrace” and “shameful,” alludes to the idea of guilt and dishonor.


[95] See Guillaume Derville, La liturgia del trabajo, op. cit., 821-854.


[97] St. Thomas Aquinas, In Epist. ad Romanos, c.8, lect.4.


[100] See Roman Missal, Preface I of the Saints.

[101] Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 339.


[104] See www.mercatornet.com/articles/view/focus_on_tranthumanism_the_quest_for_proactive_evolution. In the end, it is a matter of the rejection of created reality (see Gen 1:27: “Man
and woman he created them”) and of giving in to the original temptation
(\textit{Gen} 3:5: “You will be like God”). However “we are not God” (LS 67).

\footnote[105]{See especially Pascal Ide, “\textit{L’homme vulnérable et capable},” in
Bernard Ars (ed.), \textit{Fragilité, dis-nous ta grandeur}, Serf, Col. \textit{Recherches
morales}, pp. 31-88. See also Alain Finkielkraut, \textit{L’identité malheureuse}, Stock
2013.}

\footnote[106]{See Guillaume Derville, \textit{Amor y desamor. La pureza liberadora},
Rialp, Madrid 2015, ch. 1: \textit{Corazón}; ch. 2: \textit{Don de sí}; ch. 5: \textit{Equilibrio}.}

\footnote[107]{See, for example, St. John Paul II, Encyclical \textit{Centesimus Annus},
Pope Benedict XVI, \textit{Message} for the celebration of the Fortieth World
Peace Day, January 1, 2007, 8, which mentions the canticle of St. Francis;
\textit{Address} on the occasion of the visit to the German Federal Parliament,
September 22, 2011.}

\footnote[108]{Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, interview with Álvaro Valenzuela, \textit{El
Mercurio}, Santiago de Chile, August 23, 2015, cited in \textit{L’Osservatore
Romano}, 24-25 of August 2015, p. 8.}

\footnote[109]{François-Xavier Guerra, “\textit{Josémaría Escriva, le chrétien et la cité},” in
\textit{La grandeur de la vie ordinaire}, vol. II \textit{San Josemaría Escrivá, Contesto storico,
Personalità, Scritti} (ed. Mariano Fazio), Edizioni Università delle Santa
Croce, 2003, 86.}

\footnote[110]{\textit{Ibid.}, 90.}

\footnote[111]{Pope Francis, \textit{Catechesis} (April 15, 2015): \textit{L’Osservatore Romano},
Spanish weekly edition (April 17, 2015) 2. “‘Gender theory’ tends to
propagate itself in the form of ‘ideological colonization,’” said Pope Francis
in his press conference during his return trip from the Philippines to Rome,
on January 19, 2015. See Aaron Kheriaty—Paul McHugh, \textit{Sexuality and
Identity: Scientific Findings}, 2-4, particularly about the danger of labeling
people.}

\footnote[112]{Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhort. \textit{Evangelii gaudium}, 88.}

\footnote[113]{Aristotle, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, Book 9, ch. 10.}


[118] See Tony Judt, *op. cit.*, chapter: “*What did we learn?*” I would point out that priests, called to be at the service of all souls, often have the impression of passing from one world to another.

[119] We could mention here the song *Va, pensiero* of Verdi in *Nabucco*, and the success of Boney M. in the 1970’s with *Rivers of Babylon*.


[121] Including *Ulysses and The Lord of the Rings*, as well as *El Cid, Don Quixote*, and *The Betrothed* (“Good bye, mountains which came forth from the waters, and you are elevated to heaven... How sad it is that one who was raised among you has to abandon you!” Alessandro Manzoni, *I promessi sposi* [*The Betrothed*] chapter 8); also Rilke and Péguy. In French literature, Chateaubriand often laments that exile whose melancholic nostalgia for places crowns the finale of the *Mémoires d’outre-tombe* (*Recapitulation of my Life*): “I found myself on horseback for two centuries, as at the confluence of two rivers; I had submerged myself in its turbulent


[124] Paul Claudel, cited by Jean Daniélou, L’oraison, problème politique, Le Signe, Fayard, Paris 1965, 150: «Ce que tu cherchais si loin par-delà la mer et au-delà des villes, ta mère et ta sœur le savaient sans avoir quitté Charleville».


[129] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 26, a. 9, co. See St. Jerome, *Com. in Matthaeum*, lib. IV (Mt 24:36): “Omnis enim pater filii nomen est.” See Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Second part, ch. 11: Prince Andréi says in regard to his son, his sister, and his father: “They are the same as me. The rest are not.”


[132] Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Citadelle*, Gallimard, Paris 1948; CVIII: “Without enemies you have neither form nor measure” (p. 240 [page numbers are from Spanish ed. Alba, Barcelona 1997]); CLXIX: “Because of this I do not have enemies. In an enemy I see a friend. And he is converted into one” (p. 361); CLXVIII: “One who walks in the same direction as myself offers fewer occasions of meeting and interchange than one who is coming against me” (p. 356). See St. John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, August 6, 1993, 72, on “the essential link between the moral value of an act and the ultimate end of man.”


[134] See Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Citadelle*; op. cit., CXXI: “The opposite of the ship is the sea. But it has shaped and sharpened the stem and hull. And the opposite of fire is the ash; but it protects the fire” (p. 272).


[137] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1440; 1033: “against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves.”


[139] Edith Stein (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross) has profound observations in this regard; see *Die Frau. Ihre Aufgabe nach Natur und Gnade*, in E.S. Werke, XVIII, 19-21. See Edith Stein, *Obras completas, IV Escritos antropológicos y pedagógicos* (*Magisterio de vida cristiana, 1926-1933*), Ed. Monte Carmelo — El Carmen de Espiritualidad, Burgos 2003, 282. See Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, “*La cuestión de la mujer según Edith Stein*,” in *Anuario filosófico* 1998 (31) 753-784. Joseph Ratzinger has emphasized that the rejection of creation as a gift from the Creator, a gift filled with meaning (end, covenant), and a sign of God’s goodness, has undermined man’s call to live in a relationship of love: man is free and authentic if he accepts his right relationship to the world and to others, if the measure of what has been created is respected in all (see Joseph Ratzinger, *Im Anfang schuf Gott. Vier Münchener Fastenpredigten über Schöpfung und Fall*; especially, in the Italian translation of Carlo Danna, *Creazione e peccato. Catechesi sull’origine del mondo e sulla caduta*, Paoline, Milan 1986, pp. 50-57).


St. John Paul II, Encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, 2; see *Gen* 1:28.


See “exomologeo” in Horst Balz - Gerhard Schneider, *Dizionario esegetico del Nuovo Testamento*, cit., op. col. 1257 sq.


St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Conversations*, 123.


Ibid., 84.

Ibid.


Ibid., 64.


St. Josemaría Escrivá, The Forge, 528.

Pope Francis, Motu Proprio Misericordiae vultus, 16.


Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, no. 200.

See Santiago Sanz, op. cit., pp. 229-231.
